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YUGONOSTALGIE, YUGOSPHERE CULTURELLE ET
MEMOIRE DE / POUR L'AVENIR
YUGONOSTALGIA, CULTURAL YUGOSPHERE AND
MEMORY OF / FOR THE FUTURE

Alina Iorga*

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Abstract: *By counterbalancing the instrumentalization of the ethno-nationalist restorative nostalgia – which was not only the affective and imaginary fuel of the mnemonic wars fought, starting from the 80s, on the territory of “the country that no longer exists”, but also that of both the subsequent tragedies and cultural-political polarizations –, Yugonostalgia emerged in the painful 90s as a privileged form of post-Yugoslav mnemonic imagination. Against the background of the persistent mnemonic conflicts within the region, the multidirectional/ agonistic Yugonostalgic memory appears nowadays as a catalyst of the emotional and ethical commitment with the recent past, particularly able to inspire “visions of a better future”.*

Keywords: *Yugonostalgia, multidirectional/ agonistic memory, retrospective utopia, post-Yugoslav divided memories, retrotopia*

Introduction

Yugoslavia [...] became a prohibited word, and the terms *Yugoslav*, *Yugonostalgic* or *Yugo-zombie* are synonymous with national traitor.¹

La réflexion citée, extraite de *La culture du mensonge* de Dubravka Ugrešić – un recueil d’« essais anti-politiques » dont la première édition, parue pendant son exil en Allemagne, réunit des textes publiés

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¹ Dubravka Ugrešić, *Culture of Lies: Antipolitical Essays*, University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998 [1995], p. 78.

indépendamment dans l'intervalle 1992–1995, au temps des guerres de Croatie et de Bosnie-Herzégovine –, exige, évidemment, une contextualisation attentive, « cruciale pour la compréhension des paramètres historiques » caractéristiques de la société transitionnelle qui y fait l'objet de la critique : « It is a society in formation, but also a country at war – the two are inextricably connected ».² L'observation garde sa pertinence par-delà l'analyse des textes culturels qui incorporent, tout comme la littérature « patchwork » publiée par Ugrešić notamment après avoir quitté, en 1993, la Croatie d'origine, la coexistence conflictuelle des deux pôles des mémoires fragmentées des communismes à l'Est – le trauma et la nostalgie³ –, dont le présent travail ne constitue qu'une modeste introduction.⁴ En effet, à côté du multiperspectivisme (y compris celui dérivé de la transdisciplinarité), à même de soutenir l'intégration des positionnements souvent divergents des multiples « sujets impliqués »,⁵ l'examen des contextes (historiques, politiques, culturels, sociaux etc.) s'avère vital pour toute approche des dynamiques des mémoires antagonistes qui ont bouleversé le monde ex- et

² Dragana Obradović, *Writing the Yugoslav Wars: Literature, Postmodernism, and the Ethics of Representation*, Toronto, Buffalo & London: University of Toronto Press, 2016, p. 68.

³ Mitja Velikonja, "Poetry after Srebrenica? Cultural Reflection of the Yugoslav Eighties", in Latinka Perović et al. (eds.), *Yugoslavia: Chapter 1980-1991*, Belgrade: Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, 2021, p. 973.

⁴ L'article fait partie d'un projet plus vaste, incluant plusieurs travaux dédiés à la dynamique des relations entre la mémoire, la nostalgie et l'utopie, repérable dans les imaginaires socioculturels postsocialistes. Ces travaux sont censés offrir, entre autres, des perspectives nuancées sur les visages multiples de la nostalgie (y compris son pôle utopique), l'accent mis sur le contraste entre les formes réflexives-prospectives, en général non-instrumentales, telle la yougonostalgie, et les versions restauratrices-regressives instrumentalisées dans les narrations politiques néo-nationalistes actuelles, telle la nostalgie populiste-étatiste post-soviétique qui soutient, depuis les années 2000, la revivification du culte de Staline. Cf. Alina Iorga, « Passés troublés, rétro-utopies et mobilisations guerrières en Europe contemporaine » in *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai. Studia Europaea*, no. 2, 2022(a), pp. 155-181 ; *Idem*, « Între nostalgia restauratoare și muzeul fantomelor utopiei. Practici nostalgice în spațiul cultural (post)sovietic » in *Transilvania*, no. 11-12, 2022(b), pp. 129-142; *Idem*, « Mémoire, nostalgie et "la fin de l'utopie" à l'âge du "présentisme" » in *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai. Studia Europaea*, no. 2, 2023, pp. 149-173; *Idem*, « "Le passé est un pays étranger" et inaccessible... ou l'étrange cas de la yougonostalgie roumaine : *Disco Titanic* par Radu Pavel Gheo » in *Romanische Forschungen*, no. 1, 2025 (à paraître) ; *Idem*, « Visages de la yougonostalgie et mémoires fragmentées dans les romans de Dubravka Ugrešić : *Le musée des redditions sans condition* et *Le ministère de la douleur* », 2024 (en cours d'évaluation/ peer review).

⁵ Michael Rothberg, *The Implicated Subject: Beyond Victims and Perpetrators*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019.

post-yougoslave à partir des guerres mnémoniques initiées dans les années '80, à une époque traversée par de profondes contradictions dans l'ancien pays de *bratstvo i jedinstvo*. Sans s'attarder sur un sujet qui a fait déjà couler beaucoup d'encre, il nous faut rappeler qu'il s'agit de l'ère du déclin de « l'exceptionnalisme yougoslave » perçu – d'une manière similaire aux autres « mythes fondateurs » de la Yougoslavie titiste, tels l'indépendance par rapport à l'influence soviétique, l'auto-gestion, le non-alignement et le relatif confort économique – comme un pylône identitaire de l'État multinational : « ...instead of being dominated by the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia was the only communist country [...] that retained its autonomy and it forged close ties with the United States and Western Europe, including a cooperation agreement with the European Community. »⁶ En proie des crises politiques alimentées par la délégitimation de l'État et de la Ligue des Communistes (désintégrée en janvier 1990), qui, en favorisant « l'émergence des [ethno-]nationalismes autoritaires autonomes et réciproquement conflictuels »,⁷ va précipiter le collapsus violent de 1991, ce « pays de l'Est enclavé dans le bloc de l'Ouest » (pour reprendre une description du *Musée des redditions sans condition*, écrit par Ugrešić toujours en Allemagne, entre 1991–1996) restera quand même, voire dans ce climat trouble, le lieu d'une liberté inimaginable pour les autres sociétés communistes de l'Europe Centrale et Orientale, celui d'une relative prospérité et surtout celui d'une vie culturelle « vibrante ». Cette effervescence d'avant le crépuscule fera lieu, après le « naufrage » de 1991, aux tragédies des guerres, contemporaines avec les transitions démocratiques dans l'ancien bloc soviétique, où l'aggravation des inégalités et des traumas sociaux a nourri, à côté des perspectives dominantes sur le « capitalisme du désastre »,⁸ une polarisation profonde des mémoires collectives déjà fragmentées du communisme, incorporée ensuite dans les mémoires « multidirectionnelles » ou « agonistiques » de ce temps des crises : « If we would like a concept that represents these contradictions and conflicts, we could call this remembering of uncertainty, precarity, and

⁶ Florian Bieber, Armina Galijaš, "Yugoslavia 1989: The Revolutions That Did (Not) Happen", in Wolfgang Mueller *et al.* (eds.), *The Revolutions of 1989: A Handbook*, Wien: Verlag der Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2015, pp. 161, 162, 166. Cf. Holm Sundhaussen, "Staatsbildung und ethnisch-nationale Gegensätze in Südosteuropa" in *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, no. 10–11, 2003, pp. 3-9.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 166.

⁸ Kristen Ghodsee, Mitchell A. Orenstein, *Taking Stock of Shock. Social Consequences of the 1989 Revolutions*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2021, pp. 14-16.

potentialities *memories of crisis*.»⁹ C'est vers la fin de cette période de « transformations profondes » – devenues au cours des trois dernières décennies, « un territoire des conflits mnémoniques »¹⁰ – que se généralise la nostalgie post-socialiste, dans ses versions vernaculaires célébrant un « passé idéalisé » fort contrasté par rapport au présent des désillusions, vu, quant à lui, par le filtre des émotions négatives :

It is seen as a time of prosperity, in stark contrast to the current feelings of unfairness, endless competition and a winner-takes-all mentality, as well as disappointed hopes, anxiety, and loss. While this does not translate into strong nostalgia for the former regime, interviewees do remember pre-1990 society as being friendlier, more solidary, and more equal.¹¹

Évidemment, dans le territoire ravagé par les guerres du « pays qui n'existe plus » – ce « paysage disparu de la perte de l'homme », avec les mots de la narratrice yougonostalgique du *Ministère de la douleur* (2005) d'Ugrešić – ces émotions collectives sont beaucoup plus intenses. Attachées aux pratiques culturelles yougonostalgiques, elles révèlent une complexité qui transcende, d'une manière prévisible, le contexte des tragédies des années '90, celui évoqué dans les « essais anti-politiques » cités ci-dessus, en s'ouvrant non seulement vers la mémoire heureuse de l'ancienne communauté imaginée, mais aussi vers un avenir qui intègre les versions projetées jadis par les sujets impliqués dans le « Projet Yougoslavie ». ¹² C'est

⁹ Ksenia Robbe, "Introduction. Remembering Transitions: Approaching Memories in/of Crisis", in Ksenia Robbe (ed.), *Remembering Transitions. Local Revisions and Global Crossings in Culture and Media*, Berlin & Boston: De Gruyter, 2023, p. 20. Cf. Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009. Cf. Anna Cento Bull; Hans Lauge Hansen, "On Agonistic Memory" in *Memory Studies*, no. 9 (4), 2016, pp. 390–404.

¹⁰ Joanna Wawrzyniak, Veronika Pehe, "Neoliberalism, Eastern Europe and Collective memory. Setting the Framework", in Veronika Pehe, Joanna Wawrzyniak (eds.), *Remembering the Neoliberal Turn. Economic Change and Collective Memory in Eastern Europe after 1989*, London: Routledge, 2023, p. 7.

¹¹ Till Hilmar *et al.*, "Deep Transformations: Lived Experiences and Emotions in Social Change Narratives" in *Cultural Sociology*, Special Issue: *Deep Transformations: Lived Experiences and Emotions in Social Change Narratives*, no. 18 (2), 2024, pp. 189–190.

¹² Mitja Velikonja, "Ways of Remembering Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav Rear-view Mirror", in Latinka Perović *et al.* (eds.), *Yugoslavia from a Historical Perspective*, Belgrade: Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, p. 543.

surtout à cette dimension prospective de la yougonostalgie qu'on a dédié les pages suivantes.

Des mémoires sociales yougonostalgiques à la yougosphère culturelle

Comme montré par une abondante littérature scientifique, la culture mémorielle post-yougoslave incorpore les tensions existantes entre la mémoire traumatique (autobiographique et sociale) des guerres, les mémoires politiques compétitrices sur lesquelles reposent les régimes mnémoniques officiels des États successeurs – anti-nostalgiques¹³ par rapport à l'héritage du communisme condamné sans nuances dans une perspective tributaire du paradigme totalitaire –, et les contre-mémoires modelées par la nostalgie pour l'espace culturel supranational préservé pendant plus de trois décennies avant l'éclatement de la deuxième Yougoslavie. Selon Zoran Milutinović, ce fut l'ère « la plus riche » de l'histoire des cultures nationales yougoslaves (malgré une austérité économique qui a duré plus de quinze ans), notamment grâce à ce « strate » supranational maintenu à l'aide des institutions de l'ancien pays de la fraternité et de l'unité :

Despite poverty and wartime destruction, culture was taken seriously in this period, and it showed serious results. Anyone familiar with the cultural scenes in the successor states has to admit that the new nation states do not take culture seriously, nor, thus far, has a creative generation of the same caliber made an entrance. [...] Just the list of cultural and educational institutions founded in the second Yugoslavia demonstrates that nationalists, especially those from the smaller nations, should celebrate this period instead of cursing it.¹⁴

Tout au contraire, comme dans l'entier bloc de l'Est situé avant 1989 sous l'hégémonie soviétique, les régimes officiels post-yougoslaves restent focalisés, au moins dans les années '90, sur le pôle traumatique des mémoires du communisme, malgré les différences substantielles entre l'expérience

¹³ *Idem*, "Lost in Transition: Nostalgia for Socialism in Post-socialist Countries" in *East European Politics and Societies: and Cultures*, no. 23 (4), 2009, p. 537.

¹⁴ Zoran Milutinović, "What Common Yugoslav Culture Was and How Everybody Benefited From It", in Radmila Gorup (ed.), *After Yugoslavia. The Cultural Spaces of a Vanished Land*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, pp. 82, 84. Zoran Milutinović, "A Note on the Meaning of the 'Post' in Post-Yugoslav Literature" in *Slavonic and East European Review*, no. 99 (4), 2021, p. 738.

quasi libérale de la Yougoslavie titiste et celles dérivées du stalinisme, repérables dans les anciennes républiques soviétiques et dans les satellites de l'URSS. Il ne faut pas oublier qu'au début des années '80, à une époque où les conséquences des crises économiques mondiales survenues au cours de la décennie précédente se manifestaient, dans les deux blocs rivaux, par le déclin de l'État-Providence, témoignant de « l'épuisement des énergies utopiques », ¹⁵ la Yougoslavie continuait d'être « l'État le plus prospère de l'Europe Orientale, le communisme à visage humain dont les Tchèques avaient languï en 1968, avant qu'il n'y soit écrasé par les Soviétiques » : « Yugoslavia then was widely seen as a model for the world of how a multi-lingual /religious /national society could overcome the terrible legacies of a ghastly war, the one in 1941–45 [...]. » ¹⁶ Malgré cela, une décennie après, les *New Master Narratives* des acteurs ethno-nationalistes illustraient le renversement radical de ce modèle: « ...they have all enabled the creation of new narratives through strategies of symbolic nation-building that selectively draw on the past to create equally problematic mnemonic regimes to the one they worked to destroy [...]. » ¹⁷ Leurs tentatives de convertir le « younivers » ¹⁸ en une source de traumas culturels ¹⁹ amplifient les traumas psycho-sociaux provoqués par les guerres, ²⁰ et cela peu après le « chant du cygne de la Yougoslavie », la « renaissance » des « *Iconic eighties* », accomplie par « *la dernière génération yougoslave* ». Or, comme l'a observé Mitja Velikonja,

¹⁵ Jürgen Habermas, "The New Obscurity: The Crisis of the Welfare State and the Exhaustion of Utopian Energies", in Jürgen Habermas, *The New Conservatism: Cultural Criticism and the Historians' Debate*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991, pp. 48-70.

¹⁶ Robert M. Hayden, "Exititis in Europe?: Yugoslavia as the First European Disunion" in *Ethnologia Europaea*, no. 50 (2), 2020, p. 50.

¹⁷ Vjeran Pavlaković, "Memory Politics in the Former Yugoslavia" in *Rocznik Instytutu Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej*, no. 18 (2), 2020, p. 11.

¹⁸ Martin Pogačar, "Traces of Yugoslavia: Yuniverse beyond Nostalgia", in Nicolas Hayoz, Daniela Koleva, Leszek Jesień (eds.), *20 Years after the Collapse of Communism: Expectations, Achievements and Disillusions of 1989*, Bern & New York: Peter Lang, 2011, p. 436.

¹⁹ Jeffrey C. Alexander, "Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma", in Jeffrey C. Alexander *et al.*, *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 2004, p. 12.

²⁰ « ...ironically, with the end of actual fighting in the former Yugoslavia, the war over (and on) memory has even intensified further. » (Jan-Werner Müller, "Introduction: The Power of Memory, the Memory of Power and the Power over Memory", in Jan-Werner Müller (ed.), *Memory and Power in Post-War Europe: Studies in the Presence of the Past*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004 [2002], p. 17.

The cultural renaissance was building Yugoslavia from the “bottom-up,” not in the sense of the state-ordered and organized politics of *brotherhood and unity* or even the unitarian desire for a single, directed *Yugoslav culture*, but horizontally, through popular culture, subcultures, tourism, civil society initiatives, identity politics, etc. The most propulsive and the most widespread culture of the 1980s was in its essence transnational, spontaneously pan-Yugoslav: it has shaped the generation as much as the generation shaped it. At the same time, it spread well over its state boundaries, undoubtedly becoming a part of the global pop and alternative cultural scene.²¹

Les transformations radicales des années '90 sont, donc, d'autant plus bouleversantes, ayant pour conséquence, dans les termes de Robert Hayden, un recul devant l'avenir : « Since Yugoslavia was premised on a future of peace and prosperity through a federation of its component nations, and their equality, the repudiation of the federation, as well as of the premises of equality and “brotherhood and unity” between its peoples [...] amounted to a retreat from the future. »²² C'est ainsi que les narrations révisionnistes sont parvenues à fracturer²³ non seulement le régime mnémorique antérieur, mais aussi les mémoires collectives : « ...ethno-exclusivist ideology that attempts strictly to define and homogenise “national substance” and threatens to close off the cultural horizon, produces quite the opposite effect of fragmentation of such discourse. »²⁴ Dans la sphère des imaginaires socioculturels, cet effet est discernable, comme montrait Svetlana Boym à l'instar de Dubravka Ugrešić, dans une géographie de la mémoire fragmentée, dont les *topoi* associés à une « *Trümmerliteratur* » élégiaque²⁵ incorporent la juxtaposition des « horreurs de la guerre » et de la yougonostalgie : « The word *nostalgija*, the pseudo-Greek term common to all the new languages of the country – Croatian, Serbian, Bosnian, Slovene – is linked together with the word *Yugoslavia* that Milosevic had confiscated from the common memory. »²⁶ Pour tous les ex-Yougoslaves réfractaires à « l'homogénéisation nationale qui a précipité la désintégration violente de la

²¹ Velikonja, “Ways of Remembering Yugoslavia”, pp. 971, 976.

²² Hayden, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

²³ Jan Kubik; Michael Bernhard, “A Theory of the Politics of Memory”, in Michael Bernhard; Jan Kubik (eds.), *Twenty Years after Communism. The Politics of Memory and Commemoration*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 17.

²⁴ Pogačar, *op. cit.*, p. 439.

²⁵ David Williams, *Writing Postcommunism: Towards A Literature of the East European Ruins*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, p. 6.

²⁶ Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, New York: Basic Books, 2001, p. 52.

fédération », observe Aleksandar Bošković, « la guerre civile a été un signifiant essentiel de *l'exil* », de « la rupture d'avec leur vie antérieure », de « la perte de leur identité collective. »²⁷ Lors d'une analyse des « paysages médiaux »²⁸ du younivers slovène, configuré autour de « trois axes : *l'histoire, le mythe et la culture populaire* », soutenant « une géographie et une architecture symboliques » où se croisent le passé et le présent, Martin Pogačar soulignait, lui aussi, les conséquences, au niveau des imaginaires sociaux, de ce qui a été perçu comme un grand désordre par une partie significative des sujets impliqués. En effet, le collapsus de la Yougoslavie dans « un bain de sang, dans l'absence des funérailles décentes » a engendré une « dissolution de la réalité sociale [et] culturelle » :

A significant number of people was left without a grander referential framework and without a tool to apprehend meaningfully what has happened; with an abundance of rather ambiguous memories of their shared past, which lost all relevance in new nationalized countries; and with scant prospects to deal with a no longer so bright future.²⁹

C'est au milieu des ruines, tant affectives que matérielles, de ce cadre référentiel dévasté par la guerre – et en conflit silencieux avec les « rétro-utopies »³⁰ des « guerriers mnémoniques »³¹ ethno-nationalistes – que s'insinue d'abord la yougonostalgie, en défendant l'espace fragile du dialogue, animé par l'imagination mnémonique, avec « le passé qui avait célébré l'avenir. »³² Connectée à la dynamique multidirectionnelle des mémoires et de la culture populaires – y compris la « mémoire collective implicite » qui persiste dans l'espace d'expérience modelé par la culture de la fraternité et de l'unité –, la yougonostalgie arrive à transformer le paysage culturel et politique cloué dans la « *damnatio memoriae* »³³ du révisionnisme historique de l'époque. Soulignons, à ce point, qu'« à l'opposé de la commémoration », la mémoire collective implicite n'est pas « avant tout

²⁷ Aleksandar Bošković, "Yugonostalgia and Yugoslav Cultural Memory: *Lexicon of Yu Mythology*" in *Slavic Review*, no. 72 (1), 2013, p. 57.

²⁸ Pogačar, *op. cit.*, pp. 435-436.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 437-438.

³⁰ Zygmunt Bauman, *Retrotopia*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017.

³¹ Kubik, Bernhard, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-34, p. 17. Cf. Iorga, « Passés troublés, rétro-utopies... »..

³² Velikonja, "Lost in Transition", p. 546.

³³ *Idem*, "Ways of Remembering Yugoslavia...", p. 536.

régressive », mais illustre, en revanche, « une dynamique foncièrement prospective » : « Implicit collective memory is a form of 'collective future thinking without thinking'. »³⁴ Préformée par une telle dynamique des imaginaires sociaux, la yougonostalgie est, dans les termes de Mitja Velikonja, « une sorte de résistance (non)réflexive [...] à la flétrissure systématique ou, du moins, à l'amnésie imposée quant à l'ère yougoslave [...], mais aussi aux nouvelles tragédies, injustices et à l'exploitation » du présent. Plutôt discrète pendant la guerre, dans la mesure où elle reste limitée aux espaces privés des petites communautés mémorielles, la yougonostalgie pénètre, depuis les années 2000, « les discours, les pratiques et les institutions mainstream »,³⁵ malgré les efforts de « délégitimer les évaluations positives du passé socialiste yougoslave »,³⁶ visibles dans les discours ethno-nationalistes radicaux, où cette « émotion historique »³⁷ polymorphe³⁸ est dénoncée comme « irrationnelle, non-patriotique, réactionnaire et immorale. »³⁹

En renvoyant aux expériences historiques différentes, les multiples manifestations et significations de la yougonostalgie sont tributaires tant des spécificités de la « mémoire générationnelle »⁴⁰ que des options politiques des sujets impliqués. Dans son analyse des interviews accordées en 2017–2018 par les « derniers pionniers » yougoslaves, à présent des acteurs politiques en Slovénie, en Serbie et en Croatie, Milica Popović met en évidence cette complexité de la yougonostalgie qui facilite, d'un côté, par le truchement des « positionnements générationnels », la gestion des « dissonances cognitives » apparues entre les mémoires autobiographiques et les « discours publics révisionnistes », pouvant être convertie, d'un autre

³⁴ Astrid Erll, "The Hidden Power of Implicit Collective Memory" in *Memory, Mind & Media*, no. 1, 2022, p. 11.

³⁵ Velikonja, "Ways of Remembering Yugoslavia..." , p. 536.

³⁶ Tanja Petrović, "The Past that Binds Us: Yougonostalgia as the Politics of Future", in Srda Pavlovic, Marko Zivkovic (eds.), *Transcending Fratricide: Political Mythologies, Reconciliations, and the Uncertain Future in the Former Yugoslavia, Southeast European Integration Perspectives*, no. 9, Baden-Baden: Nomos, p. 137.

³⁷ Boym, *op. cit.*, p. xvi.

³⁸ Michael Hviid Jacobsen, "In Times of Nostalgia: the Brave New World of a Grand Old Emotion", in Michael Hviid Jacobsen (ed.), *Nostalgia Now: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives on the Past in the Present*, London: Routledge, 2020, p. 9.

³⁹ Petrović, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

⁴⁰ Harald Wydra, "Generations of Memory: Elements of a Conceptual Framework" in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, no. 60 (1), 2018, pp. 5-34.

côté, en un « phénomène politique » collectif, grâce aux « positionnements politiques. »⁴¹ La seconde dimension est quasi absente dans les terribles années '90, quand la dynamique yougonostalgique, influencée par le contexte (post)traumatique et témoignant de « l'interaction des mémoires hégémoniques et antagonistes »,⁴² implique des versions « non-instrumentales », « vernaculaires » ou « existentielles »,⁴³ en contrepoids de la nostalgie instrumentalisée dans des buts légitimateurs par les acteurs politiques engagés dans les guerres des mémoires. Repérable chez les représentants de la première et de la dernière génération yougoslave, comme l'observe Monika Palmberger lors de sa recherche menée dans les années 2000 en Bosnie-Herzégovine,⁴⁴ la nostalgie existentielle reflète l'effort de récupérer ce que Dubravka Ugrešić avait nommé « la mémoire confisquée ». C'est, dans les termes de Svetlana Boym, « une sorte de mémoire de tous les jours, un corpus commun de repères émotionnels qui se soustraient à une cartographie précise » : « It is composed of both official symbols and multiple fragments and splinters of the past, "a line of verse, an image, a scene, a scent, a tune, a tone, a word." »⁴⁵ Si ces réminiscences appartiennent à la « culture nostalgique » (« bottom-up nostalgia »), les versions « instrumentales » intègrent la « culture de la nostalgie » (« a constructed, top-down (materialized) discourse »),⁴⁶ dont l'exemple le plus saillant sur le plan de la mémoire politique ethno-nationaliste est la « nostalgie restauratrice ».⁴⁷

⁴¹ Milica Popović, *Post-Yugoslav Memories as a Resistance Strategy and the Political Significance of Yugonostalgia*, PhD Thesis, Institut d'études politiques de Paris – Sciences Po, Univerza v Ljubljani, 2021, p. 240. Cf. Monika Palmberger, *How Generations Remember. Conflicting Histories and Shared Memories in Post-War Bosnia and Herzegovina*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, p. 236.

⁴² Daphne Berdahl, "'(N)Ostalgie' for the Present: Memory, Longing, and East German Things" in *Ethnos*, no. 64 (2), 1999, p. 193.

⁴³ Daniela Koleva, *Memory Archipelago of the Communist Past. Public Narratives and Personal Recollections*, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022, pp. 213, 229, 231.

⁴⁴ Palmberger, *op. cit.*, p. 236.

⁴⁵ Boym, *op. cit.*, p. 52. Cf. Ugrešić, *op. cit.*.

⁴⁶ Mitja Velikonja, *Titostalgia – A Study of Nostalgia for Josip Broz*, Skopje: Mirovni Inštitut, 2008, p. 29; Velikonja, "Lost in Transition..." , p. 539.

⁴⁷ Boym, *op. cit.*, p. xviii.

En intégrant une « utopie rétrospective »⁴⁸ pourvue d'un pôle prospectif⁴⁹ robuste, la yougonostalgie se situe à l'antipode des rétro-utopies attachées à la nostalgie restauratrice qui a été le ressort imaginaire et émotionnel des conflits violents des années '90 : « It is not a revisionist or "restorative nostalgia" [...], not a return of the past, the regime, the leader or past times, but a return of the utopias of those times. »⁵⁰ De fait, tout comme *Ostalgie* et les autres avatars de l'imaginaire nostalgique-utopique (pas forcément liés aux contextes post-socialistes) révélés au niveau de la mémoire sociale, la yougonostalgie apparaît à un moment où « le retour au passé n'est plus possible ».⁵¹ Par-delà les contextes traumatisants évoqués, force est de constater que le phénomène apparaît sur le fond d'« une épidémie globale de la nostalgie », manifestée comme « une langueur affective pour une communauté ayant une mémoire collective, un désir de continuité dans un monde fragmenté »,⁵² mais reflétant en premier lieu, comme toutes les nostalgies, une réaction critique envers le présent : « The key to understanding nostalgia is the present, not the past. By insisting that everything was better before, homo nostalgicus implicitly criticizes what is wrong now. »⁵³ Loin d'être l'objet d'une « langueur paralysante », le passé reconstruit grâce aux pratiques yougonostalgiques fournit, donc, un prétexte pour la critique, aux enjeux émancipateurs,⁵⁴ du présent contestable : « Although Yugo-nostalgia is not always employed to counter the nationalist discourse [...], it brings with it not only the potential for criticising the present situation but also provides an orientation towards the future. »⁵⁵ Comme le souligne Vladislav Beronja, la reconstruction du passé yougoslave – conçu notamment dans sa dimension cosmopolite, tributaire de la culture supranationale évoquée –, pourrait soutenir un « projet de la démocratie radicale dans le

⁴⁸ Velikonja, *Titostalgia*, pp. 27, 129, 133; Velikonja, "Lost in Transition...", pp. 535–551, pp. 535, 537; Velikonja, « Ways of Remembering Yugoslavia... », pp. 535, 536.

⁴⁹ Boym, *op. cit.*, p. xvi.

⁵⁰ Velikonja, *Titostalgia...*, p. 133, nous soulignons.

⁵¹ Koleva, *op. cit.*, p. 248.

⁵² Boym, *op. cit.*, p. xiv.

⁵³ Velikonja, "Lost in Transition...", p. 546. Voir aussi Bošković, *op. cit.*, p. 75; Chris Hann, "Transition, Tradition, and Nostalgia; Postsocialist Transformations in a Comparative Framework" in *Collegium Antropologicum*, no. 36 (4), 2012, p. 1127.

⁵⁴ Emily Keightley, Michael Pickering, *The Mnemonic Imagination. Remembering as Creative Practice*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 118.

⁵⁵ Palmberger, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

contexte européen », à la condition que ce passé soit regagné « d’une manière plurielle, agonistique. »⁵⁶ Cela exigerait un « multiperspectivisme radical »,⁵⁷ qui rende possible l’accomplissement du « pluralisme agonistique » – tant dans le champ politique que sur le terrain culturel, et surtout dans la sphère de la gestion des mémoires problématiques – auquel correspond, selon Chantal Mouffe, un cosmopolitisme distinct par rapport à la version basée sur le « multiperspectivisme consensuel » et aux « nouveaux cosmopolitismes » qui partagent la notion d’un « pluralisme sans antagonisme », en y éludant « le caractère nécessairement conflictuel ». Par contre, la version agonistique du cosmopolitisme intègre « la dimension antagoniste du politique », en admettant que « le monde est un plurivers, pas un univers ». Cette conception est compatible, dans le modèle agonistique de la démocratie libérale envisagé par Mouffe, avec « un type de “consensus conflictuel” fondé sur des interprétations divergentes des principes éthico-politiques partagés. »⁵⁸ Sur le terrain des *Memory Studies*, ce modèle permet d’exploiter dans des cadres démocratiques la capacité de « la mémoire agonistique de revitaliser la mémoire des conflits du passé, afin de répolitiser la sphère publique [...], de contrecarrer les mémoires nationalistes antagonistes qui ont escaladé en Europe ces dernières années », compte tenu de la complexité de ces conflits et de « la diversité des opinions et des émotions » qui en sont attachées, tout en promouvant « la solidarité humaine à l’intérieur et au-delà de l’État-nation ».⁵⁹ Dans le cas des paysages mnémoniques conflictuels post-yougoslaves, il s’agit d’accomplir une démocratisation des mémoires antagonistes, tout en renforçant, alors que « la Yougoslavie est morte », l’esprit de solidarité attaché à la « yougosphère »⁶⁰ politico-culturelle. Dans ce contexte, la récupération du passé yougoslave supposerait, comme montré par Beronja, la révélation non seulement de ses « aspects idéalisés », mais aussi de son héritage négatif :

⁵⁶ Vladislav Beronja, *History and Remembrance in Three Post-Yugoslav Authors: Dubravka Ugrešić, Daša Drndić, and Aleksandar Zograf*, PhD Thesis, University of Michigan, 2014, p. 16.

⁵⁷ Anna Cento Bull, Hans Lauge Hansen, Francisco Colom-González, “Agonistic Memory Revisited”, in Stefan Berger, Wulf Kansteiner (eds.), *Agonistic Memory and the Legacy of 20th Century Wars in Europe*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 17, 20.

⁵⁸ Chantal Mouffe, *Agonistics. Thinking the World Politically*, London & New York: Verso, 2013, pp. 19-23.

⁵⁹ Stefan Berger, Wulf Kansteiner, “Agonistic Perspectives on the Memory of War: An Introduction”, in Berger, Kansteiner, *op. cit.*, pp. 3, 5.

⁶⁰ Tim Judah, « Bonnes nouvelles des Balkans de l’Ouest: La Yougoslavie est morte, vive la Yougosphère! » in *Anatoli*, no. 1, 2010, pp. 147-170.

... one should be wary of any uncritically restorative projects, even the hybrid "self-management" socialism, the Second World solidarity offered by Tito's non-alignment policy, or the soft nets of the welfare state which make "Yugonostalgia" – in today's highly uncertain political and economic climate – so inviting. As long as these remain mere slogans – "Like a mother, with its Plan, the state takes care of every man;" "When brothers unite – nothing can oppose their might!" [...] – they remain frozen in the realm of leftist melancholia, which produces "fashions instead of schools, cliques instead of parties, and agents instead of producers."⁶¹

Ce n'est pas, certes, le cas des avatars actuels de la yougonostalgie, en tant que pratiques de médiation de la mémoire culturelle – le terrain le plus favorable pour « la réflexion sur les expériences personnelles et collectives », y compris celles du passé (post-)transitionnel –, à même d'« incorporer des voix et des subjectivités originales et [de] modeler de nouveaux imaginaires sociaux. »⁶² C'est sur ce dernier plan – celui du « patrimoine collectif qui peut, d'un côté, raffermir et augmenter les préjugés, les clichés et les inerties, et, d'un autre côté, réorienter et transformer les souvenirs, les attentes, les espoirs, les projets et les utopies »⁶³ – qu'agit le pôle émancipateur de la yougonostalgie, devenu à présent un catalyseur de la dynamique du younivers social : « As much as the Yuniverse is a reflection of the past, it is, due to ubiquity of remnants of the past, also an important socio-cultural factor of the present. »⁶⁴ C'est ainsi que, par-delà ses manifestations vernaculaires des années '90, la nostalgie pour la deuxième Yougoslavie acquiert à présent une dimension « politique subversive qui engendre des effets politiques » : « It [...] brings political imagination back into the game, that is, thinking about alternatives after [...] the self-styled *end of history*, after the *end of ideology*, after the *end of society* and finally after the *end of Yugoslavia*. »⁶⁵ « Polyphonique, multicouche, plurivalente » et « méta-

⁶¹ Beronja, *op. cit.*, pp. 16-17. Cf. Charity Scribner, *Requiem for Communism*, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2003, p. 121.

⁶² Robbe, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

⁶³ Corin Braga, « Imaginarul european, între specificitate locală și unitate globală », in Adriana Babeți et al. (eds.), *Cartografii literare: regional, national, european, global*, Timișoara: Editura Universității de Vest, 2016, p. 35.

⁶⁴ Pogačar, *op. cit.*, p. 438.

⁶⁵ Velikonja, "Ways of Remembering Yugoslavia...", p. 544. Voir aussi, pour une perspective différente, Pål Kolstø, "Identifying with the old or the new state: nation-building vs. Yugonostalgia in the Yugoslav successor states" in *Nations and Nationalism*, no. 20 (4), 2014, pp. 760-781.

nationale », la yougonostalgie réflexive actuelle nourrit une culture politique progressiste qui n'a rien affaire aux désirs de restaurer – chose irréalisable, d'ailleurs – ni la Yougoslavie titiste, ni le socialisme d'État en tant que système politique. Transgressant les frontières idéologiques, ses expressions reçoivent des significations souvent contradictoires : « ...some hiding nationalism, some anti-nationalism; some are acts of resistance and activism, some are a lamenting intimate reminiscence of youth [...]. Yugonostalgia appears a multidirectional memory narrative, beyond singularity of narratives [...]. »⁶⁶ Dans le même temps, l'intégration de la yougonostalgie dans la yougosphère culturelle facilite « la réconciliation du passé, du présent et de l'avenir »,⁶⁷ ainsi que la revalorisation du « Projet Yougoslavie », capable de mobiliser les énergies collectives afin de construire « un avenir plus juste. »⁶⁸ L'une des plus significatives illustrations – sur le terrain de la mémoire sociale et culturelle (hormis les textes littéraires) – de la multidirectionnalité et de l'orientation progressiste de la yougonostalgie contemporaine est le *Leksikon Yu Mitologije*, projet initié, l'année de la chute du mur de Berlin, par Dubravka Ugrešić en collaboration avec les éditeurs de la revue *Start* de Zagreb, mais reporté, une fois éclatées les guerres. Plus d'une décennie après,

The creative, anti-mimetic, eclectic, ironic, parodic, deliberately profane, playfully postmodern and witty design of the *Lexicon of Yu Mythology*, together with the self-reflective, intertextual, and provocative editorial comments disseminated between its covers, successfully performs and reaffirms the emancipating (and antinationalistic) impact nostalgia has on the imagination among the new, post-Yugoslav generations. As a particular yearning for an alternative society where rectitude, equality, and solidarity are endlessly anticipated, Yugonostalgia in the *Lexicon* actively engages the social imagination in materializing its emancipating potential.⁶⁹

L'exploitation du « potentiel politique révolutionnaire et émancipateur » ne se produira pourtant que dans la quatrième phase de la récupération de la mémoire culturelle yougoslave, après le révisionnisme

⁶⁶ Popović, *op. cit.*, pp. 239-240.

⁶⁷ Olivia Angé, David Berliner, "Introduction. Anthropology of Nostalgia – Anthropology as Nostalgia", in Olivia Angé, David Berliner (eds.), *Anthropology and Nostalgia*, New York & Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2016, p. 12.

⁶⁸ Velikonja, "Ways of Remembering Yugoslavia...", pp. 543, 544.

⁶⁹ Bošković, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

historique et l'amnésie culturelle des années '90, après l'onde de la nostalgie « sentimentale et consumériste » de la décennie suivante et enfin, après la récupération nostalgique-réflexive – par le truchement des livres, des films, des émissions TV, de la musique, des expositions qui en seront dédiées à partir des années 2010 – du socialisme réel devenu « une curiosité historique éloignée. »⁷⁰ Ces évolutions favorisent tant la revivification des « *Iconic Eighties* », cette constellation privilégiée parmi les paysages médiaux du younivers, que sa connexion aux valeurs progressistes – artistiques, sociales et politiques – de l'Europe du présent, conçue, du point de vue des dynamiques des imaginaires socioculturels et des mémoires collectives, comme « une *opera aperta*, un *work in progress* ». ⁷¹ Sans insister sur un sujet réservé à un autre travail, il nous faut évoquer, dans cette perspective, le corpus significatif d'œuvres publiées par nombre d'auteurs ex-yougoslaves de langue allemande notamment après la Grande Récession de 2008, dans le contexte des crises économiques et géopolitiques subséquentes, intensifiées par l'émergence d'une nouvelle vague du néonationalisme populiste sur le continent, qui, tout en fragilisant le projet culturel-identitaire européen, semblent avoir constitué un catalyseur pour la réactivation de la mémoire yougonostalgique : Melinda Nadj Abonji, Viktorija Kocman, Barbi Marković, Ivan Ivanji (Serbie) ; Sanja Abramović, Marina Achenbach, Adriana Altaras, Ana Bilić, Marica Bodrožić, Alida Bremer, Nataša Dragnić, Nicol Ljubić, Danko Rabrenović, Ana Tajder (Croatie) ; Saša Stanišić, Melica Bešlija, Mascha Dabić, Alma Hadžibeganović (Bosnie-Herzégovine) ; Meral Kureyshi (Kosovo) etc.⁷² La contextualisation nous semble, à nouveau, nécessaire, étant donné que la double expérience, heureuse et douloureuse, de l'ancien État multinational a été souvent évoquée comme « un [contre]exemple structurel pour l'Union Européenne actuelle », ⁷³ tandis que les

⁷⁰ Mitja Velikonja, "Poetry after Srebrenica?", p. 975. Cf. Maša Kolanović, "Back to the Future of (Post)Socialism: The Afterlive of Socialism in Post-Yugoslav Cultural Space", in John Frederick Bailyn *et al.* (eds.), *The Future of (Post)socialism: Eastern European Perspectives*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2018, pp. 165-194.

⁷¹ Braga, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

⁷² Maria Mayr, "The European Future of Postsocialist Nostalgia in German-Language Literature about Former Yugoslavia" in *Colloquia Germanica. Europe in Contemporary German-Language Literature*, no. 51 (3/4), 2020, p. 328.

⁷³ *Ibidem*, p. 327. Voir aussi Robert M. Hayden, *From Yugoslavia to the Western Balkans. Studies of a European Disunion 1991–2011*, Leiden, Brill, 2013, p. 377–387; Hayden, « Exititis in Europe? ».

expériences historiques des trois Yougoslavies ont été vues comme une « métonymie, voire une synecdoque » du « court XX^e siècle ». ⁷⁴ Ce n'est pas surprenant que, dans le contexte de l'obscurcissement actuel des horizons utopiques, ces auteurs regagnent la composante émancipatrice du « Projet Yougoslavie ».

Pour conclure

En effet, la récupération des valeurs progressistes yougoslaves, convergentes avec les principes définitoires du projet de l'eupéanisation culturelle et politique, tels que la continuité identitaire, le cosmopolitisme et l'antifascisme, montre combien les pratiques culturelles yougonostalgiques soutiennent l'idée de « l'appartenance à l'Europe » et l'intégration de ses repères axiologiques essentiels. ⁷⁵ Sans encourager des interprétations *à thèse*, ni suggérer des rêves restaurateurs, les textes du corpus susmentionné incitent à la réflexion tant sur l'avenir du passé « euphorique » de la « EU-goslavie » que sur l'avenir de la yougonostalgie : « ...they also suggest that this legacy should be mobilized for building a more equal and just European future that embraces different national, religious, or ethnic identities. » ⁷⁶ C'est une transformation significative par rapport au contexte tragique des guerres yougoslaves, qui avaient contribué d'une manière décisive à la revivification des stéréotypes balkanistes quant à la région perçue à nouveau comme « un envers de l'Europe occidentale ». ⁷⁷ Stigmatisés comme « primitifs, rétrogrades et essentiellement violents », « situés géographiquement en Europe, mais sans y nécessairement appartenir du point de vue politique et culturel », les Balkans seront désormais « encore une fois "dépossédés" de leur identité européenne », ⁷⁸ peu après le « naufrage » du pays considéré jadis comme

⁷⁴ Ivana Bago, *Inheriting the Yugoslav Century: Art, History, and Generation*, PhD Thesis, Duke University, 2018, pp. 4-5.

⁷⁵ Petrović, *op. cit.*, pp. 131-137. Cf. Velikonja, "Poetry after Srebrenica?", p. 979.

⁷⁶ Mayr, *op. cit.*, p. 339.

⁷⁷ Jean-Arnault Dérens, Laurent Geslin, « Les Balkans, l'autre échec de l'Europe. Des frontières entre imaginaire et idéologies » in *Revue du Crieur*, no. 8 (3), 2017, p. 147.

⁷⁸ Stijn Vervaet, "Cosmopolitan Counter-Narratives of Dispossession: Migration, Memory, and Metanarration in the Work of Aleksandar Hemon", in Vladimir Biti (ed.), *Claiming the Dispossession: The Politics of Hi/storytelling in Post-imperial Europe*, Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2017, pp. 225-226.

« l'étoile resplendissante de l'Europe Orientale par ses souteneurs à l'Ouest ». ⁷⁹
À la même époque – celle de l'écriture de *La culture du mensonge* et du *Musée des redditions sans condition* –, si « Yougoslavie » est devenue « un mot quasiment interdit » dans les arènes (ultra)nationalistes des États successeurs, l'émergence de la contre-mémoire yougonostalgique créé déjà, en revanche, le terrain pour l'édification de la yougosphère culturelle. En contrebalançant les instrumentalisations rétro-utopiques de la nostalgie restauratrice ethno-nationaliste qui a été le ressort émotionnel et imaginaire des guerres mémorielles de l'époque, mais aussi des tragédies ultérieures, les avatars multivalents et polymorphes de l'imagination yougonostalgique, émergés au croisement des mémoires individuelles et collectives, sont perçus à présent comme un catalyseur de l'engagement affectif-éthique vis-à-vis du passé récent, capables d'inspirer, dans le même temps, des « visions d'un avenir meilleur ». ⁸⁰

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⁷⁹ Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 186.

⁸⁰ Palmberger, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

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LEADERSHIP. DECISION-MAKING. LEGITIMACY. HOW DELIBERATIVE ARE THE LABOR UNIONS IN ROMANIA?

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Abstract: *Deliberative democracy theory highlighted democratic deliberation as a modus operandi for facilitating group decision-making. In 2023, members of Romanian labor unions in several sectors took to the streets in strikes and protests, demanding higher revenues and better work conditions. Nevertheless, misunderstandings and internal ruptures shadowed their noble ends and fueled mistrust amongst unionists. This dynamic reminds rather of interest party politics as it employs vertical power relations, influenced by social and professional background segmentation. One question that reasonably arises in this context is how deliberative the decision-making process is within the unions in Romania. We specifically analyze elements of deliberative organizational leadership and the power relations within labor unions through a qualitative study in the form of interviews.*

Keywords: *Labor Unions, Romania, Deliberation, Representation, Leadership*

Context

Neo-liberalism triggered more dynamism in the labor market and new work relations, forcing unions to reshape and adjust their working procedures repeatedly. Their efficiency in coping with capitalist interests is determined by the strength of their association,¹ which, in turn, depends on

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¹ Erik Olin Wright, "Working-Class Power, Capitalist-Class Interests, and Class Compromise" in *American Journal of Sociology*, 105 (4), 2000, pp. 957-1002.

their capacity to identify, coagulate, and use the available resources.² Literature considered unions' vulnerabilities and ineptitudes and developed a theoretical corpus on their revitalization. For instance, Frege and Kelly (2004) determined six possible union revitalization models: restructuring, organizing, coalition building, social partnership, political action, and international union action.³ The present article adds to these potential actions a new element, which challenges the agents of decision-making at all levels and the method of the deliberative internal decision-making process, aiming to boost their internal democracy and legitimacy. To this end, it aims to determine the desirability of deliberative decision-making operations among a series of interviewed union members.

The idea of an organized labor force goes back to North America. The Fordist labor union model served as a major inspiration for the Western European labor structures. The North American prototype was hierarchical and represented relatively common, bottom-layer workers whose interests were aggregated by a central leadership and bespoken through official channels of social dialogue. It initially dispersed in Western Europe after WWII, pushed by industrialization.⁴ This area provided a relatively stable sociopolitical context, already operating mass production systems with a professional labor force and circulating important amounts of wealth through commercial ties. Here, the workforce could play an essential role in developing a permissive institutional design that accommodated their interests. After the Cold War, the West benefited from an influx of Eastern European qualified workforce combined with neoliberal practices of outsourcing production in these cheap labor countries.⁵

² Adam Mrozowicki, "Trade Union Organising in Eastern Europe: A Viable Pathway to Trade Union Revitalisation (the Case of the Automotive Sector)?" in *Semantic Scholar: Business, Political Science, Sociology*, 2 (1), 2011.

³ Carola Frege and John Kelly (eds.), *Varieties of Unionism: Strategies for Union Revitalization in a Globalizing Economy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

⁴ Magdalena Bernaciak and Marta Kahancová, "Introduction: Innovation against All Odds?", in Magdalena Bernaciak and Marta Kahancová (eds.), *Innovative Union Practices in Central and Eastern Europe*, Brussels: ETUI, 2017, pp. 7–20.

⁵ Dorothee Bohle and Bela Greskovits, "Greskovics Bohle Capitalism without Compromise" in *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 41 (1), 2006, pp. 3–25.

Zooming in on the Central Eastern European countries situation, we note their intricate conditions. Basically, they took over the Fordist style, which later got imprinted with socialist legacies. We find that socialist and Fordist models actually share several standard features: large size, formalized, extensively bureaucratic, and typical to manufacturing industries and the public sector. Yet, the socialist unions stood as mere channels of information transfer between the political parties and the union members, and membership was somewhat compulsory. Bernaciak and Kahancová (2017) refer to the socialist legacy as “routine servicing,” featuring a wide gap between its strata and the lack of genuine communication among and between members.⁶ Looking at their image and functioning is essential, as it affects public opinion and, implicitly, their strength. It seems that the public perception of union membership in Eastern Europe is still closely linked to regimentation, a stigmatic and compelling task, setting subtle psychological barriers related to their activity in the collective mind.⁷ Therefore, one of the primary duties of unions is to improve their public image and gain more internal and external legitimacy.

The East-West division in terms of economy, culture, politics, and general success rate could not yet be reconciled. The West still generates inspiration for the mimetic Eastern hemisphere in many aspects. Similarly, the Northern hemisphere plays a trendsetting role in welfare distribution and employment security. The United States of America, for example, designed trade union *organizing* and recruitment strategies, while the Anglo-American societies combined top-down and bottom-up initiatives focused on “membership acquisition”, conducted through direct personal contacts, calls, and interactive joint activities outside the workplace.⁸ Conversely, the state of the art of the unions in the CEEs remains “hostile”.⁹ States’ institutions tend to control and counteract labor and social movements, keeping them dependent on state funding. The unions are either in contradiction with one another or inactive and still follow communist patterns.¹⁰ Their poor

⁶ Bernaciak and Kahancová, *art. cit.*, in Bernaciak and Marta (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 7–20.

⁷ *Ibidem.*

⁸ Mrozowicki, *art. cit.*

⁹ Martin Upchurch, “Strategic Dilemmas for Trade Unions in Transformation: The Experience of Serbia” in *SEER- South East Europe Review for Labour and Social Affairs*, 9 (4), 2006, pp. 43-64 [<http://www.jstor.org/stable/43293186>].

¹⁰ Mrozowicki, *art. cit.*

representative performance may be due to the lack of real reformation strategies for the transition to a liberal market, the privatization processes, or the framework of foreign business investments.¹¹ Internally, studies reveal flawed preconceptions about the role of the leaders: disbelief in the unions' actual efficacy, role ambiguity, and, lastly, the supplementary workload.¹²

Bringing union leadership among common workers

Considering the dysfunctional union leadership, we have noticed the theoretical shifts from individual leadership to collective leadership, enabling "networks of people" to think and lead for themselves. Rather than promoting an *ideal* type of leader, the new leadership development paradigm¹³ pleads for creating the necessary conditions for collective leadership.¹⁴ Hence, the essential task of this narrative is "how" can leadership be shared by numerous individuals. Literature provides various instruments which create ideal circumstances: "open flow of information", "flexible hierarchies", "distributed resources", "distributed decision-making, and "loosening of centralized controls".¹⁵ These tools ensure greater organizational competence, coherently linking various stakeholders at different levels of hierarchy, areas, domains, and segments of processes.¹⁶ Besides collective leadership,¹⁷ collaborative leadership is another framework that admits a plurality of actors.¹⁸ However, we suggest an extension of the concept that

¹¹ Aleksandra Sznajder Lee and Vera, Trappmann, "MNCs and Labour Revitalisation in Central and Eastern Europe: Overcoming Post-Communist Weakness Through External Pressures?" in SSRN, 2012 [<http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2220664>].

¹² Christopher Gordon Smith, Tingting Zhang, Lorenzo Frangi, Linda Duxbury, "Would You Like to Become a Union Leader? Analysing Leadership Intentions through a Generational Lens" in *Industrial Relations Journal*, 54 (6), 2023, pp. 425-444.

¹³ Sofia Kjellström, Kristian Stålné and Oskar Törnblom, "Six Ways of Understanding Leadership Development: An Exploration of Increasing Complexity" in *Leadership*, 16 (4), 2020, pp. 434-460 [<https://doi.org/10.1177/1742715020926731>].

¹⁴ Kenneth Leithwood and Blair Mascall, "Collective Leadership Effects on Student Achievement" in *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 44 (4), pp. 529-561 [<https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X08321221>].

¹⁵ Nick Petrie, "Future Trends in Leadership Development", Center for Creative Leadership (CCL), 2011, pp. 1-36.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹⁷ Leithwood and Mascall, *art. cit.*

¹⁸ Peter M. DeWitt, *Collaborative Leadership: Six Influences That Matter Most*, London: Corwin, 2016.

can integrate both collective and collaborative leadership under the framework of deliberative leadership.¹⁹ Despite its potential, the deliberative component of leadership has been largely neglected.

Bernaciak and Kahancová (2017)²⁰ consider that “revitalization” needs specific semantic enlargement due to the unions’ new challenges. In their understanding, innovation means a novel “deliberate initiative or set of initiatives launched in response to a specific problem” allowed by new social and working contexts. The Working Lives Research Unit conducted the first research associating innovation with trade union activities. The entity referred to innovation as new forms of engagement or performance of the traditionally operated roles.²¹

Brief history of the labour unions in Romania

Romania has an agrarian, rural history and displays a typical regional lag in modernization.²² The precursors of the labor unions in Romania date back to mid-19th century professional alliances concerned with “issues of democracy at the workplace”. The second part of the 19th century was filled with frequent workers’ protests, and the organizations knew about a period of emancipation regarding their status and structure. They found a common voice and refined their demands by including mental and moral well-being (mutual understanding and support, equality), more pecuniary benefits, and listed their rights, eligibility, and code of practice.²³

The following fundamental moment in consolidating labor unions in Romania was in 1906 when the General Commission of the Labor Unions in Romania was created. The Commission coordinated these movements and established the legal and moral boundaries comprised in the Status of

¹⁹ Ciaran Sugrue and Tone Dyrdal Solbrenke, “Deliberative Leadership: Sustainable Practices for Public Universities?” in *Journal of Praxis in Higher Education*, 6 (1), 2024, pp. 15–42 [<https://doi.org/10.47989/KPDC422>].

²⁰ Bernaciak and Kahancová, *art. cit.*, in Bernaciak and Marta (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 7–20.

²¹ *Ibidem*.

²² Sergiu Mișcoiu and Ciprian Bogdan, “Introduction: the Never-Ending Story of Romanian Transition”, in Sergiu Mișcoiu (ed.), *Democratic Consolidation and Europeanization in Romania: A One-way Journey or a Return Ticket*, Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2021, p. 6.

²³ Romanian National Archives Inventory, “Sindicatelor profesionale în România” [<http://arhivelenationale.ro/site/download/inventare/Uniunea-Generala-a-Sindicatelor-din-Romania.-1944-1989.-Inv.-3406.pdf>].

the Labor Unions in Romania. By 1909, the Law Against the Labor Union in Romania already prohibited the association of state employees but not for the employees in the private sector.²⁴ Traditionally, unions are the affinities of the social democratic wing. Soon, union representatives teamed up with political actors who were promising solutions to their claims and offered them visibility.²⁵ Therefore, by 1921, the authorities felt the need to separate unions from political interference by the Law of the Labor Unions in Romania, adding, at the same time, more space of maneuver for these structures.²⁶ Nevertheless, this freedom was disrupted during the interwar period by a document signed by King Carol II in 1938, replacing autonomous unions with state-controlled guilds.²⁷ Each guild was constituted by royal decree and was permanently controlled by the Ministry of Labor.²⁸

Under Marshal Antonescu's military rule, public manifestation was restricted, if not forbidden at all.²⁹ The Communist Party made an instrument out of the proletariat's well-being and used it as a perfect alibi for its omnipresence in factory workers' lives. It sought to formalize these associations,³⁰ setting up central institutions such as the Unitary Labor Unions (*Sindicatete Unitare*) and the *Commission for the Organization of Trade Unification* (*Comisia de organizare a Unificării Sindicale*). Each state-led enterprise had now the right to have a union that needed to subsequently affiliate with the Unitary Labor Unions (*Sindicatete Unite*).

This managerial architecture was, in fact, a scheme to keep a hand on the unions. The party used them as spearheads for public action in support of different causes or contestations of competitors, even before ruling the country. Progressively, the Party vacuumed members by infiltrating the

²⁴ *Ibidem*.

²⁵ Ninucia-Maria Pilat, "Trade Unions and the Amendment of the Labour Code in Romania" in *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, 7 (2), 2006, pp. 185–203 [<https://doi.org/10.1080/15705850600840015>].

²⁶ Romanian National Archives Inventory, "Sindicatete profesionale în România" [<http://arhivelenationale.ro/site/download/inventare/Uniunea-General-a-Sindicatelor-din-Romania.-1944-1989.-Inv.-3406.pdf>].

²⁷ Ilarion Tiu, "Monopolul Sindicatelor", *Jurnalul Scînteia*, 2005 [<https://jurnalul.ro/scinteia/istoria-comunismului/monopolul-sindicatelor-32020.html>].

²⁸ Romanian National Archives Inventory, "Sindicatete profesionale în România" [<http://arhivelenationale.ro/site/download/inventare/Uniunea-General-a-Sindicatelor-din-Romania.-1944-1989.-Inv.-3406.pdf>].

²⁹ Tiu, *art. cit.*

³⁰ *Ibidem*.

unions and manipulating, lying, or bribing workers to join the organizations. By the end of 1944, the Unified Labor Unions controlled all professional associations, meaning almost all the blue-collar workers. In the context of the struggles brought by the war, the non-members were being intentionally deprived of financial and material assistance: “Anyone who is not with us is against us!”,³¹ believed the Communist Party. If we speak about numbers, by 1969, virtually 100% of the employees had the quality of a union member.³²

Returning to essential moments in consolidating labor factions in Romania, we must pay attention to the *General Congress of the Unified Labor Unions* in Bucharest in 1945. The event was an excellent occasion for communist figures such as Ana Pauker, Vasile Luca, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, or Petru Groza to gain visibility and to inculcate, through their persuasive discourses, a sense of carefulness and unity within the electorate.³³ The party grew so robust that it became impossible for other actors to compete. Attributions of labor unions in a country with a unique party were channeled towards social situations and cultural and community events. The line of command and execution was always ordered from above, and no dissident activity could be performed.³⁴ A movement of assertiveness worth mentioning happened in 1979, when a group of intellectuals set the Free Trade Union of Romanian Workers. They pleaded for more financial benefits, freedom, equality, and respect for human rights. The attempt was perceived as too daring by ordinary people, who refrained from supporting it because of fearing the Securitate. Indeed, the initiators were severely punished for disturbing the working class’s productivity.³⁵

The regime change created expectations that the unions would finally fulfill their roles. The legal framework became more permissive, ensured space for dialogue, exchange of opinions between the unions and the state, or activities such as collective bargaining (the favorability principle), tripartite

³¹ *Ibidem.*

³² Ștefan Guga and Aurora Trif, “Trade Unions in Romania: Walking the Thin Line between Politics and the Market”, in Jeremy Waddington, Torsten Müller, and Kurt Vandaele (eds.), *Trade Unions in the European Union*, Brussels: Peter Lang Group AG, 2023, pp. 911–944 [<https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.32-4615>].

³³ *Ibidem.*

³⁴ Pilat, *art. cit.*

³⁵ Ashby Crowder, “Romanian Reactions to Independent Unionism, East European Labor and State Socialism” in *The Polish Review*, 52 (3), 2007, pp. 331–355 [<http://www.jstor.org/stable/25779687>].

consultation³⁶ negotiation, distribution of benefits, resources, money, advantages for the members of the unions. Nevertheless, the reality was somewhat ambivalent. While all the freedoms and opportunities were mentioned in the public discourse, exponents of the former authoritarian regime still dominated the scene. The industrial workers perceived themselves as estranged from political life, and their claims often ended in violent, aggressive movements.³⁷

The privatization processes meant a turbulent period for the company-level labor unions. The way they perceived the changes brought by capitalism caused strong resistance and efforts to delay the transition as much as possible. Unlike most Central European countries, Romania did not adopt the “shock therapy” of economic transition but rather preferred a gradual switch.³⁸ Let us look at Sidex Galați, a state-led company that used to generate substantial capital losses and contributed significantly to Romania’s budget deficit. Privatization would affect numerous stakeholders: the management of the company at the time, the State, the unions, the World Bank, the IMF, the EU, and many others. While the international financial institutions were pushing for privatization, the unions and the employees were not so keen on the idea because the State was already securing their wages. In Romania, the public sector is known for using complicated dismissal policies, so a job in the public sector can make one’s entire professional career. Eventually, they gave up their position, accepting the State’s choice to acknowledge LNM Holdings as a foreign investor in the company.³⁹

In 1990, the UGSR (the Unified Labor Unions of Romania) was dissolved and charged for having served the communist party. The same year, CSI Frăția (the Confederation of Independent Labor Unions Frăția) originated as a newly reformed professional association, generating high expectations that Romania would eventually have a veritable, western-inspired democratic representative union.⁴⁰ An avalanche of many other

³⁶ Guga and Trif, *art. cit.*, in Waddington, Müller, and Vandaele (eds.), *op. cit.*

³⁷ Monica Ciobanu, “Reconstructing the Role of the Working Class in Communist and Postcommunist Romania” in *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, 22 (3), 2009, pp. 315–335 [<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10767-009-9064-x>].

³⁸ Mrozowicki, *art. cit.*

³⁹ Sznajder Lee and Trappmann, *art. cit.*

⁴⁰ Umut Korkut, “Entrenched Elitism in Trade Unions in Poland and Romania: An Explanation for the Lack of Union Strength and Success?” in *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, 27 (1), 2006, pp. 67–104 [<https://doi.org/10.1177/0143831X06060591>].

smaller or larger entities emerged from scratch or got restructured. Such was the case with, maybe, the most popular faction, CSNLR (Confederation of Free National Labor Unions of Romania), which inherited most of the members of the former UGSR, choosing Mr. Victor Ciorbea, a politically unaffiliated law professional, as president. CNS Cartel Alfa emerged in 1990, and the BNS (The National Labor Unions Block) became the fourth major union confederation in 1991. By 1993, CSNLR and Frăția fused, and Victor Ciorbea served as leader of the new establishment. Miron Mitrea was elected executive Chairman.⁴¹

Since the beginning of the transition period, the leaders of the labor unions have maintained clientelistic relations with the government. Discontentment was silenced with pecuniary privileges. Unions' leaders pursued personal enrichment by engaging in informal, inadequate relations with political figures outside the companies' management. The companies' ownership became increasingly organized and developed means to ensure a professional defense of the management's profit. This forced the growth of union leadership as a counterpart to private management, upgrading their activity and forming sectoral alliances. Yet, clashes between the two occur often. The unionists accuse the organizations of being "uncooperative", while the employers notice the unionists have no representation strategy, which, they claim, make their interaction inconclusive and chaotic.⁴² The mixture of old-style former communist leaders with the new, younger generations of union leaders might cause the poor concertation of unionists' interests. For instance, in the case of steelworkers in Galați, the Solidarity Union of Steelworkers at Arcelor Mittal Galați" (Sindicatul Solidaritatea Siderurgistilor din Arcelor Mittal Galați) was hardly accepted by the company management in the beginning. It was eventually compelled to do so through protests, meetings, and strongly articulated demands for wage increases.⁴³

Since their more dynamic activity, the unions dealt with disputes on political associations and future direction. Ciorbea aligned with the wind of the democratic change and wished to associate with the Democratic Convention. At the same time, Mitrea supported and was supported, in turn, by the PDSR (Romanian Party of Social Democracy). PDSR was the party in power, and it gathered many former influential communists who

⁴¹ *Ibidem.*

⁴² Sznajder Lee and Trappmann, *art. cit.*

⁴³ *Ibidem.*

possessed the information and instruments required to win. In 1994, amid these dissensions, Ciorbea influenced and persuaded approximately a quarter of the establishment to split and created a new confederation, the CSDR (Confederation of Democratic Labor Unions of Romania).

At the end of his mandate, Miron Mitrea decided not to run again. He officially entered politics and became the vice-president of the PDSR, renouncing union affinities. His counterparty, Mr. Ciorbea, also embraced political roles, initially becoming mayor of Bucharest and later prime minister on behalf of the CDR-USD-UDMR coalition.⁴⁴

Overlapping with political parties' agendas or agreements made behind closed doors never fueled public scandals. A case in point is the Union of the Miners in the Jiu Valley, led by Miron Cozma, which was used to suppress students' protests in Bucharest. President Iliescu recognized their contribution to the "public order restoration" operation, admitting the cooperation.⁴⁵ Sometimes, public institutions co-opt representatives of labor unions in an attempt to influence and moderate labor unions' voices, weakening their impact and compromising, at times, the role of the labor union's representative.⁴⁶

The right to association is inscribed in the Romanian Constitution of 1991, with specific forms of public rights claiming, such as strikes, collective bargaining, and collective agreements. The most relevant for us are the Trade Union Act, the Labor Disputes Arbitration Act, and the Collective Agreement Act.⁴⁷

The Trade Union Act provides that a Union can start with 15 members at a minimum. The workers may establish a union in a company or a working sector, provided they belong to a specific profession, at regional or local level. All workers have the right to join unions, and no obligation to join or leave can be imposed upon them as long as they abide by the membership conditions. A company can have multiple unions. If two unions representing the same profession merge, they would form a federation.

⁴⁴ Crowder, *art. cit.*

⁴⁵ Pilat, *art. cit.*

⁴⁶ Sznajder Lee and Trappmann, *art. cit.*

⁴⁷ Al Rainnie, Adrian Smith and Adam Swain, "Employment and Work Restructuring in Transition", in Al Rainnie, Adrian Smith and Adam Swain (eds.), *Work, Employment and Transition - Restructuring Livelihoods in Post-communism*, London: Taylor & Francis, 2002, pp. 7–34.

Similarly, two associated federations would form a confederation if it gathers at least 5% of a total number of employees.⁴⁸

The dynamics of the unions in liberal democratic Romania display a somewhat reactionary and inconsistent attitude. The labor exodus and economic growth encouraged a louder voice of the unions around the 2000s, but a taciturn, absent disposition followed them. The preoccupation with the social security system was raised because of the increased risks of poverty and economic uncertainty brought by capitalism.⁴⁹ To counterbalance the unpredictability posed by capitalist competition, unions demand a more social face in the market economy.⁵⁰ However, the establishment hardly performs tasks such as consultations or discussions with the employees.

The level of unionization in Romania is relatively high. Around 27% of the workforce in Romania is associated with a trade union, amounting to approximately 1.3 million trade unionists. One can interpret the level of unionization in Romania as a laudable participatory attitude or, contrariwise, as an attempt to complement inefficient political representation by the political parties. In any case, affiliation to a union is quite a passive status. There are now five main confederations in Romania, aiming at representing cross-sectoral and cross-industrial interests: CNSLR- Frăția (National Romanian Free Trade Union Confederation–Brotherhood), BNS (The National Trade Union Block), CNS Cartel Alfa (National Trade Union Confederation Cartel Alfa), CSDR (the Romanian Democratic Trade Union Confederation) and CSN Median (The Meridian National Trade Union Confederation).⁵¹ ⁵² All of the entities above represent predominantly employees of the public sector. The largest union federations are in the education sector - FSLI (Federation of the Free Labor Unions in Education), and the health sector - Sanitas. The employees in the public sector outnumber considerably the employees in the private sector. The dynamics at the company/employer level may explain this asymmetry. State employees have more expectations

⁴⁸ worker-participation.eu-Romania.

⁴⁹ Rainnie, Smith and Swain, *art. cit.*, in Rainnie, Smith and Swain (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 7–34.

⁵⁰ Edzard Ockenga, "Trade Unions in Romania" in *Sage Journal*, 3 (2), 1997, pp. 313–328 [<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/102425899700300205>].

⁵¹ The acronyms stand for the Romanian denomination of the unions. The English translation between parentheses was chosen to better understand the name and nature of the union. Hence, the translation will not correspond *ad litteram* to the acronym used. (worker-participation.eu-Romania)

⁵² Guga and Trif, *art. cit.*, in Waddington, Müller, and Vandaele (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 911–944.

from the unions than private employees. Private companies' work relations may rely either on interpersonal interactions⁵³ or a collective bargaining narrative. Any agent can execute collective bargaining, not necessarily a union per se. In addition, the imbalance is maintained by the undeclared working contracts, the massive unofficial employment,⁵⁴ diversification in employment, and privatization.⁵⁵ After the fall of communism, the level of unionization in Romania followed a constant decreasing trend overall. The profile of the union member is a relatively aged person, close to retirement, with a permanent employment contract, and with a relatively long-term interest in keeping the same job.⁵⁶

In many cases, intervention from international bodies called for more attention to be paid to labor unions, putting pressure on the domestic systems to encourage and create favorable conditions for the change to happen.⁵⁷ The European Union insisted on more coordination among the unions, which often have different short-term agendas or long-term visions, leadership styles, and so on. It also highlighted benchmarks and opened its gates for international cooperation opportunities.⁵⁸

Regarding the impact of foreign investments in Romania on labor movements, literature presents both beneficial and weakening effects of the multinational corporations' presence within the country. In some cases, positive changes were accommodated by a healthier, more mature organizational culture of a multinational company. Notable success stories occurred in sectors such as automotive, banking, commerce, and later in IT.⁵⁹ International investments brought about a more relevant dialogue between managers and employees and trained managers for better group management, yet outside the framework of unions.⁶⁰ The presence of foreign companies in Romania depends on offers they get from more convenient countries. This situation generates a state of mutual conditionality. The host state often loses its sovereignty to the global competition for a low-paid labor force. If the

⁵³ Ockenga, *art. cit.*

⁵⁴ Pilat, *art. cit.*

⁵⁵ Guga and Trif, *art. cit.*, in Waddington, Müller, and Vandaele (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 911–944.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem.*

⁵⁷ John S. Dryzek and Leslie Templeman Holmes, *Post-Communist Democratization: Political Discourses Across Thirteen Countries*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

⁵⁸ Sznajder Lee and Trappmann, *art. cit.*

⁵⁹ Guga and Trif, *art. cit.*, in Waddington, Müller, and Vandaele (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 911–944.

⁶⁰ Mrozowicki, *art. cit.*

multinational decides to relocate, the pressure on the social protection services would considerably affect the host country's economy, which makes the host country maintain or even reconsider the facility package available for foreign investors.⁶¹

In 2011, the right-wing governing party unilaterally adopted a restrictive law of the social dialogue and amended the Labor Code, considerably damaging "collective bargaining" possibilities. It prolonged the trial period of an employee from 30 to 90 days, the fixed period employment contracts, increased the number of unpaid not worked days, and set new provisions that favored the employer. They stayed the same despite the left-wing governance alternating to power since 2012.⁶²

The economic crisis intensified during the pandemic's peak, reversing the balance to the employers' benefit and silencing the unions. However, after years of suppression, tensions resurfaced,⁶³ signaling the unions' diminishing representative capacity.

One can observe certain similarities with the representative function of political parties; the difference lies in their working philosophy. In minimalistic terms, parties are defined by two main features: (i) they seek to exert influence, especially by gaining access to the government (legislation), and (ii) they gather people with various interests and needs. The parties mirror the public interest and look for a top-down approach. The unions are assimilated, instead, to a civil society organization prototype; they stay outside the Government and target a specific political issue. Their course of action is dictated by internal consultation and decision-making.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Milosz Miszczynski, "Global Production in a Romanian Village: Middle-Income Economy, Industrial Dislocation and the Reserve Army of Labor" in *Association for Critical Sociology*, 43 (7–8), pp. 1079–1092 [<https://doi.org/10.1177/0896920515623076>].

⁶² Aurora Trif, "Dialogul social în timpul crizei economice - Supraviețuirea negocierilor colective în sectorul industrial din România", Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2015 [<https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/bukarest/12419.pdf>].

⁶³ Guga and Trif, *art. cit.*, in Waddington, Müller, and Vandaele (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 911–944.

⁶⁴ Kevin Deegan-Krause, "Civil Society and Political Parties: Growth and Change in the Organizations Linking People and Power", in Zsuzsa Csergő, Daina S. Eglitis, and Paula M. Pickering (eds.), *Central and East European Politics - Changes and Challenges*, London: Rowman&Littlefield, 2002.

Issues related to internal democracy and the representativeness of the unions' leadership

Scholars describe two primary types of reasoning behind the association in unions. One is driven by a progressive motivation to unite and advocate for their interest, and the other is the need to increase representativeness when discussing with counterparts in employers' associations or authorities. Irrespective of the case, the group must take into account the following principles: "democracy, accountability, power, and legitimacy".⁶⁵ When neglected in practice, unions face high levels of inefficiency. In times of trouble, the finger usually points to the management capacity. However, some scholars have recently suggested changing the way union leaders are chosen, providing alternatives, such as the switch from election to sortition, as a solution to remediate self-governance.⁶⁶

Literature mentions a series of customs that divert leadership from its genuine purpose. For instance, "labor unions are highly politicized".⁶⁷ Unions' leaders come to associate with political parties as it represents an occasion to gain political capital, access to information, networks, and visibility. Unfortunately, in some cases, these incentives are driven by personal political agendas, which are greatly detrimental to unionist preoccupation. In other cases, they can progressively harm the quality of the leadership until perverting union leaders' interests towards aiming for political positions. Alternation to power ensures a secure, profitable position only for the won mandate. Eventually, the bottom-up approach gets flawed, and they end up caught up in "patron-client linkages" that fuel not only organizational interests but also the personal investments of the union leaders.⁶⁸ Often, they become members of a political party to which they seem even more committed. This dissonant double hat is viewed as a conflict of interest, as it allows them to run for incompatible positions. Public opinion expresses anger towards such practices and denounces leaders for failing to fulfill

⁶⁵ Guy Mundlak, *Organizing Matters: Two Logics of Trade Union Representation*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2020.

⁶⁶ Simon Pek, "Rekindling Union Democracy Through the Use of Sortition" in *Journal of Business Ethics*, 155 (4), 2019, pp. 1033–1051 [<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-017-3526-2>].

⁶⁷ Pilat, *art. cit.*

⁶⁸ Korkut, *art. cit.*

union roles and duties.⁶⁹ Explicit or hidden associations with politics constrain the elaboration of unions' long-term strategies, as these are pressured to adjust their plans and visions according to the political maneuvers. Labor union representatives can hardly be simultaneously accountable to their political connections and to the union members. We have witnessed situations when union leaders decide to renounce their roles in the union and choose politics instead.⁷⁰

Going further, the interaction between the leaders of the unions themselves follows an effervescent dynamic as well, both hierarchically and horizontally. Though hierarchical structure implies delegation of representativeness to higher fora, fragmentation at lower levels should not necessarily mean structural or organizational weakness. As long as the fractions can collaborate, the number of grassroots organizations gathered under one umbrella is irrelevant.⁷¹ However, mistrust and suspicion are commonly encountered both horizontally and vertically. For instance, leaders of federations often accuse leaders of confederations of having betrayed the lay members of the union.⁷² These episodes alter the level of support and the attitudes of the contributors-members toward unions' management in terms of responsiveness, mobilization, trust, and engagement. Literature on the subject certifies that democratic principles have, unfortunately, not been embedded in the leadership style of labor unions. Essentially, unions suffer from elitism, a custom of non-participation, and uncoordinated activity.⁷³ Members and leaders fall short of connecting, which significantly alters the representative capacity of the elites and fuels a general state of distrust on both sides.⁷⁴

These realities give rise to ample discussion about increasing efforts to democratize labor unions. Baccaro (2002)⁷⁵ does not recommend a corporatist management approach to representative matters because it may not be

⁶⁹ www.bzi.ro, 2023.

⁷⁰ Korkut, *art. cit.*

⁷¹ *Ibidem.*

⁷² Guga and Trif, *art. cit.*, in Waddington, Müller, and Vandaele (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 911–944.

⁷³ Korkut, *art. cit.*

⁷⁴ David M. Ryfe, "Does Deliberative Democracy Work?" in *Annual Review of Political Science*, 8, 2005, pp. 49–71 [<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.8.032904.154633>].

⁷⁵ Lucio Baccaro, "The Construction of <Democratic> Corporatism in Italy" in *Politics and Society*, 30 (2), 2002 [[doi:10.1177/0032329202030002005](https://doi.org/10.1177/0032329202030002005)]

democratic enough, while Schmitter (1979)⁷⁶ disapproves of hierarchical centralized management.⁷⁷ More forms of participation would mean a more complex decision-making process but would ensure shared leadership between members and leaders.⁷⁸ A confirmed way to disrupt passivity in union membership is to assign routine tasks to lay members. Research shows that the common union member is interested and willing to take over responsibilities⁷⁹. Therefore, we assume that more bottom-up engagement and internal deliberation would be a viable problem-solving channel. Democratic deliberation takes the dialogue further and increases the complexity of decision-making process by allowing diverse cognitive contributions, expertise, and experience from various domains in a collaborative framework.⁸⁰ The prerequisites of this effort are good intentions, goodwill, and a problem-solving perspective.⁸¹

The present study does not adopt a normative stance or an all-encompassing diagnosis of the labor unions in Romania. Its relevance relies on the determinant conjunction between the quality of the internal democracy and the “union’s strength”.⁸²

A deliberative leadership for more democracy infusion in the labour unions

Simone Chambers stressed that deliberation is no longer a theory under construction but a “working theory”.⁸³ It is extensively used in political science in normative terms when trying to cover shortages of aggregative democracy:

⁷⁶ Philippe Schmitter, “Still the Century of Corporatism?”, in Philippe C. Schmitter and Gerhard Lehmbruch (eds.), *Trends toward Corporatist Intermediation*, London: Sage, 1979, pp. 7-52.

⁷⁷ Korkut, *art. cit.*

⁷⁸ Lucio Baccaro, “Aggregative” and <Deliberative> Decision-making Procedures: a Comparison of Two Southern Italian Factories” in *Politics & Society* 29 (2), 2001, pp. 243-271.

⁷⁹ Kurt Vandaele, “Newcomers as Potential Drivers of Union Revitalization: Survey Evidence from Belgium” in *Relations Industrielles-industrial Relations*, 75 (2), 2020, pp. 351–375 [<https://doi.org/10.7202/1070352AR>].

⁸⁰ Joseph Raelin, “Dialogue and Deliberation as Expressions of Democratic Leadership in Participatory Organizational Change” in *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 25 (1), 2012, pp. 7–23 [<https://doi.org/10.1108/09534811211199574>].

⁸¹ Korkut, *art. cit.*

⁸² *Ibidem.*

⁸³ Simone Chambers, “Deliberative Democratic Theory” in *Annual Review of Political Science*, 6, 2003, pp. 307–326 [<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.6.121901.085538>].

Theorists of deliberative democracy are interested in such questions as: How does or might deliberation shape preferences, moderate self-interest, empower the marginalized, mediate difference, further integration and solidarity, enhance recognition, produce reasonable opinion and policy, and possibly lead to consensus?⁸⁴

Deliberative democracy is an inspiration for enhancing democratic decision-making processes in the unions and is considered an appropriate way for collective decision-making especially when handling complicated controversies⁸⁵ because it requires a great deal of critical thinking.⁸⁶ Once the problem is acknowledged, any claim must be publicly and rationally justified. Exposing reasons in an open forum increases awareness about how we define and how we relate to the issue.⁸⁷ Moreover, it prevents the pursuit of insidious interests and the abuse of influence and power,⁸⁸ acting as a continuous framework of open dialogue. The looseness of the format allows one to continually return to former decisions for reconsideration.⁸⁹

From a procedural point of view, the participation system can be designed in multiple frameworks, including self-selection or recruitment through randomization.⁹⁰ It decouples the hierarchical decision-making style from the representative power structures and resorts to an inclusive “cognitive diversity,” expected to generate “smarter results.”⁹¹

⁸⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁸⁵ Dieter Rucht, “Evaluating Democratic Innovations Curing the Democratic Malaise?”, in Brigitte Geissel and Kenneth Newton (eds.), *Evaluating Democratizing Innovations*, New York: Routledge, 2012.

⁸⁶ Sergiu Gherghina, Monika Mokre, and Sergiu Miscoiu, “Introduction: Democratic Deliberation and Under-Represented Groups” in *Political Studies Review*, 19 (2), 2020, pp. 159-163 [<https://doi.org/10.1177/1478929920950931>]. Also see Sergiu Mișcoiu, Sergiu Gherghina, “Poorly Designed Deliberation: Explaining the Banlieues’ Non-involvement in the Great Debate” in *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research*, vol. 34, no. 5, 2022, pp. 694-711; Sergiu Gherghina, Sergiu Mișcoiu, “Crowd-Sourced Legislation and Politics: The Legitimacy of Constitutional Deliberation in Romania” in *Problems of Post-Communism*, vol. 63, no. 1, 2016, pp. 27-36.

⁸⁷ Chambers, *art. cit.*

⁸⁸ Raelin, *art. cit.*

⁸⁹ Chambers, *art. cit.*

⁹⁰ Ryfe, *art. cit.*

⁹¹ Hélène Landemore, “Deliberation, Cognitive Diversity, and Democratic Inclusiveness: An Epistemic Argument for the Random Selection of Representatives” in *Synthese*, 190 (7), pp. 1209-1231 [<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-012-0062-6>].

The quality of the discussion is ensured by the research work the participants will make on the subject before they join the meeting.⁹² Studies on the insertion of democratic deliberation as a decision-making procedure in unions in Italy by Baccaro show that the best “interest mediation” is open, sincere communication rather than complex argumentative lines. In this sense, deliberation is preferred to interest aggregation or ranking procedures for shared group benefits. In addition, it leaves the participants with the perception that the final decisions pertain to them.⁹³ The employees can ideally see their values integrated into their activity, a form of considerable empowerment that follows a genuine employee-centered approach.⁹⁴

Some other studies reveal that deliberation may help set new labor standards and should be taken out in the public sphere, including citizens, journalists, and representatives of all sectors. A rich cognitive contribution would increase their capacity to issue, implement, and monitor labor regulations, counterbalancing the centralized style of leadership.⁹⁵

Deliberation was associated with various concepts, including leadership, resulting in “deliberative leadership”. Although this association of terms confers a virtuous attribute to leadership, the concept is dependent on the leader’s conduct. The leader is expected to initiate change and manage change implementation. These clashing senses have been reconciled in what the authors call a good “symbiosis”, where they actually complete one another,⁹⁶ engaged in a “shared communication” irrespective of their rank. The dialogic dimension of leadership enhances the relational aspects among members as it calls for active listening, entertainment of new ideas and deep reflection. Deliberative organizational leadership is egalitarian and creates a safe space for discussion and competition of perspectives. When implemented, the success rate in democratic organizational rehabilitation and engagement is guaranteed. Repetition of such practices would eventually embed in a seamlessly

⁹² Ami Gutmann and Dennis F. Thompson, *Why Deliberative Democracy?*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004.

⁹³ Baccaro, “‘Aggregative’ and ‘Deliberative’ Decision-making Procedures”.

⁹⁴ Raelin, *art. cit.*

⁹⁵ Archon Fung, “Deliberative Democracy and International Labor Standards” in *Governance*, 16 (1), 2003, pp. 51–71 [<https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0491.t01-1-00204>].

⁹⁶ Dobrinka Chankova and Valentin Vasilev, “Leadership and Deliberative Democracy in the Changing World: Competing or Reconcilable Paradigms?” in *Perspectives of Law and Public Administration*, vol. 9 (2), 2020, pp. 209-219.

deliberative routine, moving the focus from the leader to the problem to be discussed, capitalizing on the patience, discourse competencies, robust construction of arguments, assertiveness, trust in the process, the will to change the status quo, a great sense of responsibility of the participants. We have to mention that the process is not an easy way out of the deadlock, it can be timely and complicated to handle,⁹⁷ but it can boost the energy of absent, inactive members.

In this study, we aimed to check the “desirability” of such a leadership style in the Romanian labor unions by determining members’ attitudes towards this idea. Given the fact that the process forces members to step outside their comfort zone, we consider the possibility of registering a wide range of attitudes. Publicly expressing opinions is not only a privilege but includes the risk of criticism, of prevailing arguments, the risk of getting opinions overridden, of adversity, as well. The uncomfortable situations are to be rationally tackled, converting “the proper decision” into a supreme good for all. Nevertheless, the supreme good retains a feature of “civility”, that is formed by the combination of four key elements: “concurrency, collectiveness, collaboration, and compassion”.⁹⁸ We assume that the success of the association of union decision-making processes with democratic deliberation depends on the overall availability of union members to manage the complexity of the deliberative democratic processes.⁹⁹

Research Design

Our study uses 18 semi-structured interviews with active labor union basic members (with no leadership function at any level), who were selected to increase variation in age and geographical distribution (balance between the counties of the eight Romanian historical regions). The profile of the interviewees is presented in Table 1. For confidentiality and anonymity purposes, the initials of their names are fictional. The interviews were conducted face-to-face (5) and online (13) in May and June 2023. Our interview guide includes questions about the nature and the degree of the involvement of

⁹⁷ Raelin, *art. cit.*

⁹⁸ *Ibidem.*

⁹⁹ Gianluca Schiavo, Adolfo Villafiorita and Massimo Zancanaro, “(Non-)Participation in Deliberation at Work: A Case Study of Online Participative Decision-making” in *New Technology, Work and Employment*, vol. 34 (1), 2019, pp. 37–58 [https://doi.org/10.1111/ntwe.12127].

the respondent in the labor movement, his/her knowledge about the decision-making processes within the union and about deliberation and deliberative democracy in general, his/her assessment of the degree of implementation of deliberative mechanisms in the collective processes of decision-making specific to that union, and about the consequences of the current status of the (lack of) implementation of such mechanisms over the vigor, cohesion and future development of the organization.

Within the qualitative research framework, we use a mix of inductive and deductive thematic analyses to identify the main recurrent arguments presented by the respondents and to cross them to produce a cohesive narrative structured into four points that we will present in the following pages.

Analysis

1. Deliberative democracy – a would-be useful mechanism for the labor unions

The labor union members believe that deliberative democracy is, in principle, a helpful mechanism for consolidating their organizations. According to many respondents, the information about deliberation and deliberative democracy is not very commonly spread, and “it’s a pity, as such things could strengthen us as a union both internally and externally” (OI). Why could deliberative democracy and other related practices be helpful for the advancement of labor unions? Our interviewees put forward at least three arguments during our investigation.

First, deliberation is by its essence a “genuinely democratic process” (NN), as it includes, as opposed to regular basic debates and other processes of decision-making, a “high preoccupation for inclusiveness and respect of the others” (VU). Other respondents highlighted the positive effects of deliberation on the overall legitimacy of “any organization, being political, union-like or non-governmental” (AP). One of them stressed the fact that:

“[...] in the Western or the Nordic societies, where I know that deliberation is more extensively practiced, the institutions are more legitimate, and the civil society is also more legitimate” (OO).

Then, deliberation could raise the level of cohesion and coherence of labor unions through “well-structured, serious discussions, much-needed in order to produce pertinent public propositions” (EV). While deliberating

upon specific issues, “the union members gain in terms of awareness” (AP), “consistency and ability to defend the common interests with more success” (PH). One of the respondents indicated that as far as she was aware, “deliberation could also be considered as a training tool for the union leaders and members” (IZ).

Last but not least, the adoption of deliberation could facilitate a “rapprochement with other more experienced and powerful labor unions of the European countries” (TH). Knowing or guessing that such practices are more present in the Western and Northern European countries, several respondents stated that “our labor unions could be more in line with their foreign counterparts” (KL) if deliberation was implemented in Romania, and “this could enhance our capacity to fight for our rights efficiently” (NN).

2. Deliberation – an undeservedly ignored democratic tool

The union members believe that there is widespread ignorance about the existence and the functioning of deliberative democracy both in broader society and in the labor unions themselves. About half of the interviewees admit the fact that they have themselves a “limited and incomplete” (PG) knowledge about what deliberation means or that they just “heard some positive things about it” (LI). At the same time, they believe that the other members of the unions are “even less knowledgeable, as nobody trained them about it” (VU). Only three of the interview participants think that they have a “pretty good idea about how deliberation is supposed to work” (NN) or about the expected outcomes of a process of deliberation (EV).

Regarding the notoriety of deliberation within wider society, most respondents regret that “it is really an obscure concept; nobody knows about it” (DO). So, there is a higher degree of ignorance about deliberation in the broader public than among the members of the labor unions, and this is because...

“[...] even if we, the union members, are not great intellectuals, we are nevertheless more aware of societal issues than the regular people” (RD).

What are the reasons for this widespread ignorance? First, our respondents pointed out the inconsistency of Romania’s civic and political culture, where “there is no interest to cultivate criticism and to stimulate the individuals in thinking independently” (ER). Then, because deliberative democracy is “maybe too recent, even for the most active actors, such as the NGO or union leaders” (PH), and so there was no time to understand its

principles and “even less time to implement them” (*DO*). Finally, this ignorance is due to the orientation of the “Romanian unions, but also maybe of other unions in this part of Europe” towards the satisfaction of some “basic economic and social demands” (*OI*). A loquacious respondent put it in a nutshell:

“We need to get higher minimal wages from the Government. We ask for decent salaries and they give us peanuts money. So, what are we supposed to deliberate upon? Admit that this is not very sophisticated!” (*KL*).

Thus, even for those who think they are knowledgeable to some extent about deliberation, there is a belief that it rather serves “higher” more complex purposes rather than minimal and simple demands, which explains why there is an inherent reluctance about using it in the working unions’ activities.

3. The centralized leadership – an obstacle against deliberation

If deliberation is paradoxically both needed and ignored, this is also because of the Romanian labor unions’ structure, composition, and practices. Several respondents underlined the “severe concerns” about the degree of “internal democracy of the Romanian labor unions” (*OO*). One of them explained that...

“[...] we have some more or less brilliant leaders, who sometimes succeed to defend some of our interests, but they would not drop power even the Apocalypse was coming” (*TH*).

Other participants in our research pointed out the “pyramidal form organization” of labor unions, which is always based on a “strong and long-lasting leadership” (*PA*). The absence of a limit concerning the number of terms in office that a union leader can have is a preoccupation for another respondent, who rhetorically asks himself:

“What would be the interest of an ‘eternal’ union leader to promote deliberation? Could the result of a proper deliberation be the decision to reappoint him a thousand-plus-one time?”

In other words, deliberative practices are not encouraged in the labor unions as they would lead to a more substantive contestation of the union leaders who are too well-entrenched.

However, there are also some more structural impediments against deliberation in the manner the labor unions are structured, apart from the central role of the organization’s national leadership. Different interviewees

complained about the “lack of transparency of the decision-making processes” (*DO*), the “quasi-formal but content-empty consultations” (*VU*) of the regular members by the unions’ leadership, the “caporalization” (*RD*) of the local committees by the unions’ central ruling groups (*AP*). All in all, our respondents suggest that deliberation is unlikely because it would emerge on an unwelcoming, if not hostile, ground, as the unions’ leading structures would not accept practices that could jeopardize their positions.

4. The lack of deliberative practices – a barrier against the unions’ modernization

Most respondents believe that the lack or very low level of integration of deliberative democracy in the collective decision-making processes prevents the modernization of the Romanian labor unions. There are several ways that this delay or even absence of incorporation of deliberative mechanisms negatively affects the labor unions’ modernization processes.

To begin with, as one of the young interviewees put it, “To be honest, the Romanian labor unions are like elephants, and some deliberations, some debates, some genuine discussions could play the role of a court circuit that could activate and put them in a motion” (*TH*)

Apart from this “awakening” role, an influx of deliberation could “force our union leaders to open the organizations” (*AP*), which are now “so closed, so unfriendly to their members” (*DO*). By introducing a dose of deliberative democracy, “many union members who are asleep could find the motivations to become active” (*LI*), and many workers who are now reluctant to be involved in the unions’ activities would “find the needed impulse to join us” (*ER*).

Moreover, the lack of proper “contradictory debates, discussions, deliberations within the unions” prevents the capacity of the unions to internalize the mechanisms of “wider dialogue and negotiation”, not only with the Government and the business unions, but also with other “relevant social actors” (*VU*). One of the respondents described the situation in a suggestive manner:

“We are like the kids whose only contacts are their respective mothers and fathers; we do not know – and maybe do not feel the need – to talk to other parts of our society” (*OI*).

So, deliberation could unchain the imagination of the members of the labor unions, providing them with ideas and models of practices that could make them “socially valid, more present, more ‘in’” (RD).

Nevertheless, most respondents are pretty pessimistic about the real possibilities of introducing deliberative democracy in labor unions and, in this way, making them more modern. This is precisely because there is a “widely spread lethargy among us, the basic members” and a “self-deceiving satisfaction with the status-quo among them, the unions’ leaders” (AP). The novelty of deliberation, the complexity of its tools, and, above, the incentive to use it as opposed to the less demanding, although less stimulating and effective current activities are among the would-be obstacles against the enhancement of labor unionism via the implementation of deliberative mechanisms.

Conclusion

The findings of our investigation confirm the disconnection between rank-and-file members of the unions and the leading elites. Whether there is discontent or protest, the situation presents *deliberativeness*, basically what Young identifies as a need and space for deliberation. The fact that the union members are appreciative of deliberation shows awareness of the benefits of this mechanism and the potential to respond to a comprehensive series of issues related to legitimacy, the quality of debate, and the emancipation of the unions. Even if some of the respondents showed concerns about the framework of discussion, they believe they are entitled to point out, better than anyone, to the employment issues in Romania. They might feel discouraged from resorting to such tools due to the need for a complex formulation of demands rather than the defense of the bare minimum.

Conversely, there are few incentives for the representative elites to apply this tool. As predictable, the lack of alternation to power contributes to maintaining the status quo. Most leaders try to hold on to power for as long as possible and to ease their work. Deliberation would open a new way to scrutinize management activity, which is less convenient than the current leadership conduct. We note the incongruence of the interests of the members and the unions’ elites. While union members acknowledge that democratic deliberation could enhance internal democracy, they can hardly foresee its implementation as a decision-making process.

The reform tested for labor union revitalization aligns with the “powers” mentioned by Levesque and Murray: “internal solidarity, external solidarity, and strategic and discursive capacity”. These elements further build “deliberative vitality”.¹⁰⁰

This chapter opens avenues for further in-depth research regarding deliberative sectoral and social approaches, inter-union collaborative activity, and congruence between the leaders and the members of a union, federation, or confederation.

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Table 1: The Profile of Interviewees

No	Initials	County	Age	Branch	Gender
1	VU	CJ	41	Health	F
2	PP	CJ	51	Industry	M
3	OI	IS	28	Education	F
4	TH	AG	62	Administration	F
5	LI	SJ	36	Police	M
6	DO	BC	44	Health	F
7	NN	B	35	NGO	M
8	PP	BV	48	Administration	F
9	ER	CT	58	Education	M
10	PH	MH	41	Police	F
11	KL	HG	60	Industry	M
12	AP	TM	34	Education	F
13	IZ	PH	55	Administration	F
14	PG	VS	58	Industry	M
15	OO	AR	42	NGO	F
16	EV	BH	40	Arts	M
17	PA	B	33	Health	M
18	RD	SB	41	Industry	F

MARCIEN TOWA ET LA CRITIQUE SENGHORIENNE DE LA
NEGRITUDE : UNE CONTRIBUTION A L'IDEOLOGIE DU
PANAFRICANISME ?

MARCIEN TOWA AND THE SENGHORIAN CRITIQUE OF
NEGRITUDE: A CONTRIBUTION TO THE IDEOLOGY OF
PAN-AFRICANISM?

Charles Wilfried Tikená Boutora*

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Abstract: *After the first generation of Pan-Africans formed at the beginning of the 20th century mainly by black Americans and Caribbeans, the second generation is formed with black Africans. These black Africans are inspired and influenced by the founding fathers of Pan-Africanism. Marcién Towa (1931-2014) is one of them. The philosopher is a key figure in the intellectual history of Africa who has contributed ardently, alongside other renowned intellectuals, to the writing of the modern history of Africa. His fight very legitimately was to wash the Africans of opprobrium (the stereotyped images of Africa and its inhabitants created by the colonizers). Through his criticism of Senghorian negritude, he makes a remarkable contribution to the reflection on the movement, a considerable contribution to the ideology of Pan-Africanism.*

Keywords : *Negritude, Pan-Africanism, Criticism, Contribution, Ideology*

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Introduction

Dans notre monde de superpuissances impérialistes, comment prétendre à une autonomie tant soit peu réelle dans quelque domaine que ce soit, sans acquérir soi-même une puissance suffisante pour résister à toute tentative de subjugation ouverte ou camouflée ? Ces présuppositions de l'autonomie spirituelle, la négritude senghorienne et l'ethnophilosophie ont pour but de les dissimuler, et de couvrir ainsi la dégradation et la démolition de nos cultures par le néocolonialisme,¹

écrivait le Marcien Towa dans son *Essai sur la problématique philosophique dans l'Afrique actuelle*.

Après la première génération de panafricains constituée au début du XX^e siècle essentiellement par des noirs américains et caribéens (Sylvester Williams, William Edward Burghardt Du Bois dit "W. E. B. Du Bois", Marcus Garvey, Georges Padmore...) se forme la deuxième génération avec les noirs africains. Ces noirs africains sont inspirés et influencés par les pères fondateurs du panafricanisme sur deux inspirations distinctes: d'une part, des hommes politiques (Kwame Nkrumah, Sékou Touré, Amilcar Cabral, Julius Nyerere...) et, d'autre part des intellectuels de grande renommée (Cheikh Anta Diop, Joseph KO-Zerbo, Théophile Obenga, Marcien Towa ...). C'est Marcien Towa (1931-2014) qui nous intéresse dans la présente étude. Le philosophe est un personnage incontournable de l'histoire intellectuelle de l'Afrique qui a contribué ardemment aux côtés d'autres intellectuels de renom, à l'écriture de l'histoire moderne de l'Afrique. Son combat fut de laver les africains de l'opprobre (les images stéréotypées de l'Afrique et de ses habitants créées par les colonisateurs).

Si les contributions de Marcien Towa sont multiples vue l'importance des thèmes qu'il traite à travers ses ouvrages, ses enseignements à savoir : la critique de l'idéologie de l'impérialisme occidental, de l'ethnophilosophie, la question de la réappropriation de soi, ou encore, celle du développement en Afrique. C'est précisément sa critique de la négritude Senghorienne qui nous intéresse dans la présente étude. A travers cette analyse, il s'agira de

¹ Marcien Towa, *Essai sur la problématique philosophique dans l'Afrique actuelle*, Yaoundé: Clé, édition de 2012, p. 75.

s'interroger sur le combat panafricain de Marcien Towa, d'apporter des éléments de réflexions et des pistes d'analyses sur son héritage.

Afin de répondre à cette question quatre lignes d'études constitueront la trame de cet article. Une première abordant l'intellectuel panafricain à travers ses œuvres, la seconde, une présentation de la pensée senghorienne de la négritude, la troisième, la critique towaienne de la négritude senghorienne et la dernière un héritage panafricain de Towa au service des peuples africains.

Marcien Towa, un philosophe dans la lignée des intellectuels panafricains

Initialement pensé par des intellectuels africains de la diaspora, puis nourrie par les idées d'africains continentaux, le panafricanisme se veut une réponse politique aux divisions européennes de l'Afrique (d'abord l'esclavage ensuite la colonisation). Les intellectuels et militants panafricains ont rêvé et imaginé une Afrique unie qui aurait sa lumière et sa puissance propre. Le panafricanisme est à la fois un projet et un engagement politique, une idéologie et un idéal qui a profondément contribué à la construction de l'histoire politique et intellectuelle de l'Afrique du XXe siècle.² « Idéologie d'origine caribéenne et américaine, le panafricanisme prend racine parmi des intellectuels noirs qui ont l'ambition de combattre le racisme, les préjugés et la discrimination dont étaient victimes leurs communautés ».³ Plusieurs étapes ont conduit à la naissance du panafricanisme : la découverte de l'Afrique par les européens, l'infériorisation du peuple noir, la traite et la colonisation. L'historien franco-béninois Amzat Boukari-Yabara, dans un ouvrage intitulé *Africa Unite ! Une histoire du panafricanisme*, consacre une profonde étude du mouvement. Il définit le panafricanisme comme un mouvement socio politique développé par les afro-américains et les antillais entre la fin du XIXème siècle et la fin de la seconde Guerre Mondiale, ou une doctrine de l'unité politique formulée par les nationalistes africains dans le

² A bien des égards, le panafricanisme se trouve dans une relation à la fois de mimétisme et d'opposition avec le processus de structuration des Etats-nations en Europe, tel qu'il a été analysé par Sergiu Mișcoiu, *Naissance de la nation en Europe. Théories classiques et théorisations constructivistes*, Paris: L'Harmattan, 2010.

³ Oruno Lara cité par Patrick P. Dramé, *L'Afrique postcoloniale en quête d'intégration, s'unir pour survivre et renaître*, Québec: Les presses de l'université de Montréal, 2017 p. 11.

cadre des luttes anticoloniales et indépendantistes.⁴ Le panafricanisme est donc la prise de conscience pour une émancipation politique, économique, culturelle et sociale des noirs. Nnamdi Azikiwe premier président du Nigéria, dans un article intitulé « L'Avenir du Panafricanisme », *Présence Africaine* 1962/1 fait remarquer que :

Pour certains, le panafricanisme signifie la recherche d'une personnalité africaine. Pour d'autres, il implique la négritude. Tandis que pour un grand nombre, il s'applique à une situation dans laquelle le continent africain entier est libéré des entraves de la domination étrangère avec ses leaders préparant librement le progrès méthodologique et le bien-être de ses habitants.⁵

Comme nous pouvons le constater, plusieurs personnalités afro descendantes et africaines vont constituer le socle sur lequel va se développer l'histoire du panafricanisme. Ces acteurs panafricains vont défendre plusieurs idées. A titre d'exemple : Paul Cuffe se préoccupe presque exclusivement du rapatriement en Afrique des esclaves noirs libérés. Edward Wilmot Blyden popularise le slogan "back to Africa" et défend l'idée d'une "personnalité africaine". William Edward Burghardt Du Bois développe la notion de "conscience raciale". Marcus Garvey popularise le slogan "Africa for African". Anténor Firmin prône "l'égalité des races humaines". Kwame Nkrumah prône "l'unité du continent africain", etc.

Marcien Towa va s'imprégner de ces idéaux panafricains axés sur l'émancipation politique, économique, sociale et culturelle des africains, et s'inscrire dans cette continuité. Il est auteur de plusieurs œuvres critiques. Outre ses travaux scientifiques : *Essai sur la problématique philosophique* et *Léopold Sédar Senghor : Négritude ou servitude* publié en 1971, *L'idée d'une philosophie négro-africaine* en 1979, *Qu'est-ce-que la Négritude ?* en 1983, *Identité et Transcendance* en 2011, etc..., le philosophe défend dans les conférences la nécessité d'une décolonisation mentale. La pensée de Towa est une philosophie critique fondée sur la désaliénation de la société africaine, sur l'idéal éthique d'une libération de l'homme noir. Dans son *Essai sur la problématique philosophique dans l'Afrique actuelle*, il dénonce le préjugé qui

⁴ Amzat Boukari-Yabara, *Africa Unite! Une histoire du panafricanisme*, Paris: La Découverte, 2017, p. 23.

⁵ Nnamdi Azikiwe, « L'Avenir du Panafricanisme » in *Présence Africaine*, 60-1, 1962, p. 9.

prétend que les africains n'auraient eu aucune part à l'œuvre générale de la civilisation. Il fustige les critiques violentes de Hegel dans *la raison dans l'histoire* et montre que celles-ci ne suffisent pas pour refuser à l'Afrique ce que la nature lui a donné.⁶ Il a s'agit aussi pour Towa de répondre aux préjugés européocentristes de l'appartenance exclusive de la philosophie au monde occidental, par un plaidoyer pour une reconnaissance de l'existence d'une certaine philosophie en Afrique. Towa s'est appuyé sur la philosophie pour mener à sa manière le combat pour la libération de l'Africain. Rejoignant les idées de Kwame Nkrumah, pour lui, l'urgence est pour l'Afrique, de mettre sur pied une unité politique laquelle réalisera une Afrique libre. Towa mènera une vie entière destinée au combat pour la libération du continent africain et son émancipation.

L'un des apports les plus considérables de Towa est sa critique de la négritude Senghorienne. Dans son livre intitulé *Léopold Sédar Senghor : Négritude ou Servitude ?* Il attaque violemment la négritude de Senghor en l'opposant à celle de Césaire. Au travers de cette critique, il apporte une contribution remarquable à la réflexion sur le mouvement de la négritude.

La pensée senghorienne de la négritude

Formulé pour la première fois par le poète martiniquais Aimé Césaire, comme le reconnaît Léopold Sédar Senghor « Je suis d'autant plus libre de défendre le terme qui a été inventé, non par moi, comme on le dit souvent à tort, mais par Aimé Césaire »,⁷ rejoint ensuite par ce dernier, la conception de la négritude émerge au sein d'une époque marquée par la montée du nazisme et des persécutions hitlériennes en Europe et de la guerre civile en Espagne. Face à la situation du monde, aux rapports de force en présence et à tous les grands problèmes de l'humanité dans leur ensemble, les fondateurs de la négritude ont cherché un moyen pour s'exprimer et se définir. Le mot lui-même, négritude, est révélateur. Il est délibérément forgé à partir du terme jadis offensant nègre. Son choix plein de fierté et de défi, comme racine de ce néologisme semble suggérer le désir des poètes noirs de le renvoyer, épanoui, en plein visage de leurs détracteurs.

⁶ Diakité Samba, « Marcien Towa entre deux cultures » in *An African Journal of Philosophy / Revue Africaine de Philosophie* vol. 21 (1-2), 2007, p. 68.

⁷ Léopold Sédar Senghor, « Problématique de la Négritude » in *Présence Africaine*, 1971/2 N° 78, p. 5 [<https://www.cairn.info/revue-presence-africaine-1971-2-page-3.htm>]

C'est à travers la revue *L'Étudiant Noir*, n° 3, mai-juin 1935 dans la rubrique "Conscience Raciale et Révolution sociale" que Césaire emploie la première fois le terme.

Ainsi donc, avant de faire la révolution et pour faire la révolution, la vraie, la lame de fond destructrice et non l'ébranlement des surfaces, une condition est essentielle : rompre la mécanique identification des races, déchirer les superficielles valeurs, saisir en nous le nègre immédiat, planter notre négritude comme un bel arbre jusqu'à ce qu'il porte ses fruits les plus authentiques.⁸

Il utilisera à nouveau le terme en 1939 dans son ouvrage *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*. Il se fait le témoin et le défenseur de la cause noire. « Ma bouche sera la bouche des malheurs qui n'ont point de bouche, ma voix, la liberté de celles qui s'affaissent au cachot du désespoir. »⁹ Césaire lance le mot, à savoir qu'il faut ramasser la négritude puisqu'on l'a piétinée, bafouée, méprisée.

Dès sa naissance, le mouvement reste confiné au cercle des intellectuels noirs francophones en France. C'est là, qu'ils prennent conscience de la spécificité des valeurs culturelles négro-africaine et de leurs rôles dans la lutte pour la libération de l'Afrique. La culture étant une force vive essentielle d'une nation, d'un peuple, seule sa réhabilitation peut être le germe d'une résurrection et d'un nouveau départ. Les intellectuels noirs vont progressivement la revaloriser. Pour ce faire, ils commencent un travail d'exploration identitaire, en articulant leur pensée autour de l'appartenance raciale, des valeurs spirituelles et artistiques de l'Afrique noire, des valeurs de civilisation des Noirs par le monde et ceci, tout en s'inspirant des intellectuels noirs américains. La négritude apparaît comme quelque chose de spontané. Les intellectuels apportent chacun un tempérament propre, un caractère, une origine sociale, un trait particulier. Ceci à travers une littérature qui se constitue progressivement et qui est orientée vers la poésie.

⁸ Césaire Aimé, "Conscience raciale et révolution sociale" in *L'Étudiant noir*, n° 3, mai-juin 1935.

⁹ *Idem, Cahier d'un Retour au pays natal*, Paris: Présence Africaine, 2000, p. 20.

De toutes ces formes et approches, celle qui nous intéresse est la négritude Senghorienne. Certes, Aimé Césaire, Léopold Sédar Senghor, Léon Gontran Damas et autres ont participé à vêtir le mouvement ; dans l'analyse cependant, on distingue plusieurs éléments d'oppositions. A travers l'étude des nombreux ouvrages, discours, allocutions et conférences une distinction principale apparaît. La négritude de Césaire est inébranlable et intransigeante. Celle de Senghor est plus conciliante, plus accommodante. Césaire ne veut rien perdre de sa négritude, ne veut pas la voir dissoudre dans aucune fraternité, contrairement à Senghor qui est plus conciliant et attaché à son épanouissement et à son dépassement.

Dans une analyse critique opposant Césaire et Senghor, Amady Aly Dieng, ancien militant au sein de la Fédération des Etudiants d'Afrique Noire en France (FEANF), auteurs de plusieurs ouvrages sur les organisations étudiantes en France et contemporain des deux hommes voit à travers la poésie de Césaire une négritude de dénonciation accentuée et d'incitation contre le système colonial, qui a une valeur décolonisatrice. Tandis que celle de Senghor est plus passive et plus conciliante.

La poésie de Césaire alimentait le feu des rebellions coloniales. Celle de Senghor, dans une posture d'agenouillement, nous incite à murmurer nos souffrances, à demeurer dociles et à avoir l'échine souple. Le déluge lyrique et purificateur qui était enfoui dans le Cahier d'un retour au pays natal et dans les armes miraculeuses débouchait sur la dénonciation du système colonial dans le Discours sur le colonialisme. Césaire nous armait là où Senghor nous désarmait. Césaire tenait un langage viril là où Senghor féminisait l'Afrique.¹⁰

Senghor définit la négritude « *comme l'ensemble des valeurs culturelles du monde noir, telles qu'elles s'expriment dans la vie, les institutions et les œuvres des Noirs* ». ¹¹ Cependant, il précise que, ce n'est pas du racisme, mais de la culture. ¹² Selon lui la négritude a un double sens. Un sens objectif et subjectif.

¹⁰ Amady Aly Dieng, « Hommage à Aimé Césaire le rebelle » in *Présence Africaine*, 2 N° 178, 2008, p. 89 [<https://www.cairn.info/revue-presence-africaine-2008-2-page-89.htm>].

¹¹ Léopold Sédar Senghor, *Liberté 1, Négritude et humanisme*, «Introduction», Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1964, p. 9.

¹² *Idem*, *Pierre Teilhard de Chardin et politique Africaine*, Paris : Editions du Seuil, 1962), p. 20. Léopold Sédar Senghor, à propos du mouvement de la négritude, cité par Lilyan Kesteloot, *Histoire de la littérature négro-africaine*, 2001, p. 340.

Objectivement, « la Négritude est un fait : une culture. C'est l'ensemble des valeurs économiques et politiques, intellectuelles et morales, artistiques et sociales, non seulement des peuples d'Afrique noire, mais encore des minorités noires d'Amérique, voire d'Asie et d'Océanie. »¹³ Ces valeurs se situent dans l'expression artistique, politique, intellectuelle des noirs. Ceci porte à croire qu'elle est une manière d'être, d'agir de chaque groupe humain, notamment chez les négro-africains et négro-américains. Ensuite sur le plan subjectif, « la négritude, c'est l'acceptation de ce fait. »¹⁴ On peut en déduire que c'est, à la fois, une culture et un comportement. Cette acceptation représente une action permettant aux noirs de se nourrir de leur propre valeur. C'est assumer sans ambiguïté les valeurs de la civilisation noire. En somme, c'est la valorisation de soi-même, débouchant sur la notion de fierté, de confiance en soi et de sentiment d'être l'égal des autres.

Pour mettre en avant cette culture, les œuvres tant poétiques que critiques de Senghor présentent plusieurs thèmes culturels africains : l'évocation des masques, des danses, des cérémonies initiatiques, la femme noire, l'affirmation de la couleur (...). On peut le voir à travers les titres *Chants d'ombre*, *Hosties noires*, *A l'appel de la race de Saba*, *Masque nègre*, *Femme noire* (...). Dans *Ethiopiennes*, il brosse un tableau idyllique du monde de son enfance. Cette attitude, constitue une approche qui lui permet d'aborder des thématiques propres au monde noir (ancêtres, sagesse du vieillard, fêtes, initiations...).

La principale caractéristique de la négritude de Senghor c'est qu'elle est conciliante et accommodante. Il parle de symbiose. Dans son discours prononcé à l'Université de Bahia, il rappelle cet objectif : « la négritude, c'est d'une part, l'ensemble des valeurs de civilisation des Noirs par le monde ; c'est, par-dessus tout, la volonté active de cultiver ces valeurs pour les apporter, comme contribution à l'élaboration des cultures nationales respectives, mieux, à l'édification de la civilisation de l'Universel. »¹⁵ Pour Senghor, il ne faut pas répudier toutes les valeurs européennes.

¹³ *Idem*, « Problématique de la Négritude » in *Présence Africaine*, 2 N° 78, 1971, p. 6 [<https://www.cairn.info/revue-presence-africaine-1971-2-page-3.htm>].

¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵ Honorat Aguessy, « La phase de la négritude » in *Présence Africaine* 4 N° 80, 1971, p. 38 [<https://www.cairn.info/revue-presence-africaine-1971-4-page-33.htm>].

Tout au contraire, sachant que toute grande civilisation est métissage à commencer par le miracle grec, nous devons étudier et assimiler les valeurs les plus efficaces, parce que les plus fécondantes, de la civilisation européenne et, avant toutes autres, la raison-discursive, l'expérimentation, la technologie. Les valeurs européennes seront, pour nous Négro-Africains, des moyens, non des fins, pour enrichir nos valeurs propres et les faire servir à notre développement intégral : à l'élaboration d'un humanisme négro-africain et moderne. Quand les Russes, les Chinois et les Asiatiques, les Juifs, les Arabes et les Latino-Américains ont entrepris, et avec succès, de créer, sur leurs valeurs anciennes, de nouvelles civilisations, il est temps, encore une fois, que les élites négro-africaines d'aujourd'hui cessent de répéter des slogans fabriqués ailleurs, cessent d'être des consommateurs de culture pour créer et apporter, ainsi, leur contribution irremplaçable à la Civilisation de l'Universel.¹⁶

Telle est précisément la voix senghorienne de la négritude. En effet, pour Senghor, toutes les civilisations sont complémentaires et concourent à la civilisation de l'universel. Il voit donc un apport de la négritude à la civilisation de l'universel, une rencontre et non un affrontement. La vocation de Senghor est de réaliser des symbioses : celles de l'Afrique et de l'Europe. Une symbiose entre les valeurs nègres et les valeurs occidentales. Selon ces propres termes, « ces valeurs doivent s'épurer l'une et l'autre et ne conserver que leurs caractères excellents, pour arriver à l'harmonieuse fusion. »¹⁷ L'interpénétration des deux cultures est une nécessité. Toutefois, l'interpénétration ne doit pas être dans un seul sens, l'occident peut aussi intégrer les valeurs civilisatrices noires. Précise-t-il « il n'est pas question pour la métropole, d'adopter les coutumes et les institutions indigènes. Elle doit, néanmoins, en comprendre l'esprit : et peut-être [...] en pourrait-elle tirer profit [...] »¹⁸ Ainsi résumé, l'originalité de la pensée senghorienne repose dans le discours qu'il a institué entre l'enracinement et l'ouverture de la culture noire à d'autres cultures. En d'autres termes, Senghor invite les

¹⁶ Léopold Sédar Senghor, « Pourquoi une idéologie négro-africaine ? » in *Présence Africaine*, 2 N° 82, 1972, p. 38 [https://www.cairn.info/revue-presence-africaine-1972-2-page-11.htm].

¹⁷ Lilyan Lagneau, « La négritude de Léopold Sédar Senghor » in *Présence Africaine*, 4 N° XXXIX, 1961, p. 183 [https://www.cairn.info/revue-presence-africaine-1961-4-page-166.htm].

¹⁸ Malela Buata Bundu, « Senghor nomothète », in *Les écrivains afro-antillais à Paris (1920-1960). Stratégies et postures identitaires*, Paris: Karthala, 2008, p. 23 [https://www.cairn.info/les-ecrivains-afro-antillais-a-paris-1920-1960---page-225.htm].

humains à cultiver leurs différences tout en acceptant celles des autres. Ceci dans l'optique d'aboutir à une symbiose des cultures. Senghor soutien donc une assimilation plus objective et plus pragmatique. Il est selon lui « question, pour la Colonie, de s'assimiler l'esprit de la civilisation française. Il s'agit d'une assimilation active et judicieuse, qui féconde les civilisations autochtones et les fasse sortir de leur stagnation ou renaître de leur décadence. Il s'agit d'une assimilation qui permette l'association. »¹⁹

La critique de Towa de la négritude de Senghor

Senghor est le théoricien de la négritude qui a été violemment contesté. Parmi ces détracteurs on peut citer : le philosophe béninois Stanislas Adotevi, l'écrivain nigérian Wolé Soyinka, Cheikh Anta Diop et Marcien Towa. Stanislas Adotevi démonte *la négritude dans Négritude et Négrologues*. Il reproche ce passéisme aux négrologues, ceux-là qu'il accuse de célébrer le noir au lieu de le libérer. Dans son pamphlet virulent contre les théoriciens de la Négritude, Adotevi évoque ce qui peut conduire le nègre dans le : « *grand trou noir* ». ²⁰ Pour Adotevi, le nègre ne peut pas ignorer que la noirceur de sa peau est évidente. Il pense que ce n'est ni le moment de proclamer sa détresse mais de se réveiller-lui. De la même manière, Adotevi considère que la négritude est comme un visage de l'ethnologie et du néocolonialisme, une façon de devenir blanc. D'ailleurs, pour Adotevi, la négritude est morte. Ce faisant, il affirme : « *il faut lâcher le Nègre...* ». ²¹ Wolé Soyinka critique le mouvement avec le concept qu'il initie *La Tigritude*, en déclarant "le tigre ne proclame pas sa tigritude, il bondit sur sa proie" (The tiger does not stalk about crying his tigritude). Cette phrase est prononcée en 1962 en réponse ironique au mouvement de la négritude. Il tient ce sévère réquisitoire contre la vision senghorienne de la négritude qui selon lui est un discours qui obnubile les intellectuels au détriment d'un véritable combat contre les forces réactionnaires et anticoloniales. Pourquoi gaspiller les énergies dans de vaines rhétoriques alors que le continent africain se débat dans des problèmes politiques et économiques insurmontables ? La situation nécessite que l'on agisse avant tout. C'est la position de Soyinka.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

²⁰ Adotevi Stanislas Spero, *Négritude et Négrologues*, Paris: Le Castor Astral, 1998, p. 83.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 212.

Parmi les citations de Senghor, celle qui a suscité le plus de polémique est “ *L’émotion est nègre et la raison est hellène* “. Cette citation a donné lieu à nombre d’interprétations. L’historien Cheikh Anta Diop critique, à ce sujet, l’attitude de Senghor.

Tout au plus reconnaîtra-t-on au nègre des dons artistiques liés à la sensibilité d’animal inférieur. Telle est l’opinion de Gobineau qui, dans son livre célèbre : *De l’inégalité des races humaines*, décrète que le sens de l’art est inséparable du sang des nègres, mais il réduit l’art à une manifestation inférieure de la nature humaine, en particulier le sens du rythme est lié aux aptitudes émotionnelles du nègre »;²² continue-t-il « il est fréquent que des nègres d’une haute intellectualité restent victimes de cette aliénation au point de chercher à codifier ces idées nazies d’une prétendue dualité du nègre africain dans un vers d’une admirable beauté : l’émotion est nègre et la raison hellène.²³

Towa va critiquer la négritude de Senghor, mais va apprécier la négritude de Césaire et celle de Damas. A part sa thèse de doctorat intitulé *Poésie de la Négritude, approche structuraliste*, qui n’est publiée qu’en 1983, chez *Naaman*, et où il reprend les lignes principales de sa lecture critique de la poésie de Senghor, il publie l’ouvrage *Négritude ou servitude ?*, ouvrage dans lequel il appelle à distinguer la négritude de Senghor de celle de Césaire. Pour lui Senghor est un citoyen français qui fait la politique de la France en Afrique, contrairement à Césaire qui œuvre à l’habilitation du noir dans toutes les dimensions.

En effet la négritude de Césaire a une valeur anticolonialiste. Cette valeur à travers ces œuvres est plus évidente, plus absolue et plus radicale. La négritude dont parle Césaire est un gigantesque ralliement, la mobilisation de plusieurs millions d’hommes dévalués, une négritude de combat. Force est de constater à quel point on peut lire ce sentiment de révolte et de combat pour la reconnaissance de la culture noire à travers un certain nombre de ces ouvrages et textes critiques ou théoriques. Par exemple l’ouvrage *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal*, publié en 1939, qui reste probablement la réalisation littéraire la plus considérablement conçue dans le mouvement de la négritude est un texte critique envers l’Europe et ses stéréotypes sur les noirs mais aussi un texte sur l’égalité des races humaines. A travers ce texte

²² Cheikh Anta Diop, *Nations nègres et culture*, 3e édit, Paris: Présence africaine, 1979, pp. 54-55.

²³ *Ibidem*.

Césaire fait prendre conscience de l'impossible assimilation française ou européenne. C'est un texte fondateur qui scande à voix haute, la différence revendiquée de l'homme noir, son refus des canons imposés par les canonnières, et son rêve éveillé d'une histoire autre, qui n'a jamais signifié l'absence d'histoire. Il en est de même pour son ouvrage *Discours sur le colonialisme*, publié en 1950.

Le mot d'ordre qui a longtemps guidé la pratique littéraire de Césaire est une négritude de combat. Son œuvre est profondément anticolonialiste. Sa poésie vise surtout à produire un effet de décolonisation. On peut déduire qu'elle est une forme d'alimentation des résistances coloniales contrairement à Senghor.

Towa s'opposait à la négritude de Senghor. Pour lui « Senghor concevait la culture comme quelque chose de biologique et il considérait le noir comme émotif, ces deux thèses font que si nous sommes biologiquement plus émotifs et que nous ne pouvons pas dépasser cette émotivité, nous sommes condamnés par l'histoire. En fait Senghor n'hésitait pas à tirer ce genre de conclusion en montrant que la domination du blanc sur le noir était logique et naturelle. »²⁴ Dans l'analyse towaïenne, Senghor fait du noir un être si complètement dominé par l'émotion et l'instinct et reconnaît si volontiers l'euroanéité exclusive de la raison, que l'on peut se demander si son dessein réel est de nier ou de servir l'impérialisme européen. Selon Towa, au lieu de permettre l'affirmation de l'identité noire, la négritude senghorienne conduit au contraire à l'aliénation de cette identité. Il a donc défendu dans les conférences et dans les livres que la négritude de Senghor avait quelque chose d'irrationnel, de colonial et de raciste. La négritude de Senghor ne s'inscrit pas dans une perspective de lutte contre le colonialisme et participe à l'assujettissement de l'homme noir. Tout comme Césaire, Towa met en garde contre le risque de virer dans l'assimilation de la culture occidentale par l'homme noir et prône la nécessité de mettre fin à l'impérialisme sous toutes ses formes.

Si le panafricanisme d'essence est contre toute assimilation, et prône un retour aux valeurs africaines, la négritude défendue par Aimé Césaire et Marcién Towa est plus panafricaine que celle défendue par Senghor.

²⁴ David Ndachi Tagne, "A l'écoute de Marcién Towa: un entretien avec Marcién Towa, professeur et philosophe", 1998 [<https://motspluriels.arts.uwa.edu.au/MP1299mt.html>].

L'héritage panafricain de Marcien Towa au service des peuples africains

Marcien Towa est incontestablement l'un des grands penseurs de l'Afrique contemporaine, qui auront marqué leur époque. Toute sa vie, il évalue la complexité des problèmes africains et refuse l'abdication. Il va essayer d'expliquer à l'homme noir, que personne n'est supérieur à lui, et que la colonisation n'est pas une fatalité ou le seul moyen par lequel il pouvait sortir de l'obscurité, comme l'ont fait croire les impérialistes. Dans ce combat qui est panafricain au regard de cette volonté de libération du continent vis-à-vis de l'Occident, Towa propose un projet, celui de s'appropriier la science et la technique. Ce sont les éléments au travers desquelles l'Occident exerce sa domination. Il écrit dans *Essai sur la problématique philosophique dans l'Afrique actuelle* « qu'avec la science et la technologie, nous accédons à la spécificité européenne, à ce que le penseur européen considère à la fois comme le privilège et le fardeau de l'Europe, le secret de sa puissance et de sa domination. »²⁵ Il a compris très vite que la connaissance qu'il a acquise, loin d'être une fin en soi pour un usage opportuniste et égoïste, est plutôt une arme, un moyen pour participer, avec plus d'efficacité, à la lutte d'émancipation pour le développement légitime des peuples africains.

Towa, est à juste titre, cet idéal d'intellectuel au service de l'Afrique. Gérer cet héritage lourd qu'il lègue, représente aujourd'hui une préoccupation des intellectuels africains, le défi majeur à relever. Pour l'heure, il convient de restituer à l'homme tout ce qui lui revient, notamment sa contribution à la culture de la conscience des peuples, et ses appels incessants aux jeunes pour leur responsabilité dans le devenir de l'Afrique, celle de sa libération et de son émancipation. Il restera une fierté, un honneur et un motif légitime d'orgueil pour le Cameroun. S'il y avait un "Panthéon", ou une "Académie" au Cameroun et en Afrique, nul doute qu'il y trônerait aux côtés d'autres illustres qui l'ont précédé tels Cheick Anta Diop, Joseph Ki-Zerbo, Kwame N'Nkrumah. Marcien Towa n'est pas mort et ne devrait jamais mourir.

²⁵ Towa, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

Conclusion

L'intérêt d'une étude sur les œuvres de Marcien Towa est une véritable source de renseignements sociaux, culturels et politiques pour l'historien, le politologue, le sociologue, le philosophe. Grand penseur incontournable de l'Afrique contemporaine, Towa a mis toutes ses compétences au profit d'une cause, l'émancipation du continent africain. C'est un personnage intellectuellement engagé. Les divers sujets qu'il aborde sont toujours d'actualité aujourd'hui, malgré l'abolition de l'esclavage et une soixantaine d'années après la décolonisation, l'Afrique est toujours en quête d'une identité, d'un développement, d'une émancipation. Entre phénomènes migratoires, problèmes et dépendances économiques, conflits politiques, sous-développement, terrorisme, l'africain trouve difficilement sa place dans un contexte universel qui se mondialise de plus en plus.²⁶ A l'égard des maux qui gangrènent l'Afrique: l'insécurité, la sous-alimentation, les coups d'Etats, apparaît une nécessité de revisiter les travaux des grands intellectuels comme Marcien Towa. En s'inspirant de ces thèses celles-ci sont d'une contribution pour le développement de l'Afrique.

Ainsi, il est bien malaisé de résumer une œuvre aussi monumentale et imposante que celle de Towa. A partir de ses œuvres, il apporte incontestablement une contribution considérable à l'idéologie du panafricanisme. Ses critiques contre Senghor et les prises de positions en faveur de la négritude de Césaire et de Damas viennent renforcer les idéaux du panafricanisme.

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²⁶ Pour un regard sur la variété des conflits africains, v., entre autres : Sergiu Mișcoiu, Jean-Michel De Waele et Andreea Bianca Urs (dir.), *Maquisards, rebelles, insurgés... politiques. Le devenir des chefs de guerre africains*, Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Știință, 2023.

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L'ASSEMBLEE PROVINCIALE ET L'INGOUVERNABILITE
DE LA PROVINCE DU SUD-KIVU : DE LA DESILLUSION
AU NOUVEAU DEPART

THE PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY AND THE UNGOVERNABILITY OF
THE SOUTH-KIVU PROVINCE: FROM THE DISILLUSIONMENT
TO NEW DEPARTURE

Alain de Georges Shukurani Mugengere*

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Abstract: *The 2018-2023 legislature started with an autosubliminal show in South Kivu, a province of Congo-Kinshasa. The spectacle led to an unfavourable environment to significant impact work production on the provincial governance. Members of provincial Assembly, mainly those who regularly fell into disputes, lost opportunity to emerge as political or institutional actors with a development-axed target. Thus, this paper aimed at analysing these behaviours and practices to find out their effects on the governance in province. This study is then a functioning conceptualization of the South-Kivu provincial Assembly in interaction with the provincial government management for the progress of the province. It is based on quality features. The south-kivucentrist pathology conceptualization is the main innovant point of this study. It has widely explained the real living situation in South-Kivu during the 2018-2023 legislature with its consequences on the socioeconomic sector of this part of the country. Our results have shown that no governance that promotes socioeconomical area can emerge from that pathological situation. The obtained results have given a new explanation to the power or governance phenomenon of South-Kivu. They include several dimensions in the point understanding by enlighting irrational digressions and deviant behaviour before some cure has been suggested.*

Keywords: *Legislature, ungovernability, South-Kivu, south-kivucentrist pathology, stupidity.*

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Introduction

Le Congo-Kinshasa a organisé en 2018 les deuxièmes élections législatives provinciales depuis l'avènement de la troisième république. Comme dans les autres provinces du pays, la séance solennelle inaugurale de cette deuxième législature provinciale a eu lieu à Bukavu, la capitale provinciale du Sud-Kivu, le 30 janvier 2019. Dans cette province, la législature 2018-2023, qui est au centre de cette étude, s'est ouverte atypiquement par un spectacle d'auto-sublimation. Ce spectacle d'autocélébration affichait les couleurs de ce qu'allait être cette législature. Le début a annoncé la fin, pourrait-on dire.

Dès leur arrivée à l'Assemblée provinciale du Sud-Kivu, certains députés provinciaux n'ont pas raté l'occasion d'étonner. Les agents de l'Administration de l'Assemblée provinciale du Sud-Kivu ont été surpris désagréablement par des platitudes qui sortaient de leurs bouches. Ils déclaraient notamment : « *Nous sommes venus corriger les erreurs de la législature passée* ». « *Nous ferons mieux que les députés de la législature passée étant donné qu'il n'y avait beaucoup d'intellectuels parmi eux* ». Certains autres députés ont été même à l'aise de déclarer ce qui suit : « *Nous sommes venus chercher l'argent, car nous savons que nous ne serons pas réélus* ». Aux cadres de l'Administration de l'Assemblée provinciale qui, au tout début de leur mandat, osaient leur donner quelques orientations sur leur travail, ils n'hésitaient pas de dire qu'ils en avaient une idée. Ils ont développé une vicieuse attitude de faire croire qu'ils connaissaient tout ou presque et qu'ils étaient sûrs de leurs « stratégies », pourtant traductrices de ce que Philippe Baumard appelle « vide stratégique ».¹ L'humilité a été vaincue et « humiliée ». Ils lui ont préféré ce vice politique enivrant et destructeur qu'est l'orgueil. L'émotion a prévalu sur la raison. Or, ainsi que le pense Delly Sesanga, *la raison est l'aiguillon des choix politiques. Il implique de la circonscrire à la connaissance des problèmes et des options d'action ainsi que de leurs conséquences.*² C'est aussi le point de vue d'Abderrahman Nouda pour qui, *la raison, l'intelligence, ou le bon sens doivent prévaloir sur la technicité, la politique,*

¹ Philippe Baumard, *Le vide stratégique*, Paris : Éditions CNRS, 2012.

² Delly Sesanga, *La voie du changement : un pari de la raison pour la Rd Congo*, Paris : Harmattan, 2011, p. 204.

*l'idéologie, les traditions et les sacralités.*³ Cet auteur pense même que *la rationalité est indispensable pour réussir une initiative quelconque.*⁴

Au fait, des motions et pétitions en cascade, la faible production législative, le contrôle parlementaire improductif, des chamailleries incessantes ont finalement défini le climat dans lequel la législature 2018-2023 a évolué. C'est avec raison qu'Emile Bongeli, analysant la scène politique congolaise, affirme : « *Alors que la politique reste l'activité la plus déterminante de la vie en société, il est surprenant de constater que c'est dans ce domaine clé de la vie sociale que règnent les idées les plus absurdes, que s'installent des platitudes et des extravagances les plus effroyables, que s'exhibent les bassesses les plus grossières* ». ⁵

Les députés provinciaux de cette législature ont longtemps cru qu'ils étaient capables de changer par un coup de baguette magique le paysage de la gouvernance provinciale même sans un travail de fond. Ils ont été presque en manque de repère et de référence. C'est à juste titre qu'Évariste Boshab pense que *si l'on ne sait pas ce que l'on est, difficile de savoir ce que l'on fait.*⁶

L'objectif de cette étude est d'examiner les attitudes, les comportements et les pratiques des députés provinciaux de la législature 2018-2023. Ceci permet d'en cerner les effets sur la gouvernance provinciale. Essentiellement, la finalité est de saisir et rendre conceptuellement intelligible l'impact fonctionnel des députés comme acteurs politico-institutionnels sur la qualité de la gouvernance dans la Province du Sud Kivu et donc sur le développement de cette entité. La nouveauté de cet article est telle qu'il explore une explication inédite (pathologie sud-kivucentriste) d'un phénomène de gouvernance devenu insoluble depuis quelques années : l'ingouvernabilité du Sud-Kivu. Il propose une modalité analytique combinant l'approche dialectique et celle de la psychologie comportementale.

Par ailleurs, il sied de dire que le fonctionnement de l'Assemblée provinciale du Sud-Kivu n'est pas à ce jour conceptualisé en interaction avec la gouvernance de l'organe exécutif pour le progrès de la province. Le présent article propose une telle conceptualisation. Il tente de répondre à cette question : l'Assemblée provinciale du Sud-Kivu a-t-elle bien rempli ses

³ Abderrahman Nouda, *L'éthique politique : exploration critique de la Société*, Casablanca : Éditions Nouda, 2011, p. 106.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 104.

⁵ Emile Bongeli, *Sociologie politique : perspectives africaines*, Paris : Harmattan, 2020, p. 20.

⁶ Evariste Boshab, *Entre la révision de la Constitution et l'inanition de la nation*, Bruxelles : Éditions Larcier, 2013, p. 380.

missions jusqu'à influencer sur la gouvernance provinciale censée améliorer les conditions de vie de la population ? En guise d'hypothèse, nous conjecturons que l'Assemblée provinciale du Sud-Kivu n'a pas rempli efficacement ses missions à cause de la pathologie sud-kivucentriste (1), des chamailleries et de l'absence de volonté manifeste d'apprendre pour mieux fonctionner. L'éloge de l'inconséquence (2), le déploiement de l'essentiel des efforts pour la déchéance du Gouverneur de province (3) en sont les autres causes. *Notre thèse est donc que les attitudes et pratiques des députés provinciaux n'ont pas favorisé un fonctionnement harmonieux et efficace des institutions provinciales. Les agissements et chamailleries des animateurs des institutions politiques provinciales ont étouffé son impulsion développementale.*

Méthodologie

Le présent article repose sur une analyse qualitative. Celle-ci a consisté à examiner les attitudes, comportements et pratiques des députés provinciaux en mettant en corrélation leurs productions parlementaires. Le bilan de la législature 2018-2023 est donc examiné pour apprécier l'apport de leurs attitudes et pratiques sur la production de l'Assemblée provinciale ainsi que sur celle du Gouvernement provincial du Sud-Kivu. Quelques indicateurs chiffrés viennent en appui à la démarche qualitative de cette étude.

La méthode de l'histoire immédiate dans sa dimension dialectique, *qui pense la réalité de façon cohérente, totale et dynamique,*⁷ nous a permis de saisir réellement les différentes contradictions entre l'engagement politique formel des députés provinciaux lors notamment de la campagne électorale, les ambitions déclarées d'œuvrer pour le développement de la province et les attitudes, comportements (réalités) affichés par les mêmes dans le déploiement de leurs missions. L'approche psychologique (psychologie comportementale, psychologie de la connerie en politique) nous a également aidé à bien expliquer le phénomène étudié.

Les techniques de la documentation et de l'entretien libre nous ont permis de recueillir des données ou informations dans des ouvrages et auprès de quelques personnes (députés provinciaux, personnel politique et administratif de l'Assemblée provinciale du Sud-Kivu, membres du

⁷ Benoît Verhagen, *Rébellions au Congo, les études du CRISP*, tome 2, Bruxelles : Éditions CRISP, 1969, p. 23.

gouvernement provincial, ...) nécessaires à la réalisation de cet article. L'observation nous a permis, en tant qu'Expert du Bureau d'études de l'Assemblée provinciale du Sud-Kivu et citoyen congolais résidant à Bukavu, de manière directe et indirecte, d'observer des situations en rapport avec la thématique ici abordée.

La pathologie sud-kivucentriste et l'infécondité fonctionnelle

Il ne suffit pas d'avoir des institutions pour aspirer au développement. Il faut, en revanche, que celles-ci soient efficaces et inclusives. Leur efficacité dépend forcément de leurs animateurs. Les institutions sont les reflets des comportements des dirigeants. La loi ne suffit pas non plus. Elle est rendue inopérante par les attitudes et les antivaleurs. L'analyse des comportements éclaire donc un des facteurs de causalité majeurs des dysfonctionnements des institutions et du déficit développemental des provinces du Congo-Kinshasa.

Il est évident qu'il n'y a pas que le Sud-Kivu qui est frappé par la pathologie que nous voulons ici décrire. Au niveau du pouvoir central et dans quelques provinces dont Kinshasa, des signes manifestes de cette pathologie existent aussi. Cependant, nous préférons, dans le cadre de cette étude, nous concentrer uniquement sur le Sud-Kivu.

a. La singularité de l'auto-sublimation et de la connerie politique au Sud-Kivu : la pathologie sud-kivucentriste

Jean-Vincent Holeindre définit la connerie en politique comme notamment *ce qui peut désigner un manque d'esprit, de finesse ou de hauteur de vue, qualités nécessaires dans l'action politique qui vise le bien commun et l'intérêt general.*⁸ Patrick Lemoine la définit comme étant *l'orgueil, ou plutôt l'hubris, qui rend à peu près tous les politiques aussi inconséquents les uns que les autres.*⁹

En effet, beaucoup de Sud-Kivutiens ont tendance à croire que le Sud-Kivu est « le centre du monde ». Ils pensent que le Sud-Kivu est le maillon, le compartiment le plus important du pays et que leurs accomplissements sont tellement remarquables. Pour puiser dans les termes de Yuval Harari, ils

⁸ Jean-François Marmion, « Psychologie de la connerie en politique », in Jean-Vincent Holeindre (ed.), *L'art (politique de passer pour un con*, Auxerre : Éditions Sciences humaines, 2020, p. 35.

⁹ *Idem*, « Psychologie de la connerie en politique », in Patrick Lemoine (ed.), *Analyse psycho-neuro-biologique de la connerie des politiques*, Auxerre : Éditions Sciences humaines, pp. 27-29.

considèrent le peuple sud-kivutien comme « *le héros central de l'histoire et la source ultime de la morale et du savoir* ». ¹⁰ Lors des débats ou discussions (débats parlementaires, ceux tenus dans des radios, réseaux sociaux, discussions entre citoyens, ...), il est fréquent d'entendre des affirmations égotistes du genre : « *les bonnes initiatives du pays commencent souvent au Sud-Kivu* », « *nous sommes les pionniers de la société civile au Congo* », « *nous avons fait partir autant de gouverneurs* », « *nous avons fait ou commencé ceci ou cela* ». Cette attitude ou cette croyance inhibe le sens de la productivité institutionnelle. Plusieurs Sud-Kivutiens sont convaincus que le Sud-Kivu a une grandeur historique qui mérite d'être célébrée. Cet égotisme entretenu par l'ignorance et l'orgueil ne fait que maintenir le statu quo dans cette province ou sa régression. Tout ceci est un état pathologique qui ne permet pas une remise en cause aux fins d'enclencher les actions correctives et placer la province sur une trajectoire de relèvement socio-économique. Cette pathologie « sud-kivucentriste » marquée par l'égotisme ou l'égoïsme, le pouvoirisme et parfois le tribalisme ne favorise ni l'innovation, ni le développement. On y cerne peu de valeur ajoutée brillamment transformatrice et l'absence de leadership cohésif et transformationnel.

La pathologie sud-kivucentriste se traduit aussi par plus de capacité d'auto-sublimation (d'autocélébration) et de production des chamailleries que d'impact réel de mutation systémique sociétale. Au Sud-Kivu, il est observé une propension à perpétuer le désastre ou à reconstituer les catastrophes. Plusieurs Sud-Kivutiens, principalement les politiciens, n'apprennent ni des échecs de gouvernance passés ni des erreurs de la gestion actuelle. Assez régulièrement, ils les répètent d'ailleurs sans gêne ni honte. Pourtant, en changeant des mœurs, des méthodes et pratiques qui ont longtemps maintenu le Sud-Kivu dans cet état, il est possible de produire des fruits vitalisant l'environnement socio-économique de la province. A ce titre, Acemoglu et Robinson nous enseignent que *l'histoire n'est pas le destin et que les cercles vicieux ne sont pas incassables*. ¹¹

Le Sud-Kivu est jusque-là une province atypique, avec des politiciens privilégiant plus les bruits au lieu de chercher à produire des fruits. La législature 2018-2023 l'a suffisamment prouvé. Le travail productif a été supplanté par les chamailleries incessantes ainsi que par d'autres actes

¹⁰ Yuval Noah Harari, *21 leçons pour le XXIème siècle*, Paris : Éditions Albin Michel, 2018, p. 254.

¹¹ Daron Acemoglu, James Robinson, *Why Nations Fail: the Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty*, New York: Crown Publishers, 2012, p. 406.

irréfléchis. Pourtant, le fait d'une vérité indéniable est que la connerie en politique engendre des catastrophes que la raison ferait éviter. Elle mène même à des malhonnêtetés révélatrices de la déraison politique. Voilà pourquoi Patrick Lemoine considère que *la connerie des politiques les rend inconséquents. Elle occasionne l'hubris, qui est la démesure du pouvoir*.¹²

Apparemment, pour paraphraser le même Patrick Lemoine, dès que plusieurs politiciens congolais en général et sud-kivutiens, plus particulièrement, *accèdent au pouvoir, l'orgueil les rend stupides au point qu'ils ignorent leurs capacités d'apprentissage et leur adaptabilité*. Les députés provinciaux ont fait montre de peu d'intelligence situationnelle et de capacité à s'adapter à leurs fonctions. Surtout, ils ont manqué d'élégance et de capacité à coopérer ou à bien collaborer pour le fonctionnement harmonieux et efficace des institutions provinciales. Pour leur part, le Gouverneur et plusieurs ministres provinciaux ont aussi affiché ces déficiences. Il est probable que leurs organismes se soient mis à sécréter suffisamment les hormones de connerie dès qu'ils ont accédé à la fonction de député provincial, de gouverneur ou de ministre provincial. C'est dans ce sens que, *imaginant un modèle biologique à la connerie politique, Patrick Lemoine estime que l'accession à une position supérieure déclenche un afflux de testostérone qui, c'est bien connu, ne favorise pas l'augmentation du quotient intellectuel*.¹³ La connerie a empêché l'utilisation de leur quotient intellectuel à bon escient. Ils ont vu la province sombrer dans le désastre. Cependant, ils n'ont rien fait de significatif pour stopper la déchéance, préférant passer le plus clair de leur temps à se chamailler. Ils ont été plus querelleurs que bâtisseurs alors qu'il était attendu d'eux un travail de fond plaçant le Sud-Kivu sur la voie du relèvement.

b. Les conséquences de la pathologie sud-kivucentriste sur la gouvernance provinciale

La pathologie sud-kivucentriste a conduit et les députés provinciaux, le Gouverneur et les ministres provinciaux à produire des conneries. Au niveau de l'organe gouvernemental provincial (deux fois remanié, soit trois équipes gouvernementales), l'inefficacité de l'action gouvernementale, l'arrogance de son principal animateur, les platitudes de certains ministres, en réalité caporalisés, méritent d'être évoqués ici.

¹² Lemoine, *op.cit.*, pp. 27-29.

¹³ *Ibidem*.

S'agissant de l'inefficacité de l'action gouvernementale, elle a été notamment causée par la faible capacité de mobilisation des recettes. Selon les documents de la Direction Provinciale de Mobilisation et d'Encadrement des Recettes (DPMER) que j'ai consultés, l'évolution des recettes propres de la province renseigne une réalisation mensuelle de \$ 1 000 000 au minimum. Les dépenses de rémunération se sont chiffrées durant ce quinquennat à au moins \$ 750 000 par mois. Les frais de fonctionnement (y compris les frais des missions) ne sont pas compris dans cette rubrique. Cette situation permet de dire que les recettes mobilisées n'ont servi qu'à couvrir les dépenses de rémunération et de fonctionnement. Curieusement, même dans ce domaine, la tâche n'a pas été efficacement exécutée, car certains mois n'ont pas été payés (13 au total).¹⁴ Les rétrocessions (pratique anticonstitutionnelle et illégale malheureusement toujours d'application en lieu et place de la retenue à la source) qui devaient aider à couvrir notamment les dépenses d'investissement ont été aussi irrégulièrement envoyées par le Gouvernement central. Il est arrivé plusieurs fois au Gouvernement provincial de recourir aux emprunts bancaires pour financer certains petits projets ou pour exécuter les dépenses de rémunération.

Selon les données que nous avons récoltées auprès de l'Institut national de la statistique/Sud-Kivu et de la Division provinciale de la santé du Sud-Kivu, le Sud-Kivu n'a pas encore réalisé de progrès au plan socio-économique. 58,5% de ménages vivent en insécurité alimentaire globale. 33,8% de ménages vivent en insécurité alimentaire limite (surtout à Idjwi et Kalehe) et 14% en insécurité alimentaire sévère. 84,7% des Sud-Kivutiens sont pauvres. Cette province, qui compte 7 818 560 habitants, connaît un taux de sous-emploi global de 80,2%. Globalement, le taux de mortalité s'élève à 2,4% alors que celui de la natalité est de 4%.¹⁵ Malgré ce paysage socio-économique sombre, le Gouverneur et les ministres provinciaux ne s'empêchaient pas de se délecter du fait d'échapper régulièrement aux motions qui les visaient.

¹⁴ Il s'agit des mois suivants : Avril 2019, Septembre, Octobre, Novembre et Décembre 2020, Septembre, Octobre, Novembre, Décembre 2022 et Mai, Octobre, Novembre et Décembre 2023.

¹⁵ Nous avons récolté ces données vers décembre 2022 et janvier 2023 auprès des services précités.

L'inélégance et le triomphalisme affichés à chaque victoire remportée par ce camp relèvent de la connerie dont parle Patrick Lemoine. La victoire symbolisait presque le ciel pour le Gouverneur et ses ministres. Ils percevaient alors l'échec des députés provinciaux comme la mort ou l'enfer. La forme la plus poussée de cette connerie s'est matérialisée lorsque le Gouverneur a décidé depuis octobre 2022 de ne plus envoyer l'enveloppe de la dotation budgétairement prévue à l'Assemblée provinciale du Sud-Kivu. Au moment où nous finalisons la rédaction de cet article (fin janvier 2024), le Gouvernement provincial n'a pas déposé à vingt reprises cette dotation à l'Assemblée provinciale durant ce quinquennat. Bien plus, il n'a jamais cherché à améliorer la qualité de sa gestion de la province. Ceci aurait dû lui permettre de dissiper les accusations notamment de détournement des fonds et de spoliation des maisons ou parcelles de l'État reprises par les députés dans leurs motions de censure ou de défiance. Si les députés produisaient les bruits, le Gouverneur et ses ministres les amplifiaient par leurs actes ou agissements.

Or, la connerie en politique obscurcit la raison. Celle-ci est pourtant le moyen par lequel il est possible, en tant que gestionnaires, de se comporter en responsables et d'orienter les actions vers le bien commun, l'intérêt général. Démontrons également à présent ces conneries par le bilan de la législature 2018-2023.

Législature 2018-2023 : un bilan évocateur de l'éloge de l'inconséquence

Kolakowski définit « l'éloge de l'inconséquence » comme le manque d'esprit de suite, et le manque d'esprit tout court.¹⁶ Les députés provinciaux du Sud-Kivu ont répété inlassablement à quelques occasions (lors des débats parlementaires, lors des conférences ou meetings publics, émissions radiodiffusées ou dans des correspondances qu'ils adressaient aux autorités nationales) ce qui suit : « *Nous ne pouvons ni reculer, ni changer notre façon de faire ou d'agir* », « *nous avons un mandat du peuple, le Gouverneur ne peut pas travailler alors que nous représentants du peuple l'avons vomé* », « *toute la population du Sud-Kivu est derrière notre action et va se mobiliser à nos côtés pour le faire partir de gré ou de force* ». Pourtant, ainsi que le pense Evariste Boshab,

¹⁶ Baumard, *op. cit.*, p.15.

*la représentation par les élus ne signifie nullement la substitution au peuple.*¹⁷ Ces agissements ont rendu inconséquents les députés provinciaux. La triste conséquence de tout ceci se lit bien à travers le bilan de la législature.

Au fait, les députés de la législature 2018-2023 ont réalisé une piètre performance. Sur le plan législatif, seuls 3 édits ont été votés.¹⁸ Deux de ces trois textes ont été initiés au cours de la législature précédente. S'agissant des propositions d'édits, les députés provinciaux n'ont usé de ce droit qu'à 18 reprises,¹⁹ soit au moins 3 propositions d'édits par an. Plusieurs de ces propositions d'édits ne remplissaient pas les conditions requises (conditions de fond ou de forme). Cela a entraîné leur rejet. Au cours de cette législature, l'Assemblée provinciale du Sud-Kivu n'a voté qu'à deux reprises les édits budgétaires de la province (exercices 2020 et 2021). A cause de l'imbroglio provoqué par les motions contre le Gouvernement provincial et les pétitions contre les membres du Bureau de l'Assemblée provinciale, les édits budgétaires pour les exercices 2022 et 2023 n'ont été ni examinés ni votés. Le projet d'édit budgétaire pour l'exercice 2024 n'a même pas été déposé par le Gouvernement provincial à l'organe délibérant du Sud-Kivu. Tous ces textes ont été ainsi mis en vigueur par arrêté du Gouverneur. Sur ce rayon de la production législative, la législature 2006-2018 a fait mieux que celle qui lui a succédé. Elle a voté plus de 12 édits sur plus de 72 initiatives législatives. Elle a examiné et voté 12 édits budgétaires.²⁰

Au chapitre du contrôle parlementaire, quelque dix missions ont été effectuées. Seuls six rapports relatifs à ces missions de contrôle ont été présentés en séance plénière.²¹ En ce qui concerne les plénières tenues, leur nombre n'a pas dépassé 110.²² Selon les données nous déposées par le service en charge des séances plénières, nous avons compté 103 plénières durant toute la législature. Ce qui revient à dire qu'en moyenne seules 21 plénières étaient tenues par an, soit 10 par session et 3 par mois. Au cours de la session de septembre 2023, aucune plénière n'a été tenue.

¹⁷ Boshab, *op. cit.*, p. 380.

¹⁸ Procès-verbaux, législature 2018-2023.

¹⁹ Livre bleu, législature 2018-2023.

²⁰ Alain de Georges Shukurani, Jules Bagalwa, *Le régionalisme politique en République démocratique du Congo : enjeux et défis de l'administration publique parlementaire provinciale*, Paris : Harmattan, 2020, pp. 105-106.

²¹ État des lieux des missions de contrôle parlementaire présenté par le Bureau des séances des Commissions, législature 2018-2023.

²² Procès-verbaux, législature 2018-2023.

En revanche, les députés provinciaux ont été forts dans l'art de produire et reproduire les bruits. Ils ont traité 5 motions de censure et/ou de défiance contre le Gouvernement provincial, soit une motion chaque année. Deux de ces cinq motions (une motion de censure et une autre de défiance) ont été déposées au cours de l'année 2021 aux mois d'avril et de novembre. Ils ont même tenté une mise en accusation en 2022. Les membres du Bureau de l'Assemblée provinciale ont été visés par les pétitions de déchéance en 2020 et 2022. A deux reprises, et pendant les sessions de septembre 2022 et de mars 2023, tous les députés provinciaux se sont retrouvés à Kinshasa. Divisés en deux groupes antagonistes (pro Gouverneur et contre Gouverneur), ils défendaient auprès des autorités nationales et auprès de quelques « leaders » du Sud-Kivu évoluant à Kinshasa le départ du Gouverneur pour certains ou son maintien, pour d'autres.

Pourtant, après près de 12 ans d'une gouvernance provinciale peu reluisante, il était temps que la raison fût au cœur des actions des députés provinciaux pour amorcer la trajectoire développementale du Sud-Kivu. Ils ont eu l'opportunité de rectifier les tirs par rapport à la législature passée mais ne l'ont jamais saisie. Ce comportement est d'ailleurs illustré éloquemment par Evariste Boshab quand il écrit :

Malgré les compétences nouvelles, faute d'un personnel à même d'insuffler l'esprit nouveau, plusieurs provinces - dont le Sud-Kivu - demeurent dans un état de non administration. Les nouveaux élus, mis à part la multiplication des conflits dont ils sont auteurs, parfois administrent à la population un dégoût de la chose publique et un rejet total de rares initiatives de l'administration.²³

La législature 2018-2023 a été négativement marquée par des chamailleries. Les plus brulantes ont été relatives à l'éviction à tout prix du Gouverneur de province.

Le départ du Gouverneur à tout prix : la rengaine d'une psychologie de la connerie

Ceux qui allèguent jusque-là l'ingouvernabilité du Sud-Kivu n'ont pas tort. La situation d'échec ou de déchéance persistante au Sud-Kivu est traductrice de cette ingouvernabilité. Ses causes sont notamment l'esprit du

²³ Boshab, *op. cit.*, pp. 370-371.

pouvoir antithétique à l'idée ou à la vision de développement voire de transformation sociétale. La cristallisation d'un *état de non devenir* généralisé à un ensemble de politiciens et citoyens sud-kivutiens (plusieurs, en tout cas), une destruction aveugle du paysage socio-économique voire culturel, l'insouciance et l'inconscience, la procrastination expliquent le fait que le Sud-Kivu peut être vue comme une entité ingouvernable. Pour paraphraser Philippe Baumard,²⁴ *on a cessé de vouloir définir le réel. On s'est décidé à le subir ou à le mater, comme on materait un mal au ventre persistant à coups d'antalgiques.* A l'absence de vision et de travail substantiel, on a substitué un entêtement obsessionnel du hasard et du désordre dans l'action. A l'esprit du pouvoir destructeur persistant, on manque d'y substituer le pouvoir de l'esprit. Ainsi que conceptualisé par Kabasu Babu, *le pouvoir de l'esprit se conçoit comme la puissance du mental ou la force de la conscience de l'homme politique. Il s'agit de la faculté de libération de soi des pulsions primaires, qui dispose l'homme ou le prédispose à actionner le pouvoir dans le sens de la volonté générale et de la normativité inhérente à la res publica.*²⁵

Curieusement, les députés provinciaux de la législature 2018-2023 n'ont pas cessé de faire du départ du Gouverneur de province leur cheval de bataille. Ils ont été prêts à tout pour ça. Le résultat a malheureusement démontré leur impuissance. *Celle-ci est d'ailleurs la première leçon du pouvoir,* comme le pense Jean-François MARMION.²⁶

Le combat de toute une législature s'est résumé finalement à l'éviction du Gouverneur. Comme si son départ aurait pu résoudre tous les problèmes de gouvernance du Sud-Kivu et permettre à la province d'amorcer sa phase de relèvement. Pendant qu'ils concentraient tous leurs efforts pour faire partir le Gouverneur, ils ont même oublié de bien organiser leur travail et les services de l'Assemblée provinciale pour accroître leur productivité. Leurs motions de censure et ou de défiance n'ont fait que contribuer à désorganiser le travail de deux institutions politiques de la province. La conséquence est que rien de consistant n'a été réalisé et par ceux qui se considéraient comme saints rédempteurs et sauveurs de la province, et par celui qu'ils considéraient comme le diabolin, créateur-porteur de tous

²⁴ Baumard, *op. cit.*, pp. 15-16

²⁵ Hubert Kasabu Babu, *Le Président F. Tshisekedi et l'UDPS en 30 mois de l'imperium en RDC : entre l'Esprit du pouvoir et le Pouvoir de l'esprit*, Paris : Librinova, 2022, p. 27.

²⁶ Jean-François Marmion, *Psychologie de la connerie en politique*, Auxerre : Éditions Sciences Humaines, 2020, p. 11.

les maux du Sud-Kivu. Dans leurs actes comme dans leurs réflexions, il a été rarement constaté, comme dirait Kabasu, *la manifestation d'une brillante rationalité républicaine couplée à une distincte éthique de la civilisation démocratique.*²⁷

Par ailleurs, dans une démocratie, vouloir le départ d'un dirigeant qui a fauté n'a rien de méchant, ni de répréhensible. Cependant, il faut se conformer à la logique démocratique et républicaine qui veut que les lois, les règlements et les procédures soient respectés. L'élégance voudrait que l'on se courbe au verdict et continuer le noble combat qui est celui du bien commun et de l'intérêt général. C'est dans cet ordre d'idées que Larry Diamond parle de *la culture de flexibilité intellectuelle et politique ainsi que de la culture de modération comme deux des piliers de la démocratie.*²⁸ C'est pourquoi réduire ce combat au départ d'un Gouverneur est une connerie. Les députés provinciaux ont raté leur mandat pour un combat qu'ils ont finalement perdu. Pourtant, ils étaient censés émerger et fonctionner comme des responsables en mission. Ils auraient dû être obsédés par le fait de poser des jalons de l'amélioration de la gouvernance provinciale par leur travail parlementaire, par le sens du compromis dans la gestion et par l'instauration d'un bon climat de collaboration interinstitutionnelle. Mais hélas!, *la culture de façade, la culture de l'arrogance et de la figuration*²⁹ ont tué l'esprit du pouvoir républicain qu'ils auraient dû développer. *Celui-ci est rationaliste, modéré, élégant, recherchant le compromise.*³⁰

Au fait, ils ont commencé ce combat pour l'éviction du Gouverneur une année après l'avoir élu et approuvé son programme d'action. Ils ont alors estimé normal de désavouer, par motion de défiance, le Gouverneur sans évaluation préalable et sérieuse de son action au moyen des outils de contrôle parlementaire. Il est, pourtant, irrationnel d'estimer qu'au bout de quelques mois après sa mise en place un Gouvernement provincial soit en mesure d'exécuter les politiques publiques annoncées dans son programme d'action. Il serait illusoire de croire au miracle, *les politiques publiques se déroulant selon des temporalités relativement longues.*³¹

²⁷ Kasabu Babu, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

²⁸ Larry Diamond, *Ill Winds: Saving Democracy from Russian Rage, Chinese Ambition, and American Complacency*, New York: Penguin Books, 2020, p. 27.

²⁹ Baumard, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

³⁰ Kasabu Babu, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

³¹ Daniel Kubler, Jacques de Maillard, *Analyser les politiques publiques*, Grenoble : PUG, 2009, p. 16.

La première motion ayant échoué, plus rien ne pouvait arrêter certains députés dans leur lutte. Place désormais à l'acharnement, à l'émotion ou à la connerie. La raison a été définitivement enterrée. Le combat pour l'éviction du Gouverneur leur a fait oublier l'essentiel de leur tâche en tant que députés provinciaux. Quatre autres motions ont été enregistrées par la suite. Le match parlementaire s'est alors joué entre deux camps : les motionnaires (acteurs du départ de ce diable de Gouverneur précipitant le Sud-Kivu dans les abîmes du sous-développement) et les non-motionnaires (défenseurs du diable incarné). Le ring durant tous ces rounds ne semblait pas respecter les règles du jeu. Les dispositions légales (et parfois constitutionnelles) et réglementaires relatives aux motions de censure et de défiance ainsi qu'aux procédures ont été plusieurs fois foulées aux pieds. Les questions notamment des quorums de siège, de décision et des plénières subséquentes (mal comprises à dessein) ont posé problème. Les conséquences étaient donc chaque fois prédictibles. Le Gouverneur a été chaque fois réhabilité par la Cour constitutionnelle. Politiquement soutenu visiblement par le régime du président Félix Tshisekedi, il a semblé bien jouer à la fois le jeu juridique et politique. Il était donc plus facile à la Cour constitutionnelle de s'appuyer sur l'une ou l'autre violation d'un texte juridique lors de l'examen et le vote de la motion pour déclarer nul et de nul effet le travail « robuste » exécuté par les députés provinciaux (les saints sauveurs de la province des mains d'un diabolin irrémédiablement mauvais). Elle s'appuyait aussi sur le fait que certains députés provinciaux (deux notamment), selon elle, n'avaient plus qualité d'agir en tant que tels, car leurs mandats avaient auparavant été invalidés par la Cour d'appel du Sud-Kivu et le Conseil d'État.³² A titre illustratif, interpellés par deux cadres de l'administration (dont moi-même) sur le manque de quorum de décision lors de l'une des plénières consacrée à l'examen et au vote de la motion de censure déposée en novembre 2021, les députés provinciaux alertés avaient répondu que la tactique était politique, l'essentiel étant que le Gouverneur partît. Imbus d'eux-mêmes, ils ont confondu sans nul doute l'art du prétoire avec celui de la pratique politique et parlementaire, deux mondes différents. Ils ont eu même le culot de filmer le déroulement du vote de la motion.

³² Arrêts de la Cour constitutionnelle de la RDC relatifs aux requêtes en inconstitutionnalité des motions dirigées contre le Gouvernement Théo Ngwabidje.

C'était certainement perdre de vue que cela était bien risqué à cette époque où *tout va de nos jours dix fois plus vite qu'avant* grâce notamment à la technologie. La vidéo de cette séquence a été exploitée par la Cour constitutionnelle. Celle-ci a constaté effectivement que le quorum de décision n'était pas réuni. Par voie de conséquence et pour d'autres motifs qu'elle avait évoqués, elle a dû déclarer le vote de la motion sans effet.

La perspective politologique ne permet pas des assertions sur le fonctionnement des neurones et hormones qui ont entretenu le mode opératoire des députés provinciaux, leur désunion ou leur propension à se chamailler. Cependant, le prisme de la psychologie de la connerie en politique et la perspective dialectique permettent d'affirmer que les pathologies politiques et les contradictions cernées et expliquées dans cette étude n'ont pas permis aux députés provinciaux d'impulser un fonctionnement mélioratif de l'Assemblée provinciale du Sud-Kivu. Cela n'a pas donc permis à cette institution de bien fonctionner et de remplir efficacement ses missions. Par voie de conséquence, le Gouvernement provincial n'a pas non plus rempli efficacement ses missions.

Or, ainsi que le pense Evariste Boshab, idéalement, la création des assemblées provinciales et des gouvernements provinciaux devrait permettre de désengorger le gouvernement central et devenir des lieux d'apprentissage des pratiques démocratiques, dans l'intérêt du peuple et de l'Etat. Pourtant, le fonctionnement chaotique des institutions provinciales est loin de convaincre que cet objectif a été atteint.³³

Peut-être est-il venu le moment que les Sud-Kivutiens apprennent de tous les désordres et gâchis occasionnés pour repartir sur de nouvelles bases. L'état actuel de la province suscite la désillusion. Celle-ci devrait éveiller les Sud-Kivutiens et les obliger à s'engager vers un nouveau départ.

Apprendre à apprendre : de la désillusion vers un nouveau départ

Dans cette partie de l'article, j'esquisse quelques pistes de solution. Certaines des recommandations s'adressent en général à tous les Sud-Kivutiens, principalement aux acteurs politiques et ceux de la société civile. D'autres s'adressent aux élus de la législature issus des élections du 20

³³ Boshab, *op. cit.*, pp. 259-260.

décembre 2023. Je ne prétends pas proposer des recettes miracles, loin s'en faut. Le but de cet article n'a pas été de proposer une thérapie miraculeuse ni de tout prédire. Mais, il a été celui de diagnostiquer le problème et de l'expliquer autrement en vue de chercher à élargir nos horizons et construire un nouveau départ. Harari le dit si bien quand il écrit : *le propos de la science n'est pas simplement de prédire le futur. Dans tous les domaines, les savants cherchent souvent à élargir nos horizons, nous ouvrant ainsi un avenir nouveau et inconnu.*³⁴ C'est dans cette perspective qu'il est envisageable de prendre conscience de la nature du problème ou des défis et d'ouvrir le champ des possibles pour y faire face.

Au fait, ce qui empêche la raison d'émerger et de provoquer un élan de transformation sociétale au Sud-Kivu, ce sont la pathologie sud-kivucentriste (orgueil, égocentrisme, égotisme, autocélébration, ignorance, absence de remise en question, pouvoirisme, fanatisme, absence de leadership cohésif et transformationnel, chamailleries, entêtement à répondre aux questions qui ne sont pas les bonnes, ...), l'éloge de l'inconséquence et le refus de définir objectivement le réel. Il faut chasser ces pathologies régressives pour donner à la raison sa place de choix dans le relèvement socio-économique de la province.

Nous devons apprendre de nos échecs et des autres citoyens du pays. En réalisant que nous ne sommes pas le centre du monde, qu'il y a ce qui se fait de mieux au pays sans nous, nous pouvons acquérir de l'intelligence et de la sagesse afin de bien travailler. Nous pouvons mieux nous organiser, bien coopérer et nous engager sur la voie de la construction de la province. Tel est le pari de la raison.

Si les provinces du pays n'enregistrent pas d'avancées très significatives en termes de leur développement, il nous faut reconnaître toutefois que dans certains coins du pays certains jalons du développement sont quand même posés. Et pour se rendre compte de cela, peut-être qu'il nous faut être humbles et réaliser que nous ne travaillons pas et que nos querelles et notre cognition du pouvoir sont antithétiques au développement. Dans tous les cas, nous devons acquérir un savoir nouveau. Et ce savoir nous appelle à plus d'humilité, à travailler plus sereinement pour provoquer le progrès sociétal. Bref, l'humilité et la rationalité nous appellent à nous poser

³⁴ Yuval Noah Harari, *Homo deus : une brève histoire de l'avenir*, Paris : Éditions Albin Michel, 2017, p. 68.

de vraies questions en vue de trouver de bonnes réponses et non à nous entêter à répondre aux questions qui ne sont pas les bonnes.

Notre cognition du pouvoir et notre mental collectif et individuel ont significativement contribué à détruire la province. Procédons donc à une révolution dans nos modes de pensée et d'action. Il faut adopter une conception du pouvoir et développer un mental collectif et individuel qui permettent d'impulser le développement et de promouvoir l'intérêt général. Si nous agissons rationnellement, nous pouvons changer ce Sud-Kivu et en créer un bien meilleur.

Pour la législature à venir, la réussite passera notamment par une bonne organisation interne du travail, l'envie ou l'humilité d'apprendre et de collaborer. Elle devra s'appuyer sur les services techniques et administratifs de l'Assemblée provinciale du Sud-Kivu. Les députés provinciaux de cette législature devront privilégier le travail et non la production des bruits, la réflexion et non le reflexe, la raison et non l'émotion. Ils devront éviter d'abuser de l'usage des motions et donner un temps relativement conséquent au Gouverneur afin de mieux l'évaluer. Dans l'arsenal des actes d'assemblée, la motion peut être considérée comme une arme ultime, « une bombe atomique » à laquelle on ne doit recourir qu'en cas d'extrême nécessité de peur d'en banaliser l'usage et de créer régulièrement l'instabilité gouvernementale.

Ils ne devront pas être complaisants lors des missions de contrôle parlementaire au risque de rendre inefficace leur travail. Ils doivent éviter de se compromettre dans des pratiques patrimoniales qui finissent par réduire tout parlement à l'impuissance. Aussi, ils doivent faire en sorte que l'Assemblée provinciale gère trimestriellement la dotation inscrite au budget de la province. Cela éviterait que les députés provinciaux fassent des allers-retours au Gouvernorat pour des questions liées à l'argent, tant en ce qui concerne leurs primes que pour leurs besoins personnels. Ils doivent permettre aux deux institutions provinciales de bien collaborer pour l'intérêt supérieur de la province. Pour sa part, le Gouverneur doit être soucieux du développement. Il doit cultiver et pratiquer un leadership cohésif et transformationnel. Il doit rechercher à tout prix l'efficacité de l'action gouvernementale. Il doit mettre en place une gouvernance transparente, une gestion axée sur les résultats visant essentiellement la promotion de l'intérêt général.

Conclusion

La législature 2018-2023 a débuté avec l'exhibition d'un spectacle d'auto-sublimation. Ce spectacle a engendré un climat non propice à la production d'un travail à impact positif sur la gouvernance provinciale.

La présente étude a tenté d'examiner ou d'analyser les attitudes, les comportements et les pratiques des députés provinciaux de la législature 2018-2023. Ceci a permis d'en cerner les effets sur la gouvernance provinciale. La problématique a été tournée essentiellement autour de cette question : l'Assemblée provinciale du Sud-Kivu a-t-elle bien rempli ses missions jusqu'à influencer sur une gouvernance provinciale améliorant les conditions de vie de la population ? Les résultats auxquels l'étude a abouti ont permis de confirmer tous les pans de l'hypothèse émise.

La pathologie sud-kivucentriste est le point le plus innovant de cette étude. Elle a expliqué largement la situation vécue au Sud-Kivu durant la législature 2018-2023. Le relèvement de la situation socio-économique du Sud-Kivu passe par le fait de se débarrasser de cette pathologie. L'éloge de l'inconséquence élucidé à travers le bilan de la législature ainsi que les chamailleries autour de la déchéance du Gouverneur de province viennent appuyer le premier résultat. Nos résultats démontrent donc à suffisance qu'aucune gouvernance propulsant l'élan de relèvement socio-économique du Sud-Kivu ne peut émerger d'un tel climat. Ces résultats offrent une explication inédite à un phénomène de pouvoir ou de gouvernance.³⁵ Ils ont ceci de bénéfique qu'ils intègrent plusieurs dimensions de compréhension du problème. Leur valeur ajoutée est donc telle qu'ils se fondent sur plus d'une approche scientifique en vue d'élucider des irrationalités discursives et des comportements déviants. Les pistes de solution explorées répondent aussi à cette logique. Des études ultérieures pourront approfondir, le cas échéant, l'un ou l'autre aspect de notre étude.

³⁵ Des conclusions qui rejoignent entre autres celles présentées dans d'autres articles, comme: Dominique Kenge Mukinayi, Sergiu Mişcoiu, « Rétroactes sur le conflit congolais (RDC) et regards sur ses causes » in *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai. Studia Europaea*, no. 2, 2020, pp. 105-132 ; Andreea Bianca Urs, Sergiu Mişcoiu, "Rumble in the Democratic Republic of Congo: President Felix Tshisekedi Is Taking Control (Power, Complicity, and Protest)", in Adebowale Akande (ed.) *Globalization, Human Rights and Populism*, Cham: Springer, 2023, pp. 367-380.

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DE LA REPUBLIQUE DEMOCRATIQUE DU CONGO VOULUE
INDEPENDANTE A LA REPUBLIQUE DEMOCRATIQUE DU CONGO
QUI COMMEMORE SES FETES D'INDEPENDANCE

FROM THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO SEEKING
INDEPENDENCE TO THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO
WHICH COMMEMORATES ITS INDEPENDENCE CELEBRATIONS

Joseph Apolo Msambya*

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Abstract: *On June 30, 1960, the independence of the Belgian Congo, once personal possession for 23 years of the Belgian King Leopold II, was proclaimed as the “Republic of the Congo”. Emery-Patrice Lumumba (1925-1961) played a capital role in this emancipation which resulted in the consecration of Joseph Kasavubu as first President of the Republic of Congo and himself, Emery Patrice Lumumba, as Prime Minister. Congo has proclaimed its independence, but the new country remains plagued by violence and infighting. Belgian troops and peacekeepers from the United Nations intervene in the territory as a standoff begins between Kasavubu and Lumumba. On September 14, 1960, Colonel Joseph Désiré Mobutu led a first coup d’état which was followed by the arrest and assassination of Lumumba. The following years would be punctuated by rebellions and fighting interspersed with ceasefires in protest against the dictatorship established by the Mobutu regime after its second coup d’état, five years later, during a new political crisis. After thirty-two years of unchallenged reign, Mobutu was ousted from power by Mzee Laurent Désiré Kabila in May 1997 and since then, it has been difficult to speak of the real independence of the country, which became the Democratic Republic of Congo.*

Keywords: *formal independence, real independence, Independence Day, Zaïre, Democratic Republic of Congo, colonization, decolonization, political emancipation, sovereignty.*

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Introduction

Lorsque le Congo-belge accède à sa souveraineté nationale et internationale, la cérémonie officielle a lieu en présence du roi Baudouin, du Président Kasavubu et du Premier Ministre Lumumba, ainsi que de nombreuses délégations et personnalités étrangères parmi lesquelles Fulbert Youlou du Congo-Brazzaville,¹ venu en voisin et d'une foule assemblée au palais de la nation, à Léopoldville. Jadis considéré comme domaine privé du roi Leopold II qui le remet à la nation belge en 1908, le Congo belge maintient sa tutelle sans anticiper la transmission du pouvoir politique tout comme préparer une élite devant servir de relève en cas du désengagement. La colonisation se déroule donc dans un contexte d'une main de fer du colonisateur à l'endroit des populations indigènes bien que certaines associations sont autorisées de fonctionner, tout en restant encadrées après 1945. C'est le cas de l'Abako, association culturelle des Bakongo, créée en 1950 et qui s'oriente vers l'engagement politique à partir de 1956, sous la présidence de Joseph Kasavubu. C'est fut le cas aussi du groupe *Conscience africaine*, issu du cercle catholique considéré comme le groupe des évolués. Celui-ci, publia en 1956, un manifeste revendiquant l'accompagnement de la Belgique vers l'émancipation politique dans le cadre d'une communauté belgo-congolaise.² Mais, malgré la modération des revendications par ces deux groupes que sont l'Abako et *Conscience africaine*, l'administration et le colonat blanc sont opposés à toute évolution. Les ambitions colonialistes demeurent toujours dans les têtes des belges et l'illusion d'un Congo belge éternel se manifeste notamment par le tollé soulevé lors de la publication, en février 1956, dans la revue des cadres du mouvement ouvrier chrétien flamand, d'un texte destiné à devenir une sorte de manifeste de la décolonisation belge. Ce manifeste, paru sous le titre « *Un Plan de trente ans*

¹ Fulbert Youlou était un homme politique congolais (de Congo-Brazzaville), né le 9 juin 1917 et décédé le 6 mai 1972. Il a été le premier Président de la République du Congo, en poste de 1960 à 1960. Youlou a joué un rôle majeur dans la lutte pour l'indépendance du Congo vis-à-vis de la France, mais son règne a été marqué par des controverses et des troubles politiques, ce qui a conduit à son renversement en 1963.

² Martin Pongo Kalulambi, « Le manifeste *Conscience africaine* : genèse, influences et réactions », in Nathalie Tousignant (ed.), *Le manifeste Conscience africaine (1956). Élités congolaises et société coloniale : regards croisés*, Bruxelles : Presses Universitaires Saint-Louis Bruxelles (PUSL), 2009, pp. 59-81.

pour l'émancipation de l'Afrique belge », ³ préconise une période de 30 ans de plus pour pouvoir s'attendre à la vraie émancipation du Congo, lequel plan fut proposé par le Professeur Jef Van Bilsen, d'où le nom « Plan BILSEN ».

C'est alors que, face à cette ambition voilée des Belges de ne pas quitter vite le Congo, à travers ce plan dit Van Bilsen, qui n'a consisté qu'à une préparation de la conscience collective congolaise à désespérer une émancipation si proche, des nouveaux partis sont créés, qui demandent l'indépendance sur une base unitaire pour certains, comme le Mouvement National Congolais (MNC) de Patrice Lumumba en 1958 et d'autres s'appuyant sur la logique fédérale, comme le CONAKAT de Moïse Tshombe (Katanga). Un clivage apparaît entre les fédéralistes issus des provinces riches et les unitaristes, qui ont leurs assises dans les régions les plus pauvres, mais aussi entre les mouvements revendiquant l'indépendance (MNC et Abako) et ceux maintenant l'idée d'une communauté belgo-congolaise (CONAKAT, Conscience africaine). Les indépendances du Ghana et de la Guinée, l'écho de l'évolution en Afrique francophone et la première conférence africaine d'Accra renforcent les revendications⁴. A la suite de l'interdiction d'un meeting de l'Abako, les émeutes éclatent à Léopoldville entre le 4 et le 6 janvier 1959 avec comme conséquence l'accélération du processus. Le roi reconnaît le principe d'émancipation mais la colère monte face aux atermoiements sur les échéances pour l'indépendance. Une table ronde rassemble les partis politiques congolais à Bruxelles fin janvier 1960. A l'issue de cette réunion, l'indépendance est fixée au 30 juin et le gouvernement belge l'organise dans la précipitation, en espérant conserver le contrôle des richesses du pays. Les élections législatives, sénatoriales et provinciales de mai 1960 marquent la victoire des nationalistes, dont Lumumba devient Premier Ministre tandis que Kasavubu est porté à la présidence du nouveau pays devenu indépendant.

C'est devant les chambres réunies que le roi Baudouin prononce son discours à la gloire de la colonisation. Sur un ton paternaliste, il souligne les difficultés qui attendent le pays, en invitant les congolais à ne pas compromettre l'avenir par des « réformes hâtives » et à « défendre un

³ Michel Marc, « Van Bilsen Jef, Congo, 1945-1965, la fin d'une colonie » in *Vingtième siècle. Revue d'histoire*, n°49, 1996, pp. 163-165.

⁴ Odile Goerg, Jean-Luc Martineau, Didier Nativel (S/dir.), *Les indépendances en Afrique : l'évènement et ses mémoires 1957/1960-2010*, Rennes : Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2013, pp. 13-23.

héritage contre [...] les convoitises de l'étranger ». De quel étranger faisait-il allusion ? N'est-ce pas que ce langage laisse croire que les belges ne se considéraient pas eux-mêmes comme étrangers vis-à-vis d'un Congo-belge devenu indépendant ? Il précise son souci de maintenir une présence belge pour aider le nouvel État.⁵ Si le reportage montre Baudouin, il ne mentionne pas le contenu de son discours, ni celui de Kasavubu qui partage les mêmes appréhensions. Il fait plus encore l'impasse sur le discours imprévu de Lumumba.⁶ S'adressant directement aux congolais, Lumumba souligne que l'indépendance n'a pas été offerte par la Belgique mais qu'elle a été conquise par la lutte, avant de dresser un réquisitoire contre le système colonial. Ces discours, aux allures contradictoires, révèlent les conceptions ambiguës de l'indépendance du Congo, tandis que des fêtes sont organisées dans le pays chaque année, au son d'« *Indépendance cha-cha to zuwi ye* », chanson composée par l'orchestre African Jazz au retour de Bruxelles en février 1960. Mais depuis l'accession du Congo-belge à l'indépendance, le pays, rebaptisé à plusieurs reprises mais actuellement connu sous le nom de la République Démocratique du Congo,⁷ peine à affirmer valablement cette souveraineté acquise et il devient de plus en plus difficile de parler de la réelle indépendance. L'on constate que le pays a du mal à assurer véritablement ses missions régaliennes au nom de cette indépendance acquise, signe de souveraineté tant recherchée, et que cette émancipation se limite uniquement aux fêtes de commémoration de l'indépendance en guise de rappel historique. Après autant d'années de souffrances subies sous la colonisation, peut-on résumer l'indépendance d'un pays à des fêtes d'indépendance régulièrement célébrées d'années en années ? Les héros nationaux, morts pour la lutte en faveur de l'indépendance, trouvent-ils leur dignité et honneur via cet état de chose ? C'est cette réflexion que cet article se propose de développer dans les lignes, paragraphes et sections suivants.

⁵ Benoît Verhaegen, « La décolonisation du Congo (1956-1960), la réflexion d'un sociologue », in Michel Molitor, Jean Remy, Luc Van Campenhoutd (eds.), *Le mouvement et la forme : essai sur le changement social en hommage à Maurice Chaumont*, Bruxelles : Presses Universitaires Saint-Louis Bruxelles, 1989, pp. 67-77.

⁶ Jean-Claude Willame, « Le discours du 30 juin », in *Patrice Lumumba : la crise congolaise revisitée*, Paris : Karthala, 1990, pp. 93-118.

⁷ La colonie du Congo belge, fondée en 1908, garde ce nom jusqu'à son indépendance, le 30 juin 1960. En 1971, le général Mobutu, à la tête du pays, décide de le rebaptiser Zaïre, puis le Zaïre redevient la République démocratique du Congo en 1997 avec l'arrivée au pouvoir de Laurent Désiré Kabila.

Lutte de Lumumba pour l'indépendance : sacrifice vain ou un crachat des congolais sur sa mémoire ?

Plus de soixante ans et près d'un centenaire après l'indépendance de la République Démocratique du Congo, il y a lieu de se poser multiples questions sur l'impact de la lutte de Lumumba en rapport avec le quotidien actuel du pays et de ses habitants, que sont les congolais. Patrice Emery Lumumba, de son vrai nom Elias Okit'Asombo,⁸ a milité pour l'indépendance effective de la RD Congo et pour le bien-être du peuple congolais. Est-ce que la situation actuelle du pays et des congolais traduit-elle cette évidence ? La RDC est-elle réellement devenue indépendante et souveraine après la lutte anticolonialiste de Lumumba ? Les congolais ont-ils réellement incarné le sens élevé du sacrifice de Lumumba comme puissant symbole de la volonté d'émancipation des peuples anciennement sous domination coloniale afin de l'honorer en tant qu'héros national ?

A vrai dire, le pays ne s'est jamais mis debout depuis l'assassinat de Lumumba le 17 janvier 1961. Il continue d'être toujours sous la domination des puissances étrangères à travers diverses formes, et la sujétion économique des sociétés transnationales qui continuent de contrôler le commerce des matières premières extraites de son sol.⁹ De nos jours, il est nauséabond de constater que les dirigeants congolais ont du mal à mieux gérer la Res Publica, ce qui pousse certains auteurs à accorder du crédit au plan BILSEN car jusqu'à présent, malgré ce qu'elle regorge comme ressource, la République Démocratique du Congo est toujours classée parmi les pays sous-développés. Cela se dévoile par le non-respect de la constitution (où l'on constate que chaque dirigeant utilise à sa guise et interprète de sa manière la loi fondamentale), le déficit budgétaire (très souvent moins de 10 milliards de dollars américains pour un pays avec une population de plus de 100 millions d'habitants), le manque de croissance économique, le taux de chômage ascendant, la malnutrition, les élections chaotiques même si l'on a toujours évoqué la thèse de non-élection parfaite au monde, etc. La partie orientale du pays est devenue un lieu du théâtre

⁸ Christian Eboulé, "RDC : Qui était Patrice Emery Lumumba, le héros de l'indépendance du Congo ?", 2022 [<https://information.tv5monde.com/afrique/rdc-qui-etait-patrice-emery-lumumba-le-heros-de-lindependance-du-congo-714667>], 06 mars 2024.

⁹ CADTM, "Patrice Emery Lumumba : un combat politique à méditer", 2011 [<http://cadtm.org/Patrice-Emery-Lumumba-un-combat>], 07 mars 2024.

d'affrontements récurrents opposant les forces loyalistes (les Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo, les FARDC) et les groupes armés nationaux, parfois entre les groupes armés eux-mêmes d'une part, aussi avec les groupes armés étrangers agissant en interposition car assez souvent appuyés par certains pays étrangers.¹⁰ C'est le cas de récents affrontements de 2022-2024 entre les FARDC coalisés aux groupes armés nationaux, considérés désormais comme des réservistes des forces loyalistes,¹¹ et le groupe rebelle du M23 (Mouvement du 23 mars) bénéficiant de l'appui du Rwanda selon plusieurs rapports publiés par les experts des Nations Unies.¹² Que ce soient des conflits entre les FARDC et les groupes armés nationaux ou entre les FARDC avec les groupes terroristes ou les groupes armés étrangers, il faut noter que c'est surtout pour le contrôle des minerais que ces belligérants se battent, bien que d'autres conflits puissent revêtir des revendications identitaires. D'auteurs estiment qu'il s'agit là d'un drame sans fin et un deuil inachevé de la colonisation.¹³ Pour diverses raisons que voici, il y a lieu de souligner la thèse de la non-indépendance effective de la RD Congo :

a) Absence d'une indépendance économique

Du point de vue économique, il est difficile de parler de l'indépendance de la République Démocratique du Congo du fait de la dollarisation de son espace économique. Cette situation date de depuis les années 1990 jusqu'à nos jours et se subdivise en quatre phases (1990-1994,

¹⁰ Sergiu Mișcoiu, Jean-Michel De Waele et Andreea Bianca Urs (dir.), *Maquisards, rebelles, insurgés... politiques. Le devenir des chefs de guerre africains*, Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Știință, 2023; Dominique Kenge Mukinayi, Sergiu Mișcoiu, « Rétroactes sur le conflit congolais (RDC) et regards sur ses causes », in *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai. Studia Europaea*, no. 2, 2020, pp. 105-132.

¹¹ Loi n°23/014 du 22 mai 2023 instituant la réserve armée de la défense de la République Démocratique du Congo.

¹² Le dernier rapport Mid-term du Groupe d'Experts des Nations Unies sur la République Démocratique du Congo (RDC), publié en janvier 2024, révèle des preuves accablantes de l'implication directe de l'armée rwandaise (RDF) dans le conflit en RDC, initié par le groupe rebelle M23. Ce rapport vient s'ajouter à un corpus de preuves accumulées depuis 2022, établissant clairement les liens directs entre les RDF et le Mouvement du 23 mars (M23).

¹³ Jean Omasombo Tshonda, « Lumumba, drame sans fin et deuil inachevé de la colonisation » in *Réparations, restitutions, réconciliations : entre Afriques, Europe et Amériques. Cahiers d'Études Africaines*, n°173-174, vol. 44, 2004, pp. 221-261
[<https://doi.org/10.4000/etudesafriaines.4605>].

1995-1997, 1998-2001 et 2002 à nos jours).¹⁴ Le dollars américain circule concomitamment, sur le sol congolais, avec le franc congolais au point même que la première devise a tendance à effacer la deuxième. Contrairement aux autres pays en développement, la dollarisation de l'économie congolaise est restée dans des aspects purement monétaires, la substitution d'actifs étant marginale. En outre, la dollarisation a pris une ampleur telle que même l'État congolais est arrivé à accepter le paiement des taxes et certains salaires des hauts fonctionnaires (les Ministres, les députés, les mandataires publics, etc.) en devises. Il suffit de circuler dans plusieurs marchés à travers le pays et de constater comment les prix de tous les articles sont fixés en dollars et payés soit en cette devise, soit en son équivalent en franc congolais avec une forte inflation de cette dernière vis-à-vis du dollar américain. Même des petits articles tels que des bonbons, des beignets, des fruits, des produits agricoles et plusieurs autres produits de première nécessité sont susceptibles d'être fixés et payés en dollars américains.

En plus, l'économie congolaise repose entièrement sur les banques étrangères et sur des sujets opérateurs économiques étrangers tels que les libanais, les indiens, les chinois, etc. qui détiennent des grands commerces en RD Congo. Les Banques comme TMB, RAWBANK, FIRSTBANK, AFRILAND BANK, UBA, ACCESS BANK, BOA, ECOBANK, FINCA, SOFIBANQUE, etc. sont toutes étrangères. L'effondrement du système bancaire domestique a poussé le public congolais à détenir son épargne dans les banques étrangères installées en RD Congo ou ailleurs, soit hors des circuits bancaires, en épargnant auprès des coopératives d'épargne et de crédit (COOPEC) dont la crédibilité vis-à-vis des membres a toujours été faible et le risque de faillite élevé. La seule banque d'essence congolaise qui essayait de résister, la Banque commerciale du Congo (BCDC), a vu la majorité de ses actifs être récemment achetés par la Banque kenyane EQUITY, mettant ainsi une fusion-absorption qui a débouché à la dénomination EQUITYBCDC comme nouvelle appellation.¹⁵ Dans toute cette tragédie, le Gouvernement congolais n'a aucun monopole sur toutes

¹⁴ Kola Lendele, J. Kamanda Kimona-Mbinga, « Nature et spécificité de la dollarisation de l'économie congolaise (RDC) » in *Mondes en développement*, n°130, vol. 2, 2005, pp. 41-62.

¹⁵ Aurélie M'Bida, « RDC-EquityBCDC : que veut vraiment la Banque centrale ? » in *Jeune Afrique*, 26 janvier 2021 [<https://www.jeuneafrique.com/1111096/economie-entreprises/rdc-equity-bcdc-que-veut-vraiment-la-banque-centrale/>], 13 mars 2024.

ces banques étrangères installées dans le pays et chacune d'elles a sa propre politique et applique à bon gré ses tarifs en terme d'intérêts et des commissions à prélever auprès des clients sous son regard impuissant, ne serait-ce dans la réglementation des taux et tarifs. L'évolution du ratio classique de dollarisation constitue un proxy du degré réel de dollarisation de l'économie congolaise parce qu'il n'intègre pas la circulation des monnaies fiduciaires étrangères dans le pays.¹⁶ Dans ce contexte, peut-on réellement parler d'une indépendance économique pendant que le franc congolais est victime de concurrence sur son propre espace ?

b) *Aucune indépendance sur le plan politique*

Sur cet autre plan, il est non plus difficile d'évoquer d'une réelle indépendance politique de la République Démocratique du Congo. Depuis son accession à la souveraineté nationale et internationale en date du 30 juin 1960, le pays pour lequel Emery-Patrice Lumumba a mené une lutte acharnée pour sa liberté, n'a jamais développé aucune culture politique propre, à part le recours à l'authenticité et la zaïrianisation en tant que politique de préférence nationale qui ont semblé être coulés dans le moule du mobutisme.¹⁷ On serait même tenté de dire que la RDC serait toujours en transition, malgré son indépendance proclamée précipitamment.

Sur le plan interne, bien que les enjeux géopolitiques et économiques rendent cet espace convoité, la République Démocratique du Congo peine à s'insérer dans la mondialisation du fait de son grand retard dans la digitalisation (faible niveau d'industrialisation voire son niveau de tertiarisation). La corruption gagne les acteurs publics (kleptocratie), le problème de redistribution des richesses perdure en faveur d'une très petite couche de la population constituée des seuls dirigeants du pays au détriment du reste de la population pendant que l'indépendance de la magistrature ou de la justice se pose avec acuité, le modèle rentier d'extraction du sol ou du sous-sol étant celui qui fragilise l'économie dépendante des cours mondiaux. La persistance des défis démocratiques dont les processus électoraux requièrent souvent les appuis extérieurs et des conflits déstructurés qui n'ont aucune possibilité d'arbitrage faute d'une capacité managériale politique des dirigeants. La politique est très mal perçue car les politiciens ont

¹⁶ Lendele, Kimona-Mbinga, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

¹⁷ Ernest Wamba dia Wamba, « Mobutisme après Mobutu : réflexion sur la situation actuelle en République Démocratique du Congo » in *Politique africaine*, n°72, 1998, p. 146.

complètement désacralisé la fonction politique.¹⁸ L'espace politique est majoritairement pris en otage par des personnes sans scrupule, sans valeurs, opportunistes et peu compétentes. Les martyrs de l'indépendance du Congo n'ont aucune valeur vis-à-vis de l'État congolais au point que leurs familles et descendances restent parmi les grands oubliés de la République en termes des récompenses de reconnaissance. Sauf pour la famille Lumumba à laquelle des pensions, des honneurs officiels, des allocations spéciales ou d'autres formes de soutien financier ou symbolique sont parfois accordées, selon le gouvernement en place, en reconnaissance du rôle de Patrice Lumumba dans l'histoire du pays.

La corruption, le népotisme et le pillage systématique des ressources publiques par un petit groupe de personnes sont devenus la norme. Les conséquences sont extrêmement néfastes du point de vue sécuritaire avec l'émergence de centaines de groupes armés et des millions de congolais tués, du point de vue socioéconomique avec une pauvreté endémique et du point de vue politique avec des institutions peu légitimes issues des élections souvent chaotiques et des crises à répétition.

c) Le modèle colonial belge

Avant l'indépendance, le Congo était soumis au modèle colonial belge qui ressemblait à l'apartheid de l'Afrique du Sud. Blancs et noirs vivaient séparément, occupaient des emplois différents et ne pouvaient pas cohabiter dans les mêmes quartiers. Le modèle sud-africain d'exclusion raciale était reproduit au Congo.¹⁹ Bien que le Congo belge ait été présenté comme une « colonie modèle », la réalité sur terrain était souvent différente des images idéalisées diffusées à l'époque, marquée par des inégalités, des tensions sociales et des politiques controversées. Les effets du développement économique étaient inégaux, et les politiques coloniales ont souvent été critiquées pour leur nature autoritaire et discriminatoire.²⁰

¹⁸ Marlène Panara, « RD Congo : 60 ans d'indépendance ... et d'instabilité politique » in *Le Point*, 2020 [https://www.lepoint.fr/afrique/rd-congo-60-ans-d-independance-et-d-instabilite-politique-30-06-2020-2382377_3826.php], 16 mars 2024.

¹⁹ Jean Dresch, « Méthodes coloniales au Congo belge et en Afrique équatoriale française » in *Politique étrangère*, Paris : Centre d'Études de Politique Étrangère, n°1, 12eme année, 1947, pp. 77-89.

²⁰ Anonyme, *La colonisation belge en Afrique centrale, dossier historique*, sl, sd, pp. 18-48.

Discours contradictoires

Le roi Baudouin des belges a participé à la cérémonie d'indépendance et a vanté les mérites de la colonisation belge au Congo. Son discours a été controversé en raison de sa tonalité paternaliste et de son manque de reconnaissance des luttes et des aspirations du peuple congolais. Le Président congolais Kasavubu n'a pas contredit le roi. Il a fallu l'improvisation de Lumumba qui a souligné, dans son discours, que l'indépendance n'a pas été offerte par la Belgique mais qu'elle a été conquise par la lutte, avant de dresser un réquisitoire contre le système colonial. Les discours du roi Baudouin et de Lumumba illustraient les tensions et les contradictions qui existaient à l'époque de l'indépendance du Congo. Alors que Lumumba et d'autres leaders congolais aspiraient à une véritable indépendance et à la fin de la domination étrangère, les autorités belges étaient parfois réticentes à abandonner leur contrôle sur le Congo et à reconnaître pleinement les droits et les aspirations du peuple congolais. Ces divergences ont contribué aux tensions politiques et sociales qui ont marqué les premières années de l'indépendance congolaise.

d) Influences extérieures

Malgré l'indépendance formelle, le Congo est resté et reste jusqu'à ce jour sous l'influence des puissances étrangères.²¹ Le premier Ministre Patrice-Emery Lumumba souhaitait un pays véritablement indépendant, débarrassé de toute influence étrangère, mais cet idéal n'a pas été pleinement réalisé. Les intérêts géopolitiques et économiques ont continué à façonner les événements de la République Démocratique du Congo. Toutes les ressources minières étaient restées aux mains des belges et l'administration était contrôlée par les belges étant donné qu'il n'existait pas encore d'élites locales formées.

Jusqu'à présent, la RD Congo figure parmi ces pays sous l'influence étrangère sur tous les plans. L'histoire politique de la RD Congo reste ainsi emmaillée, plus de soixante ans après l'indépendance, d'ingérences extérieures. A la base de ces ingérences, le contrôle des richesses du sous-sol. Les ressources minières aiguisent les appétits des puissances étrangères et génèrent la corruption. Elles empêchent l'accès au sein de l'administration de gens

²¹ CESA, "Le rôle des acteurs externes dans la crise de la RDC", 2017

[<https://africacenter.org/fr/spotlight/le-role-des-acteurs-externes-dans-la-crise-de-la-rdc/>], 17 mars 2024.

capables de construire un État solide susceptible de renforcer l'unité du pays et de résister à toute ingérence.

L'indépendance réelle de la République Démocratique du Congo reste à conquérir

La vraie indépendance reste encore à conquérir dans plusieurs domaines et c'est fort regrettable que cela ne le soit pas encore, plus de soixante ans après la première indépendance de façade. Voici quelques aspects où cette indépendance reste incomplète :

a) Économie et dépendance

La République Démocratique du Congo a longtemps été dépendante de l'économie mondiale et des intérêts étrangers. Cette dépendance économique peut entraver son développement et sa souveraineté. Les ressources naturelles du pays, telles que le cuivre, le cobalt, le Coltan et les diamants, ont été exploitées par des entreprises étrangères. La souveraineté économique complète n'a pas encore été atteinte et la croissance économique bloquée.²²

La RDC dépend fortement de l'industrie minière pour ses recettes d'exportation et ses revenus gouvernementaux. Cette dépendance limite la capacité du pays à diversifier son économie et à créer des emplois dans d'autres secteurs tels que l'agriculture, l'industrie manufacturière et les services. Faute d'infrastructures adéquates, la RDC dépend des importations pour de nombreux biens et services essentiels.

Pour réduire sa dépendance économique, la RDC doit diversifier son économie, investir dans les infrastructures, promouvoir la bonne gouvernance et lutter contre la corruption. Il est également important de créer un environnement favorable aux investissements nationaux et étrangers, de développer plusieurs secteurs, de promouvoir l'entrepreneuriat et l'innovation. En outre, la RDC pourrait bénéficier des partenariats économiques et commerciaux équilibrés avec d'autres pays et régions du monde.

²² H. Vander Eycken, F. Vander Vorst, « Le blocage de la croissance en République Démocratique du Congo », in Joseph Lajugie, Emilio de Figueroa, George Coutsumaris *et al.*, *Blocages et freinages de la croissance et du développement en Afrique, Asie, Afrique et Amérique latine*, in *Revue Tiers Monde*, Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, n°30, Tome 8, 1967, pp. 411-434.

b) *Inégalités sociales*

Malgré l'indépendance, les inégalités sociales persistent. Les disparités entre riches et pauvres, ainsi que les divisions ethniques, sont des défis majeurs. L'accès à l'éducation, aux soins de santé et à l'emploi reste inéquitable.

Une étude du PNUD en 2014 a mis en évidence les causes, la dynamique et les conséquences des inégalités dans les domaines politique, économique et social en RDC.²³ Les écarts de salaire significatifs entre les fonctionnaires de l'administration publique sont un problème majeur, contribuant à l'aggravation des inégalités socio-économiques.

Les inégalités sociales, la pauvreté et l'exclusion sont des entraves à la cohésion sociale et sont parmi les causes de nombreux problèmes sociaux en RDC. Ces inégalités sont le résultat de facteurs historiques, politiques et économiques complexes et leur résolution nécessite une approche multidimensionnelle et inclusive.

c) *Instabilité politique*

La République Démocratique du Congo connaît une histoire complexe en matière d'instabilité politique. Des défis tels que les conflits armés, la corruption, les tensions ethniques et les troubles socio-économiques ont souvent marqué la politique congolaise. Ces facteurs ont contribué à des périodes d'instabilité politique et de violences dans le pays. Au fil des décennies, la RDC a été confrontée à des troubles politiques, des changements des régimes, des élections contestées et des conflits armés dans certaines régions du pays, notamment dans l'Est. Les luttes pour le pouvoir et les ressources naturelles ont souvent exacerbé les tensions politiques et sociales.

Cependant, le pays a également connu des périodes de transition et d'espoir, notamment avec l'organisation d'élections démocratiques et la mise en place d'institutions visant à promouvoir la stabilité et le développement. Les efforts pour consolider la démocratie et renforcer l'État de droit restent des défis majeurs pour la RDC. L'instabilité politique en

²³ PNUD, "Inégalités politiques, socio-économiques et édification de la nation/État en République Démocratique du Congo", 2014
[<https://www.undp.org/fr/drcongo/publications/inegalites-politiques-socio-economiques-et-edification-de-la-nation/etat-en-republique-democratique-du-congo?ssp=1&setlang=fr&cc=XL&safe-search=moderate>], 12 mars 2024.

RDC est un défi persistant qui nécessite des efforts continus tant au niveau national qu'international pour promouvoir la paix, la stabilité et le développement durable dans le pays.

d) *Héritage colonial*

L'héritage du colonialisme belge continue d'influencer la société congolaise. Les structures administratives, la langue officielle et les mentalités ont été façonnées par la période coloniale. Le fait colonial et son idéologie ont fourni un cadre de production et de diffusion structurant, sinon écrasant, aux représentations de l'Afrique et des africains en Belgique. Ils ont contribué à fabriquer l'identité du pays et leur impact sur une longue amnésie postcoloniale est cependant difficile à mesurer.²⁴ Ce sont ces mêmes acquis coloniaux qui continuent d'être d'application jusqu'à présent.

Toutefois pourtant, dans une certaine mesure, il faut noter que la République Démocratique du Congo a bénéficié d'un héritage colonial plus ou moins considérable. Citons cependant 20.000 établissements scolaires de tous les niveaux, 3 universités, près de 300 hôpitaux et de 2.000 autres formations médicales, 165.000km de voies de communication terrestres et 3 aéroports internationaux, ainsi que trois grandes centrales hydroélectriques satisfaisant aux besoins des grands centres urbains et de l'industrie lourde. A voir cet héritage sur le plan des infrastructures, il y aurait lieu de condamner l'impréparation de l'homme congolais par le colon belge pour une bonne gestion de tous ces acquis.

e) *Relations internationales*

La République Démocratique du Congo entretient des relations complexes avec d'autres pays et organisations internationales. La diplomatie congolaise et la coopération restent des enjeux importants pour consolider l'indépendance. La diplomatie et la coopération internationale offrent à la RDC des opportunités importantes pour consolider son indépendance et promouvoir le développement économique, la stabilité politique et les droits de l'homme. En s'engageant activement sur la scène internationale et en établissant des partenariats stratégiques avec d'autres nations, la RDC peut renforcer sa position en tant qu'acteur souverain et autonome dans le contexte mondial.

²⁴ Anne Cornet, Marc Poncelet, « L'Héritage colonial belge » in *Nouvelles études francophones*, n°1, Vol. 32, 2017, pp. 102-108.

Que faut-il faire pour une indépendance réelle de la République Démocratique du Congo ?

Lorsque Patrice-Emery Lumumba milita pour l'indépendance du Congo-belge, son ambition était de libérer le pays de toute ingérence extérieure pour sa gestion, donc une indépendance totale. C'est ici question de récuser les hypothèses haineuses, destructrices et infantilisantes qui tournent autour de la recherche d'un bouc émissaire, l'éternel « **autre** », qui causerait tous les malheurs de la RD Congo et des congolais.²⁵ Pour parvenir à une indépendance réelle de la République Démocratique du Congo (RDC), plusieurs mesures politiques, économiques et sociales pourraient être nécessaires, parmi lesquelles nous estimons les suivantes :

a) Renforcer les institutions démocratiques

Le renforcement des institutions démocratiques suppose d'assurer des élections libres et équitables, renforcer l'État de droit et promouvoir la transparence et la responsabilité au sein du gouvernement. Ceci appelle à la mise en pratique de la théorie de la séparation des pouvoirs de Montesquieu où chaque institution devra agir librement conformément à ses prérogatives sans aucune interférence.²⁶ Selon la Constitution de la RD Congo, le pouvoir judiciaire est indépendant des pouvoirs législatif et exécutif. Il est exercé par les cours et tribunaux, civils et militaires, en partant de la Cour constitutionnelle jusqu'aux tribunaux, en vertu de l'article 149 de la Constitution. Des institutions d'appui à la démocratie congolaise telles que la CENI (Commission Électorale Nationale Indépendante), la CNDH (Commission Nationale des Droits de l'Homme) et le CSAC (Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel et de la Communication) doivent cesser d'être à la solde des acteurs politiques qui, le plus souvent, les utilisent à leur guise. Elles doivent garder leur neutralité et indépendance pour contribuer à la jeune démocratie congolaise.

²⁵ Andreea Bianca Urs, Sergiu Mișcoiu, « De la continuité à la rupture : une analyse discursive de la présidence de Félix Tshisekedi (RDC) », in Sergiu Mișcoiu, Delia Pop-Flanța (dir.), *Communication de crise et résolution des conflits en Afrique francophone*, Cluj-Napoca, Casa Cărții de Știință, 2021, pp. 11-28.

²⁶ Jules de Montesquieu, *De l'esprit des lois*, Paris : Garnier-Frères, 1748, 680 pages.

Combattre la corruption

Le combat contre la corruption doit passer par la mise en place des mesures pour lutter contre la corruption à tous les niveaux de la société, en renforçant les lois anti-corruption et en encourageant la responsabilité des fonctionnaires. Il n'existe pas de solution unique pour la combattre, mais il existe des bonnes pratiques et des recommandations qui peuvent aider à prévenir et à détecter la corruption. Il est ainsi important que les dirigeants et les responsables politiques affichent un engagement clair et constant en faveur de la lutte contre la corruption et qu'ils donnent l'exemple par leur conduite éthique. Les cadres supérieurs et les managers ainsi que leurs collaborateurs et partenaires doivent être formés et informés sur les risques de corruption et les moyens de les éviter. La corruption peut prendre de nombreuses formes qui ne sont pas toujours liées à des sommes d'argent. Il peut s'agir du favoritisme, de trafic d'influence, de détournement de biens publics, de conflits d'intérêts, etc. Il faut donc veiller à prévenir et à sanctionner tous ces types de comportements.

b) Promouvoir le développement économique

Le développement économique implique les investissements dans les secteurs des infrastructures, de l'éducation, de la santé et de l'agriculture pour stimuler la croissance économique et réduire la pauvreté.²⁷ Parmi les actions possibles pour promouvoir le développement économique, on peut citer les mesures politiques suivantes, à condition de les mener simultanément :

- Améliorer le cadre réglementaire en supprimant les réglementations inutiles, complexes et contre-productives ;
- Améliorer la coordination entre politique fiscale et politique monétaire ;
- Renforcer le système bancaire et améliorer sa supervision ;
- Diversifier et moderniser l'économie, en stimulant l'innovation, l'entrepreneuriat et la compétitivité ;
- Renforcer le secteur privé, en soutenant les petites et moyennes entreprises, en facilitant l'accès au financement et aux marchés, et en améliorant le climat des affaires ;

²⁷ André Raynauld, « Le développement économique » in *L'Actualité économique*, n°43, vol. 2, 1967, pp. 217-235.

- Renforcer le capital humain, créer des emplois décents et productifs, en garantissant des conditions de travail équitables, sûres et dignes, et en luttant contre le chômage, le sous-emploi et le travail informel ;
- Envisager d'attribuer des subventions salariales ;
- Renforcer la gouvernance et la coopération, en améliorant la qualité des institutions, la transparence, la participation, la reddition des comptes et la lutte contre la corruption, et en soutenant l'intégration régionale profitable et le commerce équitable ;
- Cibler des activités, programmes et les projets économiquement viables ;
- Investir dans les industries à haut rendement (agroalimentaires et créatives, cinématographiques, etc.) et dans les infrastructures ;
- Attirer des investisseurs étrangers dans les industries concurrentiels ;
- Accéder aux chaînes de valeur mondiales en tant que cadre dominant des échanges commerciaux ;
- Construire des zones économiques spéciales et des parcs industriels performants;²⁸
- Moderniser le secteur agricole ;
- Investir dans la collecte des données et rendre les données plus accessibles ;
- Etc.

c) *Exploiter les ressources naturelles de manière responsable*

L'exploitation responsable des ressources naturelles de la RDC est un enjeu majeur pour le développement durable, la paix et la justice sociale du pays. Elle consiste à établir des politiques qui garantissent une exploitation durable et équitable des ressources naturelles, tout en préservant l'environnement et en bénéficiant à la population locale. La RDC dispose d'une grande diversité de ressources naturelles, notamment des minéraux stratégiques, des forêts, de l'eau et de la biodiversité, qui représentent un potentiel économique considérable, mais qui sont aussi sources de conflits, de corruption et de dégradation environnementale.

²⁸ BAD (Banque Africaine de Développement), *Perspectives économiques en Afrique*, Abidjan, Rapport 2018, pp. 56-62.

Pour assurer une exploitation responsable des ressources naturelles de la RDC, il faut mettre en place des cadres juridiques, institutionnels et participatifs qui garantissent la transparence, la traçabilité, la répartition équitable et la protection des droits humains et environnementaux. Il faut également renforcer les capacités des acteurs locaux, notamment les communautés, les entreprises, les autorités et la société civile, pour qu'ils puissent gérer les ressources de manière durable et inclusive.

Parmi les initiatives qui visent à promouvoir une exploitation responsable des ressources naturelles en RDC, on peut citer :

- Le *code minier de 2018*, qui révisé le cadre légal du secteur minier, en introduisant des mesures pour améliorer la fiscalité, la gouvernance, la responsabilité sociale et environnementale, et la participation des communautés locales.
- Le *Processus de Kimberley*,²⁹ qui est un mécanisme international de certification des diamants bruts, qui vise à empêcher le financement des conflits armés par le commerce illicite des diamants.
- Le *Partenariat pour les forêts du bassin du Congo*, qui est une initiative régionale qui réunit 10 pays d'Afrique centrale, des bailleurs de fonds, des organisations internationales et des acteurs non étatiques, pour soutenir la conservation et la gestion durable des forêts du bassin du Congo.

d) Renforcer la sécurité

A ce niveau, il faut réformer les forces de sécurité congolaise, y compris l'armée, la police et les services de renseignement, pour améliorer leur efficacité, leur professionnalisme et leur respect des droits de l'homme en vue de garantir la protection des citoyens et lutter contre les groupes armés à travers des opérations militaires ciblées pour les désarmer et les démobiliser, et lutter contre la violence dans certaines régions du pays. Les forces de sécurité doivent être formées et équipées adéquatement pour qu'elles puissent répondre efficacement aux défis sécuritaires du pays, y compris la protection des populations civiles et la lutte contre les crimes transnationaux comme le trafic d'armes et de drogue.

²⁹ Élise Rousseau, « Le processus de Kimberly et la lutte contre le commerce des diamants de sang » in *Courrier hebdomadaire du CRISP*, n°2353-2354, 2017, pp. 5-62.

En outre, c'est par une concertation efficace sur les zones d'incertitude des uns et des autres que les élites clés de différents groupes en conflit pourraient atteindre un compromis politique susceptible de conduire à une solution durable de la crise sécuritaire³⁰. D'où, la réconciliation entre les différents groupes ethniques et politiques de la RDC est crucial pour réduire les tensions et prévenir les conflits armés.

Le renforcement de la sécurité doit enfin passer par une bonne coopération régionale et internationale. Il est important que les autorités congolaises travaillent en collaboration avec la société civile, les partenaires régionaux et internationales, ainsi que les populations locales pour mettre en œuvre une approche globale et durable de la sécurité.

e) Encourager la participation citoyenne

La participation citoyenne voudrait surtout dire l'implication de la société civile, des organisations non gouvernementales et les citoyens dans les processus démocratiques et la formulation des politiques. En plus, le peuple congolais doit s'approprier la lutte de l'indépendance véritable de sa patrie en incarnant le discours de Lumumba lors de la proclamation de l'indépendance formelle du Congo-belge et de l'hymne national de son pays qui l'appelle à dresser les fronts longtemps courbés, tout en prenant le plus bel élan dans la paix.

Dans son discours prononcé à l'occasion de la fête d'indépendance, Lumumba avait rendu hommage aux combattants de l'indépendance et avait souligné la lutte acharnée contre le colonialisme. Il avait rappelé les souffrances endurées sous le régime colonial, notamment le travail forcé, les discriminations et les abus. Il a appelé chaque congolais à jouer pleinement son rôle pour construire un Congo juste, prospère et libre : « ...A partir d'aujourd'hui, chacun de nous est responsable de l'avenir de notre pays (...). Ensemble, nous pouvons réaliser l'indépendance véritable et durable que notre peuple mérite depuis si longtemps (...). ..., mais nous devons aussi nous rappeler que notre combat pour la liberté et la justice est loin d'être terminé. Nous devons

³⁰ Dominique Kenge Mukinayi, « Pistes de solution à la crise sécuritaire de l'Est de la République Démocratique du Congo » in *Études caribéennes*, n°56, décembre 2023 [<https://doi.org/10.4000/etudescaribeennes.29430>], 12 mars 2024.

rester vigilants et déterminés dans notre lutte pour un Congo meilleur ». ³¹ Lumumba a ainsi exprimé une vision pour l'avenir du Congo, basée sur la justice, la liberté et l'amélioration des conditions de vie du peuple congolais. Il a également mis en évidence la nécessité d'une économie nationale prospère pour consolider l'indépendance économique du pays. Son discours est réputé pour sa franchise et son refus de minimiser les injustices du passé, tout en appelant à l'unité et au travail pour construire un avenir meilleur. Il s'agit là d'un appel puissant à la souveraineté et à la dignité du peuple congolais auquel tout citoyen doit répondre consciencieusement.

f) *Un leadership de qualité, capable et responsable*

Si la RD Congo peine à devenir un État véritablement indépendant, cela est également dû en partie au faible leadership des dirigeants qu'elle a déjà connus depuis son indépendance jusqu'à nos jours. A son accession à l'indépendance, la RDC ne comptait qu'une vingtaine de diplômés d'universités. ³² Actuellement, malgré le nombre croissant de diplômés dont les professeurs d'universités, le pays reste toujours par terre à cause de l'amateurisme de ses dirigeants et l'absence du leadership visionnaire au plus haut sommet de l'État. D'où, pour parvenir à asseoir une véritable indépendance du pays, il faut à la tête de cet État, des hommes capables d'impulser un leadership responsable et visionnaire, à même de surmonter tous les défis que connaît le pays actuellement afin de l'aligner sur la voie de l'émergence, de développement et d'affranchissement ou d'indépendance réelle. ³³

³¹ Extraits tirés du discours de Patrice- Emery Lumumba prononcé lors de la cérémonie de proclamation de l'indépendance de la République Démocratique du Congo le 30 juin 1960.

³² Les 24 premiers diplômés africains de l'université Lovanium, toutes les facultés confondues, 2016 [<https://www.mbokamosika.com/2016/06/les-24-premiers-diplomes-africains-de-luniversite-lovanium-toutes-les-facultes-confondues.html>], 18 mars 2024.

³³ En suivant peut-être l'exemple des nations européennes. V. Sergiu Mișcoiu, *Naissance de la nation en Europe. Théories classiques et théorisations constructivistes*, Paris: L'Harmattan, 2010.

Conclusion

D'habitude, chaque le 30 juin, les Congolais fêtent la libération du pays des mains des colons belges et l'aboutissement d'une lutte portée par les pères de son indépendance que sont Patrice-Emery Lumumba et ses pairs. C'est également la date de la renaissance de l'être congolais. Malheureusement, cette première grande victoire n'a pas été pérennisée et renforcée pour aboutir à une véritable indépendance politique et économique. Aujourd'hui, cette indépendance acquise le 30 juin 1960 est principalement de façade, c'est en quelque sorte un échec. D'une génération à une autre, le rêve et l'espoir suscités par cette indépendance se sont évaporés. La crise sociale, la désintégration du tissu familial, la misère, les multiples guerres ayant déjà causé plusieurs millions de morts, le remplacement des valeurs positives telles que le patriotisme ou le civisme, par des antivaleurs, sont là quelques-unes des causes de cette situation. La grande majorité de congolais n'ont plus de repères, ils ne rêvent plus. Ils sont complètement désabusés par la politique nationale de manière générale et fortement déçus par les politiciens de tout bord.

Les Congolais doivent reconstruire leur nation, rebâtir leur citoyenneté, revaloriser leur histoire, leurs cultures et leurs racines dont fait partie cet anniversaire. Ces mesures nécessitent un engagement à long terme de la part des dirigeants congolais pour aider le pays à parvenir à une indépendance réelle et à créer un avenir stable et prospère pour tous les citoyens. Il est donc temps que les congolais, surtout les jeunes qui incarnent l'avenir d'une nation, comprennent que le blocage au développement de la République Démocratique du Congo ne peut être imputé, plus de soixante ans après l'indépendance formelle, aux occidentaux, ni aux orientaux, ni aux néocolonialistes, ni aux néo-impérialistes, mais plutôt à la défaillance du leadership congolais. D'où, il faut un sursaut patriotique des dirigeants avec une ferme volonté politique pour relever les défis d'une véritable indépendance. Dans le cas contraire, cette indépendance n'est qu'un rituel de façade qui se limite dans les fêtes de commémoration. Or, cette indépendance ne doit pas se limiter à une date historique, mais elle doit être constamment défendue et renforcée à travers des efforts collectifs et des réformes dans tous les domaines de la vie nationale.

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LETTING GO OF THE HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES IN COMPLEX EMERGENCIES? A CASE STUDY OF CIVIL-MILITARY COOPERATION IN THE EASTERN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

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Abstract: *Civil-military cooperation (CIMIC) has officially emerged as a coordinated strategy between the United Nations peacekeeping missions and humanitarian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to enable access to people in need of assistance in complex emergencies. However, this integrated approach raises serious concerns regarding the respect of traditional principles of humanitarian action: humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence. While some humanitarian NGOs are opposed to any form of collaboration with the military, others believe this cooperation is very important to enable access and provide aid to civilians in needs. Using the case study of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), this article analyses the impact of the CIMIC integrated approach between the United Nations Peacekeeping and Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) and humanitarian NGOs on the afore-mentioned principles of humanitarian action. It argues that most humanitarian NGOs that are operating in the Eastern DRC are opposed to the CIMIC's integrated approach as it pushes them to violate the principles of neutrality, independence, and impartiality. Second, CIMIC increases the danger of humanitarian workers to be targeted by illegal armed groups. Third, despite their integrated approach, both MONUSCO and humanitarian actors have not been able to pacify the Eastern DRC, end the humanitarian needs of the population, or improve their effectiveness.*

Keywords: *Humanitarian intervention, DR Congo, civil-military cooperation, peace-building, complex emergencies*

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Introduction

Civil-military cooperation (CIMIC) in complex emergencies raises a controversial debate between the strict principled and less-principled approach NGOs. Traditional NGOs such as the Red Cross, the Red Crescent, and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) are in favor of the '*strict respect*' of the four traditional principles of humanitarian action: humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence.¹ According to Red Cross and Red Crescent Guide, the principle of humanity refers to "the desire to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found to protect life and health, and to ensure respect of human being".² Impartiality refers to the "no discrimination nature of humanitarian aid and action as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class, or political opinions."³ It endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress".⁴ Neutrality implies that humanitarian organizations should "not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious, or ideological nature."⁵ Lastly, independence implies that humanitarian action "must always maintain their autonomy from public and government authorities".⁶

While there is a huge literature that discusses the emergence and evolution of the civil-military cooperation in the United Nations system and the humanitarian field, only few research studies assess the actual impact of this CIMIC collaborative approach on the principles of humanitarian action.⁷

¹ Red Cross and Red Crescent, "Four Key Humanitarian Principles Set by Red Cross and Red Crescent Guide the Action of Most Humanitarian Organizations Namely Humanity, Impartiality, Neutrality, and Independence", 1996, p. 2.

² *Ibidem*.

³ *Ibidem*.

⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵ Red Cross and Red Crescent, *op. cit.*

⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁷ Cedrick De Coning, "The United Nations and the Comprehensive Approach", DIIS REPORT, IASC, "Civil-military Relationship in Complex Emergencies, An IASC Reference Paper", 2004; Hugo Slim, *Relief Agencies and Moral Standing in War: Principles of Humanity, Neutrality, Impartiality and Solidarity*, New York: Routledge 1997; Ferreiro Marcos Rodriguez, "Blurring of Lines in Complex Emergencies: Consequences for the Humanitarian Community"; Victor Holt, Taylor Glyn and Max Kelly, "Protecting Civilians in the Context of UN Peacekeeping Operations: Successes, Setbacks and Remaining Challenges", Independent study jointly commissioned by DPKO and OCHA, 2009; Red Cross and Red Crescent, *op. cit.*;

Similarly, several studies in the literature analyze the root causes of armed conflicts, the peace-making (mediation and negotiation) processes undertaken to solve them,⁸ and the role of MONUSCO, as a peacekeeping and peace-building mechanism, in protecting civilian populations in the Eastern DRC.⁹ However, not much research in the literature analyzes how MONUSCO and humanitarian NGOs can work together to address the humanitarian needs caused by these armed conflicts. To fill this gap in the literature, this article addresses two related questions: (i) how does MONUSCO collaborate with humanitarian NGOs in providing aid to civilians in the Eastern DRC? and (ii) what is the actual impact of this CIMIC integrated approach on humanitarian principles? By answering these two fundamental questions, this article contributes to the emerging civil-military cooperation debate, and its impact on the respect of the principles of humanitarian action in complex emergency environments.

While traditional humanitarian NGOs are strictly bound by the aforementioned principles, development NGOs are flexible, and even reluctant about them. For traditional humanitarian NGOs, the role of the military sometimes contradicts these humanitarian principles. MSF, for instance, argues that the fact that humanitarian NGOs are impartial, neutral, and independent

Hugo Slim and Andrew Bonwick, "Protection: An ALNAP Guide for Humanitarian Agencies", Oxfam, 2006; Liam Mahony, "Proactive Presence: Field Strategies for Civilian Protection", Geneva: Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue; Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), "Civil-military Relationship in Complex Emergencies – An IASC Reference Paper", 2004.

⁸ Sergiu Mișcoiu, Jean-Michel De Waele et Andreea Bianca Urs (dir.), *Maquisards, rebelles, insurgés... politiques. Le devenir des chefs de guerre africains*, Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Știință, 2023; Dominique Kenge Mukinyi, Sergiu Mișcoiu, « Rétroactes sur le conflit congolais (RDC) et regards sur ses causes » in *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai. Studia Europaea*, no. 2, 2020, pp. 105-132.

⁹ Emeric Rogier, "MONUSCO and the Challenges of Peace Implementation in the DRC: Participant Approach", in Mark Malan and Joao Gomes Porto (eds.), *Challenges of Peace Implementation. The UN Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo*, Pretoria: ISS, 2003, pp. 256-268; Cori Wielienga and Nickson M. Bondo, "Mediated Power-sharing Agreement, Reconciliation and Transitional Justice. Liberia, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo", Center for Mediation in Africa, Mediation Argument no 6, University of Pretoria, 2014; Nickson M. Bondo, "Transregional Conflict in the Great Lakes Region", in Ulf Engel (ed.) *Africa's Transregional Conflicts, Comparatio*, vol 28, No. 6, 2018, pp 24-48 [<https://doi.org/10.26014/j.comp.2018.06.02>]; Mwesiga Baregu, *Understanding Obstacles to Peace: Actors, Interests, and Strategies in Africa's Great Lakes Region*, Kampala: Fountains Publisher, IDRC, 2011.

provides them the opportunity necessary to do their job, and prevents humanitarian action from being instrumentalized.¹⁰ Thus, for defenders of the *'strict principled approach'*, humanitarian NGOs must distance themselves from the military forces. By doing so, humanitarian NGOs will avoid being perceived as parties to the conflict and keep their staff members safe from being targeted by military attacks.¹¹

By contrast, other scholars consider principles of humanitarian unachievable and are tempted to abandon them. Hugo Slim, for instance, argues that most NGOs operating in complex emergencies abandon the principle of neutrality to a point of considering it unachievable, undesirable, and unprincipled.¹² He argues that humanitarian aid is very often misused by both peacekeepers and illegal armed groups in violation of the humanitarian principle. Slim advocates for the principle of solidarity towards civilian populations in need of assistance instead of remaining neutral¹³. Like Hugo Slim, Marcos Ferreiro Rodriguez argues that "the challenge may be even bigger in the case of UN humanitarian agencies are involved in integrated missions and/or under UN Security Council resolutions with clearly political mandates".¹⁴ In this case, humanitarian action becomes a political instrument.¹⁵

This article goes beyond the Red Cross and Red Crescent's *'strict respect'* of traditional principles and Hugo Slim's unachievable, undesirable, and unprincipled neutrality to suggest a *'selective approach'*. This new approach enables NGOs to selectively comply with principles of humanitarian action depending on the emergency environment in which they operate. It explains the challenges facing humanitarian NGOs that, sometimes, have no better alternatives than violating their neutrality, independence, and impartiality for humanity's sake, and vice-versa. The volatile security situation in most complex emergencies in general, and the Eastern DRC in particular, makes it difficult for humanitarian NGOs to access the civilian populations in need of aid. Most humanitarian actors acknowledge the fact that international military and peacekeeping forces can provide a degree of physical protection

¹⁰ Médecins Sans Frontières staff, anonymous, Goma, July 2015.

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

¹² Slim, *op. cit.*

¹³ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴ Rodriguez, *op. cit.*

¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

which they need while working in complex emergency environments.¹⁶ These include using military asset to assist relief workers with transportation and logistics, security of humanitarian aid, engineering support, the provision of escorts and security patrols by the military to aid workers in complex emergency environments.¹⁷ Consequently, humanitarian NGOs have no better alternative, but to depend either on UN peacekeeping military personnel, national government, or rebel forces to access to civilians in need of aid.

Like several scholars and humanitarian NGOs, this article assumes that a permanent dialogue and cooperation between humanitarian organizations and UN peacekeeping helps both actors to enforce the humanitarian imperative that obliges parties to conflict to comply with international law by allowing humanitarian agencies and NGOs to address humanitarian need wherever it is found and provide aid to civilians in war zones.¹⁸ In the same vein, it is assumed that the permanent dialogue and collaboration between UN peacekeeping mission and humanitarian NGOs contributes to raising awareness of the specific obligations of the forces concerned under international law; alerting the negative impact of military operations on civilians; and sharing aggregated data to minimize the negative impacts of armed conflicts on civilian populations.¹⁹

Research methodology

I used a qualitative methodology to collect, interpret and analyze empirical data. To this end, I conducted a nine-month field research in Goma and Bukavu (Eastern DRC) from June to September 2014 and June to December 2015. In this regard, I conducted twenty semi-structured interviews: five with MONUSCO's staff members, five with humanitarian organizations, five with representatives of civil society organizations and five with government officials based in Goma and Bukavu. I also analyzed the content of UN Security Council Resolutions, official reports of MONUSCO and humanitarian NGOs on the security situation in the Eastern DRC. Moreover, I used an empirical participatory observation as an intern at the Executive Secretariat of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region

¹⁶ Slim and Bonwick, *op. cit.*

¹⁷ Holt, Glyn and Kelly, *op. cit.*

¹⁸ *Ibidem.*

¹⁹ Mahony, *op. cit.*

(ICGLR) to analyse the security challenges that humanitarian NGOs operating in the Eastern DRC face; and assess the impacts of the cooperation between MONUSCO and humanitarian NGOs on principles of humanitarian action. Finally, I collected secondary data through a review of existing literature on policy guidelines and impacts of civil-military cooperation on principles of humanitarian principles in protracted wars in general, and the Eastern DRC in particular.

Furthermore, I used critical discourse to answer the research questions. As argued by Schmidt, the discourse analysis enabled us to go beyond what is said (ideas and text) to find out where, when, how and why it was said (context); what was said, where and how (structure); and who said what to them (agency).²⁰ Schmidt distinguishes two types of discourse analysis: *coordinative discourse* that focused on policymaking and enforcement process, and *communication discourse* that takes place between political actors and the public²¹. Discourse analysis is also used in social and policy realm and applies to generalized ideas, beliefs and assertions that can be descriptive or prescriptive.²² Like Humphreys, Van Dijk argues that discourse analysis reflects ideologies that are fundamental beliefs of groups and their members.²³ According to Dijk, critical discourse analysis enables to explain how political leaders abuse of social power, to dominate and foster inequality among the population.²⁴ Thus, discourse analysis enabled us to understand the context in which humanitarian NGOs choose to either strictly respect, abandon or select the principles of neutrality, independence, impartiality for humanity's sake. Including the introduction, the article is structured around five main sections. The second section defines CIMIC and its emergence in the UN system. The third section discusses how MONUSCO collaborates with humanitarian NGOs through the CIMIC

²⁰ Vivienne Schmidt, "Discursive Institutionalism: the Explanatory Power of Ideas and Discourse" in *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 11, 2008, p. 303.

²¹ *Ibidem*.

²² David, Humphreys, "Discourse as Ideology: Neoliberalism and the Limits of International Forces Policy" in *Forest Policy and Economics*, Vol. 11 (5), 2009, pp. 319-325. See also Sergiu Mișcoiu, Oana Crăciun, Nicoleta Colopelnic (eds.), *Radicalism, Populism, Interventionism. Three Approaches Based on Discourse Theory*, Cluj-Napoca: Editura Fundației pentru Studii Europene, 2008.

²³ Teun A. Van Dijk, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, 2000

[<http://www.discourses.org/OldArticles/Critical%20Discourse%20Analysis.pdf>], January 5, 2021.

²⁴ *Ibidem*.

integrated approach. The fourth section discusses the actual impact of the CIMIC integrated approach on humanitarian principles in the Eastern DRC. The fifth section provides the conclusion of the article.

Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC)

Several related concepts are used to describe the coordination between civil and military actors. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), European Union (EU) and Canada, for instance, use *civil-military cooperation (CIMIC)*; the United States (US) use the term *civil military operations (CMO)*; and the UN and the humanitarian community use the term *Civil-Military Coordination (CMCoord)*.²⁵ Approaches to civil-military cooperation differ depending on actors using this concept. For instance, the UN approach to civil-military cooperation differs from the NATO, EU, and US approaches to CIMIC and CMO. In NATO and the EU doctrine, CIMIC is motivated by the need to establish the cooperation between the military force, as a separate legally mandated entity, and the civilian actors in their area of operations.²⁶ In the context of the UN peacekeeping operations, *CIMIC* is motivated by the need to maximize the coordination between the military component and the civilian components of the same integrated mission.²⁷

In this article, we use the concept of civil-military cooperation (CIMIC) to describe the collaboration between MONUSCO as the military actor and humanitarian NGOs as civil actors, with an aim to create a safe and secure environment that enables access to civilians in warzones. The Eastern part of the DRC constitutes a complex emergency environment that obliges MONUSCO and humanitarian NGOs to work together to achieve a common goal of protecting civilian populations and alleviating their sufferings. In a bid to have a better understanding of the CIMIC's integrated approach, it is important to define the 'complex emergency' context in which it has emerged. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) defines a 'complex emergency' as "a humanitarian crisis in a country, region or society where there is total or considerable breakdown of authority resulting from internal or external conflict and which requires an international response that goes beyond the mandate or capacity of any single and/or ongoing UN country programme".²⁸ The next

²⁵ De Coning, *op. cit.*

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 19.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, *loc. cit.*

²⁸ Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), *op. cit.*

section briefly discusses the establishment of MONUSCO, its mandates, and its CIMIC's integrated approach.

The establishment of MONUC/MONUSCO

Background of MONUC's establishment and the evolution of its mandates

On 20 July 1999, one year after the outbreak of the second Congolese war (August 2, 1998 to April 2, 2003), all parties to the conflict, the DRC government, major Congolese rebel groups and their foreign allies such as Angola, Namibia, Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, and Zimbabwe met in Lusaka and signed a cease-fire agreement to stop the fighting and resolve their conflict through peaceful means. The aim of the Lusaka cease-fire agreement was to stop war, promote dialogue and reconciliation, and enable the deployment of an international peacekeeping force to monitor the implementation of the Agreement and protect civilian populations in the Eastern DRC.²⁹ The signing of the cease-fire agreement by all parties to conflict paved the way for the establishment of the United Nations Peacekeeping Mission in the DRC (MONUC), and a long peacemaking process that led to the holding of the Inter-Congolese Dialogue, the signing of the Final Act of the Sun City Agreement on 1-2 April 2003, the official end of the second Congolese war and the establishment of the transitional government (1+4).³⁰ Against this backdrop, MONUC was established on 6 August 1999 by UN Security Council Resolution 1258 with the consent of belligerents to observe and enforce the implementation of the ceasefire agreement through the disengagement of forces and maintain liaison with all parties.³¹ In addition, MONUC was mandated to provide and maintain humanitarian assistance and protect displaced persons (IDPs), refugees and other affected persons.³² This means that the CIMIC's integrated approach was included in MONUC's mandate at an early stage of its peacekeeping mission.

²⁹ Lusaka Cease-fire Agreement 1999; article 1, chapters 5 and 8 of the annex A [<https://www.peaceagreements.org/viewmasterdocument/319>], 20 June 2022.

³⁰ Rogier, *op. cit.*

³¹ United Nations Security Council, "Security Resolution S/RES/1258. The Situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo", 6 August 1999 [<http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/1258>], December 20, 2022.

³² Lusaka Cease-fire agreement.

Later on, MONUC's mandate was extended to include multiple related additional peacebuilding tasks, including ensuring security, political and logistic supports to the transitional government; co-organizing, monitoring and providing technical and logistic supports to the DRC government in holding general democratic elections; carrying out the demobilization, disarmament, reintegration, resettlement and repatriation of combatants (DDRRR); supporting the DRC government Security Sector Reform; trying to resolve conflicts in a number of the DRC provinces at the local and national levels; ensuring that perpetrators of human rights and humanitarian violations such as war crimes and crimes against humanity are brought to justice; and protecting civilians.³³ Despite this multiple peacebuilding tasks, the huge number of military and police peacekeepers (above 19,000), a significant budget (estimated at USD 1 billion per year), and logistics, MONUC was severely criticized for failing to protect civilians, enforce sustainable peace and security and ensure that criminals are held accountable for their crimes.³⁴

In response to this harsh criticism against MONUC, the UN Security Council voted the Resolution 1925, that changed the mandate and renamed MONUC as MONUSCO to reflect the new phase reached in the country.³⁵ With this reconfiguration, MONUSCO's mandate is to perform several stabilization tasks including, but not limited to supporting the DRC government to completely eradicate all negative forces operating in the provinces of North and South Kivus, and the Orientale provinces; improving government capacity to protect the population effectively; and consolidating the state authority throughout the country in general, particularly the North

³³ United Nations Security Council, "Security Resolution S/RES/1279. The Situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo", 30 November 1999 [<http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/1279>], November 20, 2022.

³⁴ Ayodeji B. Ogunrotika, "The Factors Behind Successes and Failure of the United Nations Peacekeeping Missions: A Case of the Democratic Republic of Congo" in *Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences*, vol. 3, 2012, pp. 914-932; Holt, Glyn and Kelly, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-73; European Communities, "The Protection of Civilians During Peacekeeping Operations", European Parliament, 2008, pp. 9-13 [<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/activities/committees/studies.do?language=EN>], 6 January 2024.

³⁵ United Nations Security Council, "Security Resolution S/RES/1925 (2010). The Situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo", 28 May 2010 [<https://monusco.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/n1038014.pdf>], November 30, 2022.

South Kivu provinces.³⁶ With its new mandate, MONUSCO increased its military capacity to include, in addition to the appropriate civilian, judiciary and correction components, a maximum of 19,815 military personnel, 760 military observers, 391 police personnel, and 1,050 members of formed police units.³⁷ As discussed in the next sections, despite its huge military, police, and civilian personnel, MONUSCO has failed to protect civilian populations against military attacks and maintain a secure and stable environment that can enable humanitarian NGOs to safely provide aid to people in needs in the North and South Kivu provinces. Several foreign and local rebel forces such as Allied Democratic Forces and National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (ADF-NALU), FDLR, CNDP and M23 rebels, and local mai-mai militias have continued killing and kidnapping civilians; attacking and looting humanitarian convoys; killing and kidnapping aid workers.³⁸ The next section discusses how MONUSCO collaborates with humanitarian NGOs to protect aid workers and enable their access to civilians in needs of aid in such a security complex and volatile environment.

MONUSCO's CIMIC integrated approach

The “triple hat” of Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator (DSRSG/HC/RC) characterizes MONUSCO's CIMIC integrated approach. This “triple hat” DSRSG/HC/RC oversees monitoring the regional peace security and cooperation framework (PSCF) benchmarks and security sector reform to improve humanitarian access.³⁹ He officially ensures that all parties to conflict allow and facilitate humanitarian workers, equipment and supplies to have full, safe, immediate, and unhindered access to civilian population in

³⁶ United Nations Security Council, “Security Resolution S/RES/2098. The Situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo, 28 March 2013 [<http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/2098>], December 30, 2022.

³⁷ *Ibidem*.

³⁸ United Nations Security Council, “Letter Dated 13 June 2023 from the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo addressed to the President of the Security Council, pp. 7-35 [<https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N23/123/80/PDF/N2312380.pdf?OpenElement>], July 20, 2023.

³⁹ Victoria Metcalfe, Alison Giffen and Samir Elhawary, “UN Integration and Humanitarian Space. An Independent Study Commissioned by the UN Integration Sterling Committee”, 2011, Overseas Development Institute [<http://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/7526.pdf>], July 1, 2021.

needs of humanitarian aid throughout the territory of the DRC in full respect of the relevant provisions of international law.⁴⁰ MONUSCO's CIMIC integrated approach is also implemented through the establishment of three protection initiatives namely the protection cluster, the co-cluster lead for protection and the senior management group - protection policy (SMG-PP). These protection clusters put in place by MONUSCO, and humanitarian organizations have made limited achievement in protecting civilian populations and aid workers in the Eastern DRC in different ways.

The protection cluster and the senior management group protection policy (SMG-PP) have allowed humanitarian workers to identify "must go" areas which require immediate deployment of MONUSCO troops. In other words, despite some controversies between MONUSCO and humanitarian NGOs, the protection cluster advocacy has enabled information sharing on troop movements to facilitate access to civilians needs.⁴¹ To this end, MONUSCO plays a significant role in ensuring movements of humanitarian agencies and NGOs to enable their access to victims in high-risk security zones.⁴² In the same vein, NGOs have used the Protection Cluster to pressure MONUSCO to proceed with caution during operations against the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) rebel group.⁴³

Similarly, multi-mandated NGOs argue that the integration between MONUSCO and humanitarian NGOs has offered the latter considerable opportunities to expand their reach inside the UN through the Protection Cluster and other cooperation initiatives.⁴⁴ Using the cluster system and other cooperation venues, humanitarian NGOs have increased their professional and personnel relations with MONUSCO's military strategists and stabilisation planners. This applies to their cooperation with UN agencies as well. In other words, multi-mandated NGOs that participate in the Protection Cluster share information concerning present civilian threats and help in codifying and categorizing these threats as either "must", "could" or "should" protect

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 34.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 35.

⁴² Ryan O'Neill, "Blurred Lines, Shrunk Space? Offensive Peacekeepers, Networked Humanitarians, and the Performance of Principle in the Democratic Republic of the Congo", in Dennis Dijkzeul and Zeynep Sezgin (eds.), *The New Humanitarians in International Practice: Emerging Actors and Contested Principles*, London: Routledge, 2016, pp 104- 125.

⁴³ *Idem*, "Rebels without Borders. Armed Groups as Humanitarian Actors", in *ibidem*, pp. 126-143.

⁴⁴ *Idem*, "Blurred Lines", in *ibidem*, pp. 104-125.

zones. The “must” protect zones are those that require an immediate response from MONUSCO through active patrolling or the establishment of a temporary operating base (TOB).⁴⁵ Thus, for most humanitarian NGOs, the Protection Cluster helped to prevent violence against civilians at least in a short turn. Because of this limitation, the Force Commander, SRSG, and senior military planners have used the Protection Cluster as a venue to push for the expansion of the “neutralisation” mandate to cover.⁴⁶ Despite its limited success in sharing safety and security related information between MONUSCO and humanitarian NGOs, the CIMIC integrated approach is viewed by traditional humanitarian NGOs as inappropriate since it does not follow the principles of humanitarian action well enough. The next section discusses the impact of MONUSCO’s CIMIC integrated on the principles of humanitarian action.

Impacts of MONUSCO’s CIMIC integrated approach on humanitarian principles

The CIMIC approach has significantly contributed to the violation of the principles of neutrality, independence, and impartiality and humanity; and the division between ‘strict principled’ versus ‘less principle’ approach.

Violation of the principles of humanitarian action

The CIMIC integrated approach between MONUSCO and humanitarian NGOs has three main negative impacts of the principles of humanitarian action: *neutrality, independent, and impartiality as defined by Red Cross and Red Crescent*.⁴⁷ Yet, the complex emergency in the Eastern DRC has left humanitarian NGOs with no better alternative but to let go some of these traditional principles of humanitarian action in a bid to access and provide aid to civilians in needs.

a. Neutrality

Far from being considered as neutral actors, humanitarian NGOs that are operating in the Eastern DRC are perceived as de facto parties to conflict. MONUSCO’s CIMIC integrated approach has led humanitarian NGOs operating into violate the principle of neutrality. Two factors explain the

⁴⁵ *Idem*, “Rebels”, in *ibidem*, pp. 126-143.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁷ According to Red Cross and Red Crescent Guide, *op. cit.*

violation of the principle of neutrality by humanitarian NGOs. First, the fact that MONUSCO participates in joint military operations with the Congolese army (FARDC) against rebel forces makes this peacekeeping and stabilisation mission a *de facto* party to the conflict. As pointed out by a former M23 spokesperson, MONUSCO is not perceived as a neutral actor, but a belligerent in the Congolese conflict. After the defeat of M23, foreign rebel groups such as the Alliance Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Uganda (ADF-NALU), the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) and other local militias have continued launching military attacks against humanitarian convoys of both international and local humanitarian workers. As revealed by the European Interagency Security Forum (EISF), 287 humanitarian workers that were previously involved in MONUSCO's CIMIC integrated approach were the target of military attacks.⁴⁸ In August 2017, UN agencies and humanitarian groups reported that 75 aid workers had been attacked, 15 UN peacekeepers killed, 1246 abducted and 543 kidnapped in the Kivu province, furthermore, two UN investigators were killed in the Kasai province in the same year.⁴⁹ These military attacks conducted by local and foreign rebel forces such as ADF-NALU and FDLR Congolese rebels, CNDP, M23, and local mai-mai militias against aid workers and civilians demonstrate the negative impact of the MONUSCO's integrated approach on safety and security of aid workers. Thus, it can be argued that by participating in MONUSCO's comprehensive integrated approach, humanitarian workers are not perceived as neutral actors, but as *de facto* parties to conflict.

In the same vein, MSF blamed other NGOs involved in MONUSCO's stabilization initiative of violating the principles of neutrality.⁵⁰ To keep its neutrality, (MSF) for instance, has never taken a stand against M23 rebels. It avoided any contact with military personnel, including MONUSCO soldiers, and did not allow them to be deployed near its health facilities.⁵¹ By doing so, MSF did not want to run the risk of blurring the lines between the preservation of the humanitarian principle of neutrality and active support

⁴⁸ EISF, "Managing the Security of Aid Workers with Diverse Security Profile", EISF Research Paper [<https://gisf.ngo/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Managing-the-Security-of-Aid-Workers-with-Diverse-Profiles.pdf>], December 20, 2022.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁰ O'Neil, "Blurred Lines", p. 119.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*.

for insurgents. For MSF, there was a real danger that a heightened tension between MONUSCO peacekeeping forces and illegal armed groups could lead to a targeting of medical activities in it joined its CIMIC integrated approach.⁵² Second, the fact that MSF took a political stand like that of rebel forces jeopardized the principle of neutrality it strives to defend. While MSF accused other NGOs of abandoning their neutrality; other NGOs accused MSF of indirectly advancing the political position of illegal armed groups such as M23 and Al-Shabab.⁵³ MSF supported the position of M23 rebel group that urged the distinction between MONUSCO's assets and those of humanitarian NGO by painting green any vehicles carrying weapons or troops. Similarly, MSF accused 'less principled' multi-mandated NGOs involved in MONUSCO's post-war reconstruction of humanitarian complicity.⁵⁴ This was the same allegation made by Al-Shabaab, a rebel group who accused humanitarian NGOs of imperialism.⁵⁵ The fact that the position of MSF is like that of M23 rebels had destroyed the image and credibility of humanitarian organizations. By advancing the position of non-state armed groups, MSF violated the principle of neutrality it claimed to defend.

b. Independence

While the principle of independence implies that humanitarian action "must always maintain their autonomy from public and government authorities", this has not been the case with humanitarian NGOs that are operating in the Eastern DRC. Given the complex emergency environment in which they operate, some humanitarian NGOs in the Eastern DRC have no better alternatives, but to use MONUSCO's military assets to access and provide aid to civilian in territories where the security situation is volatile. By using MONUSCO military logistics to delivery aid to civilians in needs, humanitarian NGOs jeopardise their independence and expose themselves to military attacks of local and foreign rebel groups. In other words, the use of MONUSCO's military assets by humanitarian workers within the CIMIC integrated approach put their lives in danger. For instance, in 2013 M23

⁵² *Ibidem*.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, p. 120.

⁵⁴ Marie-Pierre Allié, "Introduction: Acting at Any Price?", in Claire Magone, Michael Neuman and Fabrice Weissman (eds.), *Humanitarian Negotiations Revealed: The MSF Experience*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2012, pp. 1-15.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*.

rebels increasingly shot at unarmed MONUSCO helicopters and warned that it would strike any UN aircraft entering their airspace.⁵⁶

For M23 and other foreign and local rebel groups, the fact that the Congolese army (FARDC) made use of MONUSCO's resources such as military bases, intelligence, and supply lines make them defacto parties to conflict.⁵⁷ In October 2013, M23 rebels fired upon a MONUSCO helicopter carrying civilian and humanitarian staff. When questioned about the incident, M23 members responded that they had fired on the helicopter because they had mistaken it to be part of a joint FARDC-MONUSCO operation.⁵⁸ The second factor that jeopardizes the independence of humanitarian NGOs is their reliance on MONUSCO's information sharing mechanism. Given the absence of the State's authority in the Eastern DRC, humanitarian NGOs have no other alternatives but to depend on MONUSCO's information sharing mechanism to ensure the safety and security of aid workers. To this end, MONUSCO and humanitarian NGOs meet weekly not only to share information concerning the security threats and distinguish between the 'must', 'could' or 'should' go zones.⁵⁹ The 'must go' zones are those territories where MONUSCO is obligated to respond either through active patrolling or the establishment of a temporary operating base (TOB) "to protect civilians and ensure the safety and security of aid workers."⁶⁰ Whereas the 'should' or 'could go zone', does not require urgent or immediate MONUSCO troops deployment to protect aid workers and civilian populations.⁶¹

If MSF was opposed to this information-sharing initiative, a group of major international humanitarian NGOs, including the International Rescue Committee, Norwegian Refugee Council, Oxfam, and War Child encouraged other humanitarian NGOs to collaborate with MONUSCO to ensure the safety and security of aid workers.⁶² The aim of this CIMIC was to enable humanitarians to be better informed of upcoming MONUSCO's troop's

⁵⁶ Kashmiria Gander, "Congo Rebels Fire Shots at UN Helicopter" in *The Independent*, 2013 [<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/congo-rebels-fire-shots-at-un-helicopter8876263.html>], October 15, 2020.

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*

⁵⁹ MONUSCO, "Islands of Stability", Stabilization Support Unit, Draft Final, 2013.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*.

⁶² O'Neil, "Blurred Lines", p. 110.

deployments and operations, the general security context, and civilian protection related matters. However, as Ryan O’Neil puts it, NGOs that actively participate in the ‘must, should, could protect’ system have legitimised MONUSCO’s integrated approach that has provided few long-term results.⁶³ While these efforts may have deterred attacks in the short run, there is no long-term evidence to suggest that they prevent violence against civilians or aid workers. In a bid to improve MONUSCO’s protection cluster, the Force Commander, the SRSG, and senior military planners have pushed the expansion of the ‘neutralisation’ mandate to cover all battalions. Yet, the ongoing killings of civilians and military attacks against civilians and aid workers in the Eastern DRC demonstrate the ineffectiveness of MONUSCO’s protection cluster. Finally, several NGOs working in the Eastern DRC have abandoned the principle of independence and negotiated either with MONUSCO or illegally armed actors to access and provide humanitarian aid to civilians in need in the name of humanity. To this end, several humanitarian NGOs made semi-formal negotiations with non-state armed groups in the Kivu provinces⁶⁴. However, only a few NGOs have different policies regarding negotiation with non-state armed groups to allow them access to civilians in the territories not controlled by the government.⁶⁵

c. Humanity and impartiality

The CIMIC’s integrated approach has led to the violation of the principles of impartiality and humanity. MSF, for instance, accuses other multi-mandated NGOs operating in the Eastern DRC of ignoring needs, and providing aid that it is not entirely needs-based.⁶⁶ Similar accusations are made by multi-mandated NGOs against MSF whose work is mainly focused on North Kivu while greater needs are found in the South Kivu and Katanga provinces. For its part, MSF still maintains that there are always emergencies in the North Kivu to justify its presence in non-emergency contexts.⁶⁷ By doing so, MSF has violated the principle of humanity by providing

⁶³ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁴ Geneva Call, “Negotiation of Humanitarian access in the North Kivu. The Perceptions of State Armed Actors, Communities and Humanitarians”, 2019 [https://www.genevacall.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/GC-Negotiation-of-humanitarian-access-in-NK_EN2.pdf], December 20, 2020.

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁶ O’Neil, “Blurred Lines”.

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*.

humanitarian aid mainly in the North Kivu at the detriment of emergency territories in the South Kivu province. As revealed by Bimwana Aembe and Dennis Dijkzeul, “emergency cases are still observed in many locations of South Kivu regardless of the apparent security. Political stabilisation is not yet guaranteed, nor is the state response to the vulnerability of the war-affected population regarding their security and social well-being. The current risk of rapid deterioration of the humanitarian context, as was the case in Shabunda in 2009, 2010 and 2012, resulting in an influx of internally displaced persons and consequently poor public healthcare, encourages the position of MSF. MSF cannot disengage unless there is improvement in the security situation”.⁶⁸

The fact that humanitarian NGOs are sometimes obliged to negotiate with non-state armed groups to enable access and provide aid to civilians in the territories under their control jeopardise the impartiality and humanity principles. This non-state armed influence the way aid is distributed to civilian populations so that enough aid is left over to feed military troops.⁶⁹ If under normal circumstances humanitarian relief is subjected to the consent of the legitimate central government, this is not often the case in most complex emergencies. Humanitarian NGOs that are operating in the Eastern requires the consent of non-state armed actors for them to provide aid to civilians in need in the territories under their controls. While non-state armed groups accept to grant consent, they still exercise a control over the relief action and the aid that is provided to civilians in the territories.⁷⁰ In most cases, non-state armed actors condition their consent by technical arrangements with humanitarian NGOs to make sure that aid is safely delivered, and humanitarian convoys are not used to disguise supply weapons in their occupied territories. By doing so, non-state armed group easily manipulate aid to feed parties to conflict in violation of the principles of impartiality and humanity. As argued by Bimwana Aembe and Dennis Dijkzeul, the fragile state nature of the DRC government to fill in the security gap makes the implementation of principled humanitarian aid difficult and complicated as several actors involved in the Eastern part of the North and

⁶⁸ Bimwana Aembe, Dennis Dijkzeul, “Humanitarian Governance, and the Consequences of the State-fragility Discourse in the Democratic Republic of Congo’s Health Sector” in *Disasters*, 2019, p. 189 [DOI: 10.1111/disa.12336].

⁶⁹ Geneva Call, *op. cit.*

⁷⁰ *Ibidem.*

South Kivu provinces do not respect the said principles.⁷¹ Consequently, neither humanitarian NGOs, nor MONUSCO has been effective in protecting civilians and aid workers, or creating a safe environment to enable aid workers to access and provide aid to people in needs wherever they are found.

Division between ‘strict principled’ and ‘less principled’ approach NGOs

MONUSCO’s CIMIC integrated approach has divided the humanitarian community into the ‘*less principled*’ versus the ‘*strict principled*’ humanitarian NGOs. The ‘*less principled*’ NGOs are considered as multi-mandated NGOs that do not identify themselves as having a humanitarian mission in the traditional sense of the ICRC, makes them feel not obliged to adhere to the principles. Whereas the *strict principled* humanitarian NGOs are those such as MSF and Red Croce that claim to be strictly bound by the observance of four traditional principles of humanitarian action.⁷² This division clearly demonstrates that most NGOs representatives do not have the same understanding and interpretation of the humanitarian principles as formulated by the ICRC and endorsed by the UN General Assembly. In other words, this means that MONUSCO’s CIMIC integrated approach divided the humanitarian community in those who follow the *strictly principled approach*’ versus the defenders of the ‘*less principled approach*’. The *strict principled* humanitarian NGOs are opposed to any forms of collaboration with MONUSCO, while the *less principled* NGOs are in favour of this CIMIC integrated approach. For instance, in July 2013, MONUSCO circulated a draft concept note entitled, “Islands of Stability” (IoS). The basic idea behind the concept was to “stabilize areas freed from armed groups” and “create the conditions for improved governance and long-term development by addressing the root causes of conflicts at the local level”.⁷³ While initially well received by ‘*less principled*’ humanitarian NGOs, the IoS initiative was perceived by ‘*strict principled*’ NGOs as endangering the humanitarian principles. The initial draft of the IoS initiative was easily accepted by most humanitarian NGOs because it did not make any reference to humanitarian

⁷¹ Aembe and Dijkzeul, *op. cit.*

⁷² *Ibidem.*

⁷³ O’Neil, “Blurred Lines”.

programs.⁷⁴ However, it made frequent reference to the integrated role of international NGOs in various areas such as economic recovery, mediation, social cohesion, and most importantly in the provision of, most of basic services. By contrast to the first draft, the second IoS draft caused confusion about MONUSCO-humanitarian NGOs integrated initiatives.⁷⁵ This reformulation gave the impression that humanitarian organizations were not independent but included in the broader counterinsurgency strategy. Consequently, humanitarian NGOs were divided into two groups: “*the strict principled approach*” versus the “*less principled approach*”. Led by MSF, the ‘*strict principled approach*’ humanitarian NGOs began to mobilise against the IoS initiative, which they perceived as an infringement of the principle of independence.⁷⁶ They consider that taking part in this MONUSCO’s stabilization project would jeopardise their ability to operate”, and decided to remain outside of the IoS initiative for as long as funding would allow them to.⁷⁷

MSF, for instance, criticized humanitarian NGOs involved in MONUSCO’s stabilisation project of being neither principled nor needs-based. Instead, MSF sees this integrated approach as violating the principle of neutrality by making humanitarian workers parties to the conflict and putting their life at risk. For MSF staff, MONUSCO’s new neutralisation mandate creates confusion between humanitarian and military activities. By contrast, *the ‘less principled’* NGOs actively participated in this stabilisation projects with an aim to share information on troop deployment and security initiatives, and the use of peacekeeping assets and logistics; and they even requested more integration. In response, MSF sent out several emails blaming NGOs in Goma of betraying humanitarian principles of independence and neutrality.⁷⁸ In its correspondences, MSF stated that “to ensure that the vast and persistent humanitarian needs in eastern DRC are prioritised in line with impartially assessed needs, humanitarian organisations must avoid engaging in political positions while providing their support to stabilisation initiatives,

⁷⁴ Joint NGO, “Joint INGO Letter to the United Nations Security Council”, 2014 [www.enoughproject.org/files/JointINGOLetter_MONUSCOMandateRenewal_0.pdf], 30 March 2023.

⁷⁵ *Ibidem.*

⁷⁶ *Ibidem.*

⁷⁷ *Ibidem.*

⁷⁸ O’Neil, “Blurred Lines”

peacebuilding, and the Peace Security Cooperation Framework. Rather, these organisations should be engaging in the MONUSCO mandate renewal process by highlighting the ways in which the current mandate is contributing to the restriction of humanitarian space required to provide quality assistance to populations in need”.⁷⁹

MSF made it clear that multi-mandated NGOs involved in MONUSCO’s stabilization programme, “risk contributing to the blurring of lines with politico-military agendas”.⁸⁰ In other words, MSF is concerned with linking humanitarian action to counterinsurgency warfare. Like MSF, Metcalfe and her colleagues argue that “while not seemingly a problem over the last year, humanitarians complained that the SRSR has used his influence over the DSRSG/HC/RC to enforce de facto “no contact” policies with various rebel factions, in particular Laurent Nakunda’s CNDP”.⁸¹ These ‘no contact’ policies have been interpreted by coalitions of humanitarian NGOs and advocacy groups as an infringement of the humanitarian principle of independence.⁸² In the same vein, one of the coalitions of humanitarian NGOs, known as InterAction, has taken strong positions against the MONUSCO’s CIMIC’s integrated approach.⁸³ Interaction argues that “no new structurally integrated missions should be established in any situation of armed conflict, political violence, or any context where a UN political or peacekeeping mission implements a partisan mandate”.⁸⁴ Thus, despite the favourable attitude of some ‘*least principled approach*’ NGOs towards the CIMIC integrated approach, *strict principled* humanitarian NGOs have been opposed to MONUSCO’s counterinsurgency agenda. This led to tensions on several occasions between MONUSCO and humanitarian NGOs, to a point that the latter raised their concern for a more independent humanitarian action in DRC.

⁷⁹ *Ibidem.*

⁸⁰ *Ibidem.*

⁸¹ Metcalfe *et al.*, p. 31.

⁸² *Ibidem.*

⁸³ InterAction, A Humanitarian Exception to the Integration Rule, 2011 [www.interaction.org/sites/default/files/InterAction%20statement%20on%20integration%20-%20FINAL%2015%20Dec%202011.pdf], May 15, 2022.

⁸⁴ *Ibidem.*

Thus, the best way of bridging gap between the ‘*strict principled approach*’ and ‘*least principled approach*’ NGOs is promoting a ‘selective’ to the respect of the principles. The four traditional principles of humanitarian action as originally conceived do no longer reflect the new forms of post-cold war armed conflicts in general, and in the Eastern DRC in particular. As argued by Dick Salomons, the traditional principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence emerged during the battle of Solferino with the work of Henry Dunant.⁸⁵ Henry Dunant created the International Committee for the Wounded to provide humanitarian assistance which, later, evolved into the ICRC. In this context, while neutrality was necessary to gain access to all parties in a conflict, “humanity” implied that aid would be given impartially, independent of a wound combatant’s rank or affiliation.⁸⁶ In other words, for the International Committee for the Wounded to work effectively, Henry Dunant had to make sure that his organization is fully independent from any individual or group of governments, or religious organizations.⁸⁷ These traditional principles of humanitarian action have enabled the ICRC to regulate the way aid is delivered. However, these principles were conceived in the specific context of inter-state armed conflicts with clearly identifiable combatants, acting under a clear chain of command, in a political setting where war was well-regulated under the rule of law.⁸⁸ There was no real moral distinction between the combatants, and everyone accepted the validity of the ICRC’s mandate. The nature of post-cold war internal and inter-states conflicts in Africa, and in the D.R Congo makes it difficult for humanitarian NGOs to strictly abide with traditional principles of humanitarian action as conceived and applied by Henry Dunant through the International Committee for the Wounded, and actual ICRC. Ongoing armed conflicts in the Eastern DRC war is conducted by illegal local and foreign rebel groups and militias that ignore, or simply consider themselves not bound by international humanitarian law in general, and particularly the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and its three additional protocols of 1977 and 2005.

⁸⁵ Dick Salomons, “Charity, or Charade? The Tragedy of Humanitarianism” in *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 70, no. 2, 2017, p. 50 [<https://www.jstor.org/stable/e90012612>], November 30, 2023.

⁸⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 51.

⁸⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁸⁸ *Ibidem*.

The fact that most of illegal armed groups in the Eastern DRC ignore the basics of international humanitarian law makes it difficult, if not impossible for humanitarian NGOs to operate as neutral, independent, and impartial actors as this was the case with the International Committee for the Wounded during the First and Second World Wars. To address the multi-dimensional aspect of the post-cold war conflicts, the UN and the ICRC established the “Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief”.⁸⁹ The aim of this Code of Conduct was to put in place standards of behavior for the ICRC and the many national Red Cross and Red Crescent organizations, but also for a small group of signatory NGOs to abide with the four traditional principles of humanitarian action.⁹⁰ Despite this Code of Conduct, the security complex situation in the Eastern DRC puts humanitarian NGOs in a serious dilemma. Given the climate of permanent insecurity characterized by the continuous cases of kidnappings and killings of aid workers in the Eastern DRC, many humanitarian NGOs have no better option than participating into MONUSCO’s integrated approach to guarantee the safety and security of their personnel, relief convoys and assets. In the same vein, humanitarian NGOs in the Eastern DRC are forced by donors to negotiate with, or to rely on rebel groups to have a safe access to civilians in need of assistance in territories not controlled by MONUSCO, or the national army.⁹¹ In both situations, humanitarian NGOs run a risk of violating the principles of neutrality, impartiality, and independence.

By collaborating with, or relying on one of the parties to conflict, humanitarian NGOs are perceived not as neutral and independent actors but as a defacto parties to the conflict. Yet, they are struggling to address the basic needs of civilians wherever they are found in fulfilment of the core principle of humanity. This dilemma shows the need for developing a ‘*selective respect approach*’ rather than the ‘*traditional strict respect approach*’ to the principles of humanitarian action. The article argues that the “Do no harm” approach should be the guiding principle of this ‘*selective respect approach*’ to the respect of each of the four principles of humanitarian action. In her ‘do no harm’ approach, Mary Anderson argues that any conflict resolution or peacebuilding intervention should intend to do better to the beneficiaries rather than

⁸⁹ Salomons, *op. cit.*

⁹⁰ *Ibidem.*

⁹¹ Geneva Call, *op. cit.*

exacerbating the conflict.⁹² Thus, the respect or letting go of each principle of humanitarian action should be measured on whether this will do more harm than good to both aid workers and beneficiaries.

Given the difficulty to achieve all the four humanitarian principles in most complex emergencies and the Eastern DRC in particular, the article suggests the notion of '*selective respect approach*' versus the '*traditional strict respect approach*' of the humanitarian principles as a remedy to this controversial debate. As opposed to the notion of the '*strict traditional respect*', '*the selective respect approach*' advocates for the respect of principles of humanitarian action depending on the complex emergency environments in which humanitarian NGOs operate. Contrary to the ICRC and Red Crescent Movement's traditional view, our '*selective respect approach*' suggests that achieving the principles of humanitarian action should not be regarded as an interlinked linear process whereby all the four traditional principles of humanitarian action have to be simultaneously achieved, but as a selective process. As Salomons puts it, "the only principle that should truly guide humanitarian action is "humanity".⁹³ Like Salomons, Dunant believed that humanity was best expressed through personal engagement he held the hands of dying soldiers".⁹⁴

Thus, as argued by Bwimana Aembe and Dennis Dijkzeul, to enable an effective humanitarian governance in complex emergency situations such as the DRC, it is paramount to combine humanitarian normative intentions with the study of multi-actor governance and its empirical consequences on the ground.⁹⁵ The respect of each principle of humanitarian action should, in my view, depend on the security challenge that aid workers are facing on the field. This means that given the security situation on the ground should determine the extent to which humanitarian NGOs can strictly or selectively abide with one or another principle of humanitarian. According to Meinrad Studer, "ICRC tries to ensure that military action does not impinge on the impartiality, neutrality and independence of its work".⁹⁶ However, the

⁹² Mary Anderson, '*Do No Harm*', *How Aid Can Support Peace or War*, London: Lynne Rienner Publisher, 1999.

⁹³ Salomons, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

⁹⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁹⁵ Aembe and Dijkzeul, *op. cit.*, p. 188.

⁹⁶ Meinrad Studer, "The ICRC and Civil-Military Relations in Armed Conflict International Review of the Red Cross"

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/231965732_The_ICRC_and_CivilMilitary_Relations_in_Armed_Conflict], June 2, 2022.

reality on the field demonstrates that all four principles of humanitarian action should not be given the same level of importance and priority. Contrary to ICRC's view, this article argues that the idea of pure neutral, independent, or impartial humanitarian work is not realistic in most complex emergency situations in general, and the DRC.

Similarly, some scholars and humanitarian agencies recognize the principle of impartiality as the sole and fundamental principle for humanitarian action. Meinrad Studer, for instance, values more the principle of impartiality than neutrality, independence, and humanity.⁹⁷ He believes that the only instance where humanitarian NGOs will clash with the fundamental idea of humanitarian action is when they deliver aid to the beneficiaries with partiality.⁹⁸ By contrast, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) considers humanity is the core principle of humanitarian action and urges that "any civil-military coordination must serve the prime humanitarian principle of humanity".⁹⁹ The fact that all the four traditional principles of humanitarian action are not considered at the same level in terms of importance and priority, the '*selective respect approach*' is deemed necessary to fit the context of complex emergencies.

Like many previous studies, this article argues that while the principles of humanity and impartiality are less controversial, the principles of neutrality and independence are difficult, if not impossible, to achieve in security complex emergency situations such as the DRC. It questions the extent to which aid workers can remain neutral and independent from peacekeepers and still have access and provide humanitarian assistance to people in needs in complex emergency environment where their security and safety is not guaranteed. In addition, it is difficult, if not impossible, for aid workers operating in the Eastern DRC to strictly respect all the four principles and still have access to civilians and address their needs wherever they are found. The respect of these principles should depend on circumstances, context, and environment where humanitarian NGOs operate. Thus, the controversy among humanitarian NGOs regarding the MONUSCO's integrated approach demonstrates the limitation of the "*strict respect approach*" of the four

⁹⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁹⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁹⁹ Inter-Agencies Standing Committee (IASC), "Civil-military Relationship in Complex Emergencies – An IASC Reference Paper", 2004 [<http://espace.library.uq.edu.au/view/UQ:62914>], August 1, 2022.

traditional principles of humanitarian action as conceived by the ICRC. For the “*least principled*” multi-mandated NGOs, the principles of impartiality, neutrality and independence should not be used as an excuse to disregard humanity. In other words, the strict respect of humanitarian principles should not be used as an excuse to prevent NGOs from helping people in need and alleviate their suffering no matter where they are.

Furthermore, multi-mandated NGOs with peace-building, security sector reform or development related projects applied codes of conduct and internal principles different from the traditional humanitarian principles formulated by the ICRC’s. Whereas less principled humanitarian NGOs have abused the principle of humanity to justify their continuous presence in the Eastern DRC, other strict principled NGOs have used the principles of independence and neutrality to cover up their lack of effectiveness in providing aid to people in need. The work of MSF in the DRC has managed to keep the issue of humanitarian space on the agenda and helped the humanitarian community in framing the debate on the use of MONUSCO’s drones and other military assets by aid workers. However, MSF’s position about the respect of humanitarian principles has not always been consistent but changed over time.

Conclusion

Civil-military cooperation (CIMIC) has emerged as a coordinated strategy between the UN peacekeeping forces and humanitarian NGOs to enable the later to access civilians in need of aid in complex emergencies. Using the CIMIC between humanitarian NGOs and the United Nations Peacekeeping and Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) as the case study, the primary objective of this article was to analyze the impacts of the MONUSCO’s CIMIC integrated approach on the principles of humanitarian action. To this end, it addressed two fundamental questions: (i) how does MONUSCO collaborate with humanitarian NGOs in providing aid to civilians, and (ii) what is the actual impact of this CIMIC integrated approach on humanitarian principles? The “triple hat” of Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator (DSRSG/HC/RC) characterizes MONUSCO’s CIMIC integrated approach, with an aim to improve humanitarian access. However, this MONUSCO’s integrated approach has significantly contributed to the violations of the traditional principles of humanitarian action (neutrality, independence,

impartiality, and humanity); and the division of the humanitarian NGOs between the defenders of the *'strict principled approach'* versus the *'least principled approach'*. Humanitarian NGOs have struggled to become more effective in delivering aid in strict respect of the traditional principles of humanitarian action as advocated by the ICRC; but most of them have failed.

The weakness of the DRC government and its FARDC to establish the State's authority and ensure the security of both, aid workers and beneficiaries, has left some humanitarian NGOs with no better alternatives but to negotiate either with MONUSCO, or with non-state armed actors to access and provide aid to civilians in needs in the territories under their control. By doing so, humanitarian NGOs have been perceived not as neutral, impartial, and independent actors, but as parties to conflict. This explains to some extent military attacks carried out by the M23 rebel group and other mai-mai militias against aid workers. Consequently, MONUSCO's CIMIC integrated approach has divided humanitarian NGOs into two groups: defenders of the *'strict principled approach'* led by ICRC and MSF versus defenders of the *'least principled approach'* advocated by multi-mandated NGOs. However, neither a *'least principled approach'*, nor *'strict principled approach'* has been effective in providing aid the Eastern DRC. Defenders of *'the strict principled approach'* such as MSF and the ICRC blame humanitarian and multi-mandated INGOs involved in MONUSCO's integrated stabilization process of violating humanitarian principles. They accused aid workers involved with MONUSCO of violating the principles of independence and neutrality and running a risk of being perceived as de facto parties to conflict and become the target of illegal armed groups. Whereas defenders of the *'least principled approach'* consider MONUSCO's CIMIC integrated approach as the best means to ensure the security of aid workers and safe access to civilians in need of aid. Given the complex emergency in which humanitarian NGOs operate in the Eastern DRC, this article advocates for a *'selective approach'* to the respect of the principles of humanitarian action. As opposed to *'the strict principled approach'* and *'least principled approach'*, the *'selective respect approach'* enables humanitarian NGOs to abide with the principles of humanitarian action based on the contexts and environments in which they operate. The *'do no harm'* approach should guide humanitarian NGOs in selecting which of the four principles of humanitarian action to respect or let go for humanity sake to enable them access to civilians and provide aid wherever the needs are found.

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ENIGMA OF SUB-REGIONAL INTEGRATION IN AFRICA: THE CASE OF THE ECONOMIC AND MONETARY COMMUNITY OF CENTRAL AFRICA (CEMAC), 1994-2020

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Abstract: *This chapter examines the enigma of Sub-regional economic integration in the Communauté Economique et Monétaire de l'Afrique Central (CEMAC) zone. The sub-regional integration idea was born out of the need for a united Africa during the immediate independence period, to be achieved through a gradual, but steady process. Although instituted in 1994, CEMAC was a re-make of the Economic and Customs Union of Central Africa (UDEAC) created in 1964. CEMAC was established, to promote sub-regional integration among central African states that shared a common legal tender, the CFA franc, through the promotion of trade, a genuine common market and greater solidarity. Albeit recording some inroads, CEMAC lagged behind its objectives, due to tardiness and overall poor implementation of policies, limited technical capacity, divergent attitudes of member states towards integration and absence of sanctions against states that disrespect community norms. The chapter sustains that such diverse political, economic, and socio-cultural impediments could only be halted through a joint approach, for remedial renewal by all stakeholders for a truly integrated economic CEMAC sub-region. This investigation shall be based on secondary and primary data, interpreted qualitatively and presented thematically.*

Keywords: *Enigma, Economic integration, CEMAC, Sub-regionalism, Africa.*

Introduction

Regional and sub-regional integration in Africa emerged during the immediate postcolonial period, in an effort to construct viable geographic, economic and politically cohesive entities on the continent.¹ This initially

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¹ Jens Haarlow, *Regional Cooperation and Integration within Industry and Trade in Southern Africa: General Approaches, SADCC and the World Bank*, Aldershot: Avebury, 1997, p. 16.

was aimed at working towards preserving African independence and fighting neo-colonialism.² It later shifted towards economic cooperation, with the ultimate aim of establishing an African Economic Community (AEC) as laid down by the Lagos Plan of Action in 1980, which called on all African countries to strengthen their regional economic communities and establishing new ones before 1990.³ This idea spurred the formation of the wider Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) in 1983. It was in this same framework that the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) was created in 1994, to replace the Customs and Economic Union of Central Africa (UDEAC) that had been instituted in 1959 just before independence by four members: the Central African Republic (CAR), Chad, Congo and Gabon.⁴

The UDEAC treaty was signed in 1964, to strengthen regional solidarity and promote the gradual creation of a common market.⁵ Cameroon joined it that same year and Equatorial Guinea adhered in 1983. By its creation, the heads of state and Government had committed themselves to establishing a closer union between their people in order to fortify regional cohesion and promote the gradual creation of a common market in Central Africa.⁶ They considered this as a means to greater regional development and a way through which the region's economy could be integrated into the global economic system, thereby giving it more economic power in the international arena.⁷ After thirty years of existence (1964-1994), the UDEAC

² Sergiu Mişcoiu, Dan Petrică, "The New EU-Africa Relations' Strategy: Soft Power or Neoliberalist Power?", in Adebowale Akande (ed.) *Politics Between Nations. Contributions to International Relations*, Cham: Springer, 2023, pp. 539-560.

³ Margaret Lee, "Regionalism in Africa: A Part of Problem or a Part of Solution?", in *Polis / R.C.S.P. / C.P.S.R.* Vol. 9, Numéro Spécial, 2002, p. 1.

⁴ Victor Essien, "Regional Trade Agreements in Africa – A Historical and Bibliographic Account of ECOWAS and CEMAC", 2019 [https://www.nyulawglobal.org/globalex/cemac_ecowas1.html], 10th May 2022.

⁵ Bela A. Balassa, *The Theory of Economic Integration*, Homewood, Illinois: Richard Dale, Inc., 1961, p. 1.

⁶ Guy Marcel Nono, "Integration Efforts in Central Africa: The Case of CEMAC," UNO-CRIS Working papers, United Nations University, Institute on Comparative Regional Integration Studies, 2014, p. 8 [<https://cris.unu.edu/integration-efforts-central-africa-case-cemac>], 8th July 2022.

⁷ Communauté Européenne, "Région de l'Afrique Centrale : Document de stratégie de coopération régionale et Programme indicative régional," *Stratégie de Coopération Régionale Avec L'Afrique Centrale-9ème FED*, 2001 [http://ec.europa.eu/development/icenter/repository/print_r8_rsp_fr.pdf], 12th May 2022.

could not achieve these goals. As a result of the economic crisis which broke out in the late 1980s and 1990, the member states of UDEAC became highly concerned with a vision to establish a customs union and the need to create a more efficient integration initiative, leading to its replacement in March 1994 by the CEMAC.⁸ Its principal mission was, completing the process of economic and monetary integration of the sub-region that was started by its predecessor.⁹

The Treaty creating the CEMAC identified four important community institutions that would assist in achieving its objectives: the *Union Economique de l'Afrique Centrale* (UEAC); *Union Monétaire de l'Afrique Centrale* (UMAC); *Parliament Communautaire* (P.C.); *Cour de Justice Communautaire* (C.J.C.) and the Supreme Audit Court of CEMAC.¹⁰ This sub-regional organisation thus constituted a link between the Monetary Union, Bank of Central African States (BEAC), Customs Union, and the Customs and Economic Union of Central Africa (UDEAC). These institutions were further assisted by a range of organs: the Conference of Heads of States (COHS), described as the supreme body of the Community; the Council of Ministers (COM), charged with the responsibility of directing the UEAC and made up primarily of the Ministers in charge of Finance and Economic affairs of member states; the Ministerial Committee (MC), composed of two Ministers per member state with the minister of finance as head of delegation; CEMAC Commission; Bank of Central African States (BEAC); the Development Bank of Central African States (BDEAC); Banking Commission of Central Africa (COBAC) and others.¹¹ This chapter focuses on the objectives, achievements and challenges for sub-regional integration in Central Africa. It argues that, CEMAC efforts were strained by a range of constraints.

Objectives and means to achieve

The CEMAC was established as a means of creating a more defined and dominant integration initiative, aimed not only at promoting the

⁸ CEMAC treaty [<http://www.worldtradelaw.net/fta/agreements/cemacfta.pdf>], 18th October 2022.

⁹ *Traité constitutif de la CEMAC*, (1994), art 1 [[http://www.internationaldemocracywatch.org/attachments/173_CEMAC%20Treaty%20\(French\).pdf](http://www.internationaldemocracywatch.org/attachments/173_CEMAC%20Treaty%20(French).pdf)], 20th July 2022.

¹⁰ Essien, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

¹¹ Nono, *op. cit.*

harmonious socio-economic and cultural development of all its member states, but creating a true common Central African market and implementing disciplines on the free movement of persons, goods, capital and services.¹² It was also out to adopt common policies in many areas amongst which were good governance and human rights (promote peace and regional safety in accordance with the spirit of the Abuja and the AU Treaties). Moreover, CEMAC regional policies were focused on the development and interconnection of transport infrastructure, a water and energy environmental pool of central Africa (PEAC), the sub regional hydroelectric potential, implementation of a functioning customs union, regional food security programme (PRSA) and a common agricultural policy (PAC).¹³

To achieve its mission, the CEMAC set-up a series of objectives under two of its institutions: the *Union Economique de l'Afrique Centrale* (UEAC) and the *Union Monétaire de l'Afrique Centrale* (UMAC).¹⁴ These institutions had as missions, the following: set up a multilateral device of monitoring the economic and financial policies of member states; ensure a stable management of the Franc CFA; make safe its economic activities and businesses in general; harmonize the regulation of the sectoral policies in the essential fields, as prescribed by the Treaty, such as: agriculture, fisheries, industry, trade, tourism, transport and telecommunications, energy and environment, research, teaching, vocational training and creating a common market, based on the freedom of movement of persons, goods, services and capital.¹⁵ These objectives were supposed to be completely achieved within three years after the entry into force of CEMAC's Revised Treaty of 2008. It was also agreed under this treaty that in the event of a state failing to fulfil its obligations under community law, its

¹² Essien, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

¹³ African Development Bank Group, "Central Africa Regional Integration Strategy Paper 2019-2025", Edited version, 2019, p. 24

[https://www.afdb.org/sites/default/files/documents/strategy-documents/central_africa_risp_2019-_english_version_0206_19_final_version.pdf], 12th April 2022.

¹⁴ Christian Lambert Nguena, "The Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa, EMCCA", Africa Housing Finance Yearbook, 2019, p. 1

[<http://housingfinanceafrica.org/app/uploads/V8-CEMAC-PROFILE.pdf>], 14th October 2022.

¹⁵ United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, "Harmonisation of Economic Communities in Central Africa: Experts Re-engage"

[<http://www.uneca.org/stories/harmonisation-economic-communities-central-africa-experts-re-engage>], 20th September 2022.

international responsibility would be called into question and subject to adjudication before the court of justice of CEMAC.¹⁶

Achievements

After its inception in 1994, CEMAC realised a series of achievements leading to the economic integration of the sub-region. These achievements have particularly been in the domains of monetary integration; free trade zone efforts: free movement of persons; infrastructural development and the harmonisation of sector policies, as shall be seen developed subsequently.

A) Monetary Integration

As concerns CEMAC achievements, monetary integration has been one of its principal achievements, marked by the use of a common currency: the Central African francs CFA created by France for its former colonies in 1945, in the absence of a sub-regional integration policy.¹⁷ This is in spite the monetary integration system is being headed by France, which plays a vital role in its functioning as a whole and of BEAC, an instrument to control the monetary sovereignty of all member states of the Franc zone.¹⁸ Again, BEAC plays an important role in organising and managing the monetary system, banking, financial and exchange rate regime (International Monetary Fund, 2016), while COBAC (Banking Commission of Central Africa), established in 1993, monitors and controls the performance of banking activities in the CEMAC zone.

Still within the framework of monetary integration, the Central African States' Development Bank (BDEAC) has promoted the economic and social development of the CEMAC Sub-region.¹⁹ It has further assisted in financing member states, sub-regional organisations, financial institutions and economic operators in their effort to mobilize financial resources and

¹⁶ Nono, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

¹⁷ Kai Koddenbrock *et al.*, "Towards a Political Economy of Monetary Dependency: The Case of the CFA Franc in West Africa", MaxPo Discussion Paper, No. 19/2, Max Planck Sciences Po Center on Coping with Instability in Market Societies (MaxPo), Paris, 2019, p. iii [<https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/202323/1/1671513134.pdf>], 20th September 2022.

¹⁸ Nono, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

¹⁹ Central African States Development Bank, "41st Annual Report Financial Year 2017", p. 9 [https://www.bdeac.org/upload/docs/application/pdf/2019-06/rapport_bdeac_210x297_us.pdf_27052019.pdf], 16th August 2022.

financing projects. In the same vein, a Central African stock exchange known as the “*Bourse des valeurs mobilières d’Afrique Centrale*” (BVMAC), established in 2003, precisely in Gabon, supports business capitalisation and the development of an investment portfolio in the sub-region.²⁰

The Free Trade Zone efforts

CEMAC Free Trade Zone efforts is one of its accomplishments, specifically through the implementation of a preferential tariff for products originating in Central Africa, also known as *Generalised Preferential Tariff (GPT)*.²¹ Again, the rate of customs duties on goods of regional origin has been zero since 1998. *Indeed, this makes CEMAC a customs union and an incubator for the free movement of goods.* In short, CEMAC has made very significant progress in its trade liberalisation by creating a customs and monetary union. The customs union is ensured by the existence of a CEMAC Common External Tariff and use of the Franc CFA. Due to the rampant failures in market integration, regional integration, coupled with regional cooperation, is perhaps a more viable strategy for Africa.²²

Free Movement of Persons

The free movement of people across borders has been high on the regional integration agenda in the CEMAC zone, primarily because of the prospective trade gains that were associated with it. It was therefore a prerequisite that sufficient liberalization be implemented among member states for unrestricted movement of people and enhanced cross-border investments. Many positive steps have been made in this direction notably the implementation of the CEMAC digital passport since 2010.²³ This has made it easy for CEMAC citizens to travel to Cameroon, Congo, CAR, and Chad without a visa as they can simply move across borders with their

²⁰ Règlement General du BVMAC, (2008), p. 4 [<https://www.bvm-ac.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Reglement-BVMAC.pdf>], 16th August 2022.

²¹ Economic Community of Central African States, “CEMAC Economic and Financial Reforms Programme (PREF-CEMAC)”, Foundation for International Development Studies and Research (FERDI), 2017, p. 13.

²² Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

²³ Serge Loungou, “La libre circulation des personnes au sein de l’espace de la C.E.M.A.C : entre mythes et réalités” in *Revue Belge de Géographie*, 2010, p. 315.

community passport. Free movement of people across Africa represents a powerful boost to economic growth and skills development, especially when people can travel with ease for business, tourism or education.²⁴ Everyone benefits from a country that opens up their borders, as can be seen in remittances growth in recent years.²⁵ Improved infrastructure and transport facilities are said can ease the process and further stimulate cross-border mobility that boosts economic growth and development in Africa.²⁶

Furthermore, “free movement of people and the rights of residence and establishment” comprises the fifth phase of the Abuja Treaty under the auspices of the African Union that is projected to be realized by 2023.²⁷ To achieve a freer movement of people, the African Union has advocated for the “single African passport” as a part of its Agenda 2063.²⁸ CEMAC countries and region need to encourage positive reciprocity, applying the treatment they receive from more visa-open countries; and look at promoting a visa-on-arrival approach or regional bloc visas.

Infrastructural Development and Harmonisation of Sector Policies

Apart from promoting the free movement of people, the CEMAC has embarked on the development of Central Africa’s infrastructure, in order to link Cameroon, Chad and the Central African Republic, through roads and rail. The Community Road infrastructure, that cut across national boundaries such as the Touboro (Cameroon)-Moundou (Chad), Yaoundé-Ebolowa, Ambam (Cameroon)-Oyem (Gabon), the Ebolowa, -kye Ossi (Cameroon) - Ebébiyin (Equatorial Guinea) and the proposed Sangmélina (Cameroon)-Congo border road projects have been put under construction.²⁹ This much-

²⁴ Lude A. Djam, and Therese Z. Elomo, “Governance, Infrastructure and Regional Integration: The Case of CEMAC” in *Scientific Research*, Vol 11, No. 11, 2020 [<https://www.scirp.org/journal/paperinformation.aspx?paperid=104476>], 18th July 2022.

²⁵ African Union Commission, “African Development Bank and ECA, Africa Regional Integration Index Report”, 2016 [<http://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Generic-Documents/A>], 13th October 2022.

²⁶ *Ibidem*.

²⁷ *Ibidem*.

²⁸ African Union, “Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want”, 2014

[<http://archive.au.int/assets/images/agenda2063.pdf>], July 18th 2022.

²⁹ Forbinake Nkemdem, “Integration Imperative” in *Cameroon Tribune*, 9th December 2009, p. 3.

needed infrastructure investment is boosted by the macroeconomic stability that the CEMAC region enjoyed due to the high tide of oil prices.³⁰

There has been the harmonisation of regional sector policies in the CEMAC Zone in domains such as energy, transport, agriculture and the environment.³¹ Thus, among some of the efforts made in free circulation, one can make mention of the elaboration of the Regional Economic Programme (PER), that has made the sub-region a viable economic actor in Africa. In the transport sector, the introduction of CEMAC registration numbers, which are connected to a database that permits the security forces of Member States and Interpol to conduct searches, especially concerning vehicle theft have been so commendable.

In addition, vehicles displaying these registration numbers can move freely between member countries without having them changed. A common vehicle insurance scheme known as the “Pink card” has also been introduced in the sub-region.³² This card allows drivers traveling in one or more countries in the sub-region, to be properly insured in the case of accident in the destination country. CEMAC countries have also adopted a community Highway Code for roads that are open to traffic. Despite these inroads, the CEMAC has encountered several challenges in an effort to meet its objectives.

CEMAC Challenges

Notwithstanding CEMAC’s successes, sub-regional economic integration in Central Africa has been limited on account of several factors. These let-downs have not been related to the quality of its treaties, but the limited technical capacity within its institutions, the divergent attitudes of member states towards regional integration and sometimes, absence of sanctions against states which do not respect Community norms.³³ These challenges are characterised by restraints in CEMAC’s monetary integration system, free trade zone; free movement of persons; weak basic infrastructures and inadequate interconnection of national transport

³⁰ Christina Lagarde, “CEMAC: A Stronger Community for Stronger and More Inclusive Growth”, IMF, 2016 [<https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2015/09/28/04/53/sp010816>], 18th October 2022.

³¹ Nono, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

³² Nkemdem, *op. cit.* p. 3.

³³ Nono, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

networks between states; overlapping regional organisations; lack of respect for democratic principles and established institution to ensure their respect; insecurity and overdependence on oil revenues, as seen consequently.

Monetary Integration Constraints

The CEMAC monetary policy is one of the main factors restraining integration in the sub-region. It should be noted that this aspect has been championed by France, through a host of mechanisms, used to control the monetary sovereignty of member states. These are: the *Union Monétaire de l'Afrique Centrale (UMAC)*, which plays an important role in regulating the financial system of all CEMAC member states, through the following institutions: the *Bank des Etats de L'Afrique Centrale (BEAC)* that does not only guarantee the issuance of the CFA francs, but organises and manages the monetary system, banking, financial and exchange rate regime; the Banking Commission of Central Africa (COBAC), established in 1993, to monitor and control banking activities in the region and the Central African stock exchange, to support business capitalisation and development of an investment portfolio in the sub-region. Indeed, with the foregoing set-up, the sub-region's monetary system is such that the Franc CFA is ascribed as boosting more integration with France than among member states.³⁴

The Free trade Zone and Movement of Persons' Constrictions

Despite the economic *raison d'être* of the free trade zone, intraregional trade within Central Africa has remained relatively low, even with its common currency. This low and waning levels of trade among member states means restricted economic interdependence and diminutive interest among economic and political actors in the sub-region.³⁵ This mission has been overturned by nontariff barriers such as excessive taxing of goods and the lack of adequate roads and others, which have remained major obstacles to intra-regional trade.³⁶ The lack of fiscal policy coordination among members and absence of discipline enforcement has greatly worked down on the putting in place of a free trade zone in the sub-region. Although there

³⁴ Oscar V. Kuikeu, "Convergence des niveaux de vie de la Communauté économique et monétaire de l'Afrique Centrale (CEMAC) : quelle vitesse de convergence ?" in *African Integration and Development Review*, Volume 10, November 2017, p. 28.

³⁵ Loungou, *op. cit.*, p. 315.

³⁶ Sabrina Lando *et al.*, "CEMAC: A Regional Approach to Enhancing Governance" [<https://www.elibrary.imf.org>], 16th May 2022.

are policies such as the common CEMAC passport, which has allowed the movement of goods from one member state to another without any visa requirements, it has however not been fully implemented, as such, non-official barriers to migration and capital mobility have also been limited.³⁷

It is nevertheless argued that even though this EU model of market integration, has failed in spurring integration on the continent and sub-region in particular, African governments have not stopped adopting it, believing this will enhance growth and development.³⁸ CEMAC's economic challenges are said to be compounded by a timid sub-regional cooperation.³⁹ This lack of cooperation among its member states, makes national investment regimes to be open to foreigners, whose companies, sometimes in partnership with the state, enjoy, monopolies or exclusive rights, which result in anti-competitive practices and the persistence of price controls.⁴⁰ Despite the CEMAC Community Investment Charter of 1999, and the existence of Community provisions concerning exemptions, the States maintain numerous autonomous fiscal and customs privileges which could well be streamlined.

Concerning the free movement of people, despite the progress made by CEMAC, through the implementation of the digital passport, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea have continued to require obtaining a visa for entry into their respective countries from nationals of other member states, citing security concerns.⁴¹ In addition, freedom of movement in Central Africa is often characterised by acts of intolerance of the populations towards immigrants. In the sub-region, businesses have not been able to attract, move or retain professionals because of restrictive immigration laws, hampering the mobility of professional services, causing limited regional skills pooling throughout the continent.⁴²

³⁷ Loungou, *op. cit.*, p. 316.

³⁸ Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

³⁹ International Monetary Fund, "Central African Economic and monetary Union (CEMAC), Common Policies of Member Countries," Press Release, Staff Report, and Statement Country Report No. 15/308, 2015, Washington DC.

⁴⁰ United Nations Development Programme, "Central Africa: A Sub-Region Lagging Behind?", 2007 [www.afdb.org/sites/default/files/documents/strategy-documents/central_africa_risp_2019-english_version_020619_final_version.pdf], 18th July 2022.

⁴¹ Essien, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

⁴² African Development Bank, "Visa restrictions and economic consequences in Africa", 2013 [<http://www.afdb.org/en/blogs/afdb-championing-inclusive-growth-across-af>], 20th August 2022.

According to Loungou,⁴³ three great myths underlie the apparent reluctance of Gabon and Equatorial Guinea to apply the principles of free movement of people: the myth of demographic invasion and myths of economic and social perversions, associated with the crime of foreign origin. Such practices have made the CEMAC free movement of persons' objective, an uphill task.⁴⁴ It is therefore imperative for all CEMAC member states to give up on such attitudes thereby respecting the recommendations of the 2008 revised treaty.

Weak basic Infrastructure and Inadequate Interconnection of National Transport Networks between CEMAC States

Weak infrastructure, especially poor interconnection of national transport systems between CEMAC states, remain obstacles to achieving economic and physical integration in the sub-region.⁴⁵ Integration between states resides in the ease with which people, goods, services and capital can interchange between its members. But when a country or sub-region does not have sufficient transport infrastructure, it no longer fulfils its connectivity function and the economy suffers.⁴⁶ The CEMAC Sub-region is so poorly connected by road and railway systems. In fact, Railway systems are not connected, superseded and underused. In terms of maritime transport, major ports are ill-equipped to handle its activities in that region.

Overlapping Regional Organisations

The Central African region contains two integration organisations: CEMAC and ECCAS. All CEMAC members are members of ECCAS, but some ECCAS members also have overlapping memberships in other sub-regional organisations like Angola, Burundi, Rwanda and DRC which are COMESA members, while Burundi and Rwanda are EAC members and so on.⁴⁷ These parallel and often competing groupings, divert the needed economic and

⁴³ Loungou, *op. cit.*, p. 315.

⁴⁴ E. G. Samnick, "De la difficulté de circuler librement en Afrique centrale" in *Enjeux*, n° 24, 2005, pp. 20-23.

⁴⁵ African Development Bank Group, "Central Africa Regional Integration Strategy Paper 2019-2025", Edited version, 2019 [https://www.afdb.org/sites/default/files/documents/strategy-documents/central_africa_risp_2019-_english_version_020619_final_version.pdf], March 2022.

⁴⁶ Djam *et al.*, *op. cit.*

⁴⁷ African Development Bank Group, *art. cit.*

political will to succeed.⁴⁸ Furthermore, because of the lack of commitment from member states and their inability to move away from national and short-term interests, the establishment of a common currency and an institutional framework have failed to enable CEMAC member states to attain the expected level of economic and monetary integration.⁴⁹ In addition, good governance remains a task in this region as all member states have a low grade on the World Bank's good governance pointers.

The Lack of respect for Democratic Principles and established Institution to ensure their respect.

The lack of respect for democratic principles has always led to deeply afflicted conflicts in Africa, emanating from coup d'états, like that which led to the subsequent political turmoil in Central African Republic, *supplemented by the* political and military volatility in Chad, notwithstanding the disputed electoral processes in Gabon and Cameroon.⁵⁰ It has also been deduced that some heads of state use regional cooperation as a guarantee of support and confirmation of their authority by their colleagues, whenever their power is compromised by civil insurrections, rebellions or putsch attempts, or by foreign pressure. Even though CEMAC treaties envisage a common policy in the domain of good governance and human rights, no institution has so far been created to ensure their respect.

The foregoing examples show that the human rights situation in the CEMAC Sub-Region is precarious. This is so because contrary to other Courts and Tribunals of African regional economic communities that have widened their competences to include human rights, the judicial chamber of the Court of Justice of CEMAC, does not have any competence in the domain of human rights. This idea of adopting common policies on the respect of human rights and good governance, is far from being achieved in the sub-region and this because member states are not sanctioned in cases of non-compliance with these principles. Thus, the lack of a viable sanctioning institution in case of the non-respect of agreed principles among CEMAC member states is a great obstacle to integration efforts in the sub-region.

⁴⁸ Loungou, *op. cit.*, p. 315.

⁴⁹ Laurens, *art. cit.*

⁵⁰ International IDEA Policy Dialogue, "Deepening the Transition to Democratic Governance in Central Africa, 2015, p. 8 [<https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/deepening-the-transition-to-democratic-governance-in-central-africa.pdf>], 18th April 2022.

Insecurity

Insecurity has been one of the factors discouraging integration in the CEMAC zone. Boko Haram terrorist activities in the Lake Chad region have led Cameroun and Chad sacrifice significant budget resources to counter their danger and risks.⁵¹ This high incidence of terrorism in the Lake Chad Basin, political and military crisis in the Central African Republic, continued armed conflicts in the Great Lakes region, and the activities of the Ugandan rebel movement (the Lord's Resistance Army) in the Central African Republic and Democratic Republic of Congo are greatly working down on economic integration in the sub-region.⁵² For instance, due to the risks of disruption to Chadian trade routes by Boko Haram, President Idris Déby placed himself at the forefront of tackling regional security threats, from Mali to northern Nigeria. These threats particularly affected livestock trade, which is Chad's second largest export earner after oil and the source of livelihoods for large numbers of its people.⁵³ Insecurity is hugely draining CEMAC countries' budgets thereby reducing their economic commitments to sub-regional integration.

This insecurity in the sub-region is caused by the lack of team spirit, in meeting its good governance, and the Regional Economic Programme missions aimed at working toward consolidating common policies in the energy; agriculture, forestry; mining and metallurgy domains has not sufficiently transformed the sub-region's economies. This has rather reduced their added value and increased unemployment and poverty in the sub-region. At the same time, security related disruptions are taking an additional toll, not only on economic activity and fiscal resources but emotionally as well.⁵⁴

Overdependence on Oil Revenues

Over reliance on oil revenues has retarded integration among central African states, as petroleum accounts for 86 percent of its exports. Such overdependence exposes the whole region to the risks of oil price fluctuations.

⁵¹ International Monetary Fund, "Central African Economic and Monetary Union (CEMAC)".

⁵² African Development Bank Group, *art. cit.*

⁵³ Lagarde, *art. cit.*

⁵⁴ *Ibidem.*

An oil-price shock took a toll on CEMAC's five oil exporting members, since June 2014.⁵⁵ Oil prices have declined by more than 55 percent, with oil representing more than three-quarters of the region's exports and half of fiscal revenues and most countries are facing budgetary pressures.⁵⁶ While the sector's performance was rewarding in some member states in as early as 1999, where their per capita growth increased like Equatorial Guinea, there was a severe contraction of the Gabonese economy that same year.⁵⁷ This fall in crude oil prices has often disrupted macroeconomic balances in member states and deteriorated short- and medium-term growth prospects, triggering a worsening of deficits in national and regional balance of payments and a sharp decrease in foreign exchange reserves. This situation highlights CEMAC's great vulnerability.⁵⁸

Conclusion

CEMAC was established, to promote sub-regional integration in Central Africa. This chapter has focused on examining the enigma of this process in the region, CEMAC objectives, achievements and impediments. From these, challenges and threats to peace, security, stability and governance have been diagnosed as a multifaceted reality against regional integration in the sub-region. It is argued that although, the CEMAC has made immense efforts, the purpose for which it was instituted has not been sufficiently achieved, due to the lack of a joint approach towards economic integration principles in the sub-region. For this to be effective, there is need to merge the CEMAC and ECCAS into a single organisation. This would ensure the operational harmonisation of integration policies, programmes and instruments, since both organisations have similar origins, overlapping membership and similar mandates. In all, if CEMAC is to play a real role in the central Africa Sub-Region's economies, it has to be embedded into Central Africa's real-life context and not on regional schemes from the North.

⁵⁵ International Monetary Fund, *art. cit.*

⁵⁶ Lando *et al.*, *art. cit.*

⁵⁷ International Monetary Fund, *art. cit.*

⁵⁸ Central African States Development Bank, "41st Annual Report Financial Year 2017".

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THE EU AND ROMANIA. A PARTNERSHIP TO PROMOTE CULTURE & SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract: *In the dynamic landscape of sustainable development, culture and cultural heritage are emerging concepts, taking more and more space in the academic literature. In the process of maintaining the balance between past, present and future, it is unrefutably important to understand the connection between cultural protection and promotion and actions towards sustainable development and environmental protection. This article aims to explore the complexities culture orientated actions, while having in consideration the sensitive issues of the permeability of cultural heritage over time. We discuss the relationship between cultural heritage and sustainable development, the actions that the EU takes to ensure cultural sustainability and the partnership between Romania and the EU could improve to maximize the impact on culture and sustainable development.*

Keywords: *European Union, Romania, culture, sustainable development*

Introduction

Cultural heritage is the basis for tourism development in many European countries and further afield. Countries such as Greece, France and Italy are economically dependent on heritage tourism (which was also seen in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, when the Gross Domestic Product of these countries fell dramatically because of travel restrictions and the

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closure of museums and heritage sites).¹ Heritage therefore plays an important role not only in the design and implementation of socio-economic development strategies, but also in sustainable development. Environmental issues facing society have been at the heart of all soft power policies for the last 30 years, and their integration into all socio-economic aspects is no longer new. The European Union is increasingly paying attention to the impact of cultural heritage on sustainable development and has launched a series of cultural funding projects with the main objective of creating “the first climate-neutral continent”.² The ways in which cultural heritage contributes to this EU objective include: the development of sustainable cultural tourism through innovative AR/VR (Artificial and Augmented Reality) technologies; energy efficiency initiatives in heritage buildings; the creation of educational programmes for sustainable heritage management.

Sustainable development is a response to the crisis facing society in terms of the need to protect the environment. Sustainable development is a relatively recent concept, which has emerged and developed over the last 50 years, aiming at long-term economic, social and environmental stability through innovative and integrated methods of protecting and conserving resources for future generations.³ This concept covers several areas: environmental protection, tourism, health, protection of fauna and flora (terrestrial and marine ecosystems), reduction of social disparities and unemployment, poverty eradication, biodiversity, culture, etc.

The purpose of this research is to connect the two elements (cultural heritage and sustainable development), thus providing a new understanding to the concept of cultural sustainability in the framework of European cooperation. The premise of the research is that EU endeavours towards cultural sustainability are essential for the member states, especially Romania and that in the absence of such commitment from the EU, member states would not be able to properly adjust to the increasing requirements in the field (from experts, civil society, and the community as a whole).

¹ World Tourism Organization [https://www.unwto.org/cultural-tourism-covid-19], 9.05.2024.

² European Commission, “Sustainability and Cultural Heritage” [https://culture.ec.europa.eu/cultural-heritage/cultural-heritage-in-eu-policies/sustainability-and-cultural-heritage], 9.05.2024.

³ Rachel Emas, „The Concept of Sustainable Development: Definition and Defining Principles” in *Global Sustainable Development Report 2015*, UN [https://asset-pdf.scinapse.io/prod/2184349672/2184349672.pdf], 05.05.2024.

Cultural heritage and sustainable development

Cultural heritage and sustainable development are closely related concepts that are important for the long-term well-being of societies and the planet. While cultural heritage is concerned with the protection and transmission of the cultural heritage inherited from our ancestors as historical evidence of past culture and civilisation, sustainable development is concerned with meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It involves striking a balance between economic, social and environmental factors and ensuring equitable, inclusive and environmentally sound development.

Cultural heritage can play an important role in sustainable development by providing a basis for social and economic development, creating employment opportunities and promoting cultural diversity and social cohesion. For example, cultural tourism can generate income for local communities while promoting the conservation of cultural heritage. In addition, traditional knowledge and practices can be used for sustainable resource management and conservation. At the same time, sustainable development can contribute to heritage conservation. Development projects that take heritage values into account help to preserve historic buildings and landscapes while ensuring a socially and environmentally responsible development process. This process makes the relationship between cultural heritage and sustainable development one of interdependence, with the aim of promoting social, economic and environmental sustainability.

Among the largest movements in the field of sustainable development, environmental protection and circular economy, and the first of these, is the Club of Rome. It was founded in 1968 by a group of eminent personalities from the worlds of science, politics, culture and business who recognised that climate change, environmental, resource and population problems were the result of the irresponsible use of resources. It was the founders of the Club who came up with the idea of “limits to growth”, which they and experts from MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) documented, analysed from economic, biological, sociological, anthropological and technological perspectives, and put all these ideas into what is now considered the “Bible” of sustainable development, *The Limits to Growth*, which promotes the idea that our resources are finite, so that infinite economic expansion is not realistic or sustainable. The book outlines the predicament humanity faces

in terms of growth based on depleting resources and excessive consumption and provides an overview of the drivers of this unsustainable growth, as well as alternative measures that can be taken to create a “global steady state”.⁴

The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development mentions for the first time the cultural objectives promoted by the UN in the context of sustainable development, as objectives and not just cross-cutting objectives (about areas such as education, environment, consumption habits or social inclusion). Paragraph 36, page 13 of the UN Agenda⁵ states:

We pledge to safeguard and promote intercultural understanding, tolerance, mutual respect, and an ethical global citizenship in which responsibilities are shared. We recognize the natural and cultural diversity of the world and believe that all cultures and civilizations can contribute to the process of sustainable development and are indeed essential in this process.⁶

Culture and cultural heritage are also addressed in the agenda in terms of their impact on other key areas in the sustainable development process: inclusiveness (page 21), sustainable economic development (page 24), encouraging local consumption and production (page 27), and tourism (page 32).⁷

Although there is a high level of international interest in the cultural field in the sphere of sustainable development, at national level authorities are trying to maintain the trend without giving depth to the field. For example, in the National Strategy for Sustainable Development of Romania - 2030, in the Chapter “Cultural Dimension of Sustainable Development”,⁸ in two paragraphs, some statistical data are mentioned regarding the heritage objects in which investments have been made in recent years and the total number of movable cultural heritage assets.

⁴ Donnela Meadows, Dennis Meadows, Jorgen Randers, *The Limits to Growth. A Report for the Club of Rome's Project on the Predicament of Mankind*, New York: Universe Books, 1972.

⁵ UN, “Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda For Sustainable Development”, A/RES/70/1 [<https://sdgs.un.org/>], 13.05.2024.

⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁸ Department for Sustainable Development of the Government of Romania, “Romania's National Strategy for SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT 2030”, p. 72 [<https://www.edu.ro/sites/default/files/Strategia-nationala-pentru-dezvoltarea-durabila-a-Rom%C3%A2niei-2030.pdf>], 11.04.2024.

These statistics are irrelevant if they are not placed in a context that justifies their value in the field of sustainable development. Considering the superficiality with which the cultural domain has been treated in this strategy, it can be said that the “Cultural Dimension of Sustainable Development” has not been treated nearly as well as it should have been and that regulations and strategies in this area need significant improvement in order to lead to optimal results.

As urban densification projects often take place in the historic centres of large cities, they can pose challenges for the conservation and protection of cultural heritage.⁹ In this context, a new concept in the field of sustainable development is emerging in the literature: cultural sustainability. The concept of cultural sustainability aims to use elements of cultural economics to draw attention to the role and importance of cultural heritage in the field of sustainable development. By identifying the socio-economic elements of culture that have a direct impact on urban processes, the importance of cultural phenomena and cultural heritage in the sustainable development of urban areas is increasingly emphasised. Urbanisation is an inevitable process, due to population growth, but also to the attractiveness of large cities for young people seeking new opportunities. To strike a balance between the accelerated process of urbanisation and initiatives to protect cultural heritage, the solution proposed by cultural sustainability is to integrate heritage elements or highlight existing ones in the urban densification structure.

EU and cultural sustainability

The European Commission argues that cultural heritage is of significant economic importance, particularly for the cultural and creative sectors surrounding it. At the same time, cultural heritage “is an important resource for economic growth, employment and social cohesion, with the potential to revitalise urban and rural areas and promote sustainable tourism.”¹⁰

⁹ Joar Skrede, Sveinung Krokann Berg, „Cultural Heritage and Sustainable Development: The Case of Urban Densification” in *The Historic Environment: Policy & Practice*, Taylor and Francis, Vol. 10, no. 1, 2019, pp. 83-102.

¹⁰ European Commission [<https://culture.ec.europa.eu/ro/policies/selected-themes/cultural-heritage>], 15.04.2024.

At the European Commission level, there is a strong focus on the link between cultural heritage and sustainability, the latter being one of the three pillars on which the Cultural Heritage Action Framework is based. According to the European Commission, linking sustainability and cultural heritage processes has “the potential to enhance social capital, stimulate economic growth and ensure environmental sustainability. Culture and cultural heritage can contribute to achieving inclusive and sustainable development”.¹¹ Within the EU, cultural heritage is considered a priority area, the aim of the European Union in the field of culture being precisely “to respect the richness of its cultural diversity and to ensure the protection and development of Europe’s cultural heritage”. According to a survey carried out by the European Commission in December 2017, more than 8 out of 10 respondents (EU citizens) believe that cultural heritage is important not only for them, but also for their community, region and country, and for the European Union as a whole.¹² The same survey shows that three quarters of EU citizens believe that more budget needs to be allocated to the protection of cultural heritage, while 9 out of 10 respondents believe that in order to better understand the importance of cultural heritage and heritage, young Europeans should study heritage subjects in schools.

From a legislative point of view, the European Union’s action is limited by its consultative role in relation to the Member States in the field of culture. According to the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU, Article 2, paragraph 5, the European Union can only “take action to support, coordinate or supplement the action of Member States”¹³ in certain areas. In Article 6 we see that these sectors include culture. This Treaty contains a section devoted to culture, Title XIII, where Article 167 states: The Union shall contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore.¹⁴ The EU’s interest in

¹¹ *Idem* [<https://culture.ec.europa.eu/cultural-heritage/cultural-heritage-in-eu-policies/sustainability-and-cultural-heritage>], 10.05.2024.

¹² Eurobarometer, “Cultural Heritage, 2150/466”, 2017 [<https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2150>], 14.04.2024.

¹³ Official Journal of the European Union, “Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (Consolidated Version)”, 2016, p. 2 [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:9e8d52e1-2c70-11e6-b497-01aa75ed71a1.0020.01/DOC_3&format=PDF], 11.04.2024.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 6.

culture was also evident at the European Council on 14 December 2017 in Brussels, where European leaders were asked, among other things, to:

- Promote student mobility and student participation in cultural and educational activities, including through a 'European student card';
- Use the European Year of Cultural Heritage to raise awareness of the social and economic importance of culture and cultural heritage.¹⁵

At the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Rome, the European Commission proposes on 22 May 2018, A New European Agenda for Culture. It aims to "harness the full potential of culture to help build a fairer and more inclusive Union by supporting innovation, creativity and sustainable growth and jobs".¹⁶

The Council Conclusions on the Work Plan for Culture 2019-2022¹⁷ address the perspective of sustainable development and the role of cultural heritage in it, mentioning its function as a catalyst for sustainable economic, social, environmental, and cultural development in Europe. From this perspective, the creation of an 'ecosystem' supporting artists, performers, and cultural professionals as well as European artistic content is envisaged. A special report by the European Court of Auditors in 2020 analyses public investment and expenditure in the cultural sector, both at national level in the 27 Member States and at European Commission level. This report presents an audit that was carried out with the aim of establishing the effectiveness and sustainability of the European Union's investments in cultural sites, in particular through the use of the main investment fund, the ERDF (European Regional Development Fund).¹⁸ The relevance of this report for our work is that it traces the economic, social and cultural effects

¹⁵ European Council meeting, 14 December 2017, EUCO 19/1/17, p. 4

[<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/32223/14-final-conclusions-rev1-ro.pdf>], 11.04.2024.

¹⁶ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Brussels, 22.5.2018, COM(2018) 267 final [<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/RO/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52018DC0267&from=EN>], 14.04.2024.

¹⁷ Official Journal of the European Union, "Council Conclusions on the Work Plan for Culture 2019-2022 (2018/C 460/10)", Brussels, 2018, p. 2 [[https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/RO/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52018XG1221\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/RO/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52018XG1221(01)&from=EN)], 18.04.2024.

¹⁸ European Court of Auditors, "Special Report No 08/2020: EU Investments in Cultural Sites: a Topic that Deserves More Focus and Coordination", 2020 [https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/SR20_08/SR_Cultural_investments_RO.pdf], 18.04.2024.

of ERDF investments in cultural sites from the 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 programming periods in the following countries: Croatia, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Portugal and Romania. We will now analyse this report, focusing on Romania and extracting information relevant to the topic.

The report analyses, amongst other things, three projects funded by the ERDF in Romania, which aim to restore and protect heritage sites, through the Regional Operational Programme, Priority Axis 5. Improvement of the urban environment and conservation, protection and sustainable use of cultural heritage (in the 2014-2020 financial year), respectively Regional Operational Programme, Priority Axis 5. Sustainable development and promotion of tourism (in the financial year 2007-2013). The three projects analysed are: Moldovița Monastery, Buzău County Museum and Bucharest Patriarchate Palace.¹⁹

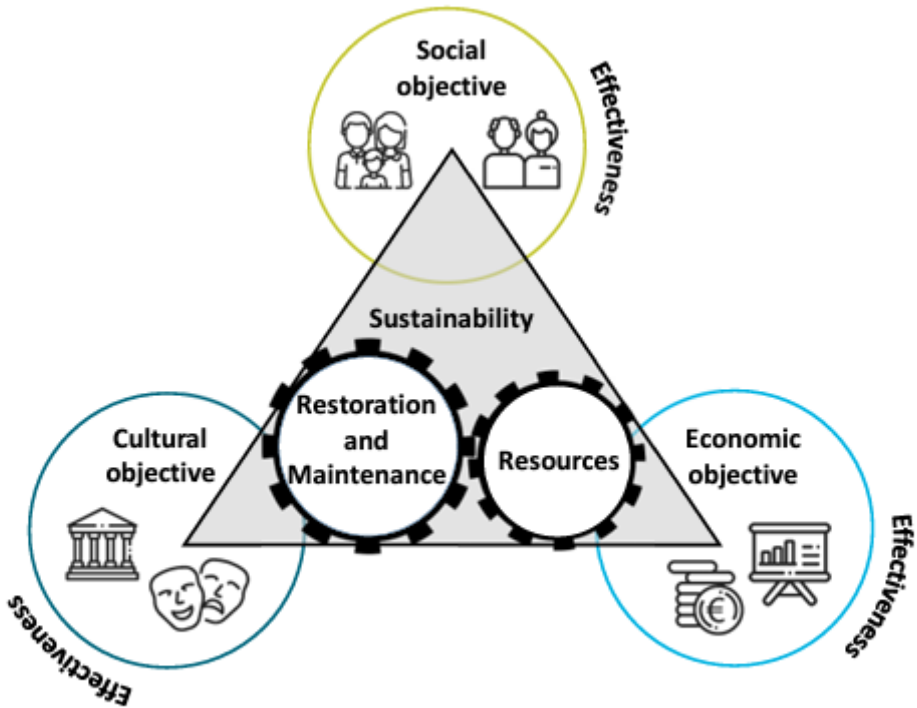
The conclusions that are drawn in the report based on the audit, and which cover all the countries audited, include:

- The funds allocated by the European Union for culture are too little compared to the real needs. The only programme dedicated exclusively to culture is “Creative Europe”, with a budget of €209 million/year in the 2014-2020 financial year. For comparison, the annual maintenance costs of the Paris National Opera alone amounted to €200.8 million in 2018.

- The European Commission’s initiatives to promote heritage sites, although numerous, are not backed up by adequate funding mechanisms. Diversification of funding sources is therefore essential to adapt to real needs in the field of cultural heritage protection.

- A contradictory effect has been identified in terms of the results of project implementation, in that although implementation contributes to the achievement of all three development objectives and ensures the economic sustainability of the heritage site, it can adversely affect its conservation (e.g. excessive and unsustainable growth in tourism, overcrowding) which can lead to the deterioration of an ancient heritage object, by affecting the environment but also the structure of the heritage object, which is in some cases very sensitive to natural or created adverse factors. In this respect, the European Court of Auditors proposes an interconnectivity model that shows the link between the effectiveness and sustainability of a project for cultural sites:

¹⁹ *Ibidem.*



Source: ECA.

Figure 1. The European Court of Auditors' model of interconnectivity between effectiveness and sustainability

An important aspect of reports such as this one is that they propose conclusions and recommendations, which are then presented to the Commission, and the Commission has to take a position on them. In the case of the report presented, the recommendations to the Commission include (but are not limited to): improving the current strategic framework for culture within the limits of the powers conferred by the Treaties, strengthening the financial sustainability of cultural sites funded by the ERDF and adopting clearer measures for the conservation of heritage sites.

In line with the inter-institutional procedure, the report also includes the European Commission's response to the recommendations received and shows how the two institutions are working together to achieve the best results and to disseminate at European and national level strategies to improve the management of cultural sites. In this case, the Commission accepts all the Court's recommendations, with the caveat that through the ERDF, it can only fund the conservation of sites at risk if they are included in a national or regional development strategy.

The European Union is trying, through a wide range of projects and proposals, to promote cultural heritage and highlight its importance in the context of sustainable development. Among the projects implemented by the European Union Institutions in this respect are:

- Horizon Europe - whose main objective is the development of innovative technologies for sustainable development and economic growth. Through Cluster 2 - Culture, Creativity and Social Inclusion, the programme aims to promote and protect cultural heritage and contribute to the social, economic and cultural adaptation of society to contemporary changes.²⁰

- COSME - European Programme for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises, which provides young entrepreneurs with a favourable environment for developing creative ideas and promoting entrepreneurial culture.²¹

- European Cultural Routes - a project developed by the Council of Europe, joined by the European Commission and the World Tourism Organisation, which aims to promote European cultural heritage destinations by creating thematic routes linking heritage sites in different European countries.²²

- European Cultural Capitals - a project developed by the European Commission to promote Europe's cultural diversity and richness, with the aim of increasing citizens' sense of belonging to European and national culture.²³

²⁰ Horizon Europe, "Work Programme 2021-2022. 5. Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society", European Commission Decision 2975, 2022, p. 6 [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/wp-call/2021-2022/wp-5-culture-creativity-and-inclusive-society_horizon-2021-2022_en.pdf], 18.04.2024.

²¹ COSME - Europe's programme for small and medium-sized enterprises [https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/smes/cosme_en], 18.04.2024.

²² European Cultural Routes [<https://www.coe.int/en/web/cultural-routes>], 18.04.2024.

²³ European Capitals of Culture [<https://culture.ec.europa.eu/policies/culture-in-cities-and-regions/european-capitals-of-culture>], 18.04.2024.

- CulturEU - Through programmes such as Creative Europe, ERASMUS+ and the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme, which funds projects to restore, protect and promote cultural heritage in order to enrich culture in the Member States.²⁴

Although the European Union only has a consultative role in policies for the promotion and protection of cultural heritage, its actions and investments in the protection and promotion of the national cultural heritage far exceed the efforts of national authorities. For example, in 2022, the AFCN (Administration of the National Cultural Fund) financed cultural projects worth a total of 13 million lei. Of this amount, only 1.8 million was for the promotion and protection of cultural heritage.²⁵

Creating synergy at national and European level

When it comes to cultural indicators, Romania has set important milestones for itself. According to the UNESCO National Culture Profile, the proactive role of the Government's Department of Sustainable Development is positioning Romania as a regional hub for sustainable development. After its first implementation in 2018 within the framework of the UNESCO project Culture for Development Indicators Suite (CDIS), the National Strategy for Sustainable Development of Romania 2030 (NSSDR 2030) was adopted, which includes a special chapter dedicated to culture, entitled The Cultural Dimension of Sustainable Development.²⁶ It is not surprising, therefore, that Romania is committed to a close relationship with the EU, especially considering that most investments, both in the protection of cultural heritage and in sustainable development in Romania, are made with European money. Since accession, according to the Minister of Economy, Entrepreneurship and Tourism, Romania has accessed almost €90 billion. If we subtract Romania's contribution to the EU budget from this, we are left with a return of over €60 billion.²⁷ When it comes to culture, European investment includes, but is not

²⁴ CulturEU [<https://culture.ec.europa.eu/funding/cultureu-funding-guide>], 18.04.2024.

²⁵ AFCN, "Call for Cultural Projects, Session II" [<https://www.afcn.ro/media/Anunt%20lansare%20concur%20proiecte%20sesiunea%20II%202022.pdf>], 18.04.2024.

²⁶ UNESCO, "National Culture Profile of Romania" [<https://whc.unesco.org/en/activities/1275/>], 13.05.2024.

²⁷ Profit.ro, "De la intrarea în UE, România a accesat 89,4 miliarde de euro. Ce sumă rămâne după scăderea contribuțiilor statului la Uniune" [<https://www.profit.ro/stiri/economie/de-la->

confined to, the organisation of cultural events, cultural digitization projects,²⁸ cultural heritage conservation and sustainable preservation.²⁹

The European Green Deal is the European Commission's roadmap for making the EU's economy sustainable. Buildings, including historical and cultural ones, are a crucial element of this initiative because they account for 40% of all energy consumption and 36% of EU greenhouse gas emissions.³⁰

It is crucial for Romania to align its policies and practices with those of other EU nations. This alignment is a necessary step towards bridging the current gap and enhancing the country's ability to foster sustainable development via cultural initiatives. The digital divide, which denotes limited resource accessibility for a significant portion of the population, underscores the need for digitisation. Digitisation emerges as a feasible strategy to augment cultural access and consumption, particularly in rural communities.³¹

In order to obtain this alignment, there are a few steps we can recommend, from a management perspective, which would allow Romania to create the wanted synergy and cohesion level with the EU. First, using proper project management tools and instruments, Romania can make full/better use of the various EU funds available for cultural and sustainable development projects. This includes funds like the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the Cohesion Fund (CF), and the European Social Fund (ESF). These funds can be used to finance projects that promote cultural heritage, sustainable tourism, green energy, and other sustainable development goals. Second, Romania can collaborate with other EU

intrarea-in-ue-romania-a-accesat-89-4-miliarde-de-euro-ce-suma-ramane-dupa-scaderea-contributiilor-statului-la-uniune-21475464], 14.05.2024.

²⁸ Adriana Dumitran, Cristina Marinescu, „Participarea Bibliotecii Naționale a României la Proiecte culturale europene: Proiectul ENRICH. Manuscriptorium (2008 - 2009) Proiectul REDISCOVER (2009 - 2010” in *Revista Transilvania*, Issue 5/6, 2013, pp. 74-77.

²⁹ Anca Dodescu, „Restoration and Sustainable Valorization of Cultural Heritage and Regional Policy in North-West Region of Romania. Case Study Revitalization of the Oradea Fortress” in *The Annals of the University of Oradea, Economic Sciences*, Tom XXII, 2014, pp. 195-203.

³⁰ European Commission, “Sustainability and Cultural Heritage”

[<https://culture.ec.europa.eu/cultural-heritage/cultural-heritage-in-eu-policies/sustainability-and-cultural-heritage>], 13.04.2024.

³¹ Mina Fanea-Ivanovici, „Culture as a Prerequisite for Sustainable Development. An Investigation into the Process of Cultural Content Digitisation in Romania” in *Sustainability*, 2018, vol. 10, no. 6, pp. 1859-1876.

countries on projects that promote sustainable development. This could involve sharing best practices, conducting joint research, and implementing pilot projects. Such collaboration can lead to innovative solutions that benefit both Romania and the EU. Third, to effectively manage and implement EU-funded projects, Romania needs to strengthen its institutional capacity. This involves improving the administrative and technical skills of the staff involved in project management, as well as enhancing the transparency and accountability of the institutions involved. Also, engaging civil society is crucial for ensuring the success of cultural and sustainable development initiatives. Non-governmental organizations, community groups, and citizens can provide valuable input and help to ensure that projects meet the needs of the local community.

Lastly, from a management perspective, it is important to note that continuous improvement is a key element to use the insights gained from each project to continuously improve the management process. This could involve enhancing the skills and knowledge of the people involved in the process, improving the project management methodology, and strengthening the relationships with EU partners.

Conclusions

Cultural heritage plays an important role in sustainable development. The 2030 Agenda adopted by the UN General Assembly for the first time integrates the role of culture, through cultural heritage and creativity, as an enabler of sustainable development across the Sustainable Development Goals. Cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, can significantly contribute to sustainable development in its various dimensions. Culture is also at the heart of development policies, ensuring people-centred, inclusive, and equitable development. Protecting and promoting culture directly contributes to many of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including safe and sustainable cities, decent work, and economic growth, reducing inequalities, the environment, promoting gender equality, and peaceful and inclusive societies. In the EU, over 300,000 people are employed in the cultural heritage sector, and 7.8 million jobs are indirectly linked to heritage.³²

³² European Commission, "EU Policy for Cultural Heritage"

[<https://culture.ec.europa.eu/cultural-heritage/eu-policy-for-cultural-heritage>], 16.05.2024.

The European Union plays an extensive role in promoting cultural heritage and sustainability in its Member States. It anchors the role of culture, through cultural heritage and creativity, as an enabler of sustainable development in the Sustainable Development Goals. It is also committed to preserving and enhancing Europe's cultural heritage through various policies and programmes. Sustainability is also among the five pillars of the Framework for Action on Cultural Heritage, which highlights its potential to enhance social capital, boost economic growth and ensure environmental sustainability.

At the same time, the EU is taking action and leading the way to become the first climate neutral continent. The EU recognises that cultural heritage can play a key role in promoting peace, democracy and sustainable development by fostering tolerance, intercultural dialogue and social cohesion.

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THE EU AND THE ABRAHAM ACCORDS: FROM SCEPTICISM TO ENGAGEMENT

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Abstract: *The Abraham accords signed in Washington in September 2020, a series of joint normalization statements between Israel the UAE and Bahrain followed by Morocco in December 2020, were a game changer in the Middle East. Those Accords provide the pathway to the end of the Arab Israeli conflict and a future of peace, tolerance and opportunity in the Middle East and around the world. Those accords proved that there is a new way for negotiations in the Middle East. One could have been surprised that the EU was not engaged in the Accords when signed. The fact that Europeans believe in the two-state solution as the only solution and the fact that the American President Donald Trump was behind the Accords made Europe skeptical to the Accords. But reality made the difference: The war in Ukraine brought its challenges and Iran's interference in the conflict (supplying drones to Russian's army) provoked a real concern in Europe. The Iranian nuclear program seemed again a threat to the west and not only to Israel and Gulf countries. conflict management played a role. This paper depicts how Europe went from skepticism to engagement concerning the Abraham Accords. Geo-political interests were clear: geopolitical realignment, a great potential for Africa and energy and food supply potential in connection to those Accords. Furthermore, cooperation as well as development in foreign affairs played a role in Europeans' choice.*

Keywords: *Abraham Accords, Israeli-Arab conflict, cooperation, international relations*

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Introduction

Geopolitics is an essential factor in international affairs. Hence in order to understand our study one cannot detach it from regional changes occurring in the region. And that is exactly what has happened in the Middle East.

In our work we shall try to analyze the factors that provoked changed in the attitude of state actors regarding the Abraham Accords. We shall see what made the EU change its attitude regarding the Accords. The global interest of a nation, a state or a community may determine the action of that entity. We are going to check whether interest is a more important factor than ideology or belief in a paradigm. In our case European skepticism of the Abraham Accords did not stand in front of new challenges that occurred in the region – the Russian invasion to Ukraine and all the consequences around it.

Literature review

In a recent voyage I made to Brussels, having the privilege to accompany Israel's President, Isaac Herzog, to the European Parliament, I was surprised to discover the lack of enthusiasm the European states, members of the EU related to the Abraham Accord. Peace is a value in modern Europe and the Abraham Accords deal with normalization, which is a step beyond peace, especially in the Middle East. I was surprised to discover that Europe who militates for peace was not engaged in the Abraham Accords but preferred to be stuck in old solutions as the only possible one, like for example the two states solution.

In 2020 one could see that European decision and opinion makers generally dismissed the Abraham Accords as a diversion from the Palestinian issue. But something made the difference. Something no one expected: the outbreak of the Ukraine war and the advance of Iran's nuclear program. Europeans started realizing the potential contribution of those Accords to energy and food security and European interests in Africa.

One must understand the great potential of geopolitical changes. In this case they offer Israel an opportunity to advance trilateral partnerships with Europe and with the signatories of the Abraham Accords.¹ In fact, countries with whom Israel had discrete relations became open. The normalization agreements signed between Israel with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain in August 2020 and later with Morocco in December 2020, have formalized intelligence and economic ties that had previously as we mentioned, existed discretely. It opened a gate to a potential new cooperation as well as new perspectives in the region.

Official relations have the potential to make things easy or at least easier. In this case, they have enabled business partnerships, academic cooperation as well as direct investments and tourism. Fruitful synergies can emerge from the same accords thanks to Israel's technological edge, the financial resources of the UAE and Bahrain. One can add of course Morocco's status as having the world's most extensive reservoir of phosphates – the most widely used source of fertilizer.

Yet strangely enough all this potential that we mentioned as well as the actual potential of the agreements to energy and food security the accords did not impress the Europeans. They had difficulties understanding the Accords signed in Washington DC in President Trump's era which probably also contributed to the lack of enthusiasm. Europeans saw in the accord nothing more than a gimmick staged by former U.S President Donald Trump for his 2020 presidential campaign and as diversion from the Palestinian issue. For Europeans obviously the Palestinian issue is a key element and a key challenge in order to achieve peace in the Middle East, the main obstacle that prevents any possible solution. The Abraham Accords are on the contrary a total opposite approach. A change of paradigm: progress can be made in the Middle East in parallel to the Palestinian issue. Very difficult for Europeans to accept or even comprehend. The war in Ukraine caused a beginning of a change in the way of thinking of some European diplomats and think tanks. They started noticing the potential of the Abraham Accords for Europe's security and energy needs. One has to always keep in mind the wariness of Europe from an immense energy crisis before the Russian invasion of

¹ Emanuel Navon, "Leveraging the Abraham Accords for Israel's Relations with Europe", Jerusalem Institute for Strategy and Security, 2022 [<https://jiss.org.il/en/navon-leveraging-the-abraham-accords-for-israels-relations-with-europe>].

Ukraine took place. They started thinking of alternative markets for their energy needs.²

One could see clearer. The two actors, Europeans and Israel, could see the potential of leveraging o the level of upgrading relations between Israel and Europe. Soon enough Israel and its European partners could see how much work can be done that can change the life of millions of people. With the partnership of the three Arab signatories (UAE, Bahrain and Morocco) of the Accords, Europe could contribute to the security and economic cooperation in Africa and joint projects for improving energy and food security.

Geopolitical realignment

The advancement of Iran's nuclear program and the war in Ukraine have coalesced geopolitical divides in the Middle East and North African region. Iran has bypassed U.S sanctions thanks to its economic ties with China and Russia. The visit of U.S President Joe Biden to Israel and Saudi Arabia and of Russian President Vladimir Putin to Iran in July 2022 symbolized and confirmed the Middle East's two competing axes, one backing Israel and moderate Sunni States – the U.S. and the Russia -backed one of the Iranian regimes and its proxies.³

While Israel had initially tried to keep a low profile in Russia's war against Ukraine which can be explained of course by Russia's presence on Syrian soil and Israel's strategic need not to undermine its freedom of action in Syrian's airspace, neutrality is no longer an option. The United States has great expectation from its allies to stand with it and the conflicting interests between Israel and Russia can no longer be ignored. On one hand Putin's increased support for Iran and on the other his hostility to alternative Gaz supplies for the EU created a larger gap in the positions between Moscow and Jerusalem without forgetting Russia's legal proceedings against the Jewish agency in its territory. Russia has become a threat to the EU and arguably to Israel.⁴

² Izabella Surwillo, "Reflections on the Energy Crisis in Europe", *Progressive Yearbook*, 2023 [<https://feps-europe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Progressive-Yearbook-2023.pdf>].

³ Navon, *art. cit.*

⁴ Robert O. Freedman, "Israel's Tightrope between Russia and Ukraine" in *Middle East Quarterly*, Fall 2022, volume 29, no. 4 [<https://www.meforum.org/middle-east-quarterly/pdfs/63520.pdf>].

Other changes occur due to new regional evolutions. Other actors in the region understand new waves of changes due to the same accords. Turkey is an important actor that reflects the new realignment in the region or in the Mediterranean to be more specific. The Turkish president who easily manipulates his country foreign affairs according to international world changes also understood the new regional picture.⁵ Ever since 2009 the relations between Turkey and Israel were deteriorated severely and in contrast Israel has developed its relations with Greece including in the military sector and its energy partnership with Cyprus. Turkey followed attentively those developing relations. The Abraham Accords were probably one step too much for Ankara. Erdogan had no other choice and decided the option of mending his relations with Jerusalem. Turkey made its choice: Erdogan's support for the Muslim Brotherhood and his claims to exclusive economic rights in the Mediterranean which could undermine gas exports to Europe, has led to better relations between Israel, the EU and the UAE.

Meanwhile, in parallel to Turkey's foreign regional policy change, the UAE and Israel have upgraded their intelligence cooperation against Turkey and Qatar as the emirates themselves strongly oppose the Muslim Brotherhood which enjoys the support of both countries, Turkey and Qatar. Egypt too followed the changes. President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi toppled the Muslim Brotherhood in 2013 and has joined the East Mediterranean Gas Forum which includes Israel, Greece, Cyprus, France, Italy and the Palestinian Authority.⁶

The Abraham Accords have the advantage of offering an opportunity to formalize defense cooperation in the eastern Mediterranean between the UAE, Greece, Egypt, Greece, Cyprus Israel and two EU states France and Italy. Two European states who increased their naval presence in the eastern Mediterranean to deter Turkey. Jordan is on the way. One could also notice the improvement of relations between Egypt, Jordan and Israel since the signature of those accords. It helps a lot the change of climate in the region which strengthens regional cooperation. One must add the military cooperation which becomes a key element due to Iran's threat regional as well as global. The progress of Iran's nuclear program has transformed the

⁵ Steven A Cook, "Ukraine's War Is Erdogan's Opportunity" in *Foreign Policy*, March 29, 2022 [<https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/03/29/ukraine-war-erdogan-peace-negotiation-ceasefire/>].

⁶ Egypt Independent, "First Energy Agreement Concluded by EU was with Egypt and Israel", February 14, 2023 [<https://egyptindependent.com/first-energy-agreement-concluded-by-eu-was-with-egypt-and-israel/>]

Islamic republic into a threshold country, thus acquiring the capacity to build nuclear weapons quickly. This is a new reality that threatens directly Israel that always declared its obligation to prevent any hostile state possessing a nuclear capacity and the UAE, neighboring country of Iran and like its ally Saudi Arabia feeling directly threaten by Tehran. Iran shares with the UAE the shores of the Hormuz Strait. Iran with its nuclear capacity would likely increase its support for Shi'ite militias throughout the Middle East – such as the Houthis in Yemen and Hezbollah in Lebanon – and threaten to disrupt shipping in the Straits of Hormuz and Bab -El-Mandeb with little fear of retaliation. Iran threatens Europeans too with their long-range missile program. Moreover, Iran also threatens France's interest in their interference in North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa. Iran's status as a threshold nuclear state increases the potential for trilateral cooperation between Israel the UAE and Europe.⁷

A great potential for Africa

Morocco, one of the members of the Abraham Accords, is an African state. It is based in north Africa and a member of the Arab Maghrib union (not very united one must add). In fact, Morocco and Israel had diplomatic relations between 1994 to 2002 and that facilitated the renewal of the relations that were stopped after the second Intifada. The renewal of the relations was also facilitated after Trump's decision to recognize Morocco's sovereignty over western Sahara, a dispute territory whose legal status is similar to that of the west bank (neither territory was recognized as a sovereign country, or as part of a sovereign country, before its seizure by Israel in 1967 and Morocco in 1975). It was not a secret to all the fact that Morocco was worried from Iran's support to the Polisario front.⁸

The Abraham Accords were a good opportunity for Morocco and Israel to coordinate security cooperation between the two countries. France on the one hand did not appreciate Israeli presence in an ally like Morocco but it was a good alliance and security cooperation against Iran and Russian involvement on the African continent. Iran declared its desire to upgrade its

⁷ Luigi Scazzieri, "Europe and the Iran Nuclear Threat", Center for European Reform, February 2023.

⁸ Oscar Rickett, Daniel Hilton, "Israel and Morocco to Normalize Ties as US Recognizes Rabat's Claim to Western Sahara", Middle East Eye, 2020
[<https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/israel-morocco-normalisation-us-western-sahara-recognises>].

relations in Africa and it did so in August 2011 shortly after the election of its President Ebrahim Raisi. He announced that Iran would prioritize its relations with Africa. That was not new. Former Iranian Presidents also invested in the African continent. Mauritania was another country targeted by the Iranians especially after the northern Arabic states upgraded its relations with Israel in 1999. Iran's policy was to invest in African states infrastructure in order to undermine Africa's ties with the U.S with Saudi and obviously with Israel.⁹

Iran's interest in Africa must be taken into consideration. Tehran is counting not only on regimes but also on communities. It knows it can count on the political and economic clout on the Shia Lebanese diaspora throughout the continent. "Under Ahmadinejad, Iran took advantage of skyrocketing oil prices and became a central economic actor in sub-Saharan Africa. How ether the economic sanctions imposed by the Obama and Trump administrations weakened Iran's financial capabilities to benefit Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Israel". Iran operates companies in Africa in order to circumvent economic sanctions. Such companies operate in countries like Republic of Congo, Nigeria, Senegal, Ghana and Tanzania.

Europeans show worries from those changes in Africa and the growing influence of countries like Russia and Iran on the African continent. French President Emmanuel Macron did not hesitate to denounce "Russian imperialism and neo-colonialism" in the African continent. Africa, especially the western and central part, is in a certain way under French influence. Paris did not appreciate Russia's interference in its back yard. Paris saw due to the Abraham Accords, Israel as an option for military cooperation in the African continent. Israel can be for France a valuable partner for its effort to counter Russian inroads on the continent by upgrading Israeli military contracts with African governments. Unlike Russia, Israel is not suspected of imperialism or neo-colonialism by African governments.¹⁰

France security option or choice towards Israel can also be explained by Morocco 's choice of joining the Abraham Accords. Israel can benefit from Morocco's economic clout in Africa. In the past fifteen years, Morocco has become the world's largest investor in West Africa and the second largest in all the continent.

⁹ Clement Therme, "Iran's Policy in Africa: Between Ideological Dimensions and Economic Enticement", Rasanah International Institute for Iranian Studies, 2022 [<https://rasanah-iiis.org/english/?p=10043>].

¹⁰ Navon, *art. cit.*

Those investments cover telecoms, banking, construction, mining and agriculture. They compete with Iran's economic influence in Africa – itself wielded via foreign direct investment and the Shia Lebanese diaspora business network throughout Africa. Official ties between Morocco and Israel provide an opportunity to coordinate a common policy of countering Iran's economic inroads in Africa. The upgrading of security cooperation between Israel and Morocco was confirmed by the official visit of Israel's chief of Staff to Morocco in July 2022 and of Morocco's chief of staff to Israel in September 2022.¹¹

It was important to note that in August 2022 King Mohammed VI called upon Morocco's allies to recognize its sovereignty over western Sahara. No one can ignore a connection between the historical events. Previous Israel's Interior Minister, Ayelet Shaked, expressed Israel's first ever public support of Moroccan sovereignty over western Sahara in June 2022. The connection between Israel's recognition of Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara and Morocco's alliance to the Abraham Accords was almost natural. The subject is so sensible that any visit to Algeria, hostile to the idea, was interpreted in a negative way by Morocco such as the official visit of Macron to Algeria in August 2022 given Algeria's support for the Polisario Front.¹²

Energy and Food security in connection to the Accords

"The European Commission's President, Ursula Van der Leyen, came to Israel in June 2022 in order to sign a natural gas agreement and has turned Israel into a partner for reducing the EU's dependance on Russian gaz. The Abraham Accords countries constitute a significant energy hub which is critical to Europe's energy security. The war in Ukraine precipitated a hike in oil prices and undermined Russia's reliability as a natural gas supplier".¹³ This energy hub has three components: Israel's natural gas resources and Israel's technological edge. The UAE's significant oil production (three million barrels per day) and Morocco's leadership in renewable energies especially solar energy projects and is the only African country to have a power cable link to Europe.

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

¹² Lazar Berman, "Shaked Affirms Support of Morocco on Western Sahara, Says She's First Israeli to Do So" in *Times of Israel*, 22 June 2022 [<https://www.timesofisrael.com/shaked-affirms-support-of-morocco-on-western-sahara-says-shes-1st-israeli-to-do-so>].

¹³ Navon, *art. cit.*

Grain supply has been impacted by the conflict in Ukraine, increasing food costs. Therefore, the cooperation between Morocco and Israel was a way to fight food crisis as Morocco contains 75% of the world's phosphate reserves used as fertilizer and the world's largest producer of phosphates, Israel has made technological advancements to agricultural productivity and water management.¹⁴ One must understand that improving food security is a European and African interest. For Europe its also an interest as food scarcity constitutes a key initiative to illegal immigration from Africa to Europe.

Iran's intervention in Ukraine war

Despite Western sanctions Teheran is doubling down on military support for Russia in a series of new military deals that definitely could prolong the war in Ukraine and offer sanction – battered Teheran new economic and defense lifelines.¹⁵

In public top U.S and allied leaders have castigated Iran for supplying Russia with drones and vowed to use everything in their power to block those shipments. But behind closed doors, officials concedes that there are no realistic avenues to stem the flow of Iranian military goods into Russia for it to deploy to Ukraine. Moreover, Russian military support for Iran could give the country's military additional advantages against any potential military confrontations with the United States or its allies in the Middle East. One could also raise the real and possible option of Russia to supply Iran with advanced air defense systems such as the S-300 or S-400 missile system. Such an event, very significant military, would help Teheran better protect its infrastructure for nuclear weapons from possible Israeli strikes.¹⁶

Israel has tried its best to engage Europe against a bad new Iran deal that would prevent Iran from possessing nuclear military power as well as new economic sanctions against the mullah Regime. Israel did it without real success, but two serious events have provoked a real change: the civil uprising in September 2022 against the regime and the murder of an Iranian demonstrator and the provision of Iranian drones to Russia that are used in

¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵ Robbie Gramer and Amy Mackinnon, "Iran and Russia Are Closer than Ever Before" in *Foreign Policy*, January 5, 2023 [<https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/03/03/russia-iran-drones-uav-ukraine-war-military-cooperation-sanctions>].

¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

the Ukrainian war. This provoked a real change in Europe's attitude towards Iran and played a role also in the significant understanding and cooperation between Europe and Israel in the Iran issue.¹⁷

One must not forget that the Arab Abraham Accords partners see also the Iranian nuclear program as a threat towards them (UAE and Bahrein) as well as Morocco who sees Iran's interference in its interior affairs. All that also contributed to Europe's interest in the matter especially with great understanding to Israeli interest as well as its partners in the Abraham Accords.

Conclusion

The Abraham Accords was initially dismissed in Europe as insignificant but are now perceived as an opportunity to help Europe face its economic and political challenges. Israel understood that the Abraham accords were a great potential to upgrade their relations with Europe.

Europe was trapped in an old narrative about the Mideast peace process and the Israeli Palestinian conflict, the EU was reluctant to embrace the Abraham Accords which were viewed as an American initiative led by former President Donald Trump, his son in law Jared Kushner and other senior officials in the administration. Some decision makers in the EU had to acknowledge that their narrative is obsolete. The war in Ukraine has provoked a real obligation to Europeans to look for a new response to their crisis management – interior (energy demand) and exterior (international affairs regarding neighbors and allies expectations).

“Since then, however and with the growing development of the relations between Israel, Bahrein, the UAE and Morocco, the EU has apparently slowly acknowledged the importance of the accords for the political and economic stability of the region”.¹⁸

Yet, the Abraham Accords have permitted a real evolution in international affairs, especially when it comes to Europe's relation with

¹⁷ Cornelius Adebahr, “Iran Provides a Sign of the Turmoil to Come – This Is How Europe Should Respond” in *The Parliament*, April 2023
[<https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/news/article/iran-turmoil-europe-security-russia-israel>].

¹⁸ Yossi Lempkowicz, “Europe Slowly Understands the Importance of the Abraham Accords”, *EU Reporter*, March 14, 2023
[<https://www.eureporter.co/world/israel/2023/03/14/europe-slowly-understands-the-importance-of-the-abraham-accords>].

Israel, ties between Europe – Israel and the African continent and Arab countries with Israel, Africa and Europe not forgetting the alliance against Iran. Indeed, it took time for Europe to understand and promote the Abraham Accords but once the European partners have understood the potential of those accords, they embraced them for the benefit of all the potential partners. In fact, those Accords do not only transform the Middle East but they have the possibility of transforming other continents in the world. One can only imagine the potential of a newcomer like Saudi Arabia to the agreement. Some see in the recent rapprochement between Iran and the Saudis - signed in China - a great test for the Accords but as stated by American secretary of state Tony Blinken: “Iran rapprochement does not in any way substitute U.S push to expand Abraham Accords”.¹⁹

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¹⁹ Marc Rod, “Blinken: Saudi, Iran Rapprochement ‘Does Not in Any Way Substitute’ US Push to Expand Abraham Accords” in *Jewish Insider*, 2023
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POPULIST RESENTMENT IN A MEDIATED CONTEXT

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Abstract: *The aim of this article is to review the role that emotions play in populism, specifically resentment, and how it is strategically used on social media platforms to create polarization. Firstly, I define the two of the main characteristics that populism has had over time: the agonistic struggle between a people and an elite, and charismatic leadership. Secondly, I examine the significance of resentment as a political emotion and how it operates in extreme right-wing populism. Thirdly, I review how resentment has been applied in the context of social media and how these platforms offer the most effective means to generate social mobilization based on emotions through storytelling, which can anticipate the reactions of the public or users.*

Keywords: *populism, social media, emotions, resentment, mobilization*

Introduction: populism as agonistic dynamic and charismatic leadership

Populism has emerged as one of the primary contemporary political phenomena. Consequently, there has been a significant increase in academic research on the subject, primarily aiming to elucidate the foundations and motivations of a phenomenon that proves difficult to delineate. There is a broad consensus that the concept of populism is inherently controversial¹

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¹ Isaiah Berlin, "To Define Populism" in *Government and Opposition* no. 3(2), 1968, pp. 137-179; Ghita Ionescu & Ernest Gellner, *Populism: Its Meaning and National Characteristics*, London: Macmillan, 1969; Margaret Canovan, *Populism*, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981; Margaret Canovan, "Trust the People! Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy" in *Political Studies*, no. 47 (1), pp. 2-16; Paul. A. Taggart, *Populism*, Buckingham: Open University Press, 2000; Cas Mudde, "The Populist Zeitgeist" in *Government and opposition*, no. 39 (4), pp. 541-563; Sergiu Gherghina, Sergiu Mişcoiu & Sorina Soare (eds.), *Contemporary Populism: A*

given that it can be primarily regarded as an ideology, a strategy, a discourse, or a movement, among others. Populism can be understood as an ideology, which unlike traditional ideologies such as liberalism or socialism, lacks a thick core but rather exhibits a thin one characterized by dividing society into two homogeneous groups: the people versus the elites. It interprets politics as the expression of the general will of the people. However, it can also be understood as a spontaneous and fragmented movement capable of harnessing political discontent to create mobilization and support for specific causes. Additionally, it can be conceived from the perspective of discourse as a generator of performative acts that are particularly effective in mediated contexts.²

One of the central features on which scholars of populism generally concur is that the notion of the “people” is a structural idea present in various conceptualizations. This idea of the people can be understood as an anti-elitism that entails a logic of people-elite or us-them, leading populism to employ a concept of politics akin to that of Carl Schmitt.³ According to the German jurist, the political is defined by the intensive and relational conflict between friend and enemy, where any issue could potentially engender this dynamic. For Schmitt, antagonism represents conflict at its utmost intensity, wherein the enemy poses an existential risk, and the conflict must be resolved by those directly involved, thus leaving no doubt about the unity among friends.

In addition to the agonistic dynamic, the notion of the “people” implies an anti-liberalism or a pure community in which there is no pluralism.⁴ Representative democracy is rejected in favour of advocating for an “authentic” or direct democracy. This is the sense in which Ernesto Laclau⁵ argues that populism represents the most purely democratic form of political action, in the original Greek sense of the term as the power of the people, which allows for the incorporation of demands from excluded sectors.

Controversial Concept and Its Diverse Forms, Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013; Benjamin Moffit, *The Global Rise of Populism: Performance, Political Style, and Representation*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016; Cas Mudde & Cristobal R. Kaltwasser, *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.

² Moffit, *op. cit.*

³ Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political: Expanded Edition*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017 [1927].

⁴ Paul. A. Taggart, *Populism*, Buckingham: Open University Press, 2000.

⁵ Ernesto Laclau, *La razón populista*, Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2005.

The way such demands are typically channelled is through charismatic leadership. In this regard, as asserted by Mudde & Kaltwasser,⁶ populism owes much to the conceptualization put forth by Max Weber. Charismatic leadership refers to the legitimacy bestowed upon a politician because their charisma is associated with heroic qualities capable of prevailing in times of crisis. This type of leadership has been highly successful in populism as a source of authority alternative to institutionalist leaders.

In this context, emotions, though not unique to populism—as other ideologies, such as liberalism with its appeal to freedom or socialism with its emphasis on equality, have also relied on them—are central in the repertoire of populist actions. Primarily, these actions are based on polarization and provocation, leveraging emotions such as fear, hatred, or resentment that are defined and mobilized in opposition to their adversaries. Subsequently, an examination will be conducted on one of the primary negative emotions, resentment, which numerous authors agree constitutes a significant component of mobilizing discourse. This will be exemplified by an analysis of Donald Trump's inaugural address. This speech will be analysed because it is a paradigmatic example that encapsulates the main characteristics of populist theory. Additionally, it will provide a better understanding of the theorization of resentment, as explained by Wendy Brown, who also focuses on Trump's average supporters.

Populist political emotions: resentment and the case of Trump's inaugural address

Arias Maldonado⁷ highlights that the primary characteristics of populist affectivity include, firstly, a rejection of rationalism as the foundation of social order. While traditionally, ideologies have been grounded in rational-transcendent ideas serving as social bonds, such as freedom or equality, populism's bond is purportedly based on the emotional connection the people have with a leader and their animosity towards adversaries. This entails two consequences: firstly, pluralism is inherently rejected since it is understood that the people cannot be divided but must remain united,

⁶ Mudde & Kaltwasser, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

⁷ Manuel A. Maldonado, "Las bases afectivas del populismo" in *Revista internacional de pensamiento político* no. 12, 2017, pp. 151-167.

facilitating the forging of bonds transcending socioeconomic boundaries. Secondly, the multitude takes precedence over the individual citizen.

The sentiments with which populism operates are largely negative, often stemming from situations such as economic crises, which are then appropriated and transformed into something positive. According to Laclau's theory, these are the empty signifiers that populist leaders seize upon, crafting a discourse capable of offering an alternative to the previously hegemonic order.

Politics is understood as conflict rather than consensus. Departing from agonism and the struggle between the people and the elites, populism abandons the principles of liberal democracy, where established norms are realized through rational agreement among actors with different interests. Thus, while populism does not reject democracy *per se* but rather liberal democracy, it contends that what is instituted can only be achieved through agonistic struggle between adversaries. The construction of agonism "relies on a set of psychological and affective mechanisms that refer to the deficits of rationality of the political subject [because] it does not matter how the content of each of these two opposing entities is defined in each case".⁸ In this sense, belonging to a group is understood as an emotional need rooted in evolution, and Maldonado asserts that "it would not be unreasonable to claim that populism is a political style whose operative assumption is moral tribalism".⁹

Another important aspect, though not unique to populism, is the significance of storytelling in constructing the belonging or identity of the people. This is particularly amplified in the post-factual and digital context where narrative or storytelling are the most effective tools for shaping political loyalty. The narrative frequently employed by populism is one in which the aim is to "regain power in order to redress the injustices suffered by [the people]".¹⁰

An example showcasing these affective characteristics is Donald Trump's inaugural address in 2017, where he asserts that the spirit of the American nation is in decline because in recent years, an elite in Washington D.C. has solely pursued its own interests and enriched itself at the expense of the citizens. Trump positions himself as a kind of saviour whose objective

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 157.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 158.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, *loc. cit.*

is to return political power to the people, who, while the elite celebrated and enriched themselves, have become impoverished. In this manner, Trump creates a “them” - the elite that has forgotten about the citizens - and an “us” that represents the spirit and true values of American citizenship. Trump includes himself in the latter group and asserts that during his presidency, all decisions will truly be made exclusively for the citizens. In this regard, with the slogan “Make America Great Again,” Trump appeals to the working class and the middle class that has been impoverished over the last decade as a consequence of the economic crisis. This dissatisfaction and disillusionment with institutions and politics in general have been channelled by appealing to an affective sentiment aimed at reclaiming an idealized past that has been stolen by “them.”

Furthermore, the external sphere is deemed less important because it is asserted that in recent times, others have been defended, and the United States has forgotten to defend itself, contributing to the country’s decline. Trump proposes that the country focus on itself and that production neither come from nor be directed towards the outside, but solely towards itself, thereby producing and consuming only products made in the United States by American citizens. While foreign relations continue to hold some importance, the paramount focus is on national interests themselves.

When discussing the people and the “us,” Trump maintains that, in a certain sense, the United States is the true chosen people, protected by the Grace of God. Thus, what truly strengthens and justifies the superiority of the “us” is the sympathy and protection of something superior to political affairs, which is God. And Trump, unlike politicians who had done nothing up to that point, is the man of action, the leader capable of reclaiming the spirit of the United States.

This discourse reveals that populism also focuses on the future, and using affective language, it seeks to justify the existence of a true and righteous people, while simultaneously rejecting traditional politics, albeit utilizing its own means.

Ressentiment is one of the primary affects present in populist dynamics. Nietzsche, in the chapter, *On the Bestowing Virtue*, of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*,¹¹ contrasts two types of egoism: one unhealthy, characteristic of

¹¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006 [1883].

the resentful person or the miser who seeks not personal growth but rather to accumulate more wealth and position oneself above others, and another healthy egoism where one becomes a gift for others without expecting anything in return. In the second, the individual commits themselves and reifies in actions they consider inherently good, irrespective of others' opinions and without feeling the world owes them. The unhealthy egoist is chained to the prevailing values of the moment, whereas the healthy egoist revalues those values, creating new forms of valuation, thereby expanding the moral and political realm.¹²

In one of her recent works, *In the Ruins of Neoliberalism: The Rise of Anti-Democratic Politics in the West*,¹³ political theorist Wendy Brown examines this same phenomenon within the context of neoliberal rationality and the support for populist parties and leaders. Brown delves into contemporary nihilism and its backing of right-wing populism by "white men" who have witnessed their beliefs and way of life crumbling in just a few years. She contends that contemporary nihilism has "desublimated" values, meaning it has freed them from energies, rendering them as mere interchangeable commodities.¹⁴ In the contemporary world, all values are trivial and superficial, devoid of their content. This leads people to be unable to distinguish truth from falsehood, to form their own opinions, thereby becoming incapable of defending themselves against fake news. The release of energy signifies the atrophy of human capacities, neutralization, and loss of consciousness. Brown argues that "Desublimation sends the will to power outward again as it releases the subject from the lash and restraint of conscience".¹⁵ The result is not so much nihilism, but rather the inability to

¹² Didier Fassin makes a distinction between *Resentment* and *Ressentiment*; however, as he asserts, this is a distinction of ideal types, and in political practice, both can be indistinguishable. Resentment is a psychological reaction to pain inflicted by another agent, and the aim of resentment is solely to make the other aware of the inflicted harm. Meanwhile, for Nietzsche in *On the Genealogy of Morality* (1887), resentment is the origin of morality from which good and evil are configured. In this article, both terms are used indistinctly. The guiding definition of *resentment/ressentiment* follows the interpretation provided by Deleuze in his *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, namely, resentment as a reactive affect that diminishes the power to act, in opposition to positive affects that are active and generate powers to act.

¹³ Wendy Brown, *In the Ruins of Neoliberalism: The Rise of Anti-Democratic Politics in the West*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2019.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 161.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 164.

nihilism, as individuals cannot conform to values with which to construct a positive project that transcends the agonistic dynamics of the moment.

Brown argues that one of the main reasons why democracies have eroded in the present day is due to this liberation of values, which has ultimately led, especially in the case of individuals who support extreme right-wing alternatives, to a politics based on resentment. The resentment and rage have not been channelled into other moral values with which to reconfigure the world but have remained as mere resentment and rage.¹⁶ This results in politics not needing to be moral, but rather an expression of cries for vengeance, with no outlet or future.¹⁷ This is evident in the case of Trump, where his political strategy, like that of his supporters, is driven by anger stemming from the void left behind by the loss of traditional values that have been believed to be immutable for centuries.

Éric Fassin¹⁸ suggests that resentment is not solely a matter of globalization's losers, as is often thought, but rather a consequence of those who have traditionally been considered inferior, such as women and minorities, experiencing improved conditions. "Right-wing populism detests nothing so much as the undeserving poor, those poor who deserve no more than what they have, or rather, who do not even deserve that".¹⁹ In this sense, both Brown and Fassin concur that the resentment seen in right-wing populism corresponds to the unhealthy egoism described by Nietzsche, as Fassin asserts, the idea being that "others are enjoying in my place; if I am not enjoying, it's their fault. And that very resentment turns into pleasure".²⁰

Pierre Rosanvallon²¹ divides this phenomenon into three different emotions. Firstly, there are the emotions of position, which express a "democratic resentment," such as the anger of not being recognized, being abandoned, or not being taken into account by the elites in power. Secondly, there are the emotions of intellection, arising from the inability to distinguish between truth and falsehood, ultimately promoting misinformation and conspiracy theories. Rosanvallon asserts that these conspiracy theories aim

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 177.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 178.

¹⁸ Eric Fassin, *Populisme: le grand ressentiment*, Paris: Éditions Textuel, 2017.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 36.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 39.

²¹ Pierre Rosanvallon, *Le siècle du populisme. Histoire, théorie, critique*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2020.

to demonstrate that behind the apparent opacity and complexity of the real political or economic world lies an order of power that is perfectly simple and rational. The solution proposed is that the groups supporting these theories consider themselves responsible for embracing and becoming active propagandists. Thirdly, Rosanvallon identifies emotions of intervention, rooted in a negative politics where intensive conflict is notably present, with the aim being nothing other than removal. However, this does not lead to the constitution of a force capable of reinventing the world. Instead, it results in a refusal of responsibility, as well as avoiding responding to criticism or the task of arguing.

Populism in a digital context: What impact does digital resentment have?

Populism in the digital context generates considerable debate and attention because it is rooted in a language of hate and resentment, as outlined above. However, it is not clear to what extent it has enough influence to also affect institutions. The emergence of parties with populist tendencies is not an exclusive phenomenon of contemporary politics, as they began to emerge in the post-war period. Nevertheless, it is in the 21st century when they have gained more prominence in an increasing number of countries and become one of the most significant actors in the political landscape. Moreover, compared to traditional and institutional political parties, they have been characterized by their excellent management of new technologies, particularly social media.

In populist mobilisation within the digital realm, the predominant dynamic continues to be one of emotional language based on negative emotions rather than constructive arguments. The characteristic feature of social media is that they offer the possibility of a relationship perceived as unmediated between the leader and their followers, while other institutionalised political actors may not utilise this tool to incite mobilisation.

Benjamin Krämer²² asserts that the relationship between populist actors and the media can take various forms. Firstly, populism may utilise digital media as a vehicle to generate communication for users that journalism or other platforms may not be capable of providing. In this sense, once again, this communication oriented towards an audience is often

²² Benjamin Krämer, "Populism, Media, and the Form of Society" in *Communication Theory*, no. 28 (4), pp. 444-465.

intended to fill an empty signifier present in a specific context, which populist actors intercept. Secondly, according to Krämer, the media can sometimes create populist forms of entertainment that complement or compete with populist actors, such as certain television or radio programs. Thirdly, populist groups and parts of the citizenry may view mainstream media as part of a conspiratorial elite. Krämer considers this latter form, non-populist media, as particularly relevant because it allows for the generation of a populist dynamic; by lacking agency over such media and the citizenry feeling disconnected from them, it may foster a belief that they are governed or have conspiratorial interests.

Kissas²³ examines how charismatic individual leaders, particularly in the digital context, are the ones who triumph and garner support, rather than a political party or organization. He understands populism as a performative ideology that does not solely depend on economic inequality, but primarily aims to affect subjectivity to act on reality²⁴ He asserts that “In the aesthetic realm of performativity, resentment functions as the glue between Trump’s personality and his candidate profile, authentically collapsing them both into the defiant persona”.²⁵ In this regard, as Higgins²⁶ points out, Trump maintained a distinction between his institutional Twitter account (@POTUS) and his personal account (@RealDonaldTrump) after his victory and throughout his presidency. Although he also used the former differently compared to previous presidents, it was on his personal account where he continued to distinguish himself using spontaneity and the anti-political expressionism characteristic of his pre-electoral period.

Social movements, particularly populism, whether left-wing or right-wing, have better understood the significance of social media compared to other political actors. However, another issue to consider is whether the very design of the software application is constituted by norms that benefit such forms of political mobilisation because “the design of a software application is already the design of an organization, proposing a model of relationship

²³ Angelos Kissas, “Performative and Ideological Populism: The Case of Charismatic Leaders on Twitter” in *Discourse & Society*, no. 31 (3), 2020, pp. 268-284.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 271.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 275.

²⁶ Michael Higgins, “Mediated Populism, Culture and Media Form” in *Palgrave Communications*, no. 2 (1), 2017, pp. 1-5.

and interaction".²⁷ Martínez Gómez's hypothesis is that there is mutual feedback between the social movement and the structure of the software application, ultimately benefiting both. Both populism and social media propose a model of organization, the former being spontaneous and the latter more structured but equally immediate, thus their convergence becomes a process. The immediacy of social media perfectly complements the spontaneity of populist demands, and although their impact may seem coincidental at first glance, it is actually based on such structuring that anticipates their media success.

As Papacharissi²⁸ argues, information, particularly Big Data, is creating a new form of knowledge and communication grounded in "digital orality" rather than in writing. The vast amount of information that Big Data can gather, representing a revolution compared to all traditional archiving methods, allows for the generation of knowledge based solely on information, which can affect the emotions of citizens. Through this information, digital orality can be generated, allowing for storytelling that gives rise to situated knowledge,²⁹ narratives that oppose given epistemologies and based on information, can anticipate the affective responses of the public or users.

Mitchell Dean³⁰ asserts that social media can be understood in the form of acclamation. Acclamation "in its classical form as a public rite with both oral and gestural performative elements".³¹ It produces affective exclamations of triumph, disapproval, contempt, etc. In its simplest form, acclamation it is a collective form of consent. What is distinctive is that acclamation is an institution in the sense that it does not require its participants to have a prior idea of its meaning; it does not require prior work or individual experience to perform it. The consequence is that through acclamation, what is expressed is collective affect rather than individual affect, as one participates in a public ritual rather than seeking a way to express individual emotions.

²⁷ Luis A. M. Gómez, "Imagen, an-alfabetismo, políticas del evento", in Sara Rebollo Bueno, Cristina Pérez de Algaba & Luis M. F. Martínez (eds.), *Género y educación ante la manipulación de la comunicación*, Madrid, 2023, p. 881.

²⁸ Zizi Papacharissi, "The Unbearable Lightness of Information and the Impossible Gravititas of Knowledge: Big Data and the Makings of a Digital Orality" in *Media, Culture & Society*, no. 37 (7), 2015, pp. 1-6.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 6.

³⁰ Mitchell Dean, "Political Acclamation, Social Media and the Public Mood" in *European Journal of Social Theory*, no. 20 (3), 2017, pp. 417-434.

³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 421.

Social media have played a decisive role as facilitators of the ritual of public acclamation because they have made the physical presence of the people almost unnecessary. However, this has also configured unique characteristics. Firstly, they are characterized by greatly reducing complexity, as they reduce acclamation to gestures such as likes or follows, which serve to approve or disapprove. Secondly, although acclamation may occur in the private sphere, a large hub of connection is established where individuals encounter and merge with others, whether they desire it or not. Thirdly, it is guided by the logic of popularity, indicating a transition from a culture of participation to a culture of connectivity. This allows for reflection on the meaning of orality itself because orality, gesture, and affect in front of a physical audience are not the same as in front of a virtual audience. In the latter, even though there may be an infinity of connected users, there is not necessarily a unified audience. Thus, digital acclamation ultimately becomes a social practice that occurs in a completely privatized space, a promise of public action that is heavily controlled.

Ultimately, there are different interpretations regarding whether populism in the virtual context does or does not exert a notable influence on institutions or political regimes. As seen, some authors argue that digital polarization does indeed affect and degrade public institutions, especially liberal representative democracies, while others assert that virtual mobilizations are structured in such a way that, although they may have immense influence within them, they are not relevant outside of them. In any case, answers to this dilemma have already begun to be proposed. One of them comes from Freedman,³² who suggests the creation of public policies that reconstruct digital media in such a way that they can contain the expansion and support of extreme right-wing populism.

Conclusions

Populism is not a new political phenomenon, although it has been over the last decade that it has been gaining increasing importance in numerous parts of the world. This rise in importance has gone hand in hand with the growing use of the internet and social media. Although they may not necessarily be correlated, as seen, populist social movements and their

³² Des Freedman, "Populism and Media Policy Failure" in *European Journal of Communication*, no. 33 (6), 2018, pp. 604-618.

leaders have been the political actors who best understood how to interpret the digital context to generate mobilization based on emotions.

This may be because information and Big Data produce a new form of knowledge that favours digital orality. While traditionally politics has been based on values or beliefs that, even if they were those of a political community, could be seen as distant, populism and digital orality can affect values that are close to individuals, thus mobilizing them effectively. Nevertheless, although populism has taken advantage of this in recent years, it does not imply that this way of doing politics cannot be institutionalized and therefore lose the privilege over public attention that populism has enjoyed. These possible forms of institutionalization have not been addressed here because they exceed the scope of this work. As Norris & Inglehart³³ argue, on the one hand, the economic inequalities generated by neoliberalism and globalization since around the 1980s may have contributed to populist support; however, fundamentally, there are also a set of interdependent deeper cultural phenomena.

This article has aimed to demonstrate the relationship between populist theory and its application on social media. It has been observed that social media is a platform where populist performativity is rewarded. This can pave the way for future studies where political science is linked with disciplines such as neuroscience to study the role of emotions more deeply on social media and how they can be controlled. If this is feasible, it could also open the possibility for populism to lose the primacy it has held on social media to date, or for other movements to necessarily adopt a populist approach in order to achieve prominence on social media.

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THE STAR AND THE QUEEN. DISSONANT HERITAGE AND THE CULTURE OF DISAPPEARANCE IN HONG KONG

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Abstract: *Caught between its Chinese and British colonial history, Hong Kong's path to self-actualization is unsure without preserving its tangible and intangible heritage. This paper examines the region's several layers of heritage through the movement to preserve the Star and the Queen piers in 2007, using two theoretical frameworks, Abbas' culture of disappearance and Tunbridge's dissonant heritage. Despite the piers' demolition, their role is vital in understanding conflicting histories and decolonizing the region's identity.*

Keywords: *Heritage, Hong Kong, The Star and Queen Piers, Identity, Nostalgia*

Introduction

After the 1997 handover to China, Hong Kong's path of uncertainty was translated from the population's anxiety into slow political and societal changes, whether in clear directives from China or via the legislation and measures proposed by the pro-establishment members in the Legislative Council. In this context, it is no surprise that Hong Kong, a place struggling to combine several layers of identity should encounter clashes between its conflicting narratives, given its post-colonial history and future integration into the mainland. Moreover, in addition to these two elements come Hong Kong's economic development and affluence, crucial for forming its local identity. Hence, this tension is visible and materialized in preserving local heritage, be it tangible or intangible, or the lack thereof. What can be more telling of a people's identification and responses to cultural heritage than the

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seeming lack of interest or public policy responsible for protecting heritage? Is there an authentic Hongkongese heritage, and, if so, why is a certain interpretation of heritage promoted over the others, for what purpose, and in whose interest?¹ There are several understandings of heritage, that of the Hongkongese people, of the British administration, and that of mainland China. Each narrative promotes the interest of the said group, and, although not excluding one another, they create spaces of dissonance. One example illustrating the dissonant heritage is the demolition of Hong Kong's central piers, Edinburgh Place Ferry Pier (the Star), and the Queen's Pier (the Queen) around 2007, due to land reclamation in Victoria Harbor.

This paper aims to shed light on the demolition of the two piers and the dialectics of heritage that resulted from this process. Regarding methodology, this study uses a qualitative method by applying Tunbridge's thesis of dissonant heritage as a filter of analysis on the Queen and Star movement.² The demolition process started in late 2006 and ended in early 2008, galvanizing the local community and resulting in protests aimed at preserving one understanding of the "Hong Kong way of life". This case study is worth taking into account when addressing the issue of creating dissonance between plural understandings of heritage and identity. To this end, this paper is divided into two chapters: the first one aims to provide the historical context that facilitated the creation of layered heritage, and the second one deals with the tangible and intangible heritage of Hong Kong around 2007. While the paper focuses on the two piers, it is not limited to this case study. Rather, its purpose is to create an encompassing understanding of heritage by providing additional information and examples of tangible and intangible heritage. Additionally, the timeframe in question is after the handover until the late 2000s, with a focus on 2007, when the demolition of the two piers took place.

Theoretical Framework. Identities and the Resulting Heritage Practices

After roughly 150 years of British colonialism, Hong Kong's anxieties about being returned to China in 1997 were appeased, to a certain extent, by the introduction of the "one country, two systems" approach, as stipulated in

¹ Gregory Ashworth, Brian Graham, John E. Tunbridge, *Pluralising Pasts. Heritage, Identity and Place in Multicultural Societies*, London: Pluto Press, 2007, p. 41.

² John Tunbridge and Gregory Ashworth, *Dissonant Heritage: The Management of the Past as a Resource in Conflict*, Chichester: Wiley, 1996.

the Basic Law, granting Hongkongers the right to continue enjoying the freedoms they had during the colonial period. One cannot help but notice a degree of irony in the previous statement, for how can colonialism provide freedom? Here, freedom is understood as certain liberties contrasting the mainland communist system, most notably the freedom of speech, press, and association. In Hong Kong's situation, in economic terms, freedom means capitalism, which allowed for the development of Hong Kong's high standard of living and ostentatious consumption, as Ting comments that "Hong Kong's colonial legacy was perceived as a set of liberal frameworks facilitating capitalism", as well as criticizing the "mutual reinforcement of capitalism and colonial power".³ Moreover, he objects to the common understanding of Hong Kong's identity as apolitical, resisting both colonialism and communism and focusing exclusively on economic development. Instead, he explains how, in the face of returning to China, Hongkongers were reluctant to create a strong identity due to "historical traumas of revolution, war, colonization on the one hand", and "political suppression, conceptual difficulty in articulating a sense of belonging outside the national-colonial framework" on the other hand.⁴ The articulation of identity is paramount to ensuring heritage conservation, and raising the question of "what heritage is worth preserving and for what purpose?"

The fact that Hong Kong authorities prioritized economic growth over heritage preservation is well known, and there is merit in looking into some of the legal frameworks that facilitate overlooking the significance of local heritage. As a world financial hub, Hong Kong's necessity for economic stability and status should be understood in the context of the rise of China's megacities, which threatened Hong Kong's standing. This debate became even more apparent with the turnover of 1997 when Hong Kong's interpretation of heritage fluctuated between globalism and localism. Should Hong Kong become Asia's World City, as the Government tried to create this image, or should it tend to its local heritage? Bearing this question in mind, one can observe two distinct understandings, as illustrated by the speeches of David Lung at a conference on heritage and tourism, as well as the speech of

³ Chun Chun Ting. "The Star and the Queen: Heritage Conservation and the Emergence of a New Hong Kong Subject" in *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture*, vol. 25, no. 2, 2013, pp. 99–100 [http://www.jstor.org/stable/43492534].

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 88.

Donald Tsang (2007), former Chief Executive. On the one hand, Lung states that:

Should Hong Kong be developed into a world-class but faceless metropolis of the so-called ‘global community’ of the 21st century? Or should Hong Kong play an active role in *preserving its cultural heritage which will enable it to be identified as a unique and culturally significant part of the world* in the mode of New York, London, or Paris? ... The successful long-term development of Hong Kong into a better place lies not only with the physical, economic, and technological ‘glitters’, but also with the *underlying cultural-heritage assets that will give Hong Kong its soul and identity.*⁵ (emphasis added)

On the other hand, in his address, Donald Tsang states that:

Our continued economic prosperity depends on new buildings being built and old ones replaced. But times have changed and people today are more attuned to heritage preservation. They no longer see urban developments as paramount, especially when the loss of heritage buildings is the price we pay for progress. Quite rightly, we have to strike a balance between development and conservation. (...) *The meteoric rise of many competing cities within the region, and especially those on the Mainland, means we must keep a firm grip on our competitive advantage.* This is a government responsibility. The community must understand that investment in infrastructure is vital if Hong Kong is to remain a dynamic and thriving world city.⁶ (emphasis added)

This differentiation is emblematic of Hong Kong’s approach to heritage, either as a symbol of its fluctuating cultural identity or as something that needs to be dealt with, to be managed to make space for “progress”. The attitude of choosing to demolish and build from scratch, rather than conserve and preserve the old is also highlighted by Tsui when contrasting the way European cities deal with heritage, namely preserving, to the way Asian cities focus more on redevelopment than on restoration. Tsui gives more drastic examples, such as the hutongs, emblematic of Beijing, being

⁵ Donald Lung, “Is Heritage For Sale?”, Proceedings of Heritage and Tourism: An International Conference, Leisure and Culture Services Department, Hong Kong, 1999.

⁶ Donald Tsang, “Letter to Hong Kong: Heritage Preservation”, KSAR Government, 2007 [<https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/200701/28/P200701260091.htm>], May 28, 2024.

demolished to make room for larger streets and infrastructure⁷. Furthermore, Tsang's vocabulary highlights a business-minded, capitalist approach that views economic development as a prerequisite for survival, especially when competing with the mainland: he uses "replaced", rather than "restored" and talks about how "the loss of heritage is the price for progress". It is precisely this aim at "progress", always understood in economic terms, that caused the series of land reclamation projects in Hong Kong, affecting the Victoria Harbor and the two piers in question.

After grasping the authorities' post-handover stance on heritage reclamation, one should dwell on the people's perception of space and identity. While it has already been mentioned that it is reductive to understand Hongkongers as just economically driven and that their apparent apathy regarding politics comes as a result of them being politically restricted during colonialism, it is time to examine how this lack of political involvement affects heritage protection. Lui observes that Hongkongers are not only obsessed with money but that older generations were not actively involved in protecting Hong Kong's heritage since they did not identify with it as their culture, rather seeing it as the heritage from the colonialism they opposed.⁸ However, public perceptions changed over time, with the emergence of new generations for whom landmarks were not necessarily tied to a colonial history they experienced little of, and who began identifying with certain local structures they grew around. Moreover, other factors need to be considered, such as the political and economic context, as Ma points to the shift from conspicuous consumption to post-materialism in the early 2000s, especially due to the 2003 SARS epidemic, and its consequent economic crisis.⁹ The CCP saw the crisis as an opportunity to pass the national security legislation, against which half a million people marched. This event served as an awakening for a local identity, rejecting both Beijing's policy, as well

⁷ Hilary Tsui, "The Demolition of Star Ferry Pier: Urban Reclamation versus Cultural Heritage in Hong Kong" in *Eurozine*, Oct. 29, 2007 [<https://www.eurozine.com/the-demolition-of-star-ferry-pier/>], 30 May 2024.

⁸ Tai-lok Lui, "Xianggang zhimin shenghuo de 'lengjingyan'" 香港殖民生活的冷經驗 (The indifference in Hong Kong's colonial experience), *Bentu lunshu* no. 2, 2009, pp. 99-104, tr. Ting, 2013.

⁹ See Ngok Ma, "The Rise of 'Anti-China' Sentiments in Hong Kong and the 2012 Legislative Council Elections" in *China Review*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2015, pp. 39-66 [www.jstor.org/stable/24291928], 19 May 2024.

as its proposed infrastructure projects.¹⁰ On this note, other relevant examples arise of protesting for heritage preservation against economic or technological development, such as the 2010 movement seeking to protect Choi Yuen Village, by opposing the construction of a high-speed rail between Hong Kong and Guangzhou. It is worth noting that both this movement and those protesting for the preservation of the piers failed under the authorities' push for Tsang's concept of "progress". Hence, the early 2000s marked the emergence of a social collective mentality, eager to protect its heritage. But what heritage, more specifically? The colonial, the Chinese, or the recently formed local one?

It has already been mentioned that the Hong Kong identity, during the early 2000s, was layered, containing all three aforementioned layers.¹¹ Ting links the formation of identity to different practices when it comes to heritage preservation: "Colonialism and nationalism were rival discourses informing the practice of heritage preservation in Hong Kong."¹² Heritage is political and by reimagining the present via the past, one can shift the focus from Hong Kong as a colony, to Hong Kong as belonging to China, via its ethnic element. For instance, Wong comments on how, after the handover, the CCP used heritage to rekindle Hong Kong's belonging to the motherland, such as when the artifacts found on Chek Lap Kok Island when building the airport were used to reshape Hong Kong's identity into a mainland framework, based on a common history.¹³ Another instance of reimagining the colonial past via mainland glasses is the preservation of the Flagstaff House, the oldest colonial building in HKSAR, which was turned into a museum of Chinese tea before the handover, announcing the shift in identity narratives and what the future would unfold for Hong Kong. Here, Tunbridge's thesis of 'dissonant cultural heritage' is relevant in articulating the tensions between the several layers encompassing the Hong Kong identity and how one might take precedence at the other's expense.¹⁴

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 44-50.

¹¹ See Marilyn Brewer, "Multiple Identities and Identity Transition: Implications for Hong Kong" in *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, vol. 23, 1999, pp. 187-197.

¹² Ting, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

¹³ Wang-chi Wong, 王宏志. *Lishi de chenzhong: cong Xianggang kan Zhongguo dalu de Xianggangshi lunshu 历史的沉重：从香港看中国大陆* (The burden of History: a Hong Kong perspective on mainland Chinese narrative of Hong Kong history), Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2000. Tr. by Ting, 2013.

¹⁴ Tunbridge, *op. cit.*

One last point to be addressed in the theoretical framework of identity and dissonant heritage is that of legislation. The preservation of heritage in Hong Kong is based on the *Antiquities and Monument Ordinance*, introduced in 1976 during the colonial period.¹⁵ Therefore, it comes as no surprise that it prioritizes Eurocentric definitions of heritage, such as age and monumentality to the detriment of intangible heritage, more common to the Hong Kong way of living.¹⁶ The scope of the ordinance is limited, as shall be seen in the case of the piers, since, as the name shows, it focuses on “antiquities”, and “monuments”. Considering that Hong Kong as a colony was less than 150 years old, what could be then interpreted as a “monument”, or “antiquity”? Therefore, it is peculiar how one heritage, that of being Hongkongese, albeit layered, develops on the framework of another, that of colonialism. This is not only unsuitable, but it is prone to bringing tensions and contestation, such as in the 2007 protests.

Tangible and Intangible Heritage in 2007. The Star and Queen Movement

Having thus established the theoretical framework and the historical background of the heritage question in Hong Kong, as well as linking it to the issue of identity in the post-colonial period, it is now necessary to consider one pragmatic example of the management of heritage, the demolition of Star Ferry and the Queen’s piers, as well as showing the limitations of the legal framework in place for protecting heritage. The construction and consequent demolition of the piers must be understood in the light of the Government’s plans for land reclamation in Victoria Harbor. There have been successive land reclamation initiatives in the Harbor, which account for Hong Kong’s overall economic success; on both sides of the Harbor, there is the Central District in which business flourishes, in addition to having some of the highest land prices not only in Hong Kong but in the world.¹⁷ It is worth noticing that the placement of the piers in the heart of this Harbor would inevitably lead to their contestation, as their demolition

¹⁵ HKSAR Government, “Antiquities and Monument Ordinance”, 1976

[https://www.elegislation.gov.hk/hk/cap53?xpid=ID_1438403334919_003], 20 May 2024.

¹⁶ Lachlan Barber, “(Re)Making Heritage Policy in Hong Kong: A Relational Politics of Global Knowledge and Local Innovation” in *Urban Studies*, vol. 51, no. 6, 2014, pp. 1179–95 [<http://www.jstor.org/stable/26145785>], 20 May 2024.

¹⁷ Tsui, *op. cit.*

is necessary to make space for a more impressive skyline, among the skyscrapers of the Central District.

Both piers were built after World War Two, in the heart of the Central District, in the functionalist style, prioritizing practicality over architectural grandeur. The Edinburgh Place Ferry Pier, commonly known as Star Ferry Pier, was the most used in Hong Kong due to being the cheapest way of transportation between the island of Hong Kong and the Kowloon peninsula. Furthermore, the Queen's Pier was built for ceremonial purposes, such as the landing of colonial officials, British royals, or Governors, but was mostly used for leisure boats.¹⁸ The piers represent a landmark for the locals in the collective memory as, for most of its history, Hong Kong thrived because of its geographical location as a port. Even before colonization, it was a meeting point for merchants, fishermen, and pirates. The functionality of the piers speaks to the locals as both tangible and intangible heritage since, on the one hand, the piers are relics of the past, and on the other, "commuter-style crossing of the harbour by ferry for a token fare, (is) arguably a defining feature of Hong Kong lifestyle shared by many".¹⁹ Moreover, it is worth examining how the pier's structure is emblematic of Hong Kong, not territorially, but sociologically. For many, Hong Kong has been a place of transit, as the region witnessed waves of refugees after revolutions and wars, whether from China to the British colony or from the British colony to the Western world. Ting comments on the phenomenon of deterritorialization as a core element of the Hongkongese identity, especially after the exodus of the population before the handover. Hence, the instability of the piers as a means of transport, the idea of transit in itself is quintessential to the formation of Hongkongers, as an identity of migrants.²⁰

The point mentioned above regarding the location of the piers in the central part of the business districts is worth further exploring, as this centrality bore witness to the development of Hong Kong. As the most frequent means of transport, in the heart of the Central district, locals understood the piers as a symbol of the city's stance as a world financial hub. What is to be understood as "locals"? As the piers were built in the 1950s,

¹⁸ Ting, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

¹⁹ Sebastian Veg, "Cultural Heritage in Hong Kong, the Rise of Activism and the Contradictions of Identity" in *China Perspectives*, 2007/2, p. 47

[<http://journals.openedition.org/chinaperspectives/1663>], 10 May 2024.

²⁰ Ting, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

they came into being at the same time as the first generation of Chinese ethnics that started to identify themselves as Hongkongese, due to several factors. This generation came of age in the 1970s and 1980s when Hong Kong's financial success started differentiating itself from China, and the Hongkongese locals from their mainland counterparts. Moreover, Ting raises a crucial point in stating that "In a city with no public square, the place surrounded by the two piers, Edinburgh Place and Hong Kong City Hall, had been the de facto site for residents to gather and voice their political demands".²¹ The space between the two piers acted, thus, as an agora,²² and witnessed the formation of the Hong Kong people as a political subject.²³ According to Ping, one element separating the "Hong Kong local identity" from mainlanders is Hongkongers' sense of entitlement when it comes to politics, which is afforded due to the freedom of speech, association, and protest.²⁴ This space not only bore witness to the centralization of the Hong Kong people into an active political element but enabled it by providing a common space. To properly comprehend the considerable role of this space, one must explore some critical points in the history of Hong Kong. For instance, it is here that the riot of 1966 started, a catalyst for the political exercise of Hongkongers, when the student So Sao-Chung went on a hunger strike against the increase of 25% of the ferry fare, showing not only how important this means of transport was to the locals, but also catalyzing into general dissatisfaction with the colonial rule.²⁵ Moreover, the space between the piers acted as a protesting point for South Asian migrants asking for civil and social rights, as well as a place of opposition to the mainland authorities after the Tiananmen massacre in 1989. Hence, Tsui's argument is relevant in stating that the two piers, together with the space encompassing them, are a part of the collective memory of millions of Hongkongers as symbols of local, grassroots culture.²⁶

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 98.

²² For more on the formation of identity around public spaces, see Wai-man Lam, *Understanding the Political Culture of Hong Kong: The Paradox of Activism and Depoliticization*, New York: M. E. Sharpe, 2004.

²³ Ting, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

²⁴ Yew Chiew Ping, and Kwong Kin-ming, "Hong Kong Identity on the Rise" in *Asian Survey*, vol. 54, no. 6, 2014, pp. 1095 [www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/as.2014.54.6.1088], 20 May 2024.

²⁵ Ting, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

²⁶ Tsui, *op. cit.*

This framework of understanding the piers as both tangible and intangible heritage is necessary and serves as a comprehensive tool for interpreting the locals' response to the Government's plans to demolish them to create more space for urbanistic development, better said gentrification, via land reclamation. What accounts for the discrepancy between the public and the Government's understanding of heritage, and why did the authorities not consider the piers as heritage from a legal point of view? To answer this, one should consider both local and international legal frameworks for heritage preservation. On the one hand, the international framework via organizations such as UNESCO proved to be futile in protecting the piers. According to *the Convention Concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage* from 1972, no site from Hong Kong would qualify for protection, since UNESCO operates on a national level, favoring tangible heritage, as opposed to Hong Kong's intangible, way of living heritage.²⁷ Tsui raises this point as well, commenting on how the 150-year-old colonial history does not fit the criteria for enlisting monuments or sites in UNESCO, and it explains why, at the time of the Piers' debate, there were no Hong Kong sites enlisted in UNESCO.²⁸ On the other hand, it has already been discussed that the local legislation, the *Ordinance* passed during colonial times, is limitative both in scope and in the means of protecting cultural heritage. For instance, the Star Ferry Pier, forty-nine years old, was one year short of qualifying for the status of a monument, showing the limitation of the *Ordinance*. Moreover, from an architectural perspective, its functionalist style and aesthetic simplicity added to what the authorities decided to be a lack of importance, especially when contrasted with the new plans for the waterfront. Furthermore, in the case of the Queen's Pier, some interpretations disqualified its existence on the basis that it promotes colonial history, in addition to the fact that its age did not fit the fifty-year criteria for conservation. The idea of reconstructing the waterfront on the space occupied by the piers highlights the issue of urban redevelopment and privatization of public spaces, an urgent issue in Hong Kong's already gentrified and crowded market. In its attempt to secure Hong Kong's status as Asia's world city, the Government's plan includes building on the waterfront a colossal government office building, a military pier, a high-end

²⁷ UNESCO, "Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage", 1972 [<http://whc.unesco.org/?cid=175>], 28 May 2024.

²⁸ Tsui, *op. cit.*

shopping mall, and a greenbelt for leisure and tourism.²⁹ This could prompt a class interpretation, alongside the issue of privatizing public spaces: by creating exclusive, consumerist spaces instead of unpretentious, functional spaces for the working class, the Government excludes low-income workers.³⁰

Bearing in mind these two interpretations, that of the piers as a link between past and present, as well as that of open, inclusive space for workers regardless of class, it is now time to consider in depth the response of the local community. After the news that the Government planned to demolish the Star Ferry Pier in late 2006, the local community came together to protest what they considered their heritage. The protesters delayed the demolition by organizing hunger strikes, candlelight vigils, and breaking into the demolition site, yet could not stop the inevitable. On the last day of the Star being functional, around 150,000 people gathered for a last crossing of the harbor, in a nostalgic mood,³¹ portraying the nostalgia resulting from Abbas's culture of disappearance. The activists, although loosely organized, gathered around the piers and formed the "Local Action" initiative. Just months later, their attention was drawn to the Queen's pier, while the movement protecting the piers was called "the Star and Queen movement", and lasted for months. More specifically, the occupation of the Queen's Pier lasted for 97 days and encompassed several means of protest, from hunger strikes to artistic workshops dedicated to the heritage, poetry reading events, and public demonstrations, as well as some extreme means, as one protester wrote banners with his blood.³² Nonetheless, it is critical to examine the role of the Queen's Pier in the discursive practices of heritage in a post-colonial society. Ting notes that although the Queen's Pier is a symbol of colonialism for some, via this movement it became a place of actualization for the people's political conviction, highlighting its role as a public space that offers the background for creating a "common ownership (of historical narratives) and destiny".³³ The two sites represent one way via which Hongkongers can

²⁹ Ting, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

³⁰ Vaudine England, "Protesters Fight to Save Historic Hong Kong Pier" in *The Guardian*, 2007 [<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/jun/18/china.international>], 29 May 2024.

³¹ Tsui, *op. cit.*

³² YouTube, "Protests to Stop Demolition of Queen's Ferry Pier", uploaded by AP Archive, Jul 21, 2015 [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PiUtPj5kUWU>], 29 May 2024.

³³ Ting, 2013, p. 83.

reflect on their history and create their future; the idea of contestation is necessary, as it has as a prerequisite for the existence of the heritage site contested.

An example of actively rereading history is how protesters, accompanied by several other groups, activists, and locals, organized a symbolic crossing of the harbor via the Queen's Pier and called it "People's Landing at Queen's Pier", reclaiming, hence, ownership of the space, and negating colonial readings of the pier.³⁴ The inclusiveness of the crowd, going beyond the "Hong Kong locals" to abode seekers from the mainland, and to South Asian migrants and workers, is illustrated in the banner carried by protesters, reading "We are all migrants!"³⁵ This attitude redefines the Hongkonger identity beyond previous constraints of history, language, and culture, and goes to the idea of striving for a better life while contributing to the development of Hong Kong.

Lastly, one more point needs to be addressed to properly comprehend the activists' response to the demolition of the piers, by providing an example with a similar reaction to the disappearance of other tangible or intangible sites or practices defined as heritage. Other than the aforementioned Choi Yuen Tsuen village, other examples of nostalgia at the destruction of grassroots culture include the demolition of the Lee Tung 'Wedding Card' Street in 2007, the Fishball Revolution of 2016, which aimed at protecting the street vendors, a symbol of Hong Kong style of living, as well as intangible heritage practices, such as the protection of English and Cantonese used as official languages, both threatened by the push for Mandarin. These examples, although not correlated at first glance, relate to Abbas' theory of the politics of disappearance:

³⁴ England, *op. cit.*

³⁵ Ting, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

The change in status of culture in Hong Kong can be described as follows: from reverse hallucination, which sees only desert, to a culture of disappearance, whose appearance is posited on the imminence of its disappearance.³⁶

Abbas proclaims that, before the handover, Hong Kong could not see culture and identity as coming from itself, but rather coming from the outside, either from the mainland or from Great Britain, calling it “a cultural desert”. After the handover, Hong Kong became preoccupied with the nostalgia of losing its culture, despite being unable to articulate what that culture meant. In turn, the spaces formerly occupied by the two piers become embedded with nostalgia, and the idea of local identity, despite the lack of the heritage to support that identity.³⁷ Blacker further develops this idea: “All these places have become magnified as the objects of a vast nostalgia that elevates them to the status of *lieux de mémoire* whose potency, following the laws of nostalgia, lies in the fact that they are no longer.”³⁸ Despite Blacker’s affirmation referring to the patrimony in Eastern Europe, this observation applies just as much to Hong Kong and explains the nostalgia surrounding the piers and their disappearance. Moreover, this understanding of nostalgia in creating one’s identity in the absence of tangible heritage is supported by Steward, who calls nostalgia a “sadness without subject”.³⁹

Conclusion

After providing the theoretical framework for analyzing the demolition of the two piers, it becomes evident that Hongkongers’ identity is not only layered but that each layer is connected to different forms of heritage, whether tangible or intangible. At first glance, it could be argued that the age and the aesthetics of the two piers did not mark them as noteworthy heritage according to the legal framework of heritage management of

³⁶ Ackbar Abbas, *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance*, NED-New edition, vol. 2, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997, p. 7 [http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctttshbm], 29 May 2024.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 63-90.

³⁸ Uilleam Blacker, “Living among the Ghosts of Others: Urban Postmemory in Eastern Europe”, in Uilleam Blacker, Alexander Etkind, Julie Fedor (eds.), *Memory and Theory in Eastern Europe*, New York: Palgrave, 2013, p. 174.

³⁹ Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984, p. 23.

Hong Kong, hence, their demolition was not only justifiable but expected considering the inevitability of economic development. However, this paper has proved that not only is the legislation in a place unsuitable for marking the status of heritage sites in a post-colonial society, but that the authorities' approach to heritage does not address the intangible value of sites such as the piers. Instead, it commodifies it in a neoliberal approach that prioritizes the privatization of public spaces for profit. The piers represented not only a place of transit physically, but metaphorically, thus, they are representative of a local community formed mostly of immigrants and the descendants of refugees from the mainland.

Moreover, Hongkongers' reaction is emblematic not only of an actively involved community but also of people trying to secure an identity by linking it to the familiar, even though in doing so they have to reread their legacy, namely colonialism. The public's reaction to the demolition denotes the coming of age of a generation ready to stand up for itself and reclaim ownership of their collective destiny, looking into the future while relying on their past. This generation would depart from the conspicuous consumption that characterized Hong Kong to post-materialism, regaining their political agency and protesting as seen in 2014 and 2019.

Lastly, while the Piers' chapter is closed with their demolition, future research should focus on new forms of identity creation via Hong Kong's cultural heritage. As the region becomes increasingly integrated into the mainland and loses its uniqueness, historical sites as well as intangible cultural practices should be conserved. This is increasingly relevant through the lens of Hong Kong's economic development where businesses and land reclamation take precedence over its patrimony. How heritage can be used as a tool for decolonizing collective memory is a question still unanswered in this case, as the region goes from one colonizing force to another.

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MIDDLE POWERS AS MEDIATORS: THE ROLE OF TÜRKIYE AND BRAZIL IN THE JCPOA, THE UKRAINIAN GRAIN DEAL, AND FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS IN THE WAR IN UKRAINE

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Abstract: *Characterized by their ability to impact the world order without having superpower status, middle powers contribute significantly to maintaining global stability and fostering notable advancements. The notion of middle powers is longstanding in international relations, with its roots traceable in the writings of the Italian 16th century thinker Giovanni Botero. The literature concerning middle powers is full of debates and considerations about their definitions, characteristics, and objectives. Türkiye and Brazil have been chosen as primary subjects of this study to exemplify the growing role of middle powers as mediators due to their involvement in international negotiations.*

Keywords: *Middle Powers; Great Powers; the Grain Deal; JCPOA; diplomatic negotiations; mediation.*

The recent developments in the Ukraine and Gaza conflicts have highlighted the growing significance of middle powers. Middle powers are regarded as states that lack superpower status but possess enough influence to impact global affairs.¹ It can only be expected that these states do not find themselves in the driver seat of the current world order, but rather in the front passenger seat, where they can seize the benefits of upholding the current status quo or align with superpowers capable of reshaping the current international system.

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¹ Meltem Müftüler Baç, "Middle power", *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 19 March 2024 [<https://www.britannica.com/topic/middle-power>], 29 May 2024.

The notion of middle powers was introduced by the Italian thinker Giovanni Botero, who originally portrayed them as entities possessing the necessary strength and autonomy needed to operate independently, without relying on external support.² The 16th century term gained notable recognition during World War II, particularly in the cases of Canada and Australia, and resurfaced in the 1990s, highlighting the roles of Japan and South Korea.

The term brings in a Pandora's Box of arguments concerning the existing definitions and the criteria required to categorize a state as a middle power. Debates often revolve around factors such as the size of the state, military might, geographical position, economic power, and resources.³ The efforts in comprising an accurate list of middle powers can be underscored by the changing dynamic of international relations, for example the articles and studies conducted in the 1990s or early 2000s would be regarded as a milestone in this regard, but also viewed as being outdated – some of the states ticking the boxes for middle powers after the end of the Cold War are no longer in that category, either they have made the jump to great powers or have faded in the background due to the developments made by other states.

Author Hasan Basri Yalçın emphasizes that while a country may possess the capabilities and independence necessary to impact international relations, it must also cultivate the awareness of being a middle power,⁴ this involves acting with the goal of attaining an autonomous position in relation to the great powers.

Recently, authors such as Mykhailo Minakov and Oliver Turner have addressed the importance of middle powers in relation to the developments of the conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza. According to Minakov, middle powers gain a stronger say in global affairs when a prolonged period of peace ends and great powers find themselves in increasingly antagonistic dynamics: "In extended periods of peace and cooperation, the non-great states have little chance to shape the global or regional political agenda. However, when the

² Dong-Min Shin, "A Critical Review of the Concept of Middle Power" in *E-International Relations*, 6 December 2015 [www.e-ir.info/2015/12/04/a-critical-review-of-the-concept-of-middle-power], 23 December 2023.

³ *Ibidem*.

⁴ Yalçın Hasan Basri, "The Concept of 'Middle Power' and the Recent Turkish Foreign Policy Activism" in *Afro Eurasian Studies*, Vol. 1, Issue 1, Spring 2012, p. 196.

great powers enter into antagonistic relations, the middle powers gain a footing to amplify their sovereign stature and influence relations between the states in their region or, sporadically, globally.”⁵ In author Oliver Turner’s view, the middle powers are stepping in the current conflicts in order to play a role traditionally attributed to superpowers, the one of the mediator, and preserver of peace and international order. Türkiye has been identified as a middle power actively involved in the Ukraine conflict by both authors and they have also stressed the past decades mediating roles the state has assumed, aiming to position itself neutrally amid antagonistic conflicts among great powers.

This study takes upon the observations of the aforementioned authors and seeks to expand on the role of middle powers as mediators in the global arena, particularly in scenarios where great powers face difficulties in resolving crises or conflicts. Türkiye and Brazil have been chosen as the focus of this case study due to their involvement in the negotiation process for JCPOA, and the war in Ukraine. The paper will take the form of a comparative analysis but due to the short format, three main aspects will be addressed:

1. What prompts middle powers to take on the role of mediator in international negotiations?
2. How did the involvement of Türkiye and Brazil as mediators influenced the negotiation process for the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action?
3. What is the significance of the Grain Deal for Türkiye as a mediator, and what are the implications of the war in Ukraine for Brazil?

The primary sources for this study are books and legal documents, while secondary sources encompass articles, press releases, videos, and other relevant materials. The scope of the paper involves drawing up a set of reflections on the involvement of Türkiye and Brazil in international negotiations and emphasizing the growing significance of middle powers in the role of mediators. This paper will be further developed in the future in a more elaborated format, but for the time being the three main aspects will be tackled.

⁵ Mykhailo Minakov, “Ukraine and the Rise of the Middle Powers”, Wilson Center [<https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/ukraine-and-rise-middle-powers>], 23 December 2023.

What prompts Middle Powers to take on the role of mediator in international negotiations?

As mentioned prior, middle powers hold a distinct position on the global stage as they are not preoccupied with the perceived threat of being overthrown compared to great powers and have enough room for asserting their objectives in contrast to weaker states. In this in-between scenario, they can draw upon their good bilateral relations with great powers to implement their objectives, seek to wield greater influence in multilateral formats, where the power of voting and lobbying can shape future policies, agreements, sanctions etc. or a combination of the two. Due to their placement in global affairs, acting unilaterally would generate limited results since their endeavors can be overshadowed by the ambitions of great powers.

There is a misconception about middle powers, regarding them as having second-rank status in world politics⁶ - it is worth mentioning that while these states do not have the far-reaching impact that great powers do in conflicts or crises, they typically do not aspire to a global influence in their foreign policy pursuits. Middle powers usually face a localized focus – often centered around a specific region or a particular ideal within the international realm, in Carsten Holbraad's book *Middle Powers in International Politics* published in 1984, he presents the context as follows: "Middle powers have no such obvious shared interests to defend against challenges from smaller powers. In extreme situations of joint oppression by great powers, as we see in later chapters, they may move closer to each other in defense of the rights of lesser powers, and on particular issues of great and general importance to middle-ranking powers they, or some of them, may take a joint stand."⁷

Russia's invasion of Ukraine marked an important step in bringing these states to the forefront, especially due to the Western call for a united front against Russia – the extent of commitment to this Western demand has

⁶ Willem Oosterveld, Bianca Torossian, "A Balancing Act: The Role of Middle Powers in Contemporary Diplomacy" in *Strategic Monitor 2018-2019*, The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies [https://www.clingendael.org/pub/2018/strategic-monitor-2018-2019/a-balancing-act/], December 23, 2023.

⁷ Carsten Holbraad, *Middle Powers in International Politics*, Palgrave Macmillan UK eBooks [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-06865-4], p. 76.

notably waned, either due to dependence on Russian gas, the prevalence of Russian bilateral ties, other conflicts coming to the forefront or by simply by being on the outskirts of the epicenter of the Russian - Ukrainian conflict.

Middle powers have regarded the conflict from a different angle, mainly pertaining to the establishment of alternative communication channels and seeking to alleviate tensions, especially when great powers struggle to engage with the others and show limited willingness to make concessions. In this respect, it is crucial to distinguish between the role of a mediator and an arbitrator - the former voluntarily facilitates negotiations to help advance to the next stages, while the latter, an appointed and qualified actor, holds the authority to provide a solution to the involved parties. Author Alan K. Henrikson discusses the importance of mediatory diplomacy, especially highlighting its common occurrence within the realm of international organizations, where middle powers have a greater impact. Through initiatives and lobbying, middle powers often serve as mediators without fully engaging in the negotiation process, as complete involvement might lead to taking sides and jeopardize their neutrality.⁸ This approach enables them to avoid displaying a clear bias and maintains their impartiality on the subject under consideration.

The subjects of this study reflect the variety of interests found among middle powers ranging from seeking regional influence and upholding the status quo, to increasingly autonomous and independent foreign policies that often put a spin in the work for great powers. Türkiye has long been loosely associated with the concept of a middle power, despite its foreign policy often evoking a revival of Ottoman heritage. In recent decades, Türkiye has diverged from the measures taken by the current proponents of the world order. On the other hand, Brazil's economic advancements in the early 2000s and the promise of becoming a regional role model has flattered due to political turmoil, economic straining, and incidents such as the rainforest fires. Neither of these states embodies a flawless example of a middle power upholding the current world order, as their development – promoting policies have been overshadowed or proven to be inconsistent due

⁸ Alan K. Henrikson, "Middle Powers as Managers: International Mediation within, across, and outside Institutions", in Andrew F. Cooper (ed.), *Niche Diplomacy: Middle Powers after the Cold War*, Studies in Diplomacy, General Editor: G. R. Berridge, Centre for the Study of Diplomacy, University of Leicester, 1994, p. 47.

to domestic challenges. Despite the evident lack of concrete results, a consistent theme prevailed: their aspiration to be involved in negotiations with great powers, especially in scenarios where complex and difficult deals become stumbling blocks and generate global concerns.

The two states depart from established middle powers such as Canada, Australia or South Korea which have been placed in this box during the Cold War; these states are regarded as being emergent middle powers – while they possess material capabilities their desire to participate in international politics carries a complex interweb of interests that does not solely carry out the greater vision of the establishers of the current world order, as author Umut Aydin suggests: “These countries are middle powers in the sense that they possess mid-range material capabilities and their foreign policies have tended towards coalition-building, with a preference for multilateralism and niche diplomacy.”⁹ An example of this type of coalition-building is the establishment of the G-20, which emerged from Brazil’s heightened involvement in WTO negotiations, specifically in services and agriculture with Türkiye being involved in this platform as well.

Türkiye possesses the necessary capabilities for middle power status, but there are contradictions between these capabilities and the discourse articulated by Turkish leadership, Türkiye aspires to transcend the status of a mere middle power: “It seems that Turkey is holding enough material capabilities to characterize it as a middle power. Beyond that, perhaps more importantly, new Turkish activism in foreign affairs illustrates that Turkey is increasingly playing the role of a middle power even though the Turkish leadership would desire even more than that.”¹⁰ Türkiye aims to assert itself as a regional hegemon, which can lead to actions that seem contradictory to its partners as the state often prioritizes national interests over bilateral or multilateral ties.

Brazil’s foreign policy aligns more with the idea of upholding the status quo and gaining influence via investing in multilateral platforms, as authors Dawisson Belém Lopes, Guilherme Casarões, and Carlos Frederico Gama stress: “In the absence of abundant material capabilities, a country will rely on reputational goods and well-established legal frameworks as a means

⁹ Umut Aydin, “Emerging Middle Powers and the Liberal International Order” in *International Affairs*, Volume 97, Issue 5, September 2021, p. 1379

[<https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiaab090>].

¹⁰ Yalçın, *art. cit.*

to reach the best outcomes in international relations.”¹¹ The perception of Brazil as the gentle giant is the result of the country’s pursuit of relations with medium and small countries, while taking part in initiatives such as BRICS, where Brazil sought to cultivate closer ties with emerging powers but was reluctant to pursue closer ties with great powers such as Russia and China, mainly seeking to maintain bilateral trade agreements.

How did the involvement of Türkiye and Brazil as mediators influenced the negotiation process for the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action?

The negotiations for the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), commonly known as the Iran Nuclear Deal marked a challenging process for the involved parties - Iran and the P5+1, which includes China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Germany, as moments of tensions and heavily implied misunderstandings between the parties were causing distress concerning the actual possibility of having the deal in function.

The primary objective of the Iran Nuclear Deal was a reciprocal arrangement, wherein Iran committed to limit its nuclear activities, permit international inspections, and decrease its enriched uranium stockpile, the remaining parties would provide relief from economic sanctions. As with any other diplomatic negotiations, there were three separate stages to the process: the pre-negotiations, the formula, and the details stage; the process was a lengthy one, comprising almost 20 months of negotiations in which the initial interim agreement – the Joint Plan of Action came into force in 2014, received two extensions in 2014 and 2015, and finally leading up to the Iran nuclear deal framework to be reached in April 2015 and the deal to be signed in July same year.

The initial signals concerning the existence of a deadlock in relation to Iran’s nuclear activity were pointed out prior to the Joint Plan of Action. The involvement of Türkiye and Brazil had been foreseen ever since Javier Solana, the European Union’s High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), and Ali Larijani, Iran’s chief negotiator on

¹¹ Dawisson Belém Lopes, Guilherme Casarões & Carlos Frederico Gama, “A Tragedy of Middle Power Politics: Traps in Brazil’s Quest for Institutional Revisionism”, in Paulo Esteves, Maria Gabrielsen Jumbert, Benjamin de Carvalho (eds.), *Status and the Rise of Brazil: Global Ambitions, Humanitarian Engagement and International Challenges*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020, p. 53.

nuclear matters, visited Ankara in 2007 at the invitation of Abdullah Gül, who was then the foreign minister. Brazil started to show interest in having a nuclear activity reduction deal with Iran around the same time, an initiative supported by Brazil's long history with nuclear issues as well as its considerable reserve of uranium.

This main concern pertaining to this intricate web of interactions and exchanges was that sanctions became overdue with no clarity on the horizon and diplomatic efforts being increasingly sidelined. In a final attempt, President Obama reached out to the Brazilian and Turkish leadership to intervene and seek consensus with Iran in 2010. This effort led to an unexpected outcome as the Turkish delegation successfully brought Iran closer to the idea of using its territory for the requested kilograms of Low Enriched Uranium (LEU).

On 17 May 2010, the representatives of Türkiye, Iran and Brazil have signed the Tehran Declaration have re-emphasizing their commitment to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and provided the following solution for the other parties to the agreement: "When the Vienna Group declares its commitment to this provision, then both parties would commit themselves to the implementation of the agreement mentioned in item 6. Islamic Republic of Iran expressed its readiness to deposit its LEU (1200 kg) within one month. On the basis of the same agreement the Vienna Group should deliver 120 kg of fuel required for TRR in no later than one year."¹² In the declaration, Iran's position towards the Turkish and Brazil's efforts has been emphasized as well: "Turkey and Brazil appreciated Iran's commitment to the NPT and its constructive role in pursuing the realization of nuclear rights of its member states. The Islamic Republic of Iran likewise appreciated the constructive efforts of the friendly countries Türkiye and Brazil in creating the conducive environment for realization of Iran's nuclear rights."¹³ In the Tehran declaration, the stationing of the LEU on the territory of Türkiye would not affect Iran's property of these resources, therefore ensuring a successful exchange without any part losing leverage.

However, the string of miscommunication and bad timing between the US and Iran persisted. The day after the Tehran declaration, the US

¹² Julian Borger, "Text of the Iran-Brazil-Turkey Deal" in the *Guardian.com*, 17 May 2010 [<https://www.theguardian.com/world/julian-borger-global-security-blog/2010/may/17/iran-brazil-turkey-nuclear>], December 24, 2023.

¹³ *Ibidem*.

imposed sanctions. The US's choice not only eroded the trust of Iran, Brazil, and Türkiye but also of the EU, active participants in the process even more than any domestic lobby. The sanctions coupled with the US's decisions reignited discourse about the inherent conflict between the US and Iran, tracing the development of events back to their origin.

Author Esmail Esfandiary relates on the inconsistencies in the US's actions towards Iran at the time as follows: "As noted above, the problem was that the U.S. had already moved to the sanctions track against Iran – holding talks with Russia and China to persuade them to agree to specific actions against Iran – anticipating that the deal would not go through. In fact, the BTI deal was not a real proposal in the first place – only another proof showing Iran's defiance."¹⁴ Therefore, the Brazil and Türkiye negotiation was regarded as a bet made on a losing dog which surprisingly emerged as a significant oversight in the sanctions strategy of the US, Russia, and China—the Iranian administration felt betrayed, leading to a resumption of nuclear activities amidst escalating sanctions.

The Wilson Centre hosted a subsequent event gathering specialists in Iranian and Brazilian foreign policy to provide their insights on the negotiation process and its outcomes. Brazil managed to demonstrate an acute interest in disarmament and has expressed concerns about the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) on the global stage, specifically in relation to the perceived discriminatory aspects of the treaty and the emphasis on the necessity of continuous advancements in disarmament. Professor Monica Herz, the Director of the International Relations Institute at the Catholic University in Rio de Janeiro, highlighted that Brazil's position revolves around the pivotal notion of complete denuclearization. The country firmly rejects any efforts to associate nonproliferation with restricting access to nuclear technology.¹⁵ Another panelist, Ambassador Craig Kelly highlighted that the U.S. stance was never to discourage Brazil or Türkiye from exerting influence on this issue;¹⁶ instead, the increased globalization of countries, driven by a

¹⁴ Esmail Esfandiary, "How the New York Times Portrayed the 2010 Brazil-Turkey-Iran Nuclear Deal: A Critical Discourse Analysis" in *Journal of Contemporary Eastern Asia*, Volume 14, No. 2, p. 59 [<http://dx.doi.org/10.17477/jcea.2015.14.2.057>].

¹⁵ Wilson Center, "A Reflection on the May 2010 Brazil-Turkey Nuclear Initiative Toward Iran", February 11, 2011 [www.wilsoncenter.org/event/reflection-the-may-2010-brazil-turkey-nuclear-initiative-toward-iran], 23 December 2023.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

strong conviction that greater internationalization is profoundly in the U.S. interest, was welcomed.

In summary, the efforts of Brazil and Türkiye in the negotiation process for JCPOA have been undermined due to the complicated dynamic between Iran and the U.S. at the time, but marked a reminder that the involvement of middle powers in international negotiations is an alternative to the deadlocks met in cooperation with broader frameworks such as the UN or EU, since they have the possibility of providing a neutral ground for discussions, carry out the talks and even get involved in the deal.

The conflict in Ukraine and the importance of the Grain Deal

Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the transit of Ukrainian grains posed significant disruptions and implied severe consequences for the states that are dependent on these imports. Türkiye had been the most vocal actor in the negotiations of the deal, and currently regards it as an achievement from the standpoint of Turkish mediation.

In order to track the progress and difficulties that emerged in keeping this deal in place, it is crucial to highlight the negotiation stages: in the pre-negotiation phase, global concern arose as the transportation of grains from Ukraine became pivotal for numerous Asian and African states dependent on these imports, prompting the necessity for negotiations. EU, Moldova, and Türkiye, stepped in the process to facilitate an understanding between Russian and Ukrainian representatives in relation to this pressing matter. From July 2022 to July 2023, an agreement involving the United Nations, Türkiye, and Russia facilitated exports through a secure maritime humanitarian corridor in the Black Sea, known as the Black Sea Grain Initiative, thus allowing the grains to cross through three ports in the Black Sea.

During the formula stage of this negotiation, the involved parties have remained focused on the specific issue of grain transport, avoiding broader political discussions due to the evolving nature of the conflict.

In the final stage of negotiations, the details stage, numerous concerns emerged regarding the countries facilitating the transport—Romania, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, and Bulgaria. Farmers from these states organized protests due to the fact that the local industry resisted purchasing their own grains at the initially agreed-upon price and instead sought to obtain Ukrainian grains or advocated for a reduction in the price of their domestic product. In response to the protests, the EU attempted to address the farmers'

claims and offered them financial support to ensure the continuity of the corridor.

On July 17, 2023, Russia officially declared its departure from the Black Sea Grain Initiative, attributing this decision to the contention that Western allies had not fulfilled their commitments regarding the imposed sanctions on Russia. The Russian withdrawal from the grain deal mirrors the United States' exit from the JCPOA, certainly at a different scale.

There are similarities in relation to JCPOA and the Ukraine grain deal as both posed challenges in negotiations due to their confrontational dynamics, the abruptness of communication, with the emergence of alternative channels of communication appearing once mediators stepped in and another unfortunate similarity comes from the fact that both deals eventually unraveled within a few years of their implementation.

Türkiye 's contradictory stance regarding the Ukrainian crisis serves as the driving force behind its mediation efforts; while condemning the bloodshed, it refrained from implementing sanctions. The country sided with the West in supporting Ukrainians, even providing Turkish drones, all the while maintaining a robust and continuous channel of communication with Russia. Türkiye sought to portray itself as a reliable player in the conflict, letting the West know that Ankara could be an important center for complex talks on world issues. It concurrently aimed to preserve goodwill with the Russian authorities by presenting a chance to loosen sanctions.

Brazil remained on the outskirts of this negotiation process considering it involved a localized concern and Türkiye was undoubtedly the closer middle power. Concerning Brazil and Ukraine, what's intriguing is that President Lula has pushed for peace negotiations prior, with the initiatives proposed by Brazil being regarded by Washington as counterproductive and naive. The Brazilian administration attempted to pursue several peace projects at the UN level. In February 2023, the Brazilian President emphasized the nation's determination to stay out of the conflict by announcing during a press conference in Washington that Brazil has no intention of sending arms or ammunition to Ukraine and by reiterating Brazil's commitment to finding a solution through diplomatic efforts.

Notably, Brazil declined to join the alliance formed by the United States against Russia. Lula, on the other hand, actively worked to establish a "peace club" made up of neutral countries with the goal of mediating talks between Russia and Ukraine. Brazilian diplomats publicly introduced this

peace initiative to approximately twenty-five country delegations at the Munich Security Conference. President Lula's remarks on the potential of a conflict resolution through the cession of Crimea incited fury within the Ukrainian administration; his remarks are seen as evidence of Brazil's support for Russia. The Ukrainian foreign ministry spokesman commented on President Lula's proposition as follows: "Ukraine appreciates the efforts of the Brazilian president to find a solution to stop Russian aggression,"¹⁷ and "At the same time, we have to clearly note: Ukraine does not trade its territories."¹⁸

The topic of the war in Ukraine is a rather unifying factor in Brazil's foreign policy objectives across the political spectrum: the need for neutrality has been stressed, in fact it was the only issue on which Bolsonaro and Lula agreed during the 2022 election campaign.

In summary, the participation of middle powers in challenging negotiations among great powers is on the rise, despite varying motivations. These nations engage in debates not only to uphold the existing order but also to advocate for the values endorsed by the current global order's proponents. Examining emerging middle powers like Brazil and Türkiye reveals that their status as middle powers is not due to material capabilities, rather it requires a deliberate intention on their part in assuming this role. The instances discussed illustrate that these states willingly step in to facilitate negotiations when primary parties encounter obstacles and express doubt about the continuation of the process or the likelihood of reaching an agreement.

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**RUSSIA'S OTHER WAR: PATRIARCHAL CULTURE AND
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE. THE #ЯНЕБОЮСЬСКАЗАТЬ
(#IAMNOTAFRAIDTOSPEAK) JULY 2016
CAMPAIGN ON VKONTAKTE**

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Abstract: *This article is dedicated to a controversial topic for Russian society, namely the campaign #ЯнеБоюсьСказать (#IamNotAfraidToSpeak) that took place in VKontakte's Russian speaking community in July 2016. First the article is based on a theoretical framework that draws attention to the concept of contentious politics and feminist movement. Second, I analysed the messages associated with #IamNotAfraidToSpeak, and argue that the campaign raised the visibility of the problem of domestic violence and patriarchal culture in the post-Soviet Russia, and this helped increase the significance of women's linguistic agency and made #IamNotAfraidToSpeak the first large-scale feminist movement in Russia. Moreover, in addition to the theoretical background, the paper focuses on a case study: The #ЯнеБоюсьСказать(#IamNotAfraidToSpeak) campaign of July 2016 on VKontakte.*

Keywords: *gender-based violence in Russia, feminist movements, former Soviet, flashmob, #IamNotAfraidToSpeak, VKontakte.*

Introduction

The campaign #ЯнеБоюсьСказать (in English #IamNotAfraidToSpeak) started on Russian VKontakte on July 5, 2016. The hashtag initially appeared in Ukraine, when activist Anastasia Melnychenko encouraged women to fight against misogyny and the attitude of victim blaming in Ukrainian society by speaking about the sexual assaults they experienced during their lifetime. The

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post gained widespread popularity very rapidly and within less than 24 hours a similar campaign was created by women in Russia by altering the original hashtag (by changing one letter, ukr. #ЯнеБоюсьСказати) to Russian.¹ During the entire month of July, thousands of Russian women shared their stories on social media while others joined the discussion and expanded it to traditional media, including Russian TV channels. From the perspective of Structuration Theory, one argues that the campaign drew much attention and challenged feminist discourse in Russia. Being the first large-scale manifestation of women's solidarity in modern Russia, the #ЯнеБоюсьСказать campaign, opposed Structure, the "recurrent patterned arrangements which influence or limit the choices and opportunities available."²

Anthony Giddens saw structure as "a virtual order of transformative relations", "social systems, as reproduced social practices, do not have structures but rather exhibit structural properties and that structure exists, as time-space presence, only in its instantiations in such practices and as memory traces orienting the conduct of knowledge human agents."³ Studying the Russian women's movement from the perspective of a discursive approach helps identify this kind of activism's potential and the opportunities it offers for women's solidarity at the level of language and consciousness and for collective identity building. Discursive patterns that permeated the public VKontakte posts related to #ЯнеБоюсьСказать touched upon various aspects of sexual violence and made social interactions more explicit in terms of issues concerning gender equality problems.

The objective of this article has more aspects. First the analysis is based on a theoretical framework that draws attention to the concept of contentious politics and feminist movement. Second, I analysed the messages associated with #IamNotAfraidToSpeak, and argue that the campaign raised the visibility of the problem of domestic violence and patriarchal culture in post-Soviet Russia. Several women who decided to

¹ Anastasia Bondareva, "#яБоюсьСказать. Мережею шириться флешмоб проти замовчування насильства" в *Комсомольская Правда*, 2016 [<https://life.pravda.com.ua/society/2016/07/5/214776/>], 19.09.2023.

² Chris Barker and Emma Jane, *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice*, London: Sage Publications, 2016, p. 448.

³ Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Introduction of the Theory of Structuration*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986, p. 17.

reveal their personal experiences and others who stood with them against domestic violence, helped increase the significance of women's linguistic agency and made #IamNotAfraidToSpeak the first large-scale feminist movement in Russia until now. I will examine the specificity of the #ЯнеБоюсьСказать campaign and argue it was predominantly of a grass-roots nature where self-organization and participation of ordinary people were crucial to it. It differs from the #MeToo campaign which exploded after The New York Times published allegations of sexual misconduct against Harvey Weinstein in October of 2017. The latter campaign, operating in the Western context, was largely initiated, and led by celebrities. In Russia this campaign did not have so much support.

Theoretical background

Feminist movements find themselves on the longer-term end of the spectrum, having an exceptionally long history. This is probably why it is feminist movement studies that have yielded a conceptualization of political generations in social movements. It's first used in a feminist context by Beth Schneider,⁴ the concept of political generations has been developed by Whittier.⁵ In her study on the persistence of the radical women's movement in the United States, Whittier defines a political generation as a group of people who became politicised at the same moment and have thus made similar political experiences. Studying feminists of various generations, Whittier finds that women who joined the movement during its "heyday" in the 1960s and 1970s share several key elements of collective identity, which sets them apart from those who became feminists in the 1980s and 1990s.⁶ However, examining political generations and the shifts in feminist collective identity produced by them reveals how the movement endures and changes over time. I draw upon Whittier's concept of feminist political generations to consider the relationship between the women's movement of the 90s, and more specifically its feminist segment, and the contemporary feminist movement in Russia. The concept of political generation is more productive to describe the relationship between these two groups of feminists in Russia

⁴ Beth Schneider, "Political Generations, and the Contemporary Women's Movement" in *Sociological Inquiry*, vol. 58, (1), 1988, pp. 4-21.

⁵ Nancy Whittier, *Feminist Generations: The Persistence of the Radical's Women's Movement*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995, p. 3.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 17.

than, for instance, the widely used term wave⁷ it has more analytical clarity and links differences between groups that discovered feminism at various moments to the political contexts in which this occurred. By studying feminist movement communities, researchers have produced a powerful argument against imagining movements, as is common in the contentious politics framework, as waves of mobilisation. Arguing against representations of “cultural feminism” as depoliticized, feminist movement researchers suggest that feminist culture produced in movement communities through their institutions and events, such as feminist bookstores, concerts, and festivals, is political both because it helps sustain the movement through periods of hostility and because it challenges the dominant culture by providing alternative models of being a woman.⁸ By studying the forms of action used by feminist movements and the meanings attached to these forms of action by movement members, feminist movement research has challenged the dichotomies of mobilisation/abeyance and politics/culture that have dominated in social movement studies. I will argue in the following, this assessment reflects the perspective of many in the feminist scene in Russia. At the same time, many participants in the feminist movement rather endorses a contentious politics perspective on collective action.

Contentious politics is a central approach in social movement studies that is widely used to this day focuses on contentious politics. In this approach, contention is understood as making claims to those in power, usually governments, by engaging in public collective protest⁹. When contentious action is sustained and organised, researchers qualify it as a social movement.¹⁰ In contrast to institutional politics, contentious action is practised by “ordinary people” who lack access to institutional channels or

⁷ Linda Nicholson, “Feminism in Waves: Useful Metaphor or Not?” in *Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies Research*, vol. 12, (4), New York: Routledge, 2010, pp. 34-39 [https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/wgss/30/], 22.09.2023.

⁸ Verta Taylor and Leila J. Rupp, “Women’s Culture and Lesbian Feminist Activism: A Reconsideration of Cultural Feminism” in *Signs* 19 (1), 1993, pp. 32–61 [https://www.jstor.org/stable/3174744], 22.09.2023.

⁹ See Sergiu Mișcoiu, *Le Front National et ses répercussions sur l'échiquier politique français 1972-2002*, Cluj-Napoca: Editura Fundației pentru Studii Europene, 2005, pp. 5-9.

¹⁰ Sidney Tarrow and Charles Tilly, *Contentious Politics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, p. 7.

challenge authorities in fundamental ways.¹¹ For this reason, contentious action is typically understood to take the form of protest: demonstrations, sit-ins, strikes, etc. The involvement of governments is central to the definition of politics from the contentious politics perspective, when social movements do not involve governments, they are labelled “apolitical”.¹² Several concepts developed in the paradigm of contentious politics, including contentious action, protest cycles, movement resources, and political opportunities, are relevant for the discussion of the contemporary feminist movement in Russia.

Patriarchal culture in Russia. Domestic violence and the government's reaction

Feminist theorists have shown that violence is gendered and that most violent acts are committed by men therefore cannot be observed outside the concept of gender. Australian sociologist Raewyn Connell defines gender as “the structure of social relations that centres on the reproductive arena and set of practices that bring reproductive distinctions between bodies into social processes.”¹³ Genders are socially constructed in terms of features and behaviours and are considered masculine and feminine. In many patriarchal cultural contexts, masculinity is associated with strength and dominance, femininity with weakness. According to The World Health Organization (WHO), gender-based violence against women is one of the most important global problems as of 2017: “Global estimates published by WHO indicate that about 1 in 3 (35%) of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence on non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime.”¹⁴ In Russian society, as in many others, patriarchy links gender to the issue of power. In her book *The Manifesto of the Feminist Movement of Russia (Манифест феминистского движения России)* Dr. Olgerta Kharitonova states that “men make women culturally invisible and use their social power to create a wall of silence

¹¹ *Ibidem*, loc. cit.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 8.

¹³ Raewyn Connell, *Gender, and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009, p. 31.

¹⁴ The World Health Organization, *Violence against Women*, November 29, 2017 [<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs239/en/>], 20.09.2023.

around those who are in pain, around women whom they use.”¹⁵ In the past, the Soviet Union preached that it was a society that had achieved the complete equality of women and men. While this may be true with regards to some areas of social life, for example women’s employment, various scholars have argued that the extent of emancipation during the Soviet reign was in fact not as large as was proclaimed. “The Soviet state promoted and institutionalised a distinctive gender order which has had a lasting impact on gender relations and gender identities in post-Soviet Russia.”¹⁶ The 1990s constituted a rupture in policy terms but not in the behaviour of men and women, which continued to be structured by Soviet gender norms.¹⁷ Contemporary statistics on violence related crimes against women in Russia, including domestic violence, are imprecise. According to Russian Government Statistics, 24.058 women were victims of domestic violence in 2017.¹⁸



Fig. 1. Victims of domestic violence in 2017

Men 11.821

Children 2.432

Women 24.058

¹⁵ Ольгерта Харитоновна, *Манифест феминистского движения России*, Екатеринбург: Издательские решения, мужчины делают женщин культурно невидимыми и используют свою социальную власть, чтобы создать стену молчания вокруг тех, кто страдает, вокруг женщин, которых они используют, 2015, с.61.

¹⁶ Sarah Ashwin, “Gender in Russia: State Policy and Lived Reality”, in Graeme Gill (ed.), *Routledge Handbook of Russian Politics and Society*, London: Routledge, 2012, p. 329.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*.

¹⁸ Константин Лаикам, *Женщину и мужчину России*, Federal Service of State Statistics Report, Moscow: Rosstat, 2016, p.185.

Russian law does not encourage reporting domestic violence to police. Russia has no law protecting individuals against sexual harassment. "According to reconstructed statistics, in Russia, every forty minutes a woman dies at the hands of a close male: her husband, cohabitant, father or friend. Domestic violence is the same as femicide, both being based on the belief that a woman is not an equal person to a man."¹⁹

In the mid-1980s, under Gorbachev, Perestroika gave life to the incipient women's rights movement in Russia. Between 1993 and 1997, the first 14 crisis centres for women appeared in Russia distributing literature and providing safe locations to those facing violence. By 1996, an estimated 400 civil society groups existed that were focused on the advancement of women's rights. Economic decline following the collapse of the Soviet Union thrust many Russian women into the workforce to make up for declining incomes as their husbands lost work. Consequently, many households no longer had a man as the primary breadwinner.²⁰

To many in the Church and politics alike, re-criminalizing domestic violence would run against traditional values.²¹ In the Russian Orthodox tradition, the family is a small church meaning that state interference in family matters like domestic violence would be tantamount to restricting religious rights. The religious leaders, like Dimitry Smirnov, a Russian Orthodox archbishop, also worry that laws criminalising domestic violence would break up the family unit leaving Russian children adopted by homosexuals.²²

Putin has weaponized the issues of domestic violence to create a divide between the West and Russia. After refusing to ratify the 2014

¹⁹ Ольгерта Харитоновна, *Манифест феминистского движения России*, Екатеринбург: Издательские решения, 2015, с.24. По реконструированной статистике, в России каждые сорок минут женщина умирает от рук близкого мужчины: мужа, сожителя, отца или друга. Домашнее насилие — это то же самое, что и феминизм, поскольку оба они основаны на убеждении, что женщина не равна мужчине.

²⁰ Kay Rollins, "Putin's Other War: Domestic Violence, Traditional Values and Masculinity in Modern Russia" in *Harvard International Review*, 2022 [<https://hir.harvard.edu/putins-other-war/>], 22.09.2023.

²¹ This is not only the case of Russia, but also of other mainly Orthodox countries. See Sergiu Gherghina, Sergiu Mişcoiu, "Faith in a New Party: The Involvement of the Romanian Orthodox Church in the 2020 Election Campaign" in *Politics, Religion & Ideology*, Vol. 23, Issue 2, 2022, pp. 226-228.

²² *Ibidem*.

Istanbul Convention, a major international convention about preventing violence against women, Russia said that it found the Convention to be inconsistent with the principal approaches of the Russian Federation to the protection and promotion of traditional moral and family values. This division between Russia and the West has only encouraged an US versus THEM mentality among the Russian public. After a new round of cries by feminist activists for an anti-domestic violence law in 2020, mass vigils emerged around the country to protest Western liberalism. Meanwhile, Russian priests took to the news to lament the forces of globalisation. While isolating Russia from the rest of the West on this issue may create moral sovereignty for the country, it also acts as a form of perverse nationalism.²³ By defining Russian values in opposition to Western ones, Putin can mobilise tradition and religion in the service of a constructed national identity. Because traditional values emphasise clear gender roles for men and women, perhaps the more subtle way in which Putin's emphasis on traditional values has enabled the rise in domestic violence is through his use of masculinity.²⁴

#ЯнеБоюсьСказать: A brief history of the hashtag campaign

The #ЯнеБоюсьСказать campaign triggered widespread hashtag activism to further the feminist cause of fighting violence against women. On July 5, 2016, Anastasia Melnychenko, the head of NGO Studena (whose main activities focus on social adaptation of military veterans, gender equality and human rights activism) (NGO Studena 2018) launched a campaign on Facebook under the Ukrainian hashtag #ЯнеБоюсьСказать with the following request: "I want women to speak today. Let us talk about the violence that most of us have experienced."²⁵ After describing her own traumatic experiences with sexual assault, Melnychenko concluded her post with the words: "It's important for us women to talk about our experiences. It is important to make them visible. Please speak. #IamNotAfraidToSpeak".²⁶ The campaign stayed in active mode for one month. The post of Melnychenko received over 2,000 comments with many later additions in 2017 and 2018. Thousands of women responded to

²³ *Ibidem.*

²⁴ *Ibidem.*

²⁵ Anastasia Melnychenko on Facebook, [Private page], 2016

[<https://www.facebook.com/nastya.melnychenko/posts/10209108320800151>], 19.09.2023.

²⁶ *Ibidem.*

Melnychenko's call to share their experiences. Less than a day after the campaign was launched in Ukraine, shares were expanded to Russian Facebook and the hashtag was translated into Russian #ЯНеБоюсьСказать. From then on, the two campaigns developed simultaneously within Ukraine and Russia. Studies have shown that hashtag activism has become a new and popular form of mobilisation in recent years. As a social phenomenon, it started on the platform Facebook and continued on the Russian platform VKontakte. Hashtag activism, a term that entered the public consciousness when New York Times media columnist David Carr wrote of the phenomenon, gives communicators an ability to streamline their messaging on the micro-blogging social networking platform. The hashtag, a function of Twitter that allows users to cluster their tweets around a single issue or focus, has garnered growing media interest in the wake of well-publicised efforts stemming from the Arab Spring and Occupy movements.²⁷ After the events of the Arab Spring, activists resorted to using hashtags to attract public attention on a wide range of issues on Twitter, and various other social media platforms such as Facebook. An important difference between hashtag platforms relates to post limitations. In 2016, tweets on Twitter were limited to 140 characters²⁸ whereas Facebook offered authors the wherewithal to narrate and detail their stories more emotionally (e.g., Melnychenko's post had 2,475 characters). Hashtags have become, in effect, a "Wikipedia database" of social media platforms. In terms of hashtag campaigns, one could easily navigate and find updated news regarding a topic framed by hashtags and every participant becomes akin to a news reporter, thus helping social media platforms become (uncensored and emotional) forums for public debates on crucial social issues.

The environment in Russia where the #ЯНеБоюсьСказать campaign developed, was not all comparable to the one in which #MeToo movement gained traction. Russian civil society differs to what exists in many other

²⁷ Derek Moscato, "Media Portrayals of Hashtag Activism: A Framing Analysis of Canada's #Idlenomore Movement" in *Media and Communication* vol. 4, no. 2, p. 3 [https://www.doi.org/10.17645/mac.v4i2.416], 19.09.2023.

²⁸ Kurt Wagner, "Twitter Is Testing a Big Change: Doubling the Length of Tweets from 140 to 280 Characters" in *Vox*, September 26, 2017 [https://www.vox.com/2017/9/26/16364002/twitter-longer-tweets-character-limit-140-280], 19.09.2023.

countries, particularly in many European nations and North America, where campaigns of a protest nature are not uncommon. Recent political actions relating to “the regime’s restrictions on the right to public protest and on the independence of the media.”²⁹ This a complicated environment in which Russian citizens to have their voices heard.

In March 2017, a victim named Diana Shurygina was subjected to public condemnation and mass internet-bullying. The Burger King Company in Russia created an advertisement wherein a girl without a visible face was painted mimicking a hand gesture used by Diana to indicate how little vodka she had in her bloodstream at the time of her attack. In the advertisement, the gesture indicated that the promotion would be limited in duration. The Burger King restaurant chain removed from its VKontakte community an advertising poster that used the image of a minor rape victim, Diana Shurygina, from the national TV show “Let Them Talk” (Пусть говорим).³⁰ Under the material, administrators of the Burger King community, in response to the indignation of users, joked, including about the prison sentence that Sergei Semenov received for raping Shurygina.³¹ Immediately after the verdict was announced, support groups for the victim (more than 8 thousand subscribers) and the convicted person (more than 17 thousand) appeared on VKontakte. The release of the program provoked the appearance of many fake Shurygina pages on VKontakte and memes with her photographs. All of them are based on photographs of the girl or screenshots of the program “Let Them Talk.” The girl is ridiculed for drinking alcohol or directly blamed for what happened.³² On 27 February 2017, Burger King removed from its community on the social network VKontakte

²⁹ Janet Elise Johnson and Arino Saarinen, “Twenty-First-Century Feminisms under Repression: Gender Regime Change and the Women’s Crisis Center Movement in Russia” in *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, vol. 38, no. 3, 2013, pp. 543-567.

³⁰ Медуза, «Burger King удалил рекламу с образом несовершеннолетней жертвы изнасилования», 2017 [<https://meduza.io/news/2017/02/17/burger-king-udalil-reklamu-s-obrazom-nesovershennoletney-zhertvy-iznasilovaniya>], 20.09.2023.

³¹ *Ibidem*.

³² Медуза, «Кто такая Диана Шурыгина и почему ее так много обсуждают? Пользователи соцсетей не поверили жертве изнасилования и начали ее травлю» [<https://meduza.io/feature/2017/02/08/kto-takaya-diana-shurygina-i-pochemu-ee-tak-mnogo-obsuzhdaut>], 20.09.2023.

the advertisement.³³ Victim-blaming in Russian society is quite common. The above-mentioned case regularly faulted the single women appearing on them for their inability to keep man, often criticising their wardrobe and behaviour. The woman may be publicly condemned or subjected to ridicule in some manner and this while coping with her own sense of guilt and shame for what happened, in Russian society such victims are pushed-back against the stereotype that only women who dressed sexually provoked men's aggression. Public discourse and the way experiences of sexual violence are narrated fundamentally affect how the issue is treated by the public, legal system, and its institutions.

Analysing the VKontakte's campaign for violence against women, their participants explained their motives as the desire to change the public mood against victims of sexual assault, encouraging people to express solidarity with other women: "I hate violence. Read the stories on the hashtag, read the comments. You will understand a lot. Girls! You will realise that you are not alone. And now I want to say, girls, my darlings, my bold ones I am with you. Thousands of stories with the hashtag #ЯнеБоюсьСказать eloquently illustrate why we need it; I need this so as not to be afraid. I need it to fight, I need it to change this. I need this to win."³⁴ The last comment touches on a very important topic: this campaign was the first large-scale manifestation of women's solidarity in Russia. As the press secretary of Transparency International Russia, Anastasia Karimova, noted: "It seems to me that what arose was a request for a feminist discourse, which was previously not present in Russia...What is happening now with this campaign is quite in line with the actualization of feminism and the struggle for women's rights in general." On VKontakte many posts followed the

³³ Афиша, «Burger King удалил рекламу с образом несовершеннолетней жертвы изнасилования», 2017 [<https://daily.afisha.ru/news/6458-burger-king-udalil-reklamu-s-zhertvoy-iznasilovaniya-posle-kritiki-v-internete/>], 21.09.2023.

³⁴ Кризисный центр для женщин, 2017 [<https://crisiscenter.ru/pochemu/>], Я ненавижу насилие. Читайте истории по хештегу, читайте комментарии. Вы многое поймете. Девушки! Вы поймете, что вы не одиноки. И сейчас я хочу сказать, девчонки, мои любимые, мои смелые, я с вами. Тысячи историй с хештегом #ЯнеБоюсьСказать красноречиво иллюстрируют, зачем нам это нужно; Мне это нужно, чтобы не бояться. Мне это нужно, чтобы бороться, мне нужно это, чтобы изменить это. Мне нужно это, чтобы победить.

hashtag with the phrase “I’ll try to speak now.”³⁵ The hashtag itself was a kind of manifesto, a challenge not only to form society, a hashtag online movement, provided a platform for mobilising Russian women and gave them linguistic agency to participate. The authors used coloured letters in their posts. They often resorted to capital letters so that posts sounded like screaming.

Conclusion

The hashtag #ЯНеБоюсьСказать and internet campaign was an unprecedented mobilisation of voices in the Russian public sphere as well as a political protest able to utilise few alternate forums. Spontaneity was one of the most important features of #ЯНеБоюсьСказать and could have been a factor of its unprecedented traction in Russia which drew the issue of violence against women into the mainstream of Russian public discourse. Feminist movement gained unprecedented public attention in Russian social media as well as drawing in more traditional Russian media. In my opinion, raising the important issue of violence against women with the intention of breaking the silence made this campaign de facto feminist.

While the Kremlin may be taking a regressive stance on domestic violence, Russians are becoming more concerned about the problem. In January 2017, nearly 60% of Russians supported the decriminalisation of domestic violence. Two years later in December 2019, almost 70% of Russians said that they favoured a law to protect Russians women against domestic violence. The tireless protests of Russian feminists have in many ways been somewhat successful at changing the minds of the public. Unfortunately, as Putin’s approval rating rises and his administration consolidates power, meaningful protections for women are still far from becoming a reality. Putin’s defining use of traditional values and hypermasculinity would have been impossible without an existing misogynistic society that views women’s lives as expendable and capitalised in such a way that violence is considered a universal means of solving many conflicts and problems. Gender limits individual opportunities and access to public discourse and the transformation of the associated Structural norms is a slow and often confrontational process. The campaign, being orientated to women and

³⁵ Кризисный центр для женщин, 2017 [<https://crisiscenter.ru/pochemu/>], сейчас попробую поговорить.

focused on domestic violence in Russia was accompanied by a strong backlash based on denial and victim blaming strategies often used to disregard domestic violence in other social and cultural contexts. #ЯНеБоюсьСказать posts have not been removed and are still accessible to online searches. The hashtag remains in the collective memory and to this day Russian social media still refer to it in their coverage. Posts in 2017, after the initial campaign used two or more hashtags such as #MeToo and #ЯНеБоюсьСказать reinforcing the idea that the #ЯНеБоюсьСказать campaign was successful and remains present in Russian society. The transnational nature of #ЯНеБоюсьСказать with its origin in Ukraine and its reach into other post-Soviet spaces, is another indication of its resonance. Dina Smailova a resident of Kazakhstan decided to share her story by creating the hashtags #ЯБоюсьСказать #НеМолчиКЗ (#Don'tKeepYourSilenceKazakhstan). After launching the campaign in Kazakhstan, she soon followed up with the creation of an assistance organisation for victims of domestic violence. Users of VKontakte were continuing to post under the hashtag #ЯНеБоюсьСказать.

According to my research, there are laws against domestic violence in 144 countries and laws against sexual harassment in 130 countries. As I mentioned above in this article, in Russia there are no such laws. The concept of domestic violence is not in Russian legislation and is a severe issue in Russia. As Amnesty International's report on domestic violence in Russia said the authorities have failed to implement a single measure to enhance protection and services for the victims. Also, this report highlights Russia is far behind global developments to protect victims of domestic violence, having very scarce measures in place such as government-funded shelters, effective practices of protection orders or police officers trained in how to respond to reports about abuse and protect domestic violence victims as in the case of victims of ethnic violence. Russia is a state party to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The UN's CEDAW Committee has specifically criticised Russia for its failure to take actions to address domestic violence.

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BOOK REVIEW

PIERRE GUENANCIA, *L'HOMME SANS MOI, ESSAI SUR L'IDENTITE*, PARIS, PUF, 2023

Jérôme Roudier*

Keywords : Philosophie, Identité, cartésianisme, politique, cosmopolitisme.

Pierre Guenancia poursuit par cet ouvrage une réflexion menée de longue date. En effet, outre ses ouvrages sur l'histoire des idées et sur la philosophie cartésienne, dont il est un des plus grands exégètes, l'auteur produit ici une synthèse entre deux mouvements principaux de sa pensée, menés depuis le début de sa carrière. En effet, *L'homme sans moi* succède à la fois au célèbre *Descartes et l'ordre politique. Critique cartésienne de l'ordre politique* publié aux PUF en 1983, réédité chez Gallimard en 2012 et *Le Regard de la pensée. Philosophie de la représentation*, publié aux PUF en 2009.

L'homme sans moi procède d'un double regard. Il est à la fois celui d'un philosophe sur les comportements politiques de l'homme d'aujourd'hui et il entend proposer l'attitude politique fondamentale que devrait adopter un homme, quel qu'il soit et d'où qu'il soit, en philosophe. Fondamentalement, la thèse de Pierre Guenancia est assez simple, claire et efficace : un homme peut être n'importe quel autre homme ; le fond de ce qui constitue l'humanité réside dans une indifférenciation fondamentale qui permet à un être humain de se structurer avec une forme culturelle sociale et politique particulière, généralement liée à l'endroit où il est né. Par conséquent, il n'existe rien de substantiel dans les particularismes. Face à l'universalisme des droits de l'homme, Pierre Guenancia souligne l'indétermination fondamentale de tout homme, jusque et y compris son sexe.

En ce sens, l'homme est réellement sans « moi » si par moi on entend une identité conçue non comme un choix libre mais comme une structuration et une détermination fondamentale, originaire. Or, comme il le souligne dans son introduction, on assiste dans nos sociétés occidentales à une

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essentialisation de l'identité, sous de multiples variantes, qui menace assez visiblement les valeurs de nos sociétés « ouvertes » et l'humanisme qu'elles supposaient.

Dans la première partie de son ouvrage, « Devenir Je », Pierre Guenancia propose une réduction du « moi » au « je ». Chaque homme, dans son individualité profonde, n'est pas une identité historique, familiale, tribale, nationale ou autre, mais une capacité de mettre à distance par la pensée toute forme d'identité et ainsi de la percevoir pour ce qu'elle est vraiment : une limitation, aussi bien personnelle (je ne suis que le produit de mon histoire), tribale (je ne suis que le membre de ce groupe) que nationale (je ne suis que français, italien...). L'auteur utilise les admirables analyses produites dans *Le regard de la pensée*, qui permettent de comprendre comment la pensée saisit l'objet en idée et ainsi se met en capacité de lui attribuer des potentialités qui sortent du cadre naturel, pour les appliquer à l'être humain lui-même : la mémoire, le jugement et l'imagination deviennent ainsi des modalités de déploiement de potentialités et non des déterminations identitaires.

Conséquemment, Pierre Guenancia insiste dans sa deuxième partie, « Un Je qui est un Nous », via Montaigne et Descartes essentiellement, sur le fait que l'indétermination fondamentale du sujet humain permet de voir tout « autre » en chaque « soi » : « dès lors qu'un individu devient capable de se voir comme un autre, il devient un sujet, il devient philosophe, même s'il n'a pas lu un seul livre de philosophie. » (p. 142) Le sens commun rejoint ici la plus fine philosophie dans l'évidence d'une identité commune à tous les hommes, fondée sur le constat que toutes les identités ne sont que des attributs.

La troisième partie de l'ouvrage « « Nous » sommes tous des hommes » approfondit l'analyse dans la direction d'une distinction entre le Je humain, qui peut être de partout et doit donc être surplombant, et la pesanteur du moi social. L'indication de la perte du « moi » dans le groupe en fusion est ici particulièrement éclairante sur ce qui se joue dans la tentation, pour l'individu, de se fondre dans quelque chose de plus « grand » que lui. L'erreur, bien entendu, consiste à vouloir mesurer son moi, à vouloir être « quelque chose » et, dès lors, face à la grandeur incommensurable du groupe, à s'anéantir en lui. Cette manière de vivre est à la fois profondément anti-philosophique, puisqu'elle suppose le refus de l'exercice de la pensée distinctive par nature, et inhumaine, puisqu'en plaçant l'accidentel comme le fond du vivre-ensemble, elle exclut de l'humanité ceux qui ne font pas partie du groupe.

La quatrième partie, « L'homme et la nature Questions et réponses » reprend le débat et interroge notre lien avec la nature, en philosophe à nouveau. Là encore, Pierre Guenancia insiste sur le choix fondamental qui est celui de chaque être humain entre une identité liée à ce d'où il vient ou une identité d'indifférence, donc d'ouverture par indétermination.

La conclusion de ce travail est double. D'une part, dans le post-scriptum à la quatrième partie, Pierre Guenancia souligne que l'individualisme, à trop renvoyer à l'importance du moi particulier, risque d'oublier l'humain en chacun : les sociétés modernes ne peuvent promouvoir impunément le moi. D'autre part, dans sa conclusion, l'auteur souligne que le lien substantiel qui lie les hommes ne peut résider dans autre chose que dans leur nature d'être pensant. Par cela, incluant une définition correcte de la pensée comme « pouvoir critique et dissociatif » p. 372, on peut mettre à sa place le lien social comme étant l'un des liens qui permet à l'autre d'exister dans sa différence.

L'ouvrage de Pierre Guenancia est à la fois simple et difficile. La thèse défendue est claire, simple, accessible par l'évidence même du sens commun : je ne suis pas grand-chose, voire rien, une chose qui pense. Pourquoi vouloir enfler cela, qui ne saurait d'ailleurs être rempli puisqu'il n'a pas de contenu mais est plutôt une fonction ? « Je » pense. Tout l'intérêt de cette réalité simple et commune consiste à comprendre que l'essentiel est de penser et que tout ce qui advient sous le regard de la pensée, y compris « moi », est accidentel et sujet à l'exercice de cette pensée. Remplir le moi, c'est limiter le je, ce pouvoir de penser librement.

La lecture de ce livre produit alors un effet assez curieux. D'une part, fallait-il ce recours à tant d'auteurs, lus sans esprit de secte ni préjugés, de Marx à Adam Smith et de Descartes à Kierkegaard, pour montrer une chose si évidente, accessible au simple regard lucide ? Le geste de Pierre Guenancia est ainsi profondément cartésien : la plus fine et profonde philosophie rejoint l'intuition naïve en la construisant et en la justifiant, en l'explorant et en permettant une compréhension plus complète, plus profonde. La philosophie s'engage ainsi en politique pour dégager les fondements sur lesquels un vivre-ensemble sain peut être construit : nos sociétés doivent permettre et valoriser l'indétermination en chaque homme, sa capacité à comprendre sans s'assimiler, à penser en distinguant. L'ouvrage souligne ainsi le risque majeur de toute institution politique : établir une substantification des particularités. Ainsi, lorsque Locke se demande « ce qui

fait de l'individu le même individu », p. 344, il ouvre une porte vers la séparation de l'homme d'avec son semblable. Le libéralisme politique, dont nous sommes les héritiers et qui forme l'objet profond des interrogations et des investigations de cet ouvrage, se comprend ainsi dans tout son étrange paradoxe. Il articule une liberté qui ne peut qu'être d'indifférence et d'indifférenciation principielle avec le politique qui ne peut s'abstraire du particulier. L'essai de Pierre Guenancia se situe ainsi dans la longue lignée des livres qui explicitent ce débat indépassable dans les sociétés contemporaines à leurs auteurs. Gageons qu'il n'est pas le dernier, et même souhaitons-le.

BOOK REVIEW

**SERGIU MIȘCOIU, PIERRE EMMANUEL GUIGO (EDS.),
*PRESIDENTS, PRIME MINISTERS AND MAJORITIES IN THE
FRENCH FIFTH REPUBLIC*, CHAM: PALGRAVE MACMILLAN,
2024, 219 P.**

Mihai Ghițulescu*

One of the first Western officials and scholars to offer advice to the new leaders in Bucharest in 1990 was Robert Badinter, President of the French Constitutional Council and former Minister of Justice. According to Ion Iliescu and others, his advice was decisive in shaping the institutional arrangements of the “Little Constitution” and, later, of the 1991 Constitution. We can assume that things would have been similar even without the direct intervention of the well-known jurist, given that France was traditionally perceived as a model for Romania. Shortly after Badinter, the more famous Maurice Duverger also visited Romania. We do not know what influence he had – we can assume it was limited – but we pay him a tribute for spreading the attractive but ambiguous concept of “semi-presidentialism”, associating it mainly with the French political system after 1958/1962 (The Fifth Republic). As in other cases (e.g., his “law” on the relation between electoral systems and party systems), Duverger threw out a brilliant but imprecise idea, irritating many academics around the world and generating a large amount of political science literature.

In Romania, the label “semi-presidential” has entered strongly into political rhetoric and even constitutional jurisprudence, being used not so much in an explanatory-analytical sense, but rather axiologically and even normatively, depending on political orientations. According to some, we have a semi-presidential system, so things must happen in a certain way (e.g., Decision No. 784/2012 of the Constitutional Court); according to others, we do not have a true semi-presidential system, but we should have one, so that things happen in a certain way (e.g., the Report of the Presidential

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Commission, 2009). In both cases, semi-presidentialism is associated with the Fifth Republic. The first one is a dangerous attempt to give legal/constitutional force to a strictly doctrinal concept. The second – which is based on the correct observation that Romanians only partially followed the French model – seems to be flawed by an overly idealized view of the French regime and, more broadly, of the role of institutions in the functioning of political systems.

Therefore, a review of the French regime's avatars over the past seven decades would have been useful even if we only think about its influence on the Romanian one. Obviously, there is much more to it, as Sergiu Mișcoiu noted: "The Hexagon tends to be perceived as a model shaper by a plethora of ruling elites around the world" (p. 2). The literature on the subject is very rich, but there was a need for an approach that would go beyond constitutional texts and theories, so as not to get lost in "the complexification of theoretical efforts to understand the nature and functioning of semi-presidential systems" (p. 4). This was the aim of the collective volume edited by Sergiu Mișcoiu and Pierre-Emmanuel Guigo. After a necessary "largely analytical-historical overview" signed by Sergiu Mișcoiu, which includes a review of the contributions since Duverger and points out some aspects that deserve (more) attention, the book follows "the dynamics of the 'power triangle' (i.e., the president, the prime minister and the parliamentary majority) during the term(s) of each president: de Gaulle (Bryan Muller), Pompidou (Olivier Sibre), Giscard d'Estaing (Alexandra Alina Iancu, Sorina Cristina Soare), Mitterrand (P.-E. Guigo), Sarkozy (Marius-Mircea Mitrache), Hollande (P.-E. Guigo) and Macron (Fabrice Hamelin). It is about "inter-institutional dynamics", beyond the two main patterns: the one in which there is a presidential majority / *majorité présidentielle*, so the two heads of the executive have the same political colour, and the one in which the parliamentary majority and the government have a different orientation than the President (the so-called *cohabitation*). In fact, it goes far beyond the strictly institutional aspects, since it analyses "the overwhelming impact of the presidents' backgrounds and profiles over the way they conceive the presidential function" (p. 8) and various events and contexts, not very political in themselves, but which affect in one way or another exercise of power. Just as authors noticed a recent desacralization of the presidential figure (which contradicts the original logic of the regime), we may appreciate that, through this approach, a salutary desacralization of political science is

achieved, by detaching it from theoretical and methodological affectedness and connecting it to real politics. Put together, the contributions form a solid synthesis of political history of the Fifth Republic, going beyond the classic narrative and seeking how the facts have determined the transformation of the regime, even when the constitutional provisions have remained unchanged. Public law and political science are always there, but in a subtle way, with the role of explaining the meanings of realities, not of screening them for the sake of academic appearance, as has often happened in recent times.

Even when applied strictly to the Fifth French Republic, semi-presidentialism proves to be a too broad, weak concept, unable of saying much about the functioning of a particular regime. Even the Fifth Republic is a generic term, applied, by virtue of the maintenance of the 1958 Constitution – with many important (although “ambiguous, to say the least”, Mişcoiu, p. 5) provisions still in their initial form – and certain customs, to a series of sub-regimes which, of course, have much in common, but are far from being identical. The Fifth Republic is “a genuine bric-à-brac”, as M.-M. Mitrache rightly wrote (p. 159).

Even before the major constitutional reform of 2000 (reduction of the presidential term to five years; with its counterpart of 2001: the organization of legislative elections immediately after the presidential ones) and 2008 (increasing the power of Parliament), which may justify J.-F. Copé’s label of “the Republic bis” (Mitrache, pp. 172, 176), we may informally speak of Republic 5.1, 5.2, even 5.1.2 and so on. Although the constitutional framework remains (largely) the same, in practice the regime would look different, as the relations between the President, Prime Minister (Cabinet) and Parliament vary according to the will of the voters and/or the representatives, plus a multitude of often unpredictable and imponderable factors.

As we say the Nixon, Reagan or Obama “administration”, we may say the Pompidou, Mitterrand or Sarkozy “regime”. And it is not enough to associate the regime with a name – we must, again, number it – as there can be significant differences between terms (when a President has been re-elected) and even within the same term. We are thinking, first of all, about the differences between the periods with *majorité présidentielle* and those of *cohabitation*. In the first case, the regime tends to become more presidential, with the head of state treating his Prime Minister as a collaborateur – regardless of whether he says it openly (like Sarkozy about Fillon, Lachaise, p. 151; Mitrache, p. 161; Guigo, p. 185) or not. Even if he accepts a kind of *diarchy* –

the term belongs to Sarkozy, who did not accept it (Lachaise, p. 151) – the head of government is responsible (only) for internal “current affairs/”current policy” – possibly also playing the role of the leader of the majority – but the President is still “meant to politically guide the country and to determine its main directions” (Mișcoiu, p. 10). During *cohabitation*, the regime slides towards parliamentarism; the Prime Minister, as leader of the parliamentary majority, tries to act like a chancellor and the President is somewhat placed in the position of leader of the opposition. In such situations, even the role of the head of state in international relations, the so-called *domaine reserve / reserved area* (Guigo, pp. 130, 185), can be challenged, as it happened in 1986-1988, when the recently named Prime Minister Chirac “tried to stay in control of the foreign affairs and the defence policy”. And, because he could not completely remove President Mitterrand, he decided to accompany him to international meetings “surprising other delegations by showing up as a duo” (Guigo, p. 116). This reminds us of some episodes in the political and constitutional history of Romania, but it is not the time and place to go back on them. What must be observed is that, even in his periods of political weakness, the French President remains on top. It preserves a certain (at least symbolic) ascendancy. We can intuit this from a comic episode related by Guino. In 1988, both incumbent President Mitterrand and Prime Minister Chirac ran for the presidency and participated in a televised debate: “François Mitterrand gave him the final coup de grace when, after Chirac had asked him not to call him ‘Mr. Prime Minister’ to respect the equality between the candidates, the President replied royally: ‘But you are absolutely right, Mr. Prime Minister!’”.

Beyond the fact that this first cohabitation was surprising – “the possibility of cohabitation was not anticipated by the founding fathers of the Fifth Republic” (Guigo, p. 115) – it should also be noted that the rivalry between the Prime Minister and the President was, at least in terms of defence and international relations, “merely symbolic” (or, let’s say, electoral): “In fact, they did not have very different views on foreign affairs... In the defence field, both the President and the Prime Minister had common points of view” (Guigo, p. 116). However, such a situation could be foreseen, based on previous experiences, different while similar. Different, because they did not represent formal *cohabitations*; similar, because they knew some “hidden forms of cohabitation-like practices” (Iancu, Soare, p. 92). In 1976-1978, President Giscard d’Estaing and Prime Minister, the same Chirac, were part

of the same political camp (though not of the same party), but relations between them were first tense, then downright bad, reaching a fight for “primacy, not so much in terms of executive power, but as informal leaders of the coalition” (Iancu, Soare, p. 97). In the end, the head of state won, “replacing the Prime Minister with a technocrat” and, thus, increasing “the presidential leeway” (Iancu, Soare, p. 105). That is why, for Giscard’s single term, one can talk about “two patterns” or even about “two different presidencies” (Iancu, Soare, p. 92). Looking even further back (1969-1972), we see President Georges Pompidou and Prime Minister Jacques Chaban-Delmas, both *Gaullists*, but who, “in addition to the personal and political disagreement”, also had an “opposing vision of the institutions” (Sibre, p. 68). The Prime Minister’s program “attacked the very foundations of the Pompidolian thought” (Sibre, p. 66). Trying to impose himself “by asking Parliament for confidence”, the latter “weakened the presidential nature of the regime”. In this case too, the President won, dismissing him and showing “that the Prime Minister was first and foremost accountable to the President” (Sibre, pp. 67-68).

In retrospect, we see that, with all the tensions – let us say inevitable in the institutional architecture of the 1958 Constitution – the Fifth Republic remained, for three decades, within the framework set by Charles de Gaulle, with a President resembling a “republican monarch”. An extensive discussion of how the monarchy was imagined would be necessary here – somehow in the manner of the continental monarchies of the 19th century (with another discussion on the role of the Second Empire), by no means like the constitutional monarchies of 20th century. We only note that “General de Gaulle built his power relations around compromises. The first compromise, implicit in the Fifth republic, was the reconciliation of several, sometimes antagonistic, historical traditions specific to the country” (Muller, pp. 47-48). Anyway, even after de Gaulle, there was a general impression that “The Fifth Republic was designed in such a way to allow any individual anointed by presidential election through universal suffrage to lead the country” (p. 49). This was confirmed by Pompidou, Giscard, Mitterrand (“the last republican monarch?”), beyond his two experiences of cohabitation (1986-1988, 1993-1995). But, at some point, someone thought (correctly, we can say) the “constitutional framework” does not guarantee that the President always leads the country.

In 1997, the former “Mr. Prime Minister”, at that time President for already two years, had to face, from the other side, a *cohabitation* (the third, the longest and, so far, the last of the Fifth Republic). That happened following early parliamentary elections called to consolidate his power. However, a left-wing majority was elected and Chirac had to accept the socialist Lionel Jospin as Prime Minister. It was “a break in the history of the Fifth Republic” (Lachaise, p. 138), whose memory is still “alive” and “painful” in the French political world (Lachaise, p. 139). The old model of “republican monarchy” seemed to have come to an end. Some called for a Sixth Republic. To solve the situation, it was decided to reduce the presidential term from seven to five years (an idea dating back to Pompidou’s time) and to reverse the election calendar (parliamentary right after presidential). These reforms of 2000 and 2001 increased the head of state’s chances of having a parliamentary majority and a loyal government. The new situation can be considered a reinforcement (because it makes the President a real head of the executive) or a violation of the original principles (because it raises questions about his role of “arbitrage”, since he is, more obviously than before, the leader of the majority). As Lachaise noted, “the difference in judgment varies depending on the scholar’s views on the «republican monarchy»” (p. 143).

The last two decades have shown how much personalities, events and contexts can matter in the functioning of a political regime. Chirac managed, in 2002, to have a majority and a submissive Prime Minister. His second term was radically different from the first, but even this time he failed to really be a strong president. The weakness came from tensions and contestations within his own group, particularly from the rising star Minister Nicolas Sarkozy. He attacked Chirac, labelling him a “lazy king” / “roi fainéant”, and launched into the fight for the succession, promising that he would be a completely different type of President, far more active in government. It was around the time when in Romania we talked of the “player president”, but it is not the case here to make comparisons. Elected in 2007, Sarkozy kept his word. He was different indeed, a “more visibly engaged in the day-to-day politics of the State” (Mitrache, p. 158), even an “over-present hyper-president” (Mitrache, p. 163), with an important clarification, for the French regime in general: these labels are not so much due to the things he did, but to the way he did them. “Sarkozy’s hyperactive behaviour was not that original or unheard of... What was different about Sarkozy was that his language and personal style were different from

anything the French public was accustomed to" (Mitrache, p. 164). "The hyper-presidency was not entirely of his own making, for its structural framework had been shaped long before Sarkozy's accession to power" (Mitrache, p. 179).

Anyway, "the first postmodern President of France" had the decisive role in the desacralization of the presidential status and in the accession to power of someone who promised to be a "normal President" and who, in the absence of such a predecessor / counter-candidate, would probably had no chance. Ironically speaking, François Hollande, elected in 2012, is, from a historical point of view, not so much a "normal President" as a "no President". It seems that everything went against him and he was unable to manage anything. Analysing all the factors that made him the only President (leaving Pompidou aside) who did not stand for re-election could be the subject of another book. It can be said that "his five-year term... revealed that the presidentialisation of the Fifth Republic was an irreversible process", because it showed that, perhaps despite Sarkozy's style, French voters wanted a "more assertive and more involved in the decision-making process of daily politics" (Guigo, p. 198). I wouldn't necessarily link this to "the new institutional system born in 2000", but to the way in which politics is mediatized today. Anyway, his most important (not necessarily positive) result (without granting him exclusivity) is that he made possible the election of Emmanuel Macron, the President who tried an original re-sacralization, who wanted to be a (post)modern "republican monarch". Naturally, since his second term is in progress, the chapter dedicated to him is the least evaluative. What can be said for sure at this point is that he destroyed "the political landscape" (Hamelin, p. 205), "the partisan divide and French political life" (Hamelin, p. 202) or, to put it more concretely, the "bipolar configuration" which represented "the basis of French political life for a long time" (Sibre, p. 62). After a first term with a parliamentary majority, but also with perhaps the biggest challenges since 1968, this second one, with a fragile government, seems to me a transition towards a re-bipolarization, in a way that was unthinkable 20 years ago and even 2 years ago. At this point, I should delete a few lines, as the President has just announced the dissolution of the National Assembly – the sixth since 1958 and the first since the constitutional reform of 2000 – following the winning of the European elections by what is traditionally called "far-right". "The President of the Republic activated the constitutional nuclear weapon", wrote *Le Figaro*. And

he “suddenly plunged the political landscape and the nation into the unknown”. I am not sure about *suddenly* (*brusquement*), but although we can make some scenarios, *the unknown* (*l'inconnu*) is the key word. So I am going ahead with what I wrote before the dissolution.

This rich and insightful exploration of French contemporary politics lacks a distinct conclusive part. Moreover, the “meanders of the concrete” – to use the phrase of a Romanian President – make it impossible. Trying to draw clear lessons can be fallacious. It is enough to see how things happened, to admit that the combination of institutional and extra-institutional factors can lead to diverse and surprising situations. “Semi-presidentialism” can mean many things, often depending on what each of us wants it to mean.

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