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An introduction on the politicization of arts in Imperial Russian left-wing movements: from Western models towards original developments

Vlad-Florin Toma¹

Keywords: Imperial Russia, left, aesthetics, social realism, utopian socialism, narodism, classical Marxism, orthodox Marxism.²

Abstract

Although the politicization of artistic content has been around us since Antiquity, a much more refined approach towards this segment came to shape during the nineteenth century, as philosophical, doctrinary and ideological thought became much more complex. Across Europe, during these times of ideological strifes, art has started to regain attention, but this time in political circles, on all sides of the political specter, as a tool to further and enhance various political agendas. Usually overlooked by historians in favour of studying more contemporary phenomenons such as Soviet-era Socialist Realism head-on, the basis for a politicised direction in arts by the left-wing movements in Russia was established much earlier than the postrevolutionary period. Due to a lack of first-hand articles on this certain aspect, this paper will be centered around the idea of a disseminator of general considerations, that is based upon text analysis of different fundamental political or philosophical works that hold

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² Orthodox Marxism is a different direction from what we known as Classical Marxism. While Classical Marxism is comprised only in the borders of the existing theories of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Orthodox Marxism is a direction that tries to anticipate Classical Marxist concepts that weren't formulated thoroughly, but in the lines of original Marxist ideas only, thus the term "Orthodox" in the name (from Greek: ortho- "right" doxos- "belief"). See to these sources for an introduction on this phenomenon: Glaser, Daryl; Walker, David M., (eds.) *Twentieth – Century Marxism: A Global Introduction*, London, Routledge, 2007, pp. 1 – 28, Shandro, Alan, *Lenin and the Logic of Hegemony: Political Practice and Theory in the Class Struggle*, Leiden, Brill Publishing, 2014, pp. 33 – 36, 87 – 91, 100 – 102.

such information regarding the evolution towards political aesthetics in the left-wing intelligentsia or political discourse in the Russian Empire. Given the fact that this concept is still underresearched, the main goal of this study is to give a framework to the main aspects of the prerevolutionary beginnings of political aesthetics or discourse on art in the aforementioned leftist movements. A secondary goal of this research is to create an efficient introduction resource for students or other interested readers. The paper is structured as follows: The beginnings of such processes from Western models to the Russian case, being represented by the contribution of Nikolay Gavrilovich Chernyshevsky, a view upon Classical Marxist approaches towards art and aesthetics, the birth of Russian Orthodox Marxist theory, starting with the works of Gerogi Valentinovich Plekhanov and ending with the political praxis of Plekhanov's ideas, represented by the actions of Vladimir Ilych Ulianov (Lenin). The authors that have been chosen in this study, especially on the Russian case studies, were selected based on their relevant contributions and impact on theory and practice as a whole, excluding peripheral opinions and contributions (e.g. Pisarev or Dobrolyubov in the Narodnik case).

Art as a new way of life: towards Social Realism as a political aesthetic manifestation, from Western Utopian Socialism to Narodnichestvo.

In addition to the factors of a cultural nature and the radicalizations in the heart of Russian society that determined the artistic germination of some of the visions that would later become the basis of socialist realism, one can observe the existence of a substantial involvement of the political-ideological sphere in the foundation of these directions: an aesthetic influenced by the ideological factor of the left-wing sphere of thought. These aspects do not represent a character of originality in Russian space, being explorations and developments of some concepts coming from the outside. In Russian space starting from the middle of the XVIII century, an extensive philosophical universe began to take shape, this time a secular philosophy. Although the first signs of detachment from theological philosophy appeared during the Rurikid dynasty, specifically in the period of Ivan III Vasilyevich The Great (d. 1462 – 1505), a noticeable schism between the two systems of thought occurred at the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century, a period marked by the reign of Peter I the Great (d. 1682 – 1725).³ With the introduction of Western aesthetics and cultural fashions that formed the first generation of secular intellectuals of modern Russia such as the polymath Mikhail Vasilyevich Lomonosov, a tendency arose to replicate the models newly arrived in the Russian space.⁴ The secular

³ V. V. Zenkovsky, *A History of Russian Philosophy, Volume One* London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1953, p. 71.

⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 71 – 72.

Russian intelligentsia, newly forged by the Western model, has quickly embraced this import of science and culture, facilitated by the reign of Peter the Great and his successors. Thus, it was possible to form the secular philosophical scene, which later defined the cultural and political foundations of Liberal Russian thought that would follow. Starting with the "*philosophical letters*" of Pyotr Yakovlevich Chaadaev (first published in 1836), the real awakening of philosophical reflection in secular gnostic systems is manifested.⁵ It can be said that the philosophical work of Chaadaev galvanized a situation that was going in full swing: the intellectual schism between the systems of thought "*Zapadnichestvo*" (*Westernisers*) and "*Pochvoennichestvo*" (*the conservative basis that resulted in the creation of Slavophile current in Russia*), which in turn resulted in the birth of modern Russian intelligentsia.⁶ It is important to note that the Westernisers were probably one of the most developed in terms of thought spectra. Thus, much of the Russian philosophical fruit of this time, derives its origin from the directions of the *zapadniki*, since these philosophical positions allowed access to the opening of new gnostic horizons: Kant, Spinoza, Schelling, Hegel, and others. On this channel of knowledge, the arrival of utopian literature was just a matter of time.

Leftist thought before Marx, has been focused strictly on the practical casuistry of the relationship between man, environment and work, striking problems that were started by the engagement of the wheels of the First Industrial Revolution. The very first mention regarding artists and art *per se* as beneficial factors for this relation, appears in the thought of Claude Henri de Rouvroy, Count of Saint – Simon (1760-1825). In the short fragment "*The role of artists, scholars and industrialists in the great future social transformations*" dated 1824, Saint – Simon in his new vision regarding social space, ascribes to the increased importance of the literati and people of Culture: "[...] in this great enterprise, artists, people with imagination will step into the lead; they will proclaim the future of the human species."⁷ The saintsimonian vision perceives cultural producers as means of encouraging the masses to increase well-being of any kind.⁸ At the same time, this encouragement also serves as a supply of the

⁵ G. M. Hambrug, Randall A. Poole, *A History of Russian Philosophy 1830 – 1930: Faith Reason, and the Defense of Human Dignity*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 31.

⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 31 – 32.

⁷ Henri de Saint – Simon, *Rolul artiștilor, savanților și industriașilor în marile transformări sociale viitoare* în C. I. Gulian (ed.) „Saint – Simon, Fourier, Owen”, București, Editura Academiei Republicii Populare Române, 1957, p. 113.

⁸ *Ibidem*.

ideal engine of the masses, where "[...] soon, all members of the society will indulge in pleasures which, until today, have been the prerogative of a very few class;"⁹ The "poetic part of the new system" substantiated by Saint-Simon, boils down only to this previous brief exhortation. Gradually, the idea of the arts as a means of encouraging and stimulating of the physically active social classes is taken up by several theorists of this phase of early socialist system.

Another important figure of French "utopian socialism", François Marie Charles Fourier (1772-1837), brought back in his debate the need for education and the arts in the life of the common man. In 1822, Fourier published "Treatise on domestic and agricultural association", or "The theory of Universal Unity", an important first step towards the foundation of his most important theory: the Phalansterian utopia, based on the idea of a common way of living that would be influenced by the factor of close interpersonal relations between the inhabitants of the social cohesive unit that had to be the Phalanstere.¹⁰ In this treatise written by Fourier, the most interesting thing for us is the trace of emphasis placed on issues of cultural or scholarly interest. Although the emphasis in his works was not on the direct question of the involvement of people of culture, he raised issues in some similarity to Saint – Simon. Fourier's concern was more that of scientific texts that had to be replicated within the Phalanstere in as many copies and as detailed as possible by its inhabitants, lamenting his contemporary situation of the lack of easy access to modern, high quality scientific materials.¹¹

Meanwhile, early socialist visions have been perpetuated beyond the English Channel, into the industrially booming British Isles. Among the first and most important thinkers in this sphere was Robert Owen (1771-1858), known for his contribution in regards to the creation of the co-operative system. At first glance, a characteristic of British utopian socialism would be that of the lack of an inclination towards issues in the arts sphere, devoting itself more to an attitude focused on issues of a utilitarian, socio - economic nature. Although there is no clear reference in the case of owenian political work concerning the structuring of the arts, the emphasis is on their importance in education and on the evolution of the arts and sciences in relation to the evolution of man in his own social

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 114.

¹⁰ Keith Taylor, *Political Ideas of the Utopian Socialists*, London, Frank Cass & Company, 1982, pp. 115 – 116.

¹¹ Charles Fourier, *Avântul cultural* în C. I. Gulian (ed.) „Saint – Simon, Fourier, Owen” ... pp. 244 – 245.

system. In the work *"The Book of the New Moral World"* Owen dealt with several such issues. In Chapter VII called *"on the new classification of society, according to age and experience, and the eternal laws of humanity"*, Owen offered the idea of a *"sixth class"*, to preserve the wealth produced by the other classes. This *"sixth class"* was meant for devoting their free time to intellectual cultivation or for artistic contributions.¹²

In this melting pot of the Westernizers thought, an interesting direction on aesthetics appears in Russia. The first intellectual to raise the issue of aesthetics in Russia was Vissarion Grigorievich Belinsky, who set out in his articles, issues related to art, namely about the mission of art. Belinski supported the idea that art must be inspired by matters neighboring or familiar to the author's space, in order to gain relevance and ultimately utility.¹³ Even with this *"organic"* perception on arts, Belinsky popularized a term that would become central for the future political aesthetics of Russia: the direct utility of art, but through a practical view, anchored in near and observable realities. With the coming of the 1850s – 1860s, the situation related to the vision of the arts in Russia is changing, being also anticipated by a metamorphosis in the political directions of the already radicalized Russian Liberals.

On May 3 1855, a new work was to radically change the perception of aesthetics in Russian society: Chernyshevsky's dissertation *"The aesthetic relations between art and reality"*, on May 10 he was to give it to an audience in a small hall of the Petersburg Imperial University.¹⁴ The philosophical text strongly draws its origins from the Hegelian work, where Chernyshevsky mentions and categorically supports in the first pages of his dissertation, the concept of beauty formulated by Hegel, starting from the idea that *"the life of the universe is a process of realization of the absolute idea"*, following that the absolute idea, once materialized, it *"decomposes into a chain of defined ideas, and each defined idea, in turn, is fully realized only in the finite whole of the set of objects or living things that it regards, but can never be fully realized in a single entity"*.¹⁵ He continues his dissertation on the definition of the

¹² Gregory Clayes (ed.), *Selected Works of Robert Owen, Volume III, The Book of the New Moral World*, London, Routledge, 1993, p. 292.

¹³ Victor Terras, *Belinskij and Russian Literary Criticism – The Heritage of Organic Aesthetics*, Madison, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1974, pp. 71 – 72.

¹⁴ A. A. Demchenko, N. G. Chernyshevsky – *nauchnaya biografii (1828 – 1858)* [N. G. Chernyshevsky – *an epistemic biography (1828 – 1858)*], Moskva – Sankt Peterburg, Petroglif, 2015, p. 163.

¹⁵ N. G. Chernyshevsky, *Esteticheskie otnosheniya iskusstva k deistvitelnosti* [The aesthetic relations between art and reality], Moskva, Gosudarstvennoe Izdatelstvo Hudojestvennoi Literatury, 1953, pp. 3 – 132.

Hegelian beauty with a simplification of an excerpt from his philosophies: *"Beauty is that thing which is excellent in its own way"*¹⁶

Chernyshevskian aesthetics posed the question of a new artistic portrayal for Russian painters and artists: the portrayal of the surrounding realities. In the same work, Chernyshevsky raised this issue, that of art as a means of reproducing the real fact: *"So, the first goal of art is to reproduce reality. Without claiming that all these words represent any innovative character in the history of the vision of aesthetics, we, however, believe that the pseudoclassical "theory of nature emulation" that dominated in the XVII – XVIII centuries should be dismissed [...]"*¹⁷ Mostly misunderstood by critics as a form of imitationism or baseless *"photographic reality"*, of a refined *"copy theory"* in the field of aesthetics, Chernyshevsky in his work has criticized this art form made solely on dagherotypic imitation, which would cause public disgust or even detachment.¹⁸ this exercise of aesthetic theory by Chernyshevsky has advocated for an art that portrays reality but does not impose boundaries and does not exclusively represent the space of the artistic imagination. Art shouldn't be a mere copy of what is situated in reality, as some critics have understood his position, but it has to depict unique or certain social facts of life, that are known more or less. Art in Chernyshevsky's political mind, represents a utilitarian, yet organic concept, through which information about society can be spread. Perhaps the most striking aspect of the Chernyshevskian thesis is the conclusion of the dissertation, which we can say it sums up his entire aesthetic vision towards arts:

*"In view of the foregoing thoughts, we have the following view of art: the crucial importance of art is the reproduction of everything that is of interest to a person in life; [...] art refers to life in exactly the same way as history; [...] the first task of history is to reproduce life; the second, which is not the occupation of all historians, is to explain it; [...] exactly the same must be said of art."*¹⁹

Apart from Belinsky, Chernyshevsky has developed a practical side on these theories. His visions on art and aesthetics have been gathered and used in one work: *Chto Delat? (What Is To Be Done?)*, published in 1863. Chernyshevsky's work arose as a direct consequence of the emergence of Turgenev's novel from the previous year, *Otsy i deti*

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 7.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 109.

¹⁸ James P. Scanlan *Nikolaj Chernyshevsky and the Philosophy of Realism in Nineteenth – Century Russian Aesthetics in „Studies in Soviet Thought“*, Boston, D. Reidel Publishing Company, vol. 30, nr. 1 – 14, 1985, p. 3.

¹⁹ N. G. Chernyshevsky, *Esteticheskie otnoshenia...*, p. 125.

(translated in the English as "Fathers and Sons"). This was one of the many reactions to a controversial work of literature, that had an emphasis on the intellectual upheavals of the first half of the nineteenth-century Imperial Russia between the Westernizers and the Traditionalists. Among many characters, the person of interest in this work is a certain Evgeny Vasilievich Bazarov, a "nihilist", which is a word created by Turgenev to portray the bazarovian attitude towards society: a man that doesn't believe in any kind of divine or physical authority and he always positions himself against the status-quo, in all its forms.²⁰ The work didn't only affected the leftist positions, but the right wing movements as well, as Turgenev's work is mostly a caricature of the Russian intelligentsia of his times.

In order to counteract the effects produced by the spread of Bazarov's image in Russian society, Chernyshevsky answers with "*Chto delat*". Written between 1862 and 1863 during his arrest, it was published in issues 3, 4 and 5 on 1863 of the literary magazine "*Sovremennik*".²¹ The novel is marked by a strong and symptomatic search for morality in relation to his ideological precepts, thus Chernyshevsky's work on this aspect is closer to the political traditions of the Russian realist novel.²² On the other hand, his way of expressing this search of morality, has much more to do with the legacy of utopian works of the Western protosocialists, which can be described as the effort of building a perfect and isolated world, totally detached from the normal existence of improbability or of hazard, in which contradictions to the world theory are virtually nonexistent. Also, there is a reported lack of mechanisms for achieving the goal of the aforementioned perfect society, which turns the work into an isolated experiment with no practical value but to display certain ideological and doctrinary finalities.

At the heart of Chernyshevsky's novel, besides the main character, Vera Pavlovna, a woman who is in search of her financial independence and who disowns the old customs of the traditional family of her time (e.g. kissing the mother's hand), there is something else important. In one of her dreams, Vera is taken by a "figure of light" to a land called "New Russia" (confused by Vera Pavlovna with the geographical term of "Novorossiia" established by the Russian Empire that encompassed the southern coast of present-day Ukraine), a land

²⁰ Henri Troyat, *Turgenev, translated from the French by Nancy Amphoux*, New York, E. P. Dutton, 1988, p. 76.

²¹ A. A. Demchenko, *N. G. Chernyshevsky – nauchnaya biografiia (1859 – 1889) [N. G. Chernyshevsky – an epistemic biography (1859 – 1889)]*, Moskva, Rosspen, 2019, p. 24.

²² Idem, *N. G. Chernyshevsky – nauchnaya biografiia (1828 – 1858)...*, p. 163.

with temperate climate beyond the Urals, along the Oka River, a land of plenty, of all possibilities.²³ This place is also geographically isolated from the rest of the world, which it means its a world where Chernyshevsky's ideas could thrive. The mere existence of coffee crops in the Siberian area, beyond the chain of the Urals or some mountains covered with land to expand agrarian capacity, are matters of utopian literature.²⁴ These forms of expression are not new: in the West, Thomas Morus, the author of a book from 1516 called "Utopia", had similar ideas about such egalitarian views or about fictitious technologies with increased efficiency. In the second part of Charles Fourier's "*Theory Of The Four Movements*" from 1808, there was the idea of a "defeat of the Sahara" trough a campaign that was meant to reforest and restore moisture in this land.²⁵ Actually, thus is one of the very first iterations in utopian literature of the theme called "*Man's struggle against the vicissitudes of the Nature*" a narrative that will become popular during the era of socialist realism. The most important in these works is the lamentation of their contemporary world, these works being rather forms of protest against the realities of their times. Morus was protesting many social aspects, but the most accepted theory is that of protesting the internal problems linked to the Reformation of the Church in the pre-modern England.²⁶ Fourier was looking for the perfect formula for communal coexistence and its benefits around the concept of the Phalanstere, and Chernyshevsky, on the other side of the European continent, was looking for counteracting a literary stereotype trough literary protest, while defining his ideological viewpoints in a safe-space environment.

Chernyshevsky's opus and contributions from radical and progressive newspapers of the time, laid the foundations that later led to the formation of the doctrinal, ideological and social idea of *narodnicestvo* (mistranslated in the English as "Populism")²⁷. His position in

²³ N. G. Chernyshevsky, *Chto Delat? – Iz rasskazov o novykh lyudiah* [What is to be done? – from stories about new people], Leningrad, Izdatelstvo „Nauka“, 1975, pp. 284 – 286.

²⁴ *Ibidem*.

²⁵ Charles Fourier, *The Theory of the Four Movements: edited by Gareth Stedman Jones and Ian Patterson*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 175

²⁶ Frank. E. Manuel, Fritzie P. Manuel, *Utopian Thought in the Western World*, Cambridge, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1979, f.p.

²⁷ The term "*populism*" is not recommended for usage when it comes to this subject, because it can be mistaken for the recent orientation of certain political positions that have no links with the original movement from ninteteenth-Century Russia. In English, the terms that are more frequent in literature are "*Narodnik*", or "*Narodist*". The term should be totally avoided in Romanian, due to its different interpretation (use the "*Narodnic*" variant). For a better understanding of this difference in terms, see: Pipes, Richard, *Narodnichestvo: A Semantic Inquiry*, in "*Slavic Review*", Vol. 23, Issue 3, September 1964, pp. 441 – 458, and Ely, Christopher, *Russian Populism: A History*, London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2022, pp. 13 – 34.

Russian aesthetics remained the most influential direction for the decades that followed in leftist circles. Through this and not only, the structures of important cultural – artistic movements that changed the Russian cultural landscape was made possible, from a certain part of the *peredvijnik* movement inspired by the organization in artistic cooperatives and the spirit of change that was manifested in painting other subjects than the ones that were a part of the national pride paraphernalia, with much more social substance (city landscapes, portraits of simple men and women, social events with a heavy impact on the masses), to the writers who began to dedicate their works as platforms for social commentary and criticism.

The narodist movement manifested itself prominently, especially after the emancipation of the serfs in 1861, beginning an entire campaign of spreading agrarian socialist ideals among young Russians.²⁸ Ideologically speaking, the narodist movement was a mixture of ideas and people, including anarchists, nihilists, socialists, etc., with different, more or less radical strategies of action.²⁹ the political objective of the Narodniks was to overcome the stage of capitalism and establish a minimal and autonomous state, organized around cooperative structures called "*artel*", and through these, to subsequently come to a socialist system.³⁰ This movement had an idealistic view of certain aspects of the past, confusing the Russian peasant with the image of the myth of the "*noble savage*": the main form of action of the narodnik organizations was called "*Khozhdenie v narod*" (translated as *Descending among the People*) which implied the descent among the Russian peasantry of young and intellectually prepared people from the main university centers of the Empire, in order to spread elements of socialist-agrarian ideology, in the hope of eroding Imperial authority in the rural areas.

Classical Marxism and it's general concepts on art

The foundation of some first directions of political origin to influence the aesthetic direction on art began to be formed with the emergence of systems of thought established by

²⁸ Inna Kochetkova, *The Myth of the Russian Intelligentsia – Old intellectuals in the new Russia*, New York, Routledge, 2010, p. 20.

²⁹ Marco P. Vianna Franco, *Ecological Utopianism in Narodnik Thought: Nikolay Chernyshevsky and the Redemption of Land*, în „Capitalism, Nature, Socialism”, Routledge, Vol. 32, No. 4, 2021, p. 25.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 29.

Karl Marx (1818 – 1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820-1895). Little debated in the public and epistemic space even before 1989, the issue of aesthetic sensitivities to Marx and Engels still represents a niche topic, rarely noticed compared to the large volume of socio – political literature left behind by the two.

In his terms, Marx defined aesthetic sensibility as a purely human characteristic, which is acquired gradually, through the improvement of work and the understanding of the material world through ideas and activities, thus gaining "artistic competence".³¹ Once "artistic competence" is developed, the processes of aesthetic mastery develop over time, man reaching from the stage of *homo faber* (working man) to *homo aestheticus* (aesthetic man).³² Marx also considered that the key elements of Hegelian philosophy, such as the non-utilitarian value of the arts as a method of satisfying spiritual needs, are based on a system of abstractions or speculations that, in an attempt to understand the world and the profane space, commit the error of imposing an essential configuration on the corporeal that represents the substance.³³

In the Marxian point of view, the development of the artistic sense is a consequence of industrial development and the human psyche in contact with industry. In 1844, in the work "*Economic and philosophical manuscripts*", Marx noted:

*"[...] Human psychology as presented to our senses, and which hitherto has not been regarded in relation to the essence of man, but always, only in the external relation of utility, because – remaining on the plane of alienation – men have always seen in the general existence of man, in religion or history, taken in its abstract-general essence such as politics, art, literature, etc., the reality of the essential forces of man, the generic activity of man. In the ordinary, material industry (- which may be regarded as a part of that general movement, as it may be regarded as a particular part of industry, since, until now, all human activity has been Labor, therefore industry, activity alienated from itself -) we have before us, in the form of sensory, foreign, useful objects, in the form of alienation, the materialized essential forces of man."*³⁴

³¹ Lee Baxandall, Stefan Morawski (eds.), *Marx and Engels on Literature and Art: a selection of writings*, St. Louis, Telos Press, 1973, p. 13.

³² Stefan Morawski, *Marxismul și Estetica*, tr. din lb. poloneză de Claudia Dumitriu și Ion Pascadi, București, Ed. Meridiane, Vol I, 1977, p. 68

³³ Ali Alizadeh, *Marx and Art*, London, Rowman and Littlefield International, 2019, p. 54.

³⁴ Karl Marx, *Desvoltarea economică a simțului artistic în K. Marx – F. Engels „Despre Artă și Literatură”*, București, Editura Pentru Literatură Politică, 1953, p. 33.

The manuscripts of this period perhaps best reveal Marx's vision of aesthetics and the arts, dividing the path of aesthetic development into millennial stages.³⁵ according to Marx, in the first stage, man artistically performs the construction of his objects, thereby expressing his ability and desire to master the material plane.³⁶ over time, the structure of the object becomes the main goal of the artistic process, subsequently an aesthetic contemplation also develops, which is a direct result of previous practice.³⁷ after these generic developments, the higher senses, that of color, of matching and of forms, become a direct result of the evolution of the aesthetic sense, becoming at this stage, defined, conscious and autonomous.³⁸ the rest of the artistic developments are categorized as purely subjective, therefore individual, depending on the artistic capacity of the individual.

The artistic creation of Marx and Engels together with the perception of aesthetics is still connected with the protosocialist heritage, despite their fierce criticism of the directions of the previous ones, which can be found in the ranks of the "manifesto of the Communist Party", where their precursors are perceived as obstacles, retrogrades.³⁹ Despite this, in the saint - simonian or owenian spirit of the protosocialists, but with an addition of materialistic philosophy, Marx in his personal work beyond Engels ascribes to the work of art a value beyond its mere nature as an object of beauty. It should be noted that marxian aesthetics is based on the idea of a synthetic experience of art and aesthetics, a communion between intellectual and emotional, along with practical aspects.⁴⁰

*"Production not only supplies a material of necessity, but also supplies the necessity itself to the material. [...] The art object – like any other product- creates an audience with an artistic sense and able to enjoy the beauty of it. Production therefore produces not only an object for the subject, but also a subject for the object."*⁴¹

Engels had a much more plastic approach in terms of literary study. Engels ' mentions of art are often confined to his political works, there are also references to the mission of the arts in different situations. As, for example, in the text of the unfinished manifesto "*The Part*

³⁵ Lee Baxandall, Stefan Morawski, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

³⁶ Stefan Morawski, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

³⁷ *Ibidem*

³⁸ *Ibidem*

³⁹ *Ibidem*

⁴⁰ Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, *Manifestul Partidului Comunist*, Bacău, Ed. Vicovia, 2014, pp. 112 – 135.

⁴¹ Karl Marx, *Creația artistică și percepția estetică* în K. Marx, F. Engels „Despre Artă și Literatură” ... p. 36.

Played by Labor in the Transition From Ape to Man" of 1876, the engelsian position on the arts is in good measure similar to Marx's position to a point. What is fascinating in the case of this theorization of the evolutionary development of man is the "labor" factor as the main determinant of human physical evolution. What is relevant to our research is that by the same "work" factor, in relation to the physical and mechanical evolution of the human body's artistic evolution is also justified:

*"Only through work, through adaptation to new experiences, through the inheritance of the special development of muscles, ligaments, and over a long period of time, a development of bones, and through this ever-renewed inherited finesse, and (thus) new skills taken up by which the human hand reaches the high degree of perfection that has allowed the creation of Raphael's paintings, Thorwaldsen's statues, the music of a Paganini."*⁴²

The differences between the two theorists are relatively minor, being reduced more to the way they interpreted the evolution of man: marxian thought raised the psychological question of the cognitive evolution of the human being, engelsian thought raised the mechanical question, of evolution from the physical point of view as a result of a genetic inheritance of ancestors who practiced different labor. However, Marx and Engels never composed an exact theoretical framework on aesthetics, limiting themselves to these fleeting mentions. Therefore, the contribution of the original Marxist theory on cultural aspects is rather difficult to capitalize on, since most of the ideas about art of those who continued Marxist theses, the Orthodox Marxists, started only from the theory of historical materialism, not developing on the margins of previous ideas. The treatment of aesthetics and artistic theories in Marx and Engels works is in a permanent correlation with the idea of labour, relevant in economic criteria, class struggle or evolution in relation to the "work" factor. Although Marx had a distaste towards early socialist thinkers such as the above-mentioned Saint-Simon, Fourier and Owen, calling them as "utopian" he has acknowledged the relevancy of the relation between mind and labour.

Russian Orthodox Marxism on art: Plekhanov, the theoretician

⁴² Friedrich Engels, *The Part Played by Labor in the Transition From Ape to Man*, New York, International Publishers, 1950, p. 9.

Marxist influence in the Russian space, especially during Chernyshevsky's activity, was nonexistent, a thing which was confirmed by Engels in an addition to the article "On social relations in Russia" in 1875. In this text, Engels argued that Marxist theory did not penetrate into Russia, amid an "intellectual blockade".⁴³ Also, through Engels, we have a small description of Russian populism, where he considered Chernyshevsky to see in the Russian peasantry "[...] a mean of transition from the existing social form to a new higher stage of development".⁴⁴ Engels also took into account Karl Marx's vision, illustrating a passage from the two men's correspondence concerning the synthesis of Chernyshevsky's political ideas.

Both practically and theoretically, the Russian left until the 1870's was formed exclusively from the fracturing and radicalization of some liberal tendencies within the great political-philosophical family of the *zapadniks*, without any marxist admixture. In the Russian space after 1860, Marx's works began to circulate in restricted frames and illegal libraries of this movement in Imperial Russia. This fact is confirmed by the works of Maksim Gorky, in his autobiographical trilogy, especially in the literary work "My Universities", where he visited such a library with forbidden works, among many others including Marx, during his time in Kazan among students influenced by the Narodnik movement.⁴⁵ This is, however, an exception to this case. Before Gorky's confirmation, we have a first manifestation of a marxist theorist from Imperial Russia, in the person of Nikolai Ivanovich Ziber. A figure often left in a shadow cone in the studies on the foundation of Russian Marxism, Ziber is one of the formers of Marxism in the Russian space, not only through his scientific contribution but also for the popularization of these ideas through his works. He graduated from the Law Faculty of Kiev University in 1863 and encouraged by one of his professors, Nikolai Kristianovich Bunge, who would later become Minister of Finance under Emperor Alexander III, would pursue an academic career in economic research⁴⁶ In 1871, Ziber completed his master's degree in economics, defending his dissertation at the University of Kiev, entitled "David Ricardo's theory of value and capital in relation to recent

⁴³ Friedrich Engels, *Adaos la articolul „Despre relațiile sociale în Rusia”*, în K. Marx, F. Engels „Despre Artă și Literatură” ... p. 299.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁵ Maksim Gorky, *My Universities*, translated by Ronald Wilks, Bungay, Penguin Press, 1979, pp. 36 – 37.

⁴⁶ James D. White, *Marx and Russia – The Fate of a Doctrine*, London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2019, p. 23.

research and explanations".⁴⁷ The work was well received by Marx himself, given that Ziber had not only relied on an analysis of Ricardo's theses in the light of marxian views, but also on a positive reaction to the first edition of "*The Capital*" in German, published in 1867, thus, Ziber popularized Marxian theory, predating Danielson's translation of the same book in Russian, in 1872.⁴⁸

Although Ziber was in reality the first marxist theorist in the Russian space, the one credited with the title of "*Father of Russian Marxism*" is Georgy Valentinovich Plekhanov (1856-1918). During his education at the Voronezh Military College in 1868 – 1873, young Plekhanov gets to read Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer, and his readings will lead him to the path of a militant atheism.⁴⁹ In 1873, Plekhanov abandoned his military career for political reasons, as the army was conducting arrests in the countryside against the narodniks who had already started their "*Khozhdenie v narod*" campaigns, thus refocusing on the Medical Academy, and later on his studies at the Petersburg Mining Institute.⁵⁰ He left these studies as well in order to join a much more engaged political career within the left, being the part of leftist groups, such as "*Zemlya i Volia*".⁵¹ After the failed Congress of Voronezh of 1879, the movement has fragmented between those who searched to follow the agenda of "*Narodnaya Volya*" (The People's Will) and the newly-formed, non-violent group called "*Chornyy Peredel*" (The Black Repartition), in which Plekhanov had a leading role.⁵² During this period, it is supposed that he read Marxist works and with the collapse of the Narodnik movements after the assassination of Emperor Aleksander II, his political compass has moved towards Marxism.

Plekhanov remained as one of the most prolific of the Orthodox Marxists, publishing a series of manifestos and political texts that secured his fame and authority on the newly built stage of Russian Marxism. In our situation, it is the texts related to the question of the arts that concern us. In this case, Plekhanov was very active, being one of the

⁴⁷ A. V. Anikin, *Put iskanii: Sotsialno-ekonomiceskie idei v Rossii do marksizma* [*The Road of Searching: Socio-economical ideas in Russia before Marxism*] Moskva, Politizdat, 1990, p. 387.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁹ A. S. Berezhanski, *G. V. Plehanov – ot narodnicestva k marksizmu* [*G. V. Plekhanov – from Narodnicism to Marxism*], Voronezh, Izdatelstvo Voronezhskogo Universiteta, 1990, p. 5.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 6.

⁵¹ James D. White, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

⁵² David M. Saunders, *Russia in the Age of Reaction and Reform 1801 – 1881*, New York, Longman Publishing, 1995, p. 335.

few Marxists who gave importance to the artistic problem. From here, what we call the "*Chernyshevsky factor*" infiltrates Russian Marxism, that of the importance given to the arts and the study of aesthetics by Plekhanov and subsequently, by his followers. Plekhanov's inclination towards the study of the arts begins with the series of articles "*Pisma bez adresa*" ("*letters without an address*"), published at the crossroads of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, between 1899 and 1901. Three in number, they address the problem of looking at the arts in the view of Marxist dialectics, to an anonymous character, addressed at the beginning of the first letter with the appellation "*Dear Sir! I will have a discussion with you about art.*".⁵³ In the first letter, the subject of our analysis and perhaps the most significant of them, Plekhanov makes a critique of Count Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy's vision of the arts and what art represents. Starting from a quote from Tolstoy's book, "*Chto takoe iskusstvo?*" ("*What is art?*"), Plekhanov tries to reduce Tolstoy's definition of the arts to the idea that „*Art represents people's feelings, while the word expresses their thoughts*".⁵⁴

Plekhanov rethinks the idea of art and iterates:

“According to Graf Tolstoy, art begins at the moment when man, seeking to convey to other people a feeling experienced by himself, and provokes it once again, is expressing it through certain known external signs. I for one believe that art begins when man once again evokes the spleen and the thoughts that he lived under the surrounding reality, giving him a certain expression in images. It can be said without a doubt that in the vast majority of cases he does these things, aiming to convey to other people what he has rethought and felt. Art is a social phenomenon.”⁵⁵

By recognizing art as a phenomenon of a social nature, Plekhanov has reconfirmed the theory put forward by Chernyshevsky in 1855 related to art and its usefulness. In the chernyshevskian sense, art represented a form of reproduction of the realities relevant to man, collected from his environment. Plekhanov through these lines does nothing but to reanimate Chernyshevsky's theory, but this time, infused with Marxist rhetoric. The first letter continued in this direction of the space of marxian thought by comparing idealistic, respectively materialistic interpretations of history. As an example, the Saint-Simon's

⁵³ G. V. Plekhanov, *Pisma bez adresa [Letters without an adress]* în „*Estetika i Sotsiologhiia Iskusstva v dvukh tomakh – tom I*”, Moskva, Izdatelstvo „Iskusstvo”, 1978, p. 144

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 145.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*.

interpretation of the formation of the ancient Greek state system is given. Viewed through the idealistic lens, Plekhanov quoted Saint-Simon as saying that "*the religious system served as an example to the political system*", basically, "*the latter was created in the likeness of the former*"⁵⁶ he confronted within these lines the "*idealistic*" thinking of the protosocialists with the materialistic vision, Plekhanov claiming that "*the Republican Olympus of the Greeks was a reflection of their social order*".⁵⁷ this conception of historical materialism is an indisputable mark of Plekhanov's development of Marx's theses, thus falling within the tagma of orthodox Marxists. An interesting fact in expressing the plekhanovian opinion related to art and taste, is constituted by its appropriation to the works of the British biologist Charles Darwin. In this first letter Plekhanov devotes an important role to him, being very generous in the matter of citations from the works of the British scholar. Starting from a reference to "*The origin of species*" related to the sense of beauty in animals in relation to the selection and reproduction capacities, Plekhanov mentions that in fact, this spirit of pleasing our gaze with things beautiful to us, would start exclusively from our evolution as a species.⁵⁸ by adhering to the ideas of historical materialism, Plekhanov justified his interests of a theoretical nature related to this subject, considering that previous ideas have the power to impact the present. His thesis argued that literary, artistic and philosophical ideas could be copied or repudiated, depending on the current view of the past.⁵⁹

A contribution of Plekhanov that would mark the movement of Russian Marxism towards cultural directions was his work on Chernyshevsky, published in Petersburg in 1910. This represents a re-instrumentalization of Chernyshevsky, for his re-use in the materialistic theses of orthodox Marxists. This fact denotes the direction of interest of Russian Marxists to art. At least in Plekhanov's case, Chernyshevsky's reinterpretation proved useful to the generations that followed him, drawing inspiration from his vision. In the opinion of a certain Vladimir Ilych Ulyanov, better known after his *nom de guerre*, Lenin, said that "*Cernyshevsky was still far from breaking ties with idealism*", treating his vision of

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 146.

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 147.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 149 – 150.

⁵⁹ Daniela Steila, *Genesis and Development of Plekhanov's Theory of Knowledge, - A Marxist between Anthropological Materialism and Physiology*, Dordrecht, Springer Science, 1991, p. 76.

social evolution as "*utterly idealistic*", looking on a different perspective of an Orthodox Marxist with a more radical agenda.⁶⁰

The most famous work on the subject of aesthetics ever written by Georgi Valentinovich Plekhanov was "Iskusstvo i obshestvennaia zhizn" ("*Art and Social Life*"), published in 1912. As the title describes, Plekhanov's thesis was written as a study on the relationship between the functions of art and social life, namely how it impacts artistic transformations. It is important to note that this study is the first of its kind to be strictly confined to the literary area. Starting with citations from Pisarev and Chernyshevsky and with a criticism of a poem by Aleksandr Sergeevich Pushkin, Plekhanov raises the question of identifying the social conditions and of any nature of the formation of "*art for sake of art*", a phrase taken from the Chernyshevsky thesis "*Estheticieskie otnoshenia iskusstva k deistvitelnosti*" of 1855.⁶¹ in the sense of the plekhanovist vision, one can observe an important first direction, that of the ossification of the Russian leftist aesthetic eye through a conservative stance on portrayal and execution of the work of art. Plekhanov presents himself to be against artistic abstractions or reductions on the ego and the divine in poetry. In the case of the problem of poetry, he attacks the decadentist poet Zinaida Nikolaevna Hippus, part of the literary and philosophical group that was called at that time "*Troebratstvo*" ("*Brotherhood of the Three*").⁶² Plekhanov condemns this decadentist poem for the introspective style of Hippus's lyricism, but especially for her "*individualism*", which in his eyes "*reaches an extreme limit*".⁶³ Individualism, even through arts, is perceived by Plekhanov as a threat against creating a unified mentality, a mentality that is needed for solidifying socialist values. Plekhanov's criticism is also reflected on the "*so-called cubists*" and their "*lightning - fast methods of creation*", blaming the lack of message and the banality of ideas behind their works of art.⁶⁴ This tendency to harden aesthetic concepts will still be observed in all representatives of orthodox Marxism in Russia. Abstractisation of art is seen as a way that could cause the erosion of basic artistic values and clear meaning, thus a conservative stance regarding portrayal has been taken into consideration. At the same time,

⁶⁰ V. I. Lenin, *Observații pe marginea cărții lui G. V. Plehanov*, în V. I. Lenin, „V. I. Lenin, Opere Complete, vol. 29 – Caiete Filozofice”, București Editura Politică, 1966, p. 519

⁶¹ G. V. Plekhanov, *Studii de teoria artei tr. în lb. română de Janina Ianoși*, București, Ed. Univers, 1978, pp. 210 – 214.

⁶² *Ibidem*, p. 263.

⁶³ *Ibidem*, p. 264.

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 275.

this cultural manifesto considers the existence of “*Art for the sake of art*”, in the same chernyshevskian manner, while adding a new concept: “*art for the sake of money*” as a form of degeneration of artistic creation by the vices of the capitalist society.⁶⁵

Finally, Plekhanov's work is marked by a strong contradiction: despite the fact that he had previously criticized various forms of artistic exposure, he had reproached Anatoly Lunacharsky for the fact that beauty is a purely subjective aspect, there being objectivism in the research of the arts.⁶⁶ Such contradictions should not surprise us, since Georgi Plekhanov had no training or qualifications in the field of arts or aesthetics. In fact, with Plekhanov, we note a special aspect. Art in the sense of Russian Marxism begins to take a different path from the aspect of Chernyshevsky, prioritizing political finalities rather than the artistic qualities, being influenced by the idea of class struggle or aspects of materialistic philosophy, combining it with the Narodnik character of Russian art, first theorized in a broader aspect by Chernyshevsky.

Russian Orthodox Marxism on art: Lenin, art and political praxis

As Plekhanov began his rise from the Narodnik movement to marxism, another fate would be directed to Russian Marxism: Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, better known after his *nom de guerre*, Lenin. Born on April 22, 1870 in a small provincial town on the banks of the Volga, called Simbirsk (the present-day city of Ulianovsk). In a political and psychological portrait of Lenin made by Robert Service in his study, “*Lenin, a biography*”, one can read about a person who had the strength and ability to suppress the expression of his emotions, acting with extraordinary calmness even after the death of his brother Aleksandr, hanged by the Imperial authorities for carrying out an attack.⁶⁷ this did not mean that he lacked the ability to express himself furiously, having an intense and emotional tone in political interactions, a flame maintained by his radicalism.⁶⁸ He had an austere personality, his traits being reflected in his narrow vision related to political or ideological issues.⁶⁹ From an

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 283.

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 286.

⁶⁷ Robert Service, *Lenin – A Biography*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2000, p 7.

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 73.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 9.

ideological standpoint, Marx was not his first influence in political directions but the work of Nikolai Gavrilovich Chernyshevsky, in particular, what was published in the Narodnik journal "*Sovremennik*".⁷⁰ After the execution of his brother, he read Chernyshevsky's utopian novel "*Chto delat?*", from where he structured his political discourse in the lines of Rakhmetov, one of the radicals that were alongside Bazarov in the plot.⁷¹

His closeness to Marxist theses was most likely facilitated by his atypical friendship with Plekhanov, a relation marked by either by collaboration, misunderstandings or contradictions. Ulyanov was very particular when it came to his political inspirations. He had a habit of binding very strong attachments to his political and philosophical sources, even holding portraits of Marx, Engels and Chernyshevsky in his own house.⁷² His fantasy of Marxist doctrine went so far as he reached to treat Marxism as an absolute and indisputable truth, which could not be contradicted by any other thesis.⁷³ Marxism for Lenin became, ironically, a surrogate of religion, a concept to which he had a categorical revulsion and considered it incompatible with Marxist ideas, as will be observed next.

Lenin, because of his lack of political perspective and not only, had many opponents, both politically and philosophically, and managed to lose a number of opportunities that would have facilitated his political actions. With Lenin, political attitudes and those related to the arts begin to intertwine, thus developing a fusion between political and aesthetic from these periods, a fusion produced under the impact of plekhanovist theses. The rise of this phenomenon we are talking about can be identified in two important stages: the conflict between Lenin and the last Narodniks in Russia and the unofficial schism between the vperiodists and the Bolsheviks.

In the tenth issue of the 1893 Narodnik journal "*Russkoe Bogatstvo*" (*Russian Wealth*) Nikolai Konstantinovich Mikhailovsky, an important intellectual pillar of the mid to late Narodnik movement, published the article "*Literatura i zhizn*" ("*literature and life*"). Mikhailovsky's article called for the narodnicist controversy with "so-called Marxists or social

⁷⁰ Alain Besancon, *Originile intelectuale ale leninismului*, București, Humanitas, 1996, pp. 181 – 182.

⁷¹ *Ibidem*, p. 182.

⁷² Robert Service, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

⁷³ Dmitri Volkogonov, *Lenin – A new biography*, translated and edited by Harold Shukman, New York, The Free Press, 1994, p. 362.

Democrats".⁷⁴ ⁷⁵ Mikhailovsky addresses a "gentleman called V. V.", related to the Marxists criticism of economic issues in the rural area, where the narodniks had various active cooperations. In one of the lines of "Russkoe Bogatstvo", Mikhailovsky assures that the efficiency of their system is supported by "statistical data", finally offering the prospect of a future debate between Narodniks and Marxists. Ulyanov's deeply negative reaction resulted in the publication of the 1894 pamphlet "Chto takoe <<Druzia Naroda>> i kak oni voyuiut protiv Sotsial – Demokratov? - Otvet na stati <<Russkogo Bogatstva>> protiv marxistov" ("Who are the <<Friends of the People>> and why do they fight against the Social Democrats? - Reply to articles against Marxists in <<Russkoe Bogatstvo>>). As Lenin was never interested in composing a study of aesthetics and art, glimpses of this marginal interest in his political work can be seen. With this work, interesting aspects of Lenin's vision of aesthetics and the arts are revealed to us. For example, within the work "Chto takoe druzia naroda...", we observe such an intervention. In his criticism of Mikhailovsky's publications, an interesting fragment appears:

"Listen to what follows: "our task is not to retreat from our national depths, which (the nation) is eminently original, but nor to translate the civilization of the West into our country in toto, along with all the contradictions that fragment it. We will have to take what is good from where we can; and whether or not it is ours is not a matter of principle, but one of convenience. [...] " Sure, how simple it is! "Take" everything good from everywhere – and everything is done! From the medieval forms " take "the worker's possession of the means of production, and from the new (from the capitalists)," take " freedom, equality, enlightenment (education) and culture. And there's nothing to talk about. Here the whole use of the subjective method in sociology is as clear as the light

⁷⁴ In this political era, the term "Social – Democrat" was interchangeable with the term "Socialist". In the last decade of the Nineteenth Century, after Kautsky's "Erfurter Programm" has been published, a form of separation between terms has occurred. Even though Kautsky promoted these ideas on the same Orthodox Marxist standpoint, the new programmatic document was promoting new tactics for an adaptation to the Capitalist society and political discourse, through the idea of parliamentarism. In Russia, a change towards similar results has been rendered as useless, as Imperial Russian political discourse was a monopoly of Pro-Imperial positions and censorship against any political concepts that were antidynastic in nature, such as the political left, was in effect. For a better understanding on the phenomenon of censorship in the Russian Empire, consult the following titles: Charles A. Ruud, *Fighting Words – Imperial Censorship and the Russian Press, 1804 – 1906*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2009, pp. 181 – 236, Frederic S. Zuckerman, *The Tsarist Secret Police in Russian Society, 1880 – 1917*, London, Macmillan Press, 1996, pp. 3 – 30, 100 – 122, 143 – 164, 182 – 201.

⁷⁵ N. K. Mihailovski, *Literatura i Jizn (Literature and Life)*, in „Russkoe Bogatsvo“, Sankt – Peterburg, Tipografia B. M. Volfa, 1893, p. 138.

of day: sociology begins with a utopia – the possession of the Earth by the worker – and indicates the conditions for achieving what is desired, that is, "taking" what is good from one side and the other".⁷⁶

These lines show his closeness to orthodoxist thought in regards with Marxism, but especially to how he saw "objective" sociological organization. Also, that "ossification" of cultural ideas does not come directly from the plekhanovist view. This was more, a consequence largely felt in Lenin-style Russian orthodox Marxists, who did not question Marx's theses but repackaged them in different contexts and concepts. Lenin cataloged all the literary and cultural development of Russia up to that time as a non-proletarian product. In an 1894 article "*Kultura i antagonizm klassov*" ("*culture and antagonization of classes*"), Lenin spoke of the fact that absolutely any product of Russian culture up to that time, was an eminently bourgeois result.⁷⁷ Lenin vehemently ignored the artistic advances on social lines of itinerant painters or narodnik writers, such as Vladimir Galaktionovich Korolenko, that through his short stories, presented glimpses of the invisible society that did not often reach the homes of those who could afford the purchase of books or art. In another short article, "*Klassy i Literatura - Materialistichesky vzglyad na otnoshenie burzhuazii k literature*" ("*Classes and Literature – the materialist view on the bourgeoisie's attitude towards literature*") from 1894, he continued his attack on the post-narodniks, this time, from positions of interpretation of the role of literature, considering the collaboration with the kulaks to be harmful in the short and the long run.⁷⁸ In theoretical regards, Lenin doesn't show a degree of originality or even of intellectual autonomy in aesthetic thought, preferring to use the aforementioned theses founded by Plekhanov.

The second stage, the conflict between the bogdanovist faction (also named "*machists*", named after the founder of the empirio-criticist theory, Ernst Mach⁷⁹ and the

⁷⁶ V. I. Lenin, *Chto takoe <<Druzya Naroda>> i kak oni voyuiut protiv Sotsial – Demokratov? – Otvety na stati <<Russkogo Bogatstva>> protiv marxistov*, Moskva, Izdatelstvo Politiceskoi Literatury, 1969, p. 89.

⁷⁷ V. I. Lenin, "*Kultura i antagonizm klassov*" in M. Lifšit (ed.) "*Lenin o Kulture i Iskusstve*", Moskva, Gosudarstvennoe Izdatelstvo Izobrazitelnyh Iskusstv, 1938, p. 45

⁷⁸ V. I. Lenin, *Klassy i Literatura – Materialisticheski vzglyad na otnoshenie burzhuazii k literature*, in. M. Lišfiť (ed.), "*Lenin...*" p. 45.

⁷⁹ Also named "*machists*", named after the founder of the empirio-criticist theory, Ernst Mach or "*vperiodists*" after the left-wing journal used by the group called "*Vperyod*", (*Forward*), this movement has been marked by the adhesion of it's founding trio: Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Malinovsky (known as Bogdanov), Anatoly Vasilievich Lunacharsky and Aleksey Maksimovich Peshkov (better known as Maksim Gorky). They militated for a leftist position that included a form of religious syncretism, as plain Orthodox Marxist literature couldn't be popularized efficiently to the Russian masses. The main ideas of this group have been gathered and organized by

Bolshevik group is one of the most visible foundations of the welding of aesthetics to the area of politics, within the ideological struggle of the factions within the Social Democrat Workers Party of Russia. The revival of the idealistic direction in the philosophical logic of some factions of the party gave the materialism advocated by Plekhanov and Lenin new energies.⁸⁰ they were pushed to respond to these disputes not only to preserve the memory of Marx, the two of whom were known for their loyalty to Marxist theses, but also to combat those who abandoned the main Party line of materialism in some sort of intellectual revenge.⁸¹ Despite this, Lenin preferred not to cause an official schism within the Party, in order not to affect the unity of the party as a whole and not to encourage other trends that could divide the already fragile Socialist Movement.⁸² Towards the end of a letter sent to Maxim Gorky, dated 7 February 1908, we are confirmed this fact of avoiding the official schism, arguing that disputes of a philosophical nature should be kept away from party work.⁸³ in 1904, Aleksandr Bogdanov published the first volume of his work, *"Empiriomonism"*. In the previously mentioned letter, sent to Gorky, Lenin expressed his position on the thinking of the machist faction:

*"I read carefully the philosophers of our Party. I read carefully the empiriomonist Bogdanov and the empiriocriticist Bazarov, Lunacharsky, etc – - and they make me give all my sympathy for Plekhanov! You need some physical strength not to get carried away, as Plekhanov does! His tactics are the apogee of ineptitude and villainy. Anyway, in philosophy, he supports the good cause."*⁸⁴

In his effort to discredit the idealistic positions of the recently-formed machsit faction, Lenin in 1909 published the work *"Materializm i Empiriocrititizm – Kriticeskie zametki ob odnoi reakcionnoi filosofii"* (*"Materialism and Empiriocriticism – critical notes on a reactionary philosophy"*), at the publishing house Zveno in Moscow.⁸⁵ It is worth mentioning that this work of Lenin is marked by a special language, different from a work that was intended to

Lunacharsky, thus publishing the work *"Religia i Sotsializm"* (*Religion and Socialism*). Zenovia Sochor has published a relevant book on this aspect in 1988, called *Revolution and Culture: The Bogdanov – Lenin Controversy*.

⁸⁰ G. M. Hambrug, Randall A. Poole, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

⁸¹ *Ibidem*.

⁸² *Ibidem*, p. 268.

⁸³ V. I. Lenin, *To Maxim Gorky, February 7, 1908*, in V. I. Lenin, *"V. I. Lenin, Collected Works"*, Volume 34, Letters November 1895 – November 1911", Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1977, pp. 381 – 382.

⁸⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 381.

⁸⁵ Tamas Krausz, *Reconstructing Lenin – An Intellectual Biography*, New York, Monthly Review Press, 2015, p. 131.

be philosophical in nature, because of the huge number of attacks against the bogdanovist representatives.⁸⁶ As a testimony to this language, there are a series of letters between him and his sister, Ana, where some thoughts about the reactionaries of the Social Democrat Party are captured, among the lines that were concerned with ensuring the publication of errata for the aforementioned book. The first letter, dated December 19, 1908, contains Lenin's response to the moderation of his expression, agreeing to rein in his position "*towards Bazarov and Bogdanov; as for Yushkevich or Valentinov, nothing should be censored, unless the editor demanded it*".⁸⁷ In another letter to Anna, Lenin notes in the postscripts that he had renounced the diminution of language towards Bazarov and Bogdanov, as the author had "*totally broken relations with them*".⁸⁸ In the text of 1909 Lenin's work, we do not find the question of art discussed, except for an interpretation by Chernyshevsky, which is recommended as an addendum for the fourth chapter of the work. This is based on a preface of the third edition of 1888 to Chernyshevsky's main aesthetic work of 1855. Even in this situation, Lenin seeks to place Marx's theses on a pedestal. Lenin declared about Chernyshevsky that he "*failed to raise, or rather, because of the backwardness of Russian life, he could not rise to the level of dialectical materialism of Marx and Engels*".⁸⁹

One of Lenin's lessons learned from Chernyshevsky and Plekhanov was to give purpose to art and literature. The purpose given by Lenin was, of course, a political one, serving a political revolution. However, the revolutionary was much more culturally moved by his conservative side, just like Plekhanov. In this case, one can observe a matter that we cannot detect from his political works: his artistic taste and inclinations in matters of art. Besancon said in "The intellectual origins of Leninism " that Lenin's tastes are dated by a perfect stability, being for the most part synonymous with those of the generation of 1860, marked by the works of Pushkin, Turgenev, Tolstoy, Goncharov, etc.⁹⁰ This is evident from the correspondence between Lenin and the writer Maxim Gorky, letters that represent the most telling example in this situation. Between the style of realists such as Turgenev and

⁸⁶ Christopher Read, *Lenin – A Revolutionary Life*, London, Routledge Publishing, 2005, p. 90.

⁸⁷ V. I. Lenin, *To his sister, Anna, December 19, 1908*, în V. I. Lenin, „V. I. Lenin, Collected Works”, Volume 37, Letters to Relatives, 1893 – 1922”, Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1975, p. 402.

⁸⁸ V. I. Lenin, *To his sister, Anna, March 9, 1909*, în V. I. Lenin, „V. I. Lenin, Collected Works, Volume 37...”, p. 414.

⁸⁹ V. I. Lenin, *Materializm i Empiriocriticism – Kriticeskie zametki ob odnoi reakcionnoi filosofii*, Moskva, Izdatelstvo Politiceskoi Literatury, 1969, p. 502.

⁹⁰ Alain Besancon, *op. cit.*, pp. 180 – 181.

Gorky, the differences are relative, but Lenin's need for Gorky did not take the form of satisfying aesthetic needs, but also political aspects. In a previously cited letter dated 7 February 1908, Lenin wrote to Gorky the following:

*"The relevance of intellectuals in the party is decreasing; news is coming from all sides related to the intelligentsia leaving the party. Good riddance to those bastards!"*⁹¹

Lenin has a different behavior from Gorky. This need of Lenin for Gorky stems precisely from that factor previously expressed by him: the Bolsheviks had no relevant representatives from the intelligentsia on their side in this Party struggle of ideas with the machists. Bringing into the ranks of the Bolsheviks an internationally recognized writer at that time would have increased the prestige of the faction. Also added here is Gorky's long activity as a gazetteer, to which Lenin was not indifferent. He tries throughout the letter to persuade Gorky to publish in Bolshevik newspapers, even with the promise of a large editorial autonomy, such as the inclusion of literary debut and literary criticism, justifying that literary work must *"tighten up with Party work that would have a systematic influence on the Party!"*⁹² Despite all Lenin's efforts to co-opt him into the Bolshevik movement, Gorky was not attracted to Bolshevik rhetoric, and Lenin's attempts were fruitless. Lenin expected similar help Gorky provided to the entire movement when he collaborated to open the legalist newspaper *"Novaya Zhizn"* (*New Life*) in 1905.⁹³ The effect was not the one Lenin has expected, Gorky even resisting Lenin's attempts through a series of articles and attacks on newspapers that supported Leninist rhetoric (*Proletari, Novaya Zhizn*), showed that the political and intellectual loyalties of Gorky were on the side of the Bogdanov and Lunacharsky. After December 1913, no further attempt by Lenin to contact Gorky is noted, and there was a hiatus in correspondence between the two until 1917.⁹⁴

Conclusions

In the end, we can say that there is a clear trajectory of politicization of arts in Imperial Russian leftist circles. It is revealed that this metamorphosis towards political

⁹¹ V. I. Lenin, *To Maxim Gorky, February 7, 1908...*, p. 379.

⁹² *Ibidem*, p. 381.

⁹³ Tovah Yedlin, *op. cit.*, pp. 95 – 98.

⁹⁴ Robert C. Williams, *The Other Bolsheviks – Lenin and His Critics 1904 – 1914*, Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1986, p. 57.

rationale is not an *ex abrupto* event, as many scholars might portray the post-1917 artistic scene. The Western “*utopian socialists*”, the first inspiration in this cultural space in such regards, had very few takes on art and literature, but when these fragments are studied, one can consider that they are not restrictive in nature and very simplistic, being boiled down to their utilitarian purpose, yet not denying the expression of individuality in artistic content. The mobile of these theories, which is the utopian project, holds the political considerations of the theorists, but not in a partisan manner, but rather in a perennial state of conservation. After the idea of a direct utility in arts has been popularized in the 1840’s by Belinsky, Chernyshevsky has revitalized these concepts, his originality being marked by giving to the work of art some sort of a didactic or moral purpose, as a vehicle for social awareness and social commentary. In the ideas of Chernyshevsky there is no mention regarding any mechanisms that could cause an eventual ossification of style or an overly political discourse, yet through certain social descriptions that can be made in accordance to his indications, we can safely assume that a political discourse can be started on such grounds. In his literary praxis though, Chernyshevsky makes a return to the utopian sphere, where political ideas are enclosed in a world devoid of any kind of intervention against his own views on politics. His position in literature is much more partisan, giving the fact that “*What is to be Done*” has been written as a direct reaction to Turgenev’s social criticism. Apart from his own and Belinsky’s aesthetic perspectives, he makes a return to the utopian writing as a safe-space for enshrining his own views on many aspects, from politics to economy. Marx and Engels can be credited for the foundation of a materialist view of arts in general. Although their theories lack aesthetic depth, being much more anchored in political, economical or even biological practicalities, they opened the door to the Orthodox Marxists materialist approach towards arts. Plekhanov’s sizeable contribution is the one that created the first, fully weaponized aesthetic discourse in Russia, before Lenin. Considering that Plekhanov’s position on art cannot exist without opposition of arts against an economic system (i. e. capitalism), beyond the logic of materialist conceptions and in the absence of a certain aesthetic equilibrium that should be established, in order to crush individualistic expressions, his political stance is obvious and utilitarian, giving a clearer perspective on the relation between arts and politics in the eyes of “*The Father of Russian Marxism*”, a view that will be inherited later on by Lenin himself: political thought should lead artistic creation.

Lenin's case is strictly limited to the literal practice of the theories of Marx, Engels and Plekhanov. Thus, Lenin's cultural criticism, was strictly limited to the lax relationship between ideology and culture that the Narodniks practiced and their artistic praxis that was much more closer to social life. In his dispute with Mikhailovsky, Lenin ignored the progress of social art in Russia, a progress that was a reality facilitated by a combination of political, economical and now, social factors. At the same time, he tried to bring artistic expression closer to the Party line, thus trying to transform art into one of the many appendages of the Party, one that would bring it relevancy. Although his plan has failed during this part of the Party struggle, a same envision of arts as a part of the main Party line will be brought again in discussion after the events of November 1917 and during the "*Great Turn*" of the first part of the 1930's, when Socialist Realism, the epitome of this long process of politicization of arts, will play it's part as a Party-lined manifestation in aesthetics, that was supposed to create a link between Party's will and the people.

The Restoration of Romanian-Belgian Economic Relations between 1957 and 1972. Information Collection

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Keywords: Benelux, 1969, Maurer-Mănescu, Harmel, diplomatic treaties, diplomatic visits, economic relations, Romania;

Abstract:

The historiography of both Romania and Belgium has insufficiently examined the economic relations between the two countries during the post-war period. This article aims to provide an analysis of the efforts undertaken by Romania and Belgium to establish new economic treaties, despite facing significant political and social challenges. Official visits by ministers and various secondary political figures, including senators and mayors from both nations, played a crucial role in enhancing bilateral trade exchanges. The economic policies of the Benelux Union—comprising Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg—tended to favor a trade balance that was advantageous to Belgium, placing the Socialist Republic of Romania at a consistent disadvantage. Nonetheless, Romania's strategic and economic interests compelled it to maintain and pursue economic relations with the Kingdom of Belgium.

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Between 1871 and 1880, Romania established a diplomatic mission in Brussels, which, on March 25, 1880, was upgraded to the status of a legation². On September 1, 1940, Romania's Legation was downgraded to the rank of consulate under the leadership of diplomat Onișor Victor Marius³. From February 1941, the responsibilities of the Belgian embassy in Bucharest were temporarily assumed by the United States, with these duties being resumed by Belgium in August 1946. Diplomatic relations with the Netherlands were notably more restricted; Teodor Solacolu, the representative of the People's Republic of Romania in Brussels, was also tasked with overseeing Dutch interests. Beginning June 27, 1947, the Dutch government decided to delegate a significant portion of its functions to the Belgian legation in Bucharest, while the Dutch minister was accredited in Budapest⁴.

Following Romania's alignment with Moscow after 1945, there was a notable deterioration in relations with Western countries, both politically and economically. The implementation of Stalinist policies severely restricted foreign access to the Romanian market, compelling many investors to divest their holdings due to the nationalization of properties. The new proponents of Stalin's ideology adhered strictly to the emerging dictatorship, resulting in several significant developments: the expulsion of King Michael and the proclamation of the Romanian People's Republic in December 1947; the establishment of the Romanian Workers' Party; the appointment of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej as General Secretary in February 1948; the signing of a cooperation agreement with

² *Anuarul diplomatic*, Republica Populară Română, MAE, Direcția Protocol, 1960, p. 27.

³ MAE, *Documente privind stabilirea, ruperea și reluarea relațiilor diplomatice ale României 1859-1944*, Bucharest, 1973, p. 412.

⁴ *Ibidem*, f. 32.

the Soviet Union; among other consequential actions⁵. This optical illusion could not be maintained for many years, as the new communist republic needed to assert itself "on the international stage," especially after the creation of the Comecon, Stalin's death, and the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Romanian territory. The affirmation of the Bucharest government and its exit from the Stalinist "bloc" depended on its domestic decisions as well as its openness to the Western world. The new "liberal" decisions made by Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, Gheorghe Maurer, or Corneliu Mănescu after 1960 had to avoid tarnishing the image of the communist world or raising new suspicions of distancing from the Kremlin⁶.

The thawing of relations with the Western world was neither quick nor simple, as Romania had left several "wounds" between 1948 and 1955, such as the nationalization of properties, the closure of foreign consulates, and more. After Soviet leader Khrushchev's visit to Washington, the U.S. became of keen interest to the Romanian political class, with the renewal of relations being carried out gradually and with certain precautions⁷. All these efforts led to the signing of a "financial and ... cultural agreement" in 1960⁸. During this period (1954), the

⁵ Adam Burakowski, *Dictatura lui Nicolae Ceușescu 1965-1989. Geniul Carpaților*, Bucharest, Polirom, 2011, pp. 59-63 (The Comecon (Council for Mutual Economic Assistance) was established in 1949 as a counter-response to the Marshall Plan).

⁶ Gabriel Zvîncă, *Distanțarea României comuniste de Uniunea Sovietică înainte de declarația din aprilie 1964* in "Philohistoriss", year VI, no. 9, Kluasenboek, Cluj-Napoca, 2020 pp. 171-178 (Even though Khrushchev's policy towards the West was much more "peaceful" compared to his predecessor, he promoted the cooperation of all communist states within the Comecon, being dissatisfied with Romania's attitude in 1962).

⁷ Paul Nistor, *Semnele „dezghețului”*. *Relațiile României comuniste cu Statele Unite ale Americii în 1954* in "Anuarul Institutului de Istorie „A.D.Xenopol” din Iași", vol. 51, 2014, pp. 261-265.

⁸ Idem, *Dincolo de Cortina de Fier: negocierile interguvernamentale româno-americane (mai-iunie 1964)* in "Anuarul Institutului de Istorie „A.D.Xenopol” din Iași", vol. 57, 2020, p. 342.

Romanians also signed a new trade agreement with West Germany⁹. These actions were also noted in Belgian reports, which mentioned forthcoming agreements for grain exports with West Germans¹⁰.

At the Third Congress of the Romanian Communist Party, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej outlined the goal of developing and modernizing the nation's economy over the subsequent 10 to 15 years. This ambitious plan faced criticism from some member states of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA), which accused Romania of pursuing a policy of "autarky." During the fifth decade of the 20th century, Western nations had imposed trade restrictions on the Eastern bloc, including limitations on exports, imports, and external credits. The eventual relaxation of these restrictions allowed Romania to engage in trade with West Germany, Italy, England, Austria, France, and Finland. The primary objective was for Romania to export manufactured goods and import advanced technologies for industrial development.

This policy was maintained by Nicolae Ceaușescu, who succeeded Dej as the leader of the Romanian Communist Party (PCR). Ceaușescu emphasized mechanization and industrial autonomy, alongside efforts to "raise the standard

⁹ Mircea Dorel Suci, „Filierea franceză” și începuturile Agenției Comerciale ale Republicii Populare Române de la Frankfurt pe Main in „Arhivele Totalitarismului”, Bucharest, vol. 1-2, 2019, p. 222 (Let's not forget the visits of Malenkov and Khrushchev to London in 1956 for Soviet-American cooperation).

¹⁰ Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Brussels (hereafter referred to as AMFA Brussels), fund *Relations politique*, folder 6.792, file *Roumanie 1955 (Nationalisations)*, f. 1-5 (During this period, Belgium imposed an embargo on Belgian products, possibly to repair relations with England and France. Another issue was the excessive rise in the prices of Romanian cereals and oil to Antwerp. J.H. de Bruyn, the Belgian Minister of Internal Affairs, was well aware that Belgium was one of the countries exporting iron, chemical, and textile materials, which Romania needed to replace outdated factory equipment. Thus, it was proposed to lift the embargo, address the "nationalization" issue, and sign a commercial agreement for a period of 3 to 5 years. Concurrently, it was desired to continue negotiations in Brussels, not in Bucharest).

of living." Implementing these policies necessitated additional international visits by Romanian officials, the signing of new agreements, NATO arrangements for goods transit, and the establishment of new consulates. Consequently, between 1960 and 1967, imports constituted 90% of the economy, while exports increased to 67%, creating a challenging economic imbalance for the country¹¹. Romania's exports to the Benelux countries included a diverse range of products such as cereals, vegetables, fruits, honey, tobacco, petroleum products, furniture, paper, and electrical machinery and appliances, among others, with a cumulative value of 272,500 Belgian francs. In contrast, imports from the Benelux countries comprised wool, textile materials, cocoa, chemical products, glass, and iron and steel products, among other items, totaling 631,500 Belgian francs. During this period, the Romanian state allocated 250,000 Belgian francs towards investments in equipment, facilities, machinery, electrical installations, scientific instruments, and various other items¹².

Until the 1960s, Western Europe was "captured by the American utopian pragmatism," being compelled to establish new economic exchanges with the United States. At the same time, Americans were seen as "peacemakers and protectors" for non-Sovietized countries. Without being a "superpower" on the global stage, Western Europe managed to maintain its relationships with other countries without sliding abruptly into the Soviet-American power play. An example of this is the Treaty of Rome in 1957, which involved the signing of the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community and the Euratom

¹¹ Elena Dragormir, *Relațiile comerciale cu Occidentul în concepția economică a României postbelice. Argumente pentru o nouă perspectivă de studiu* in "Anuarul Institutului de Istorie „A.D.Xenopol” din Iași”, vol.67, 2021, p. 480-486.

¹² AMFA Brussels, fund *Relations politique*, folder 7057, file *Accord commercial signé à Bucarest le 30.09.1960*, f. 1-8.

Treaty¹³. In the early 1960s, maintaining economic relations with Western European countries was a strategic priority for the United States, which was engaged in competition with the Eastern bloc. President John F. Kennedy was compelled to lower tariff rates as part of a broader effort to integrate Atlantic Europe into the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and to bolster the U.S. economy, albeit gradually. One proposed solution, discussed during the meeting between the European Economic Community (EEC) and the United States in Geneva from May 16 to 23, 1963, was the harmonization and reduction of industrial sector tariffs by 50%. However, this proposal failed to resolve the issue, as the six EEC member countries, particularly France, prioritized their own national interests.

In 1964, a cap was established on tariffs for several products imported into the EEC, which facilitated U.S. exports of one-third of its industrial products to Western Europe between 1968 and 1972. The most significant aspect of these agreements was the Europeans' willingness to negotiate with one of the world's most powerful nations, reflecting their diplomatic courage and commitment to reaching a compromise¹⁴.

Benelux was another European economic formation, consisting of the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg, established in September 1944. After World War II, Benelux, along with other European countries, was forced to accept

¹³ Uwe Nerlich, *Western Europe's relations with the United States in "Daedalus"*, Cambridge (US), The MIT Press, vol. 108, no. 1, 1979, pp. 87-91.

¹⁴ Lucia Coppolaro, *US policy on European Integration during the GATT Kennedy Round negotiations (1963-67): the last Hurrah of America's Europeanist* in *"The International History Review"*, London, Taylor&Francis, vol. 33, no. 3, 2011, p. 409-425 (The EEC wanted to continue dominating the export of cereals, while Washington wanted Europeans to liberalize the industrial market (also known as the Kennedy Round). These factors made the agreements increasingly complicated. For France or West Germany, it was quite clear that the greatest gains could be achieved from industry, which led to blocking the GATT agreement).

General Marshall's economic aid plan. The integration of these three countries into the new liberal economic world was also reflected in their publications, promoting the exploitation of natural resources and the modernization of industry for a better quality of life. In other words, the new momentum of the three countries in the global race for economic recovery can be observed¹⁵. Their political and economic rise on the international stage starting in 1958 allowed them to sign 20 trade treaties, increasing the pressure on Great Britain to join the EEC, due to the close relations between the Dutch and the British¹⁶. It is no surprise that the three countries organized their first conferences in London. Benelux implemented its foreign policy after 1952, creating a diplomatic committee that addressed relations between East and West, as well as decisions from the Geneva meetings. Thus, the economies of the three countries were interdependent, and decisions had to be made jointly.

As mentioned in the title of the article, we will focus more on the case of Belgium. The Belgian economic system was "dominated" by small enterprises that were "sufficiently strong and durable" to agree on prices, investments, wages, and so on. Additionally, these groups had certain concepts, such as "the most powerful best organization is the most active and the most influential on the political level"¹⁷. In the 1950s, around 25 Belgian shareholders were involved in

¹⁵ *Echos BENELUX. Commercial review devoted to the Be-Ne-Lux Countries*, edition A, no. 27/A, juni 1948, pp. 7-11 (This magazine published in French General Marshall's speech, the response from French Foreign Minister Henri Bonnet, the USSR's opinion on the new American economic plan, as well as a speech by history professor Carl L. Becker from Cornell University regarding "The International Economic Order." During this period, the main driving force behind Benelux was held by the Netherlands).

¹⁶ F. Gunther Eyck, *Benelux in the common market* in *Current History*, Oakland, vol. 47, no, 280, 1964, pp. 295-300.

¹⁷ Gordon L. Weil, *The Benelux Nations. The politics of small-country democracies*, New-York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970, pp.121-122 (In the Netherlands, these groups have direct access to the

old Belgian companies such as Concordia, Astra Română, Société Roumano-Belge des Pétroles, Société Communales des Trams de Bucarest, and others¹⁸.

Over the decades, financial difficulties encountered by communist states compelled them to seek external credit from Western sources and underscored the necessity for the advancement of trade relations. For socialist economies, the primary objective was to establish pricing mechanisms conducive to the "rational conduct of business," in contrast to Western democratic economic models. Variable pricing within communist countries was determined in accordance with global market prices and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), an organization that Romania acceded to only in 1973. Frequently, Warsaw Pact nations would convert their currencies into rubles, in accordance with directives established by the International Bank for Economic Cooperation, which was headquartered in Moscow from 1964 onwards. On the international stage, each Soviet-aligned country utilized the ruble as a currency for payments, which was ultimately convertible into U.S. dollars. Pricing for both imports and exports was based on the ruble. Nevertheless, not all Eastern Bloc countries concurred with this arrangement, with some contending that the ruble did not always qualify as a "legitimate international currency."

In 1970, the International Investment Bank was established by all member states of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) to facilitate ruble-denominated loans for new "investment projects." The sustainability of the

Ministry of Economic Affairs. The difference from Belgian companies is that Dutch firms have much greater production capacity, such as Royal Dutch Shell, Philips, Unilever, etc).

¹⁸ AMFA Brussels, fund *Relations politique*, folder 6792.7, file *Liste des participations belges a des societes privees en Roumanie*, Appendices to Report no. DJ-90.54.90-38 of September 8, 1958, f. 1-9.

bilateral agreements was compromised by financial difficulties, permitting each state to procure goods without the necessity of "balancing its trade with each individual country." The ruble, as an international currency, could be utilized within any CMEA member state. The remaining challenge was the conversion of the ruble into the capitalist economic system, a process that was experimentally initiated on January 1, 1973. It was imperative that the prices of Eastern products did not exceed prevailing market prices at the time of sale. Adjustments and decisions made by economists over the years were influenced by inflationary pressures and other economic variables, resulting in continuous fluctuations between the two economic blocs¹⁹.

Specialized literature mentions that, after Stalin's death, the country accepted the process of de-Stalinization but not the communist doctrine. In this regard, historian Mironov presents the language used by the press of the time against the "Common Market," with headlines and comments such as: "West German monopolies, the main beneficiaries" or "market interests also impact women's interests"²⁰. It is not surprising that Benelux published in its official bulletin of 1963 its reservations about the ideological, economic, and social policies of communist countries, proposing to address issues that could lead to conflicts. The economic alliance, also influenced by the Cuban crisis and the German issue, proposed in 1963 to the governments of Eastern communist

¹⁹ Stanislaw Raczkowski, *La crise monétaire internationale et les pays socialistes* în volumul *La crise des paiements international et le développement du commerce es-ouest*, Brussels, Etablissements Emile Bruylant, 1976, pp. 92-112 (Among these nine countries, there was also a bilateral trade agreement that specified the quantitative quota or the value of reciprocal deliveries and the total export value, which had to match the imported value. This did not allow all countries the opportunity to purchase other products due to the bilateral trade agreement concerning the ruble).

²⁰ Alexandru Murad Mironov. *R.P.R. și construcția europeană, Semnarea Tratatului de la Roma, 1957* în "Arhivele Totalitarismului", Bucharest, vol. 1-2, 2013, pp. 114-116.

countries cooperation on its own terms. This also depended on the organization's decision, namely whether it wanted to cooperate or not²¹.

At the outset of the 1960s, there was a partial shift in outdated political ideologies spearheaded by Henry Spaak, who served as the Secretary General of NATO until early 1961. Spaak successfully introduced "new horizons" in NATO's policy towards the Soviet Union. Through a series of speeches delivered in Paris, London, and Moscow, Spaak was able to articulate to President John F. Kennedy that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) could only effectively address challenges posed by its adversary if its member states remained cohesive and adhered to shared principles. Spaak contended that the United States needed to relinquish its supremacist stance, as well as the divisions within the alliance that were characterized by factions advocating for "active policies" versus those awaiting a Soviet initiative.

Despite Kennedy's expression of gratitude in January 1963, Spaak observed that issues pertaining to Western European policy continued to be relegated to a secondary status in American foreign policy priorities. Spaak's persistent efforts on the European stage were aimed at extricating Belgium from diplomatic isolation, which had resulted from the Congo crisis. This endeavor included the establishment of new cultural agreements with Poland, Romania, Czechoslovakia, and various other Central and Eastern European states²².

²¹ *Bulletin BENELUX*, Brussels, no. 6, 1963, pp. 36-37 (The meeting of the governments of Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg at the Benelux Consultative Interparliamentary Council also relied on the support of other Western European states, noting that they "have sufficient assets and have nothing to lose from their dynamism").

²² Michel Dumolin, *SPAAK*, Brussels, Racine, 1999, pp. 621-632 (Spaak was one of the Belgian socialist supporters, dealing with various "economic crises" related to the rise of the middle class in the 1950s-1960s).

The development and reinforcement of relations between Belgium and Romania were significantly influenced by Spaak's active engagement in ongoing dialogues, which were held either at his residence or at the residence of the Russian ambassador in Paris. Notably, Spaak continued these discussions with Vinogradov and, subsequently, with Nikita Khrushchev in Moscow on September 19, 1961. It is considered a commendable gesture on the part of the Soviet leader to extend an invitation for dialogue to a NATO representative, especially in the context of the incident involving an American U-2 aircraft that had breached Soviet airspace during the summer of 1961²³.

According to the doctrine of the time, the prosperity of Romanian society depended on the development of the country's industry, with the aim of replicating the global model, especially in agriculture. The economic difficulties that Romania faced in the 1950s did not allow it to negotiate on equal terms with other Western states, and the still precarious trade was more advantageous to Western capitalists. The gradual growth of Romania's economy alongside other European states led political leaders to adopt a goal at the Third Congress of the PMR (Romanian Workers' Party) in June 1960 to double exports by 1965, with "65%-75% going to socialist countries, and the remainder to capitalist countries." The new goal of the new leader in Bucharest in 1965 was to balance export-import trade by 1970 through the modernization of heavy industry and distancing relations with Moscow. The progress of science in technology and

²³ Paul-Henri Spaak, *Combats inachevés. De l'espoir aux déceptions*, vol. 2, Brussels, Fayard, 1969, pp.331-356 (Spaak's meetings with the Soviet ambassador between 1958-1960 sometimes took place at the residence of the Polish or Czechoslovak ambassador, or at the residence of NATO Council Dean Andre de Staercke, who was also of Belgian origin. In his memoirs, Spaak confesses that he always considered it dangerous to "find himself alone in the presence of four or five representatives from communist countries." Nevertheless, he had the courage to visit Yugoslavia, Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia).

economic thinking compelled the Bucharest government to abandon old ideologies in order to continue trade with the EEC²⁴. The new economic ambitions of Gheorghiu-Dej and the future leader can be observed in relation to the Soviet Union, with Romania reaching a figure of 5.5 billion lei in 1964²⁵.

The first steps

In this study, we observe that both countries were seeking new trade partners with similar interests. The greatest advantage for the Romanians was that Belgium's Foreign Minister, Spaak, shared social-democratic ideologies, which facilitated communication with Maurer. However, the initial attempts by the Romanians to establish relations with the West were negotiated with France, followed by Great Britain and many other states. In 1959, Alexandru Bârlădeanu, a representative of the People's Republic of Romania at the CMEA and Vice President of the Council of Ministers, undertook an unofficial visit to Belgium to "resolve financial arrears"²⁶. Gheorghe Gaston Marin, the man of national planning, made a point of visiting, among other places, the enterprises in Charleroi and Antwerp in 1959, followed by those in the Netherlands. He notes

²⁴ Elena Dragomir, *Relațiile comerciale cu Occidentul în concepția economică a României postbelice. Argumente pentru o nouă perspectivă de studiu* in "Analele Științifice ale Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” din Iași”, vol. 67, 2021, pp.481-488 (Romania's good fortune was also due to the political shift in the USSR regarding satellite countries, coupled with the courage to oppose the supreme leader. Joining international organizations such as GATT improved the level of the economy).

²⁵ Constantin Moraru, *Politica externă a României 1958-1964*, Bucharest, Enciclopedica, 2008, p. 33 (Specialized literature shows that Russia did not want its satellite to deviate from its orbit, as exemplified by the Soviet leader's stubbornness in continuing nuclear armament in 1962. Romanians participated in disarmament talks in Brussels in 1961 alongside other countries. The economic growth "four times greater than in 1950" gave Dej more authority over the dictatorship in Moscow).

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 65.

that the Dutch "industrial circles" represented a much greater interest, leading to the conclusion of various contracts²⁷.

The development and expansion of the communist politico-economic imagination were also mentioned in the foreign press, with Romania making "giant steps, unprecedented in its turbulent past, on the path of progress and prosperity"²⁸. The skepticism of the Belgian business delegate in Bucharest, J. Leroy, is noted in the documents from 1958, which mention his distrust regarding the payment of Belgian indemnities following the discussions of 1957. The development of new trade relations between the two countries depended on the settlement of old debts²⁹. At the time, the trade policy of Benelux did not align with Romania's, including payment methods³⁰, due to ongoing disputes between the Netherlands and Romania in 1958. In this context, the Romanian Foreign Minister in Brussels had signed a trade agreement between the Socialist Republic of Romania and the Belgian-Luxembourg Economic Union (BLEU)³¹. New discussions took place between the Belgian plenipotentiary in Bucharest, R. H. de

²⁷ Gheorghe Gaston Marin, *Consemnări*, Bucharest, Semne, 2003, pp. 249-250.

²⁸ Idem, *În serviciul României lui Gheorghiu-Dej. Însemnări din viață*, Bucharest, Evenimentul Românesc, 2000, pp.200-203.

²⁹ AMFA Brussels, fund *Relations politique*, folder 6792.7, file R. NAT. *Préparation Négociations BENELUX-ROUMANIE (La Haye)*, Report to Monsieur H. Fayat, Minister of Foreign Trade, dated January 27, 1958, f. 1-5.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, Report to Monsieur Leroy, Chargé d'Affaires de Belgique à Bucarest (no. B.1/144/008/22.534), f. 1-4 (On the same terms, the Netherlands also agreed to renegotiate with the Romanian government for future commercial dealings, delays that affected the agreements with Benelux).

³¹ *Ibidem*, Note for Monsieur l'administrateur-directeur general, dated January 27, f. 1-5 (Note to the Foreign Trade Administration No. B.1/144/008/20.760. New discussions took place in Paris regarding the proposal for an air commercial agreement between Romania and the Netherlands, in the context of Belgium's desire to attract investments by settling commercial decisions and indemnities with the Netherlands. Romanian exports to the Belgian-Luxembourg Economic Union (U.E.B.L.) during 1955-1956 exceeded exports to France from 1952-1953, with Brussels showing interest in a much more advantageous trade for both parties. All this information can be found in Report no. 977/377 from July 9, 1957, f. 1-3).

Vleeschouwer, and the Romanian Minister of Oil and Chemicals, Mihail Florescu, regarding trade policy with Benelux. The Bucharest cabinet preferred signing a three-year agreement with the U.E.B.L. due to the financial benefits it would gain, as well as the payment of indemnities that would come into effect in the second year of the new treaty. This did not bother the Dutch, as the trade exchanges remained identical³².

In 1960, the issue of indemnity payments was discussed by some of the most important Belgian companies, including: Electrobél, Solvay et Cie, Oscar Lemoine (representing the Belgian company Foraj Lemoine), Société des Ciments de l'Europe Orientale, Compagnie Auxiliaire des Chemins de Fer, Banque de la Société Générale de Belgique (representing the shares of Usines Métallurgiques Lemaître in Bucharest), and Société Coopérative. However, Société des Sucreries de Roumanie did not participate in these negotiations due to a lack of documentation concerning indemnity payments to Belgium or Italy³³.

Following the trade agreement signed on September 30, 1960, Belgium and Luxembourg managed to achieve a profit of 382.6 million Belgian francs (B.F.) that year, which was 7.7 times greater than the 49.4 million B.F. recorded in 1958. In contrast, Romania exported only 182.6 million B.F. to the Belgian-Luxembourg Economic Union (U.E.B.L.). One possible reason for this deficit could be the absence of Romanian commercial agents and diplomats in Belgium, with the Romanian Legation in Brussels having only "one employed secretary, M. Mocanu," to handle these matters³⁴.

³² *Ibidem*, Note for l'administrateur-directeur general (Benelux-Roumanie), no. B2/Géo/N/144/008/26.861 dated June 2, 1958, f. 1-3.

³³ *Ibidem*, Report to "Monsieur le Ministre" dated June 15, 1960, f. 1-2

³⁴ *Idem*, file Roumanie. Dossier négociation, „Note pour la direction generale de la politique" no. B/GEO/144/001, Julie 4, 1961, f. 1-3 (The figures obtained in 1960 prompted Belgian chemical traders

In the world of commerce, advertising played a crucial role. The sale or purchase of products depended on the image promoted by the press or other economic partners, whether for a short or long period. Until the early 1960s, Western Europe preferred to remain obscure regarding Romania, with very limited relations. In March 1961, the Belgian press, including "L'Echo de la Bourse" and "Agefi," published contracts between Romanians and Austrians for steel production and the promotion of the Galați steelworks, as well as collaborations with the English firm "Petrocarbon Developments." The adoption of the French Chausson model for "manufacturing truck bodies" sparked foreign interest in buying these products directly from the Romanians, potentially at a much more favorable price³⁵. In 1962, Belgium was open to negotiating with Romania regarding the purchase of Romanian oil within the global quota of 340,000 tons allocated for Eastern European countries by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Energy. Concurrently, the Romanian government was expected to place orders worth 750 million Belgian francs in the upcoming period³⁶. Let's not forget that the Romanian government had approved the reimbursement of Belgian investments declared in 1944, which were valued at 3 billion Belgian francs. In 1964, Romania agreed to pay the first installment of 55 million Belgian francs³⁷.

to visit Romania to "assess the existence of potentially interesting business opportunities" in this field. At the same time, Bucharest decided to send Lucian Florescu to Brussels as the third economic secretary).

³⁵ ANIC, Fund *CC al PCR-Secția Relații Externe*, file no. 26/1961, f. 10.

³⁶ Archives Generale du Royaume (The following will cite AGR), Fund *Comités Ministériels (CMCES)*, file no. 2016, f. 1-5 (Negotiations held in December 1962).

³⁷ AMFA Brussels, Fund *Relations politique*, folder 6792.7, file *Question Parlementaire. Roumanie*, f. 1-3 (Some of the indemnities were to be paid through the export of raw materials to Belgium. The funds were to be paid to Belgian and Luxembourg banks using Belgian francs).

It is important to note that the ideological concepts of Belgian socialists and Romanian socialists did not have the same meanings. Belgian socialists promoted the middle class by avoiding "dirigisme and nationalization," arguing that this was necessary to "prevent a Soviet-style dictatorial state." In contrast, the Social Christians avoided using the term "Soviet," substituting it with "Marxism," possibly to avoid a propagandistic interpretation³⁸. Probably for this reason, Romanian-Belgian relations were limited until the late 1950s. The Belgian ambassador in Bucharest, Marcel de Vlieger, illustrated Brussels' ongoing ideological issues between the two countries in his diplomatic documents, noting Belgium's involvement in aiding Romanian Jews. In his reports, he often preferred to "let my thoughts mature." However, there were also moments when he did not shy away from criticizing the Communist Party's brutality: "The puppets [...] who govern this charming country, according to the instructions of their Moscow masters, have only one form of freedom: overstatement... It is both charming and depressing to live in Romania: this province of the Soviet Empire".

The improvement in economic relations in 1960 is readily apparent, with various Belgian businesspeople visiting Romania "five or six times." For example, the Belgian national airline Sabena agreed to cooperate with the Romanian national airline Tarom on the Brussels-Cologne-Budapest-Bucharest route. In the table below, we will present the visits of Belgian traders in 1960:

The names of business people	The Belgian company
Walter Gallez	S.A. Ateliers Belges Reunis a Enghien

³⁸ Sarah Timperman, *1945-1954:Le PSB s'ouvrea aux classes moyennes* in "Revue Belge d'Histoire Contemporaine", Brussels, vol. 3-4, 1998, pp. 545-456.

R. Kervyn de Meerendre	Société Belge de l'Azote et des Produits Chimique du marly
Melle R. Doupagne	Etablissements Germeau-Liege
R.Borneman	Sabena
Th. Snyers	S.A. la Metallurgie Liegeoise
Fr. Rupied	Compagnie de Wagons Lits
A.Van Mol	Morissen-Anvers
M. Dugard	P.J.Zurstrassen et Fils S.A.
E. Mertens	S.A. Copina-Bruxelles
Lagrange	Soudometal
Ch. van der Vennet	Ateliers J. Hanrez
J. van Zandycke	Importator de încălțăminte
L. Pourbaix	S.A.Interorient
J.Marquet, G. Buysens, G. Debroux	L'Extraction Continue de Smet-Anvers

Société Belge de l'Azote proposed building a propylene plant, with costs amounting to 400 million francs. S.A. Citrique Belge wanted to sign a contract with Romanian importers for the supply of 200 tons of citric acid. In addition to the Romanians requesting an increase in Romanian exports, they suggested that Belgium become a transit country for Romanian goods, like Germany and the Netherlands. Consequently, Bucharest needed a commercial office in the small kingdom for selling goods³⁹, along with a new team—Florescu Lucian and Penn

³⁹ AMFA Brussels, Fund *Political Relations*, folder 13.798, file *Romania 1961*, Report no. 123 (File No. 641/407-no.376) dated June 3, 1961, f. 4 (Marcel de Vlieger, aged 50, was appointed to the post in Bucharest in January 1960 due to his experience as a diplomat in African countries as well as in Indonesia. The representative of Belgium was also responsible for managing the Dutch consulate,

Ion under the direction of M. Magheru. The negotiation conditions between G. Stuyck, the commercial attaché in Bucharest, and Mircea Petrescu, the director of foreign trade relations, were quite ambiguous, characterized by an imbalance between imports and exports. Some goods required a license to enter the Benelux area. The Belgian trading company Socomabel agreed that our country could import corn, petroleum products, chemicals, foodstuffs, and light industry goods worth 6–7 million dollars⁴⁰.

Various visits were also made by C. Deleclos, a journalist for "Lloyd Anversois," J. Geal, president of the children's theater, deputies Guillaume and Wostyn, as well as senators Pairon, de Schepper, and Chot. However, the ambassador found it challenging to fulfill his duties due to a lack of qualified staff or employees for a short period, and due to a lack of contacts and freedom, which made the task "pénible et presque irréalisable l'exécution d'une tâche pourtant essentielle". Several Romanian secretaries worked at the embassy, including Mrs. Sofronescu, Chiapella, and Berlemont, who were appreciated for their work⁴¹. The lack of Romanian staff hindered the translation and understanding of the press or documents in Romanian⁴².

The efforts and intentions of the two countries appear to be bearing fruitful results, with the trade volume with Belgium reaching 150% in 1960. This percentage seems quite promising compared to the United Kingdom (68.3%), France (83.6%), West Germany (110.3%), Austria (118.5%), and Italy (129.4%).

Exports by year and country expressed in millions of lei:

along with his advisor Jan Naaykens and commercial secretary Joseph Arnasteen. The Belgians managed the Dutch consulate for 12 years, from 1952 to 1964).

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, Rapport no. 165 (Dos. no. B/64-No. 492), dated July 3, 1961, f. 1-4.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, Rapport no. 46 (Dos.A/130-no.108), dated February 11, 1961, f. 1-6.

⁴² *Ibidem*, Rapport no. 50 (Dos. no. P/200-no.112), dated February 11, 1961, f. 1.

Country	1958	1959	1960
Austria	35,7	39,5	94,3
Belgium	7,1	5,2	12,8
Danemark	2,7	0,9	1,8
France	92,4	84,3	117,1
United Kingdom	39	52	89,5
Greece	30,3	26	23,7
Italy	66,5	56,3	153,8
Netherlands	10,7	12,6	19,2
West Germany	157,7	143,9	262,7
Switzerland	37	24,9	66,8
Sweden	2	4,1	14,3

Imports by year and country, expressed in millions of lei:

Country	1958	1959	1960
Austria	34,2	30,7	59,1
Belgium	7,5	5,9	15
Danemark	4,4	1,8	3,8
France	94,3	60,6	149
United Kingdom	44,6	64,5	106
Greece	20,8	11,7	12,2
Italy	48,7	53,5	98,1
Netherlands	22,8	24,3	23,7
West Germany	134,2	112,5	276,6

Switzerland	15,9	48,9	51,3
Sweden	3,4	5	28,5

These are the figures declared by the Romanian service. We will observe that Western countries reported different amounts due to the currency exchange rate of 6 lei per dollar. In Belgian statistics, Romanian exports for 1960 are recorded at 182.8 million Belgian francs, while imports are recorded at 382.6 million Belgian francs. It is certain that the West could barely assess the discrepancy between statistics due to a lack of information regarding trade and monetary taxes⁴³. The financial benefits for the year 1962 seem to be on the side of the Romanians, who exported goods to Belgium worth 72,830,000 Belgian francs. The major imbalance between exports and imports is not recommended by analysts, but the Walloons and Flemings managed to import goods worth 36,605,000 Belgian francs. The issue was resolved during 1963. Also in 1963, the Belgian Nitrogen Company succeeded in building a new factory in Craiova. Bilateral trade was facilitated by Romanian companies La Belgo-Roumaine and Devetra, which ensured exports to various regions of Belgium⁴⁴. The presence of

⁴³ *Ibidem*, Raport no. 276 (Dos. no. B/409/8-no.881), dated October 14, 1961, f. 1-7 (For the year 1961, it was expected that Romania would export goods worth 172.9 million francs to the European economic area, while Belgium would import goods worth 158.7 million francs into our country. Exports of goods to Belgium remained limited, which led to a meeting with Gaston Marin on October 30, 1961, explaining that various Belgian merchants were purchasing Romanian goods from Germany, Switzerland, and Italy. Without many details, Brussels refused to grant a visa to Ion Onescu for "completing" the commercial service. In 1963, Oancea became Romania's ambassador to Brussels. On July 14, 1967, he was appointed Romania's ambassador to Bonn).

⁴⁴ *Idem*, Fund *Relations politique*, folder NA/14.374, Raport no. 86 (Dos. no. A/130-nr.251), dated February 28 1964, f. 9 (In this document, Romanian secretaries continued to be praised, given additional administrative duties within the chancery despite the reduced staff. Regarding the statistics for the year 1962, we observe differences between the figures officially declared by the two parties: U.E.B.L. reported a total value of imports and exports exceeding 574 million Belgian francs,

Romanian parliamentarians in Flanders and Wallonia in October 1963 contributed to the continuation of relations⁴⁵.

New Belgian companies continued to operate in the Socialist Republic of Romania, such as Bell Telephone, which provided telephone and radio communication lines between Bucharest and Braşov and between Constanţa and Braşov⁴⁶. Since the 19th century, the small industrial workshop had struggled to export its products worldwide. This "handicap" persisted into the 20th century, with V. Ionescu, Minister of Foreign Trade, lamenting the limited involvement of Belgians in promoting Romanian products. Nevertheless, A. Spinoy, Minister of Economic and Energy Affairs, agreed to visit the new Belgian factory L'Union Chimique Belge in June 1964, as well as the city of Braşov and the Brazi refinery⁴⁷. Following the discussions, the Belgian cabinet agreed to appoint a new commercial agent in Brussels in addition to the nine diplomatic agents and six non-diplomatic commercial agents, accepting the policy of "prudent liberalism"⁴⁸. The acceptance of communists near NATO headquarters was one of the reasons why Western Europeans were hesitant to grant visas. A clear example was Rodica Barba, who held the official position of First Secretary at the Legation in Brussels while also working as an SSI agent⁴⁹.

while the R.S.R. reported 750 million Belgian francs, equivalent to 90 million lei. The official exchange rate in 1963 was 1 leu = 8.33 francs).

⁴⁵ *Apărarea Patriei*, Bucharest, no. 254, October 29, 1963, p. 4 (Alongside the Minister of the R.P.R. in Brussels, Pavel Babuci).

⁴⁶ AMFA Brussels, Fund *Relations politique*, folder NA/14.14.374, file *Relations politique*, Raport no. 90 (Dos. no.B/520-no. 256), dated February 28, 1964, f. 8-9 (Much later, they also worked on the Sibiu-Braşov line).

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, Raport no. 253 (Dos. no B/520-no.633), dated Juni 18, 1964, f. 1-5.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, Note for the Minister of Foreign Affairs, dated July 16, 1964, f. 1-2

⁴⁹ Ciprian Niţulescu, *Între stema regală și stema roșie. Aspecte privind personalul diplomatic al României (1948-1952)* in "Analele Științifice ale Universității „Al. I. Cuza” din Iași", vol. 69, 2023, f. 284-285.

For the year 1964, statistics show an increase in Romanian exports to Belgium to a value of 50 million lei, while imports into Romania were valued at 56 million lei. The main goods purchased by the socialists were metallic products, followed by machinery and equipment, pharmaceutical products, and plant products, among others. Belgian consumers preferred Romanian plant and food products, as well as mineral products, which represented 80% of the imported goods. Bell Telephone Company continued to operate, installing Crossbar-Pentaconta type interurban telephone systems⁵⁰. To gain a better understanding, it is necessary to mention Belgium's economic agreements with Eastern countries, such as Poland in 1965, Bulgaria in 1966, Hungary and Czechoslovakia in 1967. Despite the exchanges that took place between Benelux and the U.S.S.R. after 1945, Belgium decided to conclude a new trade agreement with the Soviets in 1969. However, our research will focus exclusively on analyzing the negotiations with Romania in 1968⁵¹.

In the press of the time, we will observe that Maurer, along with Cornel Mănescu, participated after 1960 in strengthening relations. We will focus on the visit to Romania by the President of the Belgian Senate, Paul Struye, in the autumn of 1967. Not intimidated by the idea of visiting the "communist camp" in Romania, Struye boldly approached the concept of European cooperation through the use of international institutions such as the UN. Journalist Florica

⁵⁰ AMFA Brussels, Fund *Relations politique*, folder 14.653, file *Roumanie (janv.-decembrie)*, Activity Report for 1964 No. 138 (File No. A/130-no.294), dated March 10, 1965, f. 1-11 (In 1964, 703 visas were issued out of a total of 948 applications. The workload of the Belgian Embassy was reduced starting September 8, 1964, when the R.S.R. agreed to accept Haverkorn van Rijsewijk as the Minister Plenipotentiary of the Netherlands in Bucharest. M. Bursens had been serving as the chargé d'affaires for the Netherlands since mid-January of the same year).

⁵¹ Idem, folder 18.890/40, file *Russie. Accord pour la cooperation economique, industrielle et technique*, f. 1-3 (In the same folder, details about Harmel's visit to Moscow, one year after his visit to Romania in 1968, are also mentioned).

Şelmaru does not mention NATO in her article but directs the speech of the Belgian Senate president, using the period's language, towards Romania's cooperation with the two Western European economic engines, France and West Germany⁵². On the other hand, the Romanian representative at the UN, Mircea Maliţa, supported the idea of the independence of each country, provided that it did not militarily occupy another country. We believe that Maliţa was not only referring to situations in Asia or the Middle East but also to the struggle between NATO and the Moscow dictatorship. Thus, Romanian-Belgian cooperation could gain momentum as long as the two countries respected each other⁵³. Between March 28 and 30, 1966, the mayors of Brussels (Lucien Cooremans), Antwerp (Lode Craeybeckx), Ghent (Emiel Claeys), and Liège (Maurice Destenay) were invited to visit the cities of Bucharest, Cluj-Napoca, Constanţa, and Iaşi, all as part of efforts for good political and economic collaboration. Concurrently, a Belgian delegation of agricultural experts visited Romanian lands⁵⁴. It is certain that the R.S.R. managed to win the sympathy of foreigners through the large number of delegations that visited between January and November 1966, all with the same goal: to secure economic advantages with the East⁵⁵.

The good intentions of the two countries are also supported by the Belgian Foreign Minister, Paul Harmel, in an interview with the newspaper *Lumea* in 1967. Harmel invited Romania to create new "concrete" political and

⁵² *Lumea*, Bucharest, no. 39 (204), September 21, 1967, p. 10.

⁵³ *Le Soir*, Brussels, no. 241, October 12, 1967, p. 3 (In July 1964, N. Ceauşescu had visited Belgium).

⁵⁴ AMFA Brussels, Fund *Relations politique*, folder 14.955, file *Roumanie 1966*, Annual Activity Report - 1966, f. 10 (In 1966, French-Romanian relations were placed under suspicion regarding France's military policy towards NATO and Romania's military policy towards the Warsaw Pact: "the positions of the respective countries are the same." Among the greatest concerns of Western states might have been the signing of the nuclear-atomic agreement between the two Latin countries).

⁵⁵ Mioara Anton, *Un proiect utopic, Societatea omului nou socialist. Începuturile* in "Studii și materiale de istorie contemporană", no. 1, Bucharest, 2018, p. 138.

economic agreements by respecting the decisions made by the UN in Geneva. The military situation represented one of the obstacles between the two "European" countries due to the ideologies they shared in 1967, with a desire to sign a non-nuclear proliferation treaty. The Warsaw Pact was not supported by the Belgian politician, who praised Romania for adapting to the new changes and moving away from the Soviet model, once again emphasizing the Europeans' desire. It is clear that Harmel was not afraid to speak frankly about the fear that communist countries still had of Moscow, depicted as a sick man with psychological trauma, referring to the presence of the Berlin Wall. It is evident that the new cooperation between Harmel and Mănescu in political, economic, and cultural matters with Romania aimed to provide an example to both camps that new changes could bring solutions to the old continent⁵⁶. However, what about the statement by the communist leader Ceaușescu in his discussion with the Dutch Foreign Minister, Joseph Luns, on January 13, 1967, where he claimed that he was not enthusiastic about collaboration "either with the Common Market or with CMEA"? The word "independence" was not fully understood by the General Secretary of the Party, despite the Dutch minister's strong emphasis on economic market cooperation, possibly with the exception of France⁵⁷. This is noted because the Netherlands was also part of Benelux, with political and economic decisions being made jointly with Belgium and Luxembourg.

⁵⁶ AMFA Brussels, *Fund Relations politique*, folder 18.898(33), file *Bezoek Min. Mănescu 6-10/02/1967*, Interview sent by Harmel to the Belgian Ambassador in Bucharest, H. Cambier, on February 22, 1967, f. 1-6 (The Belgian's perspective is evident at the end of the discussions with the assertion that "Pour ma part j'ai l'impression de mieux connaître votre pays et votre politique depuis le passage de M. Mănescu" [For my part, I have the impression of better understanding your country and your politics since Mr. Mănescu's visit]. The publications *Lumea* and *Secolul XX* were quite enlightening, "expressing a closeness to Western culture," an idea supported by Corneliu Mănescu himself. See also *Convorbiri neterminate. Corneliu Mănescu în dialog cu Lavinia Betea*, Polirom, 2001, p.123).

⁵⁷ ANIC, *Fund C.C. al P.C.R. Secția Relații Externe*, file nr. 2/1967, f. 8-10.

The discussion between Harmel and Ceaușescu on September 16, 1968, led the two states to collaborate in the technical and scientific fields, despite the events in Prague that same year. Discussions about the thinking of the two blocs continued on the political front, with Harmel promising not to share what the communist leader wished to remain private. However, the Belgian Foreign Minister placed greater emphasis on Romania's adherence to Belgian political orientation and not limiting itself to "short-term interests," referring to the understanding of the idea of European construction⁵⁸. The skepticism of Dutch Prime Minister Piet de Jong and Dutch Foreign Minister Joseph Luns on September 29, 1969, regarding Ceaușescu's and Maurer's plans led them to support new difficulties with the Common Market following political discussions⁵⁹. In the autumn of the same year, Alexandru Drăghici and Manea Mănescu met in Bucharest with Marc Drumaux, a representative of the Belgian Communist Party, to discuss potential future cooperation. It is unclear how this meeting benefited the Belgian Communist Party, as the exchange of information was more advantageous for the Romanians. During this meeting, Drumaux merely complained about the weak influence of his own party in Belgian politics.

We wish to emphasize the revelations regarding Brussels' entanglement in the "American camp," specifically the installation of NATO military facilities and the involvement of the Washington cabinet in the Congo issue. The most concerning thing for the Belgian communist was the increasing "echo [...] of democratic organizations in our country." As previously mentioned, Romanian

⁵⁸ Idem, *Fund C.C. al P.C.R. Secția Relații Externe*, file no. 75/1969 (The documents within the file are dated 1968, not 1969 as indicated by the file number).

⁵⁹ Idem, *Fond C.C. al P.C.R. Secția Relații Externe*, file no.95/1969, f. 1-7 (The lack of reflection and acceptance of Western European concepts by the party led the Dutch—possibly from the beginning—to conclude the discussion after 40 minutes on a rather stern note).

communists sought greater independence from the Kremlin by adopting political and economic relations with the West. Drăghici's interest is reflected in his questions: "You mentioned in your presentation that workers occupy certain factories and show interest in continuing their activities," and "... are there attempts by the bourgeoisie to address issues with foreign workers?" The response was that some solutions came from the state through support for credits aimed at modernizing the steel sector. Romanian leaders also emphasized this, arguing that, in addition to improving the lives of socialist people, the Romanian Communist Party had 1.7 million members, of which 70% were workers and peasants, and 25% intellectuals⁶⁰. We can easily observe the transformation of the communist doctrine concerning the active class in the motherland. Also in this discussion, the Romanians expressed their positive stance towards the presence of Americans in Europe for maintaining balance and the independence of small nations, indirectly alluding to the policies of the USSR. To remain faithful to their own ideology, the two Romanians also asserted that "the central element of Romania's foreign policy is friendship and alliance with all socialist countries"⁶¹. The meeting between Drumaux and N. Ceaușescu on September 27, 1967, was focused more on foreign policy, such as the importance of recognizing the two Germanys, the Israeli crisis, and the Vietnamese crisis, among other topics⁶².

⁶⁰ Idem, Fund C.C. al P.C.R. *Secția Relații Externe*, file no. 78/1967, f. 3-22 (Drumaux's speech did not align with the intentions of the two Romanians, and the analysis presented left much to be desired. The rise of the Romanian communists to power was achieved with the help of the Soviet Union, while the involvement of Americans in domestic and foreign politics supported the bourgeois class of Belgian liberals and Christian-socialists. Manea and Drăghici, with more experience in practicing communist ideology, realized that the Belgian Communist Party's rise to power was merely "a dream." Not to mention the financial support for the bourgeois class from Western foreigners).

⁶¹ *Ibidem*, f. 25-26.

⁶² Idem, Fund C.C. al P.C.R. *Secția Relații Externe*, file no. 81/1967, f. 45 (One of the most important ideas mentioned was that of the Belgian comrade Jean Terve, a member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee, who attempted to revive the image of medieval Europe by arguing that the

On January 30, 1968, Paul Niculescu-Mizil presented Comrade Joseph Turf, the new Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Belgium, with the new vision of Romanian communists regarding the international workers' movement's struggle against "imperialism," using Vietnamese communists as an example. In this context, the Romanian comrade referred to the lack of unity and equality among communists worldwide. It was clear that Romanians were breaking away from the old Soviet mold, adding: "... in the past, we did things this way because that's how it was done, but look, we've wised up, we've seen the damage this has done to the movement." It is evident that there was a desire for modernization by aligning with the new image of Romania within the confines of ideology⁶³. Based on the exchange of information, Turf explained his party's desire for symbiosis with other parties, including socialist and Christian-democratic ones, in the political and economic sphere, "even if there will be no communists in the government." This reflects a pragmatic approach to integrating with a broader political spectrum while acknowledging the limitations of their own party's representation in the government⁶⁴.

At the European level, the Catholic Church has managed to become involved, to some extent, in the decisions of the European Economic Community (EEC) by establishing new branches in Brussels and Luxembourg. Its concepts, represented by Belgian Catholics, in the European Parliament were similar to those of the socialists: fighting against unemployment, opposing factory closures,

presence of Christians [Catholics] in the West supports the presence of NATO through the "moral-religious current" against the red pagans).

⁶³ Idem, *Fund C.C. al P.C.R. Secția Relații Externe*, file no. 17/1968, f. 9-23.

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, f. 67.

abolishing Sunday work, and so on, all since 1963. To achieve its goals, alongside other Christian denominations, the Church succeeded in introducing new representatives, such as Helmunt von Verschuer, as Director-General of Agriculture at the European Commission. Thus, the balance between socialists and Christian democrats [or social Christians] prevented Europeans from falling into a single ideology, with the existence of multi-party systems being indeed beneficial⁶⁵.

Economic exchanges with the Benelux countries also depended on European security, which in this case was provided by NATO. This prevented the communist bloc from exchanging any types of goods, with its presence being controversial due to Ceaușescu, suggesting that Belgium should follow France's example of expelling the new command, an idea reinforced by Niculescu-Mizil who said, "and it would help us as well"⁶⁶.

The Socialist Republic of Romania sought economic modernization not only through trade but also by applying new economic concepts. In 1969, Manea Mănescu was invited by the Dutch government to present new economic ideas alongside Nobel laureate Jan Tinbergen, such as "the practice of economic calculation used in the development and application of dynamic models in the analysis of socio-economic processes," specifically the elimination of outdated communist concepts. Similar meetings also took place in the USA, Austria, and many other countries⁶⁷. The acceptance of new information in the field of science

⁶⁵ Lucian N. Leuștean, *Roman Catholicism, diplomacy, and the European Community, 1958-1964* in "Journal of Cold War Studies", The MITT Press, vol. 15, no. 1, p.74.

⁶⁶ ANIC, Fund C.C. al P.C.R. *Secția Relații Externe*, file no. 18/1968, f. 3-5 (A desire which actually supported the "cessation of U.S. aggression" [Nixon] aimed at strengthening their "monopoly over the economy").

⁶⁷ Bujor Mănescu, Manea Mănescu, Ploiești, Mileniul III, 2020, pp.263-264.

and the modernization of factories allowed the Romanian communist leader to assert before the new Belgian communist leaders, Jean Blume and Albert de Coninck, that the economy of the Socialist Republic of Romania was now superior to that of Belgium, with capitalism not being the best solution. Concurrently, he claimed that the elimination of other "exploiting classes [parties]" had contributed to what the Romanian communists had achieved by 1969, providing, for the first time, the freedom for the people to participate in the "construction of socialism"⁶⁸. In reality, the Ceaușist doctrinal regime managed to control almost all domains internally, so that the people were compelled to accept it as their leader. Even from an economic perspective, the lack of all necessary tools and knowledge impeded the progress of Romanian science and its adaptation to new international requirements.

The plans of the EEC and Romania were completely mismatched, being entirely opposed, with Belgium committing to the customs agreement of May 1, 1968⁶⁹. The development of trade relations between the two countries also somewhat depended on the visit of Mănescu and Maurer in October 1969, with the main goal of extending the agreement between Benelux and Romania for a longer period. The reports from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Brussels also note details less favorably viewed by the Belgian ambassador J. Adriaenssen, such as the accompaniment of spouses on this visit despite insistence, which was

⁶⁸ Idem, Fund C.C. al P.C.R. *Secția Relații Externe*, file no. 5/1969, f. 4-7 (Ceaușescu stated during the discussion that France would follow this model of eliminating multi-partyism within the next 20 years. In reality, events turned out quite differently, with the French general being increasingly marginalized by students, the business environment, and the French political class. The French state began to distance itself from "independent policy," being open to collaborating with European countries, and de Gaulle resigned on April 28, 1969. It would be very interesting for future research to analyze whether there was any Romanian influence on French politics between 1969 and 1979).

⁶⁹ Serge Berstein, Pierre Milza, *Istoria secolului XX*, translation Marius Ioan, Bucharest, BIC All, 1998, pp.286-289.

considered "an old Romanian custom." The main theme was the visit to Belgian industrial branches, such as the Sybeta company and the primary production greenhouses "competent for Romanians"⁷⁰. The language of communication was a barrier for the Belgians, who noted that the Romanian translators were not able to translate or understand French on political topics⁷¹. In fact, this extension was due to the agreement given by NATO also in 1969 for collaboration with communist countries. The visits served to measure the spread of Western doctrine and to establish "trust" through economic and cultural agreements, technology exchanges, and more. Analyzing the current document, we can argue that the Prague crisis shed more light on the Western doctrine of exploiting existing weaknesses in the Eastern bloc through the exchange of information "in a transitional phase". In reality, these economic agreements aimed to weaken the Soviet Union, with the North Atlantic Alliance agreeing to conclude various treaties⁷² to "promote a situation that ensures the success of a few fundamental principles"⁷³.

The visit of Minister H. Fayat, which took place between October 4-7, 1969, was marked by the publication of a new work titled "Roemenië" in Dutch,

⁷⁰ AMFO Brussels, fund *Political Relations*, folder 18.920/36, file *Romania* (subfile *Visit from October 21-25, 1969*), f. 17-18 (During the delegation, including at dinners, Maurer was accompanied by his personal physician. His room had to be quite spacious to allow for daily medical exercises).

⁷¹ *Idem*, subfile *Journée de chasse*, pp. 5-7 (In file 18.898/40, we find the dossier of Harmel's visit to Moscow in 1969, which mentions the opinions of the Spanish newspaper "Informaciones" – Telegram No. 907 from May 28, 1969 – stating that visits by Eastern European communists, such as the Romanians, do nothing but exacerbate "psychologically" the ideologies of the two blocs. Thus, Harmel and Belgium are portrayed as NATO's puppets).

⁷² *Idem*, folder 18.898/40, file *Voyage of Minister Harmel to Russia 1969*, Telegram No. 177 from April 30, 1969, f. 1.

⁷³ *Ibidem*, Telegram No. 150 from April 21, 1969, f. 1 (This document clearly specifies Western intervention in aiding Czechoslovakia. Belgium was required to undertake this visit to maintain European "peace").

which largely describes the economic development of the Socialist Republic of Romania. The primary aim of this publication was to promote bilateral relations, using language that avoids communist interpretations. A notable aspect is Fayat's inclusion of various financial tables for the period 1965-1968, which raises some concerns due to discrepancies with Belgian diplomatic reports from Bucharest that highlighted Romanian and Belgian statistics, exchange rates, and bank transfers. Nonetheless, the main objective of the work was to demonstrate the increase in trade exchanges between the two nations⁷⁴.

The desire and thirst for national economic development led the party to accept cooperation with GATT in 1971 and with the IMF and World Bank in 1972. To remove several obstacles, foreign policy also pushed for cooperation with the European Community. Economic control depended largely on the involvement of experienced specialists such as Maurer, who during this period was in a secondary role according to the party leader's directives. Ceaușescu was not specialized enough to recognize the rigidity of the economic market⁷⁵, his desire being independence from other states⁷⁶.

The spring of 1972 brought new changes to Belgian politics, with the signing of a consular convention with Romania for the first time, following the reestablishment of the Antwerp-Constanța trade route in July 1970. All these negotiations were made possible after the "amicable" discussion held in the second round, with the Belgians being confident of the Romanians' cooperation, who had "modified and supplemented" some articles of the treaty. However, it is

⁷⁴ Idem, folder 15.721, file *Belgium-Romania 1966/70*, Algemene Directie der Buitelandse Economische Betrekkingen, Roemenië. Informatienata opgesteld naar aaleiding van het bezoek van De Heer Minister H. Fayat aan de Socialistische Republiek Roemenië (4-7 oktober 1969).

⁷⁵ Emil Răcilă, *Istoria economică a României*, Bucharest, Danlex Press, 2008, pp.234-235.

⁷⁶ Lucian Boia, *op.cit.*, pp. 144-145.

not known how the treaty ultimately turned out, as the discussions were quite heated⁷⁷. Economic cooperation between Romania and Belgium, manifested through continuous trade exchanges and regular visits by experts from both countries, was a significant aspect of bilateral relations during the communist regime. Archived documents and the activity of the Danubiana company highlight that these connections were not only consistent but also crucial for the development of Romania's technical industry, even amidst the restrictions imposed by the political regime of the time.

This conclusion underscores the importance and continuity of economic cooperation, as well as its relevance to the Romanian industry⁷⁸. The importance of this cooperation was also mentioned during the economic discussions with the Belgian Office of Foreign Trade delegation and the Belgo-Romanian Economic Committee on May 16, 1972⁷⁹.

The political and economic relations between the two nations have evolved consistently over time. The visits of Belgian ministers between 1975 and 1976, as well as the visit of the Belgian royal family in 1976, were key moments that facilitated the strengthening and signing of new partnerships, despite the existence of tensions related to humanitarian issues. During this period, new cultural projects between the two countries were initiated and signed, focusing on partnerships between universities in areas such as medicine, technology, and

⁷⁷ AGR, Fund *Ministerial Committees (CMCES)*, file no. 5297, Draft Law for the Approval of the Consular Convention between Belgium and the Socialist Republic of Romania from July 1972 and the Council of Ministers Reports from March 29 and April 14, 1972, f. 15-31.

⁷⁸ ANIC, Fund *Ministerul Comerțului Exterior. Direcția plan export*, file no. 19 (Activity Reports. Foreign Missions "DANIBIANA" 1972-1973), f. 86 (Dinu Vasile, the director of the Rubber Technical Workshop in Brașov, received the sum of 500 lei to negotiate these deals in Belgium for a period of seven days. He was also tasked with negotiating the same deals in the Netherlands).

⁷⁹ *Idem*, Fund XV. *ISISP. Personalități*, file no. 547 (Presentations, Speeches, Vol. II), f. 101-106.

broadcasting, among others. However, there is an exception in the last years of the 1980s, when relations began to deteriorate increasingly.

These achievements are largely due to the previous efforts of communist leaders in the 1960s, especially Ministers Maurer and Mănescu. It can be argued that these two ministers largely succeeded in achieving their main objectives of strengthening relations with the West; however, their actions were often limited by the vision of leader Ceaușescu. The desire for isolation from Moscow created certain disadvantages for Romania, which partly explains why the economic balance continuously tipped in favor of Belgium, a country that often acted within the Benelux group. It is considered that if Romania had managed to collaborate and form an economic union with another communist country, according to the Benelux model, the country's economic situation could have been significantly more favorable. This approach might have helped avoid or at least mitigate some major problems faced in the 1980s.

Source: *Cornel Mănescu's visit to Brussels welcomed by Pierre Harmel* in "România Liberă", 07 February 1967



**Negotiating with a declining power: The American – Soviet Diplomacy
in the context of German reunification**

Ștefania-Teodora Cocor¹

Keywords: United States, German reunification, Soviet Union, great power diplomacy, George H. W. Bush, Mikhail Gorbachev, European security, NATO

Abstract: *The unexpected opening of the Berlin Wall on the evening of November 9, 1989, was a turning point in history, bringing the division of the Cold War to an end. Although the crumbling of the communist bloc seemed almost inevitable in the autumn of 1989, the reunification of Germany was still an outlying goal. But taking advantage of the opportunity that the wall's fall brought, the leaders of that time tried to accelerate history and bring German reunification to a fait accompli. The United States influenced the unification process through its effort to overcome the Allies' suspicion of a reunited Germany and preserve the American role in the future of European and German security. The high-level talks between the United States and the Soviet Union in the period 1989-1990 reveal the shifting distribution of power and the beginning of a new security architecture. Drawing on records of conversations, memoranda of face-to-face and*

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telephone conversations, speeches, public statements and memoirs, this paper examines the diplomatic interactions between Washington and Moscow during the process of German reunification. Over the ten months of negotiations, the official objectives of the United States and the Soviet Union were widely opposed. With events slipping out of his control in Eastern Europe and with a weaker political position at home, Mikhail Gorbachev attempted to secure a gradual reunification and a neutral Germany, but the readjustments of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the economic assistance given by the Federal Republic of Germany made the Soviet leader accept the Western terms. The paper aims to discover how the United States and the Soviet Union found ways to cooperate in the final act of the Cold War, what were the motivations and the aims of the main political actors and why the questions raised during that period remain a source of tension and controversy in the relations between the United States and today's Russia.

From competition to cooperation

The downfall of the Communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe and the opening of the Berlin Wall in 1989 transformed completely the map drawn at the end of the Second World War. The partly peaceful events resulted from the changes of the Soviet system that enabled to hasten the end of the Cold War. Intending to reform the Soviet system, not destroy it, Mikhail Gorbachev implemented a series of changes that had an impact not only domestically, but also on foreign policy. The reforms of *perestroika* (reconstruction) and *glasnost* (openness) would be complemented by his "New political thinking" on foreign policy, officially launched in February 1986, during the Twenty-Seventh Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. A set of diplomatic principles and

guidelines, the “New political thinking” was based on a few key themes: the fear of nuclear war shared by all peoples, the interdependence of the problems faced by humanity, the “de-ideologization” of international relations, and the end of the principle of class struggle in foreign policy.² Convinced that security must be mutual and international politics could no longer be a zero-sum game, Gorbachev had the aim to reintegrate the Soviet Union into the international system as a trusted partner.

In his historic speech to the United Nations General Assembly, on December 7, 1988, the Soviet leader highlighted the “new thinking” by declaring his intention to make the Soviet Union a responsible international actor. He announced the unilateral reduction of Soviet armed forces from Europe, the extended Soviet Union's participation in the monitoring mechanism on human rights, and the willingness to continue the dialogue with the United States and the newly elected President George H. W. Bush in “a spirit of realism, openness, and goodwill”.³ His strategy represented a dramatic change in Soviet perceptions of the outside world. The significant withdrawal of Soviet forces from Eastern Europe signalled that the European communist countries were now no longer under the tight control of the Kremlin. He applied a different approach to Europe and inaugurated a new era of détente with the United States.

The new American administration of George H.W. Bush took the reins on January 1989. With great experience in international affairs due to his tenure as ambassador to the United Nations, U.S. envoy to China, head of the CIA in the

² Marie-Pierre Rey, “Gorbachev’s New Thinking and Europe, 1985–1989”, in *Europe and the End of the Cold War: A Reappraisal*, edited by Frederic Bozo, Marie-Pierre Rey, N. Piers Ludlow, Leopoldo Nuti, London, Routledge, 2008, p.45

³ “Address by Mikhail Gorbachev at the UN General Assembly Session (Excerpts), December 7, 1988”, in *Woodrow Wilson Center Digital Archive* <https://bit.ly/3o6n1GL>

1970s, and vice president during the Reagan administration, George H.W. Bush seemed to have the most suitable profile for a leader in times of profound shifts on the international scene. In his inaugural address, Bush positioned himself on the threshold of a new era full of opportunities: “The totalitarian era is passing, its old ideas blown away like leaves from an ancient, lifeless tree. A new breeze is blowing, and a nation refreshed by freedom stands ready to push on. There is new ground to be broken and new action to be taken.”⁴ He was hinting at the transformative changes underway in the Soviet bloc and the consequences that these changes would have for the whole world.

In his first telephone conversation with Gorbachev, the American president reassured the Soviet leader that he would continue to improve the bilateral relationship and the policies started by President Ronald Reagan.⁵ He also underscored the importance of the Secretary of State James Baker in building a good working relationship with Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze.⁶ James Baker, a close friend of Bush, was considered by the President a “tough trader and a strong negotiator” who would always tell directly and forcefully how he felt on various matters.⁷ Bush wanted very special and trusted people in the key policy posts, so he installed in the administration people that would master all the details and complexities of policy matters. Even though many political leaders and journalists had predicted that the Bush

⁴ “Inaugural Address, 1989-01-20”, in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States - George H. W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum* <https://bush41library.tamu.edu/archives/public-papers/1>

⁵ “President's Telephone Conversation with Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev, January 23, 1989”, in *George H. W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum: Memcons and Telcons* <https://bush41library.tamu.edu/files/memcons-telcons/1989-01-23--Gorbachev.pdf>

⁶ *Ibidem*

⁷ George H.W. Bush, Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, New York, Vintage Books, 1999, p. 45

presidency would be tantamount to Ronald Reagan's third term⁸, the new President made sure to be distinguished both in the appointments he made in his administration and the strategy toward the Soviet Union.

Since George Kennan concluded in 1947 that "the main element of any United States policy toward the Soviet Union must be that of a long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies"⁹, Washington followed throughout the years of the Cold War the strategy of containment regarding the Soviet Union influence. All the American presidents after Harry S. Truman maintained containment as the basic strategy in U.S. relations with Moscow. But as tensions with Kremlin seemed to be reduced due to Gorbachev's transformative measures, various thinkers believed that a positive response from the United States is needed. The same George Kennan that coined the containment strategy forty years ago declared, during a testify before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in April 1989, that "there have been in recent months and years several interesting and encouraging initiatives and suggestions from the Soviet side to which we have been essentially unresponsive."¹⁰

After informal discussions with several senior foreign policy advisors, George H. W. Bush called for a different strategy. On May 12, 1989, the American President used the commencement speech at Texas A&M University to announce the new policy toward the Soviet Union: "Our review indicates that 40 years of perseverance have brought us a precious opportunity, and it is time to move

⁸ Michael Beschloss, Strobe Talbott, *At The Highest Levels: The Inside Story of the End of the Cold War*, New York, Open Road Integrated Media, 1993, p.46

⁹ "X" (George F. Kennan), „The sources of Soviet conduct”, in *Foreign Affairs. An American Quarterly Review*, No 4, Vol. 25., July 1947, New York, Council of Foreign Affairs, p. 566-582 <https://bit.ly/459sZY3>

¹⁰ "Future of U.S.-Soviet Relations", in *C-SPAN*, April 4, 1989 <https://bit.ly/41UjCHb>

beyond containment to a new policy for the 1990s, one that recognizes the full scope of change taking place around the world and in the Soviet Union itself. In sum, the United States now has as its goal much more than simply containing Soviet expansionism. We seek the integration of the Soviet Union into the community of nations."¹¹ "Beyond containment" became the grand theme of the Bush administration's foreign policy.¹² Designed as a positive response to the "new thinking" of Gorbachev, the new strategy described the Bush approach toward the reformist Soviet Union.

The prospects of a more cooperative relationship between the two superpowers were outlined against the backdrop of radical changes in Central and Eastern Europe. The Polish government agreed to negotiate with the once-illegal Solidarity trade union and, by June 1989, Solidarity delivered a crushing electoral victory for the new bicameral legislature. On August 24, 1989, the first non-communist government in postwar Eastern Europe formally took power in Poland. In Hungary, the new prime minister Miklós Németh refused to approve funds for the continued maintenance of the barbed wire along the border between Hungary and Austria.¹³ His decision to open the country's border with the West provided an avenue to escape for a large number of East Germans and marked the true beginning of the end of the German Democratic Republic (GDR). The staunch communist leader Erich Honecker resisted reforming East Germany and after anti-government protests erupted in Leipzig, Dresden and

¹¹ "Remarks at the Texas A M University Commencement Ceremony in College Station, 1989-05-12", in *Public Papers of the Presidents...* <https://bush41library.tamu.edu/archives/public-papers/413>

¹² Don Oberdorfer, "Bush finds theme of foreign policy 'Beyond Containment'", in *The Washington Post*, May 28, 1989 <https://wapo.st/3Wd65ed>

¹³ John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History*, New York, The Penguin Press, 2005, pp. 230-231

other major cities, Politburo removed him from office. His successor, Egon Krenz, alongside the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED) Politburo, decided to adopt a new travel law meant to relieve the tensions in East Germany. The decree, debated in the typical disarray in which SED Politburo found itself in November 1989, was handed to Günter Schabowski, a Politburo member that was unfamiliar with what the travel law implied. Assigned to brief the press about the new rules, Schabowski declared in front of the journalists that “we have decided today to implement a regulation that allows every citizen of the German Democratic Republic to leave the GDR through any of the border crossings.” Asked when this law would come into effect, Schabowski, almost confused, replied “immediately, without delay”.¹⁴

Within minutes after Schabowski’s announcement, crowds began gathering at the crossing points. On the night of November 9, 1989, after twenty-eight years, the Berlin Wall came down. Just as on August 13, 1961, a city and a people awoke to find themselves divided, so on the morning of November 10, 1989, that division was no more.¹⁵

The West German Factor

The decision by the East German leadership to open the borders was welcomed with excitement by all the people who witnessed the historic event. Gorbachev's foreign affairs adviser, Anatoly Chernyaev, related in his diary the significance of the fall of the Berlin Wall: “The Berlin Wall has collapsed. This

¹⁴ “Günter Schabowski’s Press Conference in the GDR International Press Center 6:53 - 7:01 p.m.”, November 9, 1989, in *Woodrow Wilson Center Digital Archive* <https://bit.ly/438pWO2>

¹⁵ Frederick Taylor, *The Berlin Wall: A World Divided, 1961-1989*, New York, HarperCollins, 2008, p. 455

entire era in the history of the socialist system is over [...] This is the end of Yalta [...] the Stalinist legacy and <<the defeat of Hitlerite Germany>>.”¹⁶ He praised the Soviet leader’s role in ending the post-war order: “That is what Gorbachev has done. And he has indeed turned out to be a great leader. He has sensed the pace of history and helped history to find a natural channel.”¹⁷

The Bush administration tried to respond with caution after the news came in. Although everyone was overwhelmed with euphoria because the collapse of the Wall was truly a freedom victory, Washington was wary about offering hasty comments that might create an incident that would escalate out of control, with a Soviet or East German crackdown.¹⁸ The administration preferred to respond in a way that would not be interpreted as a defeat for the Soviet Union. The prudence of President Bush was sensed by the journalists at the press conference that was organized after the opening of the Wall. Given that the event was a sort of great victory for the American side in the big East-West battle, the President was asked why he doesn’t seem elated. “I am not an emotional kind of guy”, he responded.¹⁹ In a telephone conversation with West-German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, the American President shared his worries: “I want to see our

¹⁶ “Document No. 101: Diary of Anatoly Chernyaev regarding the Fall of the Berlin Wall, November 10, 1989”, in *Masterpieces of History: The Peaceful End of the Cold War in Europe, 1989*, edited by Svetlana Savranskaya, Thomas Blanton, Vladislav Zubok, Budapest/New York, Central European University Press, 2010, p. 586

¹⁷ *Ibidem*

¹⁸ James A. Baker III, *The Politics of Diplomacy: Revolution, War & Peace, 1989-1992*, New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1995, pp.163-164

¹⁹ “Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session With Reporters on the Relaxation of East German Border Controls, 1989-11-09”, in *Public Papers of the Presidents...* <https://bit.ly/43js3Pc>

people continue to avoid especially hot rhetoric that might by mistake cause a problem.”²⁰

The urge for restraint came also from Gorbachev. On November 11, 1989, the Soviet leader told Kohl that “I hope that you will use your authority, your political weight and influence to keep others within limits that are adequate for the time being and for the requirements of our time.”²¹ He requested the Chancellor to avoid anything that might further threaten the GDR’s existence, including hurried calls for a possible German reunification. This subtle demand showed that although the Soviets had allowed the Wall to fall, they were by no means ready to accept that unification would be the next step.

Since mid-1989, when the reforms in Central and Eastern Europe seemed to be in full swing, the Bush administration began to hint about the reunification of the two German states. On May 31, 1989, recalling Ronald Reagan’s appeal of tearing the Berlin Wall down, President Bush stated in front of the people of Mainz, Germany, that the “wall stands as a monument to the failure of communism. It must come down.” Asserting that the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and the United States are “partners in leadership”, the American President highlighted the responsibility that the two states would have at the beginning of a new era when the Cold War division is over. Introducing the language of unity to his German audience, Bush asserted that the West’s goal is a “Europe whole and free”. Moreover, talking about the fate of the communist

²⁰ “Telephone Conversation with Helmut Kohl, Chancellor - Federal Republic of Germany, November 10, 1989”, in *George H. W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum: Memcons and Telcons* <https://bit.ly/3IB1Ljh>

²¹ “Document No. 103: Record of Telephone Conversation between Mikhail Gorbachev and Helmut Kohl, November 11, 1989”, in *Masterpieces of History: The Peaceful End of the Cold War in Europe...*, p. 591

state, he declared that “we seek self-determination for all of Germany and all of Eastern Europe.”²² His speech set the tone for closer U.S.–RFG cooperation and for the unwavering support that Washington would have been willing to give Bonn in the possible process of German reunification.

But in the weeks following the opening of the Wall, the Bush administration continued to be cautious. The administration concluded that “at the moment neither the people of the GDR nor the government of the FRG is talking about reunification; the emphasis has been on democratization, and this is where we should keep our emphasis as well.”²³ On November 21, 1989, the American President asked the West-German foreign minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher if there is a likelihood that the rapidity of change that has come to Eastern Europe will result in an instant demand in Germany for reunification. The foreign minister said that “no one can foresee. In the GDR, at the top of the agenda is freedom, democracy, and free elections.”²⁴

Nonetheless, West Germany’s agenda seemed to be different. On November 28, 1989, Chancellor Helmut Kohl surprised everyone, including his allies and coalition partner, when he presented a Ten-Point Program for Overcoming the Division of Germany and Europe to the *Bundestag*. According to his Program, the first step was closer cooperation between the two German states, followed by the formation of a confederation and finally by the establishment of a federation that was compatible with East-West détente and European

²² “Remarks to the Citizens in Mainz, Federal Republic of Germany, 1989-05-31”, in *Public Papers of the Presidents...* <https://bush41library.tamu.edu/archives/public-papers/476>

²³ Philip D. Zelikow, Condoleezza Rice, *Germany Unified and Europe Transformed: A Study in Statecraft*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1997, p. 113

²⁴ “Meeting with Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher of the Federal Republic of Germany (U), November 21, 1989”, in *George H. W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum: Memcons and Telcons* <https://bit.ly/45zVuyr>

integration.²⁵ Kohl's initiative was meant to give him an upper hand in the internal struggles of West German politics. Chancellor's parliamentary majority rested on an alliance between the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), its smaller Bavarian sister party, Christian Social Union in Bavaria (CSU), and the Free Democratic Party (FDP) of the foreign minister Hans Dietrich-Genscher. Thinking about the 1991 federal elections and eager to take the lead on the German question before Genscher, the FDP and the opposition Social Democrats, Kohl was hoping to shape unification policy. Moreover, he wished to prevent the four occupying powers from seizing the diplomatic initiative above the Germans' heads.²⁶

After Kohl's historic speech, the Chancellor and President Bush talked in depth about the internal problems that Gorbachev and the communist regime from Central and Eastern Europe had been facing. Given the situation that was occurring, Kohl estimated that in the GDR would be free elections by the autumn of 1990 or the beginning of 1991. Talking about his Ten-Point-Program, the Chancellor emphasised the importance of acting with reason, caution and in coordination with Washington. Bush assured the West German leader of his support and appreciated the Program and the exposition of the future of Germany.²⁷ As the Malta summit between Bush and Gorbachev was approaching,

²⁵ "Helmut Kohl's Ten-Point Plan for German Unity (November 28, 1989)", in *German History in Documents and Images: One Germany in Europe (1989-2009)* https://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=223

²⁶ Kristina Spohr, "Precluded or Precedent-Setting?: The "NATO Enlargement Question" in the Triangular Bonn-Washington-Moscow Diplomacy of 1990–1991", in *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (Fall 2012), p. 11 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26924149>

²⁷ "Telephone Conversation with Chancellor Helmut Kohl of the Federal Republic of Germany (U), November 29, 1989", in *George H. W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum: Memcons and Telcons* <https://bush41library.tamu.edu/files/memcons-telcons/1989-11-29--Kohl.pdf>

the Chancellor and the American President discussed the possible outcomes of the high-level meeting. Bush indicated that would be no bold proposals.²⁸

At the Malta summit, held on December 2-3 1989, the German issue was only one aspect of the complex U.S. – Soviet agenda. The summit was the first face-to-face conversation between the American President and the Soviet leader since Bush's inauguration in January. Although Washington could have seized the opportunity to turn the summit into the key decision forum on what was happening in Germany and the rest of Central and Eastern Europe, the Bush Administration preferred to set out limited goals. Any effort by Washington and Moscow to decide the fate of Europeans without the Europeans at the table risked awakening memories of the Yalta summit at the end of World War II. According to a memo for Secretary of State James Baker prepared before the summit, it was considered that Gorbachev might think that it is time to work with the United States for a neutral and united Germany. But the memo, written by the long-time SALT negotiator and retired Army General Edward Rowny, stated that "it is entirely premature and improper to enter into any such discussions. Free democratic choices in both the GDR and the FRG, together with thorough consultations with our European allies, should guide the future shape of Germany".²⁹ Referring also to arms control, the memo recommended that the U.S. should "focus the discussion on process and not engage on substance."³⁰

Trying to estimate Gorbachev's political thinking regarding Germany, another memo claimed that Gorbachev is likely to note the Soviet opposition to a

²⁸ *Ibidem*

²⁹ "Rowny memo to Baker, November 17, 1989", in *National Security Archive: The Last Superpower Summits*
<https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/22562-document-15-rowny-memo-baker-november-17-1989>

³⁰ *Ibidem*

reunified Germany, “insisting that it can only occur in the context of the creation of a <<common European home>>.” However, given the Kohl proposal, the Soviet leader “might raise the eventual creation of a German confederation – largely economic – or a demilitarized zone down the middle of the two Germanies”. For addressing German and European security, Gorbachev might “float the idea of an all-European conference on security, perhaps in a CSCE (Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe) context.”³¹

Aboard the Soviet cruise ship *Maxim Gorky*, off the coast of Malta, the two superpowers’ leaders engaged in cordial discussions that confirmed the threshold of a brand-new era of U.S.-Soviet relations. After talking about the American attitude toward *perestroika*, economic relations and disarmament issues, they turned to the changes in Eastern Europe and the subject of Germany. Bush admitted that the U.S. had been “shaken by the rapidity of the unfolding changes.” He assured Gorbachev that the American administration is trying to do nothing which would lead to undermining the Soviet leader’s position. Even though Bush was aware of “how delicate and sensitive problem is” the German question for the Soviets, he went on by saying to Gorbachev “that it is impossible to demand of us that we disapprove of German reunification.”³² The Soviet leader said that he agree with the American role in the European problems, but both the USSR and the U.S. should „act—and interact—in an especially

³¹ “Department of State. Information Memorandum to Secretary Baker from Douglas P. Mulholland (INR). “Soviet Thinking on the Eve of Malta.” November 29, 1989”, in *National Security Archive* <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB298/Document%205.pdf>

³² “Notes by A. S. Chernyaev, Record of Conversation between Mikhail Gorbachev and George H. W. Bush at Malta Summit, December 2, 1989”, in *Woodrow Wilson Center Digital Archive* <https://bit.ly/43T2qET>

responsible and balanced way in this period when all of Europe is undergoing such dynamic changes.”³³

Concerning Kohl’s Program, Gorbachev expressed his resentment. He considered that the chancellor is “too much in a hurry on the German question.”³⁴ From Gorbachev’s point of view, a reunified Germany would pose a series of challenges and only history should decide how to be confronted: “For example, would a united Germany be outside alliances or with NATO? Answer is premature and we should let it run its natural course...Let history decide what should happen.”³⁵ Suggesting a possible new security architecture in Europe, the Soviet leader stressed that “a Helsinki II Summit to develop new criteria for this new phase would be a good idea.” Furthermore, he even implied that the Warsaw Treaty and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) should be transformed into more political than military organizations.³⁶

Responding to reporters’ questions after the summit, Gorbachev reiterated his concerns about Germany: “Any artificial acceleration of the process would only exacerbate and make it more difficult to change in many European countries [where] those changes are now taking place”³⁷ Even though he seemed to warn about accelerating the process of German reunification, his relaxed demeanour convinced the U.S. that the Soviet leader was malleable on the

³³ *Ibidem*

³⁴ “US Memorandums of Conversation, George H. W. Bush and Mikhail Gorbachev at Malta Summit, 2-3 December 1989, December 2, 1989”, in *Woodrow Wilson Center Digital Archive* <https://bit.ly/3JaBBV0>

³⁵ *Ibidem*

³⁶ *Ibidem*

³⁷ “Remarks of the President and Soviet Chairman Gorbachev and a Question-and-Answer Session With Reporters in Malta, 1989-12-03”, in *Public Papers of the Presidents...* <https://shorturl.at/zGVX1>

German question.³⁸ After all, he seemed to just oppose a hasty reunification not the reunification of the two German states per se.

Heading to Brussels for a meeting with NATO allies, President Bush was determined to make public the American support for Kohl's Ten-Point Plan and give the chancellor the green light for reunification. At the press conference held on December 4, 1989, Bush outlined the American task to "provide the architecture for continued peaceful change, to end the division of Europe and Germany, to make Europe whole and free"³⁹ Thus, he announced the four points that represent the U.S. position on German reunification: self-determination; unification in the context of Germany's continued commitment to NATO and an increasingly integrated European Community; moves toward unification must be peaceful, gradual, and part of a step-by-step basis; and inviolability of borders must be respected according to the Helsinki Final Act.⁴⁰ Bush also underscored the U.S. will remain a European power, engaged in the future of Europe. President's statement officially opened the debate about German reunification. Since then, Germany would become a main subject in both private and public debates between the United States and the Soviet Union.

United States' remarks triggered the first comprehensive Soviet policy statement on the German question. During a speech to the Political Committee of the European Parliament in Strasbourg on December 19, Soviet foreign minister Eduard Shevardnadze declared that a push for reunification would risk

³⁸ Philip D. Zelikow, Condoleezza Rice, *op.cit.*, p. 130

³⁹"The President's News Conference in Brussels, 1989-12-04", in *Public Papers of the Presidents...* <https://bush41library.tamu.edu/archives/public-papers/1298>

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*

“destabilization in Europe.”⁴¹ But in an unprecedented visit to NATO headquarters in Brussels, Shevardnadze suggested that Moscow would agree on reunification only if West Germany accept demilitarization and adopt a neutral status.⁴² The Soviet foreign minister appeared to rule out unification while at the same time posing questions about how it could occur. His speech seemed to reveal the dilemmas that the Soviet Union was facing at that moment.

By the end of December 1989, the GDR and the USSR were the only Warsaw Pact states that still had Communist governments. In East Germany, mass demonstrations continued even after Egon Krenz resigned and the reformist Prime Minister Hans Modrow was now fully in charge. Protesters expressed their demands for political liberalization, open borders and German unification. GDR was on the verge of collapse as the calls for a reunited Germany became more strident. On January 25, 1990, Gorbachev had an ad-hoc meeting with his closest foreign affairs advisers for discussing the German problem. They agreed that the process of German unification cannot be stopped and recognized that the GDR “is not a real state anymore”.⁴³ Their strategy was that the Soviet Union must be present in the process. For coming to an agreement on the German question, the Soviets proposed a meeting of the “six: the U.S., Britain, France, the USSR, plus Kohl and Modrow, the winners and the losers of the

⁴¹ Tyler Marshall, “Turmoil in the East Bloc: Shevardnadze Calls at NATO, Warns Against Reunification: Diplomacy: The Soviet foreign minister says those pushing for one Germany endanger European stability”, in *Los Angeles Times*, December 20, 1989 <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1989-12-20-mn-628-story.html>

⁴² R.C. Longworth, “Shrvardnadze Visits NATO, Urges Caution on German Unity”, in *Chicago Tribune*, December 20, 1989 <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-1989-12-20-8903190523-story.html>

⁴³ “Document No. 118: Diary of Anatoly Chernyaev regarding German Reunification, January 28, 1990”, in *Masterpieces of History: The Peaceful End of the Cold War in Europe...*, pp. 673-674

war.”⁴⁴ With the Soviets acknowledging the inevitability of reunification, a fundamental change in Moscow’s position toward Germany was marked.

The discussions about NATO’s future in a reunified Germany

The reunification of the two states, which was already inevitable at the beginning of 1990, sparked a debate over what role would NATO have in the future of a united Germany and an undivided Europe. A united Germany should remain part of NATO or avoid all alliances and become neutral? With the Soviet Union still holding its legal rights as one of the four occupying powers, Moscow’s requests could not be ignored. The negotiations that occurred in early February 1990 between the United States and the Soviet Union about NATO’s role in Germany were essential for defining the prospects of the reunification process and European security in the post-Cold War era.

First American proposals for the future of NATO in a reunited Germany originated in German thinking. On 31 January 1990, RFG’s foreign minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher expressed his vision of a united Germany and its place within a new European architecture. In his speech given at Tutzing, Bavaria, the foreign minister declared that the process of German reunification would occur in a European context, including eventually, membership of a united Germany in both NATO and the European Community. Therefore, he was opposed to a neutral reunified Germany. Out of the desire to appease the possible disapproval of the Soviets for reunification, Genscher addressed the NATO expansion in the former Warsaw Pact territory of East Germany. In his vision, any attempt to extend “NATO military structures to the territory of today’s GDR would block German unity”. In order not to undermine the security interests of the Soviet

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*

Union, „NATO should rule out an expansion of its territory towards the east, moving it closer to the Soviet border“, according to the West German foreign minister.⁴⁵

Genscher's ideas would have an echo in the United States. During a visit to Washington on February 2, 1990, the West German foreign minister talked with Secretary of State James Baker about the vision outlined at Tutzing. In the press conference assembled after the meeting, both of them were in full agreement that reunification would not involve the extension of NATO to the East.⁴⁶ The American Secretary of State seemed to be convinced that this concession would be made Soviets to agree with Germany's reunification in NATO. A few days later, in a conversation with British Foreign Minister Douglas Hurd, Genscher clarified what an expansion of NATO territory toward the East means. According to a British memorandum, "when he [Genscher] talked about not wanting to extend NATO that applied to other states besides the GDR. The Russians must have some assurance that if, for example, the Polish Government left the Warsaw Pact one day, they would not join NATO the next."⁴⁷ Genscher thought not only about the future of NATO in Germany but also in Eastern Europe.

⁴⁵ "U.S. Embassy Bonn Confidential Cable to Secretary of State on the speech of the German Foreign Minister: Genscher Outlines His Vision of a New European Architecture, February 1, 1990", in *National Security Archive - NATO Expansion: What Gorbachev Heard* <https://shorturl.at/bLQSY>

⁴⁶ "Sir A.Acland (Washington) to Mr Hurd. No. 295 Telegraphic [PREM: Internal Situation in East Germany], Confidential WASHINGTON, 5 February 1990, 5.30 p.m: Genscher's Visit to Washington, 2 February", in *Documents on British Policy Overseas, Series III, Volume VII: German Unification, 1989-1990*, Edited by Patrick Salmon; Keith Hamilton; Stephen Twigge, London/New York, Routledge, 2010, p. 463

⁴⁷ "Mr. Hurd to Sir C. Mallaby (Bonn). Telegraphic N. 85: Secretary of State's Call on Herr Genscher: German Unification, February 6, 1990", in *National Security Archive* <https://bit.ly/3p3RFRl>

Although Secretary of State James Baker did not consider the broader question of a possible future NATO enlargement if the Warsaw Pact would cease to exist, he embraced Gensher's formulation in the conversations with the Soviet officials. On February 9, 1990, in his meeting with the Soviet foreign minister Eduard Shevardnadze in Moscow, Baker linked German reunification to a NATO non-expansion pledge. After he stressed that the U.S. "does not seek in any way a unilateral advantage of the situation" unfolded in Germany and Eastern Europe, the American Secretary of State tried to convince Shevardnadze of the danger that a neutral Germany would pose for European security: "A neutral Germany would undoubtedly acquire its own independent nuclear capability."⁴⁸ Aware that the Soviet Union perceived NATO as an imperialist alliance, devoted to the destruction of socialist countries, Baker proposed a reunited Germany that is "firmly anchored in a changed NATO", a NATO that is "far less of military organization and much more of a political one". Additionally, to persuade the Soviets to accept his proposal, Baker has made it clear that "have to be iron-clad guarantees that NATO's jurisdiction or forces would not move eastward."⁴⁹

In a later conversation with Mikhail Gorbachev, the American Secretary of State reiterated the same ideas regarding Germany and NATO. Firstly, Baker put forward the "Two Plus Four" mechanism for negotiating the external aspects of reunification. Gorbachev told Baker that the Soviets also thought about this formula of negotiation, but they named it "Four Plus Two". Shifting to the American military presence in Europe through NATO and how the newly reunited Germany would be integrated within the Alliance, the American

⁴⁸ "Memorandum of Conversation between James Baker and Eduard Shevardnadze in Moscow, February 9, 1990", in *National Security Archive* <https://bit.ly/45ZOTNJ>

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*

Secretary of State affirmed that if the U.S. “maintain a presence in Germany that is part of NATO, there would be no extensions of NATO’s jurisdiction for forces of NATO one inch to the east.”⁵⁰ To be more convincing of the threat of a neutral Germany, Baker even asked Gorbachev “would you prefer a united Germany outside of NATO that is independent and has no US forces or would you prefer a united Germany with ties to NATO and assurances that there would be no extension of NATO’s current jurisdiction eastward?”⁵¹ Because he did not want a replay of Versailles, Gorbachev said that the best way to “constrain that process is to ensure that Germany is contained within European structures.” Referring to the NATO expansion to the East, the Soviet leader emphasised that a “broadening of the NATO zone is not acceptable.” Baker replied “we agree with that.”⁵²

With his version of Genscher's Tutzing formula, Baker was hoping to ease Soviet concerns about NATO. His call for no extension of NATO “jurisdiction” to the East was the main topic on the agenda prepared for the Moscow visit. Deputy National Security Adviser Robert Gates, who accompanied Baker to Moscow, discussed similar terms in a meeting with Soviet intelligence chief Vladimir Kryuchkov on February 9, 1990. Gates stated that “we support the Kohl-Gensher idea of a united Germany belonging to NATO but with no expansion of military presence to the GDR. This would be in the context of continuing force reduction in Europe.”⁵³ He asked Kryuchkov what did he think

⁵⁰ “Memorandum of conversation between Mikhail Gorbachev and James Baker in Moscow, February 9, 1990”, in *National Security Archive* <https://bit.ly/3MUUBry>

⁵¹ *Ibidem*

⁵² “Record of conversation between Mikhail Gorbachev and James Baker in Moscow (Excerpts), February 1990”, in *National Security Archive* <https://bit.ly/3P7MbzB>

⁵³ “Memorandum of conversation between Robert Gates and Vladimir Kryuchkov in Moscow, February 9, 1990”, in *National Security Archive* <https://bit.ly/3qCzNgY>

“of the Kohl/Gensher proposal under which a united Germany would be associated with NATO but in which NATO troops would move no further east than they now were?” Gates believed that this is a sound proposal. However, the Soviet intelligence chief answered that “trust between the U.S. and USSR is growing, but that trust still had to be materialized...Kohl and Gensher have interesting ideas – but even those points in their proposals with which we agree would have to have guarantees.”⁵⁴

With the initial American assurances, it seemed that the Soviet officials were promised that the acceptance of a reunited Germany in NATO would be met by Western restraint. Even though the Tutzing formula sounded appealing to the Soviets, the American administration started to weigh the consequences that a NATO non-expansion pledge would mean. In Washington, President Bush and his National Security Council (NSC) staff started to move away from the Gensher – Baker line that was raising problems for the role of Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. What would be the value of NATO’s pledge of mutual assistance to Germany in case of aggression if the pledge did not cover all of Germany’s territory?⁵⁵ The NSC staff decided that the references to “jurisdiction” should be dropped and the operative phrase should be a “special military status” for East Germany, with the details to be worked out in the “Two Plus Four” framework.⁵⁶

The “*Sonderstatus*” of the East German territory was first envisaged by NATO Secretary General Manfred Wörner. In a speech about Atlantic Alliance and German Unity presented at Hamburg on February 8, 1990, Wörner argued

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*

⁵⁵ Kristina Spohr, *op.cit.*, pp.24-25

⁵⁶ Mark Kramer, “The Myth of a No-NATO-Enlargement Pledge to Russia”, in *The Washington Quarterly*, p.50 https://ciaotest.cc.columbia.edu/journals/twq/v32i2/f_0016179_13953.pdf

that “special arrangements could be devised to take account of Soviet security interests with a united Germany as a member of the Atlantic Alliance. A component of such an arrangement could be a special military status for the territory of the GDR, or perhaps an agreement not to extend military integration to that territory.”⁵⁷ Thus, Wörner’s idea, endorsed by the Bush administration, made clear that the whole of a united Germany would be protected under Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, but that the territory of East Germany would be treated in a special way in order to overcome Soviet objections to Germany’s continued membership in NATO.

Prior to Helmut Kohl’s meeting with Mikhail Gorbachev on February 10, the United States sent to the West German chancellor two messages, one drafted by the NSC staff and one by the European Bureau of the Department of State. Even if the two letters contained contradictory messages, one of them talking about the “special military status for East Germany” and the other about the “not one-inch” pledge, Kohl would go to Moscow carrying an extraordinary written guarantee of American backing. During their meeting, Kohl told Gorbachev that NATO “should not expand its scope.”⁵⁸ Even though he understood that a neutral Germany was off the table for the Western side, Gorbachev asked the Chancellor what if a reunited Germany would be non-aligned like India or China.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ “Atlantic Alliance and German Unity: Speech by Secretary General, Manfred Wörner at the Überseeclub, Hamburg, 8 February 1990”, in *NATO On-line Library: NATO Speeches* https://www.nato.int/docu/speech/1990/s900208a_e.htm

⁵⁸ “Memorandum of conversation between Mikhail Gorbachev and Helmut Kohl, February 10, 1990”, in *National Security Archive* <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/16120-document-09-memorandum-conversation-between>

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*

After he acknowledged the inevitability of reunification, Gorbachev seemed to be conscious that the next step would be the acceptance of a reunified Germany in NATO. He realized that a Europe without America and in the absence of total Soviet control would mean a Europe in which Germany could become too powerful.⁶⁰ The U.S. and West Germany were careful to conduct the unification process in a way that would not make the Soviet Union look like a great loser because Moscow was already in a really weak posture. At that time, Gorbachev himself was in a delicate position. He was under siege from both the communists and the reformers from the USSR. Boris Yeltsin was elected the president of the Russian Federation and he and his colleagues began to challenge Gorbachev's authority as head of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and of the USSR.

During February 12 -14, 1990, how the negotiations on Germany's external unification were to be conducted was officially decided. On the margins of the Open Skies Conference in Ottawa, an agreement was reached by the Foreign Ministers of NATO and Warsaw Pact states concerned to hold discussions on external aspects of the establishment of German unity in a Two Plus Four framework.⁶¹ According to the Soviets notes, the Soviet foreign minister Eduard Shevardnadze was unhappy that the conference, which was supposed to be about the "Open Skies" Treaty transformed into a discussion about the reunification of Germany: "I am in a stupid situation – we are discussing the Open Skies, but my colleagues are talking about unification of

⁶⁰ Angela E. Stent, *Russia and Germany Reborn: Unification, the Soviet Collapse, and the New Europe*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1998, p. 113

⁶¹"NATO Update: February 1990", in *NATO* <https://www.nato.int/docu/update/1990/9002e.htm>

Germany as if it was a fact.”⁶² James Baker stated once again to Shevardnadze that if a united Germany stays in NATO, “we should take care about non-expansion of its jurisdiction to the East”.⁶³

The United States, after promising to adapt NATO in a way that would appear less threatening to the Soviet people, convinced FRG to apply chequebook diplomacy in its relations with the Soviet Union as compensation for the major concessions that Moscow might be willing to make. At the Camp David summit, on February 24, 1990, Chancellor Helmut Kohl started the meeting with President Bush by thanking him for the support that the U.S. gave him ahead of the talks with Gorbachev. After he shared his concerns about how the border question would be solved with Poland, Kohl mentioned that a united Germany will be a member of NATO but a transition period is needed in which NATO units, including *Bundeswehr* forces dedicated to NATO, cannot be stationed on East German soil.⁶⁴ President Bush emphasised that full German membership in NATO is linked to the American ability to sustain US troops in Europe. Turning to the Soviets, the American President remarked that the Soviets are not in a position to dictate Germany's relationship with NATO. After all, the victory of the Cold War was of the United States: “We prevailed and they didn't. We can't let the Soviets clutch victory from the jaws of defeat.”⁶⁵ Worried about the Soviet position, the chancellor said that the Soviets are negotiating, but this may end up as a matter of cash because they need money: “There will be concerns for the

⁶² “Teimuraz Stepanov-Mamaladze notes from Conference on Open Skies, Ottawa, Canada, February 1990”, in *National Security Archive* <https://shorturl.at/pzLMY>

⁶³ *Ibidem*

⁶⁴ “Memorandum of Conversation between Helmut Kohl and George Bush at Camp David, February 24, 1990”, in *National Security Archive* <https://shorturl.at/grt46>

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, p.9

Soviets if Germany remains in NATO, for their security. And they will want to get something in return”, said Kohl. Suggesting how the FRG might help Gorbachev to save his face in the negotiations, Bush told Kohl that “you've got deep pockets.”⁶⁶

At the joint news conference following discussions, the two leaders noted that in a unified German state the former territory of the GDR “should have a special military status, that it would take into account the legitimate security interests of all interested countries, including those of the Soviet Union.”⁶⁷ Asked about the role of NATO in Europe given the fact that the Soviet Union is less and less a threat, President Bush replied that the enemy now is “unpredictability” and “instability.”⁶⁸ The U.S. determined to maintain its troops on European soil and to continue its commitment toward the transatlantic security.

The negotiations for German reunification turned out into a discussion about the future of European security. The U.S. wanted to clarify that the CSCE cannot replace NATO as the core of the West’s strategy in Europe. If the Soviets wanted the U.S. to remain a “European power”, it had to accept that NATO was the *raison d'être* for keeping Washington’s forces in Europe. By the end of February, the United States, alongside RFG, managed to impose their agenda on the Soviets. USSR was unable to come up with a coherent negotiating strategy given the USSR’s weak economic and political situation. As a result, the U.S. tried to achieve the unification of Germany absolutely on Western terms.

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, p.10

⁶⁷ “Joint News Conference Following Discussions With Chancellor Helmut Kohl of the Federal Republic of Germany, 1990-02-25”, in *Public Papers of the Presidents...* <https://bush41library.tamu.edu/archives/public-papers/1585>

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*

The Road to a post-Cold War European security architecture

The events that occurred constantly decreased the negotiating leverage of the Soviet Union. In March 1990, with the first free elections in East Germany, the communist regime had completely lost its legitimacy. With more than 98% voter participation overall, the CDU – CSU coalition, which campaigned on a platform of rapid unification of Germany, secured 48% of the vote, far more than any other party. It was clear that the political system of the GDR had no democratic legitimacy.⁶⁹ Moreover, the Soviet empire started to crumble. On March 11, 1990, Lithuania's legislative Supreme Council voted in favour of declaring independence. The Baltic states' separatism undermined with acceleration Gorbachev's leadership.

Even if they bargained from a position of weakness, the Soviets attempted to speak out against full German NATO membership and propose a new and different European security architecture to emerge once the Cold War was ending. During a meeting in Washington, Shevardnadze told President Bush that at the upcoming CSCE summit, the member states "have to prepare and design some fundamental European security structures."⁷⁰ From the Soviet point of view, the CSCE was the organization that would replace the two ideologically opposed alliances, NATO and Warsaw Pact, that competed during the Cold War. However, the American President considered that CSCE "will be an important pillar in the new Europe but we should not try to make it do more than it can."⁷¹ He emphasised that European stability is enhanced by a U.S. presence.

⁶⁹ Mary Elise Sarotte, *Not One Inch: America, Russia, and the Making of Post-Cold War Stalemate*, London, Yale University Press, 2021, p. 82

⁷⁰ "Memorandum of conversation between George Bush and Eduard Shevardnadze in Washington, April 6, 1990", in *National Security Archive* <https://shorturl.at/ixzKN>

⁷¹ *Ibidem*, p.8

Valentin Falin, the Central Committee's most senior expert on Germany, wrote in a memorandum sent to Gorbachev that the Soviets' limited freedom of manoeuvre made the West maximally realize its long-time aspirations without risking a serious confrontation. He thought that the "West is outplaying us, promising to respect the interests of the USSR, but in practice, step by step, separating us from <<traditional Europe>>".⁷² Falin urged the Soviet leader to necessary put forth a very definite and firm position.

Washington sensed the way Moscow perceived Western intentions to maintain NATO at the core of European security. To appease the Soviets, President Bush announced on May 4, 1990, that a wide-ranging NATO strategy review would be launched for the transformed Europe of the 1990s.⁷³ Plus, he called off any further modernization of U.S. nuclear artillery shells deployed in Europe and the follow-on to the Lance program. In his address, Bush also pointed to the need of strengthening CSCE and called for accelerated negotiations toward a Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE treaty), followed by U.S.-Soviet negotiations on short-range nuclear forces. In the same fashion, James Baker told the Soviet foreign minister during a meeting in Bonn about Bush's speech to reassure Shevardnadze that the process "would not yield winners and losers. Instead, would produce a new legitimate European structure, one that would be inclusive, not exclusive."⁷⁴ Shevardnadze welcomed the remarks and even if he recalled the difficulty to accept a reunified Germany

⁷² "Valentin Falin Memorandum to Mikhail Gorbachev (Excerpts), April 18, 1990", in *National Security Archive* <https://shorturl.at/cfkmE>

⁷³ "Remarks at the Oklahoma State University Commencement Ceremony in Stillwater, 1990-05-04", in *Public Papers of the Presidents...* <https://bush41library.tamu.edu/archives/public-papers/1853>

⁷⁴ "James A. Baker III, Memorandum for the President, <<My meeting with Shevardnadz>>, May 4, 1990", in *National Security Archive* <https://shorturl.at/egmAR>

in NATO, the Soviet foreign minister agreed that neutrality was not the answer for long-term stability. He stated clearly, according to Baker, that the Soviets want the American military presence in Europe.⁷⁵

In the run-up to the U.S. – Soviet summit in Washington, the Bush administration sought to demonstrate that it is making an effort to respond to Soviet concerns. In his meeting with Gorbachev on May 18, 1990, the American Secretary of State provided the Soviet leader nine points of assurance to prove that USSR's position is being taken into account. The assurances included: limiting the *Bundeswehr*; accelerating negotiations on tactical nuclear weapons; ensuring that Germany would not produce, develop, or acquire chemical or biological weapons; for an agreed transition period, NATO troops would not be stationed on the territory of the GDR; for an agreed transition period Soviet troops would remain on the territory of the GDR; adapting NATO politically and militarily; reaching an agreement on the Polish-German border; transform the CSCE into a permanent institution that would become an important cornerstone of a new Europe; the Soviet Union's economic interests to be duly considered during the unification process.⁷⁶

However, the conversation in Moscow continued with Gorbachev and Shevardnadze questioning the status of Germany in NATO. The Soviet Foreign Minister pointed out this time that if "united Germany becomes a member of NATO, it will blow up perestroika. Our people will not forgive us. People will say that we ended up the losers, not the winners."⁷⁷ Evaluating the new role of

⁷⁵ *Ibidem*

⁷⁶ "Record of conversation between Mikhail Gorbachev and James Baker (with delegations), Moscow, May 18, 1990", in *National Security Archive* <https://shorturl.at/prwPY>

⁷⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 29-30

NATO that Washington was talking about, Gorbachev suggested that the USSR propose to join the Alliance because the U.S. “say that NATO is not directed against us”. Regarding CSCE, the two sides had also different perceptions. Baker admitted the U.S. opinion and said that “It’s nice to talk about pan-European security structures, the role of the CSCE. It is a wonderful dream, but just a dream. In the meantime, NATO already exists....” But Shevardnadze insisted that the CSCE process “is a reality. We have to think about European security structures that would not be based on blocs. We can create them.”⁷⁸

Soviet reticence was more a bargaining tactic, rather than an inflexible unwillingness to change its position hardly defended during the negotiation process. Both the Americans and the Germans realised that Soviet resistance was further weakening. By the end of May, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, after one of his latest meetings with Shevardnadze, believed that Russians are coming to terms with German membership of NATO and that their desire for CSCE summit this year gives the West leverage.”⁷⁹

At the Washington summit on May 31, the two superpowers’ leaders tried to settle the outstanding Cold War disputes: the division of Germany and Europe, significant reductions in the Soviet military threat to the West, and the transformation of the U.S. – Soviet relationship toward one of true cooperation. As Gorbachev was facing a political and economic crisis at home, he needed a successful summit, so the Bush administration meant to give him one. The states signed a trade pact, even though the Soviet Union had not relaxed its economic

⁷⁸ *Ibidem*

⁷⁹“Mr Hurd to Sir C.Mallaby (Bonn), No. 368 Telegraphic, Parts 1 and 2 [WRL 020/13], Confidential FCO, 29 May 1990, 10.05 a.m.” in *Documents on British Policy Overseas, Series III, Volume VII...*, p. 676

embargo against Lithuania, and pledged to reach agreements on reducing chemical weapons and strategic nuclear arms.

On the issue of Germany, Gorbachev confirmed that under the Helsinki Final Act, a united Germany would “decide on its own which alliance she would be a member of.”⁸⁰ Even though he implied that his preference is for a Germany with one foot in both NATO and the Warsaw Pact, Gorbachev made the concession that the Bush administration was waiting for. At the end of their meeting, both leaders agreed that the matter of alliance membership is, in accordance with the Helsinki Final Act, a matter for the Germans to decide.⁸¹ It was evident that Gorbachev gave his assent for a reunified Germany in NATO.

But after this summit, the West was again reminded of the instability of Soviet positions. At the second ministerial meeting of the Two Plus Four, Shevardnadze tabled a lengthy paper on elements for a final settlement that showed once again the USSR’s intransigence. Nevertheless, his display was intended to a great extent for domestic Soviet purposes and was not immutable.⁸² The Politburo was still dismayed by the loss of the Eastern European empire and the prospect of a reunified Germany in NATO. Besides, the growing domestic crisis made Gorbachev look less like a man in power and more like an embattled leader, as American Ambassador John Matlock claimed in a cable sent to the U.S.

⁸⁰ “Excerpt from the second conversation between M. S. Gorbachev and G. Bush, Washington, White House, May 31, 1990”, in *The National Security Archive - The Washington/Camp David Summit 1990: From the Secret Soviet, American and German Files* <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB320/11.pdf>

⁸¹“News Conference of President Bush and President Mikhail Gorbachev of the Soviet Union, 1990-06-03”, in *Public Papers of the Presidents...* <https://bush41library.tamu.edu/archives/public-papers/1946>

⁸²“Mr Hurd to Sir M.Alexander (UKDEL NATO), No. 149 Telegraphic [WRL 020/12], Confidential FCO, 23 June 1990”, in *Documents on British Policy Overseas, Series III, Volume VII...*,p.717

Department of State on May 1990.⁸³ Thus, Washington needed to publicize NATO's new approach towards the East in a context that would help Gorbachev gain domestic support. As the Washington high-level meeting seemed part of a Gorbachev political campaign, the NATO summit was expected to have the same effect in Moscow.

On July 5-6, 1990, right in the middle of the Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the NATO summit was held in London. President Bush believed that revamping NATO's public image would help the Soviet leader to defend himself at the Congress.⁸⁴ The NSC staff, working closely with a small group of State and Defense aides, prepared a succinct draft declaration before the NATO summit to support Gorbachev to prevail over his opponents at the CPSU Congress in the short term and convince the Soviet leader to accept a united Germany without significant restrictions on NATO in the longer term.⁸⁵ To avoid bureaucratic entanglement, the U.S. decided to hold the text closely, and have the President send it to fellow heads of state just days before the summit, allowing it to be negotiated only by foreign ministers and leaders at the summit itself.⁸⁶

The final Declaration underlined that a united Germany in the Atlantic Alliance of free democracies will be an indispensable factor of stability and proposed to the member states of the Warsaw Treaty Organization a joint declaration in which they would solemnly state that are no longer adversaries.

⁸³ “<<Gorbachev Confronts Crisis of Power>>”, Moscow 15714, Cable from U.S. Embassy Moscow to U.S. Department of State, 11 May 1990”, in *The National Security Archive* <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB320/01.pdf>

⁸⁴ Mary Elise Sarotte, “Perpetuating U. S. Preeminence: The 1990 Deals to “Bribe the Soviets Out” and Move NATO In”, in *International Security*, Vol. 35, No. 1, Summer 2010, p. 123 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40784649>

⁸⁵ *Ibidem*, p.128

⁸⁶ James A. Baker III, *op.cit.*, p. 258

Moreover, it called for completing the first treaty to reduce and limit conventional armed forces in Europe (CFE Treaty) and a more institutionalized CSCE.⁸⁷ The elements of the London Declaration managed to reach to Moscow. With concrete evidence that NATO had changed and European security structures were being strengthened, Gorbachev successfully emerged from Congress and win re-election as general secretary.

By the beginning of July, Germany and the United States offered the USSR political and economic incentives to make German membership in NATO more reasonable for the Soviet people who lost eastern Germany to the Western Alliance. Yet, Gorbachev still thought about alternatives other than a full NATO membership for a reunited Germany. There were many models of alliance membership like the French model, with non-integration into the military command or the Danish-Norwegian, with prohibitions on the stationing of foreign troops and nuclear weapons. To avoid such proposals from the USSR, Helmut Kohl sought an invitation to go to Russia so that he could negotiate a favourable final deal.

The agreement reached by Chancellor Kohl and Gorbachev on July 15-16, 1990, has brought about a sea change in the negotiations. Throughout their meeting, Gorbachev consented to full German sovereignty and membership in NATO. Anyway, he offered a compromise: the non-proliferation of NATO's military structures to the territory of the GDR and maintaining Soviet troops there for a certain transition period. Gorbachev told Kohl that "United Germany

⁸⁷Declaration on a Transformed North Atlantic Alliance, Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council ("The London Declaration"), 05 Jul. 1990 - 06 Jul. 1990", in *NATO* https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_23693.htm

is a member of NATO. De facto, the former territory of the GDR will not enter NATO's sphere of operation as long as Soviet troops are there."⁸⁸ The Chancellor found the concessions reasonable, even though he also agreed to reduce the size of the *Bundeswehr* to 370,000 troops within three to four years.⁸⁹

The breakthrough that had been achieved during the bilateral discussions was the product of an intense five months of meetings and bargaining, in which the United States had played a major role. During the Two plus Four Ministerial Meeting on July 17, Shevardnadze underlined the importance of the London NATO Declaration in making German membership of NATO acceptable.⁹⁰ Thus, all parties involved in the negotiations laid the groundwork for the German-Soviet deal.

As the terms of the final agreement seemed to be completely reached, there was a realistic prospect of wrapping the whole process up at the next Ministerial Meeting on September 12, 1990. Gathered in Moscow, all six ministers in the Two-Plus-Four process were ready to agree on the text of the final treaty on German unification. But a major problem has arisen at the very last minute of negotiations: NATO's future role in Germany. The Soviet side still insisted that, even after the withdrawal of their forces from GDR territory, non-German forces could neither be stationed nor deployed in that territory. This request created the same problem: would Germany be partly in NATO and partly not? To eliminate

⁸⁸“From the One-on-One Conversation of M.S. Gorbachev with H. Kohl, July 15, 1990”, in *National Security Archive* <https://shorturl.at/cFHRZ>

⁸⁹“Results of the Kohl-Gorbachev Talks (July 15-16, 1990)”, in *German History in Documents and Images: One Germany in Europe (1989-2009)* https://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/docpage.cfm?docpage_id=3290

⁹⁰“Mr Hurd to Sir M. Alexander (UKDEL NATO), No. 173 Telegraphic [WRL 020/12], Confidential FCO, 18 July 1990, 9.00 a.m.: Two plus Four Ministerial Meeting, Paris, 17 July”, in *Documents on British Policy Overseas, Series III, Volume VII...*, p. 729

the confusion, the U.S. came up with the idea of a written addendum to the treaty that would explain the meaning of the word “deployed”. As a result, the formal treaty would continue to state in Article 5 (3), as Moscow wanted, that foreign armed forces will not be stationed in Eastern Germany or deployed there following the completion of the Soviet armed forces. However, the new addendum or “agreed minute” to the treaty stipulated that “any question with respect to the application of the word “deployed... will be decided by the Government of a united Germany in a reasonable and responsible way.”⁹¹ It was a remarkable formulation and indeed may have constituted a unique case in international law, whereby the interpretation of an element of a multilateral treaty is left solely to the discretion of one signatory.⁹²

On October 3, 1990, Germany was able to unify as planned, with NATO’s full legal jurisdiction. The reunification prompted a seismic change in the European security system. A “Europe whole and free” was emerging as NATO reformed, CSCE started to be institutionalised and Warsaw Pact was about to dissolve. But, as James Baker asserted, “Almost every achievement contains within its success the seeds of a future problem”.⁹³ Years later, as NATO started its enlargement process, Russian officials accused Washington of breaking its promise not to expand NATO. In 1993, Russian President Boris Yeltsin wrote to U.S. President Bill Clinton that “the spirit of the Treaty on the Final Settlement with respect to Germany... precludes the option of expanding the NATO zone

⁹¹ “September 12 Two-Plus-Four Ministerial in Moscow: Detailed account [includes text of the Treaty on the Final Settlement with Respect to Germany and Agreed Minute to the Treaty on the special military status of the GDR after unification], November 2, 1990”, in *National Security Archives* <https://shorturl.at/hpvGI>

⁹² Robert L. Hutchings, *American Diplomacy and the End of the Cold War: An Insider's Account of US Diplomacy in Europe, 1989-1992*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997, p.139

⁹³ James A. Baker III, *op.cit.*, p. 84

into the East.”⁹⁴ In the 2010s, President Vladimir Putin declared that the West had lied to Russia about NATO expansion: “At one time we were promised that after Germany’s unification, NATO wouldn’t spread eastward.”⁹⁵ Even Mikhail Gorbachev argued that “the decision for the U.S. and its allies to expand NATO into the east... was definitely a violation of the spirit of the statements and assurances made to us in 1990”.⁹⁶

What is clear is that the February 1990 talks and the subsequent treaty for German reunification created confusion in Russian circles over what the United States promised. No deal was reached against NATO expansion, but the suggestions made by key political actors, such as Baker, Genscher and Kohl, in the initial phase of negotiations, were interpreted as pledges against NATO expansion. Moreover, the transformation of NATO into a more political alliance and the American efforts to engage the Soviet Union in the new European security architecture implied, in Moscow’s perception, the existence of a non-expansion deal.

Conclusions

Achieved within the context of an emergent new order in Europe and the transformation of its key institutions, the reunification of Germany resulted from ten months of intense bargaining that revealed the United States and Soviet

⁹⁴“Retranslation of Yeltsin letter on NATO expansion, September 15, 1993”, in *National Security Archives* <https://shorturl.at/pCLT2>

⁹⁵ David M. Herszenhorn, “Away From Show of Diplomacy in Geneva, Putin Puts On a Show of His Own”, in *The New York Times*, April 17, 2014 <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/18/world/europe/russia-ukraine.html>

⁹⁶ Maxim Kórshunov, “Mikhail Gorbachev: I am against all walls” in *Russia Beyond*, October 16, 2014 https://www.rbth.com/international/2014/10/16/mikhail_gorbachev_i_am_against_all_walls_40673.html

strategies for Europe and the whole post-Cold War world. Negotiating during a period in which both sides were determined to move beyond containment to an era of enduring cooperation, the two super-powers tried to overcome Europe's division and settled the disputes that were at the root of the Cold War conflict.

During the diplomacy surrounding German reunification, Washington attempted not just to secure German interests, but also the American ones. Aware of Moscow's weak positions, American officials used the process of German reunification to strengthen the United States' position in Europe after the Cold War. Rather than embracing the Soviets' ideas of new pan-European institutions, Washington preferred to maintain and adapt the NATO alliance in order to make sure the American presence would continue in Europe.

Without an effective and coherent strategy regarding Germany, the Soviet Union presented an ambivalent position during the process of German reunification. Even though Mikhail Gorbachev and Eduard Shevardnadze eventually realized that full German NATO membership was inevitable, they were constantly testing the West. But, the two inducements offered by the Federal Republic of Germany and the United States that consisted in financial aid and reforms of NATO, made the Soviets to finally accept the Western conditions.

The diplomacy of German reunification could be framed in the dynamic of rising and declining powers. The United States found itself in a strong position as the democratic wave was sweeping the Central and Eastern Europe, its economy was solid and the military was at a high degree of readiness after President Reagan started the build-up. In contrast, the Soviet Union witnessed the demise of its empire and the economic, social, and military problems were mounting. It is by no means surprising that Washington was able to achieve all of

its objectives without making any major concessions. Although the United States wanted to avoid a process of negotiations that would yield winners and losers, the long-term outcome proved the opposite. How the American officials have considered the security interest of Moscow at that time remain a source of tension and controversy even in today's relations between the United States and Russia.

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**Foreign policy of the Russian Federation: focus on the post-Soviet area
(1991 - 2000)**

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Keywords: Moscow, foreign relations, USSR, interconnection, zones of influence, politics, relations, buffer zones, conflicts, interests, strategies, resources;

Abstract: *The given work focuses primarily on researching the political situation following the collapse of the USSR and Russia's attempts at consolidation in the last decade of the 20th century. The approach to the subject is based on the theory of realism, examining the subject from the perspective of the Kremlin's interests in certain geographical areas and its mode of interaction with states in those regions. Thus, each region has represented and continues to represent a strategic area of interest for both Russia and other regional or global powers. Consequently, various strategies are anticipated, initiated, or carried out in approaching a particular state or group of states collectively. However, all these have also had a rather negative effect on the policies promoted by Moscow, especially in the case of certain states such as Azerbaijan. Moreover, certain events in the post-Soviet political arena have demonstrated the Kremlin's weakness in stabilizing situations that have spiraled out of control.*

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Introduction

The foreign policy analysis of the Russian Federation has always been an extensive topic of research and has been constantly approached by various researchers and analysts. The interest was even more pronounced after the outbreak of the conflict in Ukraine.

Evidently, after the breakup of the USSR, the Russian Federation placed itself in a rather uncomfortable position, being surrounded by a lot of new states, 14 in number, which forced a political reorientation, in terms of collaboration from equal to the newly emerged states. For this reason, one can state that in the context of 30 years since the breakup of the USSR, the Russian Federation, as the successor, had focused its attention on the post-Soviet space through several political, economic and social channels. The purpose of this research is to highlight the main directions of the Kremlin's foreign policy in the last decade of the 20th century.

For starters, I will delimit the three directions geographically, as to mislead and show the differences in making political decisions:

- I. European (Baltic countries, Belarus, Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova),
- II. Transcaucasian (Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and the Chechen Republic) and
- III. Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Tadjikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan).

All three areas are very important for the Russian Federation for political-military, economic and social reasons. As to Russia's foreign policy, the last decade of the 20th century should not be seen as imperial or dictatorial. The reason for this specific attitude towards it, as witnessed in the internal problems of the Russian state itself, will be illustrated further in my research.

I will be taking into account not only the ambitions of Moscow, but also those of the new state leaders and the society of their states. I will highlight from the beginning that the rhetoric of many of the newly created states has imposed certain problems for Moscow in its search for a common language of cooperation.

After the collapse of the USSR, the Russian Federation had trapped itself in its own past and Lenin's own socialist creation. The problem of the new political system in Moscow does not differ, for the most part, from the communist system, whilst also it is aware of its own problems; three more years would pass before a new constitution and new legislative bodies would be created to set the entire Russian state in motion. Until then, the Russian Federation would focus on domestic politics, at the same time trying to play the role of the "*good Samaritan*" externally, trying to improve the world situation and the general outset created by the communist regime in the previous years. This number of years gave the new states a period of time to create their own vision, rhetoric and ideology, uninfluenced by Moscow. This would later cause both political and social distancing.

Through all of the above I will be making some historical analogies between the rhetoric of the Russian Federation, the USSR and the Russian (Tsarist) Empire. These analogies will provide a better understanding of the

work. At the same time, the given work will be based on different primary and secondary, domestic and foreign sources. All the sources used in the work will serve as an aid for a harmonization of ideas and providing an overview of the situation as a whole.

An attempt to revive the USSR under a new democratic form?

First of all, in order to support a link between Moscow and the other states, the Kremlin had to create certain international organizations. The first organization was the Commonwealth of Independent States (hereafter CIS), created in 1991 and it intended to provide an alternative to the European Union, an analogy of the CIS with the USSR can be envisaged. The second organization is the Collective Security Treaty Organization (better known as CSTO), created in 1992, its purpose being seen in collective defense and as a counterweight to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization block (NATO), being an alternative to the Warsaw Pact.

According to the words of mr. Nazarin Sergiu: *"And although the CIS has proven to be an amorphous and ineffective hybrid, in the absence of a system of responsibilities for the fulfillment of assumed obligations, it continues to retain its priority in the foreign policy of the Russian Federation for strategic, economic and human reasons."*²

As for the international organizations established by the Russian Federation, they are expected to play a much more important role in the future.

² Nazarin Sergiu, *Federația Rusă în contextul proceselor politice internaționale contemporane*, Teză de doctorat, Chișinău, 2004 – [Nazarin Sergiu, *Russian Federation in the context of contemporary international political processes*, PhD thesis, Chisinau, 2004].

Each state on its own would decide to cooperate with Moscow in its own way. On the other hand, the CIS provides a platform for direct communication between leaders and a prerogative to support states in domestic economic relations. Such somewhat democratic control offered a possibility of surveillance.

Both agreements would evolve over several years, although the stages were entirely predictable. All the movements in the arena of international politics between the former Soviet republics were completely dictated by the same personnel who in one way or another were trained and raised by the communist system. The reason why other countries signed these agreements can be understood in the context of the tensions created. Thus, we arrive at the previous idea that all the presidents of the newly formed states came from the former communist political environment. A large part of them were trained and educated in Moscow. This required the new leaders of the states to direct their vision for a collaboration with a well-known regional actor. The evolution of the partnership being another matter, it differed from state to state, but the most important focus for the period of the 1990s was largely occupied by the cooperation between the Russian Federation and the former Soviet republics.

CIS represents, as the "Agreement on the establishment of the Commonwealth of Independent States" as itself declares, a strategic partnership in the economic and political fields, between the main founders: Republic of Belarus, Russian Federation and Ukraine.

The CIS automatically led to the definitive breakup of the USSR and the imposition of a new international community in a more democratic way, to which other states in the post-Soviet space will later join. Another fact which

warrants attention are the following words within the agreement: *"On the basis of the common historical character of our peoples and the ties that have developed between them, taking into account the bilateral treaties concluded between the High Parties Contracting Parties desiring to build democratic states governed by the rule of law, intending to develop their relations on the basis of mutual recognition and respect for national sovereignty ..."*³

We can distinguish the fact that the three founding states wanted a continuation of the already existing previous relations, obviously peacefully cooperating, in the closest possible way. But it can be highlighted that, apart from the actual organization, Moscow would negotiate separately (bilaterally) with the Minsk leadership regarding the creation of a new type of alliance, which will lead to the creation of the Union State at the end of the second millennium.⁴ As for Ukraine, there are many divergences; it does not compare to the Republic of Belarus for both political and social reasons.

In the case of the Republic of Belarus, political power has been taken over since 1994 by the current president, Alexander Lukashenko, who imposed an authoritarian leadership, but many researchers consider Lukashenko's regime as an authoritarian one with democratic aspects.

Ukraine, for its part, for essential reasons had a much different development, following the democratic model and offering greater freedom to society. The clear example of ideological diversity was expressed by the former president of Ukraine, Leonid Kravchuk, in the TV program "One to One" (June 1,

³ *Ibidem.*

⁴ Unitary State - Political, economic, social, military alliance between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus.

1997) said that the divergences between Russia and Ukraine are constantly visible, even during the signing agreements or treaties, they were not respected by any of the parties.⁵

As for the other countries that had joined the CIS, those would be: the Republic of Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tadjikistan and Turkmenistayn (*observing member*)⁶. Some of these countries would later withdraw from the organization for obvious reasons, such as Ukraine (2018)⁷ and Georgia (2009)⁹.¹⁰

As for the CSTO, this organization took its roots as early as 1992 on May 15, when the "*Collective Security Treaty*" was signed¹¹. The main theme of this collective security bloc would be addressed later, as it is also a problem for the policies promoted by Moscow. The CSTO currently includes the following states: Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation and

⁵ ВИДgital ViD, *Один на один 1997 (01.06.1997)*, YouTube, 2017 – [VIDgital ViD. (2017, October 20). *One on One 1997 (01.06.1997)*, YouTube, 2017] -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rta7wghmEZE>

⁶ Observer member since 2005, the reason for the definitive non-involvement in the organisation can be seen in the non-ratification of the agreement.

⁷ Офіційний портал Верховної Ради України, Новини, *Пленарне засідання Верховної Ради України (відео)*, 2022 - [Official portal of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, News, *Plenary session of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (video)*, 2022] -

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⁸ Annexation of the Crimean peninsula by the Russian Federation.

⁹ Захаров Владимир, *Грузия вышла из СНГ*, МГИМО, 2009 – [Vladimir Zakharov, *Georgia has left the CIS*, МГИМО, 2009] - <https://mgimo.ru/about/news/experts/118960/>

¹⁰ The Five-Day War (Georgian War) between Georgia and separatist forces (Abkhazia and South Ossetia) supported by the Russian Federation.

¹¹ Организация Договора о коллективной безопасности, *Меморандум о повышении эффективности Договора о коллективной безопасности от 15 мая 1992 года и его адаптации к современной геополитической ситуации*, 2012 - [Collective Security Treaty Organisation, *Memorandum on Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Collective Security Treaty of 15 May 1992 and its Adaptation to the Current Geopolitical Situation*, 2012]-

https://odkb-csto.org/documents/documents/memorandum_o_povyshenii_effektivnosti_dogovora_o_kollektivnoy_bezопасnosti_ot_15_maya_1992_goda_i_eg/

Tajikistan. The following states were also part of the organization: Azerbaijan (1993 - 1999 – The exit took place due to the lack of coordination between Baku and Moscow regarding the situation around the Republic of Artsakh)¹², Georgia (1993 - 1999)¹³ and Uzbekistan (1992 – 1999¹⁴; 2006 - 2012 - the exit from the organization takes place due to the problematic discussion regarding cooperation with Afghanistan)¹⁵.

Eastern Europe– Belarus, Ukraine, Republic of Moldova

As I stated, the first part I will be focusing on Moscow's foreign policy regarding the European area. The most obvious challenge for the given region is the different evolution of relations between Moscow and each individual state. Accordingly, the main partner state of the Russian Federation after the breakup of the USSR was and is, as of now, the Republic of Belarus.

After the collapse of the USSR, political-administrative problems arose in several states, which provided the Kremlin with an effective lever to act on its new neighbors, through active involvement in the political life of the given states.

The Republic of Belarus, in turn, was seen as Moscow's most appropriate partner for several reasons. This is not due to the remaining communist political model, but to a common historical ideology. Starting with the Russian Empire,

¹² Н.С. Ниязов, *ВЗАИМООТНОШЕНИЯ АЗЕРБАЙДЖАНА И ОДКБ В 1994–2011* гг., в ВЕСТНИК ТОМСКОГО ГОСУДАРСТВЕННОГО УНИВЕРСИТЕТА, 2011, №4(16) - [N.S. Niyazov, *IMPLEMENTATION OF AZERBAIJAN AND CSTO IN 1994-2011*, in VESTRIC OF TOMSK STATE UNIVERSITY, 2011, No. 4(16)] - <https://vital.lib.tsu.ru/vital/access/services/Download/vtls:000789075/SOURCE1?view=true>

¹³ *Ibidem.*

¹⁴ *Ibidem.*

¹⁵ И. Карташов, *Узбекистан заявил о выходе из ОДКБ*, Российская Газета, 2012 – [И. Kartashov, *Uzbekistan announced its withdrawal from the CSTO*, Rossiyskaya Gazeta, 2012] - <https://rg.ru/2012/06/29/uzbekistan-site.html>

the territories of the state of Belarus began to be fully integrated into the composition of the state of the empire, completing the total integration only at the end of the 18th century, through the partition of Poland in 1795¹⁶. The same culture, language, way of thinking and other socio-cultural elements favored the accommodation of the society itself. The coming to power of the communists and the reform of the state, led to a political reformulation in the space of the former Tsarist Empire. The provision of its own administration, but controlled by Moscow, laid the foundations for the creation of a new society.

In turn, the independence of Belarus is seen as a desire of the elite rather than the people, who woke up overnight in a new state. Paradoxically, the leadership in Minsk was quite loyal to the Kremlin and during the 1990s Moscow would create an official alliance with Minsk, created on the basis of several bilateral treaties¹⁷, which in the future would leave its mark on the history of both states and lead to the creation of the Union State. Like the CIS and CSTO organizations, the alliance between Russia and Belarus would develop over the years, beginning in 1995 and ending in 1999, where the alliance's final foundations are laid. The pact, obviously, represents an alliance of necessity more

¹⁶ *Россия – Беларусь: из истории взаимоотношений*, Президентская Библиотека Имени Б.Н. Ельцина – [*Russia - Belarus: from the History of Relations*, Boris Yeltsin Presidential Library] - <https://www.prlib.ru/collections/1879500>

¹⁷ *История Союзного государства*, Посольство Республики Беларусь в Российской Федерации - [*History of the Union State*, Embassy of the Republic of Belarus in the Russian Federation.] - https://russia.mfa.gov.by/ru/bilateral_relations/sojuz/#:~:text=%D0%94%D0%BE%D0%B3%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%BE%D1%80%20%D0%BE%20%D1%81%D0%BE%D0%B7%D0%B4%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%B8%20%D0%A1%D0%BE%D1%8E%D0%B7%D0%BD%0%BE%D0%B3%D0%BE%20%D0%B3%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%83%D0%B4%D0%B0%D1%80%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B2%D0%B0.%D0%91%D0%B5%D0%BB%D0%B0%D1%80%D1%83%D1%81%D1%8C%20%D0%BE%D0%BE%20%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%B8%D0%B7%D0%B0%D1%86%D0%B8%D0%B8%20%D0%B5%D0%B3%D0%BE%20%D0%BE%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%BE%D0%B6%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%B9

on the part of Moscow. The Kremlin was looking for a much closer land route to the Kaliningrad region.

Therefore, another context can be added, oriented towards a geo-strategic vision represented by the Republic of Belarus, on whose territory is the only land route to Europe (not crossed by rivers or mountains), located between the Daugava River (which passes through Latvia and Belarus) and the Dnieper River (which passes through Ukraine and Belarus). The only strip of land passes through the corridor formed between the cities of Vitebsk - Orsha. Under the given conditions, the Republic of Belarus represents the most important strategic bridge of the Russian Federation in the direction of the European plain.

Moving on to the relations between Moscow and Kiev, we see a complete difference from the previous relationship between Moscow and Minsk. This is characterized by several problems, the main one being seen in the Ukrainian elites and the history of this state. First of all, we can highlight the fact that Ukraine would not go the route Belarus took and would not sign treaties of alliance and cooperation, and moreover would not ratify the agreement on the CIS Charter, which obviously meant a disagreement between the states. In particular, current events have revealed a leadership problem in Kiev; in other words, after the collapse of the USSR a Pandora's box was opened, revealing a real problem with previous decisions made by the Moscow leadership during the communist period.

However, Moscow forced Kiev to sign the *Budapest Memorandum*¹⁸ from 1994. According to the memorandum, the following states: the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, guaranteed the territorial integrity and independence of Ukraine on the condition that it returns the Soviet nuclear weapons stationed on its territory.¹⁹ It was clear that at the time of signing the memorandum, no one foresaw the emergence of a conflict between the Russian Federation and Ukraine. However, Ukraine's surrender of its nuclear weapons to Russia was a major victory for the Kremlin. From independence until the early 2000s, Ukraine and the Russian Federation were perceived both externally and internally as allied states.

Since the Republic of Moldova does not have a direct border with the Russian Federation, Chisinau is not seen and has not been seen by Moscow as a major enemy or an extremely powerful adversary. Again, to maintain its influence over Chisinau, the Kremlin would use the confrontation on the Dniester between Tiraspol and Chisinau to form political leverage over the years.²⁰ Added to this is the leverage effect in the energy sector, largely created during the Soviet period. For the most part, with the exception of the 1992 Dniester conflict, Russian foreign policy does not focus on Chisinau, nor was it considered in the

¹⁸ Министерство иностранных дел Российской Федерации, *Меморандум о гарантиях безопасности в связи с присоединением Украины к Договору о нераспространении ядерного оружия, Международный договор, 1994* - [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, *Memorandum on Security Assurances in Connection with Ukraine's Accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, International Treaty, 1994*] - <https://www.mid.ru/upload/medialibrary/fe3/%D0%BL.%D0%BC%D0%B5%D0%BC%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B4%D1%83%D0%BC.pdf>

¹⁹ Ibidem.

²⁰ Elena Nistor, *Războiul de pe Nistru: cauze, actori, consecințe*, în STUDIUM: Revista studenților, masteranzilor și doctoranzilor în istorie, 2017, nr. 10 - [Elena Nistor, *The War on the Dniester: causes, actors, consequences*, in STUDIUM: Journal of students, masters and doctoral students in history, 2017, no. 10]/

plan in this regard. The Dniester Moldavian Republic represents in itself a coordination bridge between Moscow and Chisinau. This frozen conflict is a way of influencing the given region.

As for the Baltic states (Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia), here the foreign policy of the Russian Federation failed. First of all, it took shape in the social and historical conflicts between the Baltic states and the Russian Federation. According to surveys conducted in 2000, all three independent states had *a negative attitude about Soviet socialism and a return to it*.²¹ As stated from the beginning, the historical context and the ideological confrontation would lead to the formation of a new society, based on other principles and morals in the Baltic states, which would automatically lead to a distancing from Russia. Despite the given fact, the parties have signed certain treaties since the proclamation of independence, called "*Treaties on the basis of inter-state relations*".²² Otherwise, the politics between the Baltic states and the Russian Federation during the 1990s is characterized as stagnant, the complexity of the situation being exacerbated by the fact that the countries were starting to join the NATO bloc, which would obviously lead to a deterioration of bilateral relations between states.²³

²¹ Татьяна Игнаточкина, Очир Манджиков, *Россия и страны Балтии*, Россия В Глобальной Политике, 2003 - [Tatiana Ignatochkina, Ochir Manjikov, *Russia and the Baltic States*, Russia in Global Politics, 2003] - <https://globalaffairs.ru/articles/rossiya-i-strany-baltii/>

²² Электронный фонд правовых и нормативно-технических документов, *Договор об основах межгосударственных отношений Российской Советской Федеративной Социалистической Республики и Эстонской Республики от 12 января 1991* - [Electronic Fund of Legal and Regulatory-Technical Documents, *Treaty on the Basis of Interstate Relations between the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic and the Republic of Estonia of 12 January 1991*] - <https://docs.cntd.ru/document/1901980>

²³ С. С. Бойков, *Evolution of Russian foreign policy towards the Baltic States at the present Stage*. Post-Soviet Issues, 2020, No.7(3) - <https://doi.org/10.24975/2313-8920-2020-7-3-389-406>

The Caucasus – a buffer zone between the Russian Federation and the Near East

As for the states in the Caucasus region, focus should be drawn to the geographical and social problems of the region as a whole, which from the very beginning would be exploited in the relations between the Kremlin and the states in the region. From Ivan the Terrible to the present day, the region presents an area of major interest from several points of view. Some of the arguments given, which were mostly highlighted by the two world wars, were military control of communication and transport arteries, thus having control over the entire region²⁴. The aspirations for liberation and independence led to quite large sacrifices behind these conscious desires.

The year 1991 offered a huge chance for the 3 newly formed states, however, this area became a buffer that separated NATO (Turkey) and the Russian Federation. Apart from the geographical problem of this territory, there is also another issue outlined at the ethnic-cultural level, especially the division between the Armenian and Azeri, Abkhaz and Georgian, Ossetian peoples. The small enclave states, within others, created during the USSR, had a major impact in the regional politics of this territory, starting from 1991.

From the three official states - Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia - to the three unrecognized states - Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Artsakh, they interconnect the interests of each individual actor. The situation should be looked

²⁴ И.В. Бочарников, *Кавказская политика России в X–XX веках*, в Научно-исследовательский центр проблем национальной безопасности, Москва, 2013 - [I.V. Bocharnikov, *Caucasian Policy of Russia in the X-XX centuries*, in Research Centre for National Security Problems, Moscow, 2013].

at as a whole, especially when it comes to the relations between the three states and the conflicts between them, only later bringing into the equation the interest of Moscow and its interest to keep the conflicts in a frozen state. Only first I will be drawing attention to another player, already non-existent in the region, which had left a rather bloody imprint on the entire Russian Federation, the Chechen Republic of Iziceria.

The declaration of independence of the Chechen Republic of Icikeria can be seen as a blow to the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation. The future of this state would set a precedent that could lead to a demand for independence from other entities of the Russian Federation.

I would like to point out that the first campaign against the Chechen Republic of Icikeria, represented a total failure of the Russian military forces, especially after the loss of control over the city of Grozny. It is unusual that this loss forced the Kremlin leadership to look for ways to resolve the conflict peacefully. Under the given conditions, on August 31, 1996, the *Khasavyurt Agreement* was signed, ending the military operation and the withdrawal of the Russian military from the republic.

The agreement provided for the cessation of fire and the de-escalation of the situation in the region, while at the same time it provided for the creation of new principles to clarify the relations between the two states; one of the points of these principles stipulated the following: *An agreement on the basis of relations between the Russian Federation and the Chechen Republic of Icikera, established in accordance with the generally recognized principles and norms of international law, is to*

be concluded before December 31, 2001.²⁵ This directly points to a possible rekindling of the conflict, turning it from frozen to hot.

It only represented peace for a short time. The official status of the republic was still quite fragile, due to the non-recognition of any other international organization (only the leader of Georgia, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, recognized the republic, but at the time of recognition, for the beginning of 1992, in Georgia was under a coup d'état)²⁶. Such an international political settlement gave the Kremlin freedom domestically to create a new strategic plan and avoid previous mistakes.

The second military campaign against the republics began on September 30, 1999. According to official data, the leadership in Grozny lost control of the army and terrorist groups.²⁷ The campaign itself lasted for 9 months, but officially ended on 16 April 2009, following the completion of the anti-terrorist operation. Despite this, there were still numerous terrorist formations in the region waging guerrilla warfare.²⁸

Another problem in this space is represented by the quasi-states that were unrecognized at that time, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Both states declared their

²⁵ В.П. Романов, *ПРИНЦИПЫ определения основ взаимоотношений между Российской Федерацией и Чеченской Республикой*, БИБЛИОТЕКА ХРОНОСА - [V.P. Romanov, *PRINCIPLES for determining the basis of relations between the Russian Federation and the Chechen Republic*, CHRONOSA BIBLIOTECA] - http://hrono.ru/libris/lib_r/wh_book28.php

²⁶ *Кто признал дудаевскую Республику Ичкерия*, Рамблер/Новости, 2018 - [*Who recognised Dudayev's Republic of Ichkeria*, Rambler/News, 2018.] - <https://news.rambler.ru/other/40962060-kto-priznal-dudaevskuyu-respubliku-ichkeriya/>

²⁷ Aleksei KUDRIAVTSEV, *WAHHABISM: RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM IN THE NORTHERN CAUCASUS*, Central Asia and the Caucasus - <https://ca-c.org/wahhabism-religious-extremism-in-the-northern-caucasus/>

²⁸ *В Чечне после отмены режима КТО произошло боестолкновение*, Кавказский Узел, 2009 - [*There was fighting in Chechnya after the cancellation of the KTO regime*, Kavkazsky Uzel, 2009] - <https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/153047>

independence after the collapse of the USSR. Obviously, such a unilateral decision was not in agreement with the leadership in Tbilisi. It would also lead to some ethnic conflicts and mass cleansing.²⁹

The context of the conflict was the integration of the territories into the Georgian state and the end of separatism. In order to end the military conflict and not to lose their desired independence, Georgian military forces were stopped by a counter-offensive by Abkhaz military forces, supported by Chechen mercenaries. The Kremlin intervened in this war, officially to stop the bloodshed in the region, the reason being also the significant non-participation of Russian troops apart from humanitarian missions. Moreover, Moscow has positioned itself as a mediator between the two states, offering a platform to regulate the problems that have arisen.³⁰ The given actions represent a freezing of the conflict for an indefinite period, which would be seen later.

In the case of Georgia, the Russian Federation had been deeply involved in resolving the internal situation, where an uprising broke out as early as 1991 (after independence). Following multiple battles both internally and against separatist republics, Georgia's defense forces were no longer capable of fighting on two fronts, which directly forced the then-president of Georgia, Eduard Shevardnadze, to ask the Russian Federation to intervene in the conflict and help Georgia avoid imminent defeat. Moscow, seeing this as a clear possibility to

²⁹ Tracey German, *Abkhazia and South Ossetia: Collision of Georgian and Russian Interests*, in *Russie Nei Visions*, IFRI, 2006, No.11 - <https://www.ifri.org/en/publications/notes-de-lifri/russieneivisions/abkhazia-and-south-ossetia-collision-georgian-and>

³⁰ Х.Д. Гицба, *Война в Абхазии в 1992-1993 гг. и политика России*, в ИСТОРИЧЕСКИЙ ЖУРНАЛ: НАУЧНЫЕ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ, 2017, № 5 - [H.D. Gitsba, *The war in Abkhazia in 1992-1993 and Russian policy*, in HISTORICAL JOURNAL: SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH, 2017, No. 5].

realize its plan of influence over Georgia, proposed the latter to take part in the CIS. Georgia, having no other way out of the situation, supported the idea, thus giving the Russian army a military base on its territory.³¹

Military confrontations continued, but on a much smaller scale, finally ending with the signing of the *Moscow Agreement on a Ceasefire and Separation of Forces of 14 May 1994*³²³³. As for the period up to the 2000s, it remains quite tense for the region. Speaking of the conflict between Georgia and South Ossetia, the situation closely resembles the actions surrounding the Abkhaz issue.

As for the regional issue between Armenia and Azerbaijan, here the Kremlin's role is seen primarily as a negotiator and peacemaker. The geopolitical struggle in the given region was fought between the Russian Federation on one side and Turkey on the other, both playing the role of intermediaries and supporting its ally.³⁴ Because of this, Moscow's problem lies particularly in the fact that it does not have a direct border with Armenia, which makes it difficult to provide military aid to the latter. The main problem in the region being seen by

³¹ В. Колбаиа, И. Хаиндрава, Н. Сарджвеладзе, Е. Чомахидзе, А. Гегешидзе, *ГАРАНТИИ ПО НЕВОЗОБНОВЛЕНИЮ БОЕВЫХ ДЕЙСТВИЙ: ОПАСЕНИЯ В КОНТЕКСТЕ ГРУЗИНО-АБХАЗСКИХ ВЗАИМООТНОШЕНИЙ*, GFSIS, Тбилиси, 2009 - [В. Kolbaia, I. Khaindrava, N. Sarjveladze, E. Chomakhidze, A. Gegeshidze, *WARRANTS FOR UNRECOVERY OF BATTLE ACTIONS: Dangers in the context of the Georgian-Abkhaz Relationship*, GFSIS, Tbilisi, 2009].

³² Orig. - Соглашение о прекращении огня и разъединении сил, подписанное в Москве 4 апреля 1994 года

³³ Civil Georgia, *Московское соглашение о прекращении огня и разъединении сил от 1994 г.*, 2008 - [Civil Georgia, *Moscow Ceasefire and Separation of Forces Agreement of 1994*, 2008] - <https://civil.ge/ru/archives/172279>

³⁴ Ш.Н. Саламов, *КАРАБАХСКИЙ КОНФЛИКТ: ИСТОКИ - ПРИЧИНЫ - ПОСЛЕДСТВИЯ*, Бишкек, 2018 – [SH.N. Salamov, *KARABAKH CONFLICT: SOURCES - CAUSES - CONSEQUENCES*, Bishkek, 2018].

both sides, in the existence of the Republic of Artsakh, both Yerevan and Baku saw the given region as a part of its territory.

As a result, the entire region remains a politically unstable area with three frozen conflicts, in which Moscow managed to play directly through the interests of each state, which would also lead to a deterioration of political ties.

Central Asia – an area of major interest to world powers

Looking at Central Asia and the states of the region, it should be noted that the interaction of newly formed states such as Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Tadjikistan with the Russian Federation was seen from the beginning as rather unipolar, in the sense that the leaders of these states were, in a word, loyal to the Kremlin. The main problem arises in the relationship between each individual state.

The words of Maria Lipman (Russian political scientist and journalist), say the following: *Independence fell on the countries of Central Asia like a snowball: at first, the citizens of the newly formed countries could not understand at all what was happening and why the usual Soviet order had collapsed suddenly. In that initial period, it was not clear on what basis the new statehood in the region would be built; will the local (Soviet) elites be able to retain power or will they be overthrown by new forces; local secular regimes will remain; to whom will they direct their foreign policy?*³⁵ In the first stage after the breakup, society was in a perplexed state.

³⁵ Мария Липман, *Центральная Азия и внешние державы*, Pro et Contra, Москва, 2013 - [Maria Lipman, *Central Asia and External Powers*, Pro et Contra, Moscow, 2013] - https://carnegieendowment.org/files/ProEtContra_58_all.pdf

The new leaders, the confrontation with the opposition and other problems have propelled a very harsh policy of the leaders in the region, especially in the case of opponents: *Nursultan Nazarbaev dealt harshly with political opponents; Islam Karimov was credited with brutally suppressing the popular uprising in Andijan. In Turkmenistan, especially under the leadership of Saparmurad Niyazov, the political regime became a surrealist anti-utopia. Tadjikistan's leader, Emomali Rahmon, came to power following a civil war between clans. Although his experience as a Soviet manager (at the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union he was director of the Lenin State Farm in the Dangara district of the Tajik SSR) did not prepare Rakhmon for this challenge, he managed - with the help of Russia - to end the war and subsequently, to maintain peace in Tajikistan through repeated escalation of the conflict.*³⁶

Whilst on the topic of the Kremlin's interest in the given area, I'd like to first approach the economic and political interests. This is also where the battle for natural resources comes in: the Russian Federation is not in a position to dictate its own rules, and the surrounding states are interested in pursuing their own economic policy, calling on other surrounding states that are interested in these resources.

On the other hand, the Kremlin would rely heavily on the leaders who remain in office to consolidate its apparent economic and political dominance in the region.³⁷ At the same time, various bilateral and cooperation treaties, which I mentioned at the beginning, would be concluded.

³⁶ Ibidem.

³⁷ Bobo Lo, *Frontiers New and Old: Russia's policy in Central Asia*, in *Russie Nei Visions*, IFRI, 2015, No. 82 - <https://www.ifri.org/en/publications/notes-de-lifri/russieneivisions/frontiers-new-and-old-russias-policy-central-asia>

Quintessentially, the states of the Central Asian region prevail over the other states listed above not only by its history but also by ethnic and social reasons totally different from the European side. While the Caucasian states seek a way out of the problematic situations by appealing to the political power of the Russian Federation and other European states, the Turkish states, apart from Tadjikistan, prefer interstate cooperation. This cooperation can itself be seen through the multiple ethnic enclaves located on the territories of other states.³⁸ The respective enclaves, in turn, imposed certain problems between the states and even led to the development of cross-border conflicts, which goes against the idea mentioned above, but given conflicts are seen as socio-economic problems and nothing more.³⁹

Talking about the bilateral relations between Moscow and each individual state, we should start with Kazakhstan – the largest state in terms of size in the region and which represents a buffer zone between the rest of Central Asia and the Russian Federation.

The main treaty concluded between Moscow and Astana provides for military cooperation between the states and commitments on nuclear weapons, located on the territory of Kazakhstan.⁴⁰ According to this bilateral agreement

³⁸ КОЧЕВНИК, *ПОГРАНИЧНЫЕ КОНФЛИКТЫ ЦЕНТРАЛЬНОЙ АЗИИ* [Video], YouTube, 2022 - [СОСНЕВИЧ, *Border Conflicts of Central Asia* [Video], YouTube, 2022] - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=upG4sjT9y9c>

³⁹ БОЯРКИНА Оксана, *Конфликты в Средней Азии На примере Ферганской долины*, в Свободная мысль, 2017, н. 1 - [Oksana BOYARKINA, *Conflicts in Central Asia On the Example of the Fergana Valley*, in Svobodnaya Mysl, 2017, n. 1] - https://elibrary.az/docs/jurnal/jrn2017_257.pdf

⁴⁰ *Договор между Российской Федерацией и Республикой Казахстан о военном сотрудничестве*, Электронный фонд правовых и нормативно-технических документов - [Teaty between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Kazakhstan on Military Cooperation, Electronic Fund of Legal and Regulatory-Technical Documents] - <https://docs.cntd.ru/document/1900516>

signed on 28th of March 1994, the parties are committed to military aid, border security and such. Also in the given agreement it is stipulated that the Russian Federation, according to article no. 4⁴¹, that Moscow will repay in financial form or in some other form equivalent to the buyback of nuclear weapons. Another rather important agreement for the Russian Federation concerns the leasing of the Baikonur Cosmodrome.⁴² These and other agreements were signed and ratified between the two states required political, military and economic cooperation to be maintained at a fairly high level. In conclusion, Kazakhstan itself represents a rather fragile area for the Russian Federation from a geopolitical point of view. Because of this, the Kremlin must constantly take into account Astana's international policy.

As for other states in the region, Moscow's interests are not so significant here; totalitarian or semi-totalitarian regimes favor the harmonious construction of political elites. Economic and military cooperation normalized the situation between the new states and Moscow. It can be seen that after 1991 and until the beginning of the new millennium, a significant part of the elite supported the policies proposed by the Kremlin in their perspective.⁴³

⁴¹ Ibidem.

⁴² *Соглашение между Российской Федерацией и Республикой Казахстан об основных принципах и условиях использования космодрома "Байконур"*, Электронный фонд правовых и нормативно - технических документов - [Agreement between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Kazakhstan on the Basic Principles and Conditions of Use of the Baikonur Cosmodrome, Electronic Fund of Legal, Regulatory and Technical Documents] - <https://docs.cntd.ru/document/1902968>

⁴³ Калинина О. Н., Россия и Центральная Азия: региональное сотрудничество в сфере безопасности, Известия Уральского государственного университета. Сер. 2, Гуманитарные науки, 2011, № 4 (96) - [Kalinina, O. N., *Russia and Central Asia: Regional Security Cooperation*, in *Izvestiya Ural'skogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta*. Ser. 2, Humanities, 2011, No. 4 (96)] - <https://elar.urfu.ru/bitstream/10995/18789/1/iurg-2011-96-05.pdf>

However, interests changed over the decade; apparently, the emergence of new local or regional powers forced a change in the foreign policy of these states. Basically, the previously mentioned international actors, such as Iran and Turkey, stand out from the rest because they have sought and are seeking geopolitical allies in the international arena to strengthen their own statehood. On the other hand, another international actor of a higher order than Iran and Turkey, namely China, is emerging in the region.

Conclusion

After the collapse of the USSR, Moscow had to rethink the main areas of interaction with its new neighbors. Since many leaders were elected by the overwhelming majority of the population, they were, in a sense, part of the previously controlled political apparatus in Moscow. For these reasons, Boris Yeltsin's policy was aimed at solving the situation in society and strengthening his capacity for power in the former territories. It is obvious that the newly formed state had two main problems. The first would be the nuclear weapons located on the territory of independent states, which endangered not only the Russian Federation, but also the entire planet. While the second problem would be as an attempt to normalize the situation around him, de-escalate and impose own policy in a new stage of history. Another variable can be added here based on finding local allies and the future creation of control points, such as Transnistria in the case of the European region, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh in the Caucasus region. Central Asia has its own territorial problems and is also a sphere of influence for Moscow.

The period of the 90s for the Russian Federation represented both an internal and external struggle, Moscow not having at its disposal the multitude of levers that the USSR had. Thus, from a world power it turned into a regional power with internal and external problems, especially after the rise of NATO. Discomfort has intensified since the collapse of the USSR, as the political space at the international level has expanded, and the Russian Federation no longer has the opportunity to act in all possible ways. From this point of view, the void left by Moscow will be occupied by other regional powers, as has already happened with Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, the Baltic states and others.

This distinction between the policies of some states loyal to Moscow and others considered Russophobic is characterized by a single aspect; and here arises the basic problem of how to see Russophobia and Russophilia - for ordinary people who do not interfere in state affairs, the Russian Federation was not seen as a relevant enemy, especially in difficult periods of universal history.

To conclude this analysis, it is correct to talk about the reasons for the emergence of interstate relations. In the period after 1945 and throughout the Cold War, Moscow acted cautiously, creating economic links between the center and the periphery in various ways. Thus, many states found themselves directly or indirectly linked to Moscow in one way or another from an economic point of view. The most obvious of these links can be traced back to the creation of gas pipelines. The economy of each republic within the USSR was its own, but linked to Russian resources.

Another aspect, which strongly determined the communist period, was the formation and creation of a rather extensive bureaucracy. For this reason,

many of those who came to power after the collapse of the USSR went through the same school of thought. Under these conditions, there is a direct or indirect connection between the leaders persisted during that period. Another reason can be seen in the social factor and in the orientation towards a possible patronage of Russia for a short period of reconstruction of the respective states.

Reform of Diplomacy. Toward diplomacy's reform?

Ioan Voicu¹

Keywords: diplomacy, international relations reform, UN, negotiations

Abstract

*The scientific literature about diplomacy is becoming increasingly extensive globally, although its quality is quite rare at the level required by substantial intellectual criteria. However, we can positively mention that in 2023, a new comprehensive book signed by Paul Webster Hare, Juan Luis Manfredi-Sánchez, and Kenneth Weisbrode as Editors, under the title **The Palgrave Handbook of Diplomatic Reform and Innovation**, appeared in the publishing house Palgrave Macmillan. The book has 758 pages covering 36 chapters as follows:*

Part I Introduction; Diplomacy the Neglected Global Issue: Why Diplomacy Needs to Catch Up with the World; Part II State of Diplomacy; The Closing of the Diplomatic Mind; A Diplomatic Taxonomy for the New World Disorder; Knowledge Diplomacy: A Conceptual Analysis; Why Reforms Are Needed in Bilateral Diplomacy: A Global South Perspective; Part III Politicization of Diplomacy; Diplomats and Politicization; Digital Diplomacy and International Society in the Age of Populism; Withering Ministry of

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Foreign Affairs: Evidence from China; South Africa and its Foreign Alignment and Practice: From Hope to Dashed Expectations; Part IV Reforming Institutions; From Great Expectations to Dwindling Status: Brazilian Diplomacy's Response to Post-Cold War Upheavals; Crisis Prevention and Stabilization Made in Germany: Meeting the Demands of Modern Diplomacy? Integrated Statecraft and Australia's Diplomacy; African Union Reform: Challenges and Opportunities; What Motivates South Korea's Diplomatic Reform and Innovation? The Transformations of French Diplomacy; Part V Digital Revolution and Diplomatic Reform; Digital Diplomacy in the Time of the Coronavirus Pandemic: Lessons and Recommendations; Exploring the Usefulness of Artificial Intelligence for Diplomatic Negotiations: Two Case Studies; Beyond Meeting and Tweeting: The Next Challenges for Innovation in Diplomacy; Disinformation and Diplomacy; Digitalizing South American MFAs: Reform and Resistance ;

Part VI Multilateral Diplomacy and Innovation; Toward a More Credible Multilateralism at the United Nations: A Few Practical Steps; A New Logic of Multilateralism on Demand; About Spheres of Influence; Regional Diplomacy and Its Variations: Change and

Innovation; Why Collective Diplomacy Needs to Embrace Innovation; Innovating International Cooperation for Development: A New Model for Partnerships Between Developed and Middle-Income Countries; The UAE's Innovative Diplomacy: How the Abraham Accords Changed (or Did Not Change) Emirati Foreign Policy; Small States: From Intuitive to Smart Diplomacy; Urban Diplomacy: How Cities Will Leverage Multilateralism; Reforming Global Health Diplomacy in the Wake of COVID-19 ;

The Reform of Humanitarian Diplomacy; Geoeconomic Diplomacy: Reforming the Instrumentalization of Economic Interdependencies and Power; Science Diplomacy with

Diplomatic Relations to Facilitate Common-Interest Building; Climate Diplomacy for a 1.5 Degree World; Global Diplomacy and Multi-stakeholderism: Does the Promise of the 2030 Agenda Hold? Conclusions.

We have enumerated the titles of all the chapters of the book to offer a panoramic view of the whole volume, familiarizing the readers of this article with the integral content of this excellent collective research and underlining the complexity of any serious analysis dedicated to the reform of diplomacy during an era characterized by global vulnerabilities, perplexities, and discontinuities.

But how can diplomacy be reformed when it is experiencing a serious crisis, both at the bilateral and multilateral levels, and how can the crisis of diplomacy itself be defined?

A diplomacy crisis can be defined as a state of significant challenges, breakdowns, or shortcomings in the practice and effectiveness of diplomatic efforts and processes. It refers, in fact, to a situation in which traditional diplomatic approaches and mechanisms cannot adequately address or resolve complex international issues, mainly existing conflicts.

Any attentive observer will see that the international system constantly evolves, with power dynamics, alliances, and emerging issues reshaping the geopolitical landscape. Rapid and significant technological, economic, and political changes present new challenges that traditional diplomatic structures and practices may struggle to adapt to, but without real success.

Moreover, several current global challenges, such as climate change, terrorism, nuclear proliferation, and cybersecurity, have become increasingly complex and interconnected. Life shows that these multifaceted issues require

genuine and sustainable diplomatic solutions that go beyond simple traditional state-to-state negotiations and involve a wide range of stakeholders, including non-state actors, multinational corporations, and civil society organizations.

It is a truism that trust is a fundamental element of diplomacy, but practice demonstrates that it can be frequently eroded by factors such as historical conflicts, ideological differences, misinformation, and the perception of biased or unfair diplomatic practices. When trust is undermined or compromised, it becomes harder to establish meaningful dialogue and cooperation between nations, with several consequences seriously hindering diplomatic efforts.

Even a short but objective scrutiny of international life shows that the global surge in populism and nationalism has led to more inward-looking policies encouraging a unilateral focus on national interests over multilateral international cooperation. This trend risks further strain diplomatic relations and affects the ability to find mutually beneficial solutions to shared unprecedented problems.

Diplomatic efforts can frequently reach an impasse, where negotiations stagnate, trust breaks down, or conflicting parties refuse to engage in dialogue or continue it. These deadlocks can lead to heightened tensions, escalations, or even the use of force, further exacerbating the diplomacy crisis.

Under current circumstances, technological advancements, particularly in communication and information dissemination, have positive and negative impacts on diplomacy. While they offer new opportunities for more effortless engagement and dialogue, they also enable disinformation campaigns,

cyberattacks, and the manipulation of public opinion, creating supplementary difficulties for diplomats.

Addressing the diplomacy crisis more practically requires innovative approaches, adaptive strategies, and a strong commitment to multilateralism. It involves strengthening diplomatic institutions, enhancing cross-cultural understanding, promoting permanent dialogue, rebuilding trust, and engaging many stakeholders to collaborate on global issues.

Even when dealing with the immediate consequences of the diplomacy crisis, we have to recognize that the world community of nations is in a state of affairs where traditional diplomatic methods, mechanisms, and processes cannot effectively address and resolve unprecedented global issues and existing or emerging conflicts. It is characterized by a breakdown or inefficiency in diplomatic relations and negotiations, leading to heightened tensions, impasses, and an inability to achieve desired results.

The functioning of the United Nations demonstrates that we are experiencing an erosion of multilateralism. This erosion leads to a decline in cooperation and increased unilateral actions by states, which undermines the effectiveness of diplomatic efforts. This dangerous shift can be seen in many instances where countries prioritize national interests over collective global solutions, resulting in diplomatic stalemates and diminished trust among nations.

History shows that diplomacy traditionally plays a crucial role in resolving conflicts and preventing their escalation into armed conflicts. However, in many cases, diplomacy fails to bring about peaceful resolutions of disputes and

conflicts due to deep-rooted historical, political, and cultural factors that can generate prolonged crises, even violence, and the use of military force.

Dealing with diplomacy's crisis

The book under consideration suggests that addressing the diplomacy crisis requires adapting diplomatic practices to the evolving global landscape, promoting genuine multilateralism and cooperation, fostering open and transparent communication, rebuilding trust, and employing innovative approaches to conflict resolution.

Embracing new diplomatic tools, such as digital diplomacy and track-two diplomacy, and revitalizing international institutions can also help overcome the challenges and difficulties diplomacy faces in the modern era.

Following a more detailed analysis, several key factors contribute to the diplomacy crisis, including the failure of multilateral institutions. The United Nations, the World Trade Organization, and various regional organizations are crucial in facilitating diplomacy and cooperation among nations. However, these institutions have faced intense criticism for their limited effectiveness, bureaucratic hurdles, and inability to adapt to evolving global challenges. This undermines their capacity to serve as effective platforms for diplomatic dialogue and problem-solving processes.

Technological advancements have transformed how people communicate and interact, but they have also presented new complex challenges to diplomacy. The proliferation of social media and digital platforms has amplified public scrutiny, making it harder for diplomats to conduct discreet negotiations.

Additionally, cyberattacks and digital espionage threaten diplomatic communications and sensitive information shared by negotiators. At the same time, disregard for international norms and treaties undermines the credibility and effectiveness of diplomatic efforts. This can result in a temporary breakdown of trust and cooperation among nations, escalating diplomatic crises.

The book under consideration illustrates that the increasing interconnectedness of nations and the complexity of global issues have surpassed the capabilities of traditional diplomatic approaches. Challenges like terrorism, climate change, cyber warfare, and economic interdependence require new and innovative diplomatic strategies.

Diplomatic deadlocks and gridlock while dealing with intractable conflicts, unproductive negotiations, and the inability to reach consensus on critical issues contribute to diplomatic crises. Disputes over territorial claims, ideological differences, or vested interests can hinder diplomatic progress and escalate tensions. All the above factors must be added to the declining public trust that stimulated public skepticism towards traditional diplomatic practices and institutions. Perceptions of diplomacy being opaque, elitist, or disconnected from the concerns of ordinary citizens risk eroding trust and legitimacy. This situation undermines the public support that remains necessary for effective diplomacy, which is strongly affected by polarization and fragmentation.

It is evident that diplomacy operates in a world where countries hold divergent interests, ideologies, and priorities. This makes consensus-building and finding common ground more challenging. Disagreements among major powers often lead to gridlock and hinder collective decision-making.

Diplomatic capacity and adequate resources are conditions sine qua non for success in international relations. The diplomacy crisis is exacerbated by many countries' weak diplomatic capacity and insufficient resources. Limited diplomatic presence, underfunding, and lack of expertise in emerging areas hinder the functioning of effective diplomacy.

The continuous disintegration of diplomatic norms illustrates the necessity of serious reforms in the diplomatic field. Many established standards and protocols guiding diplomatic interactions and negotiations are disregarded or violated by nations or actors, a phenomenon leading to a breakdown in trust and the erosion of diplomatic principles.

A diplomatic crisis can indicate a breakdown of diplomatic relations between nations or the isolation of certain countries from the international community. Diplomatic boycotts, trade wars, or geopolitical tensions can lead to a deterioration in diplomatic engagement and cooperation, hindering the resolution of conflicts or the pursuit of common goals.

There is a consensus view that addressing the diplomacy crisis requires a commitment to strengthening diplomatic channels, fostering open dialogue, rebuilding trust, and promoting cooperative approaches to global challenges. It also involves adapting to evolving geopolitical dynamics, leveraging diplomacy in conjunction with other instruments of statecraft, and upholding the principles of international law and mutual respect among nations.

Finding solutions

All the project's authors that resulted in the book under consideration agree that the practice of bilateral and multilateral diplomacy needs to be readdressed. It should be remembered that this book's intended audience comprises those interested in studying diplomacy in international relations, learning how it affects the solutions that are achieved, and how its failures affect the planet's evolution.

The book hopes that state representatives will recognize that diplomatic procedures should be adjusted to today's circumstances. Many of the authors address how diplomacy needs to catch up with contemporary power distribution and technology.

As Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary-General, noted, multilateral diplomacy has proved weak and fragmented. In more radical terms, William Burns, former U.S. ambassador to Russia and Deputy Secretary of State, sees the "schizophrenia of an emerging international system with the globalization of the world economy alongside the fragmentation of international politics." (p.12).

According to the reviewed book, what are the cardinal events in recent diplomatic history? It appears that a creative renewal occurred alongside a refinement of multilateral diplomacy primarily in or about Europe: the establishment of what would become the EU as well as NATO; the culmination of Cold War détente with the Helsinki Final Act; the peaceful termination of the Cold War at the Geneva and Reykjavik summits. Other events might be added to the list, like the Bandung Conference in 1955, when the international system became dramatically less Eurocentric. Still, the innovation represented by Bandung was primarily political (or geopolitical) rather than diplomatic per se.

Other events evoked in this volume can be mentioned, like the signing of the Vienna Conventions on Diplomatic and Consular Relations in the early 1960s, as evidence of a more focused attention on diplomatic practice. The development of multilateral institutions—the European Union and the Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe have not supplanted nation-states, but instead “coexist with and in many instances have sustained and strengthened them”. (p.28)

In reality, the success of diplomacy depends on how far diplomats recognize each other’s functions. Raymond P. W. Hare focuses on cultural differences as a significant factor in how diplomacy is conducted. His analysis is concentrated on the prospects of reform of diplomacy. Traditionally, states view the value of diplomacy differently and though they recognize the mutual benefits of diplomatic relations, they attach different priorities to it. Some states may see it as fundamentally just a networking operation, where contacts are developed, but with little incentive to build consensus and lasting peaceful solutions.

Some academic studies have highlighted the areas where reform might be pursued. These studies refer mainly to the erosion of diplomatic norms and to the struggles for diplomacy to find a new identity. “And diplomats may be losing their unique status as communicators and negotiators. Technology has multiplied the capacity of others to seek to engage in the practice”. (pp.6-7)

From a purely practical perspective, a key issue in determining whether there is a real will for diplomacy reform is how contemporary leaders view its potential effectiveness. Do they recognize its shortcomings and the need for collective action? The answer is realistic.” There is indeed evidence that some contemporary leaders do have a sense of diplomatic malaise.”(p.10)

After the COVID-19 pandemic, a principal conclusion of the book under review is that “global health diplomacy reform will require diverse tools and methods since current disruptions and distrust will complicate any single overarching global effort to provide the health protections the world needs”.(p.602)

It should be recognized that the COVID-19 pandemic has included tragic loss of life, erosion of economic well-being, and depleted trust in global leadership and institutions. While COVID-19 is sometimes referred to as a once-in-a-century health event, the book warns that an even more virulent pathogen may be in store for humanity as the interface between humans and animals grows steadily closer in an ever more crowded and climate-stressed world. In this context, it is necessary to underline “the importance of effective health diplomacy reform and illuminate the avenues reform could take. The greatest danger would be if the world repeats past errors and permits urgency on health diplomacy to dissipate as the COVID-19 health crisis recedes. Complacency—not disease—is the greatest threat”.(p.633)

In a lucid approach to all these matters, the suggested improvements are of a practical order. They are inspired by the conviction that “it is high time to break with outdated, repetitive, and unimaginative habits in multilateral diplomacy, and to re-energize UN multilateral diplomacy with a sense of vision, of priority, and of common purpose”.(p.420)

The authors critically remind readers that in many countries, national departments of Foreign Affairs often consider multilateralists to belong to a separate branch, specializing in somewhat abstract issues, operating in a different universe, and relying on distinct networks and codes. So being the case, to reach

its full potential, multilateral diplomacy needs mainstreaming. Breaking traditional silos, and bringing in new ways and new actors, both at home and at the UN, is indispensable. In this regard, it is recognized that the contribution of bilateral diplomats, in their capitals or in the field, “can bring new dynamics to multilateral diplomacy.” Bilateral diplomats “can relay useful information on the perception of the role of the UN in specific countries. They can help develop or fine-tune targeted and convincing arguments for respective partners. They can bring a degree of realism into analyses and expectations”.(p.426)

From a strictly pragmatic point of view, it is reminded that the UN delegates’ daily practice consists of meetings, consultations, discussions, and negotiations, both formal and informal. This permanent exposure to different viewpoints and exchanges with colleagues from many countries is “one of the most enriching experiences, both at the personal and professional level”. There are also many “experts” who specialize, each in their area of work, in the drafting of texts and elaborating compromise formulations. This is, of course, a welcome and necessary skill at the United Nations”.(p.430)

While emerging technologies are considered to have a key role, they represent only a fraction of the spectrum of innovation. In this regard, the UN Secretary-General’s *Our Common Agenda* highlights other issues, such as “strategic foresight and behavioral science, which are seeing new momentum as instruments to advance multilateral diplomacy.” (p.515)

The book’s authors consider that these ideas “would give bilateral and multilateral diplomacy an opportunity for a new start. We hope those who read this book will contribute other ideas for its reform and innovation. All those

interested in the cause of diplomacy will recognize that its benefits cannot be taken for granted". (p.736)

Is a reform of diplomacy possible?

Yes, a diplomacy reform is possible and has been a topic of discussion among scholars, policymakers, and practitioners in recent years. Diplomacy, as the practice of conducting negotiations and managing international relations, has evolved over time to adapt to changing global dynamics. Here are a few areas where reforms in diplomacy have been suggested:

There is a growing recognition that diplomacy needs to be more inclusive, involving a broader range of actors beyond traditional diplomats. This includes engaging civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations, businesses, and other stakeholders. Furthermore, diversifying the diplomatic corps by including more women, minorities, and representatives from different backgrounds can bring fresh perspectives and insights.

Nobody can deny that the digital age has transformed communication and connectivity, strongly influencing the practice of diplomacy. Embracing digital tools and platforms can enhance diplomatic efforts, such as using social media for public diplomacy, leveraging data analytics for decision-making, and employing virtual diplomacy to facilitate discussions and negotiations.

It is clear that traditional diplomacy has primarily been conducted by state actors, but contemporary challenges and practices often require collaborative efforts involving multiple stakeholders. In fact, emphasizing multistakeholder diplomacy can enable more effective responses to complex issues such as climate change, cybersecurity, and global health.

It is a platitude to repeat that public opinion and perceptions play an increasingly significant role in international relations. Governments and diplomats have recognized the importance of engaging with the public abroad to promote their countries' values, culture, and policies. Enhancing public diplomacy efforts, including cultural exchanges, educational programs, and media outreach, can foster better understanding and cooperation between nations.

Diplomacy can play a vital role in preventing conflicts and facilitating peaceful resolutions. Strengthening early warning systems, investing in preventive diplomacy, and developing mediation capacities can help address conflicts before they escalate into violence.

Given the pressing global challenges related to climate change and environmental degradation, integrating ecological considerations into diplomatic practices is crucial. This includes promoting international cooperation on climate agreements, sustainable development, and resource management.

These are just a few examples of potential reforms in diplomacy. The specific nature and scope of reforms may vary depending on geopolitical circumstances, evolving challenges, and the priorities of different countries and international organizations. Let's see how the specific proposals for the diplomacy reform as advanced by the book under consideration.

Specific proposals for reforms

First of all, the authors of the reviewed book ask the following question: **What Parts of Diplomacy Need Reform?** To answer this fundamental question, the authors refer to the fact that "The image on this book's cover is the broken

chair in front of The United Nations Palais de Nations in Geneva. This recognizes key arms control agreements achieved by diplomacy, but the incomplete nature of progress. And that diplomacy has fallen short in its aims. Diplomacy needs to be self-critical again.” (pp.11-12)

In this respect, a first needed reform concerns “The P5—The permanent members of the UN Security Council. Their role is pivotal in the UN Charter. Global diplomacy has to contend with its history of failures, procedural disputes, vetoes, and theatrics. But it is there, and it should not be avoided in any discussion about reform”.(p.13)

It is realistically recognized that “Because reform involves long-term processes of change and adaptation, it is difficult to identify a clear point in time for a final evaluation. In addition, the study of institutional reform suffers from a biased sample. Many reform proposals and ideas are discarded within bureaucracies and so never see the light of day.”(p.242)

Concerning the UN reform in general it is appropriate to keep in mind the following warning: “It is clear, however, that without the political will of governments to abide by their obligations under the Charter, no amount of reforms will be able to restore the authority and the legitimacy of the United Nations as a unique instrument for peace, global cooperation, and common solutions”.(p.433)

On the other hand, existing practice suggests that “Multilateral institutions need genuine reform beyond rhetoric, or they will face dissolution”.(p.448)This risk should not be underestimated.

It is quite normal in this book to find appropriate references to the text of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (1961), which is considered to be

an essential instrument “to identify the diplomatic challenges for humanity to evolve as a globally interconnected civilization, recognizing that 193 nations are parties to this framework agreement from last century after the Second World War. It is cogently reminded that “The words about diplomatic relations that have been negotiated by diplomats carry lessons and wisdom, which are important to preserve, reflecting national interests and in rare cases common interests with survival as the umbrella consideration for humanity across time”.(p.673)

The book ends with a list of specific suggestions about diplomacy reform. We will list them without commenting on their value and about the chances of being implemented, but with the hope that they may stimulate further discussions on this significant topic.

The first suggestion relates to the Vienna Conventions on Diplomatic and Consular Relations Revision. Neither has been revised since the 1960s. The existing Conventions were negotiated by less than a third of the organization's 193 present UN members. They were also negotiated in the context of the Cold War and bear the imprints of a Western model of diplomacy.

This is certainly true, but the current political atmosphere at the global level is not promising for such a complex codification process. What can be done is to infuse more substance into the deliberations on diplomatic matters under the guidance of the Six (legal) Committee of the UN General Assembly. The following reminder of an item to be considered during the 78th session of the UN General Assembly is self-explanatory: *Consideration of effective measures to enhance*

the protection, security, and safety of diplomatic and consular missions and representatives.

The following proposal is formulated as *Renewing Diplomacy's Vows*. This may be a feasible way of formally reaffirming some of the key principles of the UN Charter, such as respect for sovereignty and the renunciation of the use of force. In the absence of any realistic prospect of renegotiating the UN Charter itself in the near future, states might be asked to rededicate themselves to the framework ideals and commitments of 1945. From an organizational perspective, efforts must be made to revitalize the work of the UN Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization, which meets every year but does not seem to be sufficiently productive in giving tangibility to its own legal mandate.

The suggestions related to "The P5" and the role of the United Nations Security Council deserve special attention. Indeed, the increasing erosion of authority and respect for the UN Security Council's activity and resolutions is a long-standing, complex problem. The longer this goes there is an obvious risk that its members, including some of the P5 themselves, will continue to circumvent and marginalize the UN system.

There is a suggestion to strengthen the points of contact on the *Future Agenda of Diplomacy*. The way of implementing it is not clear and the absence of a coordinating center makes it controversial.

Restructuring of Foreign Ministries is a process going on with debatable success in many countries. It will certainly continue, but for financial reasons the small countries will be at a significant disadvantage, as they cannot expand the

costs required by an increasing number of civil servants, to say nothing about enlarging the national diplomatic corps.

An interesting idea is to establish a prize for diplomacy. It is inspired by the Nobel Peace Prize, which can continue to function based on the same legal criteria. Great diplomats can be awarded this Prize, as it was the case with Dr. Henry Kissinger in 1976. It is helpful to remember that this Prize is awarded for “the best work for fraternity between nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies and the holding and promotion of peace congresses.”

A critical suggestion concerns the Geneva Conventions, which “remain the landmark achievements of diplomacy in preventing the world returning to a state of barbarism where wars randomly massacre civilians, and there is little or no international accountability. The humanitarian focus of the Conventions now extends to intra-state conflicts”. While recognizing the role of these international legal instruments in promoting peace diplomacy; it is appropriate to join the authors of the book under review in emphasizing the fact that “ they need reaffirmation and revision”. (pp.732-735)

Conclusion

We will conclude the book review, whose coordinates and contents are mentioned at the beginning of this article, with the most recent references contained in the UN publication *Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 9 A New Agenda for Peace*, published in New York in July 2023. They come under the heading of *Diplomacy for peace and say:*” The driving force for a new

multilateralism must be diplomacy. Diplomacy should be a tool not only for reducing the risks of conflict but also for managing the heightened fractures that mark the geopolitical order today and carving out spaces for cooperation for shared interests. Above all else, this demands a commitment to the peaceful settlement of disputes. The underutilization of the different tools referred to in Article 33 of the Charter remains one of our greatest collective shortcomings.

The peaceful settlement of disputes does not demand new tools, for those that exist remain relevant, potent, and based on consent. However, they often fall short of their promise when the will of Member States to deploy them is lacking. It is incumbent on all actors to rely on peaceful means as their first line of defence to prevent armed conflict.

Diplomacy must be prioritized by all sides to bridge these growing divides and ensure that unmitigated competition does not trample humanity. Diplomatic engagement is critical among countries that think alike. However, it is crucial for those who disagree. During moments of high geopolitical tension in recent history, from Suez to the Cuban missile crisis, diplomacy saved the world from war or helped find ways to end it. It requires risk-taking, persistence, and creativity. The Black Sea Initiative shows that, even in the most complex of situations, diplomatic engagement and innovative use of multilateral instruments can help find common ground.²

Special attention should be paid to the results of research entitled *Futures for Diplomacy for practical and academic reasons. Integrative Diplomacy in the 21st Century*. This is a report prepared by Brian Hocking, Jan Melissen, Shaun

² See *Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 9 A New Agenda for Peace*, United Nations, New York, July 2023, p.11.

Riordan, and Paul Sharp and published in October 2012 by the Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael'.

The last paragraph of the report contains a question and an answer which read as follows: " How will the diplomatic network adapt to a changing diplomatic environment?» Quite radically. Change will come from three directions. First, money – or lack of it – will be a determining factor in the shape of the diplomatic network. This will focus attention on the longstanding debate regarding the relationship between the requirements for access to centers of international activity and the form that presence might assume to achieve it. Large-scale closure of missions is unlikely, but resources will be redeployed. In the EU, for example, bilateral representation will continue to be scaled down. The EEAS may offer some solutions to the resource problem. Second, re-deployment will be reinforced by the need to respond to the emergence of new centers of political and economic power. Third, as missions become platforms for other government departments, tensions over ownership and operation will need careful handling".³ This assessment is lucid and realistic. Diplomacy will survive but in a reformed embodiment.

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) decided by consensus on 8 September 2022 to convene the Summit of the Future held on 22 and 23 September 2024 in New York. The theme of the Summit will be "Summit of the Future: multilateral solutions for a better tomorrow." It is already agreed that the Summit will have a cardinal role to play in reaffirming the Charter of the United

³ See the full text of the report available at https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/20121030_research_melissen.pdf

Nations, reinvigorating multilateralism, boosting implementation of existing commitments, deciding on concrete solutions to challenges, and restoring trust among Member States. This might positively impact the future of diplomacy at all levels. We can wait with moderate optimism for the success of this multilateral diplomatic event.

The importance of citizen engagement in the implementation of sustainable development policies in Romania

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Keywords: public participation, sustainable development, policy making, Romania

Abstract

Sustainable development is at the core of every major decision in international politics, as the direction of the international community has been set towards protecting and restoring the resources of the planet. Although the goals are the same, each country is at a

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different level of achievement regarding the agreed-upon objectives. This article focuses on the current point Romania is in, the progress which has been made, and the path that lies ahead, analysed from the perspective of correcting measures that could help set its course on the right trajectory. Special attention is paid to the role that public participation has in implementing European policies designed to help the block follow through with its goal at the national level, in Romania. Considering that the literature is limited in this sphere, this article aims to connect some of the principal sustainable development pillars, contributing to the creation of a more complex picture of the actual context in Romania and the different dimensions that factor in the implementation of new policies.

1. INTRODUCTION

The need for effective sustainable development policies around the globe is becoming more and more apparent with each day that passes, generating a greater necessity for a complex and comprehensive understanding of the whole process, from policy proposals to different forms of community participation.

Although at the international level, this subject represents one of the biggest research interests, at the national level, in Romania, there is currently a literature gap. This is not to say that Romania does not prioritize steps taken towards reaching the European objectives, but the process is still relatively slow. The purpose of this article is to contribute to the information available regarding Romania's sustainable development progress by analyzing different levels of participation under the three main pillars: social, economic, and environmental.

For this goal, the article approaches the progress made by Romania toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) achievement from the perspective of community involvement. One of the keys to achieving the unity ideals is

represented by how the society acts, generating massive social movements, eventually changing the collective mentality. Starting from a fragmented society, Romania will continue to have a difficult time as community engagement is rarely taken into consideration, with most initiatives stopping at some raising awareness actions. Community awareness is only the first step of the journey, but it needs a follow-up and real reactions from the public if the results are expected to have a long-term impact and lasting results concerning mentality.

2. ROMANIA'S POLITICAL CONTEXT

Romania has made significant progress in its 30-year journey as a democracy and 16-year membership in the European Union, moving closer to embracing the universal values shared in our interconnected global community. However, it still has a long way ahead on the journey of becoming a reference state for progress.

One of the biggest challenges Romania is facing on this front is political instability. In a landscape where the government frequently changes, long-term policies often face challenges due to inconsistent resource management, leading to the postponement of many beneficial policies as each new administration seeks to establish its own direction.

On the Democratic Index, Romania scored 56 out of 100, being described as a semi-consolidated democracy at the end of 2022 (Freedom House 2023). The party politics of the national actors are seen as being opportunistic rather than result-oriented and prone to trying to win by accumulating influence through funds distribution; the civil society has a limited space to act, the legal and

political instruments at its disposal offering narrow opportunities (European Commission 2021); the media is not considered to be independent, as the level of transparency regarding media ownership and the state funding as the principal financing component tend to generate concerns regarding editorial autonomy; the level of corruption is perceived as being a fairly average one, with a score of 46 out of 100 in the year 2022 (Transparency International 2023).

With 2024 being an electoral year, a lot of attention needs to be paid to continuity. For any policy to have the chance to be effective, it needs to offer enough time for all the involved sectors to align themselves with the new direction. For this, Romania needs to work on the political stability.

Another important aspect of the success or failure of a policy revolves around community engagement and public participation. When a country's society is split between two or more opposing governing directions, the lack of unity affects the implementation of new policies.

In Romania, the ruling coalition, firstly seen as unacceptable by the public, is slowly gaining the support of the electorate. In a survey conducted in March 2023, when asked about their opinion of a PNL (National Liberal Party) and PSD (Social Democratic Party) alliance in the 2024 elections, approximately 43% of the liberal respondents declared that they would have a good opinion about this possibility, and 7% that they would have a very good opinion, with the answers coming from the democrats being even more promising, as around 45% of the democrat respondents declared that they would have a very good opinion and 12% that they would have a very good opinion (Postelnicu 2023).

This alliance has the opportunity to gain the electorate's trust, thus raising the level of community engagement and public participation if it delivers the

promised results. The possibility for continuity offered by the current ruling coalition could bring Romania closer to achieving long-lasting policies that have a real impact throughout society.

However, if the coalition fails, the Romanian society is going to be split into three principal directions: liberals, democrats, and nationalists. This unwanted outcome could harden the process of democratic consolidation, affecting Romania's position on the international scene, as the nationalist party, AUR (Alliance for the Union of Romanians), is gaining more popularity, following the European trend that marks the rise of right-wing populist parties across Europe (Silver 2022). This type of ideology could potentially affect the well-being of the citizens, the country's security, and environmental actions, as the framework of our world is based on international cooperation, not on national-oriented policies of isolation.

3. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AT THE EUROPEAN LEVEL

Sustainable development is currently defined as being "the development that meets the needs of present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs" (European Commission 2019). Environmental issues and the current rate at which we are using the planet's resources threaten not only the well-being of our generation but also the existence of future generations.

Although we now have a universal definition, throughout the years, the concept has been differently interpreted by countries all around the globe (Duran, et al. 2015). In 1989, in the United Kingdom, the definition was: "Sustainable

development involves devising a social and economic system, which ensures that these goals are sustained, i.e. that real incomes rise, that educational standards increase that the health of the nation improves, and that the general quality of life is advanced" (Pearce, Markandya, and Barbier 1989). In 1999 in South Africa, the definition was: "Sustainable development is a program for changing the process of economic development so that it ensures a basic quality of life for all people and at the same time protects the ecosystems and community systems that make life possible and worthwhile" (Vander-Merwe and Van-der-Merwe 1999). In 2012, in Romania, sustainable development was understood as "the ability of a society, ecosystem, or any such existing system to operate continuously in an undefined future without reaching key resource depletion" (Marin 2012).

From all these different definitions, the concept of sustainable development started to gain more and more implications in a multitude of sectors, becoming the transdisciplinary and complex concept we work with today. The sustainable growth of our world rests on three foundational elements: the social, economic, and environmental sectors. Sustainable development is attainable only through maintaining a harmonious balance among these three aspects and their respective areas of influence.

The European Union is constructing its policies around the 17 SDGs agreed on at the United Nations General Assembly in 2015 when the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was signed.

The SDGs address existing inequalities in a wide spectrum of domains, such as the social one, the economic one, the educational one, etc. The main concern raised by the variations in the level of quality of life across European countries is that it could lead to different national policies, slowing down or stopping

altogether the progress towards achieving sustainability ideals. For example, the rising wave of populism can be attributed to the fact that many societies do not feel represented at the European Union level, as they can see the context as being unfair (European Commission 2019). This kind of inequality leads to social preferences favoring populist ideals, which offer people a glimmer of hope of improvement in their quality of life, but in the long term could lead to even bigger differences in population growth and living standards.

The European Union has made great progress in elaborating and implementing policies that support the SDGs, but their effectiveness depends on how the member states integrate them. There is a policy implementation gap throughout Europe, as different governance systems achieve different results (Hudson, David, and Peckham 2018).

Another challenge that sustainable policies face is related to their multidisciplinary approach. For example, environmental problems cannot be improved solely by environmental policies if economic policies are promoting fossil fuels, and social policies cannot be effective without educational policies supporting the society's workforce preparation for the carbon transition.

In this article the focus is on how community engagement can improve the multilateral approach to sustainable development policies, focusing on the realities and improvements needed at the national level. Community involvement will be analyzed through the lenses of the three main pillars: environmental, social, and economic.

4. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK IN ROMANIA

Romania's current Sustainable Development Strategy is based on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, focusing on the three pillars, and recognizing the need for popular support, by citizen's integration of the promoted principles in their lives. In this context, Romania's government has established a Department of Sustainable Development through the Government Decision 313/2017 (Department of Sustainable Development 2017).

Besides the Strategy, the biggest mechanism Romania has that contributes to the Sustainable Development of the country through the adaptation of new policies and integration of sustainable values in different areas of the political, social, and economic life is represented by the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) for Romania. The mechanism was created by the European Union to offer support to the member states in the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, and Romania could access 29 billion euros, half as a grant, and half as a loan (Ministry of Culture 2021).

However, the opportunity to access these funds comes with certain conditions that the receiving country is obliged to meet, such as:

- Rule of law: following concerns in Hungary and Poland, the European Union decided to use the Resilience and Recovery plan for a country as a means to be assured of the enforcement of the rule of law (European Parliament 2023);
- Transparency and public participation: access to information needs to be facilitated for the members of the society, and the national plans need to have a consultation component, where local and regional authorities, social partners, civil society organizations, and other relevant actors come together to decide the best course of action (Lopez 2021);

- Strategic environmental assessment and environmental impact assessment: national resilience and recovery plans need to be aligned with the European Union's legislation, promoting the "do no significant harm" principle, and finally contributing to the EU Green Deal (Lopez 2021).

Romania's RRP was approved by the European Commission in September 2021, with Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission expressing her support towards our country: "By focusing on measures to secure the green and digital transitions, from improving the energy efficiency of buildings to improving connectivity and digital skills, the measures set out in the plan have the potential to be truly transformative. We will stand with you in the years to come to ensure that the ambitious investments and reforms set out in the plan are fully implemented" (European Commission 2021).

The principal measures included in the national plan that promote sustainable development are the following: modernizing the railway infrastructure; modernizing urban mobility by creating the necessary infrastructure for a green and safer urban transport; making the shift towards renewable energy; renovation and modernization of buildings; conservation of biodiversity and protection of the environment through reforestation, ecological reconstruction, and species protection. All these measures will be accompanied by a series of digital, social, and economic reforms (European Commission 2021).

Over time, Romania has also accessed European funds through the creation of three different Ops (Operational Programmes) concerned with the implementation of sustainable development policies: POR (The Regional Operational Programme), POCU (The Human Capital Operational Programme), POSDRU (Human Resources Development Sector Operational Programme).

POR 2014-2020 was centered around raising the economic competitiveness and improving the living conditions of local and regional communities through the development of the business, infrastructure, and services sectors, to achieve the sustainable development of different regions through efficient management of resources (Romanian Government 2014). The proposal has been adopted by the European Commission, but the results at the national level remain to be seen yet. POCU 2014-2020 attracted the support of the European Social Fund and was concerned with helping Romanians, including the youth, to find suitable jobs, contributing to reducing the level of poverty, social exclusion, and social inequities (European Commission 2013). However, in May 2022, Romania still had a relatively high percentage of youth unemployment, ranking just under Greece and Spain, with 23% (Eurostat 2023).

POSDRU, one of the first programs of its kind, elaborated at a time of political turmoil, during Romania's accession to the European Union was supposed to correlate education and the teaching and learning processes with the life-long parcourse of an individual's working life (Romanian Government 2007). However, in 2023, a decade and a half later, education reform is still a subject of public interest, at the center of debates, with it being part of the election platform of Romania's President, Klaus Iohannis, who is on his last term as a president.

The existence of such programs from the earlier stages of European Union membership represents the commitment Romania made to being a factor of change. However, having the policies on paper is only the first stage, and the assessment of the progress will aim at how many of the objectives were reached, and to what extent.

5. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN THE POLICY PROCESSES

Education, access to information, and public awareness are three of the most crucial factors when it comes to civic participation in the decision-making process. Fostering a beneficial collaboration relationship between communities and governmental institutions could help raise the level of community engagement, as people take into consideration the dedication of political actors towards improving their living standards.

The level of community involvement and the participative aspect of democracy are directly linked to the cultural norms of the society and the importance attributed to the concept of the respective nation as a whole, leading to two possible identities: civic nation and cultural nation (Bakk 2010).

If we look at the implementation of sustainability policies, community awareness and involvement become much more important, as the communities vulnerable to the effects of climate change are forced to adapt in order to increase their level of resilience (Khatibi, et al. 2021).

The level of community involvement and public participation is heavily influenced by the trust that people have in their leading institutions. Public participation has many forms, including, but not limited to informing and listening through dialogue, debate, analysis, and implementing jointly agreed solutions (Stephan Hügel 2020). Public trust can be split into two categories: actor-based trust, when people gravitate towards a certain person in a leadership position to represent their interests, and system-based trust when people trust the capacity of the political system and its instruments to represent them (Sapienza 2021). When creating new policies, policymakers need to know how to

address the public, as the efficiency of a policy and its success depend on public involvement.

When analyzing community engagement, another aspect that needs to be addressed is public opinion. For a policy to be supported and the goal to have greater chances of achievement, it is important to have the sympathy of the public opinion, as it is one of the pillars of a healthy and well-functioning democracy (Political Science 2021). Public opinion also represents one of the deciding factors regarding the decisions made about future policies since the primary goal of any politician is to benefit from public support to be re-elected.

In Romania, generally, the community involvement level can be noticed in public debates, where the relationship between citizens that participate and the public institution is based on consultation, so the community participation could be portrayed as being composed of moderately involved citizens (Haruța și Radu 2010). A reason for the generally low level of community involvement in policy processes could be attributed to the fact that ultimately, the decision belongs to the policymakers, and Romanians believe that these decisions are based on the interest of certain groups who hold influence, not on the general well-being of the community (Olteanu și Beyerle 2015). The political class, in turn, shows interest in community engagement primarily during times of crisis management. Typically, this engagement is orchestrated in a way that centers the conversation around the reputation of specific political figures, rather than focusing on the necessary actions to resolve the situation at hand.

Public participation has four steps: giving information to the public, listening to the public, engaging in problem-solving, and developing agreements (Creighton 2005). This article focuses primarily on which of these steps need to be improved

for the Romanian society to have a better chance at aligning with the SDGs, considering that policies without compliance deliver no meaningful results.

6. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES IN ROMANIA

The level of political polarization present in a country also influences public participation. The subject of climate change is a highly controverted one, generating debates throughout Romanian society. Although there is a considerable level of community awareness when it comes to climate change and its consequences, with 84% of Romanians thinking that it represents the biggest challenge for humanity in the 21st century and 88% believing that climate change has an impact on their everyday lives (European Investment Bank 2021), the polarization is still strong, as loud climate-skeptic views are gaining more popularity because of the rise of right-wing and populist actors that influence the public climate discourse (Max Falkenberg 2022).

Attitudes towards carbon taxation and other sustainable development policies depend on the level of political trust (Fairbrother 2022). In Romania, the level of trust in public institutions is low, with approximately 12% trust in the Parliament, 17% in the Government, and 25% in the Presidential Administration (Statista Research Department 2023). This translates to initiatives for mitigation efforts and new climate policy proposals being withdrawn because of the public opposition.

There are, however, some positive examples of well-received measures taken towards the carbon-neutrality objective, the most prominent one being that the

transition to green energy enjoyed some success, as this is where the regulation of the renewable energy market and other new forms of “luxury” come into play, resulting in the spread and popularization of electric vehicles, which depends almost absolutely on the reaction of the end consumer, which is the public. This is where the transition towards eco-friendly alternatives really shines, as people do not even need to express themselves, they simply buy the product, with electric and hybrid cars reaching 20% of the market share in Romania in 2023 (Dumitrescu 2023).

To extend this approach to other key areas of environmental policy in Romania, the public's understanding must be straightforward: the requirement for policies in a particular sector does not automatically imply that the issue should be politicized. Climate change carries a significant amount of different ideologies whenever it is talked about, being continuously contested (Coulson 2023) and this aspect can also be identified in Romania. Community awareness cannot be realized without a coherent message, and the mixed rhetoric discourses promoted by different political parties contribute to the public confusion phenomenon, creating new limitations for the much-needed sustainable development policies.

For gathering public support and eventually contributing to the engagement of the community, the first step is assuring proper information channels. Raising community awareness involves educating and acquainting people with the issue of climate change. Romania will face numerous challenges in adopting and incorporating European sustainable development policies unless proactive measures are taken to involve communities in discussions and actions that benefit them. This is essential for citizens to realize the significance of being

actively engaged in societal issues. There's a disconnect in communication between different social mechanisms, like state institutions and the average citizen. Regrettably, the state's passive response to major issues often results in engagement only in the wake of tragedies, rather than proactive involvement aimed at preventing such events and enhancing overall quality of life.

7. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN SOCIAL POLICIES IN ROMANIA

The Sustainable Development Strategy for Romania recognizes the high level of inequities, social exclusion, and marginalization (Romanian Government 2018). Despite considerable progress, the journey towards social equity remains extensive. The lingering impact of communist-era mindsets means community engagement is inconsistent, and affected by varying levels of skepticism. Citizens are increasingly worried about growing disparities, not only economically but, more crucially, in terms of social inequality. Some of the main problems are related to the level of social security as poverty levels are above the European average, the social stratification that points out a thinning middle class (Sergiu 2017), and the social exclusion of specific groups.

Social policies in Romania often garner public interest and community engagement, as a significant portion of the population is directly impacted by them. These policies tend to receive more support compared to, say, environmental policies because the immediate benefits and enhancements to quality of life are more apparent to the community. However, as long as Romania's social sector lags behind that of Western European countries, the

adoption and integration of the SDGs will face challenges. This is because the population is more preoccupied with immediate concerns rather than those of a distant future.

However, this does not mean Romanians are not concerned with the future. This year, Romania was confronted with one of the biggest vulnerabilities the system had concerning care homes for the elderly and disabled, with tens of centers being shut down for abuse and squalid living conditions (Stefănescu 2023). For a country where there are already concerns about the quality of life when reaching retirement age, considering that the rapport between the number of retirees sustained by state social insurance and the number of employees is 8 to 10 (Rosu 2023) when the news hit about the reality from the care homes, the community reaction was a strong one. The inquiry garnered significant community interest, especially as it involved well-known politicians, including the notable Gabriela Firea, the former Mayor of Bucharest. This journalistic investigation was carried out by independent bodies: The Investigative Media Center and Bucharest Bulletin. Although initially reported early in the year, the topic only gained widespread attention and became a major point of discussion in the community after official authorities stepped in (Cârgulea 2023).

This example perfectly illustrates the need for better social policies in Romania. Because of low pensions, a great amount of the senior population and their families end up relying on these types of care homes, that draw their money from the state (Vlad 2023) to provide their services. This scenario highlights the necessity for better integration of the elderly in the community and calls for improved social policies that cater to all segments of the population. It also resonates with the widespread fear among many Romanians about their future.

In Romania, community engagement in social policies is significantly shaped by how individuals connect with the specific policy in question. Regarding the care homes, the public reaction was intense as many Romanians recognized that existing social policies were not supportive enough, leading to a heightened awareness of their own risk of falling into that marginalized group.

Another example of a massive form of public participation can be identified in 2018. After the Coalition for Family raised over three million signatures in a petition to modify the Romanian Constitution so it would specify that a marriage should be between a man and a woman, replacing the term "spouses"² (Reuters 2016). Despite efforts made by different religious groups or nationalist formations, the community involvement delivered a low turnout for the referendum, with only 21% of the constituency expressing a vote, thus rendering the referendum "not valid" (Digi24 2018). This instance of participation was unique in that the community collectively chose to boycott the referendum. Recognizing that voting would likely result in losing the referendum, the opposition opted to abstain from voting entirely. This strategy aimed to prevent the referendum from reaching a valid turnout, effectively winning through a deliberate absence.

8. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN ECONOMIC POLICIES IN ROMANIA

In Romania, when analyzing economic policies, certain factors should be taken into consideration, such as:

² ARTICLE 48 - Family. *Constitution of Romania*. Chamber of Deputies. "The family is founded on the freely consented marriage of the spouses"

- the economic disparities between rural Romania and urban Romania;
- the economic disparities between the public sector and the private sector.

Romania's society, despite the recent economic growth of some densely populated urban areas such as Bucharest or Cluj (Rosu 2018), is still above the European average regarding the percentage of the population that lives in rural areas, with 46% in 2019 (Băncescu 2021). Community involvement in economic policies is subject to major discrepancies between urban and rural areas. In urban areas, where there is a large concentration of the population, the public interest is a major force of influence, whereas, in rural areas, where the population is spread throughout the country, even if in a certain village there is a major involvement, it does not usually have the power to influence the direction of certain policies.

In rural areas, the principal source of income is predominantly agriculture, with a significant part of the non-agricultural population commuting to nearby cities (Sandu 2005). However, even though the rural population is scattered around the country, in the year 2023 Romanian farmers organized one of the biggest agricultural protests in the country, as policies designed to help Ukrainian farmers were starting to affect Romanian farmers, as Klaus Iohannis, President of Romania promised to ask for a solution from the government (Cosiță 2023). Romanian farmers declared their dissatisfaction with the fact that the Romanian market started being flooded by Ukrainian produce, contributing to the phenomenon of unfair competition, as Ukrainians are excluded from taxes in an effort to show solidarity and support toward the conflict they face. They also condemned the lack of involvement from governing bodies in attracting financial support from the European Union, with Romania only receiving 10 of the 56 million given to support Romanian, Bulgarian, and Polish farmers (Negreanu

2023). This protest marked one of the highest levels of community involvement regarding economic policies in Romania.

Another type of polarization in Romania concerning economic policies is related to the differences between the public and the private sector. The employees from the public sector are earning 32% more than the employees from the private sector (Chirileasa 2022). Moreover, Romania has the largest number of employees in public institutions from the European Union, and to reduce expenses, the Romanian government decided to freeze new hiring in public institutions, with a few exceptions, from May 2023 until the end of the year (Niculescu 2023).

People's involvement in economic reforms regarding the public sector is relatively high, as the employees are part of syndicates that are involved in making sure the workers' rights are respected. This year alone there were different protests regarding policy proposals in the respective sectors:

- in April 2023 there was a wave of protests concerning education reform, where educators demanded higher wages in response to the evolving economic landscape and the increasing cost of daily living (Costiță 2023). The teachers refused to go to classes for a few days, signaling to the government the importance of their jobs. The strike lasted for three weeks and ended in a protest march where 20000 people participated, after which promises were made regarding the increase of their salary (Peticilă 2023);
- in June 2023, employees in the health sector, particularly 10% of medical professionals who undertake extra shifts, staged a protest. They threatened the possibility of resigning, demanding that their work's value

be accurately reflected in their salaries and calling for adherence to the existing salary legislation (Digi24 2023).

- The situation in Romania, where workers in crucial sectors for national development and future generations feel their rights are being ignored, should be a wake-up call for the political class. The stalemate in education reform is partly due to the near absence of dialogue between the Ministry, Inspectorates, and teacher-parent councils. When communication does occur, it's often during political crises, lacking continuity. This pattern is not isolated; engagement with other civil society representatives typically gains importance only in times of conflict or protest, rather than being a consistent priority.

Sustainable development hinges on devising policies that enhance the population's well-being and foster interdisciplinary collaboration. The emergence of protests in response to economic issues within sectors like food, education, and health reveals a profound mistrust between the governing bodies and the populace. For comprehensive progress, citizens throughout the country, regardless of their profession, must feel that their interests are being considered and adequately represented.

9. CONCLUSIONS

Romania has consistently demonstrated its aspiration to move towards a more sustainable future, with certain sectors like IT&C leading the way as industry pioneers. However, when it comes to creating and maintaining a system that is

sustainable, self-sufficient, and people-oriented, Romania still has a long way to go.

There have been policies elaborated to improve day-to-day life and the overall wellness and life quality of the Romanian society, policies that take into consideration important aspects, that to approach multidisciplinary measures, touching on every interconnected sector. Unfortunately, there is a lack of continuity and follow-up that comes from the isolation of the political class from the citizens it represents which slows down this process. To achieve the European sustainable development goals, which Romania does support, the ruling class needs to look inward, to listen to the needs of the society, as models that have worked in other countries may not necessarily work here as well.

The Romanian society, composed of all the local and regional communities show a lack of trust in the political institutions, which affects the expected results of proposed and implemented policies. One of the most needed improvements the legislators could bring would be to work towards involving the community in the elaboration of new policies. The civil society already has a lot of necessary instruments, from involved individuals to representatives of different sectors, to civil experts that could help the process. As far as the political communication sector is concerned, the current official communication infrastructure with the general public needs to be used more consistently and for the public interest.

In conclusion, Romania's journey towards sustainability involves addressing the interlinked pillars of the environment, society, and the economy. While progress has been made in various sectors, there's a pressing need for a more holistic and people-centered approach. The disconnect between the political class and the citizens, as well as the lack of trust in political institutions, hinder the

implementation of well-intentioned policies. To achieve European sustainable development goals, Romania must prioritize community involvement, utilize existing civil society resources, and improve public communication to bridge the gap between aspirations and action.

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BOOK REVIEW

Michael Cox, *Agonies of Empire: American Power from Clinton to Biden*, Bristol, Bristol University Press, 2022, 204 pp.

With an unprecedented position in the history of international relations after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the United States and its power preoccupied pundits and historians alike. In the last 30 years, they tried to analyse the sources of American power, its limits, and even its possible decline. The multiple crises that put American hegemony to the test after the Cold War created an ongoing debate between those with a declinist position, who foresee the inevitability demise of American power, and those with an optimistic view, who continue to believe in the dominance of U.S. global leadership.

In his latest book, *Agonies of Empire: American Power from Clinton to Biden*, Michael Cox traces America's actions and behaviour in the international arena from the end of the Cold War to the dawn of Joe Biden's presidency. Emeritus Professor of International Relations Michael Cox spent his entire academic career writing about the most pressing issues facing the world scene, from the relations between the superpowers during the final years of the Cold War to U.S. foreign policy and the Troubles from Northern Ireland. Cox is the author and editor of several books, including *Superpowers at the Crossroads* (1990); *US Foreign Policy after the Cold War: superpower without a mission* (1995); *A Farewell to Arms: from long*

war to long peace in Northern Ireland (2000); *Soft power and US foreign policy: theoretical, historical and contemporary perspectives* (2009). In *the Agonies of Empire: American Power from Clinton to Biden*, Cox proceeded with his tradition of studying the current foreign policy challenges and put together a collection of essays that explore American foreign policy as it is searching for purpose in increasingly uncertain times.

Trying to explain why, despite the United States' great power, successive presidents since Bill Clinton have found the world so difficult to manage, Michael Cox examines the major turning points from the post-Cold War history that questioned the invincibility of American power. Divided into five parts, the book analyses how presidents such as Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, Barack Obama, Donald Trump, and Joe Biden addressed the many challenges that emerged during their presidential tenures.

Concisely, the author investigates the critical junctures that had an impact on the United States' position in the world: America's unipolar moment after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, 9/11, the financial crisis of 2008, the emergence of revisionist powers like China and Russia and their "axis of convenience," the crisis of globalization and the rise of populism. Using various sources to assess the strategies and miscalculations that the U.S. leaders made, Cox underlines the role of the individual in foreign policy decision-making, the ideological thinking of every U.S. President making a difference in how American power was projected around the world.

Beginning the historical narrative with the Wilsonian liberal Bill Clinton, the author places the reader into the post-communist era when the U.S. had to rethink its grand strategy. Elected President at a moment of both triumph and

uncertainty for America and the world, Bill Clinton acknowledged that his mission was to renew the U.S. leadership. In a more globalized world, Washington needed a policy that would lead to international stability and global prosperity. Therefore, he started to expand the U.S. economy in world trade, promote democracy, and facilitate a Western-style transition in post-communist Russia. However, as Michael Cox shows in his book, Clinton's strategies raised some problems. His "geo-economics" caused a trade deficit and an uncritical attitude towards globalization. The democracy promotion revealed the limits of U.S. influence and collided with other American interests, and his approach toward Russia failed to secure a liberal democracy there.

Despite these missteps, America had never felt so secure. However, this sense of security faded away with the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Bringing the concepts of empire and imperialism to his analysis, Cox argues why the U.S. is an empire and how President George W. Bush adopted an imperialist doctrine after 9/11. The "war on terror" transformed America into a more assertive power, with a propensity to take unilateral action when it considers necessary.

In 2008, Washington struggled with a reputational crisis and a financial crash. Debates about a possible post-American world began to show up as a power distribution unfolded on the international scene. The rise of China began to challenge American global leadership increasingly. Assuming office in this context, Barack Obama put forward a strategy of engagement with both allies and adversaries. He understood that American power was limited and could no longer act as the "world's policeman." Instead, the U.S. had to rely on "smart power" to reassert its global influence. His internationalist view yielded several achievements during his administration, including the New START Treaty, the

Iran nuclear agreement, the Trans-Pacific Partnership, and the Paris Climate Agreement. Nevertheless, his setbacks in Libya and Syria, the weakening of the transatlantic partnership, and the resurgence of an aggressive Russia after he sought to reset the relations between Washington and Moscow left a mixed legacy.

Trying to discover what brought Donald Trump to the White House, Michael Cox reviews the wave of populism that swept Europe and the U.S. in 2016 and the narratives behind this concept. He suggests that “populism was and is very much an expression in the West of a sense of powerlessness of ordinary citizens and the Western leaders”¹. Promising to restore control to the people and to make “America great again,” Donald Trump won the presidential elections and triggered a “political earthquake” worldwide. By exploiting the many divisions in American society and creating a sense of chaos, Trump accelerated the academic and policy debates about the U.S. decline.

The book's last part also shows President Joe Biden's first foreign policy decisions after he took office. Biden re-engaged with global organizations and allies, willing to show that the U.S. is prepared to lead again. Although the apparent return to liberal internationalism was a relief for America's traditional allies after the more isolationist turn during the Trump administration, the continuing domestic deep divide put U.S. power in danger.

More of an optimist regarding the future of the U.S. position in the world, Michael Cox argues in his book that for all the crises that faced the American power in the last decades, Washington remained the only titan on the international scene because of its economic, military, and diplomatic advantages.

¹ Michael Cox, *Agonies of Empire: American Power from Clinton to Biden*, Bristol, Bristol University Press, 2022, p. 133

Nonetheless, the profound polarization within the U.S. could imperil its grand strategy.

Agonies of Empire: American Power from Clinton to Biden is a valuable contribution to U.S. foreign policy studies. Highlighting the intersection between domestic and foreign policy and how American power evolved with every presidential administration, Michael Cox provides the readers with a balanced assessment of the United States' role in the world.

Ștefania-Teodora Cocor

Mihai Manea, *Consiliul Europei. Politică și predarea istoriei în Europa*, București, Editura Nomina, 2018, pp.176

Since its creation in 1949, the Council of Europe has promoted human rights and freedoms, consolidated democracy, political dialogue, and cooperation between states in the social, economic, and cultural sectors. Intending to have a united Europe, in which the inclusion and acceptance of diversity are some of the critical elements in the growth of the individual, the Council of Europe has been involved throughout the second half of the 20th century, continuing until now in the development of different levels of education in Europe, especially in teaching history. The importance that the Council of Europe has given to history as a subject in European schools is motivated by history's ability to influence the masses. Depending on its nuances, history can be a tool for division or unity among nations and peoples. Considering this feature of history, the Council of Europe understood that having a society that knows the European identity and finds itself in it, history becomes a mandatory discipline within the education systems and fundamental for developing European citizens.

Mihai Manea, professor of history, PhD in the history of International Relations and European studies, member of the National History Commission, and president of the Romanian History Teachers Association (APIR - Clio), is the author of scientific, systematic works and articles in periodicals dealing with various aspects of history.

His work, "*Consiliul Europei. Politică și predarea istoriei în Europa*", aims to identify and highlight the Council of Europe's notable efforts in teaching history at the European level. Reiterating the need for history, a field that has

become vast following its constant research, to be studied for people to acquire knowledge and understanding about themselves and others, the author appeals to all the meetings, seminars, projects, and symposiums supported by the Council of Europe during the 20th century and until now.

The paper investigates the evolution of the requirements of history teaching according to time and social, political, economic, etc. circumstances, observing the adaptability to which the discipline of history has been subjected during seven decades. Thus, starting from history's transnational and international character, it becomes a priority factor in developing young people who get historical and civic education through it.

In the book's first part, the author analyzes the connection between history and political science, demonstrating that, in its interdisciplinarity, history defines political science. At the same time, in an interdependent relationship, history takes shape and meaning thanks to political sciences. History creates a broad palette of study, and through its connection with the other social sciences, there is an interest in researching fields such as economics, psychology, sociology, philosophy, etc. The author continues by presenting the constant concern of the Council of Europe about the way history is taught in schools, stemming from history teachers' propensity for subjectivism. Until 1989, the Council of Europe was concerned with transforming history into the discipline taught to unite people, develop inclusive mindsets, and be open to diversity and understanding. By creating joint working groups between pre-university and university education teachers, researchers, and specialists, the Council of Europe led to the rapprochement of different cultures and ways of seeing history to reduce subjectivism, capable of arousing animosity among young people. With

the end of the Cold War and the fall of communism in Central and Eastern Europe, the Council of Europe saw the need to teach history in favor of spreading and consolidating democracy in the states now on this path.

The 1990s are described as focusing on the concept of national and European identity, aiming to make a connection between the two. That is why, during this period, through its meetings, the Council of Europe seeks to treat sensitive or controversial topics of history and popularise the idea of European history and the role of the history teacher to preserve truthfulness and objectivity in reporting facts. At the same time, in understanding historical events, it is proposed to use a multiperspective approach, a method by which students are familiar with multiple perspectives by analyzing historical sources and including them in the historical narrative. History teaching is divided in these years by strictly chronological themes, such as the Bolshevik Revolution or the Holocaust, to align these events' information and teaching methods without being radicalized by subjective factors. Also, the Council of Europe facilitates the transformation and integration of former communist states into the democratic vision. It regulates the study of history (especially in textbooks) - from a deeply ideologized discipline to one of multiple perspectives.

In the last part of the work, the author, Mihai Manea, reviews the documents issued by the Council of Europe due to its projects, including the views on education and history teaching in the 21st century. The 3rd millennium brings new challenges to the topic under discussion - the intensification of globalization and interdependence, terrorism and radicalism, and migrations or digitalization. All this leads to the need to readjust the history teaching process according to the need for intercultural dialogue, moving towards studying

history from a social and cultural point of view. The history teacher is thus seen as an "agent of the formation of the young generation," people with an analytical spirit and critical thinking, inclusive and open to diversity. In the 21st century, such training becomes possible thanks to new technologies and the multiplication of sources of analysis, a broadening of the spectrum of history, interest is developing in the study of the role of women in history, the history of diversity in which cultural differences are also promoted. After 2010, the Council of Europe focused on history, which was taught as a sum of changes and interactions between people and cultures. History is seen as a discipline of thinking rather than memorization.

Even though the evolution of history in European schools has been transformative and adapted to the requirements, the author mentions that, in some respects, the Council of Europe has maintained its position on some ideas. National history can only be studied within European and universal history. The discipline must present events from all points of view (even social, economic, and cultural). Moreover, history is also essential in direct relation to democratic citizenship, with the development of an inclusive mentality, and promotes, above all, the debate and the exchange of ideas between peoples.

Maria-Corina Preda

Emilio Gentile, *E subito fu regime. Il fascismo e la Marcia su Roma*, Editori Laterza, Bari, 2012, pp. 319

The "March on Rome" historiography has been marked by deeply conflicting interpretations, reflecting this major historical event's complexity and antagonistic nature. In the book *Le origini del fascismo in Italia. Lezioni di Harvard*, the historian Gaetano Salvemini had shown in the 1940s that the event was little more than an "opera buffa," an absurd display without a revolutionary substance. This perspective portrays the March as a mere theatrical staging, a calculated spectacle orchestrated to create the illusion of a grassroots uprising.²

Over the decades, the interpretation of the March on Rome has undergone a fascinating evolution. Early interpretations, particularly from the 1960s, focused on the political negotiations that paved the way for Fascism's rise. Many scholars viewed this event as Mussolini's masterpiece, portraying him as the central figure and mastermind behind it. This perspective not only suggested that his strategic skills were crucial to the event's outcome but also that the military actions of the Fascists were considered somewhat secondary—being a decorative element rather than a primary force, as argued by Renzo De Felice.³

In the 1970s, Adrian Lyttelton, in his work "The Seizure of Power: Fascism in Italy 1919–1929," distanced himself from De Felice's political interpretation and established a new direction for analysis. He described the events of October 1922 as a classic example of *psychological warfare*. The fascists seized control of provincial centers by targeting key locations such as prefectures, police

² Gaetano Salvemini, *Scritti sul fascismo. Lezioni di Harvard*, Feltrinelli, Milano 1961, p. 611.

³ Renzo De Felice, *Mussolini il fascista I. La conquista del potere, 1921-1925*, Einaudi, Torino, 1966.

headquarters, railway stations, communication hubs, and anti-Fascist institutions. Their strategy combined military and political tactics, including the calculated threat of violence and the display of popular support, to intimidate the government and persuade it to take power.⁴

An expert on Italian fascism, Emilio Gentile emphasizes in his work *E fu subito regime. Il fascismo e la Marcia su Roma* that the violence associated with the strategic negotiations surrounding the March on Rome was not incidental but a crucial aspect of the Fascists' broader political strategy. Emilio Gentile downplays the significance of the negotiating faction and Mussolini as the sole architect behind the success of the March on Rome. Instead, he highlights the crucial role played by the *squadristi* (members of the Fascist squads) and their leaders, such as Italo Balbo and especially Michele Bianchi, the secretary of the National Fascist Party (PNF), in driving the decision to undertake this insurgent action. He asserts that the squadrist element of fascism was 'the dominant force of fascism'; without it, maneuvering, negotiation, or individual talent for seizing opportunities would not have enabled fascism to come to power (p.133). Gentile notes, "Historically, the militia party instigated the March on Rome; the leader and the secretary merely interpreted its will". (p.134)

The "March" on the capital was, in fact, only the concluding act of a prolonged assault on state power conducted by the fascists starting in 1921. The fascists always followed the same script: they would move en masse into a provincial capital, often mobilizing men from surrounding regions, occupy public offices and government headquarters, railway stations, telephone

⁴ Adrian Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power: Fascism in Italy 1919–1929*, Routledge, London and New York, 2005, p. 71.

exchanges, and post offices; they would storm military barracks, seize weapons, order prefects and military commanders to hand over power to the leaders of the fascist squads, destroy the offices of rival parties, and dismiss local administrators. During the "biennio rosso" (the "two red years") of 1919-20, the violent surge of political fanaticism and class struggle made Italy appear to be a country on the brink of civil war.

The fascists recognized the military limitations of their militia. However, the "March on Rome" was not just a rhetorical gesture. To influence political negotiations, the insurrection relied on the squadristi mobilizing in cities under Fascist control. They occupied public offices and created widespread confusion, disrupting the government's response. This strategy aimed to facilitate the advance of Fascism toward the capital indirectly, as a direct military confrontation was deemed unfeasible. Furthermore, ongoing negotiations helped strengthen the movement's position, ensuring its success without needing a forceful takeover of Rome.

The violence associated with the fascist movement and the capitulation of the Italian state played significant roles in its success. The violent attacks by fascists against political opponents, along with the authorities' tolerance of such actions, created the impression that fascism was a force for order capable of restoring stability amid social chaos. Gentile's work highlights the importance of examining the interplay between political forces, societal dynamics, and the authoritarian aspirations that defined the fascist movement during its formative years. By focusing on this crucial period, we can gain deeper insights into how fascism transformed from a fringe movement into a dominant political force, reshaping Italy's future and influencing other authoritarian regimes across

Europe. Considered a temporary phenomenon born out of the war, Italian fascism quickly evolved into a mass movement with its ideological goals and structure. It gained influence beyond mere reactionary violence, establishing itself as a force capable of reshaping Italian political and social systems. Its rise captured attention across Europe, becoming an attractive model for other authoritarian movements and spreading its influence beyond Italy's borders.

Gentile said that the novelty of fascism led most opponents and observers to view it as a fleeting movement, lacking its ideology, program, social base, unity, or cohesion—merely a contingent result of provincial groups united by armed struggle against proletarian parties and organizations. Once its role as a reactionary militia serving the bourgeoisie ended, the fascist movement expected to wither due to a lack of inherent vitality or disintegrate from internal conflicts. Few recognized that fascism was not a temporary phenomenon, nor just a mercenary militia against the proletariat, but a mass movement with its own autonomy and ambitious goals. The "March on Rome"—a carefully orchestrated event during which the fascists paraded for over five hours through the streets of the capital in front of Mussolini—was essentially a confirmation of a completed fact: the capitulation of the liberal state to fascist control.

The central thesis of Gentile's book is that the ascent of fascism to power was not the product of compromise, but it was the profound capitulation of the liberal state to the insurrectional coercion of an armed faction, which proffered nothing more than nebulous and ambiguous assurances of reinstating constitutional legality in exchange for its ascendancy. The triumph of the "March on Rome" crystallized the fascists' conviction that they were the exclusive bearers of the national will, thus endowing them with the audacity to govern the nation

beyond the confines of the law, the constitutional order, and the parliamentary system.

Moreover, the offensive launched against the liberal state by fascism from peripheral territories was already present in the work of Angelo Tasca, who insightfully noted that the "idea of a "March on Rome" represented "the natural outlet of the fascist 'offensives' that, increasingly extensive, started from already conquered territories for new annexations." He highlighted how the blackshirts effectively occupied the entire Po Valley and much of Central Italy—Tuscany, Umbria, and the Roman countryside. While Tasca ultimately perceived the "March on Rome" as a mere "parade," his analysis sheds light on constructing a counter-state, alternative fascist sovereignty that emerged primarily in provincial areas.

More recently, Giulia Albanese has emphasized the importance of connecting the events in Rome with the simultaneous actions occurring in numerous cities across Italy. She argues that these various "acts of force" significantly influenced "the geography and impact of the march itself," which challenges the traditional narrative about this pivotal historical moment. This perspective encourages a broader understanding of how fascism consolidated power by considering local and national contexts. Albanese also stated that Mussolini's first government marked the inception of dictatorship in Italy, signifying the decline of liberal institutions.⁵

Gentile argues that the transfer of power to fascism was an unprecedented event, not just a simple change of government. For the first time

⁵ Giulia Albanese, *La marcia su Roma*, Laterza, Roma-Bari, 2014.

in the history of parliamentary states, a newly appointed prime minister announced that his rise to power represented an irreversible moment, marking the beginning of a revolution intended to last for decades. Furthermore, it was unprecedented for a prime minister of a parliamentary government to lead a state-funded party militia prepared to suppress anyone opposing the fascist regime and its "inevitable developments."

To understand why the political outsiders known as fascists—whom Mussolini called the "gypsies of politics"—were able to seize power in 1922 and establish a twenty-year single-party regime, we need to broaden our perspective. Instead of focusing solely on the event of the "March on Rome," we should examine the underlying dynamics of how they acquired power. This includes shifting our attention from the capital city to the country's periphery. By doing so, we can gain a clearer understanding of the military aspects of the "March on Rome" and the political maneuvers that supported it.

Mihaela Mustăța



