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Front cover: Detail from a wooden cross (hand carved) at a monastery in the Maramures County of Romania.

SUMMARY

Plenary Session

THE ROLE OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERS IN DEVELOPING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCES OF TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

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Abstract: *In a global world, educational leaders play a crucial role in developing intercultural communicative competences of teachers and students. The article discusses the notions of culture and intercultural communication competencies based on different definitions and models. Then, it stresses the role of educational leaders in developing such skills in teachers and students. Finally, it presents several successful attempts made in this direction at the level of policy makers, institutions of higher education and schools.*

Keywords*: intercultural communication competence; educational leaders; policy makers*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the global world of the 21st century it is almost impossible to find homogeneous societies. People travel a lot, some are born in one country, move to another one, work in a third one or in more than one simultaneously. Even in the same country or in the same city, one can encounter different cultures. In order to respond to the challenges of life and work in the global world and in order to ensure peace and understanding between people, it is crucial to develop intercultural communication skills. Intercultural competence is not something one is born with, but rather an attitude and skill that people can develop over lifetime. The National Council for Cultural Competence (NCCC, 2009) asserts that each organization should value diversity and should institutionalize cultural knowledge as an ongoing process. The European Commission (2010) stressed the importance of teacher education programs and policies in preparing teachers who are effective in culturally diverse settings.

2. DEFINING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE (ICC)

In spite of the fact that there are many definitions of *"culture*", the common denominator that most people would agree on is that it involves values, beliefs and norms held by a group of people and passed from generation to generation. People who belong to a certain culture share the way they look at their past, the way in which they live their lives working with other people and their hopes for the future. Any culture influences the behavior of a certain group, the stories people tell each other about the way in which they understand life and their communication with people outside their own group. Culture shapes both the personal identity and the group identity and it influences every aspect of daily life: the way people talk, dress and behave, their religion, the symbols they use and pass to their children and grandchildren, sometimes without even realizing it. When people from different cultures and different ages meet and/or work together, they face intercultural situations in which people have different views of life, different religious beliefs, different views on politics, gender and sexuality. There are even more subtle differences between people from different cultural backgrounds. They may have different habits regarding how to great someone (to shake hands, to bow, to kiss on the cheek, to kiss a lady's hand, etc.), how to talk to each other (on a formal or informal way), how to know if a person is serious about making a deal or is simply polite, etc. The interaction between people from different cultures does not promise intercultural learning (Amir, 1969) unless certain conditions are met. Cultural competence includes the ability to understand, appreciate, respect and interact in a positive way with people from different cultures.

Fantini (2006) analyzed different terms related to interculturalism, including "intercultural effectiveness" and finally proposed the term **intercultural communication competence** (ICC). As stated before, there is no consensus regarding a definition of culture and the terms intercultural communication and/or intercultural competence are even harder to define, but the literature presents certain common terms and models which help clarify this notion. The main concept refers to the ability to function in an effective way in intercultural situations, with people from different cultures, to be able to communicate, work and live with people from different backgrounds (Fantini & Tirmizi, 2006).

Intercultural situations are encounters with people who are perceived by a person as culturally different. Each interpersonal situation has the potential to become an intercultural situation. When we look at people as being part of a certain cultural group instead of paying attention to each individual, we risk to fall in the trap of stereotypes and to assume that all have certain characteristics that belong only to that specific group.

There is a consensus in the literature that intercultural competence is a lifelong process. It starts with self-awareness, with the knowledge of one's multiple identities, of those of other people and to the way these identities can affect different situations (Grant & Portera, 2011; Holiday, 2011). According to Byram (1997), it is important to avoid dividing people between 'us' and 'them' since such an approach is always based on stereotypes and differences, but rather to be empathic, flexible and tolerant of ambiguous situations. When a person respects human rights and democratic values, it is easier to be open to think in a critical manner and to develop conflict resolution skills. In order to help people gain intercultural competence, there is a need for planned and meaningful learning. Deardorff (2009, 2011) uses the definition of intercultural competence as "the effective and appropriate behavior and communication in intercultural situations." However, she stresses the fact that in any intercultural situation, while *effectiveness* can be determined by any person, *appropriateness* can only be determined by the other individual, since appropriateness is related to cultural sensitivity and respect for the cultural norms of that person.

3. INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE: MODELS AND ASSESSMENT

Intercultural competence is not easily defined and several models were proposed in order to help grasp the concept and to find different ways to develop it. All the models have one thing in common: they deal with the way in which people perceive their own culture, other cultures and their relation to these cultures.

Fantini (2006) distinguished between four dimensions of intercultural competence: inter-cultural **knowledge**, **attitude**, **skill** and **awareness**. People must be first knowledgeable of their own historical roots and aware of their beliefs and values. Only after this initial step, one can learn about other cultures and interact with people from different groups in an appropriate way. During this process, they can discover or develop their own openness, their empathy and their ability to be tolerant and adopt a flexible behavior in their interaction with people from different cultures.

Cross' Cultural Competence Model (1988) stresses the importance of **self-awareness, culture specific knowledge** and **skills** that promote effective cultural interactions. He developed a framework which emphasizes the fact that the process of achieving cultural competency occurs along a continuum and includes six stages:

1. *Cultural destructiveness* includes policies and attitudes that are harmful and demean people and groups.

2. *Cultural incapacity* includes stereotyping people and being extremely bias towards them.

3. *Cultural blindness* occurs when people have an ethnocentric view and pretend not to see the differences. "I don't see color/ race/ religion, for me they are all the same".

4. *Cultural pre-competen*ce implies the recognition of and the respect for differences between people from other cultures.

5. *Cultural competency* is a step one reaches when s/he is willing to learn about other cultures and to look at the world from their perspective.

6. *Cultural proficiency* is achieved when a person becomes proactive in advancing and institutionalizing cultural and intercultural competence in organizations and in society at large.

Deardorff (2006) developed the **Intercultural Competence Framework/ Mode**l, built as a pyramid which includes five main elements: **attitudes, knowledge, skills, internal outcomes** and **external outcomes**. The *attitudes* imply curiosity, tolerance of ambiguity and the ability to value other people. *Knowledge* implies that each person learns about his or her culture and about the way in which it has shaped his or her identity. It includes the understanding of globalization and its impact on people and communities. It also has to do with the ability to look at reality from other people's perspectives, as well as the will to make an effort to gain socio-linguistic abilities. The *skills* a person needs to develop are the ability to listen empathically, to observe, evaluate critically and interpret reality.

Once the first three elements are achieved, one can move to the *internal outcomes* that include flexibility and empathy for the other, and to the external outcomes which are based on the first four elements and demonstrate a person's behavior and communication in intercultural settings. Deardorff (2009), stresses the fact that intercultural competence can only be achieved if it is cultivated.

Since nobody is ever “completely interculturally competent”, it is important to reflect on the way one can get the knowledge, skills and attitudes that will influence the internal and the external outcomes.

Being a lifelong process, intercultural competence can never be fully achieved, and its assessment is very complicated. Deardorff (2006) stresses the importance of assessing the ongoing change in a qualitative and formative way. She proposes to use her pyramid model by focusing on three dimensions related to intercultural competence that will influence the internal outcomes (flexibility, adaptability and empathy) and the external outcomes. The assessment of the internal outcomes will show the degree of flexibility, adaptability and empathy that has been achieved. It can also determine to what extent a person is able to look at reality from other people's perspectives and to treat them according to the way in which they want to be treated. The external outcomes can be revealed through observations and interviews that will show the behavior and communication of a person, as it is seen by others.

Fantini *et al*. (2006) conducted a mixed methods study in which they used a two way assessment of intercultural competence, based both of self and of the other using research tools in different cultural settings (Ecuador, Great Britain, and Switzerland). Since Fantini is a sociolinguist, he was aware of the impact language can have and therefore this study was conducted in different languages. The results point out that intercultural competence requires a complex of abilities, and the advantages of learning another language in its natural setting affect the development of intercultural competence and such an experience can be defined as "life altering." A study conducted by the National Center for Cultural Competence (2009) shows that preservice teachers have positive beliefs about cultural diversity but they don't have the necessary skills to transfer these values to their students.

4. EDUCATIONAL LEADERS’ ROLE IN PROMOTING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

For the purpose of this article, educational leaders are defined as educators who can be found at different levels of the educational systems. Ermenc (2005, 2007) asserts that a systematic restructure and a significant change of perceptions are needed in order to erase from the curriculum stereotypes and ethnocentrism and to make it flexible enough for teachers to be able to alter it accord)ng to their students' needs. As far as the teacher education is concerned, such programs must have *informed aims* (teaching the teachers to know what), *formative aims* (educating them to know how) and *professional aims* (to know why). Figueredo-Canosa et al (2020) distinguish between three ways of integrating cultural diversity in pre service teacher education curriculum: transversal, specific and project based. They also differentiate between four types of in service teacher training: courses, seminar, working groups and training in centers. In order for all these programs to be effective, they should combine theory with practice, be reflective, collaborative and participatory**.** The results of this study show that intercultural communication is positively linked with wellbeing and performance.

4.1. Policy makers should look at education in a systemic way, should make decisions regarding a national curriculum and should have clear objectives which can be implemented in schools. For example, in the French speaking areas of Switzerland, in the school curriculum (Plan d"etudes Romand PER, 2011), one of the goals advanced by the Ministry of Education is to help students develop their "transversal capabilities" which include the abilities to collaborate, to communicate, to think creatively, to develop strategies of learning and to express feelings. These capabilities allow students to better know themselves and to optimize learning. They are considered to have a positive effect on the organization of class work and represent an important condition for the social and professional integration of students in the future (PER, 2011). The Swiss model is based on Fantini's intercultural competence model, and therefore the curriculum includes resources which have been made available to teachers, such as "Looking at 'The Other' in the media, the movies and the internet". These materials are developed in order to encourage reflection and they include four steps: *knowledge*, *behavior, attitudes and feelings* and *action* and they are conceived in order to encourage reflection.

4.2. Faculty professors in universities and colleges and especially in institutions of teacher education should help both pre-service and in-service teachers develop intercultural communication skills, so that they can educate their students in the same direction and prepare them for the global world of this century. The purpose of education in general and teacher education in particular is to promote social justice and critical thinking (Cochran Smith & Power, 2010; Hinojosa,

& López, 2016). Therefore institutions of higher education that prepare psychologists, social workers, doctors, nurses, lawyers and other professionals should make a conscious effort of institutionalizing intercultural communication competence in their programs and should promote students exchange,. Departments of teacher education should work together with institutions that initiate programs for the professional development of teachers as well as with schools and their administrators. The common goal should be to develop the *knowledge*, the *skills* and *the attitudes* that were mentioned in the relevant literature. Hill-Jackson, Sewell & Waters (2007) distinguish between *resisters* (people who perceive cultural diversity as a problem) and advocates (who have positive views).

An interesting approach in this direction is that of the University of Oulu, Finland. This institution offers a BA in Intercultural teacher education geared for elementary teachers. Its curriculum provides competences for "international educational tasks" which enable the graduates to work in a regular Finnish school, in an international school where subjects are taught in English or to work as international experts in this field. In order to achieve this goal, the students are exposed to the theoretical concepts related to intercultural education such as culture, identity, equity and equality, they learn about the practices and research in the field so that they can critically analyze this field. (https://opas.peppi.oulu.fi/ en/programme/14692). Tarozzi (2014) stresses the importance of committed teachers with intercultural beliefs, values and competence. Given the fact that teachers sometimes show a naïve and superficial view of cultural diversity, such a program offers a long-term process and makes a firm commitment to equality and social justice.

Lopez & Hinojosa (2016) created an inventory of preservice teachers' beliefs about cultural diversity. The University of South Australia created indicators for graduates that can prove international perspectives as professionals and citizens. A study conducted at the University of Granada found significant differences in their beliefs regarding cultural diversity between preservice teachers according to their field of studies. The students with the most positive approach were from the fields of elementary education, special education and foreign languages. Some of the student teachers have displayed a limited view of cultural diversity and therefore short-term courses on this subject are not enough in order to create a deep and long lasting change.

Gordon College of Education in Israel (www.gordon.ac.il) is a teacher education institution situated in the multicultural city of Haifa and which has a very diverse student and faculty body: Jews, Arabs, Christians, Muslims learn and work together with new immigrants from the former Soviet Union, from Western countries (France, England, US, South America) as well as from Ethiopia. It is therefore crucial for pre- service and in-service teachers who learn at the undergraduate level and for future school administrators who study at the graduate level to develop intercultural competence skills. Intercultural situations occur in natural settings in every class. Several courses in different departments (English, Communication and Humanities at the undergraduate level and Educational Administration and Leadership at the Graduate level) expose the students to vignettes that allow them to effectively act in intercultural situations. Two different models have been used in order to help students develop intercultural competences. Both models use the vignette technique, a method that can elicit perceptions, opinions, believes and attitudes from responses or comments to stories depicting scenarios and situations (Finch, 1987; Hazel, 1995; Hill, 1997).

The first method chosen by teacher educators at Gordon College of Education for intentionally addressing intercultural competences of students is the Dilemma Based Model (DBM), which has been used in different settings with different type of students and school administrators (Reichman, 2017, 2018). This model can be used either as a whole course or as a module in one of the existing courses in any field of study, across the curriculum, either at the undergraduate or the graduate levels. It facilitates opportunities of cultural encounters among students and also between students and faculty members. The model promotes higher-order thinking skills as well as critical thinking, and it empowers the students to creatively take control of their own learning. Students who have been exposed to this type of experience found it easier to learn on their own as well as in heterogeneous groups of people who were or became genuinely interested in a certain subject. The goal is student transformation because these skills help the learners not only in one type of course, but also in dealing with future challenges in their personal lives. (Reichman, 2018).

The DBM model consists of six steps:

First step: The instructor introduces a story that contains a moral dilemma, the competing values are presented and each student has to answer the question: "What should the protagonist do and why?” The students DO NOT share their answers with anyone.

Here is an example of a vignette used for this use of activity:

> *Ms. Jones is an ESL teacher in an elementary school in Hope, Iowa. She teaches choir as well as ESL to a class of twenty 4th graders who were not born in the US. Some of them are immigrants, others came to the US for a period of a couple of years because their parents work or study there. Among these 20 students, 15 are Christians, two are Jewish, two are Muslim and one is Hindu. Two months before Christmas, Ms. Jones would like to teach them Christmas songs, so that they can perform in front of their parents. She is not sure how the non-Christian parents will react. Should she pull the students out of choir before Christmas? Should she give up teaching them Christmas songs which had been the traditional songs during the winter show? She decides to go and ask the school principal for advice on this matter.*
> *What do you think the school principal should say and why? In dealing with this dilemma, you must consider the fact that FREEDOM OF RELIGION is a value guaranteed by the US Constitution, as is the value of SEPARATION BETWEEN STATE AND RELIGION.*

Second step: (A variation of De Bono's Six thinking hats model, 1988) The instructor gives each group a specific role ("hat"). The students who are have been assigned the white hat will look for FACTS, the yellow hat explores the PROS and the black hat looks for the CONS, the disadvantages and even the dangers ("Devil's advocate"). The red hat expresses FEELINGS and EMOTIONS, the green one is the CREATIVE one that looks for new ideas and options. The instructor wears the blue hat, which means that s/he MANAGES THE THINKING PROCESS, asking questions about the subject as well as about the process, so that the guidelines are followed. If the class is very large, two or more groups of students can be assigned the same ‘hat’ (role).

Third step: The students, using relevant and adequate sources, with the instructor acting as a facilitator, look for new knowledge that will help them strengthen the position they have been assigned. Since each student has been assigned a role, most conflicts are avoided because the ideas presented are not seen as reflecting their personal views.

Fourth step: The students discuss the topic based on what they have learned independently or in the small groups. They prepare their ‘roles’ and get ready to present the results to the entire class.

Fifth step: Each group of students presents their results to the whole class. This can be done using short – TED style – lectures, role-play, artistic work or any other technique that the students may choose. By sharing the information with the entire class, all students reach a similar level of knowledge, which then becomes the basis for the group discussion.

Sixth step: The students assess their work (*self-evaluation*) as well as the work of their colleagues (*peer evaluation*) and they reflect about ways to apply their solutions to similar moral conflicts that they might face. At this point the professor also evaluates the students' work (*top-down evaluation).*

Several studies have shown that DBM is effective in increasing the students' intercultural communication competence while also helping them develop critical and creative thinking (Leon, 2019; Levy, 2019; Bekermus, 2019).

A second technique that has been used at Gordon College was Gibbs' Reflective Cycle Model (1988) in order to help students develop ICC competences. The future teachers and administrators have to work on a given task in groups and to follow the six steps of the model:

1. *Description:* What happened? The students discuss a situation in a group and they become aware of the fact that different people look at the same given facts from different points of view.
2. *Feelings and thoughts*: What did you *think* and what did you *feel* about this situation? The students have to reflect on their own feelings and thoughts regarding the given situation.
3. *Evaluation:* What was good and what was bad? What helped us reach our goal? What motivated us and what distracted us from achieving our goal.
4. *Analysis:* what sense can you make of this situation? Who convinced the participants in a certain direction and how? Were the arguments pertinent? Why or why not?
5. *Conclusion*: What else could you have done? In retrospect, the students have to decide if they could have done more or if they could have acted in a different and better way.
6. *Action plan*: if a similar situation arose again, what would you do? This step helps students realize that in the future they might encounter similar situations and at this point they can think in advance of better ways of thinking and acting. Therefore, the students are interested in reflecting about *the process* because they understand that it is relevant to their own lives and they can learn from it.

Pre-service and in-service teachers and administrators have used one of these two models or a combination of both models in their own schools, with other teachers and students. The positive results have been presented in several studies (Leon, 2019; Levy, 2019; Bekermus, 2019). The students have become more motivated and the relationships among them have improved.

4.3. Intercultural competence in schools. As it has been mentioned before, intercultural competence is an ability that people should develop over time and therefore it is important to start in schools, with students, led by well-trained teachers who can, in turn, teach the necessary skills across the curriculum and not as a single lesson, in a single subject.

One should start by learning about one's own historical roots and by exploring his or her own values and beliefs. It is obvious that each of us has a CORE of values and beliefs that we cherish and we don't want to give up, but at the same time each person can also be FLEXIBLE about some other values and beliefs. When learning about people from different cultures and by interacting with diverse groups of people, a person gets familiar with the CORE values of other people and focus on the common ground, try to understand the differences in a non-judgmental way. In order to achieve this goal, students have to be open enough so that they can look at reality from another person's perspective, to show empathy towards people who are different, to be flexible and adaptable to unknown situations.

Two examples of attempts to develop intercultural competences in Israeli schools will be presented. The first one is a project called "Roots" that takes place in ALL the Israeli high schools in 8^{th} grade. During an entire school year, the students are asked to create a portfolio regarding their own family roots. In order to do so, they interview their parents, grandparents and other relevant people and they collect pictures and different artifacts. They decide what to present and how, they learn a lot about their own family history and about their colleagues' backgrounds. During the last month of the school year each cohort presents their findings, the students share them with their colleagues and with the other parents, discuss the similarities and the differences between them. Since Israel is a very multicultural society, in any class one can find students from very different backgrounds. A teacher who has received special training in coaching such a project advises the students during the entire year (Beckerman, 2019).

The second example is much more complex and challenging because it involves dealing with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on a daily basis (Bekerman & Horenczykm, 2004). Eight Jewish-Arab schools accept students coming from families that have chosen an entirely different educational experience for their children. These public schools have an equal number of Arab and Jewish students although the Israeli Arabs represent only 20% of Israel's population. Each of these schools has two co-principals, one Jewish and one Arab and each class has two teachers for each subject, once again one Arab and one Jewish. These educators have chosen to work in such an environment because they are not only committed to promoting intercultural competences, but mainly to promoting peace by creating equality, understanding and coexistence between people coming from the two cultures. The teachers do not use any translation in class, all of them are fluent in both languages and therefore they provide full bilingual education during the entire day, year after year. The students also become fluent in both languages and they become familiar with both cultures. They are influenced by the political context of the Arab-Jewish conflict and they learn how to deal with very tough situations of violence which unfortunately occur from time to time, such as wars and terrorist attacks. The resources needed for the operation of these schools with double faculty are considerable but they are justified by the vision of promoting mutual understanding between children from both cultures whose population have been in conflict for over a century (Amara, 2005).

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Intercultural communication competence does not happen naturally and can never be fully achieved. Nevertheless, through a lifelong process, these skills can be nurtured and developed. Policy makers in the field of education should make it a priority and make sure that this goal finds a place in the curriculum, both in institutions of higher education in general, and in teacher education in particular. I strongly agree with Ermenc (2005) who recommended that pedagogical principles should guide the entire process of planning, implementing and evaluating education. Additionally, school teachers and administrators should receive adequate training in this field, so that they become able to transmit these skills to their students of all ages. This is not 'a subject' that only needs to be taught theoretically. It must be part of an ongoing process that is based on one or more of the different models that have been offered. Teachers and faculty members are not technicians who have to present this material to their students and then check their knowledge through a test. They must be prepared so that they can take charge of the curriculum, so that they can implement these principles across different subjects, in different ways that involve both the thoughts and the feelings of their students in a matter which makes it relevant to their lives. In order to do that, they have to be aware of their own stereotypes and should stress the human dignity and respect that each person needs and is entitled to. Teachers need to take responsibility for each of their students, they need to be supported by systemic measures and should be treated as professionals who have the right and the ability to become policy makers themselves and to see policy as a process and not as a final product.

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TRAINING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE THROUGH EDUCATION. STRATEGIC AND RESILIENT AMPLIFIERS

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Abstract: *The present study examines three topics following the current debate on intercultural competence: key ideas from modern reflections on the tense relationship between innovative education and the effects of the globalization paradigm; breaking the dissonance between intercultural strategies and gentle responses to the challenges of the crisis-generating context for school actors; the efficiency of the educational environment in terms of the cultural formation of the youth personalities, transformations and resets. The critical attitude aims at the demotivating, unsustainable and non-harmonized effects, respectively constructive and capitalizing on the empathic communication and on the resilient intercultural practices, which have proved to be efficient and qualitative. The formation of the values of intercultural competence is supported by arguments, by the values added by the actors of institutional management education, complementary to the basic competencies - scientific, technological, volitional-emotional, character-wise, pragmatic-social, and spiritual. Interrogative messages are explicit, software arguments ensure compliant and resilient behavior of educational actors to meet the challenges posed by insecure, poorly formative-innovative scenarios. Alternatives to scientific, technological, artistic, therapeutic-spiritual and psychomotor knowledge are becoming emergent due to the continuing redefining of cultural-professional and personal lifestyles process. The formative balancing process, created by intercultural education, reduces the asymmetries, the dissonances and the conflicts between the classic cultural values normality and the risks of authoritarian tendencies, between resilient, compliant and sustainable cultures emerging intergenerational and questionable discourses promoting new redefinitions, bringing forth cultural and educational arguments.*

Keywords*: cultural education; intercultural competence; compliance; resilience; empathic action and communication*

1. INTRODUCTION

The interest in the formation of intercultural competence at the community level and at the generational one has significant legitimacy in what we define today as the science, art and philosophy of *interrogations* (questions), constituting the legitimacy of the field known as *erotetics*.

The specificity of the modern conceptual approach of interculturality is an interdisciplinary and functional multipurpose one, oscillating between axiological, epistemological-semantic values, with significant pragmatic and sociological-educational functions. The developments proposed in the current paper have motivational-cognitive arguments derived from new methodological options and innovative guidelines, rooted in the formative-social models generated by the context of current education in civil and military schools, responsible for qualitatively reforming changes in training young generations and social actors, in a surprising context of change and redefinition.

The identified answers, some with the status of solutions, imaginary but also concretely placed at the intersection between the values of human existence, transformative social learning strategies (Mezirow, 2014) and potential partnerships, aimed at increasing the dowry of *psychologically resilient valences and compliant behaviors* of direct or indirect actors in the education field. The background of the problems is frequently examined, as it contains notes of critical conscience, assumed decisions, declared or only intuited alternatives involved in the dance of challenges to our peaceful existence, at a community, group or individual level. We identify interrogative formulations, explanations and mental solutions, with positive effects of the functionally active and rational mind, capable of reasoned change, based on five new hypostases for the future: disciplined, synthetic, creative, respectful, ethical (Gardner, 2007).

At a morphological level, the approached topic allows the formulation of four interrogative-stimulating statements:

I1. How is the picture of the complexity of the basic concepts necessary for understanding the holistic construction of the formation of intercultural competence through education configured today?

I2. What arguments do we use to create unity between the goals of formal and informal education, the diversity of perceptive intelligence, and the quality of the improving resilience of social integration/adaptation in light of new challenges?

I3. How do we increase the functionality of intercultural competence through education, in order to apply more frequently positive resilience techniques, which are adapted and personalized to each of the education actors?

I4. To what extent is the hypothesis valid that intercultural competence increases the rate of development of social-critical awareness and decision-making and informational-action at the level of education actors, and at varied-profiled schools?

2. THE SEMANTICS OF CONCEPTUAL AND METHODOLOGICAL REFERENTIAL ANALYZES

2.1. Basic concepts. The concepts that can be utilized in the formative-goal documents are often intertwined with the interrelationships present at the level of four pentagonal techniques:

a) process-qualitative interactive: training/ teaching, learning/ transformation and evaluation, feedback, added/ newly created values, resilience with positive functional feedback;

b) instrumental analysis of contextual knowledge through the operational use of methods known as SWOT analysis, PESTLE, 6 Sigma, Gemba Kaizen, LISREL, etc.;

c) negative crises, with major impact and risk, with different amplitudes at mega-, macro-, meso-, micro-factorial level, with different causalities: geopolitical, technological, economical, security, ecological, socio-cultural impoverishment, energetic, health, language, immoral-deontological lifestyles of politically correct language (according to the reset guidelines of the new order);

d) intercultural competence options related to the intercultural competence valorizing the multicultural strategy within the *professional partnerships* between countries, institutions, bodies, mechanisms, etc. which legally legitimizes the status of meeting the spheres of educational, cultural, military, decision-making inter influence, decision-making, intelligent-perceptual interpretive (Wachler, 2021).

2.2. Projective work scenarios. Conceptually focused, the scenarios, some positive, some negative, are / can be the effect of critical and analytical thinking, often controversial. Subject to critical analysis will be the negative ones, inducing fear, fear, blackmail, division of people, the creation of equations with many unknowns and in which some people become skeptical, fragile, destructive, aggressive, other manipulators through networks and fake news, of aggressive authoritarianism and of the effects generated by the dissolution of knowledge.

2.3. Developments and connections in the intercultural space. We attribute the first promoted reference to the *concept of culture*, the meaning of which seems to be commonplace for many of us. As a result of historical evolution, the meanings of culture have multiplied, without completely breaking away from those attached to *civilization*, both having the status of conditions of education through sustainable culture.

Interculturality and intercultural competence represent the dialectical unit of four intrinsic directions to authentic education (Neacșu, 1987): a) *gnoseological*, acts of reflective knowledge of some laws, facts and natural or social processes, objective or subjective; b) *axiological*, phenomena resulting from the connections and interconnections between human values and aspirations through education; c) *creative*, potentially dynamic factor of the emergence of the being of the qualitative action-transformative being; d) *communicational*, critical social amplifier vs. resilient integrator in the social praxis of the group, of the community. Increasing today, what becomes evident is the expressly pragmatic orientation, present in diplomatic situations/ goals and negotiation in military confrontations vs. synergistic bilateral or multilateral military cooperation (see NATO). Complementary, and emphasizing the complexity of interculturality and the formation of resilient intercultural competence, we approach the substance a definition through the phrase of articulated sets of ideas, values, attitudes, practices and social-human behaviors created, processed, transmitted and cultivated differently between education subjects, of agreed international relations.

2.4. The logic of interconnections in culturological dialogue. The present and the future in which we are involved in existential, cultural, educational and intercultural formation are achieved through the school and university curriculum, through the links with technological and informational evolution, with the scenarios of the supporters of megatrends inscribed in what we call the relations of global thought to local action.

Appearing around the 1990s, following a possible definition, the globalization through diversity of diversity, the references of the British Encyclopedia are circumscribed to intensified and extrapolated community social relations internationally, justifying/ explaining how events are modeled by synchronous knowledge and interpretation of situations. and phenomena occurring at a great spatial distance. Gradual nuances have emerged, culturological globalization being minimally considered an example of the interconnection between near and far regions, as well as a convergent development of social activities and/or the establishment of institutionalized power networks. More succinctly, globalization as the boundless amplification of interculturality means both compressions of the world/space and a reset awareness of the fact that the world is a single entity. The central aspects are, therefore, interconnection, remote action, accelerated interdependence, deterritorialization and supraterritorialization, breaking the space-time correlations" (Gheorghe, 2020). Examples inscribed in the globalizing discourse are multiple: health, ecology, communication, social movements, ideology, economic-financial system, markets, crises, evolutions, values, effects, analyzes, and so on.

On the other hand, we are not really talking about global education, *global governments*, about global noncritical idealization, and global functional didactics. We can accept global moral hierarchies (see the concept of peace), as well as desired values as global: trust, quality, democratic values, human power, sustainable development, thinking in alternatives, the diversified will of the human spirit, etc. We speak instead of a cultural foundation with dimensions of intercultural education based on moral values with warnings of integrity in opposition to pride, dishonesty, arrogance, helplessness, toxicity. There are competing paradigms, tensions between political faults, inflection points in interculturality, informational and manipulative unsupervised social networks, negative repetitive norms, desires to withdraw from borders by force / war, bold mixtures between globalization, plurality, secularization.

2.5. The logic of interconnections in culturological dialogue. Amplifying the powers of psychoeducational resilience – an optimistic outlook! We live, as human beings, at least at a certain age, a continuous pressure, a spiral of a whirlwind that throws the human subject in disturbed contexts, fully demanding the powers of adaptation. Educational institutions and the world of education actors are constantly demanding the strengthening of the capacity for imaginary and positive control of the existential and adaptive socio-professional conditions. At the same time, the idea of reducing the effects of risky impact is accentuated, simultaneously with an increase in serotonin, the nucleus of the resilience gene (neuroscience data), the appearance of stress-causing effects of energy imbalance of the spirit and relative homeostasis.

Stepping on a relatively fragile path of human existence today, we find ourselves in the hands of that mysterious force of the human psyche to face the role of one of the great fortune-tellers, whose neuroscience psychologists, pedagogues and researchers sought to find the answer to a question "what is resilience?" (Berndt, 2014:13).

Integrated into the world of education, the concept of resilience has a functionally differentiated status through the sensitivity and adaptation of humankind to the specificity of its missions (to receive change, reforms, resets to face new contexts and new situations) with disturbing life balance and forming processes – two types of schools, civilian and military, that we think about *hic et nunc*! Strictly examined, resilience today, especially in military schools, has a significant emphasis on rapidly adaptive psycho-social behaviors, on the formation of action consciousness with reactions of professional response to the disturbing challenges of critical contexts. Moreover, correct perceptions of security risks, of the effects of weakening the adaptability coefficient to strategic unpredictability are required. At stake is the quality of missions under oath, the perception, understanding and interpretation of events, the mobilization of intrinsic motivations participatory in the defense of training institutions, heritage, and the country as a whole.

The study of resilience, especially emotional, with all its cognitive-moral, neurobiological, psychogenetic, educational or pragmatic forming goals, facilitates the resolution of pressures, ensures the sustainability of skills training through mental, moral, spiritual, emotional strategies to secure human space when confronted with the non-values of political-ideological reset.

In the education world, especially in that of intercultural competence, resilient consciousness upholds the values of adaptive psycho-emotional power, transforming negative, dissonant thinking, through forming, into positive thinking, appealing to the corrective filtering of defensive pessimism (assertive, not offensive) of the psychic evolution towards becoming a positive power.

The consciousness of the education actors, characterized by the values of emotional resonance, implies, according to the Canadian expert G. Bharwaney (2020:41) a change in the daily response; solving personal and interpersonal problems; communication with others of one's own feelings and thoughts; empathy in relationships with the group;

dialogue promoted in the event of a problem; elaboration of an effective forming program.

Such a forming program will be designed and developed based on the existence and functional relationship of three benchmarks:

(1) the fundamentals of self-awareness (self-esteem, self-control, mood, empathy, understanding, communication of the importance of conscious processes);

(2) resilient emotional skills (changing daily response behavior; solving personal and interpersonal problems; communicating with others about one's own feelings and thoughts; empathy in relationships with the group; dialogue promoted when a problem arises and is solved);

(3) results and added value through resilience and education/forming (functional energy at its optimum potential; productive organization of efficient powers under pressure; connections through personal interactions; managerial influences and intelligent management of relationships with others).

Assessing the qualities of emotionally resilient consciousness becomes formative-demonstrative and follows the results of a positive educational application consisting in the introduction of a self-assessment questionnaire on experiences, opinions and value-attitudes related to the development of emotionally resilient consciousness and well-being. This is the case of the application of the NETT Questionnaire (Chopra, 2020:42), which investigated the meanings of awareness and awareness that have become the goal of a program for well-being, optimal experience of self-awareness, which is, in fact, resilient consciousness.

The key question remains: Can we develop through specific education/forming, meditation, reflection, formative action, cognitive-emotional resilient states of consciousness? The preliminary answer includes some ideas reflecting the responses of education actors regarding: the presence of conscious consciousness, associated with management and leadership; accepting the dynamics of the concept of mindfulness; the sensitivity of modern man to accepting alternative contexts, the prospects of innovation, positive stability assessments, the control doubled by self-control of opposing views and the defense of the rights of expression regarding the truth, normality, value of personal and community projects, effect of a social consultation competent; the need for investigative research, understanding the meanings of balance, progress by assuming perspectives, discerning risks, self-awareness of the need for academic-pedagogical reflection.

3. POSITIVE CONNECTIONS USEFUL FOR THE FORMATION OF INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

We start with the statement of a psychological paradox: crises make you more resilient, it is accepted that this, resilience,

> comes to light only after greater crises, when we have gone through greater difficulties, […] when I have learned how to use personal and social resources, available or necessary, [...] when all this can be learned, [...] when contexts gradually lead to a reduction in exaggerated sensitivity, [...] when the difficulties result in his learning how to get out of a difficult situation less burdened, [...] and, with age, we become more serene, as a result of increased resilience, [...] a greater baggage of experiences that they can already overcome several crises (Berndt, 2014:190-191).

The effects of the academic pedagogical maturation can be interesting for our problem, among which we mention:

a) the relationship between education and multiple cultures in an intercultural community; it becomes visible at the level of manifestations of intercultural competence by bringing identities closer, reducing diversity due to acceptance of differences, desires for empathic communication, recognition of the status of educated subjects, civil or military specifics of the school, limitations of interculturality;

b) building resilience by progressively increasing cultural sensitivity; we consider the reduction of the spectrum of divergences, the emphasis on the culture of cultural styles, the accentuation of the conduct of empathy classical and neoclassical pro culture, the creation of intercultural bridges through translations, the circulation of distant spatial-temporal and communal values, the promotion of curricular universals promoted by the pedagogy language, sports, academic debates, etc.;

c) values of decision-making behavior at the intercultural-educational level, including: inclusion, critical thinking, civic literacy, community living, the quality of learning organizations, etc.

4. EDUCATIONAL PROJECTS WITH COMPLEMENTARY REFERENCES IN INTERCULTURAL LEARNING

From the positive series of projects for formative learning we note, in addition to some reference documents - the Paris Declaration, adopted by

European Ministers of Education (2015), the Romania Educated Project (2021) and:

The SIRIUS project, initiated by the European Commission, defines a network to promote the learning and education of children and young people, with emphasis on the effectiveness of concerns to promote access to quality curriculum, inclusive education for and the extension of strategies specific to national education.

The e-Twinning project, a platform for transformative school collaboration, addressing components such as: the triad of values of active citizenship, tolerance and diversity; the reconstruction of the idealized, emblematic society, through civic values, ways of life, intercultural habits; strategic partnership, under the auspices of Erasmus +; training in empathic communication skills, multipurpose language integration; designing a common basis of good practice, equal opportunities, personal cultural initiatives, a positive approach to diversity, building an intercultural learning environment;

Multimedia learning kit, consisting of videos, language games, cartoons, etc., aimed at contextualizing and valuing units of curricular/interdisciplinary content;

Domestic and international partnerships, with resonance in the sphere of interculturality visible in standards, options, decisions, educational actions at the level of means, participation, involvement and finalities. There are several models for achieving intercultural partnerships (those promoted by Epstein, Hoover-Dempsey, Sandler, Attride-Sivling), and the triad of values is important here: interaction, availability and responsibility in the promoted programs.

Master's degree curricular programs, with results and added values in the field of professional intercultural learning present in institutions distorting intercultural competence, with applications to: intercultural diplomacy, intercultural management, economic, religious, as well as the training of experts in geostrategic military policies.

The study of the documents regarding the formation profiles of specialists with officially recognized competencies in the field of interculturality through studies at the university level allows us a brief listing of examples of some utility, because of governmental decisions. We select profiles present from the structures of the University of Bucharest (Bc) and Brașov (BR), in the academic year 2021-2022.

Thus, we present them as qualifying to a set of higher standards institutions, regarding the forming of intercultural competencies: Intercultural, literary and linguistic communication strategies (Philology, Bc); Balkan, British, French cultural studies (Philology, Bc); Globalization and cultural diplomacy (Philosophy, Bc); Cultural interfaces in prehistory and antiquity (History, Bc); Digital history and heritage computerization (History, Bc); Culture and politics in a European and international context (Bc); Intercultural communication and studies (Sociology, Bc, English); Intercultural management (Sociology, BC, English); Identification in multiculturalism (Philology, BR); Cultural innovation (Philology, Br); Linguistic studies from an intercultural perspective (Philology, Br.).

5. CONCLUSIONS

The supporting arguments can be multiplied, qualifying the positive-persuasive power through communication and interculturality, by focusing on the extension of today's intercultural education. The foundations have a real historical horizon, a creative academic action rationality of an optimal balance of formative-resilient symmetries at the level of connectivity of the networks of schools and universities, civil and military institutions.

The interconnectivity and dialogue between coexisting cultures represents interculturality in the broadest sense, a socio-humanistic power beneficial to human beings, groups and human communities.

The overall effectiveness quality of this mental-emotional force of interactive interculturality becomes a certainty in the mentality and behavior of social education actors insofar as it is associated with the triad valence resilience, compliance and positive intrinsic motivation, formed early and progressively through educated stimulations.

The intercultural aspect, through language and emerging / creative institutional educational practices, becomes influential-formative, personalizes and socializes the learning communities, from and through given / created contexts, aspiring to acquire a mysterious resiliently positive, assertive and persuasive power, formal, nonformal and informal. Strategic amplifiers of intercultural models are diversity, interactivity, dialogue and empathic communication, pro-communion training style and pro-harmonization of relationship behaviors. In opposition, they will be considered the boomerang of options for resetting life, the values and attitudes of censorship promoted by the new revolutionary and rapidly degenerative ideologies in terms of cultural, democratic and traditionally historical civilization, contained in the lesser known but much undesirable Woke culture.

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SOCIETAL RESILIENCE. BETWEEN RESILIENCE THROUGH EDUCATION AND RESILIENCE THROUGH WAR

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Abstract: *On the one side, societal resilience is the central concept of the current National Defense Strategy. Originating in studies on appropriate disaster response, this concept has become crucial in relation to hybrid threats. Societal resilience underlies another concept, that of state resilience, which has become a reference concept in recent years in the NATO. Societal resilience is vital for the community to withstand violent and high-impact events and to quickly return to normality and functionality. On the other side, Ukraine proves to be, under the conditions of the Russian invasion, a resilient state that has cultivated its societal resilience for the last eight years. This resilience has developed in response to the violent military challenges of recent years and has led to the implementation of guidelines for optimal response to the challenges (Korostelina, 2020). However, Ukraine is not an example of good practice in strengthening societal resilience. Through this article, we aimed to analyze the two possible forms of strengthening resilience: through education and through war. The latter case can be illustrated by the example of Ukraine or Israel. In the former case, the adequate projection of the Romanian security documents could illustrate the phenomenon, as long as the public education policies meant to consolidate the societal resilience would result from our national defense strategy. This article is based on another article presented at a previous edition of the conference Redefining Community in Intercultural Context (Lesenciuc et al., 2018), in which we approached, starting from the discrepancy between strategies and public policies, the need to strengthen the other effective response to hybrid threats: culture of security.*

Keywords*: state resilience; societal resilience; military resilience; Ukraine; education*

1. THE CONCEPT OF RESILIENCE

The concept of societal resilience is not directly connected, in its origins, with that of hybrid warfare. It has emerged as a form of societal or community resilience in relation to the ability to respond adequately to natural disasters and continues to be associated primarily with these disasters. For example, in Julie L. Drolet's recent study (2021:365-377), the concept of resilience is the perception directly correlated with social adaptation to climate changes. Therefore, the semantic area of the concept of *community resilience* most often overlaps with the particular form of resilience, *community resilience to disasters*, the difference in overlapping involving the consideration of other forms of nonviolent crisis that require adaptation from society. In recent years, societal resilience has focused on socio-economic, ecological and environmental issues rather than on other possible causes, projecting this particular direction of understanding the concept despite previous generalist considerations considered in the past. For example, T. Fitzpatrick (2016: 57-85) explicitly restricts the semantic area starting from a broader framework of definition, even if, the concept was still defined in relation to the response to disasters (Arbon *et al.*, 2012:17), whereas starting from a working tool of the Torrens Resilience Institute (2012):

> The term *community resilience* is used to describe the interconnected network of systems that directly impact human society at a grassroots community level, including the socioeconomic, ecological, and built environments. A community is resilient when:
> „...members of the population are connected to one another and work together, so that they are able to function and sustain critical systems, even under stress; adapt to changes in the physical, social or economic environment; be self-reliant if external resources are limited or cut off; and learn from experience to improve itself over time" (Arbon *et al.*, 2012, *apud* Fitzpatrick, 2016:57-58).

Nevertheless, issues related to the preparedness of local communities attract not only the appropriate community response to disasters, but also issues related to other security issues (including response to military or hybrid threats), which leads to the judicious design of a "culture of responsibility", within some cultural areas (Napolitano, 2009).

2. SOCIETAL RESILIENCE IN ROMANIAN SECURITY DOCUMENTS

2.1. National defense strategy (NDS/ SNAp) (2020-2024). The concept of state resilience. *The National Defense Strategy for 2020-2024* (2020) uses the concept of "resilience" in relation to a number of descriptors and in different analytical frameworks. Resilience is one of the indicators of the appropriate and effective response in terms of national security to the manifestation of potentially negative aspects of the internal environment (vulnerabilities) and external ones (threats), along with continuity, adaptability, flexibility and predictability (NDS/ SNAp, 2020: 5), defining the state as a robust actor that has survived, in relation to the many facets of globalization, primarily from a political and cultural point of view, but also from an economic perspective and the various forms of weakening it, specific to the postmodern period. (Holton, 2011:13). The perspective of state resilience - in the sense of the resilience of a national community and an administrative strengthening - is one that concerns the state in the process of recovery or adaptation to the environment. State resilience was initially the subject of a study in the case of states whose principles and values have been severely shaken by wars or forms of conflict or protracted crisis: Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Lebanon, a.o., on issues mainly related to military intervention / contribution to achieving the required level of resilience, see, for example, the article "A Military Contribution to State-Resilience: Afghanistan and Lebanon" (Pounds *et al.*, 2017:199-232), but, subsequently, the concept developed in the scientific field through its normative foundations established at the level of the North Atlantic Alliance. In line with the NATO perspective, the reference is the recent Allied Resilience Commitment, the *Strengthened Resilience Commitment* of 14 June 2021, a engagement signed at the level of Heads of State and Government at the Warsaw Summit, which projects the broader concepts of "national and collective resilience", complementing the need for resilience at the level of small communities (in the sense of "civil preparedness") for the challenges of the security environment of increasing complexity. If in terms of the engagement "collective resilience" is based on the provisions of Article 3 of the Washington Treaty, "national resilience" remains undefined, being accepted as a national obligation or responsibility. From this perspective, "national resilience" is seen as a mandatory condition and warranty of implementing the resilient projection at the alliance level, an approach that provides an applicable framework to reduce vulnerabilities and to apply a unique set of measures able to provide a resilient NATO response:

> Under NATO 2030, we have agreed today to enhance our resilience. Noting that resilience remains a national responsibility, we will adopt a more integrated and better coordinated approach, consistent with our collective commitment under Article 3 of the North Atlantic Treaty, to reduce vulnerabilities and ensure our militaries can effectively operate in peace, crisis and conflict. Allies will develop a proposal to establish, assess, review and monitor resilience objectives to guide nationally-developed resilience goals and implementation plans. It will be up to each individual Ally to determine how to establish and meet national resilience goals and implementation plans, allowing them to do so in a manner that is compatible with respective national competences, structures, processes and obligations, and where applicable those of the EU. (*Strengthened Resilience Commitment*, 2021).

Building resilience is therefore NATO's major goal from which a number of national responsibilities arise. The National Defense Strategy (2020) anticipated the projection of the Warsaw summit and engaged, at the level of Romanian society, a form of state resilience asserted by the very title of the first chapter of the document prepared by the Presidential Administration, namely: "Romania, an active member of the NATO and EU, a resilient state and pole of regional stability" (NDS/ SNAp, 2020:7). At this level of ambition, the perspective of state resilience concerns the global perspective: "a resilient state, able to relate efficiently, proactively and adequately to the unpredictability of developments in the global security environment" (NDS/ SNAp, 2020: 8), but also in relation with the economic, cybernetic, healthcare dimensions or others. State resilience is perceived as a potentiating factor either in terms of the various areas mentioned, or in terms of contagion with the resilience of small companies, or in terms of providing action models and patterns to increase the resilience of the Republic of Moldova.

2.2. National Defense Strategy (NDS/ SNAp) (2020-2024). The concept of societal resilience. State resilience concerns the stability, adaptability, capacity for anticipation of the state, but it is based on the very established concept, of societal resilience, defined within the contents of the national defense strategy and identified within the limits of its applicability

> The concept of Romania's resilience is addressed from a double perspective: the inherent capacity of entities –

> individuals, communities, regions, state – to resist and adapt articulately to violent, stress-causing events, shocks, disasters, pandemics or conflicts, on one hand, and the ability of these entities to return, as soon as possible, to a functional, normal state, on the other hand.
> Strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerabilities require a flexible multi-dimensional strategy as well as a broad perspective on all systems, in order to limit the risks related to a crisis, but also to improve the capacity to quickly manage the adjustment mechanisms at local, national and regional levels. Resilience covers all stages of a crisis situation, from prevention (where possible) to adjustment and limitation of effects (when necessary), and includes positive transformations that strengthen the ability of current and future generations to provide for what they need. (NDS/ SNAp, 2020:11).

Therefore, the strategy adapts the concept of state resilience, building on the NATO projective frame, yet anticipating development, and basing the concept measurable by the functionality of the administrative apparatus, on a natural concept (from a theoretical perspective), although more difficult to build, educate and even measure. In the absence of the concept of societal resilience, the concept of state resilience would have been emptied of content, whereas without the tools needed to educate and strengthen the state of affairs called "societal resilience", which is not formed *ex nihilo*, the concept of state resilience becomes inapplicable. The strategy proposes a number of tools to be developed to strengthen societal resilience and critical infrastructure, but also in the case of resilience and critical infrastructure protection, it is necessary to first prepare the "mental software", i.e., it is necessary to project through the "cultural lens" (Ciupercă & Vevera, 2019:75-80). The strategy aims to improve the level of awareness of hostile actions carried out through traditional and new media, to size the tools through which to make the sources of misinformation transparent, to increase the importance of educational institutions with regard to identifying and combating misinformation, to create functional literacy, to develop healthcare programs, education for emergency situations and digital skills development, etc., but these directions, although correctly worded and in line with real skills development requirements, have so far not found the legislative means and the set of executive measures for implementation. The Romanian national defense strategy, useful and adapted to the current requirements (even anticipating the transformations of the regional and global security environment, perfectly anchored in the realities of these days) does not have the possibility to impose itself by transforming these intentions, projections, directions and objectives into viable security policies, required both by the national defense system, public order and intelligence, and by other institutions that hold a role in the state security. If these projections of the strategy also involved a measurement of the level of adoption of the document issued by the Presidential Administration and the end of the period in which it is applied, progress could be seen in the indicators taken into account. Regarding the National Defense Strategy (2020), an analysis of the initial state of societal resilience and the end state would be mandatory. Transforming "effective tools for strengthening societal resilience" (NDS/ SNAp, 2020: 23-24) into measurable indicators and measuring their level would mean the minimum required level of regulatory resilience in terms of security culture.

2.3. Romania's military strategy (RMS/ SMR) (2021). The concept of national resilience. Romania's military strategy (2021) is built on the same pillars and is based on the concept of resilience, which from the perspective of the national defense system, must become robust and strengthened (RMS/ SMR, 2021:3; 12). Moreover, the Romanian Armed Forces assume the role of consolidating national resilience and become "responsible for national resilience" (RMS/ SMR, 2021:3), despite the fact that it does not have the necessary means, as it results from the projection of the National Defense Strategy. Although thus broadly designed, in relation to the analysis of the general framework and the debate on military risks and threats to Romania's security, once the missions of the Romanian Armed Forces and national military objectives are taken into account, resilience becomes a goal at the military system level, with a role in ensuring societal and state resilience: "developing the resilience of the military system and contributing to ensuring national resilience" (RMS/ SMR, 2021:13; 26). Romania's military strategy (2021) is also a clear projective tool, which correctly projects the direction of consolidating societal resilience, through the educational resilience of the military education system:

> Increasing the resilience of the military education system is based on modernizing the educational infrastructure and related endowment, in conjunction with the present and future needs of the force structure and the challenges of action environments, in order to ensure participation in a quality, modern and inclusive educational process. Adaptation / updating / modernization of existing education programs for the development of transversal competencies in accordance with the principles of the Romania

> President's project, Educated Romania, including notions of innovative and creative learning, as well as competencies oriented towards structural and digital transition. The education system will seek to train future military leaders by promoting competence, competition and multidisciplinary in the training process. (RMS/ SMR, 2021: 18).

Romania's military strategy operates with the concept of national resilience, which, as a rule, should have been linked to the projection of the National Defense Strategy of the country and aimed at both levels: state and societal resilience, but this concept is limited to the latter, based on the definition framework designed in accordance with the NDS (see the assumed definitions taken over, RMS/ SMR, 2021:25-26, from NDS/ SNAp, 2020:11, but associated with a different concept, that of "national resilience"). The use of two different terms in the two strategies, national resilience and societal resilience, is likely to disrupt application possibilities. However, Romania's military strategy defines a fundamental concept, that of military resilience:

> Military resilience is the ability of forces to absorb kinetic and non-kinetic shocks associated with actions specific to military, conventional and hybrid conflict, including fighting in the degraded CBRN, electromagnetic and cybernetic environment. In essence, military resilience is the ability of the military instrument to build credible forces and successfully conduct the defense operation, even if the opponent is able to create strategic, operational or tactical surprise. In this sense, the Romanian Armed Forces ensures the development of robust, flexible, balanced military capabilities, organized according to the specifics of the missions, able to execute the entire spectrum of missions and operations, in all operational environments of the modern combat space. At the same time, the Romanian Armed Forces trains and equips the force structure, ensures the prepositioning of stocks and essential services in the targeted areas and maintains the capacity to generate reserves of any kind. (RMS/ SMR, 2021:26).

3. PUBLIC POLICIES OF SOCIETAL RESILIENCE?

Unfortunately, neither the provisions of the national defense strategy of the country, nor those of the military strategy find their answer in public policies to strengthen societal resilience through education. There is no alternative to strengthening resilience in this way, and the most convenient argument comes from the National Defense Strategy itself (2020), which explicitly defines the tools to strengthen resilience as educational tools. This is all the more serious as UNICEF has proposed a framework for aligning education policies on increasing the resilience of education systems in Europe and Central Asia in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic (UNICEF, 2020), based on the need to improve adaptability of education systems to reduce the impact on children and not to leave traces on them throughout life due to the inability to implement an inclusive education. Obviously, the text of the UNICEF document is primarily about student resilience, with an emphasis on inclusive education, but the projection is based on the need to improve "the resilience and efficiency of education systems by planning and delivering inclusive, quality and innovative education" (UNICEF, 2020:42). In addition, the issue of resilience, fundamental not only on the NATO agenda, but also on the European one, even if sometimes taken up in projective documents in education – for example, in the draft to *Strategy on the digitization of education in Romania* – does not produce effects, except for taking formulas from European documents as justification for some digitization priorities (such as connectivity, SmartEDU (2020:10). Within the operational plan of measures of the strategy, there is also a set of activities under the umbrella of the direction "Ensuring the core of key competencies, "competencies of success", competencies of resilience and creativity" (SmartEDU, 2020:35-36), but operational objectives/ subordinate measures and actions do not explicitly concern resilience. If we take into account, in addition to the set of extra-systemic directives, the models of good practices, with an emphasis on system resilience, not on the resilience of students (which is less affected by the education system, but, to a greater extent, by partners in the education activity: student - teacher - parents), the directions projected by the national defense strategy regarding the educational system (with a role in collective security) are not found in the implemented education policies.

We took into account all these aspects from the desire to re-debate a topic that we analyzed in 2018, when another national defense strategy was enforced (NDS/ SNAp, 2015) and when we highlighted the lack of coherence between the strategic projection of the culture of security and the way of reflection in the preschool, primary and secondary education in Romania (Lesenciuc *et al.*, 2018: 93-101). In the light of the time frame of the previous analysis, we had stated that there were no effects of the national defense strategy on the curriculum. The education policy document "Milestones for the design, updating and evaluation of the National Curriculum. National Curriculum Framework" approved by the Order of the Minister of Education and Research no. 5765 of October 15, 2020 does not change the perspective on the necessary level of culture of security and resilience of the education system (even if it was developed more than half a year after the COVID-19 pandemic sudden occurrence), maintaining the projection of civic competence (necessary but insufficient in terms of culture and education of security, respectively societal resilience at the minimum level accepted for systemic functionality) and does not even offer the possibility of including a vision based on resilience through the management of curricular alteration process.

4. SOCIETAL RESILIENCE IN UKRAINE. THE NEED FOR RECOVERY AND ADAPTATION TO THE ENVIRONMENT FOLLOWING THE ONSET OF THE CRISIS

The issue of societal resilience in Ukraine has arisen - in the current formula or in variants that have undergone various previous stages of development - since 2014, the year of the annexation of Crimea and the beginning of the hybrid war in Donbas. These issues have been reflected in various public documents or scientific studies dedicated to the societal resilience project applied in Ukraine or dedicated to studying in a bloc of states subject to the same threat. For example, Boulègue *et al.* (2018) included in the same study Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova, with the difference that, if, in Ukraine, the process of awareness, resilience and mobilization entitled *Revolution of Dignity* began in 2014:

> Ukraine can be viewed as a political 'laboratory' in which Russia has tested a variety of measures to exert influence, and at the same time as an example of resilience. Since 2014, many of the levers of Russian influence have weakened as a consequence of civil society mobilization associated with Ukraine's 'Revolution of Dignity' and subsequent reforms. (Boulègue *et al*., 2018:2).

Moldova, and especially Belarus, were left with extremely limited resources to strengthen resilience, the so-called *cognitive resilience* in the former case, and through *soft Belarusinization* in the latter. The Ukrainian model of weakening Russian influence, a public warning to raise awareness of the Russian danger, doubled in action by anti-corruption reforms in the fossil fuel sector, has become a success, despite maintaining the intensity of the military actions of the separatists supported by the Russian Federation in Eastern Ukraine at a certain level. The high percentage of national pride - amid destabilizing actions by the Russian Federation in the south and east, and the existence of a high percentage of ethnic Russians, 17.3% of the entire population of the country at the last census, in 2011, in just two years from the reference date, 2014, the level of pride displayed by being a citizen of Ukraine (according to Boulègue et al., 2018: 8) reached 68%. The increase of resilience to misinformation played an important role in this process, by controlling the narratives in the public media, by enacting the Law on Media Transparency in 2015, by organizing crisis communication centers, such as Ukraine Crisis Media Center or through #stopFake actions, by increasing information security measures and by counter-misinformation. The official Ukrainian response to the influence actions of Russia is relevant in this regard and, in particular, so is the response of civil society organizations (CSOs) (Boulègue *et al.*, 2018:18). National resilience has become the key element in security, and the demonstration of this projection is the result of numerous studies, among which we highlight the one conducted by Bondarenko *et al.* (2021), which proposed an integrated security model based on the principles of regional resilience, taking into account the creation of a multilevel risk assessment system, the development of crisis management tools and the development of resilience in local and regional communities.

Practically, since the invasion of Crimea by Russia, Ukraine entered a state of permanent conflict and was forced to develop a series of policies to adapt to the uncertain security environment and to recover from the violent military actions in the east of the country. Russia did not weigh the form of compensation of the Ukrainian state through societal resilience before the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, reducing it to the measurable values of military power in the first place, or economic power (and even political power, influenced by political means). Perceived as a society that has counteracted fragility from the perspective of various indicators with resilience that is not limited to adaptation, but which, in the conditions of transition from crisis to war, turns into a willingness to fight and support the war effort and it becomes a symbolic center of gravity of the conflict - as it actually happened in the case of the ongoing invasion of Russia - the Ukrainian state has been continuously preparing during the eight years of war, not only from a military point of view, but also from the perspective of societal resilience. Actually, some studies focused on the case of Ukraine, published before the conflict began, have taken into account community resilience as a form of power (Korostelina, 2020), in line with our previous view that the culture of security is a form of manifestation of symbolic power (Lesenciuc *et al*., 2018).

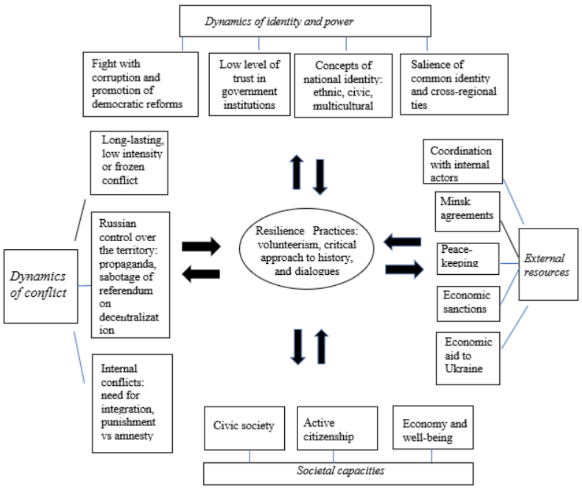

Fig.1 Ukraine's national resilience model (*apud* Korostelina, 2020:20)

Korostelina's perspective is supported by many previous analytical frameworks that partially fix the relationship between the ability to rebuild or adapt the community and symbolic power, but the study by George Mason University researcher is unequivocal: community resilience is a form of manifestation of power, more precisely, of symbolic power. In this interpretive line, once the effects of the Minsk Peace Agreements of 2014 and 2015 had no effect on the Eastern Front, Ukraine was forced to produce and impose a resilience plan that led to the formation of a strong civic voice and of a consistent civic activism, as decisive expressions, from the perspective of societal capacities, to which elements of identity and power dynamics were added (Fig.1): the mentioned anti-corruption campaign, doubling the effort to promote a national (multicultural) identity, a series of external resources and elements of conflict dynamics (Korostelina, 2020:20).

Ukraine's societal resilience model is not one of good practice. Societal resilience in this country has been the result of adapting the nation to the set of challenges it has faced. The result of Korostelina's study is one that proves this adaptation to external resources and the dynamics of the whole conflict, in order to respond through an extensive process of identity reconfiguration and through the development of a series of societal capacities. Societal resilience in Ukraine is the result of the common learning of the Ukrainian community to respond to a threat that has not ceased to be evident for eight years, until the invasion. Under these conditions, Ukraine's resilience is driven by the crisis and conflict in the post-Maidan period. The same is the case in which, for example, the Israeli community has strengthened its level of resilience as a result of similar challenges (the reference in this regard is the study by Reuven Gal, 2013). But the real issue of societal resilience is not (only) that of responding appropriately to threats and environmental (security) challenges, but (also) that of preparing in the absence of environmental challenges that require the development and training of resilience.

5. CONCLUSIONS or ADVOCACY FOR A DIFFERENT KIND OF RESILIENCE

Ukraine is a state with a very high level of societal resilience. That was probably the key element that Putin did not know when he ordered the invasion of Ukraine. Numerous statements and assumptions lead to this perspective. However, despite this high level of resilience, Ukraine cannot be considered a model of good practice. Societal resilience has been strengthened by triggering a response to a challenge. Similarly, we could have treated the case of the state of Israel. These two cases are the result of training in real conditions. When conditions of crisis or war are not manifest, societal resilience depends on other factors. Among them, the preparation of the level of societal resilience in peacetime is vital. This implies the inclusion of the issue of social resilience in the projective documents in the field of national security, the use of an operationalized and unequivocal conceptual apparatus and the transformation of the projective framework into actual training of the population to respond to threats of various kinds. This article is not the result of a simple scientific analysis of a projective security framework, compared to a case study of a conflicting neighboring state, but also a plea for firm action to implement the tools and directions identified through the National Defense Strategy policies (2020), through a series of public education policies, concerning both the formal framework and informal and non-formal education. To this end, an additional requirement in forming and strengthening the level of societal resilience is the formation and maintenance of a minimum accepted level of the culture of security. Ukraine's lesson is not the one of a model of societal resilience, but of the fact that societal resilience has truly turned into a power capable of stopping the obsolete war machine of the Russian Federation, which, under the false impression of hybrid power (including an information perspective), stumbles in front of its own vulnerability.

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TO BE OR NOT TO BE ONLINE? VIRTUAL LEARNING IN THE NEWS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract: *This paper investigates how virtual learning during the pandemic has been depicted in the mainstream media, focusing on news headlines, as headlines frame events and attract readers, besides informing and raising awareness about specific topics. The corpus includes news headlines published by three Romanian and Italian newspapers on the topic of remote learning in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The analysis adopts a mixed-methods approach, taking into account word frequency and lexical and syntactic patterns. The findings indicate that Romanian media tended to frame negatively the topics connected with the system of education in general, while the news in the Italian media adopted a more positive tone.*

Keywords*: online education; pandemic; headlines; Romanian; Italian*

1. INTRODUCTION

The fast spread of the coronavirus cases, in the spring of 2020, led many countries to take unprecedented measures, such as the closure of public and private schools and the adoption of online education. Before this moment, arguments against online teaching highlighted the costs of the technology employed, the lack of personal contact (e.g. Schmitz and Hanke, 2021:1-2), or the need for extensive teacher training. Online learning can foster greater participation by students to the courses (Dawley, 2007:2), yet it can also hinder access to education if certain technological requirements are not met (Lockee, 2021:5). Traditionally, online education was viewed as suitable to adult learners, mostly in the domain of higher education (Lockee, 2021:5). The widespread shift from face-to-face to online instruction in 2020 forced authorities, educational institutions and teachers to reconsider the role of online education and the learning opportunities it provides.

A growing corpus of research has investigated the benefits and disadvantages brought by online learning during the pandemic, with mixed results so far. For instance, a study of students' opinions revealed that they preferred instruction in the physical classroom to online instruction, however they appreciated the improvement of the teachers' skills during the pandemic years (Chakraborty *et al.*, 2021:360). Online classes can be motivating for students if they provide interactive learning and if the technological tools support task completion (Schmitz & Hanke, 2021:6). In order for online education to be successful, both teachers and students need to trust the technological means and consider them useful (Moawad, 2020:106). Teachers need to develop a sense of self-efficacy in online teaching in order to continue to use technology in the future (Menabò *et al.*, 2021:1572). From this perspective, the experience of online teaching during the pandemic may prove useful, as a study conducted on language educators shows that they have agreed to integrate technologies in their classroom-based lessons after the pandemic (Jin *et al.*, 2021:419).

The general public opinion on online education during the pandemic may also influence the perceived usefulness of this way of teaching and even contribute to its success or failure in certain communities. Research on this topic is still at the beginning, with studies showing a favorable attitude towards online education expressed by the public on social media (e.g. Asare *et al.*, 2021). However, the users of social media are already digitally literate and therefore they may be more inclined to endorse online learning, while the opinions of other categories of the public are more difficult to investigate.

The present study aims to contribute to filling this gap, by focusing on the presentation of online education in the media during the pandemic. The analysis compares the headlines published in Romanian and Italian newspapers regarding online education in order to assess (1) the frequency of words and expression used and (2) the positive or negative framing of news about online teaching and learning.

2. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 News headlines. According to Bednarek and Caple (2012: 100-101), news headlines should fulfill first an informative function, summarizing the content of the article. They should also attract the reader, increase the newsworthy character of the article, and express a stance towards the story presented in the article. Recent research points out that the informative function of the headlines has decreased lately, while the interpersonal function, aiming to attract the readers' attention has become widespread (e.g., Ifantidou, 2009; Janét *et al.*, 2022). In the case of online journalism, this trait can be explained through the availability of engagement metrics (Janét *et al.,* 2022:37). Research on headlines of editorials revealed that they presented the subjective attitude of the authors and tried to influence the readers' understanding (Bonyadi, Samuel, 2013:1). Although the clickbait phenomenon still needs investigation, it seems that specific linguistic traits such as short words or the inclusion of pronouns or sentimental words, increase the effectiveness of headlines (Kuiken *et al.*, 2017:1312).

2.2. Data collection. Three corpora have been created for the purpose of this research, two in Romanian language and one in Italian. The Romanian language corpora have been based on the headlines of the articles published in the online version of the newpapers *Evenimentul Zilei* and *Adevărul*. The Italian corpus included the headlines and intros of the articles published in the online version of the newspaper *Il Sole 24ore*. The headlines have been selected through a research in the online archives of each newspaper, using the words *school* and *online* (Rom. *școala online*; It. *scuola online*) as search terms. The resulting articles have been scanned and only the headlines of the texts connecting to the national system of education have been included in the corpus. The number of articles published on the research topic differed from a newspaper to another. The EVZ corpus included articles published between 22 April 2020 and 2 February 2022, totalizing 1,144 words. The *Adevărul* corpus was the largest one, with 3,824 words, representing the headlines of articles published 22 February 2022 and 2 January 2021. The *Il Sole* corpus totalized 2,540 words, but the articles were not listed in chronological order on the publication website. The period covered in this case was between November 2020 and 17 March 2022.

2.3. Methodology. The quantitative analysis was carried out with the use of the Sketch Engine program (http://www.sketchengine.co.uk/). The program allows corpora in any language as an input and can generate word sketches for the words of the targeted language (Kilgarriff *et al.*, 2004). For the current study, the Sketch Engine tool was employed in order to assess the frequency of multiword-expressions (2-gram and 3-gram analysis) and of certain lemmas, especially nouns and adjectives, based on the assumption that noun and noun phrases prevail in headlines and lead texts (Bednarek, Caple, 2012:85-86).

3. QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

3.1 The *Evenimentul zilei* corpus. Since this was the smallest of the three corpora, the quantitative results showed fewer occurences for each term in comparison to the other corpora. The 2-grams analysis showed that the most frequent combinations in the corpus were *școala online* (9 results) and *Școala online* (5 results), indicating the attention given to the new category of the school system. The combination that ranked second in the 2-grams list was *(de) ultimă oră*, suggesting that the rules regarding school instruction have changed frequently and that changes have been announced at short notice. The repetition of this combination in the corpus also indicates that the newspaper proved to keep the readers updated and to increase the impact of the headlines to attract the readers' attention.

The combination *se închid* (6 times) indicates that the closure of schools has represented a topic of interest. The education system has been presented in terms of keeping the schools open or closing them, but not in terms of efficiency of the learning process. The list of 2-grams does not show references to human actors (teachers, pupils, parents) involved in the learning process, but only to abstract notions, through terms such as *școala*, *pandemie*, *an școlar*, and *București*, with the latter term indicating a main focus of the articles on the situation of schools in the Romanian capital.

This hierarchy is also visible in the frequency of certain nouns. The most frequent noun is *școală* (34 times). If other forms of the noun such as *școala* (11 times) and *școlile* (6 times) are taken into account, the total number of occurrences is 51. The term that ranked second as a lemma is *online* (32 times). In contrast, terms referring to the human actors appeared more rarely: *elev* (23), *părinte* (11), *ministru* (10).

The lemma *elev* was accompanied by prepositions or by participial adjectives: *Anunț de ultimă oră despre elevi* (01/24/2022); *Ce îi așteaptă pe elevi în acest an* (11/08/2021); *Revine coșmarul pentru elevi* (10/07/2021); *Tot mai mulți elevi infectați cu COVID-19* (10/15/2021). When the lemma was in the subject position, the headline usually referred to obligations imposed to the pupils, for example through the verb *a trebui*: (*Elevii trebuie să meargă la școală*, 09/29/2021) or through expressions showing imposition (*Elevii, băgați cu japca în vacanță*, 10/20/2021). The lemma *familie* appears only once in the corpus, while the lemma *copil* appears 5 times. These results show that the perspective focused on the pupils, as a part of the education system, less on them as persons, as 'children'. While the term *elev* may increase the impression of objective presentation, it reduces the children to a passive role in the teaching process, without the power to decide for themselves or to interfere with the regulations.

The lemma *profesor* appears 3 times, which indicates that the teachers received less attention than pupils and authorities in the newspaper. Other terms connected with the teaching process, such as *învățător* and *educator* do not appear in the corpus.

3.2. The *Adevărul* corpus. This corpus has been larger than the other two corpora; therefore more terms have been identified through the Sketchengine programme. Two of the first three combinations identified through 2-grams analysis referred to distance learning: *în online* (26 times) and *școala online* (18). Another expression, *la școală*, figured on the second place in the 2-gram list, with 19 occurrences, yet it did not refer to face-to-face lessons. Most of the times, it was associated with verbs in different moods and tenses, such as present conditional (*Elevii și profesorii ar putea veni la școală și sâmbăta*, 01/10/2021) or in association with another verb, indicating possibility, uncertainty, assumption (*Când preconizează ministrul că se vor întoarce elevii la școală*, 01/05/2021). The expression thus often conveyed the idea of a possible action, instead of a certain one.

The 2-gram expression *la mie* ranked fourth, with 17 occurences. It referred to the number of coronavirus cases per 1,000 persons in different geographic areas. The infection rate was commonly presented in the newspaper as the key factor for the shift to remote learning.

Another frequent expression was *de elevi* (17 times), usually referring to the number of infected pupils or to the pupils participating to remote or in-person learning: *65 000 de elevi din București învață online* (10/05/2021); *Peste 30.000 de elevi din Alba merg de luni la școală* (02/07/2021). *Peste 200 de elevi din Ialomița, infectați cu SARS-CoV-2* (02/07/2022). Other expressions involving the word *elevi* also appeared in the corpus: *elevii din* (9 times), *elevi din* (7), *Elevii din* (5), *elevi și* (5). Regarding the last expression, *elevi și*, 4 out of the 5 occurrences appear in headlines about confirmed infection cases. There is only one case where *elevi și* is followed by *profesori* and refers to their desire to have in-person instead of virtual learning: *Aproape 80% dintre elevi și profesori vor ca anul acesta orele să se desfășoare fizic, la școală* (09/12/2021).

The expression *Ministrul Educației* appeared 15 times in the corpus, followed at a distance by *Ministerul Educației* (6 times), indicating that the Minister was perceived as the main communicator and as the major authority taking the decisions about remote learning. Also, the frequency in the news headlines shows that the Minister of Education had obtained large media coverage during the pandemic.

The preoccupation for remote versus in-person learning is also visible in the list of 3-grams. Here, the combination *cu prezență fizică* appears on the first place (9 times), followed closely by the combination *în sistem online* (7 times). The term *online* also appears here in the combination, *online din cauza* (5 times), which suggests that online learning was viewed as an exception from normality and that explanations for this exception had to be given in the news articles. The combination *unități de învățământ* appears 6 times in this list, yet the concordances do not refer to learning in the actual school settings. 5 out of 6 times, the combination refers to the shift to online learning, in headlines such as: *Alte patru unități de învățământ din București trec la cursuri online* [...] (10/19/2021); […] *Care sunt cele cinci unități de învățământ care rămân exclusiv online* (02/05/2021).

The general list of lemmas identified in this corpus included on the first places the terms *online* (128 times) and *școală* (121), indicating that online learning and the closing and opening of the schools have received the widest coverage in the news about education during the pandemic. Numbers also scored very high as lemmas (117 times). The mentioning of numbers in the headlines may suggest reliability and also construct news value, as in the corpus the numbers referred to the schools closed, or to the number of pupils and teachers infected.

The frequency list of nouns sheds light on the discursive representation of the main actors involved in the learning process. The noun *elevi* has the highest score (75 times). Yet, in many cases, the noun is accompanied by participial adjectives, such as *infectați* (*Peste 200 de elevi din Ialomița, infectați cu SARS-CoV-2*, 02/07/2022; *Zeci de elevi din Dâmbovița, infectați cu SARS-CoV-2 în ultimele zile*, 01/17/2022); *primiți* (*Elevii fără COVID-19 nu sunt primiți la cursurile online*, 10/21/2021), *confirmați* (*16.316 de elevi, confirmați cu coronavirus* […], 10/13/2021). In such headlines, the pupils are presented as suffering the actions of other actors or of external factors. Other terms referring to the pupils are *copil* (15 times) and *generație* (4 times). The noun *elevi* is followed at distance by *profesor* and *părinte* with the same number of occurences (23). The noun *profesor* often refers to cases of coronavirus among teachers and rarely to their opinions and work for online education. Regarding the authorities, the lemma *câmpeanu* scored the highest (25 times), followed by *ministru* (13), *sorin* (8), *autoritate* (6) and *guvern* (3). Again, this indicates that Minister Câmpeanu was perceived as the main communicator on the topic of education during the pandemic.

The noun with the highest frequency in this corpus was *școală* (120 occurrences). Other terms linked to education were *curs* (35), *clasă* (29), *educație* (27), *învățământ* (17), *sistem* (11). Terms referring to elements of the education process such as *examen* (8 times), *vacanță* (9), *materie* (7), or *evaluare* (6) were less frequent. The frequency list indicates that the teaching modality (online or face-to-face) chosen by the authorities represented the focus of attention. The newspaper paid attention to the official measures and to the closure and opening of schools. This finding is sustained by the list of adjectives identified in the corpus, as the most frequent adjectives are *online* (66 times), *școlar* (16), *fizic* (15), *infectat* (8). Many adjectives which appear in the corpus have a negative meaning: *pierdut* (6 times), depășit (4), *suspendat* (4), *închis* (3), *obligat* (2), *blocat* (2), *impus* (2), *criticat* (1), *defavorizat* (1).

3.3. **The *Sole 24* corpus**. In the Italian corpus no combinations of words were identified for the 2-grams and 3-grams lists. This result may be due to the small dimension of the corpus, but it also indicates that the Italian headlines did not include repetitive combinations of words.

The lemma with the highest frequency was by far *scuola* (95 times), followed by the lemma *online*, with only 17 occurrences. Other terms referring to the mode of learning were: *dad*, the abbreviation for *didattica a distanza* [remote teaching] (14 times); *distanza* (4), and *presenza* (6). It appears that school in itself tended to represent the focus of attention, instead of the teaching modality. Many lemmas identified in this corpus represented temporal references, such as various months (*gennaio* – 21 times; *febbraio* – 17 times; *marzo* – 14; *novembre* – 8; *dicembre* – 8) and the word *anno* [year] (14 times). The word *anno* does not refer always to the school year, but also to the age of chidren and to yearly editions of projects and competitions.

The frequency lists for this corpus indicate an interesting characteristic regarding the representation of the actors involved in the teaching process during the pandemic. Each of the lemmas *istituto*, *governo* and *studente* appears 9 times in the corpus. Further, the lemmas *ministro* and *docente* are present 6 times each. This suggests that the representation of the social actors tended to be well-balanced in the Italian corpus, with the voice of the authorities being expressed in a percentage almost similar to that of students and teachers. Considerably fewer articles than in the *Adevărul* corpus referred to the children's parents, as the lemma *genitore* only had 2 occurrences in the Italian corpus. Other nouns connected to the actors involved in the education system were: *personale* (3), *prof* (3), *ministero* (3) and *presidio* [headmaster] (3). For the last term, in 2 out of the 3 cases, the term referred to the positioning of the school directors in opposition to the authorities' decisions ([...] *è scontro tra ministro e presidi*, 01/18/2022) or to the formulation of their requests (*I presidi chiedono di utilizzare questi giorni* [...], 12/27/2021). The lemmas *prof* and *docente* do not appear in utterances where their actions are criticized, but frequently in relation to positive actions ([...] *maggiore dialogo con i prof: ecco la scuola che vorebbero i ragazzi*, 02/24/2022; *Formazione, Treccani scuola: «In Pratica» corsi certificati per docenti. Nuova linea didattica per la formazione e l'aggiornamento dei prof*, 03/08/2022).

The findings also show that other terms besides *studenti* (9) and *alunno* (2) are used in order to refer to schoolchildren: *infanzia* (5); *ragazzo* (5); *bambino* (4), which suggests that the articles brought sometimes into discussion the pupils as children, not only in the depersonalized role of 'pupils', being subject to education.

The adjective with the highest frequency in the corpus was *nuovo* (17 times), most often accompanied by nouns such as *regole* and *misure*, showing that the change of governmental measures characterized the Italian education system. The second most frequent adjective was *scolastico* (9 times). The concordance list for this adjective shows that it was not always used in order to refer to the school year, but also in combination with terms such as *materiale*, *player*, *editoria*, *psicologia*, *dispersione* indicating that the headlines presented news about auxiliary resources for teaching and learning and also about possibilities to minimize the problems associated with online learning. Other adjectives which appeared in the Italian corpus were: *culturale* (3), *digitale* (3), *educativo* (3), finanziario (2), *internazionale* (2), *ecologico* indicating attempts to enrich the formative offer of schools and also to change the school system into a more modern one.

4. QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

4.1. The *Evenimentul zilei* corpus. The previous results indicat that the Romanian headlines usually focused on the measures issued to contain the virus spread. The EVZ corpus comprised headlines from 75 articles, but only 2 of them focused on positive events linked to virtual learning and support to children during this process (*O nouă șansă pentru educație. Platforma care ajută elevii să învețe*, 11/11/2021, and *INEDIT. Manuale care îi inspiră pe copii să învețe singuri. Premieră la Editura Contra Mundum*, 11/08/2021). Many other titles were dysphoric, framing online learning as a wrong decision of the authorities and as a failure. The titles include such terms as *greșeală*, as an evaluation of the official measures on education: *EXCLUSIV. Școală online și după pandemie. Cum arată adevăratul învățământ digital. Mircea Miclea, fost ministru al Educației, despre greșeala majoră pe care o face România* (11/06/2021).

Online learning is presented in the *Evenimentul zilei* as unwanted by pupils, parents and teachers. For example, metaphors such as *coșmar* and *urgie* appear in the first utterance of the headline, functioning as an evaluation of the situation presented and a synthesis for the entire article: *Revine coșmarul pentru elevi. Școlile și liceele se închid rând pe rând. Ultima listă* (10/07/2021); *E urgie: fără locuri la ATI, școală online, orașe pe roșu* (09/21/2021). Other headlines include verbs with a negative meaning (*a se teme*) in regard to online learning or negative verb forms (*a nu dori*): *Începerea noului an școlar: Scenariul de care se temeau părinții s-a adeverit. Peste 2.000 de elevi fac școală online* (09/10/2021); *Scenariul pe care nu și-l dorea nimeni: Școala va putea trece în sistem online* [...] (08/31/2021). Superlatives also appear in connection to negative emotions or events: *Pandemia a schimbat comportamentul elevilor. Care sunt cele mai mari frici ale copiilor* (02/20/2021).

The headlines in this corpus use metaphoric terms from the register of fight and war in order to refer to the closure of schools and online learning: *Război pe viață și pe moarte pentru noul an școlar! Părinții au încins Whatsapp-ul* (08/02/2020); *Școala online face prima victimă!* [...] (11/06/2020); *Tulpina Delta aruncă în aer sistemul de educație. Urmează închiderea școlilor* (09/16/2021); *Școala în pandemie, o bombă cu ceas.* [...] (10/20/2021); *«Încăierare» între Sorin Câmpeanu și DSP Ilfov. Decizia DSP l-a scos din sărite pe ministrul Educației.* [...] (10/13/2021). In this manner, both the pandemic and learning, either online or face-to-face, are presented as dangerous and framed as an ‘enemy’.

The headlines do not show support or empathy to the pupils and teachers facing the challenges of remote learning, yet they construct an image of these actors as willing to cheat and thus deserving punishment: *Urmează verificări la sânge în școli. Anunț pentru elevi și profesori. Ce se întâmplă cu școala online* (10/11/2021); *Strigător la cer! Tablete pentru școala online, descoperite la case de amanet din București* (09/20/2021); *Distanțarea fizică naște monștri? Hărțuirea are loc, acum, online* (11/26/2020); *Anunțul care a băgat groaza în dascăli! Vor fi dați afară în secunda doi în caz de refuz* (10/01/2020); *Alertă pentru părinți! Cum se trișează la școala online. Ce este Photomath* (12/29/2020). Such titles show ambiguity and suggest to the reader possible erratic behaviour from the main actors involved in the education process, namely students / pupils and instructors.

Besides quotes from the announcements made by the Ministers of Education, the headlines present interventions or interviews with other public persons on the topic of remote learning. However, the speakers quoted in the headlines expressed strong disagreement with remote learning, for instance through the use of lexical items showing outright depreciation (*Maria Coman: Școala online e o porcărie! E inuman să ții ore în șir niște copii în fața unor tablete,* 12/03/2020) or through verbs indicating speech acts: *Academia Română condamnă școala online*. [(...), 07/28/2020]. In the latter case, the depreciation is enhanced by the mention of the speaker, as a prestigious cultural institution.

4.2. The *Adevărul* corpus included headlines from 225 articles. 14 of them referred to positive events or actions connected to online learning, for example the formation of teachers or the use of digital tools and internet to improve virtual learning (*Europa Conectată: Construim în România un sistem educațional conectat*, 01/26/2021). The rest of the headlines refer to infection cases, to the shift from classroom instruction to online instruction and to the measures adopted in order to contain the virus spread.

A characteristic of this corpus consists in the frequent mentioning of numbers in the headlines. Such titles suggest precision and an objective stance adopted by the newspaper or the discursive strategy of rationalization through the appeal to numbers as an objective data (Van Leeuwen, 2008). However, the numbers are frequently accompanied by adverbials in the corpus, which diminishes the impression of precision (Cătănescu, 2006: 28): Peste 150 de elevi, infectați cu SARS COV-2. 18 clase din Călărași fac școală online (02/14/2022); *Patru cadre didactice din județul Olt și alte trei din Mehedinți au murit după ce s-au infectat cu SARS CoV-2. Peste 220 de școli s-au închis în ultimele 24 de ore* (10/12/2021). Such imprecise numbers not only create ambiguity, but they alsofunction as intensifiers (Bednarek, Caple, 2012). They suggest higher numbers than those mentioned, which increases the idea of danger and great losses, because of the pandemic.

Only a few headlines feature the pupils as Agents or as the source of enunciation: *Elevii își aleg materiile și programul*, 12/09/2021 (in an article about a private school); *Aproape trei sferturi dintre elevi consideră că din punct de vedere calitativ cursurile online nu au fost la fel de eficiente* [...], 08/20/2021. In other cases, even if the noun *ele*v appears in the position of subject, the context reveals that the headline is about the restrictions imposed to the pupils: [...] *Îmi place să cred că părinții înțeleg că dacă elevii nu merg la școală, nu merg nici la mall*, 10/14/2021. The term *generație* is used as a generalization, to refer to the pupils and students, in association with a negative evaluation: *Încă o generație de sacrificiu* (11/18/2021), [...] *«Sunt o generație pierdută, asta este!»* (05/20/2021).

The teachers are also present in the news headlines first as a generic term, in connection to the coronavirus cases (e.g. *Aproape 100 de elevi și zeci de profesori infectați, în Olt*, 01/25/2022). Besides, references to teachers include news about their deviant behaviour in relation to pupils and/or parents: *Profesor către părinte: Ai mintea bolnavă* (06/02/2021); *Profesor din București, cercetat după ce a apărut în lenjerie intimă în fața elevilor, la orele online* (02/25/2021). There are very few instances when the lemma *profesor* appears linked to a positive action. This happens, for instance, in an article about the training programme „Profesor în online": *În mai puțin de 9 luni am reușit să formăm 20% dintre profesorii din România în competențe digitale* (02/12/2021).

The headlines include quotes from various actors, both authorities, experts, or lay people or parents. In most cases, however, the quotes reveal negative opinions about online learning. This happens, for instance, in headlines quoting the Minister of Education: *Ministrul Educației: Nu există nici acum platforme dedicate și securizate prin care să avem o evaluare corectă online. Și-au pierdut foarte mult din relevanță* (09/03/2021); *Sorin Câmpeanu: Este inacceptabilă continuarea pierderii prin sistemul de învățământ online* (08/15/2021). The mentioning of the source of authority validates the negative opinion expressed. A different opinion is presented in another headline, yet the source is not indicated here: *Ministrul Educației, contrazis: Viteza de internet din România, perfectă pentru școală online* (10/26/2021). The focus of attention is formed again by the Minister of Education which appears in the first position, although he is not the source of the utterance quoted. Online education is evaluated as inefficient and even dangerous, yet some headlines present these evaluations as facts. The impression of certainty is given through the use of verbs in the indicative mood: *Medic psihiatru, despre școala online: «Nu a adus niciun beneficiu. Va crea niște viitori tineri antisociali* (03/14/2021). Here, the idea of reliability is enhanced by the mention of the speaker's role as an expert and through the generic term *tineri* accompanied by the scientific term *antisociali*, which leads to the idea of an expert opinion. Another headline attributes a quote to an unnamed source, *dascăli: [...] «Cu astfel de subiecte, elevii sigur pică examenul»"* (03/23/2021). Certainty is conveyd here through the use of the adverbial sigur. Such headlines contribute to the general negative framing of online education as inefficient and wrong.

4.3. The *Il Sole* corpus. The Italian corpus includes 80 articles, out of which 30 headlines refer to positive events connected to schools, universities and the teaching process. Here, the shift to remote learning is presented in a positive light, for example in an article about the results of a survey: *Scuola, sondaggio targato Swg: il 46% degli italiani è favorevole alla Dad* (01/18/2022), where 46% of the respondents preferred remote learning, compared to only 39% respondents who were in favour of classroom-based instruction. The reference to the survey and the percentage suggest precision. Other headlines presented various events, projects and initiatives aiming to enrich the course offer of schools and highschools, frequnetly thorough verbless clauses: *Programmi allargati alla scuola: scambi di docenti e studenti* (03/17/2022); *Internet, un milione di scuole mappate grazie a «Giga» di Unicef e Itu* (10/28/2021); *Piccole scuole, accordo con i piccoli musei per poter ampliare l'offerta educativa* (03/17/2022). Negative opinions are less present than in the Romanian corpora and they are presented in a hedged form. For example, an adjective that acquires negative connotations is *complicato*: *Dalla dad alla scuola che verrà. Un anno complicato per il mondo della scuola* (02/01/2022).

In comparison to the Romanian corpora, the voice of the Minister of Instruction is less present in the corpus. The headlines show that the Ministry does not represent the only source of decisions and that other administrative layers also play an important role in the adoption of measures for online instruction. For example, the term *Regioni* appears as an Agent: *Scuola, Bianchi: «Si torna in presenza», se ci saranno focolai decideranno le Regioni* (12/17/2021). Moreover, the actions linked to sources of authority are not only about the imposition of specific rules, but also about the courses offering: *Scuola, in Trentino chi non frequenta l'ora religione studierà etica. Ugo Rossi, consigliere di Azione in Provincia di Trento: «La giunta si è impegnata ad offrire alternative didattiche importanti»* (01/24/2022).

Besides the voice of the authorities, the voices of the students and teachers' unions are presented in the headlines. Disagreement between groups of social actors is not framed as a conflict, but as a dialogue: *Associazioni studentesche a Bianchi: «Ascolto non basta, vogliamo risposte concrete»* (03/02/2022); *Scuola, i sindacati proclamano lo sciopero per il 10 dicembre* (11/24/2021); *I sindacati della scuola proclamano lo stato di agitazione: pronti allo sciopero* (11/16/2021).

The voices of the students are heard even on other topics than school life, for example in a survey about the presidential elections in Italy: *Quirinale, per 1 giovane su 4 il nome è Draghi. Ma a scuola non se ne parla* (01/21/2022). The Italian headlines thus appear less focused on the teaching modality and more on the opinions, attitudes, and needs of the actors involved in the process of education.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The results show that the measures adopted due to the virus spread have represented a key topic in the online editions of all the newspapers. In the Romanian media, the shift from face-to-face to online instruction was considered to be newsworthy not only at the beginning of the pandemic, but also during the various vawes. Online teaching was viewed as an exception from the normality and it was depicted as a failure of the authorities and of the actors involved, teachers and pupils. The pupils appeared in the headlines mostly through strategies of passivization, in the reports of infection cases. The teachers appeared rarely in headlines about their positive accomplishments. They were often mentioned as cases of infection and death, or as manifesting inappropriate behaviour. Many sources quoted by the Romanian media expressed negative stances towards online education and such opinions were presented as certainties.

The Italian headlines also referred to shifts between classroom-based and online instruction. However, more articles in *Il Sole* than in the Romanian publications addressed other topics linked to education as well: the courses offered by schools, their utility for the pupils, the relevance of school instruction for the future job of the young adults, or the methods and tools used by the teachers during the pandemic years. The findings confirmed those previously obtained by Cătănescu (2006), showing that the Romanian media has maintained an inclination towards negative stance, framing events as conflictual. The most dysphoric titles were found in the *Evenimentul zilei* corpus, suggesting a tendency towards tabloidization, for instance through the use of terms related to war in order to present the shift to remote learning. *Adevărul* tended to present news about infection cases more objectively, while headlines of editorials revealed negative opinions about the authorities' decisions and online instruction. The lack of editorials showing a favourable stance towards online education suggests that the depiction of this measure during the pandemic was still unbalanced.

The most positive coverage of the chosen topic was identified in the Italian newspaper *Il Sole 24 ore*. Here, negative opinions about online education tended to be presented by means of lexical, morphological, or syntactic hedges, which reduced the idea of certainty. In concordance to the findings made by Asare *et al.* (2021), the subtopic of learning support during the pandemic appeared to be given special attention. Such support was seldom visible in the Romanian headlines, where the framing of online education tended to be viewed in a simplistic way, as the closure of schools, without details about the opportunities offered by online education. In sum, the Romanian headlines aimed to gain the readers' attention and to persuade them to adopt a certain stance on the topic, while the informative function was prevalent in the Italian headlines, which indicated the topic of the articles and focused less on shocking the reader.

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THE NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENT IN THE CONTEXT OF THE FIRST-YEAR TRANSITION TO UNIVERSITY

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Abstract: *In recent years, universities have undertaken an important social role in promoting lifelong learning by opening their doors to adult learners and tailoring training programmes to best suit their needs. A series o statistical indicators point to the fact that by 2030, students aged over 25 will represent the growing population involved in higher education, al European level, whereas the number of students aged between 18 and 25 will record a constant decline. This study aims at identifying the challenges non-traditional students face during their transition towards upper education, with a focus on the first year a study. A second aims is to examine the role of first year seminars organised by universities in facilitating the students' adaptation to the university environment and in stimulating their participation in studies. A good understanding of the characteristics and vulnerabilities faced by non-traditional students is an important prerequisite for providing an adequate response to their needs and planning specific interventions focused on retention and persistence in studies.*

Keywords*: non-traditional students; first year seminars; transitional pedagogy; lifelong learning*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the past few decades, it has become increasingly obvious that larger access to higher education requires much more than minimal relating to non-traditional cohorts. Hence the need for investments in significant resources to ensure that a more diverse student community is enrolled in this educational stage. Universities have undertaken an important part in promoting lifelong learning by opening their gates to adult learners and adapting their training programmes and learning conditions to suit the needs of this category of learners. The larger access to upper education meant more than relating to the 'non-traditional' cohorts – students aged over 25, students of a certain ethnic, socio-economic or professional background that differed from that of the majority (Gilardi & Guglielmetti, 2011). Significant resources had to be invested in order to ensure the enrollment of a more and more diverse student body in this educational stage.

2. THE ROLE OF UNIVERSITIES IN PROMOTING LIFELONG LEARNING

The essential part played by universities in promoting lifelong learning has been explicitly expressed in many public policy documents that emphasize the imperative need to diversify the provision of educational services, the involvement of higher education institutions in initial and continuing teacher training, aligning research with theoretical contributions from the field of adults education and continuing learning and the creation of various opportunities aimed at encouraging community-based learning (Popescu, 2012; Yang & Schneller, 2015; Samoila, 2018).

A succession of statements from the European Commission (EC), starting in 1991 with the *Memorandum on Higher Education in the European Community*, have expressed a common set of sentiments that have included adult access as a specific focus. The 1991 Memorandum challenged HEIs to support an increasingly knowledge-driven economy and society by widening access to higher qualifications. It also urged them to create opportunities for updating and renewing qualifications, to increase preparatory courses, and to do more to recognise prior learning and experience (EC, 1991). The *Agenda for the Future* adopted in 1997 during the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education includes a provision according to which formal education institutions, from the primary to the tertiary level shall open their gates to adult learners, adapting their learning programmes and conditions to meet their needs.

There followed a *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* (EC, 2000) according to which lifelong learning is no longer just one aspect of education and training, it must become the guiding principle for provision and participation across the full continuum of learning contexts.

The project to increase adult participation in HE was given further impetus by the *Lisbon Strategy* (Council of the European Union, 2002) which sought to make Europe 'one of the most competitive knowledge economies in the world', and by the European Commission's Communication, *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality* (EC, 2001). This Communication of the EC stated that Member States would aim to improve the quality and effectiveness of education and training systems, and ensure that they are accessible to all. The achievement of these objectives would require enhancing quality in higher education across Europe, removing barriers to teacher and student mobility and promoting lifelong learning and guidance (UNESCO, 2015: 22). Other document issued by UNESCO (2020) states that "adult learning and education (ALE) is a core component of lifelong learning. Adults have a critical role to play in the development of societies because of their accumulated knowledge and experience, which can be mediated by educational processes to strengthen it and make it socially useful.' The need to involve education institutions in supporting adults during and after the pandemic is also voiced in the Eurydice Report (2021) according to which education systems can play an important role in identifying and reaching out to the most vulnerable groups of adult learners in order to encourage their participation in education and training.

3. THE PROFILE OF THE NON-TRADITIONAL ADULT STUDENT

Considering the globalization processes, demographic changes and the unprecedented rhythm of technological development, upper education institutions are challenged with an increasingly more acute need to facilitate the access of the population to lifelong education, to reconsider learning services and opportunities so that the educational system destined to elites can be turned into a mass system in which learning and education are provided to an increasingly diverse student population. What causes this tendency? First of all, there are the demographic factors correlated with the decrease of the birth rate and population aging, which result in a constant decrease of the number of traditional young students (18-25 years of age) who enrol in bachelor studies; on the other hand, upper education is striving to meet the need to train a highly qualified workforce, as a response to the current social requirements. A series of statistical indicators point to the fact that by 2030, students aged over 25 will represent most of the higher education population (undergraduate studies), whereas the younger population of students aged between 18 and 25 years will decline substantially (National Centre for Education Statistics, 2006).

Adult students are described as non-traditional because of several factors that influence their participation in the educational process. Bourgeois et al. (1999:3) define the non-traditional adult student as "a person who interrupted his/her studies for a significant period of time to undertake responsibilities related to their family and profession". The category of non-traditional students includes *older students* (Bennett et al., 2007; Bourgeois et al., 2009; Chao & Good, 2004; Forbus et al., 2011; Hart, 2003; Kim, 2002; Rosário et al., 2014; Scott & Lewis, 2012; Tilley, 2014), *those who come from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds (with poor socio-economic resources or from minority ethnic groups* (Thomas, 2002), *people with extended previous educational and professional experience* (Billett, 2017) and *those recording discontinuity in their educational itinerary* (Kasworm, 2018; Souto-Otero & Whitworth, 2017). In other conceptualizations, the non-traditional adult student is described as follows: *aged over 25, undertaking multiple responsibilities (professional, marital, parental, social), interruption of education in most cases, professional and educational activities often overlapping, numerous experiences related to the involvement in community-related activities* (DLL, 2010a). As non-traditional students fulfil multiple roles and undertake different responsibilities in relation to their family, friends, employers, etc., joining a new course of formal education is relegated to the background.

Other authors (Correia & Mesquita, 2006; Johnson & Merrill, 2004; Lynch, Chickering, & Schlossberg, 1989) synthetize the main characteristics of non-traditional students according to the following criteria: (i) age – adult students are aged over 23/25 years, while traditional students are aged between 18 and 23 years; (ii) interruption of attendance of formal education after completing mandatory education – adults students spent a while outside the formal education system and have no university experience, often being the first generation in their family to access this type of studies, (iii) professional experience – adult students have a more significant professional experience than traditional students (who often have very little experience or hardly any) and often undertake parallel professional responsibilities, working either full or part time and (iv) attitude towards upper education – adult students are more preoccupied by the practical application of knowledge and are also more determined and dedicated than traditional students, since their decision to attend upper education is based on the desire to develop their career and update their professional knowledge (Ambrosio et al, 2014; Correia & Mesquita, 2006).

4. EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES FOR NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENTS

Numerous studies investigate the manner in which adult students relate to the experience of university education. The research mentioned below falls into two broad categories: a. studies that explore the manner in which adults perceive the university environment in terms of their own *academic competences*; b. studies that analyse how adults perceive the university environment in the context of inter-generation and intra-generation interactions, in term of *social competences.*

4.1. Non-traditional adult student's academic competence. Regarded as a quantifiable outcome of learning, *academic competence* is defined in a series of studies as the balance between the student's performance and the existing assessment standards applied by institutions (Cole, 1991, Wentzel, 1991). Other researchers use the concept as a synonym of *academic performance* or *academic skills*. Di Perna & Eliott (1999) define academic competence as a multidimensional concept that includes study skills, academic skills, interpersonal skills, academic self-concept, and academic motivation. A series of studies that analyse the academic competence of the non-traditional student (Chism, Cano, & Pruitt, 2006; Lynch & Bishop-Clark, 1994; Schlossberg *et al.*, 1989) report that during the initial stages of integration, the students are confronted with anxiety and poor awareness of the self with regard to their place in a youth-oriented learning context; anxiety is triggered by concerns regarding their ability to perform, believing that they are disadvantaged because of their age and the fact that they interrupted their studies, finding it difficult to cope with the respective intellectual requirements. In an investigation conducted in 2010, Carol Kasworm analyses the experiences of adult students enrolled in university studies in research universities. The respondents in this study were selected by means of a non-probability sampling strategy oriented towards adults who were at least 25 years of age, had good academic training according to the criteria established by their institution, attended at least 15 academic courses, represented various academic specializations and had professional and family-related responsibilities. The study conducted by Kasworm (2010) indicates that *adults relate the academic competence to the following indicators: orientation towards tangible purposes, persistence, capitalization of their own maturity and active involvement in the learning process*.

Adult students considered that, unlike their younger colleagues who are perceived as being less focused on tangible educational objectives and committed to their tasks, they are more successful in setting and following their own goals with regard to the learning process, since they are more aware of their intention to learn and this intention are correlated with their professional evolution. On the other hand, younger students were described as being rather passive in the classroom and more preoccupied with being accepted by their peers and with the quality of their social life at the expense of their academic performance. Many adults reported they had inadequate knowledge and skills and admitted that they enrolled in evening high school classes in order to refresh their knowledge related to working with formal content or to update their basic high school skills (Brücknerová *et al.*, 2021).

Kasworm's (2010) study indicates that adults associate competence with perseverance, continuous involvement and the mentality according to which 'the most adapted survives'. Respondents report numerous hours of study and explicit preoccupations in the interactions with their professors during courses and seminars, as compared to traditional students. The adults interviewed by Kasworm (2010) identified four stages of integration in the university environment: (a) *The initial stage* – the university is perceived as a competitive environment due to its prestige at the social level, the key role of the academic community being to appreciate adults as suitable or unsuitable for university studies; (b) *The functional stage* – the professors are perceived as efficient trainers, leaders and managers for all students; (c) *The acceptance stage* – the community provides open support to adult students; (d) *The collegial stage* – adults become resources in an open, supportive community. However, they continue to believe that they have to constantly prove they meet the standards set by the university's prestige.

As far as the culture of competition in universities is concerned, students compared the university studies experience with their previous learning experiences (in high-school or community centres), perceived as more favourable, less competitive, during which they benefited from support and counselling in developing their competences. As they advance in their studies, students acquire a more powerful feeling of appurtenance to the university environment and perceive the institution as being less conflicting and competitive (Kasworm, 2010).

4.2. Inter- and intra-generation interactions in upper education. There are studies that explore the climate of acceptance of adult students in various institutional contexts in specific bachelor, masters or doctoral programmes and in various stages of their academic journey (the first year of study, for instance) during inter-generation classes (for example Apps, 1981; Darkenwald & Novak, 1997; Faust & Courtenay, 2002; Kasworm et al., 2002). Aiming to identify the level of adults' presence and participation in groups dominated by younger students, these studies started from the general idea of 'the self in the' mirror, according to which we get to know ourselves through the lens of our interactions with the others and in relation to the expectations of the society regarding age-related roles. A number of recent studies have examined the preconception common to institutional culture regarding the various sociocultural roles that affect the identity of adult learners. These studies have focused on the institutional context and suggest limitations of power, and poor support for adult learners, leading to institutional invisibility and alienated and marginalized identities. (Quinnan, 1997; Sissel, 1997; Sissel, Hansman, & Kasworm, 2001). These studies refer mainly to the experiences of women from socially and racially disadvantaged backgrounds (e.g., Cohen, 1998; Jacobs and Berkowitz, 2002; Studdard, 2002).

The research conducted by Kasworm (2010) indicates that adults identified three different patterns that describe the relationships with young students: (a) *positive relationships* and valuable exchanges with the traditional students; The interactions with the younger students provide opportunities to understand modern mentalities and develop relations of mentorship; (b) *the poor academic quality of the accountability of the traditional students*, perceived by adult students as poorly prepared for involvement and displaying a passive behaviour that is not centred on the tasks; (c) *the negative relations with the traditional students* who excluded the adults from their communities by social distance and discrimination, perceiving them as being too close to their parents' age to be understood and integrated.

As far as intra-generation interactions are concerned, adult students claim to feel alone in the classroom, with few fellow students of similar age. The causes that determine the deficient interactions with students of similar ages are: (a) the distribution in distinct groups and their options for the study of various disciplines correlate with the existence of very few contexts that encourage intra-generation interaction; (b) lack of interest from the universities in organizing meetings and activities that could promote socialization between non-traditional students; (c) lack of counselling and tutoring services adapted to the profile of the non-traditional student; demanding life rhythm – they do not have the time to establish friendly relations with other adult students outside their existing group of friends.

Upper education for adult learners is not only meant to help them develop skills, but also to encourage them to maintain and improve the position they hold within the community and society, and thus to improve the quality of their life.

5. FIRST-YEAR SEMINARS (FYS). KEY FINDINGS FROM PREVIOUS STUDIES AND NONTRADITIONAL STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

The concept of *first-year seminars* refers to the introductory courses organised by universities to facilitate the integration of first-year students and familiarize them with the main skills to be developed and with the supporting university community (faculty, administration, other students).

Adult student participation in the first-year seminars is minimally documented in the literature. In fact, there are only a few empirical studies in this area (Bailey & Marsh, 2010; Hatch, 2003; Julian, 2001; Welch, 2004), and the literature exploring this issue is rather descriptive and generally focuses on learning purposes, content, and processes (Anderson, Gardner, & Kuh, 2006; Swing, 2001) or assessment issues (National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition, 2009). While some authors (Gast, 2013; Osam et al., 2017) argue that time (limited due to work responsibilities) and finances are the most common situational barriers at the undergraduate admissions stage, there is at least one study (Lundberg, 2003) that argues that work do not negatively influence participation and retention, adult students being confident in their time management skills. Other research shows that lack of confidence is perceived by adult learners as the main barrier to success (Potter, 2021; Osam *et al.*, 2017; Samuels *et al.*, 2011).

Beyond the diversity of characteristics associated with the adult learner profile, numerous studies argue that the most difficult challenges identified by non-traditional students in the transition stage to university are institutional ones, such as confusing enrollment, remediation, and financial aid programs and policies, issues that can discourage retention and persistence (Gast, 2013; Osam *et al.*, 2017; Soares, 2013; Soares, 2017).

Institutional responsiveness and support have been found to have a positive impact on retention and completion (Bergman et al., 2014; Ray, 2012; Samuels *et al.*, 2011; Serowick, 2017). From the investigation coordinated by Bergman et al. (2014) it appears that "campus environment and institutional resources influence adult student persistence more than internal characteristics or other external factors" (p. 98). A 35-year study (1966-2002) conducted by Astin *et al.* (2002) found that student participation in introductory seminars in the first year of study determines the adaptation and transition to the university environment, while other authors suggest that classrooms are the central stage for learning in adulthood (Bean & Metzner, 1985; Kasworm & Marienau, 1997). Students develop a sense of institutional belonging when they feel that the institution cares about them and their success.

Bailey and Marsh (2010) claim that when adult learners were presented with the standard first-year introductory seminar syllabus, they found the content inadequate, most of them suggesting additions to the syllabus in line with adult learning needs. From the results reported in the above investigations, it appears that the organisation of first year seminars for non-traditional students should consider ensuring the following conditions: (a) inclusion of non-traditional adult students in small classes; (b) conducting introductory seminars in such a way that they do not overlap with the academic programme, preferably in the summer before the academic year; (c) the existence of a designated university representative to represent the interests of adult learners; (d) involvement of adult learners in action research projects to help develop a curriculum for non-traditional learners

If we consider the results of Carol Kasworm's (2010) investigations and the two challenges for the integration of non-traditional students in the university context, the academic and the social component, the activities carried out in the introductory seminars can be summarised in the table below:

Tabel 1. First-year seminars activities.
Source: Liston & Breslin (2013).

Academic component	Social Component
(a) Knowledge of human resources in the university (meetings with professors, management and administrative staff)	**(a)** Student services tailored to the learning and social needs of non-traditional students
(b) Course management: - Types of examinations and assessments - Structure of modular courses - Timetable	**(b)** Support services (medical, financial/scholarships, accommodation, meals, campus rules)
(c) Forms of organising teaching activity (seminars, lectures, laboratories, internships)	**(c)** Knowledge of the physical space of the university (professors' offices, administrative services)
(d) Academic community and bibliographical services	**(d)** Transport services **(e)** Local attractions

Student participation in these activities has the following benefits (Pickenpaugh *et al.*, 2021): (a) Helps academic and social integration; (b) Encourages active student involvement in learning; (c) Provides a supportive framework for ensuring student belonging to the university environment; (d) Helps students make the transition to a new learning environment and community; (e) Communicates the culture and expectations of the institution; (f) Increases academic performance; (g) Improves student persistence in the transition stage from first to second year

From an investigation coordinated by Padgett and Keup (2011), it appears that nontraditional students identified the following goals achieved as a result of participating in first-year seminars: (a) Develop academic skills; (b) Develop a connection with institution; (c) Orient to campus resources; (d) Encourage self-exploration and personal development; (e) Create a common first-year experience.

Experts distinguish other ways in which the participation of adult learners in the educational process can be made more accessible: 1. developing coherent mechanisms for identifying the results of learning in various contexts and ensuring the transferability of credits both within one institution and between institutions, sectors or even states; 2. establishing common research and training activities at the university/community level; 3. bringing university services to external groups; 4. conducting interdisciplinary research on adult learning and education; 5. creating adult learning opportunities through flexible, creative and open programs, also considering the specific needs and requirements of male and female students; 6. providing systematic continuing training to adult trainers (European Commission, 2013).

During the first semester of undergraduate studies, non-traditional adult students must manage and balance both social and academic responsibilities, which often feels overwhelming for successful academic integration. The studies reviewed in this paper demonstrate that the organisation of first year seminars in higher education institutions has the potential to reduce the gap between the expectations of adult learners and the actual demands they face in their first year of study. Both academic and social competences contribute to successful integration, and adult learners succeed when they understand that competence development is a continuous process that does not end with the completion of an educational programme.

In the first year, students have special learning and support needs, dependent on social conditions and transitions correlated with the academic environment (Kift, 2015). The experience of first-time students is not homogeneous, but instead varies widely, depending on age, level of prior preparation correlated with average admissions, motivations, social networks and patterns of engagement. A transition pedagogy is

> a philosophy of guidance and support, embedded in a formal first-year curriculum, and is operationalized at the level of attention paid in the first-year academic learning experience for contemporary heterogeneous cohorts (Kift, 2015).

6. CONCLUSIONS

This paper has shown the critical importance of improving adult access and success in higher education by encouraging participation in the activities organised during the introductory seminars held in the first year of studies.

With regard to counselling and tutoring services for non-traditional adults, universities need to design strategies to support the integration of non-traditional students in the first stages of interaction with the academic environment, such as *first year seminars*, to create flexible and open inter-generation and intra-generation learning communities, taking into account the specifics of adults' complementary social roles that often compete with learning. Support sessions for non-traditional students facing stressful situations provided by specialists who assist them in the transition towards the new form of education should be included in the educational offer of all upper education institutions.

The way in which lifelong learning in tertiary education can contribute to the students' wellbeing as well as the way in which universities are capable to respond to the constantly growing learning demand recorded primarily at the level of communities facing demographic decline and population aging represent critical priorities that require mature and rigorous scientific thinking, while the expertise should be deeply rooted in the social dimension and the experiences of the current student population characterized by unprecedented diversity should be carefully considered.

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FROM INDIVIDUAL WELLBEING TO COLLECTIVE RESILIENCE: A CULTURAL APPROACH TO HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract: *Wellbeing has been defined in relation to the quality of personal life and social relationships. The contexts in that people live, study and work may promote or undermine the subjective wellbeing due to potential opportunities or challenges. Higher education settings are academically stimulating and career-focused and, therefore, highly competitive. Nevertheless, higher education area is also a socially rich environment that provides constructive human interactions as a medium to enrich learning. A positive attitude contributes not only to personal wellbeing and deep learning, but also to individual and collective resilience in an era of dynamic changes and crisis. The psychological resilience is the ability to overcome the adversities of life, while the collective resilience is the ability of a group or a community to face challenges and internal or external tensions, arising as a result of political, economic, social or environmental changes. In these conditions, the educational relationships serve as a catalyst for resilience. Our study aims at investigating the perception of Romanian students, framed by the specific cultural context, regarding positive emotions, optimism and wellbeing, and collective resilience. The questionnaire-based inquiry has collected the responses of the participants. The key-themes identified from the answers to the open questions have been interpreted in a grounded theory approach. Our findings show that all participants declare positive experiences regarding emotions and that the reasons for which they are grateful are the learning acquisitions and personal achievements.*

Keywords*: wellbeing; cultural imprint of resilience; resilience in higher education*

1. INTRODUCTION

The relationship between education and wellbeing has been a topic of interest for the last decades. Some reports have shown positive association between education and wellbeing (Blanchflower & Oswald, 2004; Ferrer-i-Carbonell, 2005), and positive association between education at moderate levels and wellbeing (Stutzer, 2004). Other studies have pointed out negative relation (Dockery, 2010; Shields, Wheatley Price, & Wooden, 2009). The negative association between education and wellbeing has two possible explanations: education costs and assumes additional loss of leisure and work-related stress (Kristoffersen, 2018). More than that, some evidence enhances an indirect effect of education on wellbeing through labour market outcomes, economic status and health (Powdthavee *et al.*, 2015).

The effects of education on wellbeing might also differ across countries and the approach to education-happiness puzzle focussing on the role of expectations, contributing greatly to how individuals evaluate their circumstances according to some reference points that differ systematically across education levels (Kristoffersen, 2018). Other authors present evidence that preferred working hours fall with higher education, therefore education may affect subjective wellbeing negatively due to overwork and, furthermore, people with higher education may be exposed to greater stress because they experience their work as more demanding (Stier & Lewin-Epstein, 2003). As Kristoffersen (2018) highlighted, education may improve wellbeing only if expectations are exceeded, but may decrease wellbeing if they are not met (Kristoffersen, 2018). Some studies show that much of the effect of education on subjective wellbeing is cancelled out by increases in aspirations (Clark *et al.*, 2015).

There are cultural variations regarding positive emotions: in Western cultural models positive emotions are associated with individual success, high self-esteem, and good health (Heine, Lehman, Markus & Kitayama, 1999; Kitayama, Markus, & Kurokawa, 2000; Taylor & Brown, 1988). Positive and negative emotions are not simply bipolar opposites and often have different predictors and consequences that are culturally determined (Leu, Wang & Koo, 2011).

Growing cross-cultural evidence has shown that a pro-positive/contra-negative orientation to emotion is more prevalent in Western, especially American cultural contexts, whereas a more balanced orientation toward emotion exists in Eastern cultural contexts (Miyamoto, Ma & Wilken, 2017). The approach to pro-positive and balanced system of emotions is relevant to the present study for the consideration that Romanian culture presents similar factors with East Asian cultures. These cultures record low levels for individualism, unlike Western culture, therefore being considered collectivist (Hofstede *et al.*, 2012, 99-101). The relevance of cultural differences in emotion is highlighted in *Figure 1.*

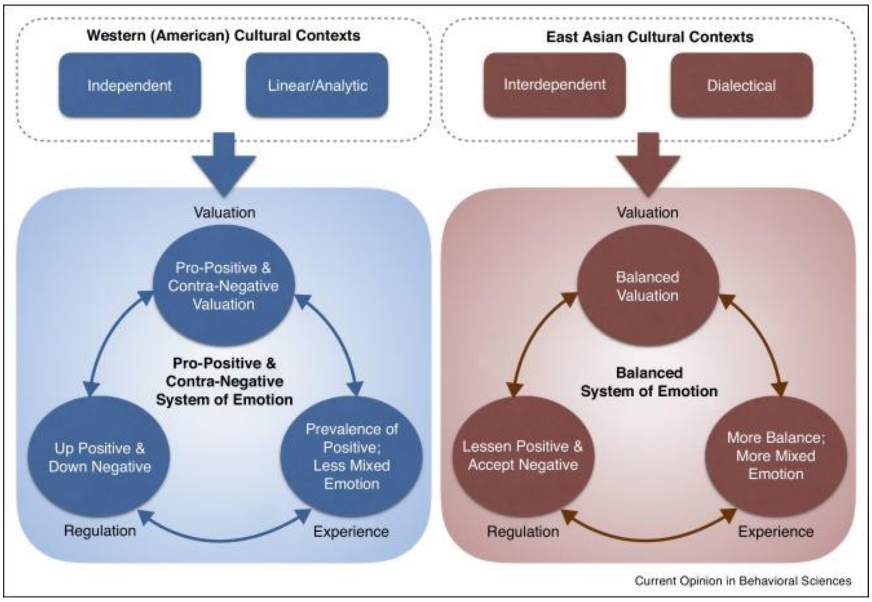

Fig. 1. Pro-positive and contra-negative versus balanced system of emotions (Miyamoto, Ma & Wilken, 2017)

2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

The main research question followed in our study was: *Are national cultural patterns preserved in young students' behaviour regarding positive emotions?* The objectives of the study were: (a) To identify the positive emotions experienced most often by students; (b) To set means for individual and collective resilience; (c) To evaluate the current profile of students towards positive emotions and collective resilience.

3. EMPIRICAL APPROACH AND DATA COLLECTION

3.1. Procedure. The questionnaire-based inquiry was launched in February 2022 via Google Forms. The themes identified in the responses to the open items were further developed in several focus-groups.

3.2. Participants. The target group consisted in 76 students enrolled in teacher training activities. The distribution according to "sex" variable divides them in 73 females and 3 males. The participants are aged between 20 and 65 years.

3.3. Measures. In order to evaluate the current students' profile regarding the benefits of positive emotions and their use for resilience, we initiated a questionnaire-based inquiry and selected the major themes regarding positive emotions and resilience emerged from the open questions. A quasi-grounded theory was developed, sustained with the issues added by the interventions in focus-groups.

4. FROM INDIVIDUAL WELLBEING TO COLLECTIVE RESILIENCE

4.1. Aspects regarding positive emotions. In this study, we used the conceptual framework for positive emotions developed by Barbara L. Fredrickson (2019). The respondents have chosen the positive emotions experienced most often as follows: Joy – 25%; Amusement – 20%; Love – 20%; Hope – 15%; Pride – 5%; Interest - 5%; Inspiration – 5%; Satisfaction – 5%.The results show that serenity and gratitude are missing in students' choices. Half of the participants declare they experience positive emotions in regular school and educational activities *very often* (25%) and *often* (25%), *sometimes* (40%), *rarely* (10%).

4.2. Aspects regarding individual and collective resilience. Among the reasons for which they consider to be grateful at the end of the week, the respondents have chosen: Personal accomplishments – 40%; Learned lessons – 30%; Recreational activities – 15%; Family relationships – 10%; Meetings with friends – 5%. As we can see, the majority of respondents have a self-centred approach (80%) and only 20% find their comfort in human relation with relatives and friends.

4.3. Aspects regarding the current profile of students towards positive emotions and collective resilience. The current profile of student does not match the traditional profile identified for the Romanian people, who were used to set the interest of the group above the personal interest. The Western models of management and personal development have contributed to the change of the perspective about individual and collective interest. The current profile of the respondents towards emotions is the result of a mixture of influences occurred over the times, with ancient historical origins, and of postmodern shades of globalization.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The concept of wellbeing is a popular topic nowadays. All the respondents declare they are familiar with the content of it. The study enhanced an individualist perspective in higher education and the focus on learning outcomes rather than interpersonal relationships. The study groups are usually seen as appropriate for solving the tasks, but educational relationships are not really considered to be a reference for learning. The results do not have the quality of being generalized. The limited number of participants and the emerging perspective of grounded theory are the main disadvantages. Nevertheless, the importance of education and training in achieving higher standards regarding the quality of life according to higher expectations towards personal and professional life has been already highlighted. Higher education is a competitive area and this point may influence the responses of the students about their feelings and thoughts.

The benefits of individual and collective wellbeing are too obvious not to address the academic environment with relevant evidence regarding applied positive psychology and resilience. Promoting ways to create and enhance wellbeing would only help to diminish the effects of the alienation in the educational relationship experienced during the last two year of online or hybrid learning. In the same time, it would help to train competent and healthy teachers, who will pass on to further generations the effective behavioural patterns. From a cultural perspective, Romanians tend to express negative emotions rather than positive, but non-replication of the cultural pattern about the prevalence of the group over the individual it is encouraging.

The new curricular vision implemented in early childhood education and care, in primary and in secondary education set on competence formation and development will lead to the increase of a proper understanding of wellbeing and its contribution to collective resilience. The gap in the high school curriculum will have to be filled if recovery of the future students is desired. Nevertheless, individual and collective wellbeing will promote citizenship and democratic values.

The findings of the investigation show that individual resilience is better addressed than collective resilience in higher education nowadays.

The limits of the study will be exceeded by extending the number of participants and investigating the differences according to age, specialization, educational background or working experience. However, the relevant response to the research question shows that traditional cultural patterns are less provided in current students' behaviours, as premises of promoting real wellbeing and collective resilience.

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EDUCATION IN THE POST COVID PERIOD

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Abstract: *The Coronavirus pandemic has caused a global economic slowdown and forced teachers, students and educators at all levels of education to adapt quickly to the use of e-learning. Online and distance learning also took place before the COVID-19 pandemic, both during regional crises such as earthquakes, floods and other natural disasters in order to maintain continuity in education, and as a method of adapting education to the development of technology and the limitations of today's society dominated by a frantic economy. The magnitude of the current crisis is unprecedented and the lasting effects of this will be found in the education process, too. Thus, for some experts, a return to traditional physical education is necessary immediately, while for others, this forced transition to online education is a time to change and reinvent the way in which education could take place in the future. The conceptual solutions to these crises reflect a profound change in policy-making, and this article highlights the need for a trans-disciplinary approach to education policy-making so that the current approach to education leads to a permanent change in the way future education is delivered. We also include military education with its specific disciplines and in complementarity with its own organizational rules.*

Keywords*: education; COVID-19 pandemic; military education*

1. INTRODUCTION

The pandemic highlighted the fact that schools are a complex place, much more than a simple 'learning place'. They give a whole range of knowledge, they are the environment that offers integration and social development, health care, vocational training, community support, internet connections, language services and much more. Now, research shows that school leaders at all levels intend to find a way to continue to provide a wide range of educational and social services when the pandemic ends. The forced transformations of the pandemic on the labor market lead to a rapid adaptation of education and we believe that there will be an explosion of new vocational training programs, faster and more accessible training routes and partnerships with representatives of the economy in its current form. The faster the school adapts to these developments, the better integrated the graduates will be in the economic branches that survive the pandemic and that are really developing.

2. ANALYSIS OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

We begin the analysis with what Surgeon General Vivek Murthy said as a rare warning: "It would be a tragedy if we overcame a public health crisis just to allow another crisis to grow in its place." (Murthy, 2020:27). Of course, Vivek Murthy brought to the attention of readers the related consequences recorded during the pandemic and aggravated by it. And here we are talking about anxiety and depression, about violence, racism and a number of other social and political conflicts. He certifies this hypothesis through case studies conducted mainly in American society. However, students and the school have been similarly affected by government measures to limit the effects of the pandemic in recent years because they have been similar given the massive interdependence of states in this common fight against the virus. A major topic of interest on the European agenda is the adaptation of education and training systems to the digital age, and some recent initiatives need to be mentioned in this regard: (1) the launch in July 2020 by the European Commission of the new European Skills Agenda for Sustainable Competitiveness, Social Equity and Resilience, from which we have two key objectives - promoting lifelong learning and training skills for a job; (2) the launch, on 30 September 2020, by the European Commission of the new Digital Education Action Plan, entitled "Resetting education and training for the digital age (2021-2027)" based on an extensive public consultation process, resulting in that "60% of respondents believe that they have improved their digital skills during the crisis, with more than 50% wanting to deepen them";

the plan includes two strategic priorities embodied in the development of a high-quality digital educational ecosystem and in the majority the strengthening of digital skills for digital transformation; (3) the launch in September 2020 by the European Commission of the Communication on the European Education Area by 2025, an initiative aimed at strengthening the education and training systems following the Coronavirus crisis, at the same time as the EU's recovery (https://www.edu.ro).

We deduce from this the concern for the continuation, development and adaptation of the education systems on both continents in the conditions imposed by the pandemic, but also by the labor market that is facing the need for experts in the digital field. Moreover, it is noted that

> the COVID-19 crisis has drawn attention to both the opportunities and risks of online life and the need for a better and safer digital environment for all, especially for young people under 18 (Strategy on the Digitization of Education in Romania, 2021:5).

After a traditional research, based mainly on the conclusions of various authors who have analyzed the educational reality, we can adhere to the idea that today, higher education is facing a real crisis that does not seem to have its roots in the Coronavirus pandemic but somewhere deeper, in the speed of adapting educational policies to social and technological realities. Rather, COVID-19 has led to an increase in the situation and a new and in-depth analysis of budgets, costs per student and training methods. We look at the realities of higher education; in the US

> the reality that already existed at the beginning of March, when we were not aware of how much it will change soon: schooling rates have increased by 213 percent in the last thirty years - faster than any other industry, including assistance medical. At the end of 2018, student loan debt reached $ 1.47 trillion, more than the national total of credit card or car loan debt. However, students pay a high price for much of the same product that higher education has offered for decades. (Sands & Shushok Jr., 2020:2).

If we refer to the higher education in Romania, it results that

> the total number of universities registers a downward trend, a situation determined, first of all, by the decrease of the number of private universities, concomitantly with the maintenance, in approximately the same parameters, of the state higher education network. The number of faculties decreases constantly in the period 2011-2018 (from 614 to 545), after which it reaches 546 at the level of the academic year 2019-2020. The declining trend in higher education institutions is correlated with the trends in student enrollment (Report on the state of higher education in Romania 2019, 2020:4).

But now that COVID-19 is wreaking havoc on the economy, on public health but also on the normal operations of universities, it may be time for a momentum to accelerate change. Perhaps university leaders will seek to think more creatively, says Steven Sample, a former president of the University of Southern California, who advocates 'free thinking,' a practice that requires participants to think beyond the constraints of resources, time, and fears of failure". Because the business world is full of free-thinking examples, and here we can exemplify Elon Musk's SpaceX and Tesla - excellent case studies. The current social, health, economic, development conditions are those that impose programs or inventions that change the game in higher education, which boldly traverses the new reality to improve their graduates and their learning.

In fact, an analysis of the online master's degree obtained in a field related to mathematics, computer science, law, sociology or even philosophy, history suggests that higher education institutions can successfully use technology to allow the transfer of resources to students, thus opening accessibility of education without a proportionate increase in costs. However, there are also universities that have entered into partnerships with business and industry institutions to accelerate the adaptation and quality of the workforce and the development of technology. COVID-19 has forced us all to think differently, and education has some of the biggest implications. We can say that this period has revealed our ability to be innovative when the rules we know no longer apply. Certainly, what has been achieved well in education under the pressure of social distancing measures taken during the crisis will be capitalized on so as to support students' access and success despite deep budget deficits. Moving online training can make teaching-learning, research and training more flexible, but there are opinions that

> the speed with which this transition to online training is expected to take place is unprecedented and astonishing (Hodges *et al.*, 2020:4).

3. HOW DO WE CAPITALIZE ON THE EXPERIENCE GAINED DURING THE PANDEMIC?

In this sense, there are aspirational visions, especially now, when the landscape has changed. It is possible, of course, that this change will become permanent, and if we recognize the opportunities, the conversations that are now taking place between university administrations and their boards around the world and, increasingly, between professors, students and other staff. to lead to that much-discussed transformation in recent years. We agree that

> there are two such aspirations that I believe have become urgent: first, a student, staff, or faculty member should be able to be anywhere in the world participating in a learning or discovery community and continue to be on fully involved with the university; and secondly, wealth, income and the postal code should not be predictive factors in student access and success (Sands & Shushok Jr., 2022:2).

Both trends have often been expressed in the last decade, but few traditional universities in Romania and even in Europe can rightly claim that any of these goals have been achieved. Now, under the pressure of the pandemic and the immediate resolution, both were possible even if the means and contents were largely adapted ‘on the fly’, without too much study and prior preparation. Because it is certain that well-planned online learning experiences are different from online courses in response to a crisis or disaster. Of course, the residential model that has proven its efficiency and usefulness for many generations of students, through their holistic development and socialization, will not be completely abandoned.

So, in Timothy Sands & Robert Shushok Jr. view (2022:2), the university becomes the ‘nest’ for the first year and the home base after that. This first year on campus gives students the opportunity to be part of an academic community, allows them to adapt to the new educational status and also facilitates the identification of ways of personal development. It also prepares the future graduate's collaboration with the university's partner economics institutions, thus ensuring a later integration into the labor market more easily.

This first year prepares the student for the second community he will be part of - that of teachers and mentors who guide him in person and remotely. In this scenario each course is HyFlex thus giving the student the opportunity to engage in learning and research depending on his special situation. The student is either in a laboratory or part of a research project, participates in learning on or off campus and thus has the opportunity to schedule time and prioritize their goals. Faculty and teachers could have the same flexibility as well.

What are the consequences of such a scenario in higher education? The university becomes HyFlex in every dimension. Thus, it becomes delocalized but nevertheless having the university campus with its characteristics. The beneficial element for the university is that some of its students and professors are off-campus for a well-defined period of study and the institution can expand its access and gain momentum without having to develop its permanent infrastructure. Also, the costs per student are lower which will make the studies accessible to larger categories of young people and the economic partners of the universities will more easily attract talented students to their companies. They also become interested in teaching-learning at the university and thus the faculty has a group of specialists in each field, who contribute to the good preparation of students.

It should also be noted that with the growth of transnational education, the motivations and models of development increase proportionally. Host countries may have different motivations in opening their borders to foreign education providers: either as a way to meet the high demand for higher education or to accelerate the pace of reforms in their own education policies. Online training is likely to facilitate the process of internationalization, bringing with it benefits related to the possibility of providing higher education opportunities for all students, not just that mobile minority. The idea that higher education institutions can develop digital learning as part of their internationalization strategy is very clear.

We can also bring the language of learning in favor of online education. The language of research is becoming more and more widespread as an English language, and it is increasingly considered the language of education around the world. Also, the “language of digitization” is the same English language, elements that favor both the internationalization of education and its development using creatively and motivatively the proven inclinations of the Z generations or those of the “Millennials generation”.

Looking at it from a different perspective, it is very tempting to compare online learning with residential learning. In fact, an article in the Chronicle of Higher Education has already called for a ‘big experiment’ to do just that (Zimmerman, 2020:4). The idea of blended learning has been included in the political agendas without paying enough attention to the fact that institutions can make different decisions and decide to invest differently, resulting in very varied solutions and results from one institution to another.

So, starting from these results, we will advance some careful reflections that we hope can be taken into account when preparing the evaluations that will result because public policies must be based on a common understanding of concepts and developments as well as a certain degree of consensus on their understanding.

The first idea is that online learning is considered to be of lower quality than face-to-face learning. We believe that all these hasty movements of online educational institutions can seal this perception and lead to a current through which complete educational profiles are not designed so that universities can take full advantage of the real advantages and open possibilities of the online format. In support of this statement, we quote the 16th President of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Timothy Sands, who states that

> researchers in educational technology, especially in the sub-discipline of online and distance learning, have carefully defined the terms throughout years to distinguish between the extremely diverse design solutions that have been developed and implemented: distance learning, distributed education, blended education, online education, mobile education, learning and more (Sands & Shushok Jr., , 2022:2).

A second idea is the internationalization of training, a concept that is perceived differently by researchers, institutional leaders in education, decision-makers at the national level or educational or related organizations. Thus, at the Romanian level, a series of trends in the internationalization of education have been determined, among which is a "general critique of the reasons and goals of internationalization in the global arena of higher education" (Egron-Polak & Hudson, 2014:7). The internatio-nalization of education is not at all a singular phenomenon but is massively influenced by a series of global, regional and national evolutions and trends in the political, economic, cultural and demographic field and also health.

In this regard, let us look at Europe, which is seen around the world as a model of internationalization; there are still quite a few differences between European nations both in terms of the implementation of the Bologna process and in terms of the level of development of education systems. The Strategic Framework for the Internationalization of Higher Education in Romania in 2015 shows that

> funding levels, tuition fees, and scholarship schemes vary significantly between European countries, resulting in different commitments to internationalization and different institutional implementation strategies.

So the wider use of the combined form of education could be an element to overcome these shortcomings at national, European and only level.

This year of crisis has given us a glimpse into what is possible in response to the latest unique challenges for higher education institutions. Students, faculty, and academics from around the world have been involved in this process, and they have managed to do things that have never been done before in order to preserve the teaching and learning of students. When this situation is over educational institutions will have an additional experience in maintaining the continuity of training, an experience that needs to be evaluated, improved and adopted through sectoral policies.

4. MILITARY EDUCATION AND ITS SPECIFICITY IN THE PANDEMIC

In order to make a real analysis of military education, both the specific characteristics of the military organization and the objectives established by the strategic planning documents adopted at the level of the Ministry of National Defense must be taken into account. Romania's Military Strategy 2021 states that the main features of the operating environment include

> interconnecting capabilities in all confrontational environments and at all levels of employment, improving autonomous systems, increasing the scope of cyberspace actions and hybrid strategies and actions (Romania's Military Strategy, 2021:9).

It follows that the development of the military education system must be in line with the objectives assumed by the Ministry of National Defense and lead to their fulfillment in the medium or long term, as planned. Defense education will be based on three fundamental directions which are to personalize and ensure the educational process for all military students, to make the education system more flexible according to priorities and challenges and to adapt the system to external changes and future trends.

Thus, defense education, under the action of the Covid-19 pandemic, like all systems in the world, is beginning to transform and modernize so as to provide a portfolio of skills needed to be created and developed to meet the complexity of its missions. type of "labor market". The resulting conclusion was that adapting defense education to distance and/or blended learning was also the most important way forward.

Following this forced shift from military training to residential to non-residential learning, institutional assessments are being made to identify the most appropriate directions and pathways to make the transition, and some universities are proving an accelerated pace of transformation. It is important to determine why and what changes are needed to enable distance learning to be introduced into the educational institution and what the concrete effects are. The key is to identify the necessary changes in hardware, software selection, resource needs materialized in money, time, staff, etc. and an appropriate organizational approach. Another key we believe is the mastery with which are added to university studies the training elements specific to the military organization, those necessary in creating the climate specific to military entities or the leadership skills of military structures.

In this regard, NATO has identified areas of distance learning that can be supported (Defence Education Enhancement Programme, Strategy for Distance Learning Support, 2021:9) and potential courses of action for each of them. The first direction consists of institutional support in the administration and management of a modern distance learning program that brings with it concrete challenges that consist of: "legal requirements for the distance learning system; limited experience of faculties in distance education and training, lack of support staff trained to provide distance education; lack of necessary system technology and hardware. The option is that online teaching does not replace the social interaction between the actors involved in teaching and the learning processes. Especially in military education, establishing trusting relationships between leaders, subordinates and colleagues who is essential for the successful execution of missions is a part of education that should not be lost in the process of transforming defense education. It is emphasized that it is necessary to develop the faculties so that they can design and deliver lessons using active methods of learning in a distance learning class with their own teachers and instructors or from partner schools that are competent in teaching (both synchronous and asynchronous), digital and social literacy.

Therefore, mixed or hybrid programs, as exemplified above, can be designed to correspond as closely as possible to both NATO-sponsored development directions and the training and human resource development necessary for the military organization so that so that to be able to be met the assumed military objectives.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The educational landscape in Europe and around the world has changed fundamentally and teachers, students and their families have adapted quickly and continued to learn, showing determination, adaptability, perseverance and creativity. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has raised awareness of significant gaps and shortcomings in digital skills, connectivity and the use of technology in education, the economy and the labor market.

Moreover, the COVID-19 crisis has drawn attention to the challenges, opportunities and risks of online life, and these must be assessed so that education and training systems become appropriate for the digital age, given the real and major impact of the digital transformation.

And the current general context of higher education is a major factor influencing societies, the labor market and its future, along with the continuing expansion of digitization and increasing the use of technology in education, including open access resources. It is successfully added to the transformation stage, the benefit of reducing the costs transferred to students and their families.

Based on the analysis of current trends, what are the future European trends in the evolution of education? A focus is on increasing the quality and visibility of each university while maintaining the reputation it has already earned and increasing the competition for talented students and researchers. A new balance is also sought between short-term and long-term goals influenced by the rate of subsequent social involvement of graduates and the intensification of the development of strategic partnerships with the economy.

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INTEGRITY IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS: AN OVERVIEW OF DRIVERS AND ENABLERS

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Abstract: *Much like any analysis of intangible aspects underlying organizational fabric like leadership or culture, to mention just few, the discussion on integrity in public institutions tends to focus on tangible tell-tale signs like corruption and its various forms, while obscuring the real drivers and enablers of breaches in this so much sought organizational virtue. Therefore, the current article aims at providing an overview of the main causes leading to the loss or compromise of integrity in public institutions from an organizational behavior perspective. The aforementioned discipline allows a multi-layered approach anchored in General System's Theory to account for the macro-organizational influence on integrity, Group Dynamics Theory, namely Richard Beckhard's GRPI model, to explain the role played by groups and teams in upholding or undermining organizational values, and last but not the least Social Cognitive Theory of Morality to account for the reasons leading individuals to form or change existing moral standards.*

Keywords: *integrity; culture; organizational behavior; change; ethics*

1. INTRODUCTION

The approach taken by the current article is anchored in organizational behavior defined from the three fold perspective of the organization as an entity in its own right, groups and teams as the engine contributing to organizational efficiency and effectiveness, and individuals whose competences, efforts, and attitudes act as the fuel feeding the organizational engine. Consequently, we deem that the best definition for integrity to apply for such an outlook must bring in a sufficient number of dimensions and variables to capture the inherent multi-level and complex reality underlying organizational life. In this respect, considering the already validated framework employed by NATO in relation with integrity building for countries willing to self-assess their defense sector or any other institutions in the security sector and titled *"Building Integrity Self-Assessment Questionnaire and Peer Review Process. A Diagnostic Tool for National Defence Establishments"*, the definition of integrity that we choose for this article identifies the following (NATO:2015,7) dimensions: the individual as an employee, organization processes and the organization itself (Fig. 1).

The variables characteristic of each are: competence/competency, honesty and completeness of the work individuals conduct; "seamless" fit-for purpose of processes underpinning organization dynamics; and genuine accountability, competence, completion of work, honest use of output and resources in accordance with organization goals.

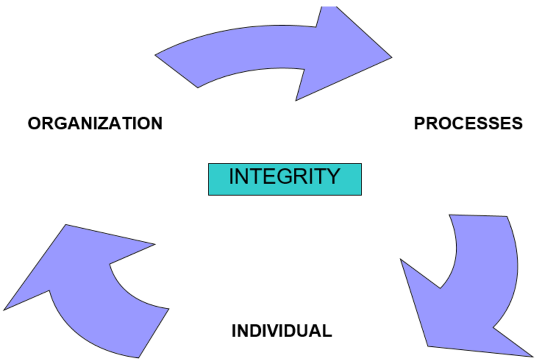

Fig. 1. Definition of integrity from a threefold perspective

Considering the above operational definition of integrity, the assumptions underlying the theoretical research into the drivers and enablers of integrity within organizations, especially those in the public sphere, are that: (1) integrity is enabled by principles informed by and decided based on the boundaries of each organizational system and made actionable via their reliable transfer into resources, incentives and consequences; (2) organizations are made by people and of people requiring that any analysis of them looks at the role of the human factor as the foundation stone of integrity.

2. DRIVERS AND ENABLERS OF INTEGRITY AS PROVIDED BY GENERAL SYSTEM'S THEORY

We believe that the value judgments underlying General System's Theory match the need to depict a system's approach to integrity and thus identify its advantages and likely disadvantages. Given length constraints related to this article, we will just briefly overview the main directions of thought related to the theory. Based on these we are to identify a number of rules that could be put in place when approaching integrity system-wide.

First, the idea of a system as a whole is decisive for the theory, its postulates, assumptions and statements. As initially proposed by Hegel, wholeness factors into the added value of a systems' parts brought together by similar characteristics and held together by dynamic interdependencies and interconnections (i.e. the most common cited postulates according to which "the whole is more than the sum of the parts", "the whole defines the nature of its parts", "the parts cannot be understood by studying the whole" (Skyttner, 1996:30). Taking things further, Lars Skyttner (1996:35) argues that holism is a search for an "outlook to *see better*, a network *to understand better* and a platform *to act better*".

Second, one of the postulates underlying General System's Theory (Boulding, 1964) is that order, regularity and non-randomness are preferable. To establish these, out of the number of characteristics that define systems we believe that their teleology and dynamic equilibrium are the most salient. Thus, from a teleological perspective, every system is goal oriented and its behavior and structure are configured by that. What is more, a sytems' teleology is supported by regulation and by the possibility to determine system performance (Churchman, 1971) and quantification. Second, the quality of a system to be in a dynamic equilibrium or "steady state" (Hassard:1993) captures the system's interdependence with the environment of which is part and the exogenic and endogenic tools aimed at maintaining the equilibrium and retaining the capacity of the system to work and transform the inputs into outputs. From this perspective it is noteworthy the concept of organization as an open system that receives input from the external environment, transforms them via internal processes, structures, people and technology into outputs. In this respect, one statement is worth reminding:

> Systems must receive sufficient input of resources to maintain operations and to export the transformed resources to the environment in sufficient quantities to continue the cyclical process (Hassard, 1993:33).

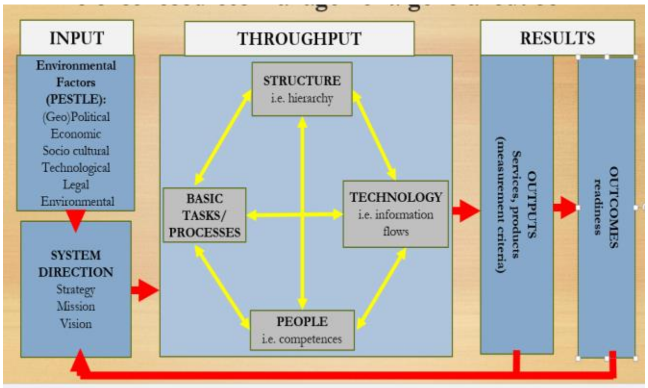

Fig. 2. A system's view of inputs, throuput, ouput and outcome

As it becomes obvious from the figure above, performance management in terms of clear definition of outputs and outcomes based on the system's direction delineated by its strategy, mission and vision as informed by PESTLE factors plays a major role. From this perspective it is worth reminding that any performance measurement system must rely on:

- Adequate performance management principles,
- Adequate goals and objectives based on which the right indicators and methods are identified;
- Availability of good data;
- Analytical and reporting skills;
- Measures for efficiency and effectiveness relying on: output indicators: costs, savings, efficiency of the sub- systems; input indicators: procedures used, number of complaints received and resolved; process indicators: transparency, nondiscrimination, fairness, accountability;
- Outcome indicators: user satisfaction, cost and convenience for users, budget effects.
- Official support, guidance and actions.

Furthermore, the organizational factors arrangements that have the greatest impact on organizational performance are:

- The allocation of resources and the establishment of systems that match responsibilities, be them of financial/human nature;
- Clarity of purpose (outcomes to be achieved);
- Clarity of task (outputs to be produced);
- Authority (flexibility) to pursue the purpose and undertake the task;
- Accountability for use of authority.

Consequently, for performance measurement to work input control measures must exist before establishing output control measures. Furthermore, there are 2 major key success criteria for implementation of strategy: measures of effectiveness that focus on effects rather than effort (e.g. number of integrity breaches recorded as a measure of output; budget savings generated as an outcome) and risk analysis.

Sometimes, especially when a new approach is first implemented, as it may be the case with the consolidation of integrity at the level of an organization as a system, all one can do is measure input and output. There may not be enough data yet to measure outcome.However, persistence and consistency are necessary before measurable outcomes deriving from the implementation of strategy become visible.

One major flaw of the system's approach to integrity building, especially in public institutions, is that it takes a mechanical approach obliterating the value of individual commitment and values. In this respect, one major remark made by Paul Robinson *et al.* (2008:1-12) is that "ethics is rather caught than taught" and that translates perfectly for the case of integrity as a value promoted and singled out for the management of public institutions. That is underlined by the figure below that draws the attention not only to the way the outer context influences the inner context of any organization from an integrity perspective, but also the necessary overlap of two inner core dimensions characteristic of ethical behavior, namely compliance and value-orientation.

From an organization perspective, GST is transferred into the seven Ss: strategy (i.e. methodical planning and allocation of resources in relation with stragic goals), staff (i.e. people who are acculturated in the organization's system of values), style (i.e. collective management behavior), skills (i.e. specific features of an organization rendering its competitive advantage), systems (i.e. processes and procedures of communication, decision-making, resource allocation), structure (i.e. the level of centralization/decentralization and its inherent role in establishing authority and interrelationships) and shared values (i.e. the common working ground for all the other elements) (Skyttner, 1996:43).

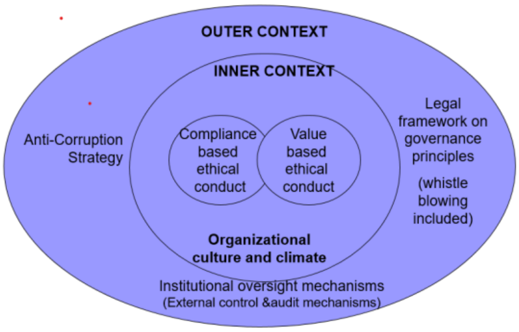

Fig. 3. A general outlook of organization external and internal enablers for integrity

In conclusion, the drivers of integrity from a system's perspective, are the input, output and outcome elements.

The enablers are at the level of throughput and must be analyzed in terms of their breadth and depth. The depth is related to individual tools and techniques characteristic of system components (i.e. tasks, structure, people and technology), and the breadth is ensured by coherence, interconnectedness and interdependence. The interconnection of system components is expressed as tangible/intangible flows of goods or knowledge across system components. The supply of resources, basic rules regulating resource use and deployment, incentives for applying these rules, and consequences for overstepping/ misinterpreting the rules or mis- appropriating, mis-using, dis-using resources drives it. Additionally, readily available and complete information on all of that enables the materialization of actions and prevents the emergence of issues.

When compliance based programs are viewed as drivers of integrity at organization level from an input-output-outcome perspective, individual/ group behavior is driven by the prospect of sanctions, audits, legal provisions, rules and regulations that are focused on prevention, detection, and punishment. Nonetheless, in such a situation there is one major fallacy: codes of conduct, codes of ethics, policies, guidebooks, etc do not actually address or solve covert unlawful, illegal, unethical behaviors since the main enablers of such programs are prevention in the form of:

- Strict compliance standards and procedures disseminated via training and publications;
- Clear-cut system of penalties and sanctions;
- Responsibility for overseeing compliance lies with high level managers;
- Lessons learned; detection focused on
- Increased monitoring and control measures
- Audits, reporting systems for employees ensuring the anonymity of the whistleblowers and punishment visible in commensurate sanctions/ penalties for ethical trespasses

The Solution consists in approaching ethical values, of which integrity is but one, as a whole. Consequently, taking into account the seven S model suggested above, we believe that solutions such as input of functional managers along with legal advisers' contribution as to what is deemed as desirable behavior, educational programs focused not only on legal compliance, but mostly on orientation and integration into organizational values, cause-effect analyses and comprehensive approaches to applying solutions , along with a "do-it-right climate"

(HBR) could enable a more ethically bound behavior of individuals and hence of organizations as entities.

3. GROUP/TEAM DYNAMICS AND ITS ROLE IN INTEGRITY BUILDING

Group and team dynamics, along with group salient features like group think and group cohesion play a major role in consolidating or undermining integrity building as an organizational project. Out of the best known models employed in describing the way groups and teams develop and contribute to organizational efficiency and effectiveness goals we deem that Richard Beckhard's GRPI (1972: 23-27) model, along with Lencioni's(2002) identification of the main malfunctions within teams may contribute to identifying the key drivers to upholding/ consolidating/ undermining integrity at organization level.

The GRPI model describes four components that contribute to establishing effective teams, as well as to diagnosing the problems within those. These are the goals established by the organization and assumed by the team, the roles of team members requiring the latter to understand the part to be played as part of the team, the inherent expectations, accountability and responsibility; the processess involved in determining work-flow and procedures for decision-making, problem and conflict solving, and the interpersonal relationships among team members anchored in values like trust and working principles such as communication, collaboration and flexibility. The model offers a two fold perspective on the key ingredients conttributing to effectiveness and quality in team work. On the one hand, it emphasizes the cascading approach to developing teams, namely the need to establish clear GOALS that lead to the identification of authority levels, associated responsibilities and tasks (ROLES) and henceforth inform the sequence of activities that generate smooth and working PROCESSES and allow team members to estabish working relationships among themselves.On the other hand, the GRPI can be used as a diagnosis tool by which the interaction failures among team members can be better analysed from a multi fold perspective that starts from the personal level and moves up towards the objective level of goals and results. The visual scaffolding of team development and analysis is presented in *Figure 4.*

All of the above gain relevance for the discussion on integrity from the perspective of the 80:20 ratio proposed by Noel Tichy when analyzing conflicts arising within teams. According to the afore-mentioned researcher, there is a cascading effect of goal definition on team member roles, processes and interpersonal relationships.

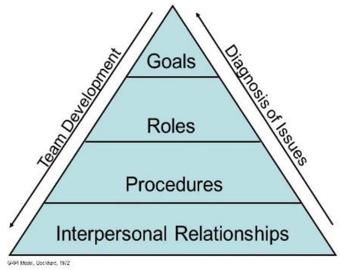

Fig. 4. Approach for team development, White Paper Draft, 18/02/2013 | Version 2.

Ambiguity of goals counts for 80% of the problems arising in the rest of the components; the uncertainty about the roles team members must assume represents 80% of the remaining 20% (i.e. 16%), whereas the standardization of processes counts as 3.2% of the overall ratio, and trust based relationships as 0.8%. Consequently, establishing the main guidelines by which the four components of team development can and should be established and enacted is the first step to be taken in approaching integrity at group/team level. In this respect, we deem that Lencioni's model offers the key concepts by which to derive any indications as to how to mold group and team behavior in such a manner that turns the value of integrity into a virtue. Whereas the GRPI model offers a tool of problem diagnosis and step by step team development, Lencioni's model identifies the core elements required for teams to work towards achieving goals and perform quality work. The author identifies those in negative terms and they concern lack of trust, fear of conflict, lack of commitment, avoidance of accountability and inattention to results (2002:7). Translating those into positive terms guiding action in relation with team/group dynamics would reneder the following categories: orientation towards results cupported by individual accountability, confidence based commitment and trust. The relationships among Richard Beckhard's model, Lencioni's five disfunctions of teams and Tichy's identification of the main causes of failures within the GRPI model is delineated *Figure 5.*

The main takeaways resulting from the figure above in relation with integrity building and maintenance at group/team level are as follows.

Team development starts from goals. The SMARTer the latter are (i.e. Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound) in terms of specifying what is envisaged to achieve from the perspective of integrity building, the less ambiguous the actions become.

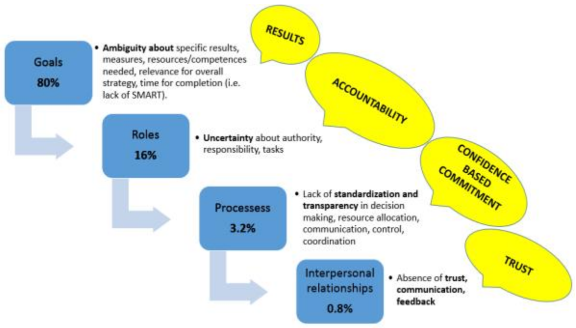

Figure 5: Factors influencing integrity from the perspective of team development and problem diagnosis

One of the trends in integrity building is to connect it to an anti-corruption discourse. On one hand, that allows for enough specificity since it can attach clear measures based on which resources can be identified and time-lines established. Nonetheless, it inflicts upon the all-encompassing meaning of integrity as a value and potential virtue narrowing its scope and diminishing its impact. Therefore, we deem it necessary that when breaking down the term integrity into actionable variables and associated verbs, those should underline aspects like wholeness, coherence, cohesion, completeness, soundness of any enterprise. Verbs like increase, create, maintain would thus be specific enough to associate measures, time lines and resources with an organization's overall strategy. In close relationship with the identification of tangible results through the phrasing of SMART goals is the necessity to be clear about the requirements concerning the desirable behavior generating those results.

A clear-cut and unequivocal connection between tangible results and values guiding and enforcing desirability of actions is one of the key enablers of integrity at group/team level. In terms of the roles individuals assume, the latter must be clarified and delineated in terms of the level of authority they entail, as well as from the perspective of responsibilities and tasks.

Clarification in the form of standardization and transparency is also important in relation with an organization's most important processes pertaining to decision-making, control, and resource allocation. Roles and processes play a major role from the perspective of the Social Cognitive Theory of Morality and the mechanisms by which moral disengagement occurs. According to Bandura (1986) that is the result of displacement of responsibility, as well as of diffusion of responsibility resulting from mechanisms such as the use of moral justification to account for immoral acts, making advantageous comparisons regardless of logic fallacies they incur, rejecting, distorting, refusing to acknowledge those actions that generate negative impact or attributing blame for action or non-action to the victims.

As for trust, the dimensions that we would like to introduce surpass the vulnerability outlook proposed by Lencioni. Our suggestion is that the litmus paper for trust are crisis situations. Consequently, the main variables we propose are based on a crisis response toolkit (Building Trust in Diverse Teams. The Toolkit for Emergency Response, Oxfam GB for the Emergency Capacity Building Project, 2007:7) according to which there are two dimensions of trust: a deep form of trust and a swift/shallow one. Deep trust takes time to develop and effort to sustain. It is anchored in variables such as: (1) Compatibility of background, values, interests; (2) Goodwill in relation with the welfare of team members; (3) Predictability in terms of team members' consistent behavior over time and despite circumstances; (4) Well-being or the feeling that the others' intentions are right; (5) Inclusion in social relations of the team; (6) Accessibility from the perspective of the other team members' willingness to connect at personal level. Shallow trust is based on competence or, in other words, on the perception that team members are not to fail one of their own in times of need; openness with information manifested via a proactive and transparent behavior in this respect; integrity measured by the extent to which the others keep promises and observe moral principles and values; and reciprocity as the main norm driving cooperation.

4. CONCLUSIONS

What does it take for integrity to transform from a legal obligation and an ethical value into a virtue?

First, we believe that taking a multi-layered approach to integrity from a change management perspective may inform future actions. In this respect, in terms of change initiatives and their depth, according to Andrzej A. Huczynski & David A. Buchanan (2013:624), there are five types of changes that generate specific results (Fig. 6). Surface change focuses on achieving efficiency and more often than not on restructuring (e.g. centralizing or decentralizing). Shallow change is concerned with resource reallocation that is mostly done by resizing organizational departments or the organization itself (e.g. growing or cutting the number of departments). Another approach to that also consists in improving the planning processes. Penetrating change is tightly connected to changes in leadership and changes to an organization's definition of success, which resides in the establishment of new goals and objectives. Deep change as the name itself suggests is related to transformations made in organizational mission, vision, values, philosophy. Transformational change also referred as a paradigm shift aims at changing mental models, thinking, the manner of solving problems, the way of conducting activities in an organization, as well as the definition of internal and external boundary.

Fig. 6. A taxonomy of change initiatives,
Source: Huczynski & Buchanan (2013:624)

Consequently, for integrity to be driven it takes strategic transformational approach. That has to be supplemented though by cumulative changes at the other levels related to the transfer of values like integrity in the statements of an organization's mission and vision, in the definition and behavior of its leadership, as well as in the definition of the wholeness of processes and structures.

Second, in our opinion, heeding a number of change management principles can be another solution to the dilemma as to how integrity can be driven from the outside and enabled from the inside. Integrity can be an individual value and virtue. However, as the models presented in this article inherently indicate, it is under the influence of the overall organizational environment and under the pressure of teams'/groups' acknowledgment, acceptance and enactment of goals, roles, processes and values. To become an organizational and group/team virtue it needs efforts at multiple levels: organization wide, group-wide and individual.

From an organizational perspective, one of the basic prerequisites in change management is to gain understanding of an organization's internal and external environment, as well as of its culture from a two-fold perspective: the AS IS/current description of variables and the TO BE/Envisioned state of the organization to achieve via change initiatives. Pressure from the external environment towards identification of core values like integrity is essential, in our opinion, in public institutions but it does not suffice. In this respect, according to the Price Waterhouse Change Integration Team (1995) there are several paradoxes that need to be managed when focusing on change, even though an analysis of these rather indicates them as basic principles to heed.

The first paradox refers to the fact that for any positive change to occur, significant stability of the system is necessary. To reconcile the two apparently opposing dimensions of change and stability, trust and leadership are required as main pillars. Additionally, stability can be reinforced by securing: culture (core values), clarity of current strategy, people and their roles such as: catalyst, resource finder, stabilizer, etc., as well as the practices related to these (e.g. the right person in the right place, at the right time for the right reasons); core competences (in full coherence with the mission of the organization); and the relationships with the stakeholders.

The second principle mentioned by PWC is that to build an organization, individuals must be the focus of any change initiative and as such their commitment and reward represent important facet of managing them. Additionally there are also other important aspects like meritocracy (i.e. hiring the right people with the right skills and attitudes for the current and future state of the organization), using performance evaluation as a " must do" not just as a "must have", identifying individual performance drivers and reinforcing those, building social skills, establishing unequivocal objectives and accountability lines related to these, measuring team performance but rewarding individuals, setting high expectations and rewarding accordingly and last but not the least finding and promoting passionate leaders and effective coaches.

The culture of the organization is one of the key enablers of integrity. As such, it requires managers and leaders targeting their efforts. The former must: create and communicate the norms for competition/ collaboration/ communication; deliver a well-articulated strategy; clarify performance measures, create "working structures" and supportive people practices; show honesty and be visible. On the other hand, leaders must target empowerment as the main tool by which change can be driven to achieve its ultimate goal. Empowerment is strongly related to creating an environment conducive to making decisions and acting in a responsive manner, establishing a high performing and passionate team and clarifying who makes decisions and what type of decisions need to be made.

The roles and responsibilities of those in charge of ensuring the success of the change initiative, as well as of those who need to take over the results of change and implement them/manage them must be clarified and included in job descriptions and subsequent performance measures and evaluations, as well as reward systems. Along that, education and training must complement the efforts if change is to endure. An important aspect related to roles and their inherent authority, responsibilities and tasks is represented by the attitudes that changes in values, as it is the case for integrity, generate. They may range between involvement, commitment on one hand and resistance on the other hand.

Resistance to change can be triggered by various factors. An analysis of these and the identification of the measures that are adequate can help overcome it. Some of the most important factors that make people raise boundaries when change is on the way are:

- Lack of awareness and understanding may be related to the purpose of change, its drivers or its envisaged, tangible outcomes. Additionally, it may impact the description of individual roles and responsibilities related to the change process.
- Feeling of losing control may be related to the amount if input people contribute to the change initiative. If the self-beliefs are at a high level and yet the outcomes are not sensed as desirable because of individual lack of involvement in their generation, then people may resist change.
- Lack of support on behalf of key figures in the organization. Genuine support on behalf of the key people in an institution needs to be secured if their subordinates are to be involved.
- Threat to existing status quo. As employees, people reach a status quo as far as their power, career, knowledge, skills, work patterns, working relations are concerned. Therefore clarification of how change affects or does not affect such aspects, as well as adequate management of employees' rational and irrational fears along with avoidance of the "grapevine" influence via proper communication, negotiation, clear description of roles and responsibilities is essential. In the end, the goal is to avoid people's alienation, distrust and hence their sub-optimal performance of current or future tasks.
- Lack of time to assimilate the change. More often than not the need to generate results does not give people to internalize the values sought through change initiatives.
- Lack of incentives and rewards. To change is to learn. To learn is to make errors and learn from them. If people are not granted the freedom to make mistakes when required to make changes, nor allowed to learn from them, then the change initiative is prone to failure of false positives. That is all the more true when focusing on values and their enactment as virtues in organized systems.

To conclude, we can positively say that in order for integrity to become a virtue in public institutions changes on multiple levels are necessary. Nonetheless, the most important element of change is individual behavior. Therefore, we should not forget change is about gaining results. Failure to reward the results in accordance with what each and every individual values, not in a non-discriminatory manner leads to disengagement in the long run. Consequently,

> An integrity-based approach to ethics management combines a concern for the law with an emphasis on managerial responsibility for ethical behavior. Though integrity strategies may vary in design and scope, all strive to define companies' guiding values, aspirations, and patterns of thought and conduct. When integrated into the day-to-day operations of an organization, such strategies can help prevent damaging ethical lapses while tapping into powerful human impulses for moral thought and action (HBR, 1994).

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Hybrid Warfare.
Cognitive Warfare

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND DIGITIZATION IN THE CONTEXT OF PANDEMIC CRISIS

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Abstract: *The current paper sets to explore the hypothesis that the COVID-19 pandemic is a strong incentive for accelerated digitalization and a significant shift in economy. The other hypothesis is that developments in those sectors under the novel pressures of a worldwide sanitary crisis also come with significant risks, which require increased attention from the national security establishment. In order to explore those hypotheses, the author has documented the overall highlights of the technological context – including the concept of SMART administration, some security developments during the pandemic – with a stress on the health system, but also on the infodemic that completely altered the course of recent events, while also providing some practical examples pertaining to the Romanian social reality.*

Keywords*: pandemic; infodemic; digitalization; administration; security*

1. METHODOLOGY

The approach of the current topic is not that of an expert in economy or technology, but rather from an intelligence practitioner`s perspective, focused on the general context caused by COVID-19 and its security implications. The paper is, generally, rather descriptive, as it is still too early to identify all the intricate consequences the ongoing pandemic will have, but does come with personal and empirical interpretations, based on practical experience and the author`s intelligence background. The sources are predominantly statistics, but also literature produced by technology experts.

2. TERMINOLOGY

It is important to delineate the overall terminology of the paper as it comprises significant differences among easily confused topics. *Digitization*, for one, is the conversion of data from analogue to digital. The author considers that digitization is one of the first stages for digitalization as it does not entail major developments in the business flows, but rather generates raw data. *Digitalization*, on the other side, means using technology and digitized data to change workflows in order to make them more efficient, from multiple perspectives, starting with increasing profits to reducing operational costs and involved resources in a particular activity. By allowing new workflows and new revenue sources, digitalization further supports *economic development*, therefore all three concepts are interconnected.

In Romania's case, the pandemic led mainly to *digitization* rather than digitalization, in many areas, at least in the first months of utter confusion and shock. For example, in the average citizen`s interactions with the administration, there was the punctual benefit of no longer leaving printed documents at the counter; in many cases, however, digital papers are sent by e-mail for further printing and processing by a clerk. What we actually need is digitalization - in the described case, an electronic form and automatic data processing, interaction with other data basis in order to collect readily-available information without requesting it from the citizen, automated responses wherever possible etc. While costly for private businesses, digitalization is particularly challenging and significant for public bodies and organizations, with even more limited resources and reduced capabilities, lacking experts and the finances that would motivate them, but in turn managing sometimes huge quantities of sensitive data in analogic form. For state bodies, digitalization does not provide immediate economic advantages, as it would with private organizations. However, states need it the most in order to boost their economies.

The challenge of the future for the Romanian public organizations – which is no longer such a novelty as there are many success models in other countries –will be the implementation of the concept of SMART city. This goal would have an extraordinary impact on building efficient and advanced communities, using the human capital and advancing towards sustainable development.

Relevant examples of what SMART cities can do for society as a whole come from most areas of our social life. For instance, in healthcare, they can provide effective communication flows among various medical institutions, helping to develop new services and improve cost-effectiveness. In education, new technologies support proficient pedagogy, leveling up the teaching process and ensuring fair and equal access to quality education; in isolated areas, electronic lessons can compensate for the lack of teachers or for their lack of expertise. Digitalized administration means less bureaucracy, less resources needed for its upkeep, easier interaction of the citizens with authorities, but it also facilitates opening and running legal, tax-paying business. The digitalization of SMART communities provides the proper environment for economic development of the private sector, too.

Romania’s experience provides useful lessons for the Western Balkans in general and the Western Balkans candidate countries in particular in their efforts towards the EU integration. The digitalization as part of the Western Balkans transition towards a digital economy and society can bring tangible benefits not only in terms of economic growth and convergence with the EU Single Market, but also in terms of better rule of law, increased transparency and political accountability, strengthened democratic processes, enhanced regional cooperation etc. At the same time, the security implications of the digital transformation have to be carefully assessed, while effective measures should be implemented as early as possible in order to prevent or limit the disruptive impact of cyber incidents.

3. PANDEMIC IN AN ALREADY SHAKY WORLD

The COVID-19 crisis would not have been a full-blown crisis unless factors of various nature had not aggravated the consequences of the virus. Several traits of the world we have lived since December 2019 contributed to the current situation in manners unprecedented by most of the other pandemic situations of the past centuries.

First of all, our modern society`s characteristic trait is *openness* or the lack of virtual and practical barriers in many of its aspects. In analyst Fareed Zakaria’s words (2020:14), pre-COVID, “the world was open, fast and unstable”. Prior to the start of the pandemic we had free movement, real-time communication at low costs or no costs of all, high-speed connections and heavy interdependencies. We also had free markets while the information revolution allowed for the rapid movement of ideas, services, goods. Our world before the start of the pandemic had both many opportunities and major vulnerabilities.

Digital economy has been assumed all over the world for the past two decades. We are currently used with digitization and digitalization in most areas of our lives: online baking / finances, online shopping and e-commerce, digital administration reducing bureaucracy and intermediating the previously direct interaction between citizens and their state, working online, online entertainment etc. Those were all designed to save time and effort and to allow particulars not to leave their houses, unless they chose to.

This all happened in successive waves of technological advancements, with the regular, material economy giving way gradually to the digital one. Technology is irreversibly shaping our world and has an unprecedented impact on our everyday lives, in all relevant areas. It would be much to say, at this point, that in Romania digital economy prevails over the material one, but is safe to underline its tendency to develop.

We have also witnessed a paradigm shift – the private sector has taken the lead on technological developments and is driving the global innovation. This is an advantage given the large resources they can allocate and the high speed of the innovation processes. But, as we have already seen, this is also a challenge since not always the priorities and interests of private companies are aligned with those of the states.

Against this backdrop, the gap between the technological developments and the state’s capacity to keep up with them can become a strategic vulnerability, increasingly difficult to address even by the global actors. This strategic vulnerability is particularly worrisome for countries that do not have the resources needed to keep up with the technological developments.

Moreover, democracies can have a harder time narrowing that gap than illiberal states or authoritarian regimes that do not concern themselves with democratic values or human rights. Some of the authoritarian regimes are even cooperating with or supporting, financially or otherwise, the private firms, to develop digital tools that could be used to strengthen their grip internally, repress or silence their critics, restrict individual liberties, advance their interests etc. In other cases, the authoritarian regimes deny access to technological or digital developments in an effort to preserve their power, prevent the spread of information, exert a strict control or censorship of the information sources etc.

In a highly interconnected world, pandemic meant unprecedented shutting down of economies and societies, thus more instability. Part of this instability is also generated by the overall context of major geopolitical shifts: aggravated competition among the great powers, transition from a unipolar to a multipolar world, tendency towards a new balance of power, but also enough reasons of conflicts and war, including asymmetric and informational war, some conflicts resulting in significant migratory waves.

Besides the virus itself, the author considers that there are two decisive factors in managing, but also, sometimes, in aggravating this unexpected health crisis: the first one, technology, and the second one, individuals themselves.

4. TECHNOLOGY, BOTH SOLUTION AND PROBLEM

As it has already been mentioned, digital transformation was propagating before COVID-19 appeared. It did some good, helping those in digitalized enough societies, to stay isolated and not miss some of the comforts they have previously enjoyed, but also in maintaining some sort of communication and keeping some parts of the economy running. Advanced technologies remain, nonetheless, a constant challenge both for the private sector – since they involve significant costs – as well as for the public one, particularly for intelligence institutions, which tend to have difficulties in keeping up with their opponents. Some managed to use it to their advantage, many – not yet. From the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, enough vulnerabilities that come with technology were stage-center. Probably the most familiar and worrying of all were:

– 5G technology, with many potential applications, ranging from economic to military ones; it means high speed data traffic, but also devices which are more susceptible to DDoS (Distributed Denial of Service) attacks or quicker disruption of servers. The famous Huawei debate had started before the pandemic to question the good faith or intentions of companies under control of strategic opponents; many countries have implemented measures to protect their own infrastructures by paying particular attention to equipment coming from insufficiently trusted producers.

– British telecom providers, for example, were prohibited from buying Huawei 5G equipment after December 31st 2020 and need to replace all Huawei equipment by 2027, with an estimated cost of 2 billion GBP, while Romania has very recently passed a law requiring the approval of the Supreme Council for National Defense in the process of acquiring 5G technology.

– In the Western Balkans, Serbia, "Kosovo" and North Macedonia had signed agreements with the US on 'trustworthy' 5G in 2020, while Albania has signed a similar document in June 2021, in view of Tirana's plans to implement a 5G network in the coming period.

– Cryptocurrency is also a pre-existing risk, with potential to aggravate while everybody is busy with the health crisis. It can generate tax evasion or money laundering, but also be used in financing illicit activities of all sorts.

– Quantum computing, while not yet a reality, can raise even more privacy concerns than we already have, since it will lead to the rapid annihilation or neutralization of most encryptions previously considered secure, such as blockchain.

Cyberspace has, for some time, been a territory for confrontation and conflict, suitable both for offensive and defensive actions. In 2019, the number of cyber-attacks was already high, with 31% of organizations having experienced attacks on their infrastructure. Out of those, 43% attacks were aimed at small businesses (Galov, 2019), and a company needed, on average, six months to discover data breaches. The same source anticipated the costs of cybersecurity by 2020 to be of over 5 trillion USD.

Under those circumstances, it is relevant to take a look at data from Romania and see how the pandemic impacted technological development and viceversa. One of the factors working in our favor has probably been the internet speed, among the highest in the world, but internet access, on the other side, seems lowest in the very areas where it has been needed the most during the pandemic: in rural, isolated and low-income areas:

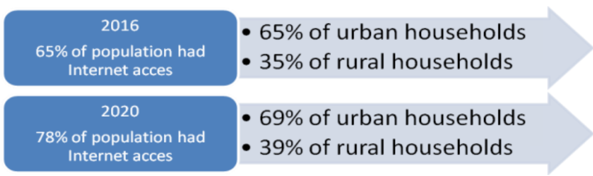

Fig.1 Internet access in Romania

Romania's **digital economy** has already been on a rising trend, but lagging when compared to other European states. Only 12% of Romanian enterprises had e-commerce activities in 2019, compared to the EU average of 17%, but the percentage grew to 18% during the first year of pandemic, similar to that of most EU Member States. The number of Romanian online shoppers was around 35% of internet users in

2017, and forcibly rose to 58%, in 2020 (Eurostat). COVID 19 accelerated digital retail, forced those who preferred the old manners of acting – going to stores or theaters, paying bills at the counter – to adapt. And what is true for individuals is also true for businesses, which acted the same.

But while the Romanian private sector made its best to adapt and survive during crisis, with e-commerce, its time and cost effectiveness, exploitation of increasingly sophisticated mobile devices and potential for increase, as probably the net winner, not the same can be said about using the maximal technological possibilities by the state sector. According to Eurostat, e-government individual activities on websites were only accessed by 9% of the Romanian population in 2019, compared to a EU average of 44%, with a significant increase in 2020, when 18% of the population accessed them, but way under the EU average of 48% (Eurostat). The acute need for actual digitalization of essential services was even more significant during 2020, despite the rapid shift of some activities online. The explanation resides in the lack of the necessary technical and procedural safeguards, as well as adequate staff training.

R&D would have been a key factor in developing the digital economy, but investments made in these areas by the Romanian IT&C sector were also lagging in the years preceding the pandemic, which should have been a reason for concern, too (Eurostat).

A similar digital leap was registered across the Western Balkans since the beginning of the pandemic, a very positive development since the economies in the area were lagging behind the European Union's digital transformation, with the gap narrowing slowly.

Due to economic slowdown in the last years, the region has made some, but not significant, progress in building digital economy and society. The support provided by the EU is gradually increasing the digital convergence between the Western Balkans and the EU member states, with initiatives such as the 2018 Digital Agenda for the Western Balkans and the 2020 Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans (European Commission, 2020) contributing to lowering roaming costs, improving broadband connectivity, increasing cyber security, developing the e-Government, e-Procurement, e-Health, digital skills etc.

Studies conducted in 2020 in the Western Balkans indicate that the use of digital services increased most during the pandemic (between 37.8% and 42.6%) in the areas of entertainment, education, social networks and information, with only 14.3% when it comes to contacts with the administration (Bieber, 2020). The last statistic is not surprising given that, according to the same study, pre-pandemic data showed that one quarter of the population in most Western Balkan economies does not use the Internet at all. Moreover, the use of online administrative services is consistent with the low level of trust the Western Balkans citizens have in their government (no more than 30%) (World Bank, 2021).

Probably the best ally for the digital economy during COVID-19 was the **work from home** system. It replaced regular offices when the type of activity itself allowed for it, and brought surprising collateral benefits: less time wasted in traffic, less pollution, overall less resources used for the same activities. It was a major motor keeping the economy running: a Cisco study on 25 countries and over 4500 public and private organizations revealed 91% of them had at least 25% of all employees working remote at some point during the pandemic (Cisco, 2021). In the Western Balkans, the low level of digital transformation was reflected by the fact that only a quarter of citizens which worked from home used technology more than before the pandemic.

But there were several downsides to it, not considering the fact that some activities could not be transferred in this new system. Most organizations – public and private alike – were unprepared for the online shift; they had no proper security and privacy policies in place. To pinpoint Romania, Bitdefender senior researcher Cătălin Coșoi estimated that 50% of Romanian companies were not prepared to move their activity online when the pandemic started (Cosoi, 2022).

Working from home / online therefore proved to be both risk and opportunity. It boosted both digitization and digitalization, but it also came with an increased number of cyber- attacks of all sorts: based on social engineering techniques – phishing, smishing; attacks on e-learning platforms, ransomware etc. In Romania`s case (not particularized on working from home, but relevant overall), CERT-RO reported a number of 28.745.934 attacks captured by its sensors in infrastructures in 2020[1], with a trend of increased sophistication and frequency.

Various types of problems stemmed from the galloping rise in the digital economy, which, unfortunately, had to happen at a pace which put security and privacy concerns second.

[1] According to a statement by CERT-RO director general Dan Cîmpean at a specialzed conference in April, 2021.

– Careless employees were a significant source of problems, both in the private and in the public sector. 95% of data breaches worldwide during 2020 were attributed to human error by a Cyber Defense Magazine study (Galov, 2021), which shows there was a serious underestimation of the necessity and relevance of training regarding new technologies and also regarding the appropriate channels for sensitive information. Employees make security and privacy compromises either because they are unaware of risks, or in order to avoid further efforts. Thus, using unauthorized channels for confidential information, such as private e-mail addresses instead of the institutional ones, the lack of cyber security culture and enforcement of adequate security policies led to more vulnerabilities for employers worldwide.

– Security issues stemmed from insufficient security policies. In some cases, administrators do not enforce sufficient policies, in others, commercial applications are not concerned enough with devising sufficient layers of security, which leads to vulnerable systems and equipment and, in many cases, lack of integrated security solutions.

– Attackers exploited user and security weaknesses. Their motivations were, obviously, different:

○ actors with financial motivations have exploited the context generated by working from home, through exfiltration of data, particularly credentials from personal or official bank accounts. In 2020's Romania, EMOTET was the most frequent type of malware attack of this sort (Buletin Cyberint, 2021) and it tried to exfiltrate financial data, generally starting from a spam e-mail message;

○ actors with ideological motivations – hacktivism – normally have a lower technological level than other attackers, but they manage to block resources – particularly, in the state of health crisis, those of public health institutions. In many cases, they use ransomware.

Technology gained new meanings during the pandemic, becoming even more relevant than before for **health care** systems and providers worldwide. Video consultations became a necessity and were used as often of possible, despite former reluctance from both doctors and patients. Electronic prescriptions also became a reality.

Even more important, artificial intelligence, although still in the beginning and having its shortcomings, got more involved in providing health care services. First, its diagnosis capabilities were particularly useful as it compares cases to a much wider data-base than any specialist could do. It processes data for studies and provides them for multiple research teams, in almost real time, which was a crucial part in finding out more about the new virus and how to counter it. It also assists in interpreting imagistic data and has multiple applications in medical research and development. Rudimentary or more sophisticated robots also proved important in hospitals and clinics, when the risk of infection was practically zero if patients were visited by them instead of medical personnel.

Smart devices such as phones or watches help monitor essential functions for patients, such as heart rate or oxygen saturation, and, in some cases, they trigger alarms when the wearer experiences serious trouble, asking for urgent help on users' behalf. But to those opportunities technology brought for the medical systems worldwide, we must also associate significant risks that come with the interconnection our world prided itself on. Attacks on sanitary and medical systems surged. State and private entities became more and more interested in medical data, starting with those concerning research, development and innovation used in the vaccine making and accreditation processes, to top data from patient`s medical records or from big pharma. In December 2020 only, studies show a 51% increase of cyber-attacks against health-care providers, with a monthly average of 178 million attacks on medical organizations during the past year (Buzatu, 2020). Particular for the COVID-19 pandemic, there were data breaches – including at the World Health Organization, regarding vaccines and potential drugs to treat the new disease. Data were leaked online by attackers. Attacks on the vaccine supply chain and on the certification bodies were also frequent phenomena.

Other threats stemming from technological development during the first year of COVID-19 crisis were the Solar Winds attacks. Products of the IT software security solutions producer from the US were attacked by Russian hackers, thus compromising over 100 companies using Solar Winds services.

Illegitimate apps did their share of damage in COVID context. Invoking apparently legitimate and needed user information regarding the number of new cases or daily reports, they generally requested access to personal data, such as those from location or payment history. Malware from such apps infected predominantly mobile devices, and they exploited the fact that the app impersonated official ones. One such example was Covid 19 Tracker, which contains a malware of the ransomware variety. Covid Lock also blocks and encrypts data, requesting a bitcoin reward in order to release them.

Attacks on legitimate apps were frequent, too. Zoom and Skype were among the most accessed apps during the pandemic; while they are encrypted, in theory, there were data leakages as well as attempts to exploit their vulnerabilities by accessing device cameras and microphones for the purpose surveillance and trolling.

From the point of view of intelligence, dilemmas regarding surveillance and human rights were only heightened by the pandemic, when societies were confronted with new technological developments which again brought into discussion the old security – freedom dilemma. Personal health information was now needed in short time, in order to support policy-making and to enforce decision, and it took the odd form of applications of previously national-security-related technology being used for health-related purposes.

The trend was to accelerate the use of Artificial Intelligence for surveillance purposes, the most significant examples being those of Israel and China. Specially developed apps allowed for biometrical surveillance, localization, restrictions on free movement, thus building a new form of social control. Chinese authorities devised helmets that scan body temperature and have included facial recognition functions, cameras were used to monitor entrances into the homes of those under quarantine, and although, in some states, usage of such technology was voluntary, it raised serious and legitimate concerns regarding privacy.

From a strategic perspective, the pandemic made us rethink fundamental concepts we operate with, from globalization, freedom of movement and goods to sovereignty and, subsequently, our approaches in dealing with such global crises.

Closed borders, services and goods no longer available or that could not be delivered across the borders, disrupted transnational supply chains and boosted protectionist measures in regard to technologies, resources or products. All these developments have exposed the vulnerabilities and dependencies at the national and the EU level.

The importance of value chains (microelectronics, batteries, AI) in light of the current level of global digital transformation was particularly emphasized in the case of vital industries. Economic sectors dependent on human contact (automotive or aerospace industry for example) and the manufacturing industries have been the most affected during the first wave of the pandemic (their employees the most exposed to the virus). The ability of different industries and businesses to switch to digital was crucial for mitigating the impact of the pandemic and for their rebound.

At the European level, the COVID-19 crisis accelerated the initiatives towards strengthening the EU strategic sovereignty or autonomy, understood as the ability to act autonomously, to rely on its own resources in key strategic areas and to cooperate with partners whenever needed. Concrete projects were launched or are envisaged in different areas, from economy, energy policy, defense, including defense industry and security, climate action, external action etc.

5. THE INDIVIDUAL AT THE CENTER OF PANDEMIC

The pandemic has affected all areas of life as we knew it. Technology advances has generate both opportunities and risks, the material economy losing ground to the the digital one-businesses were disrupted, authorities were under pressure, while trade, travel, foreign investments and supply chains took serious hits. Vulnerabilities that never occurred to us – or did, but we did not do enough to reduce them - manifested on all levels of our lives, from the globalization phenomenon itself, to the simplest day-to-day activities which have not previously comprised such a threat.

The individual was at the center of opportunities: human knowledge and creativity has and will continue to be crucial in solving problems. At individual level, though, the psychological impact did significant damage. Processes of alienation and isolation or loneliness have already been manifested before 2020 due to the natural developments in our lifestyle. But, during the health crisis, individuals with psychological vulnerabilities, equipped with all facilities of modern communication, became both vectors and targets for threats and manipulation.

The infodemic - difficulty to process enormous quantities of data, not all of them real – became more and more prominent in the context of utter uncertainty. Faced with lack of scientific data, scientists needed to shift and adapt their positions to gradual findings. Political leaders, trying to follow the science, frequently changed policy, which generated further lack of trust and emotional reactions from regular people. The political consequences of those phenomena are obvious and they range from fear to renewed forms of isolationism. Groups of people started neglecting or rejecting evidence in favor of intuitive analysis, and this is, by no means, a new phenomenon, but it altered important decision-making regarding health; conspiracy theories flourished, while successful propaganda stimulated people to make bad decisions regarding their own health and wellbeing, with impact on those of the others. Classic manipulation instruments were employed by various interested actors, distracting attention from key events with marginal hypothesis, promoting harmful ideas or theories that turn into problematic actions.

Technology and inherent human flaws merged and managed to aggravate the crisis. Social media facilitates organization of users around an idea – the bubbles – but the ideas are, in many cases, debatable, yet not debated. It allows for messages to be disseminated in closed, private groups, which are difficult to follow and to counter and debunk. Instead, closed groups allow for very quick spread of internet propaganda and fake news, which has a negative impact on several levels, from generating a crisis of trust to fake or exaggerated medical advice. Moreover, even outside the privacy of closed groups, the Facebook algorithm, for example, propagates content based on the number of views, not quality, veridicity etc., which promotes viral, but not necessarily scientifically accurate content.

It is true that some social media platforms took measures to counter the spread of COVID-related disinformation and misinformation. Facebook, for example, has dedicated staff, responsible for verifying and eliminating negative or misleading content. It also started informing users if they had contact with disinformation messages, but only if they liked or commented the respective content. There is also a Coronavirus Information Hub on Facebook, as well as a cooperation with WHO to run a COVID-19 chatbot. Whatsapp, on the other side, uses artificial intelligence to eliminate spam accounts and has limited the forwarding options for messages with disinformation potential.

Nevertheless, we are still fighting propaganda, manipulation, fake news with completely inadequate instruments. And some are particularly difficult to debunk: deep fakes, for example, are only an aspect of the fake-news phenomenon, but are credible because they involve manipulation of audio and video content in an almost undetectable manner.

The pandemic was not the beginning, but yet another argument for more solid instruments to counter the impact of disinformation and infodemic.

In a particular note, but of utmost interest for intelligence, is that isolation meant changes in the manifestation of some national security risks and threats, among which terrorism comes to mind. While there was an initial decrease in the number of actual terrorist attacks, online radicalization and self-radicalization have increased, which means complementary measures are necessary, both from the intelligence sector, and at social level (such as de-radicalization programs with significant educational and social assistance contributions).

Disinformation and fake news have found a fertile ground in the Western Balkans during the pandemic, diminishing the already low level of trust in the governments and the national institutions. Promoted by a wide range of actors through conventional channels and social media networks, several conspiracy theories flourished, one of them attributing the spread of the pandemic to the 5G technology.

6. LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE

I chose to stress two of the main factors with significant impact upon the digitalization and economy of the COVID world, technology and human reaction. And, while it is difficult to anticipate the best solutions to a crisis while in its midst, from the technological point of view I believe Romania has some advantages and needs to make proper use of them, in order to grow its geostrategic profile.

Cyber security is crucial to make the digitalization process productive and safe. And, in this regard, I need to stress the notable development represented by the establishment of a European Cyber-Security Competence Center (ECCC), on Romanian soil. The new institution will lead a Network of Cybersecurity Competence Centers proposed by the European Commission.

As mentioned before, we do have modern, fast networks, with rapid access to the internet, and, moreover, we also have a valuable talent pool, with worldwide recognized IT&C specialists.

But there are also flaws we need to strive harder to correct. The insufficient and inadequate, old legal and regulatory framework, for one. Despite the significant talent pool, we have insufficient staffing levels and difficulties with recruitment in public and private organizations alike, due to the brain drain phenomenon. We also have low budgetary allocations for cyber security, both in state institutions, and in private ones.

Again, from the intelligence perspective, we have difficulties with legacy infrastructures, which lack coherence, security policies and interoperability. There are also limited research and development enterprises and technological innovations, in spite of our national human potential.

This means that we need to support closer cooperation among CY authorities, the private sector and academia, in order to devise appropriate strategies and enforce proficient security measures. We must enhance information exchange among all involved parties, in order to develop capabilities and joint response, and this must happen not only among domestic and foreign relevant actors, but also with the private sector.

The Romanian legislative and institutional framework needs to be updated as soon as possible, with at least a new law for cyber security and a new CY security strategy. Those need to be adequate to manage new technological arrivals, such as AI, 6G, machine learning, the internet of things, block chain technology, augmented virtual reality, quantum computing and the hybrid warfare. Cyber-attacks from state-sponsored actors, hacktivists or cyber terrorists/ cyber-crime will continue and become even more sophisticated, and without the proper legal, institutional and human resources, we will be unprepared to counter them.

Special attention must be paid, in my opinion, to education. We all need to educate ourselves regarding technology, learn the basics in order to keep safe. Building a cyber-security culture and awareness among technology users, developers, involved institutions is highly relevant. It would be my pleasure to stress that there are currently a number of post-graduate educational programs at prestigious Romanian Universities, including the West University of Timișoara, focused on cyber security. Public-private partnerships are also crucial to ensure all of the above.

In a more general approach of the future, I think data privacy will continue to gain relevance as the pandemic advances or ends. A CISCO study revealed companies have doubled their privacy budgets in 2020, to an average of 2,4 million USD (Cisco, 2021), and state bodies need to start increasing investments in this regard, too, in order to keep up with change.

The new technologies need to become more and more integrated in functional activities, both as defensive and as offensive instruments. Nevertheless, I think some negative effects will continue, particularly attacks aimed at the health systems, big pharma, on-line education process and online meetings / work from home.

Against this very complicated background, the national decision-makers have a decisive role. Based on the lessons learned during the last two years, they have to assess the vulnerabilities, especially in the vital industries / areas, to identify the resources and the capabilities needed to ensure the economic continuity and prevent the strategic disruptions in a new crisis situation, to put in place efficient, targeted measures adapted to the specificities of each area, and to ensure that these measures are implemented.

The National Recovery and Resilience Plans prepared by the EU Member States provide a huge, but very challenging, opportunity for carrying out during the next years structural reforms and public investments in the six priority areas agreed at the EU level, amongst which the digital transition.

For the Western Balkans, the investment in the digital transformation, with the support of the EU, is vital for the economic recovery, for accelerating the convergence with the EU Member States and the EU integration.

Given the increased importance attached by the EU to the rule of law in the new methodology for enlargement, digitalization will facilitate the efforts of the Western Balkans partners to strengthen their administrative capacity, reduce corruption in the public administration, implement data systems that could increase the cooperation between the national competent authorities, and thus improving the fight against organized crime, cyber-attacks or terrorism. The security implications of the digital transformation in the region have to be carefully assessed, especially when it comes to investments in critical IT&C infrastructures.

Enhancing cybersecurity capabilities and implementing robust cybersecurity measures are particularly important, as highlighted by the highly disruptive consequences of recent cyber-attacks. The EU toolbox regarding cybersecurity risks to 5G networks and other EU standards or recommendations in the area have to be taken into account when drafting the security measures.

Adaptability and preparedness have become key conditions for keeping us with the pace and impact of digital transformation. This particular pandemic managed to **accelerate history,** but faster sequences of events leave loopholes that generate new vulnerabilities and chain reactions, propelling negative effects too. Therefore, we all need to contribute and do our best to avoid cascading failures (if I am allowed to use yet another software term, although I am not an expert).

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THE COGNITIVE WARFARE IN DESIGNING THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY (AND THE SECURITY ENVIRONMENT)

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Abstract: *The constructivist approach of international relations informs us about the deep structures of the global political organization, which is culture: the intersubjective meanings and perspectives people have in common and share. Our minds, our thoughts, our perceptions are in part the result of specific educational curricula, up to now designed to follow independent national educational programs. The language and the words we use play a very important role in configuring the cultural lens which intermediates our communication with reality, placing us in the middle of things and seldom obscuring the distinction between the subject and the object of our observation.*

The social construction of reality and a social world of our making are no longer philosophical ideas but the evidence to study. The need to theorize the theorization process, perceived as a base for social constructions, indicates us to question our educated identities and our educated mind frames as scientific objects to study.. ”A world of our making” (Onuf, 1989) means that culture, as an invisible mind frame, should be the object to study in order to better understand and anticipate the systemic challenges and to assess the risks that might arise in the future. McLuhan (1970) once said that culture is our business – war equals education, violence is the quest for identity and having his ideas in mind we intend to discuss the cultural infrastructure we presume is at stake in contemporary systemic cognitive warfare.

Keywords*: cognitive warfare, constructivism, culture, international security environment*

1. INTRODUCTION

The recent events from the Eastern part of Europe, more specifically the conflict in Ukraine, preceded by negotiations between Russia, US, EU and NATO regarding Ukraine, the ‘’red lines” invoked by Russia about NATO’s frontier expansion towards the East, the difficulties to reach an agreement between the parties involved in the conflict made us think in terms of cognitive warfare: the human mind is as well the battlefield and the aim is to change how people think in order to change how they act. As Russia’s declarations (*Adevărul.ro*, 30.01.2022) revolved around the idea that they didn’t want war but security guarantees, that they request written accords on some specific subjects, like agreements that Ukraine will never become a NATO member, we wondered why Russia insisted on getting the written promises of Western countries. What’s at stake? Why the parties involved in the conflict are not able to find a compromise?

We presume that at stake on the cognitive warfare strategic map are the deep foundational principles of the international system. The reasons superseding the invasion of Ukraine might be interpreted as a manifestation of the historical contradictions between the two main theories of international relations, realism and liberalism. The two main paradigms of IR, realism and liberalism, perceived from a constructivist point of view, represent two variants of global order to agree upon and consider the normalcy on the global scene. The agreement on some principles of the international system from a constructivist point of view represents the deep structure of the international system. Ian Clark (2007:2) formulates the idea in terms of core principles of legitimacy which express rudimentary social agreements. “Legitimacy is attached to society as the subject”. Some values were privileged in certain historical contexts. International society has expressly adhered to certain principles, be that maintaining a balance of power or securing fundamental human rights. (Clark, 2007:2-3)

The core principles negotiated in relation with, for instance, Ukraine, represents the units, the fundamental bricks of the international system. When talking about delineating between international systems, Phipott (2001) discuss the changes of the core organizing principles generated by deep cultural turns, e.g. the revolutions in sovereignty.

The changes are very important and difficult to comprehend. The modifications involve the mind map of people, the invisible frames functioning almost like an international constitution. In this regard, Philpott (2001:5) mentions:

> The eccentricity of international revolutions, the reluctance to remember them, I further suspect, lies in the strangeness of the very idea of an international constitution.

The deep cultural structure of international system lies in the mind of people and can be named the informal constitution of international society:

> Behind wars and commerce and investment and immigration, prior to alliances, leagues, concerts, and balances of power, beneath agreements governing trade, armaments, and the environment, is the constitution of international society. (Philpott, 2001:11)

The key principles of the international society are nowadays contested by important actors (not to say by the great powers as we believe it would mean upholding the realist strategic view). We are in the middle of a turmoil of debating the first principles. Even the right to existence of certain states is contested. For instance NATO Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, felt the need to specify that Ukraine has the right to defend itself as it is a sovereign state (*Adevărul*, 16.12.2021) in a context when its right to existence is contested by Russia, as well it's right to independence, to freely choose its foreign policy and alliances. On considerations related to security guaranties, a lot of issues can be invoked having the effect of breaking the constitutive rules of the international system with the justification the wars to be prevented.

Currently, we are witnessing the negotiation of the normalcy on the international arena. Once upon a time the actors signing the Treaty of Westphalia convened upon a system of sovereign states and on some principles of international security management. The European Union is an alternative system of managing international relations. The United Nations as well represents a system of rules for managing international relations in order to stop wars or promote interventions for humanitarian reasons.

During history ideas and principles reflecting specific intersubjective meanings on which the organization of the world rested varied producing varied different international systems. On the international arena a profound contestation of the fundamental cultural bricks the world is underway. The fact that there are other states

> is something that most citizens of most states during most times take for granted, and do not consider the product of anyone's design or the work of architects or framers. Fighting, trading, negotiating, they believe, is the real business of nations (Philpott, 2001:5).

Today is no longer the case as more and more people question the international society design and organization.

2. PERCEIVING THE WORLD: A WORLD OF STATES OR A WORLD OF NEGOTIATED IDENTITIES?

The academic discipline of International Relations, as a field of study, was officially configured as such after the First World War ended. At the international peace conferences organized in Paris (1919 – 1920), the world leaders were preoccupied to find solutions in order to prevent the emergence of another war of similar magnitude with the Great War. The theories used in explaining the causes which led to the emergence of the First World War were diverse. The interpretation that prevailed, the Versailles settlement - although some doubt that Versailles deserves to be called a settlement at all (Clark, 2007:110) - was that offered by the American president, Woodrow Wilson: the systemic cause of war was the European balance of power system. Wilson believed the task of peacemakers was to introduce the rule of law and create an effective international society. The balance of power system was the discredited one (Nye, 2005:84). The alternative model produced to replace the balance of power system was the concept of common security and the League of Nations, the organization to embody the new concept. The international society was to be understood as an international society of peoples, not simply of states (Clark, 2007:112).

A number of key liberal principles for organizing the world, comprised in the Peace Program proposed by Woodrow Wilson, were the first to be criticized by the realist paradigm of International Relations, developed after Second World War. The evidence that liberalism had failed to reach its goal was considered the emergence of the Second World War. The conclusions the realist IR scholars like Edward Hallet Carr (1990) or Hans Morgenthau (2007) draw had been reflected in the IR realist school of thought: the liberal program (renamed idealism by the self-proclaimed realists) failed in constructing a better world, the proof invoked was the emergence of the

World War II. The assumptions of the liberal theory were wrong, the realists claimed, therefore the world was organized in realism's terms, in accordance with the concept of polarity. As a consequence of that realist interpretation, the structure of the international system was to be defined in terms of bipolarity. Kenneth Waltz (2006), for instance, was the neorealist thinker who advocated the idea that if there was such a thing, a theory of international politics, then that theory is the theory of the balance of power (Little, 2007:167).

For K. Waltz the international system was a theoretical concept, one cannot use empirical methods to find out more about the nature of the system as the system was theoretically produced. A bipolar configuration of the international system was first a theoretical construct, a variant of international architecture adopted by actors for several reasons. The descriptive dimension of the distribution of power, Waltz admits, was very difficult to assess, starting at least with 1970, as there was no clarity whether the system was bipolar or multipolar (Little 2007:179). In the past, those great powers were relatively easier to be identified, but no longer was the case.

The Cold War was based on a theoretical assumption: bipolarity means more stability. Kenneth Waltz was an advocate of that realist idea. A multipolar system was not perceived as a safe one because of its unpredictable character of alliances. It was not enough to monitor the capabilities of the enemy as there was the possibility of changing sides of the allies. K. Waltz thought that the flexibility of a multipolar system was a source of risk as there was the danger of defection once the war starts (Waltz, 2006:166–167). Multipolarity was considered an instable configuration, as there could be no predictability. The "fluidity" of alliances comprises the risk that your friend/allied to transform itself into your enemy. In the realist strategic map the alliances are not marriages of love, but marriages of convenience. Alliances are based on interests and can shift as interests change (Goldestein & Pavehouse, 2014:63). The IR realist paradigm, as a constitutive theory of the international system, depends first on its validation and acceptance of the main great actors. Apart from the descriptive dimension of the distribution of capabilities, there is a normative dimension of the balance of power system. The normative dimension of the balance of power depends on the will of the participants to validate it and implement it as a mechanism of managing international relations. The normative dimension of the balance of power becomes more important nowadays as the risks of escalating conflicts are enormous.

3. THE CONSTITUTIVE DIMENSION OF REALISM AND THE MULTIPOLARITY CONCEPT

After the Cold War ended, most leaders and realist thinkers assumed that the international system became unipolar, as the US was the sole superpower which remained intact after the collapse of USSR. The objectivity of that appreciation was difficult to confront with reality. The unequal distribution of power was hard to measure. There were voices assuming that, in fact, the system was multipolar (Keersmaeker, 2017) or that the international scene can no longer be described using the balance of power concept (Vasquez & Elman 2012). As the post - Cold War world was a new one, comprising as well nuclear powers, describing it by using the polarity concept could be inaccurate and misleading (Rhodes, 2004). Once upon a time, during 1815s, the negotiators in Vienna tried to equilibrate power between the Great Powers, redistributing territories, resources, population, using quantitative measurements and estimations. (Lauren, Craig & George, 2007:26-28) In the post-Cold War context the aim of equilibrating power seems an impossible task in objective terms. Assessing power and capabilities of the actors is profoundly subjective and has mostly a propagandistic purpose. For instance, the importance of describing the world as being unipolar, in terms of US hegemony, serves as well in a cognitive warfare scene certain goals: upholding the image of an unjust world, a world unbalanced that needs to be balanced (Nye, 2002; Ikenberry, 2002; Kapstein & Mastanduno, 1999). Even if in terms of hard capabilities the international system might be characterized by multipolarity, in terms of soft power it was important for US enemies the world to be characterized in pejorative terms like unilateralism or "American hegemony", having the connotation of unjust world and the implicit assumption that a just world is a multipolar one. Evoking the international scene in terms of unequal hard power distribution, the description was important and relevant for legitimating policies having the goal to equilibrate the disequilibrium of power. That was the key argument for preventing major wars.

Yet, the realist paradigm was not supposed to be tested. As Martin Wight (1978:41) noticed, estimating the distribution of power at a certain point in time can be misleading. "What is a great power? It is easier to answer historically, by enumerating the great powers at any date, than by giving a definition." The politics envisaging getting an international equilibrium of power was based on the desire of international actors to contribute to a global climate of stability by establishing measures to build trust. It was about communicating and negotiating, proving good and nonaggressive intentions.

During the Cold War period, assessing the Soviet threat meant calculating capabilities in order to maintain the equality with the US. Therefore, the balance of power system had as a core principle the desire to overcome the security dilemma and the Thucydides trap by taking measures in order to deal with the fear of being aggressed. The equilibrium of power, usually describing an international architecture characterized by equal distribution of capabilities between great powers, was perceived at times from a normative point of view as a good one, a desirable architecture, and it was based on the creed that the world should be balanced. Major actors agreed to consider it as such: as a mechanism to manage international relation and build trust.

Nowadays, the balance of power model is contested by the majority of the Western countries. It cannot be used as a key principle of international relations as it contradicts other key principles of the international society, for instance the sovereignty principle or the national self-determination principle. The balance of power system was the main European hegemonic idea replaced after the First World War in Paris 1919, during that "six months that changed the world" (MacMillan, 2002), partially recovered during the Cold War, but perceived in terms of "the continuing story of a death foretold" (Guzzini, 1998).

4. THE CONTESTED PRINCIPLE OF NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY

The national sovereignty principle is based on deeper cultural, philosophical values that the principle in itself. Authors like Stephanie Lawson (2006) writes in her book *Culture and Context in World Politics* how certain ideas and values shapes modern international relations. The principle of sovereignty, for instance, has come closer to enjoying universal explicit assent. Intervention and integration challenge the sovereign state's territorial supremacy and overthrow some of the basic rules of authority. The changes result from revolutions in ideas. It takes a revolution in ideas to bring a revolution in sovereignty. (Philpott, 2001:4) The dynamics of the European integration by establishing supranational authorities to administer the main war capabilities, coal and steel, was the theoretical solution proposed by the founding fathers of the European integration process and sustained by the theories of European integration. The process of European integration continued on other areas important in terms of social security, e.g. preventing the risks related to famine. Therefore, the agricultural policy was configured. As the security agenda expanded, the rationality of continuing the integration process was upheld by arguments related to social security goals. Economic development, the policy of cohesion for reducing the disparities between European countries were justified in terms of social security. We may assume that the main security risk to be prevented, the emergence of another major war between countries, which was the prior justification for European integration process, did not remain the sole security risk to be managed. As the human security agenda proliferated, the European agenda comprising security risks grew. The risks were perceived to arise at every corner, the human security doctrine for Europe was synonymous with good governance. The theoretical security program of European integration progressively justified the need for a deeper change, which meant in fact a change in the nature of the political communities.

From a philosophical point of view, national sovereignty is dependent on the interpretation that culture matters, national identity is relevant for establishing a state, a polity. Stephanie Lawson (2006:4) mentions that

> to the extent that nations are assumed to be cultural units encompassing 'a people' it follows that each nation is entitled, via a democratic principle of self-determination, to form itself into a sovereign political community, that is, a sovereign state that is co-equal with all other such entities in an international system of states.

In a cognitive warfare map, there are other competitors, other identities having relevance in different contexts. A cultural turn might revert such constitutive interpretations. Bukovansky (2002) demonstrated the effects the French and the American Revolutions had on international political culture. Lawson (2006:4) shows that the concept of culture is crucial to the formulation of distinctive identities in relation to the issue of who belongs and who does not belong in or to specific political communities.

> This is where the culture concept and the idea of 'nation' intersect, for the latter is often defined not simply as a political community characterized by a particular culture, but as a political community by virtue of its possession of a particular culture.

The constitutive theories of the international relations can be perceived as particular hermeneutics on what matters as core principles in organizing the world. It also implies a hierarchy of principles. Ikenberry (2001:3) was interested to decipher how hegemonic order is created at rare historical junctures. The alternation between the two main models of organizing International Relation, realist and liberal, was reflected in political practice during the last centuries. The historical events of major importance can be traced from the perspective of key principles political actors agreed upon. The history of international systems establishes `cornerstones` like the settlements of 1815, 1919, 1945, post – Cold War, post 9/11.

The past world orders relied on key principles major actors, after victories, convened on. The 20th century was the period searching the specificities, the national flavors and definitions. During the 20th century it was important to create and maintain traditions, models, patterns, to develop national identities, national brands as the national culture represented the badge for having a state as well for wanting a new one or separating from another one. The national identity and culture was the prerequisite for diverse social movements as the international order established at Versailles 1919 consecrated the national self-determination principle.

5. CULTURE IS OUR BUSINESS IN DESIGNING THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY

The world orders in a diachronic perspective had philosophical assumptions as organizing principles. Kenneth Waltz (2006) considered that there are only two possibilities to define the international system: as anarchic or as hierarchic. There are meta-values to agree upon as key principles like national sovereignty, for instance. The fundamental institutions of international society are to be observed as nowadays the cognitive warfare has as stakes the fundamental principles of international society.

When speaking about cultural infrastructure we try to identify the first principles a society should uphold and cultivate. For instance, an important transformation which needs to be studied is related of the implications of changes derivate from prevalent communication means, respectively related to information age. A culture based on words differs fundamentally from a culture based on images involving important changes in functioning of the human mind. The cultural revolutions are similar to cultural rifts the humanity experienced when translating from medieval to modern era. The cultural turn has profound implication for every aspect of everyday life, yet for organizing international sphere as well: how people consume information, how the brain of people function has many consequences. The future social order is dependent on educational programs. The educational programs have profound political consequences. Globalization means as well having the conscience of a global society. The more evident becomes the constitutive function of theories and the awareness that people act and decide in accordance with their education, thoughts and feelings.

The constitutive role of social theories, be that international relation theories, has paramount relevance, as represents mechanisms of interpreting the international organization. Guzzini (1998:xii) notices the foundational role of theories:

> In other words, we are interested not only in how one can use theories to analyze given events, but how the determination and analysis of these very events is in itself constructed by different theories.

Given the globalization process, our social identities are questioned in the "new global village". The unofficial constitution of international society means a lot more, it implies giving political and social definition of personal identities. The ideological consequences are intrinsic. On the international level, constitutions are rarely explicitly called such. But they are constitutive, foundational, in this essential respect: they define the polities and their basic powers with respect to one another. (Philpott, 2001:11).

6. CONCLUSIONS

The cognitive warfare to define international society has many consequences as it is related to ideologies and educational policies having philosophical fundaments which constructs and maintain the legitimate political communities. Roxanne Lynn Doty (1996:121) noticed that:

> …by conceptualizing the state as a given, a unitary entity, the dominant realist approach has undermined the distinction between state, nation, and sovereignty. This permits questions of national identity and its relevance to sovereignty to be dismissed because they are presumed not to be problems.

The challenges we face today, from a cultural point of view, revolve around the philosophy and ideology of international society construction. As there are many people, the identity of the "we" becomes "a flexible political resource, adaptable to changing circumstances and new crises" (Doty, 1996:126). The identities are nowadays negotiated as the inside and outside dichotomy is challenged. Doty (1996:123) mentions that for the real-life practitioners of statecraft, the issue of foundations cannot be dismissed. "Their task is to constitute as unproblematic a thing that is intrinsically problematic - the nation." Some authors, like Rodney Bruce Hall (1999), wrote about the national collective identity, as a social construct, and the way it constructed international systems, delineating three epochal changes. The author argues for the need a clear distinction to be made between the nation and the state:

> Nationalism fosters or impels a specific legitimating principle – national self-determination – which has far–reaching consequences for system constitution and transformation. National sovereignty is a form of social institution distinct from that of a state sovereignty. (Hall, 1999:12)

The cognitive warfare has profound structural consequences, the politics of identity can be perceived as a warfare strategy using culture, theories and philosophies, rhetorical strategies, favorable for diverse interests and stakes. By stating that culture is our business, that war equals education, that violence is the quest for identity, McLuhan (1970) evoked an idea H. Arendt heighted: before being natural, human condition is political (Droit, 2012:112), yet the administrative cliché can no longer be easily expelled or disconnected from people's minds.

The cognitive warfare in designing international society and the security environment has at stake determining people to act in a certain way by changing their perceptions about just actions. A classical war cannot be fought if soldiers refuse to fight, if they don't believe the war is just, that the cause is a just one. The international scene is an arrangement involving as well competitive principles of justice and perpetual negotiations of personal and social identities. The political units from the international scene imply structured definitions of the self. The citizenship represents such a structured identity. Challenging the structured identity means as well challenging the world order, the norms and the organizing principles the international society is formed on.

The information revolution modifies profoundly our perception of reality, as well as our identities. The virtual communication and the social media revolution exposes people to disinformation, fake-news, propaganda, making them vulnerable to all kinds of information content. The role of good educational programs, the importance of knowledge and culture, is multiplied by the dynamics of the international security environment and by the cognitive instruments used by armies in order to win the war. Becoming the main battlefield in an era of global communication, human mind represents the place to be colonized with desirable contents by diverse actors, promoting as well versions of international organization. From our point of view, the difficult problem would be delineating between free speech and a silent war.

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THE BATTLE OF STRATEGIC NARRATIVES: VLADIMIR PUTIN VERSUS VOLODYMYR ZELENSKY

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Abstract: *Our research analyzes the narratives employed by the Russian president Vladimir Putin and the Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky in their speeches regarding the military actions in Ukraine from the 19th of February to the 10th of March 2022. The battle on the ground between Russia and Ukraine is doubled by the two presidents' discursive confrontation. They both address their own audiences, opposing audiences and the international audience affected by this confrontation. They express powerful ideas that are the building blocks for strategic narratives through which they justify their action, they highlight the role they play in the conflict and set expectations for the future. Our narrative analysis identifies the major frames and topics of these narrative strategies as they unfolded at the beginning of the war and the results of these discursive confrontations.*

Keywords*: strategic narrative; actors; events, setting*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the present informational ecosystem, wars are as much fought on the narrative battlefield as they are fought in the physical domain. In the current conflict in Ukraine, we see two strategic narratives that are battling for superiority: on the one hand, the Russian president's narrative regarding the rights and threats that the Russian Federation has and perceives, respectively, with respect to Ukraine; on the other hand, the Ukrainian president's narrative about the courage, values, fortitude of the Ukrainian people in face of a war and their penchant for democracy. In order to better comprehend how strategic narratives function and what their societal and security power resides in, we have conducted a narrative analysis of the speeches given by Vladimir Putin and Volodymyr Zelensky in the period 19 February - 10 March 2022, a timeline that includes speeches delivered before and shortly after the beginning of the war in Ukraine. Our objective is to understand what strategic narratives the two heads of state employ in order to shape international and domestic perceptions of and reactions to the war.

To this end, we have reviewed the literature with respect to strategic narratives and we have extracted a conceptual framework to be used in analyzing the strategic narratives of the two above-mentioned actors.

2. STRATEGIC NARRATIVES IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Narratives have been part of humanity's culture since the beginning of time because they respond to an inherent and omnipotent need to understand one's environment and experiences, to make sense of the world around, by identifying the hidden causal and temporal relations that order events and confer meaning over apparently random sequences of occurrences. As Holmstrom explains, narratives are more than simple stories. Their role is to "describe the past, justify the present, and present a vision of the future" (2016: 119). The explanatory, correlational and organizational nature of narratives provides control over large volumes of information that could otherwise overwhelm humans' ability to function in the world. They give structure and meaning to experiences, which is why they are so attractive and could be used for multiple purposes and at various levels of complexity. Joseph Campbell (1991) has identified the typical narrative structure as containing: a character/an actor that the audience can identify or empathize with, tension built through curiosity, danger, crisis, the struggle to overcome the moment of crisis and the solutions, the satisfying denouement. Gottschall (2019:47) explains that narratives train the human mind's associative processes to handle difficult situations when and if confronted with them.

Holmstrom further explains that narratives become even more important when a crisis is unfolding, when people are confronted with an unknown situation, which creates a void of knowledge and understanding. In these cases, when people cannot resort to a narrative to explain the events, there is a void that any explanation available could fill, irrespective of its viability and merits.

> Facts alone cannot ease the feeling of being lost intellectually. Narratives answer the basic human need for structure and predictability. If one side fails to provide a meaningful narrative, others will fill the void (Holmstrom, 2016:120).

However, narratives could be used to shape the understanding of international relations and systems as well, as they can operate at a strategic level. In this case, they could be used to shape policies, to determine strategic advantages, to project certain states or organizations' image in the world, to inform reactions to crises or conflicts, to determine expectations regarding certain actors' behavior, to create desirability to cooperate or reluctance to engage with certain actors, to make predictions about future courses of action. These are strategic narratives and are defined as

> representations of a sequence of events and identities, a communicative tool through which political actors – usually elites – attempt to give determined meaning to the past, present and future in order to achieve political objectives (Miskimmon *et al.*, 2013: 7).

In our opinion, this attempt is, in fact, meant to create a feeling of eternity and stability, by bridging the past, present and future into a continuous and comprehensible sequence of events unfolding towards a clearly defined goal. Strategic narratives confer power and influence in international relations. As Madisson & Ventsel (2021:22) explain

> telling a story entails segmentation of a flow of experience, which has been perceived as continuous, into many concrete units which are thereafter ordered in a definite way: temporal and causal relations are created with other elements of the story and meaningfulness is attributed to the whole story.

Narratives are not about true facts, but about specific perspectives which reflect particular interests, and their goal is to intentionally shape the meanings of conflicts to suit their proponents' needs (Miskimmon *et al.,* 2013, Miskimmon *et al.,* 2017).

Strategic narratives are employed by every governing power that "tries to connect its story to the existing societal narratives, but these ties are seldom perfect" (Maan, 2020: 34) Moreover, conflicts, crises and wars are complicated and dangerous times which can create further disruption in societal narratives. As Maan explains, these moments of disruption are the perfect opportunity for successful narrative entrepreneurs to "interpose their own story between the government story and the societal narrative," (2020:34) thus leading to more disruption and an alteration of societal understandings and positionings.

Strategic narratives bring together and recontextualize various distinct narratives related to history, traditions, norms, culture, values, symbols which enhance their persuasive power because they trigger associations, evaluations, point to solutions that the audiences then more readily embrace since they already feel to a certain extent connected to them. We have noticed that, in the context of warfare strategic narratives can integrate even narratives that at previous times had been contradictory, for example, accusing people unrelated to Nazism that they are Nazis. Given the volatility and anxiety of the context, people are more willing to accept these conflictual reinterpretations of historical and cultural references.

Miskimmon *et al*. (2013:7-10) explain that strategic narratives have a particular structure through which meaning is obtained. This structure involves: actors, events (plot and time), and setting (including space). Actors work to present their own character by selecting historical references, values, actions that promote the desired image. In other words, they select certain frames which coordinate how their meanings are transmitted to the audience. In the case of international relations involving states or organizations, events can be historical, long ranging or punctual and precise, such as when a crisis or conflict breaks out. Events are governed by chronology and causality and the goal of a strategic narrative is to provide these organizations so as to best suit the interests of the actor. The setting refers to the context in which the events unfold and the actors make certain decisions. The context itself dictates how certain events are perceived by the audience, to what extent they can visualize the events and the actors. Moreover, we argue that the setting can rely not solely on spatial representations, but also on historical background, as the actors choose to present it, as well as on the legal framework provided by conventions, treaties, memoranda, agreements that govern the interactions among states and international organizations. The setting determines the actions of the actors and affects the evolution of events and therefore the construction of meaning that strategic narratives propose.

Along the same lines of analysis, Maan (2020:121) points out that strategic narratives rely on three elements: identity, meaning and structure. Identity (or actors in Miskimmon's interpretation) represents the sum of

> behavioral patterns, attitudes, values, beliefs, perceptions, history, culture all congregated into a cognitive, affective and expectational network that allows members of a society to make sense of the events that surround them and to become integrated into the social fabric.

Secondly, narratives give meaning to a series of events, they construe an understanding of what is happening. Maan emphasizes the fact that narratives do not necessarily tell the truth, as they create a meaning for those events in question and a justification for the interpretation they propose. Lastly, structure (loosely associated with setting from Miskimmon's classification) refers to how the narrative is organized and presented and it determines to a great extent how the audience will perceive the content of the strategic narrative, given the chosen pattern. Generally speaking, for a Western audience, a linear, chronological pattern which enumerates causes and then explains their effects is the more common and easily understood. It is our contention that this model may not function for an Eastern audience who is familiar with the circular and eternal vision of history and in which nostalgia for the past is more attractive.

All these elements that a narrative relies on are constructed via frames which Castells defines as structures corresponding to "neural networks of association that can be accessed from the language through metaphorical connections" (Castells, 2009: 140). For this reason, it is important which elements are chosen to construct the narrative because they will dictate the associations in the audience's minds and only those frames that manage to activate and connect to already existing frames in the public's minds will create the desired effect.

> Frames are effective by finding resonance and increasing the magnitude of their repetition. The greater the resonance and magnitude, the more likely the framing is to evoke similar thoughts and feelings in a larger audience (Castells, 2009:158).

Frames are based on selection and emphasis of some aspects of an event or an actor so as to guide interpretation in the desired direction.

3. REFERENCES

We have employed narrative analysis as our research methodology, which presupposes the analysis of texts as a reflection of the diverse stories that nations, governments, organizations construct about themselves, with respect to history, current events, cultural behaviors etc. Narratives presuppose that "events are selected, organized, connected, and evaluated as meaningful for a particular audience" and they are interpreted as such by the storytellers (SESSRM 2014). We have chosen to focus on thematic narrative analysis, that is on the "study [of] the substance of narratives" to determine the topics present in the narratives (SECRM 2017), the reasons they were chosen, and the world view they construct.

Bearing in mind what Dumitriu & De Graaf (2016:3) explained that "strategic story-telling can serve to explain strategic issues in a more personal, meaningful way" and that political actors may employ strategic narratives in order to make events meaningful, socially relevant and relatable for the audiences, we examined the ways in which the Russian and the Ukrainian presidents constructed their strategic narratives regarding the war in Ukraine.

More precisely, we have collected the speeches of Vladimir Putin and Volodymyr Zelensky from the period 19.02.2022 to 10.03.2022 with respect to the war in Ukraine. We have focused on this 20-day period because it represents the week prior to the conflict, the explosive beginning of the conflict and a short period afterward in which the two president's discursive positions became clear. The sources for the scripts were the two presidential web pages: http://en.kremlin.ru/ and https://www.president.gov.ua/en. In total, we have analyzed five speeches by Vladimir Putin and 23 speeches by Volodymyr Zelensky.

In order to identify the strategic narratives that the two heads of state propose for the interpretation of the war in Ukraine, we have identified in our analysis the three components of narratives: actors, including the ways their identities are created, events i.e. what meaning they are given, and setting, context, i.e. the structure, the framework in which the actors and the events unfold. In order to understand how these components are constructed, we have looked at the frames that the speakers employ and the ways in which they interact to build the strategic narratives.

3.1. Vladimir Putin's strategic narrative. The narrative analysis of Putin's speeches reveals that he uses three main actors in the strategic narrative he constructs: **the Russian Federation, Ukraine** and international organizations and alliances: **NATO** (with particular focus on the **United States**) and **the European Union**. Our analysis has identified several frames that Putin resorts to in order to create the image of these actors. In order to create the image of Russia, several frames interact. The first one is of **honest Russia**: “Russia always worked with Ukraine in an open and honest manner and, as I have already said, with respect for its interests”; Russia worked in “openness and goodwill” with NATO in the 1990s and 2000s; Russia fulfilled its obligations after the Cold War and proposed cooperation with the West, showing “its readiness to work honestly with the United States and other Western partners” (21.02).

The second one is of **Russia as an innocent victim of foreign scheming**. NATO is moving forward, towards Russia’s borders despite promises not to do so and protests from Moscow:

> our biggest concerns and worries, and (…) the fundamental threats which irresponsible Western politicians created for Russia consistently, rudely and unceremoniously from year to year.

Moreover, NATO and the US in particular, respond with “either cynical deception and lies or attempts at pressure and blackmail” to Russia’s concerns. Part of the same frame is the statement that the Pentagon develops missile systems in Eastern Europe that could easily hit Russian territory.

> It is like a knife to the throat. I have no doubt that they hope to carry out these plans, as they did many times in the past, expanding NATO eastward, moving their military infrastructure to Russian borders and fully ignoring our concerns, protests and warnings (24.02).

Another frame this actor plays in is that of **Russia as a savior**: Russia feels compassion for the oppressed people in Donbass.

> It became impossible to tolerate it. We had to stop that atrocity, that genocide of the millions of people who live there and who pinned their hopes on Russia, on all of us (24.02).

> Russia respects their aspirations, the feelings and pain of these people that were the main motivating force behind our decision to recognize the independence of the Donbass people’s republics (24.02).

In relation to this frame, we find another one, **pacifist Russia**: Russia supported resolving “the most complicated problems by political and diplomatic means, at the negotiating table” (21.02). Moreover, Putin portrays **Russia as the eternal fighter against Nazism** that continues the battle that Russian forces started in the Great Patriotic War. “The Ukrainian authorities denied everything that binds the Russian and the Ukrainian people together” (24.02), which led to

> the rise of far-right nationalism, which rapidly developed into aggressive Russophobia and neo-Nazism. This resulted in the participation of Ukrainian nationalists and neo-Nazis in the terrorist groups in the North Caucasus and the increasingly loud territorial claims to Russia (21.02).

Putin states that Ukrainians attack the communities in Donbass on a daily basis with heavy equipment, while the Western world does nothing because the 4 million people affected

> did not agree with the West-supported coup in Ukraine in 2014 and opposed the transition towards the Neanderthal and aggressive nationalism and neo-Nazism which have been elevated in Ukraine to the rank of national policy. They are fighting for their elementary right to live on their own land, to speak their own language, and to preserve their culture and traditions (21.02).

He goes even further to claim that the nationalists and neo-Nazis are using their own citizens as “human shields”

> It is only fascists that did this, they were the ones that treated civilians so inhumanely when Soviet forces were fighting them, including as they were liberating Ukraine (03.03).

Another set of frames involving Russia focuses on the fact that **Russia is still a power to be reckoned with**: Russia still has military and nuclear power

> today’s Russia remains one of the most powerful nuclear states. Moreover, it has a certain advantage in several cutting-edge weapons. In this context, there should be no doubt for anyone that any potential aggressor will face defeat and ominous consequences should it directly attack our country (24.02).

Putin also frames Russia as being eternal, focusing on the Russians’ respect and promotion of their cultural heritage.

> The culture and values, experience and traditions of our ancestors invariably provided a powerful underpinning for the wellbeing and the very existence of entire states and nations, their success and viability (24.02).

These cultural traditions are the source of Russia’s power and status in the world and the bedrock for their sovereignty:

> We all know that having justice and truth on our side is what makes us truly strong. If this is the case, it

> would be hard to disagree with the fact that it is our strength and our readiness to fight that are the bedrock of independence and sovereignty and provide the necessary foundation for building a reliable future for your home, your family, and your Motherland (24.02).

The second actor Putin employs in his strategic narrative is Ukraine. A very important frame that Putin creates with respect to Ukraine is that it does not exist independently of Russia, neither from a cultural nor from a statehood point of view. We have termed this the **Ukraine non-existence frame**. Ukraine cannot be accepted as a separate country from Russia because they share the same history, culture. "I will never abandon my conviction that Russians and Ukrainians are one nation";

> Ukraine is not just a neighboring country for us. It is an inalienable part of our own history, culture and spiritual space. These are our comrades, those dearest to us – not only colleagues, friends and people who once served together, but also relatives, people bound by blood, by family ties (03.03).

Moreover, Ukraine has never been a real state

> Ukraine actually never had stable traditions of real statehood. And, therefore, in 1991 it opted for mindlessly emulating foreign models, which have no relation to history or Ukrainian realities (21.02).

This led to clans with self-serving interests and oligarchs, and not to better conditions and protections of the citizens' interests and well-being. Within the same frame, to accentuate Ukrainian lack of statehood, Putin delegitimizes the Maidan protests by stating that Maidan was a nationalists' coup d'état and it pushed the country "into the abyss of civil war. Eight years later, the country is split. Ukraine is struggling with an acute socio-economic crisis" (21.02). Given the fact that it did not have the traditions of statehood, Ukraine "has been reduced to a colony with a puppet regime";

> The state was privatised. As a result, the government, which designates itself as the "power of patriots" no longer acts in a national capacity and consistently pushes Ukraine towards losing its sovereignty (21.02).

In all, the Ukraine actor is nothing more than a cultureless and statehoodless puppet in the hands of foreign powers, which introduces the second frame regarding Ukraine: **Ukraine as an instrument of foreign manipulation**. Ukraine blackmails Western countries to support it, by using its potential ties with Russia as a bargaining chip.

> The officials in Kiev replaced partnership with a parasitic attitude acting at times in an extremely brash manner. Suffice it to recall the continuous blackmail on energy transits and the fact that they literally stole gas (21.02).

Kiev used its dealings with Russia to blackmail the West.

> Kiev tried to use dialogue with Russia as a bargaining chip in its relations with the West, using the threat of closer ties with Russia for blackmailing the West to secure preferences by claiming that otherwise Russia would have a bigger influence in Ukraine (21.02).

With respect to the actors NATO (the US in particular) and the EU, Putin employs an **external aggression and superiority frame.** NATO and the EU have an aggressive stance against Russia and its legitimate interests and complaints

> Where did this insolent manner of talking down from the height of their exceptionalism, infallibility and all-permissiveness come from? What is the explanation for this contemptuous and disdainful attitude to our interests and absolutely legitimate demands? (24.02)

Russia understands that international relations evolve and change, but believes the change should be professional, smooth, patient, taking into account and respecting all the actors' interests and responsibilities. However, this is not the stance that Western countries have adopted:

> we saw a state of euphoria created by the feeling of absolute superiority, a kind of modern absolutism, coupled with the low cultural standards and arrogance of those who formulated and pushed through decisions that suited only themselves (24.02).

Moreover, the West has constantly tried to destroy Russia in two ways. First, culturally

> they sought to destroy our traditional values and force on us their false values that would erode us, our people from within, the attitudes they have been aggressively imposing on their countries, attitudes that are directly leading to degradation and degeneration, because they are contrary to human nature (24.02).

Secondly, by infringing on its territorial integrity by expanding NATO infrastructure on Ukrainian territory.

> Any further expansion of the North Atlantic alliance's infrastructure or the ongoing efforts to gain a military foothold of the Ukrainian territory are unacceptable for us. Of course, the question is not about NATO

> itself. It merely serves as a tool of US foreign policy. The problem is that in territories adjacent to Russia, which I have to note is our historical land, a hostile "anti-Russia" is taking shape. Fully controlled from the outside, it is doing everything to attract NATO armed forces and obtain cutting-edge weapons (24.02).

As these operations continue, Russia's very sovereignty is threatened. "It is not only a very real threat to our interests but to the very existence of our state and to its sovereignty. It is the red line which we have spoken about on numerous occasions. They have crossed it" (24.02).

Another frame connected to the previous one refers to the fact that **NATO and the US are deceitful**. All the exercises that NATO organizes in Ukraine are "an impudent development of Ukrainian territory as a theatre of potential military operations" against Russia. NATO has deceived Russia with promises not to expand eastward.

> This type of con-artist behaviour is contrary not only to the principles of international relations but also and above all to the generally accepted norms of morality and ethics. Where is justice and truth here? Just lies and hypocrisy all around (24.02).

In particular, the US is framed as "an empire of lies":

> All its satellites not only humbly and obediently say yes to and parrot it at the slightest pretext but also imitate its behaviour and enthusiastically accept the rules it is offering them. Therefore, one can say with good reason and confidence that the whole so-called Western bloc formed by the United States in its own image and likeness is, in its entirety, the very same "empire of lies" (24.02).

As far as events are concerned, two main narrative threads are identifiable in Putin's speeches: (1) the future the Russian president desires for Russia; (2) the justifications for the present war in Ukraine.

The **future Vladimir Putin desires for Russia** is clearly stated in his speech on 21st of February, before the invasion began and which should look as follows: NATO should no longer expand or deploy assault weapons on Russian borders and, in fact, it should retreat to the positions it held in 1997. This vision for the future is in fact a past situation. Even when he attempts to speak about the future, Putin returns to the past and the injustices the believes Russia has suffered. These three proposals have been ignored by Western states who claim that "each state is entitled to freely choose ways to ensure its security or to join any military union or alliance. That is, nothing has changed in their stance, and we keep hearing the same old references to NATO's notorious "open door" policy" (21.02). Additionally, the West attempts to blackmail Russia with sanctions, which, in Putin's estimation "they will introduce no matter what as Russia continues to strengthen its sovereignty and its Armed Forces" (21.02). He goes even further to claim that the West may actually be "fabricating a pretext for yet another sanction attack regardless of the developments in Ukraine", because "their one and only goal is to hold back the development of Russia. And they will keep doing so, just as they did before" (21.02). Putin restates the idea of a circular historical vision in which what has come before will come again.

With respect to the second line of events, **justifications for the present war in Ukraine**, Putin considers that Russian proposals for

> an equal dialogue on fundamental issues have actually remained unanswered by the United States and NATO, when the level of threats to our country has increased significantly, Russia has every right to respond in order to ensure its security. That is exactly what we will do (21.02).

This is the moment in which pacifist Russia becomes Russia the savior and fighter against Nazis, which are reflected in the ways Putin presents the events in the war. He announced on the 24th of February 2022 that

> in accordance with Article 51 (Chapter VII) of the UN Charter, with permission of Russia's Federation Council, and in execution of the treaties of friendship and mutual assistance with the Donetsk People's Republic and the Lugansk People's Republic, ratified by the Federal Assembly on February 22, I made a decision to carry out a special military operation.

The objective of the operation is to protect the people who "have been facing humiliation and genocide perpetrated by the Kiev regime." Therefore, the Russian forces "will seek to demilitarise and denazify Ukraine, as well as bring to trial those who perpetrated numerous bloody crimes against civilians, including against citizens of the Russian Federation." It is not part of the plan "to occupy the Ukrainian territory. We do not intend to impose anything on anyone by force" (24.02).

Relying on Russia's frame as the eternal fighter against Nazism, Putin states that the West does not intend to respect the treaties signed in the aftermath of the Second World War, documents which he deems "sacred" because they enshrined the "sacrifices our people had to make to defeat Nazism."

Putin reminds that the people living in territories now belonging to Ukraine had not been asked how they want to live after the Second World War, and he wants to protect their rights

> Freedom guides our policy, the freedom to choose independently our future and the future of our children. We believe that all the peoples living in today's Ukraine, anyone who wants to do this, must be able to enjoy this right to make a free choice (24.02).

He addressed the citizens of Ukraine to remind them that Russia had to act in 2014 "to protect the people of Crimea and Sevastopol from those who you yourself call "nats."" But he will not "infringe on the interests of Ukraine and the Ukrainian people", as his only goal is to defend Russia "from those who have taken Ukraine hostage and are trying to use it against our country and our people." He emphasizes that the Ukrainian's "fathers, grandfathers and great-grandfathers did not fight the Nazi occupiers and did not defend our common Motherland to allow today's neo-Nazis to seize power in Ukraine" (24.02)

He also warns against foreign interference that would extort a terrible cost.

> No matter who tries to stand in our way or all the more so create threats for our country and our people, they must know that Russia will respond immediately, and the consequences will be such as you have never seen in your entire history (24.02).

This is in fact a threat against NATO and EU states.

As the intervention progressed (25.02), Putin presented the events and stated that the clashes

> are taking place not with regular Ukrainian armed forces' units but with nationalist groups that, as we know, bear direct responsibility for the genocide in Donbass and the spilled blood of the citizens of the people's republics.

He states that objective monitoring reports

> banderites and neo-Nazis are putting up heavy weapons, including multiple-rocket launchers, right in the central districts of large cities, including Kiev and Kharkov

and assimilates Ukrainian defense to terrorists using civilian covers.

In his updates on 03.03, he stated that Russian soldiers are acting courageously, like "true heroes" in order to protect the people in Donbass and provide security for the Motherland.

> Our servicemen are fighting hard, fully understanding the righteousness of their cause. Soldiers and officers remain in position even after being wounded. They sacrifice themselves, their lives, to save their fellow soldiers and civilians.

He also explains that foreign nationals, Chinese and Indian students, have been taken hostage by the neo-Nazis.

He restates the objectives of the operation "a peaceful life for the citizens of Donbass, and for the denazification and demilitarisation of Ukraine." Putin resorts to Russia as a victim frame implying that Ukraine, with Western help, was preparing to become a nuclear power again.

In his 05.03 discussion with the pilots of Aeroflot Group he reiterates the idea that Ukraine needs to be denazified because the neo-Nazis have infiltrated the government and they are the one who are fighting Russian troops, taking foreign nationals as hostages and even using the Ukrainian civilians as "human shields". The authorities in Kiev had called to ask for humanitarian corridors out of Mariupol, but despite the fact that "our people responded instantly and even suspended hostilities", the civilians were not allowed to leave by the neo-Nazis. He explains again that one of their main requests is demilitarization as Russia is a savior and protector for oppressed people.

With respect to a no-fly zone over Ukraine, he clarifies that this cannot be done from Ukraine, only from neighboring states and declares that

> we will consider any move in this direction as participation in the armed conflict of the country from whose territory a threat to our servicemen is created. We will consider them participants in hostilities that very second. Their membership in any organisation will not matter then.

This is Putin's way of reasserting Russia as a power to be reckoned with.

With respect to the setting, and more specifically the context of the invasion, there are two main lines along which Putin constructs his speeches (1) historically; (2) legally. Putin narratively reinterprets past events and legal documents to suit his interests, as we previously argued, not the truth. From a **historical perspective**,

> modern Ukraine was entirely created by Russia or, to be more precise, by Bolshevik, Communist Russia.

> This process started practically right after the 1917 revolution, and Lenin and his associates did it in a way that was extremely harsh on Russia – by separating, severing what is historically Russian land (21.02).

In their quest to attain greater support, the Bolsheviks gave the republics in USSR "the right of nations to self-determination, up to secession", which was enshrined in the Soviet Constitution of 1924. Putin calls this the

> the mine laid at the initial stage to destroy state immunity to the disease of nationalism was ticking. As I have already said, the mine was the right of secession from the Soviet Union.

Even though Ukraine's independence was due to this oversight in the founding USSR documents, Russia, as a savior, accepted

> the new geopolitical reality that took shape after the dissolution of the USSR, and recognised the new independent states. Not only did Russia recognise these countries, but helped its CIS partners, even though it faced a very dire situation itself. (…) Our country provided this assistance while respecting Ukraine's dignity and sovereignty (21.02).

In his speech on 05.03 he presents another historical analysis with respect to the Maidan protests, as a reaction to the Crimeans' people decision to unite with Russia. He terms Maidan as "the anti-constitutional coup in Ukraine, which was, unfortunately, strongly supported by Western countries." He also explains that Crimea made a free decision, through a referendum, to become part of the Russian federation, but the nationalists and neo-Nazis who obtained power in Kiev after the coup d'état refused to acknowledge this. The people in Donbass who did not approve of the new regime in Kiev were then persecuted in two military campaigns which both failed.

From **a legal** point of view, Putin states that the operation in Ukraine

> does not contradict the high values of human rights and freedoms in the reality that emerged over the post-war decades. This does not mean that nations cannot enjoy the right to self-determination, which is enshrined in Article 1 of the UN Charter (24.02).

Putin analyzes the laws passed in Ukraine with respect to official language use and minority rights. He concludes that Russia cannot sit idle in the face of policies that attempt "to root out the Russian language and culture and promote assimilation", and which state that Ukrainian is the state language and

> the Russian language has no place in schools or public spaces, even in ordinary shops. The law on the so-called vetting of officials and purging their ranks created a pathway for dealing with unwanted civil servants (21.02).

He accuses Ukrainian military and law enforcement agencies of cracking down on "the freedom of speech, dissent, and going after the opposition." Moreover, Ukraine prepares the destruction of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate. "The Ukrainian authorities have cynically turned the tragedy of the schism into an instrument of state policy" (21.02).

Kiev's intentions to join NATO are also part of the framing, as Putin declares that every state has the right to construct its security system as it sees fit, and enter what military alliances it wants as long as international legislation is respected. He refers to

> international documents expressly stipulate the principle of equal and indivisible security, which includes obligations not to strengthen one's own security at the expense of the security of other states. This is stated in the 1999 OSCE Charter for European Security adopted in Istanbul and the 2010 OSCE Astana Declaration (21.02).

He declares that Ukraine joining NATO poses a direct threat to Russian security.

3.2 Volodymyr Zelensky's strategic narrative. With respect to **actors**, Zelensky has a more personalized approach, meaning that each actor, Ukraine, the Russian Federation, NATO and the European Union (in this case addressed separately) is divided into subcategories. He does not only construct state or organizational actors, but also addresses the people living in those countries, as they are the force behind any change and any resistance.

When presenting Ukraine, Zelensky praises the courage and endurance of its **people**, and this forms one frame in his speeches: "great people of a great country"; "nobody is going to break us, we are strong" (08.03). They are mobilized against the enemy: "It is up to you and all of us whether the enemy will be able to advance further into the territory of our independent state" (24.02) and they are defenders of Ukraine, who demonstrate real heroism, "the enemy was stopped in most directions" (25.02). The only way to preserve freedom and state integrity is through the Ukrainians' "solidarity and determination" (25.02). In framing the qualities of the Ukrainian people, Zelensky goes further than simple collective structures and refers particularly to people who, in doing their jobs, help the country withstand the invasion.

> You are now at the height of your spirit, at the maximum of possibilities. Every soldier on the lines of defense. Every doctor who saves lives. Every firefighter who extinguishes fire. Every entrepreneur who continues to work. Dozens and dozens of other professions. Millions of people which became one whole. Superpower of the spirit. Programmers who joined the information troops. Everyone who joined the territorial defense. Teachers and educators who do not leave children. Police officers. Civil servants. We all withstood the blow together (05.03).

Another frame refers to **Ukraine** as a great united country in the face of a terrible war.

> During this time, we have had more unity than for over thirty years before. At first, we were equally scared, then we felt equally painful. And now we do not care. Except for victory. Except for the truth. Except for peace. (…) Except for Ukraine. During this time, we have truly become one. We forgave each other a lot. We started loving each other (02.03).

Due to its people and their resistance, Ukraine is a great, powerful country, a symbol of freedom.

> We responded to the invasion as we can in times of greatest danger. Responded with heroism. Solidarity. Mutual assistance. We responded in Ukrainian. So that the history of Europe will remember it forever (04.03).

Moreover, the identity of Ukraine is shaped in this conflict as the antithesis of evil, as the light that can banish evil. "Even in complete darkness we will see the truth. And we will fight until it darkens in our eyes. Because we are warriors of light" (04.03).

With respect to the frames pertaining to **Russia**, first there is a frame related to the **Russian people** as possible allies of Ukraine in this conflict as the ones that could stop the Russian president from pursuing this war. From the first day, Zelensky addresses the Russian population directly asking for their help and explaining that the war damages both sides:

> War deprives everyone of guarantees. There will no longer be any security guarantees for anyone. Who will suffer the most from this? People. Who does not want this more than anyone? People. Who can prevent this? People (23.02).

As in the case of the Ukrainian people, Zelensky does not call upon the population as a whole, but upon individuals in their various fields of work to assist him in stopping the invasion:

> Public figures, journalists, musicians, actors, athletes, scientists, doctors, bloggers, stand-up comedians, Tik-Tokers and many more. Regular people. Regular, normal people. Men, women, the elderly, children, fathers, and most importantly, mothers. Just like people in Ukraine. Just like the authorities in Ukraine, no matter how much they try to convince you otherwise (23.02).

He also acknowledges their efforts to stop what is happening and the Russian reactions against the war on social media, but he demands more decisive actions:

> If you hear us, if you understand us, if you understand that you are attacking an independent country, please go out to the squares and address the President of your country (24.02).

He also explains the situation as succinctly as possible, drawing a line of demarcation both in terms of nationality, as well as in terms of territory:

> We are Ukrainians. We are on our land. You are Russians. Now your military has started a war. The war in our state. I would very much like you to speak on Red Square or somewhere else on the streets of your capital, in Moscow, St. Petersburg and other cities in Russia (08.03).

The second aspect of the Russia frame refers to the **state** as such, which Zelensky describes as a **purveyor of terror**, as the war progresses: "Russia's criminal actions against Ukraine show signs of genocide"; "[the Russian soldiers] showed their true faces. This is terror";

> They [The Russian soldiers] are going to bomb our Ukrainian cities even more. They are going to kill our children even more insidiously. This is an evil that has come to our land and must be destroyed (27.02).

His frame extends and comes to be **Russia as a terrorist state** which must be condemned as such:

> This attack on Kharkiv is a war crime. This is state terrorism of the Russian Federation. After that, Russia is a terrorist state. Obviously. And it must be official. We call on all countries of the world to respond immediately and effectively to this criminal tactic of the aggressor and to declare that Russia is committing state terrorism. We demand full responsibility for terrorists in international courts (01.03).

The frame includes references to the effects of this terror on Ukrainian citizens: "This is torture. Deliberate. Systematic. Organized by their state. Foreign to us. And ruthless for everyone, even for its citizens" (08.03). In order to further the frame of deliberate terrorist attacks, Zelensky explains that

Russia had planned the attack for years, but this does not mean that Ukraine is weak:

> We are a nation that broke the enemy's plans in a week. Plans that have been built for years. Treacherously. Deliberately. With hatred of our country, of our people - of any people who have heart and freedom. But we stopped them. We beat them (03.03).

The **European Union** is framed around the **democratic principles** it embodies and which are defended by the Ukrainian people. The EU should be grateful to Ukraine for standing and fighting against the Russian aggression that threatens EU countries.

> Europeans are aware that our soldiers are fighting for our country and, consequently, for the whole of Europe. For peace for all European countries, for the lives of children, for equality, for democracy. And this gives us the full right to do the following (28.02).

Ukraine is also described as the catalyst for European unity. Zelensky frames Ukraine in relation to the EU as its guardian and protector against invaders.

> I'm very glad to sense this mood, the uniting, unifying mood. I'm happy that we have unified today, all of you, all the countries of the European Union (08.03).

He extends the frame of the war to include the EU, so that the Union would feel compelled to act by accepting Ukraine:

> This is not just Russia's invasion in Ukraine, this is the beginning of the war against Europe. Against the unity of Europe. Against elementary human rights in Europe. Against all coexistence rules on the continent. Against the fact that European states refuse to divide, yes, to divide the borders by force (25.02).

In light of what Ukraine has done for EU, Zelensky claims that it has proven worthy to become a member of the Union:

> The European Union is going to be stronger with us. We have proven that at a minimum, we are exactly the same as you are. So do prove that you are with us. Do prove that you will not let us go. Do prove that you indeed are Europeans (08.03).

Moreover, he frames the integration as the reunification of the forces that fight the darkness into one united body: “And then life will win over death and light will win over darkness” (08.03). He uses the same antithesis as when he described the way Russia acts against Ukraine.

Once more, he addresses **the citizens of the union**, the people themselves, because he is aware that any state or organization’s position is, eventually, determined by the will of their people.

> Ordinary people can also do their part of the job, I'm sure, in every country of the world, in each country of Europe. Go out on the square of your cities and demand peace for Europe, peace for Ukraine, stop this war. Go out, go out on the squares and demand to stop the war. This is our right. This is your right (25.02).

The frames Zelensky uses to create the image of the actor EU all have one common goal, to equate Ukraine to Europe so as to scare the European population into understanding that this is not a distant war that does not concern them, but a very close one, that could affect them to the same extent that it affects Ukraine:

> demand from your governments more financial, more military assistance to Ukraine. For this help is a help to you. For it is a help to Europe. You help yourself (25.02).

Thus he hopes to garner their support and project Ukraine on a course to European integration.

Another actor that is present in Zelensky’s speeches is **NATO**. He demands repeatedly and insistently that NATO should intervene to protect Ukraine, either by sending troops or by closing the skies over Ukraine. However, when this does not happen, the NATO frame shifts from being a possibly strong ally for Ukraine, to being a weak actor that does not fulfill its potential and is in fact responsible for loss of lives: “all the people who will die starting from this day will also die because of you. Because of your weakness. Because of your disunity.”

> Today, the Alliance’s leadership gave the green light for further bombing of Ukrainian cities by refusing to make a no-fly zone. You could close our sky. But… I do not know who you can protect and whether you can protect NATO countries. You will not be able to buy us off with liters of fuel for liters of our blood (04.02).

Thus NATO is too lenient with Russia.

With respect to events, Zelensky constantly creates a parallel counter-story to that presented by Vladimir Putin in support of the invasion. Ukraine is portrayed as a builder and promoter of peace, the exact opposite of what Russian audiences have been told:

> You are told that this flame will bring liberation to the people of Ukraine. But the Ukrainian people are free.

> We remember our past, and we are building our future ourselves. Building, not destroying, as you are told every day on the television. Ukraine in your news and Ukraine in real life are two completely different countries. And the main difference is that ours is real.
>
> We want to define and build our history ourselves. Peacefully. Calmly. Honestly. Hear us. The people of Ukraine want peace. The Ukrainian authorities want peace. We want it, and we make it. We do everything we can (23.02).

The second debunking story that Zelensky promotes refers to Putin's claims that Ukrainians are neo-Nazis:

> You are told that we are Nazis. But how can a people who gave more than eight million lives for the victory over Nazism support Nazism? How could I be a Nazi? Tell that to my grandfather, who went through the entire war in the infantry of the Soviet Army and died as a colonel in independent Ukraine (23.02).

He again moves to a personal and concrete level, that of his own personal narrative, in order to support his statements that there are no neo-Nazis in Ukraine.

Moreover, Ukrainians are not the ones who started the attacks, they would not attack those they are related to by family or friendship ties:

> You are told that I will order an attack on the Donbas, to shoot and bomb without questions. Although there are questions, and very simple ones. Shoot at whom? Bomb what? Donetsk, where I have been dozens of times? Where I have seen people's eyes and faces? Artyom street, where I walked with friends? Donbas Arena, where I rooted with the locals for our Ukrainian guys at the Euro [the 2012 UEFA European Football Championship]? Sherbakova Park, where we drank together when our guys lost? Luhansk? The home where my best friend's mother lives? The place where my best friend's father is buried? (23.02).

Once more, Zelensky resorts to his personal narrative to illustrate the strong bond of respect and friendship that Ukrainians share with their co-nationals in Donbass. The only reason they fight back is to protect the freedom they already have and their families:

> We know for certain: we don't need war, neither cold, nor hot, nor hybrid. But if forces attack us, if someone tries to take away our country, our freedom, our lives, the lives of our children—we will defend ourselves. Not attack. Defend ourselves. While attacking, you will see our faces. Not our backs. Our faces (23.02).

And they will fight bravely to defend their country. Step by step, Zelensky debunks the frames that Putin's speeches promote and presents events from the Ukrainians' perspective.

Zelensky's speeches also tell the story of the invasion, naming each day the cities and towns that have been attacked, creating a particular, concrete representation of the war, taking it from an abstract level of an almost impossible event in the 21st century, to the devastating images of killed civilians, bombed buildings, attacked cities, millions of refugees. He tells stories regarding the bombing of Freedom square in Kharkiv, of a maternity hospital "Children's hospital. Maternity hospital. What did they threaten the Russian Federation with? (…) Was it the denazification of the hospital?" (09.03) He also speaks of a bakery

> Today in Makarov, Kiev oblast, they shot up a bakery. What for? An old bakery. Think about it. Why the hell would you shoot a bakery? (…) Or ruin yet another church in Zhytomyr oblast. The church of the Blessed Virgin Mary, built in 1862. This is inhumane (07.03).

These are everyday places, part of every person's life, and their association to bombs and destruction makes the war more comprehensible to people who have not seen a war in their lifetime. This is a strategic narrative of war as something that could happen anywhere, even in the most mundane places.

The events that he describes exhibit the same antithesis that he created for the actors involved; it's a clear dialectic of a conflict in which there is a good side and an evil side that consciously destroys civilian lives:

> They lied that they would not touch the civilian population. But since the first hours of the invasion, Russian troops have been hitting civilian infrastructure. They consciously chose tactics to destroy people and everything that makes life just normal. Power plants, hospitals, kindergartens, residential buildings - all this is under attack every day (27.02).

Zelensky also presents future developments, he takes the narrative into the future, projecting a bright image of a future beyond the destruction of war. The refugees will be able to come back, the reconstruction of the country will begin with funds from the World Bank and the IMF

> We have an agreement among the largest financial institutions to support Ukraine. There is already a decision on emergency aid and tens of billions of dollars for the reconstruction of Ukraine after the war (05.03).

The cities will be rebuilt and all traces of the war will be removed "We will rebuild everything. We will make our cities that the invader ruined better than any city of Russia" (07.03). He assures his people that there will be a glorious after the war

> After the war. Because everyone saw that for the people who defend themselves so heroically, this "after the war" will surely come. There will be a new Marshall Plan for Ukraine. The West will form this support package (08.03).

Moreover, it is worth noticing that Zelensky constructs event lines in tune with the audience he has. During his speech to the British Parliament he constructed his timeline per days, presenting the fights that took place each day, the suffering but also the heroic acts of the Ukrainians. He also drew parallels and built associations with Winston Churchill's speech in front of the Parliament during the Second World War in which he swore that they will defend each piece of British soil against the Nazis.

> We will not give up and we will not lose. We will fight until the end, at sea, in the air. We will continue fighting for our land, whatever the cost. We will fight in the forests, in the fields, on the shores, in the streets. I'd like to add that we will fight on the banks of different rivers and we're looking for your help, for the help of the civilised countries (08.03).

These powerful associations activate frames that the British are extremely proud of and thus Zelensky manages to garner support from the audience.

The **setting** that Zelensky activates for his strategic narrative is flexible, requires change, adaptability and quick reaction. In fact he argues that the architecture of security needs to be updated, a new system needs to be built

> The rules that the world agreed on decades ago no longer work. They do not keep up with new threats. They are not effective for overcoming them. This is a cough syrup when you need a coronavirus vaccine. The security system is slow. It crashes again. Because of different things: selfishness, self-confidence, irresponsibility of states at the global level (19.02).

Appeasement does not work because it led to the annexation of Crimea. He also extends the spatial setting of the conflict so that Western countries will not perceive this war as isolated to a distant and irrelevant space for their own security, but as a close and potentially dangerous place for their own peace. What affects Ukraine, affects the whole world

> That in the XXI century there are no more foreign wars. That the annexation of Crimea and the war in Donbas affects the whole world. And this is not a war in Ukraine, but a war in Europe (19.02).

Zelensky also reverses the roles on the EU, explaining that it should not be Ukraine constantly seeking to be accepted and allowed to integrate, but it should be the EU offering integration to Ukraine as a reward for protecting its Eastern border from Russian aggressions.

> This is your contribution to the security of Europe and the world. Where Ukraine has been a reliable shield for eight years. And for eight years it has been rebuffing one of the world's biggest armies. Which stands along our borders, not the borders of the EU (19.02).

The EU itself should prove that it is desirable through its actions and worthy of Ukraine.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Our narrative analysis of the two presidents' strategic narratives has revealed the fact that they employ divergent means of construing actors, events and settings despite employing the same actors (Russia, Ukraine, NATO, EU) and referring to basically the same events. Vladimir Putin's strategic narrative presents Russia a as pacifist, honest actor, who has tried to cooperate with Ukraine and Western powers in an attempt to preserve Russian sovereignty and protect Russian strategic interests, despite constant deceit and infringement by NATO, the US and Ukraine itself. He portrays Russia as an actor from the past, and his narrative is a means of reconstructing and reattaining the glorious old times when Russia was an empire and a force to be reckoned with. He uses somewhat veiled threats, he shapes the international legal framework to justify his actions, he draws parallels to NATO and US actions that could provide justification for his military actions in Ukraine and he rewrites Ukrainian history in order to prove that it has never been a sovereign state, and the independence it has gained was the result of USSR interests at the time when that union was founded and thus it is not warranted at present and it cannot be a justification for Ukraine to bring NATO and Western interests so close to Russian borders. The strategic narrative that Putin creates is based on a language of separation reminiscent of the immediate aftermath of World War II, which proves that Putin's representations of Russia and of its missions function on the historical scale of eternity, of the permanence and infallibility of his visions of Russia as a defender of people, sovereignty and culture against foreign, especially European, interferences. This dichotomous and inflexible strategic narrative is anchored in the past and is aimed at constructing a cyclic future that eternalized the ideal vision of Russia that Putin has. This strategic narrative directed towards the past is portrayed in fact by the type of "special military operation" which is not at all different from types of missions in World War II. This proves that Putin has not managed to move beyond that point in history in anything but word usage.

By contrast, Zelensky's strategic narrative, while based on a similar adversarial dichotomy, is more nuanced and flexible. The Ukrainian president adapts his strategic narrative to the audience he has, to the associative frames that are most familiar to the audience and that are bound to stir the most powerful reactions. The actors he constructs in his narrative are not monolithic, but diverse, he refers not only to countries or organizations and alliances, but also to the people that give these alliances their legitimacy and that could force to stop the aggression or obtain more support for Ukraine. He indicates particular categories of population in his speeches and thus the audience can identify with them. Therefore, his strategic narrative has a less state-based and more a human-centric approach with respect to actors. As far as the events are concerned, Zelensky's strategic narrative is projected to the future, to what Ukraine and the world could become, after the war, not to a past in which only Russia matters. His approach to the unfolding events is to put them in direct link not only to Ukraine, but to the whole of Europe and to the future of democracy, thus emphasizing that the war in Ukraine relevant and dangerous for all democratic countries. Zelensky's narrative constantly presents particular happenings, and concrete places as the conflict unfolds, thus creating a referentially valid mental representation of the war zone for foreign audiences and transforming the violence into a very concrete and easily relatable experience for audiences worldwide. Zelensky employs a language of unity, he calls for common action explaining that in protecting Ukraine, democratic countries actually protect themselves. The Ukrainian president creates a strategic narrative that brings the world together, that garners support, by appealing to people's consciences, while at the same time reaffirming Ukraine's courage, individuality, democratic aspirations and sovereignty.

Strategic narratives are vital in constructing the image of a state or organization or alliance and the explanations of the actions and events that are unfolding at a particular time or of evolutions on a historical scale. What our analysis has revealed is how the strategic narratives of the two main actors involved in the conflict in Ukraine are created. Putin's speech focuses on actors, presented as abstract, generic entities, and less on events because he creates a projection of a situation which must be accepted as indubitable and certain, while passing elsewhere responsibility for current events. Conversely, Zelensky's speeches focus on the actors' human nature and more extensively on the unfolding events which he brings to collective debate, in order to foster understanding and inclusive responsibility.

In conclusion, our analysis has revealed two different strategic narratives in Putin and Zelensky's respective speeches. On the one hand, the Russian president has not managed to be convincing with respect to the "special military operation" in Ukraine, which has led to Russia becoming even more isolated at a global level. On the other hand, the Ukrainian's president adept construction and use of strategic narratives has led to unprecedented support for his country and to hopes for Ukraine's future integration in the European Union.

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SECURITY ILLITERACY. THE SECURITY CULTURE PROBLEMATIQUE REFLECTED IN THE ROMANIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

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Abstract: *This article sets to offer a comprehensive perspective on the continuous and flexible adapting of security and intelligence studies in Romania where, through notable efforts, there is an ongoing progress to integrate national practices into the Euro-Atlantic landscape. Even if we are not speaking of an innovative topic-as throughout time the efforts of theorists and practitioners focused on diverse theories and taxonomies related to security and intelligence studies- it has to be noted that our efforts have the purpose of rather consolidating and developing the subfields of education and security culture. From this perspective, we are perfectly aware that the process of identification, shaping, developing, and implementing of a security education and culture is undoubtedly laborious. For reasons concerned more or less with patriotism, education (in general), critical thinking, various interests, each of us has a security education, but the basis is only empirical. Starting from this reality, the objective of this article is to build a scientifically-based instrument that would export security education and culture to a scientifical level. This article is based on pragmatic research methods, thus being more solution-oriented towards a sociological issue, namely the implementation of security education and culture at the societal level. More so, the analysis conducted is both descriptive- the establishment of the societal status-quo, and exploratory- constructing an argument for the application of security education and culture through various programs. The topic could be reviewed from the pragmatism paradigm point of view, more specifically through a deep analysis of cause-effect relations, as means for grasping the present-day context properly. This is the rationale supporting the aim of finding a valid solution to a pressing problem: the absence of a security education and culture at national level.*

Keywords*: security; security culture; intelligence; cooperation;*

1. INTRODUCTION. *SECURITY CULTURE,* AN OPERATIONALIZED CONCEPT

In a recent study published in *Gândirea militară românească* (Lesenciuc & Cozmanciuc, 2022:122-139), we were proposing a process of operationalization of the concept of security culture to be aligned with the National Defense Strategy Guidelines for the 2015-2019 period (SNAp, 2015:7): "The sum of values, norms, attitudes, and actions which determine the understanding and absorption of the security concept and its derived terms at the societal level", but, more important, with the constructivist school of thought within which the latest two National Defense Strategies were developed, and also the projective documents elaborated by the Department of Homeland Security in the US. More precisely, the term "security culture" was adapted so as to fit the patterns of national culture, in accordance with the dimensions proposed by Professor Alexander Siedschlag (2018) of Penn State, Middletown, coordinator of various national security programs, being based also on the categorization developed by Peter Katzenstein (1996), professor at Cornell University, one of the most preeminent representatives of the constructivist school.

Following the operationalization process, a matrix scheme in accordance with a national cultural scheme (traditions, symbols, behavioral patterns, habits) was developed as a result of projecting norms and standards (norms, values, attitudes, actions). Making the connection between the theoretical landscape regarding the complex issue of the 'security culture' and the empirical reality has produced not only the matrix scheme recalled earlier, but also an operationalized definition of the concept, assuming the transitions from concepts to dimensions (information classes), variables (regarding properties and qualities of these variables), and indicators and indexes (about the measuring and comparing possibility):

> Security culture represents a set of norms, values, attitudes and actions resulted from the habits, traditions, symbols and behavioral patterns of a nation conditioned itself by the need to adapt to the environment (including developing a threat response system), which ensures the understanding and absorbing the concept of 'security culture' and its derived concepts (including the security-freedom balance), reaching a minimum level of trust in state institutions and societal resilience as a result of social interactions and learning processes through formal, informal and non-formal education and based on a pre-existent civic culture (Lesenciuc & Cozmanciuc, 2022:136).

The process of operationalizing the concepts within the limits of the constructivist logic is instrumental to identifying the possibility of measuring the dimensions and variables of the security culture, for the purpose of later signaling certain possibilities of consolidation of the security culture. This article, part of a broader on-going research -aimed at identifying practical means of consolidating security culture during high school years through pedagogic experiment- has the purpose of identifying the current level of security culture in the sample groups and witness groups of four national collages, three civic and one military collage, located in different geographic zones.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1. The general objective of the entire analytical approach. Research objectives. The basic process of identifying an educational model for consolidating security culture requires a pedagogical experiment, thus projecting a pedagogical ascertaining-ameliorating research which targets the identification of practical tools for developing security culture during high school, and, extensively, also during middle-school. Aiming at bringing into discussion an ambitious and coherent project of security culture and education at the level of the civil society, our work focuses primarily on the curricular dimension of the project, meaning on identifying win-win solutions in the state-citizen dynamic in order to create and promote instruments: 'handbooks', programs, courses, even public policies on behalf of the state institutions which would allow for the creation of values, attitudes, citizens' behaviors in accordance with the institutional norms. Hence, this research does not intend to be conducted on the basis of a sample at the level of the entire high school cycle, but to rather build a consistent analytical landscape focusing on experimental and witness groups in order to underline the level of security culture among Romanian high-school students.

Taking into account the need to promote security culture and education in the context of emerging challenges - which in turn came to reflect the national security vulnerabilities- and the fact that security culture and education are not part of the national curricula, our entire analytical process focuses on identifying practical solutions for consolidating security culture within the high school students by means of a thorough implementation of state programs (the general objective of the analytical of analytical process). In such case, regarding security as a common good which entails concentrating efforts at a multilevel scale of challenges/ threats to the national security, we set as primer objective to identify the level of security culture among high school students involved in the simple analytical process. In addition to such objective, we set to identify: the level of trust in public institutions of the population in question, to what extent this population is familiarized with the attributes of the institutions involved in the national security process, the risks, threats and vulnerabilities of national security, respectively the intention to get involved in finding solutions, the comparative analysis of the data concerning the level of security culture and resilience on behalf of the students enrolled in civil and military high schools.

2.2. The research group. The research universe includes student groups that are to be exposed to ameliorative program in the pedagogical experimenting phase and shadow /witness groups. Out of need to map the research universe, we opted out for a sample group of those analyzed from high schools in which the ameliorative project would be implemented. This sample group is composed of national military college students. Hence, we divided experimental structures of 11th grade students as follows: 11th grade class A of 'Tudor Vianu' National College in Bucharest, mathematics-informatics profile (19 students), 11th grade class A of the 'Andrei Șaguna' National College in Brașov, mathematics-informatics (29 students), and 11th grade class E of the 'Petru Rareș' National College in Piatra Neamț, humanities and social sciences section (29 students). These three institutions are located in geographically-relevant area of Romania, and occupy important places in the national top of best academic results (for instance, in the previous academic year, the 'Tudor Vianu' National College occupied the 7th place, 'Andrei Șaguna' National College – 5th place, and 'Petru Rareș' National College in Piatra Neamț – 44th place. The raking was decided after the

Baccalaureate exam out of 1.452 institutions in Romania, with a success rate of 99,4%-100%), being representative of the level of academic performance when implementing the pilot project.

Moreover, the sample group was composed of the homogenous group of the 'Ștefan cel Mare' National Military College Câmpulung Moldovenesc (raking 48 in the national hierarchy, with a success rate of 100%), mathematics-informatics section, with a total of 120 students in 11th grades. In order to balance the scale, in this phase we have integrated the 27 students of the shadow/witness group represented by 11th grade class B of the 'Andrei Șaguna' National College. Consequently, the population subjected to analysis comprised: 104 students of civil high schools in which the pilot project is implemented, and 120 students from the reference group of the military college above-mentioned.

Out of the subjects analyzed with an average age of 16.89 years old from the day the research had begun, 94 are boys and girls, the remaining 23 not identifying with a gender or to other indicators that would have not have kept their identity anonymous.

2.3. Type of research. This article has the purpose of underlining the partial results of a longitudinal study (designed in three phases: initial, experimental, and final), but also focuses on a transversal projection when cross-sectioned with a key characteristic: the level of security culture in a certain moment of the research, in the last week of the 1st semester in the 2021-2022 academic year. For this initial phase, we applied exhaustive quantitative research methods targeting the population which would later on be part of the pedagogical experiment, extended for analytical purposes along two levels of reference groups: shadow/witness group(s) in civil colleges, and the military one. Out of need for a limited-perspective instrument used to collect data, we opted for a mixed questionnaire of 35 open questions and multiple-choice ones, collectively administered in the presence of the professors involved in the pedagogical experiment, which also acted as field operators: Prof Dan Ciupercă (CNITV), Prof Rodica Deaconescu (CNAS), Prof Dorina Dexler (CNPR) and Prof Petrică Ciocan (CNMSM).

To research the level of security culture, we almost exclusively used the collected data form the targeted population, out of which we analyzed the relevant data allowing for the future secondary analyses. The majority of multiple-choice items implied the pre-codification of information and the possibility of using a Likert five-steps intensity scale, while for the opened questions, we resorted to post-codification of information.

3. RESULTS

3.1. The level of trust in state institutions. It is not a surprise anymore that we are mainly living in a low trust society, especially when counting for civil high school students. Even if the average within the researched group is of 2,30 (equivalent of a trust level of circa 57,5%), the values and principles of the civil high school students vary between 1,82 – 2,00 (45,5 – 50% in relative values), fact that results in a consistent difference, of 19%, for the participating civil high schools: 1,87 (46,75%), compared to military high schools – 2,64 (66%). Ever since the first question whose responses were cross-sectioned with the intensity, there was a difference perceived between the trust level in state institutions among experimental groups and reference group that indicates, on one side, the vested interest in preparing in the civic domain/security culture in military high schools, having as a cause either curricula differences or the role of sub-unit commanders in shaping and consolidating this level or an increased rate of sensitiveness of the students about such topic. These aspects are easier to underline in relation to the frequency of certain responses: not a single civil high school student trusts state institutions "to a higher degree" whereas 15,83 of the military high school opted for this answer, not a single military high school student chose the "to a lesser degree" option, while this option was preferred by 4,80% of civil high school students.

The urge to justify the low level of trust in state institutions on behalf of civil high school students was a consistent one. Corruption within the state apparatus and the prevalence of personal interest above state interest ranked among the first places, with 20,65% of options, followed by the lack of transparency in the decision-making process, the incapacity (of disinterest) to promote a favorable image sustained by media campaigns, breaking the law and failing to promote human rights, the obsolete system and communist ideological roots of the current state apparatus, the instability of the policy-making process, lack of concern for citizens' problems, and bureaucracy. Regarding the justification of the trust level in state institutions, only 8,33% of the military high school respondents identified negative aspects (resembling the ones enumerated above), whereas the majority chose to not comment on the matter (explicitly or implicitly).

Among the responses of the reference group of students, there are some which recall a sort of attachment to the "student of a military high school" label: "I activate in the Ministry of Defense hence I trust state institutions", or to the "function" of citizen:

"That's how a citizen of this country should think". The students' responses are not dissonant in relation to the vulnerabilities chapter of the National Defense Strategy (2020: 218-29), maintaining however corruption as the top choice among state system vulnerabilities (SNAp, 2015), and identifying convergent causes within the level of student preparedness in relation to the first six elements comprised by the strategic document. The aspects of the low level of cyber security, the pregnant technological deficit, but more important the low quality of the educational act, of security culture, and modernization gaps, the digitalization and development of infrastructures were not mentioned even if one student recalled "absence of digitalization of the state apparatus".

To distinguish between the emotional and rational bases of trust in state institutions, and in order to correlate the degrees to which responses were motivated by attachment of disinterest, we collected data among the students on the perception of professionalism in state institutions. The results obtained were in accordance with those from the first question, but the average was lower- 2,13 (53,25 % in relative values), with an average point of 1,68 (42%) regarding civil high school students, and 2,56 (64%) regarding military high school students, with a difference of 22% in relation to the level of trust. If we are to correlate lack of trust with the absence of professionalism, we would discover minimal variations between the responses offered, with a single exception of a military high school student which responded that "he trusts state institutions", but they are indeed characterized by unprofessionalism, his argument being "I can't explain why". The arguments sustaining the answers are similar to the precedents. However, it is worth mentioning that in this case the responses were more dissipated, and the first option of the civil high school students is incompetence resulted from "politicizing state institutions" (with 9,61% in relative values out of the total of respondents). Some subjects argued that the fourth wave of the COVID-19 pandemic was dominated in media by the presence of politicians not health experts. Apart from incompetence, the civil high school students identified additional causes for the lack of professionalism in state institutions: nepotism, corruption, lack of interest, populism etc. The answers offered by military high school students, there have been arguments for the high value (organization, discipline and dedication), but also for the negative percentages which are in accordance with the responses given by civil high school students.

Regarding the politicization of state institutions, diminishing of professionalism, politics interfering with expert-based domains, we also questioned the trust level in the politicians. The results were eloquent: the students of the three civil high schools had an average of 0.63 (15,75% in relative value) whereas the students from a single military high school had more than double, 1.34 (33,5%), both values being situated near the "small extent indicator". Such result contributes tremendously to our research: if the level of trust in public institutions (which are, from the students' perspective, politicized) is one that fits the "to a certain extent" indicator, and the level of trust in politicians is situated near the "to a lesser extent" indicator (in the case of the experimental group, close to the value of "to a small extent"), this means that the political class, generally speaking, represents at the perceptive level an impediment to the scope of acknowledging the need for security culture.

Consequently, there is the risk of perceiving security culture not as an innate need resulted from the interaction between the state and its citizens, but as a condition imposed by the political class. From this perspective, the political dissidents must acknowledge that danger and design several coherent educational programs within the national security range that would not be associated with the political class. In other words, 'security culture' as a national project cannot be a political initiative in order not employ a low trust capital, but it must be a citizen's initiative or a security/educational experts initiative.

Overall, medium-level trust in state institutions and low level-trust in politicians, doubled by the performance criterion of the state apparatus (approximately, in relative values) inferior to the trust given are distorting the accurate perception of the security concept and its derived terms. The perception differences between civil and military high school students are the result of a subjective perspective after all, considering that score differences were not justified in any of the cases analyzed. We do not have the guarantee (by employing this indicator) that the security culture level is higher in the case of the military high school students, but we will not attempt to identify this aspect as we are more interested in the results registered within the population that is subjected to the pedagogical experiment.

3.2. Institutions with competences in national security. By trying to identify the institutions with national security competences from the point of view of high school students, we followed, by using the phrase "Which of following institutions have a more important role for the national security of Romania", the identification of institutions which are predominantly engage in the national security process: "defense (understood in a double normative quality-national and collective defense), public order, intelligence activity, counterintelligence and security: (SNAp, 2015:5), in relation to the concept that the National Defense Strategy of 2015 introduced, that of "extensive national security", which includes the "educational, health, economic, energetic, finance, environment, critical infrastructure domains" besides its core structure. From this point of view, the responses were nuanced in the sense that the difference between the security culture and extensive security culture concepts were less noticed in the case of civil high school students than in that of the military high school students. In the first case, within the response range, the differences between institutions involved in the narrow security concept-defense, public order, and intelligence are slim: Ministry of Defense – 75%, Ministry of the Interior – 72,12%, Intelligence Services – 71,15%, whereas the following institutions from the extensive system were allocated values ranging from half of the projection upon the narrow system: Ministry of Education – 34,62%, Ministry of Health – 26,92%, Ministry of Economy – 5,77%, Ministry of Environment – 4,81%, Ministry of Finance – 2,12%, Ministry of Energy – 5,77%, Ministry of Foreign Affairs – 1,92%. In the case of military high school students which are under the Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Education jurisdiction, perceiving the role of the military is influenced by this relation-84,17%, whereas the other structures of the narrow security system are perceived as having an important role for national security as follows: Ministry of Interior-60%, Intelligence Services- 51,67%. The institutions included in the extensive security system are perceived in terms of bellow 10%: Ministry of Education – 10%, Ministry of Health – 9,17%, Ministry of Finance – 5%, Ministry of Environment – 2,50%, Ministry of Economy – 1,67% and Ministry of Energy – 0,83%.

Despite the fact that military high school students distinguish better between the structures with national security competences and the other broader system structures, their perspective is distorted by the very membership in such an institution, the army. On the other hand, the civil high school students have a less vivid picture (differentiated) of the two structures, but nonetheless, their perspective is not distorted by their affiliation with any of the national security institutions. All in all, we cannot conclude that the security culture level necessary in order to identify structures with national security competences is altered regarding this indicator. Still, we ought to mention that there is not a connection with the current national security threats and vulnerabilities. The main topic debated during the period in which the questionnaire was employed was energy-related, but the security implications of the energy crisis were not taken into account even by the civil high school students (5,77%) or by the military high school students (0,83%). Consequently, a delay steaming from the aggregation of public opinions linked to national security aspects could be sensed, fact underscored by considering the role of the Ministry of Health when combating the COVID-19 pandemics (26,92%, respectively 9,17% from the respondents' opinions).

Regarding the perception on the salary system within the national security system, the matter is actually reversed. Civil high school students think that the national security personnel are better remunerated that it should be, with an average of 2,13, while military high school students think quite the opposite- that the personnel are paid with less than they deserve, with an average of 1,77. Even if, compared with the majority of NATO and EU member states Romania's national security employees are underpaid, the military high school students' opinion is not necessarily an informed one, but rather a subjective one as they would hold the same positions in the future. The 9% difference in relative values regarding the two perspectives is supported by another difference: while none of the civil high school students consider that these employees are "severely" underpaid than they should be (value 0 in the Likert scale), 11 military high school students opted for such an answer.

The divergent opinions of the two groups of students are, regarding this indicator not easily identifiable. There is a probability that there is a subjective factor influencing the responses of the military high school students. There is also a similarity concerning the delay of the aggregation process of public opinions of the institutions with national security competences. Certainly speaking, the security culture level is not low in relation to the knowledge degree of the institutions involved in the extensive national security system.

3.3. Identity perspective. From an identity perspective, the questionnaire results were unpredictable. 8,65% of high school students have opted for multiple identities, and 90,38% for a single identity. Taking into account both options, on the first place of top choices for the civil high school students is the nation-state, with 40,48% of options (considering that CNPR students gave opted for local identity). On the following places as an identity option are: the city: 33,65%, Europe: 22,12%, and the entire world: 11,54%, the region: 4,81%. The military high school students, assuming that a level of security culture was achieved through formal education, it would have been expected that national identity scores first, with a higher percentage than in the cases of military high school students. Still, local identity is situated on the first place with 55,83%, followed by national identity with half the score of the local identity: 24,17%, respectively by other potential identities, with values below 10%: regional-9,17%, European – 5,83%, and global – 5,00%. In the case of military high school students, there were only two options for a multi-layered identity, both assuming a triple identity: local, regional, and national.

Security culture is a concept that involves first and foremost national identity. Taking into account the results of the two groups, the experimental and referenced ones, it is safe to assume that from this perspective the level of security culture is a relatively low one, reality amplified by the lack of an awareness program of the security-related issues even in the case of military high schools.

Hypothetically speaking, the students' option for a city in which students, especially civil high school students would continue their studies as university attendees is tightly linked with their identity option. From this point of view, civil high school students, which had multiple choice options, formulated their intention of continuing their university education in Romania-42,31% (with the note that 65,51% of CNPR students have opted for this choice), then, in a European city-37,50%. The option of continuing their studies in their birth town (the majority of answers were from CNITV students) was embraced by only 8,56% in relative values, whereas continuing the studies in a city outside of Europe was picked by 7,69% of civil high school students. The military high school students on the other hand, considering that continuing their military studies is mandatory, and given the fact that in Suceava county (where CNMSM is located) there is no such possibility, 86,66% of students chose to continue their studies in another Romanian city, the rest of the values being therefore insignificant. Military high school students didn't have multiple-choice option; hence career prospects are precise and pre-established, and the chances for a rededication are slim. For the answers to question no. 11, which asks for clarifications for answer 10, military high school students used this very argument, stating their preference for one of the armed forces universities, Military Technical Academy or the Military Medicine Faculty. Regarding the options of civil high school students, they crystallized in four main directions: low quality level of education in Romania and the high level of education in Europe/outside Europe (11,53%), lack of specialization in the residing/birth city (10,57%), multiple short- or long-term opportunities (9,61%), and the need for improving, knowing, and expanding the horizon (5,76%). Most of the alternative answers could not be justified.

After correlating the options of the questions which made the object of analysis in the context of the present sub-chapter, we concluded that there is no precise statistical determination regarding the identity dimension, and, consequently, analyzing from the career prospects perspective does not serve the desired research objectives. However, the identity option explicitly formulated indicates a low level of security culture, especially for the reference group.

3.4. Knowing the risks, threats, and vulnerabilities to the national security. In order to identify the level of knowledge of risks, vulnerabilities and threats to the national security, we tried to identify first the perception on Romania's development potential, and the chances for that potential to materialize on regional, European or global level, respectively knowing security guarantees concerning Romania. In the hypothesis of development to the point of becoming a regional actor of significance, we formulated the following request through the questionnaire: "For Romania to be considered a powerful state, it is first and foremost necessary for it to prove that it is an authority ...". Civil college students have opted for the economic development of Romania – 85,58%, followed by political development – 29,81, technological – 19,23%, military – 15,38%, and symbolic – 19,23%

Military high school students have opted for approximately the same priorities' order, with the exception that over 50% of them have considered essential the development in *hard power* terms. Influenced by their career choice, and their acquaintance with a certain professional environment- the military one-these students found necessary the development in the area of hard power, given that 90,47% of civil high school students and 84,62% of total respondents opted for the *soft power* answer. Therefore, from military high school students' point of view, the prospect for development is bipolar, like an economic power: 53,33% and military power – 50%, then as a political power: 33,33%, technological: 18,33%, and symbolic: 9,17%.

Military high school students' perspective is compatible with that of the National Defense Strategy

(2020), whose subtitle underlines the two dimensions: “Together, for a safe and prosperous Romania existing in a world full of novel challenges”, in which the word ‘safe’ entail the need of long-term military development (or coercive), and the term ‘prosperous’ could refer to the economic dimension. The civil high school students’ perspective implies that only one of the two dimensions would be taken into account, the economic one; the security culture level is medium in this instance. Arguing for the options (through the responses to question no.13) presumes arguments dissipation. In general, arguments on economic power also refer to targets (joining G20). Political power, on the other hand, is considered the link between and a control mechanism over the other power forms. One answer explained the superiority of symbolic power: the other forms of power do not matter is there is a lack of cultural identity of the nation-state. Regarding military power, there were only a few arguments. The ones who have opted for this power form either chose not to answer or claimed their answer “without any special reason”. In spite of this fact, there were responses that gathered the following perspectives: the power status of a nation is measured strictly by taking into account military capabilities, military power is a catalyst for the other types of power or the necessity to understand the geopolitical position of Romania as a “shield for Europe against the Russian danger”.

This perspective refers also to Romania’s geographic ambitions of becoming a recognized power. Regarding this challenge, “Romania has chances of being considered a powerful state in ...”, both civil and military high school students have divergent opinions, the majority of which being concerned with local geographical areas. In the case of civil high school students, their first option was mentioning developing as a powerful state actor in the Balkans – 28,85%, then in Eastern Europe – 25,96%, in the entire Europe – 16,35%, in the Extended Black Sea Region- 13,46%, in the entire world – 1,92%. (we mention that 20,19% of respondents were convinced that Romania cannot become a powerful state actor), and in the case of military high school students, the responses were as such: developing as a powerful actor in Europe – 25,83%, followed by Balkans –23,33%, Eastern Europe – 21,67%, the Extended Black Sea Region – 12,50%, and the world – 4,17% (only 10,83% respondents claimed that Romania has slim to no chances of becoming a strong state). In the “Preface” of the current National Defense Strategy, the ambition of fulfilling security objectives imply a certain type of engagement in relation with the North-Atlantic and Black Sea region, while national security objectives are defined within the context provided by NATO and the EU, narrowed to the areas of “the Black Sea region, and the Balkans, as well as consolidating security and stability in other areas” (SNAp, 2020:16). Due to the unclear position in relation to the Black Sea region, “a geographic area of crucial importance” (SNAp, 2020:21) for Romania, civil high school students that would be subjected to the pedagogical experiment do not prove a high security culture level.

The following questions better clarify the security culture level, focusing on the possibility that an armed conflict might take place in Romania’s proximity, Romania’s involvement in such a conflict over a time span of five years, the potential aggressors endangering national security, and the resolution mechanisms of security issues. The questionnaire was submitted five weeks before the moment when Russian troops invaded Ukraine and in the context of latent of low intensity risk of escalation of the various geographical areas’ conflicts, especially those in the Black Sea Region: Donbas and Lugansk, Crimea, Transnistria, Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia, Abkhazia etc. To the question “To what extent do you think it’s possible that a military conflict would take place in the area?”, despite response differences, civil as well as military high school students had responses close to value 1, ‘slim chances’, or 2 ‘to a certain extent’. The responses average was 1,43 (37,75% in relative values), civil high school students opting for an increased probability of a conflict outbreak – 1,68 (42%), whereas military high school students did not think such a scenario is probable – 1,20 (30%). From the total of respondents, 39 (17,33%) opted for the ‘slim chances’ response, 90 (40%) opted for the ‘to a certain extent’ response, and only 6 (2,66%0 for the ‘high chances’ response. The answers were surprising in what concerns the involvement of Romania in a war in the upcoming 5 years, the values being higher than in the previous question. With an average of 1,60 (40% in relative values), higher by 2,25% than the possibility of a regional conflict, the students answered that Romania has chances of being involved in a military conflict. The average for civil high school students was 1,79 (44,75%), equivalent with the "to a certain extent" option, whereas the military high school students average was of 1,41 (35,25%), closer as a value to the ‘slim chances’ option. The answers to both questions argue for a lack of knowledge of the regional security environment, respectively a low level of security culture. An argument in this regards comes also from analyzing the motivation behind the possibility of a conflict outbreak: 36 students (16%) claim that the involvement would be triggered by Russia's aggressive behavior, out of which 26 are civil students (25%), and 10- military high school students (8,33%), out of which only 16 (7,11%) , 10 civil and 6 military (5%) viewed the involvement after an escalation of the Russian-Ukrainian war as a possibility, precisely as a result of a potential (at the time the questionnaire was completed) invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation 16 students (7,11%) viewed as a probable case the involvement of Romania in a conflict as an action deemed necessary by Art 5 of the North-Atlantic Charter, and 12 (5,33%) as a result of regional conflicts and the instability of the regional security environment.

To be able to identify the potential aggressor, we formulated the question no 21 "Which of the following states geographically close to Romania could manifest an aggressive behavior in the following 5 years?", and we included, besides immediate neighbors: Bulgaria, Serbia, Hungary, Ukraine, Republic of Moldova, also Russia, China, and Turkey. The responses varied this time as well between civil high school students and military high school students mainly from a value-based point of view, not hierarchically speaking, all the more so as both student groups had placed Russian Federation threats to the top of the hierarchy- 82,69% of civil students, and 75,83% of military students. On the second place, both groups listed Hungary- 30,77% civil students and 40,83% military students, followed by China (16,35%, and 13,33%), Ukraine (14,42% and 11,67%). The answers concerning the aggressive intentions of the Republic of Moldova were surprising (9,62% and 4,17%).

Taking into account the offensive and aggressive behavior of the Russian Federation towards national security, and also this states' actions in our country's eastern proximity, but also not recognizing the obligations imposed by political and political-military alliances which a part from the before-mentioned countries take part in (see for instance Hungary), we consider that the level of security culture from this indicator's perspective is a medium one.

Although included in the previous interview body, for purposes of not suggesting certain responses, the aspect about security-related issues of Romania proves a high knowledge level on behalf of the respondents. To the question "Who can solve national security problems?", both civil and military high school students ranked first the following option: "On one hand, the Romanian state institutions, but also NATO/EU" with 44,23%, respectively 49,17% out of all options, followed by the answers: "Equally, NATO/EU"-32,69%, and 20,00%, and "First and foremost NATO and the EU but with a small contribution from the Romanian state" – 17,31%, and 17,35%. Marginal values did not benefit from consistent scores, rather, civil high school students did not consider that solving national security problems would depend exclusively on NATO and EU intervention.

In what concerns the different types of threats to national security, mentioned within the National Defense Strategy (2020), but present in the previous strategy as well (SNAp, 2015), civil and military high school students had similar responses. To the question of "Do you believe that Romania could become the target terrorist attacks in the next 5 years?", an unclear threat for both national defense strategies, a security risk with disastrous consequences, but with a low probability in our case, the average of responses was 1.00 (25%), meaning the level of 'slim chances', with small variations in what concerns the two student groups. To the question of "To what extent do you believe that illegal migration from the Middle East can negatively impact Romania in the next 5 years?", the average was 1,77 (44,25%, close to the 'to a certain extent' level could be interpreted as a sign that illegal migration may be associated not only with terrorism but also with human trafficking, dealing drugs, weapons etc.) The differences between the two categories of respondents are minor: 1,83% (45,75%) for civil high school students, 1,70% (42,5%) in the case of military high school students. A similar result was registered regarding the question of "To what extent do you believe that Romania will be the target of cyberattacks in the following 5 years?". From this perspective, considering that cyberattacks have become a major trend with the potential of influencing or even altering the security environment according to the National Defense Strategy (2020), cyber attacks

> launched by state and non-state entities (cybercriminal groups, hackers with or without an ideological, political or extremist-terrorist motivation) on the intelligence and communication structures of crucial importance represents a serious threat to national security; their intensity, complexity and diversity being placed on an ongoing evolutive path (SNAp, 2020:25)

needed to be acknowledged, all the more so attempts at launching such attacks is being ascertained all the time, with a higher intensity in the aftermath of Russian invasion of Ukraine. The general score of 1,76 (44%), close to the "to a certain extent" value, with variations between 1,72 (43%) in the case of military high school students and 1,88 (47%) in the case of civil high school students is an indicator of the low security culture level. Together with the previous results, the conclusions indicate a medium level of security culture from this perspective.

3.5. Youth involvement in national security problems. The activism of high school students is the most important indicator in what concerns the level of security culture. In this regard, we conducted a series of 7 questions through which we wanted to grasp students' intention of being active in national security problems, as a result of a minimum necessary level of security culture, compared to previous participation in civic actions. To the first question. "To what extent would you agree to have certain rights restricted through wiretapping, electronic mail checks etc. to increase national security?", initiated after an intense debate on the reports between security and liberty (see for i.e., the famous paper coordinated by Thierry Balzacq and Sergio Carrera, 2006, *Security Versus Freedom? A Challenge for Europe's Future* or the ones generated after 9/11 attacks, v. Dinh, 2001; Banks, 2010, etc.) or the reports between security and private life (having as a focus point thye debates around the Cambridge Analytica scandal and reference papers in the domain, v. Schnelbe *et al.*, 2018; Kozlowska, 2018, etc.). To this question, the averages obtained after the questionnaire was submitted were of 1, equivalent to 'slim chances', meaning 0,78 (19,5%) for civil high school students, and 1 (25%) for military high school students, with an average of 0,88 (22%). Similar results were registered through the responses to the question "To what extent you agree that personal information be used by various economic entities (banks, markets, corporations)?", with an average of 0,92 (23%), a value of 0,82 (20,5%) obtained after analyzing the questionnaire filled by civil high school students, and 0, 98 (24,5%) for military high school students. The two questions, which followed one after another, can generate confusion in the students' minds without security culture. In the first case, that entail narrowing liberties and rights (actions which can be employed by the state anyway in special circumstances), the issue is viewed as in the second case that does not imply a solution to a national security problem. Rather, out of lack of attention, when using social media, people give up easily their personal information (such as location). The response to the third question underscores that, when security culture is missing students fail to distinguish within the security-liberty relation. Asked if they would agree that their personal information be collected by social media platforms (Instagram, Tik Tok, Facebook etc.) students responded in similar values to the previous questions: 1,04 (26%) general average, with 1,02 (25,5%) civil high school students, and 1,07 (26,75%) the average among military high school students. On this three-questions panel, through the responses given, students proved a low security culture level.

The following four questions researched students' activism (as an intention) in relation to the three major security dimensions: defense, public order, and intelligence, toppled by students' activism (as an anterior practice) in what concerns civic projects. "To what extent would agree to join the Romanian Army to respond to a security need?" is the question that proved the largest gap between civil and military high school students' responses. In the first instance, the low level of activism, with a value of 1,51 (37,75%) represents an alarming reality, especially because in the case of military high school students, activism is above 3 ('to a large extent') – 3,08 % (77%). The average between the two groups is irrelevant. The relevance is maintained only in the case of a 40 % gap, an indicator of the low level of security culture in the case of civil high school students and a high level – military high school students. From this perspective, we ought to conclude that in the case of the following indicators on the level of activism at an intentional level in relation to the support of the public order institutions: police, county police, Romanian General Inspectorate for Emergency Situations in the case of a catastrophe or in the case of supporting intelligence services, military high school students are willing to do it within the limits of the standard value 3 ('to a large extent') with averages of 2,97 (74,25%), and 3,10 (77,5%). The major change at the intentional level was produced in the case of civil high school students, for whom intervention to support public order and intelligence structures score values between 2 and 3 on the Likert scale, meaning between 'to a certain extent' and 'to a large extent' – 2,48 (62%), and 2,60 (65%). The failure to identify the three situations as being quasi-similar, answering to security problems handled by the three-core structure within the Romanian state security system represents the main element for understanding of a low level of security culture in what concerns civil high school students that are to be subjected to the ameliorative program. In the absence of some constraints generated by the lack of knowledge on aspects of national security, the two student groups have given similar scores for their activism so far (up to the moment of filling the questionnaire): 2,02 (50,5%) for civil high school students, and 2,16% (54%) in the case of military high school students.

Question no. 28 acts like a filter for the purpose of identifying the real level of involvement and honesty of both groups when completing the questionnaire.

3.6. Other aspects. In a similar manner, but for purposes of testing the openness and sensibility of the subjects to the information launched through mass media, we identified the main information sources of students. In accordance with our initial expectancy, there are no notable differences between the two student groups, and ranking first in their option, with 93,27%, respectively 86,67% is the Internet (also including social media). Books are found on a considerable distance in their top choices with 32,69 % for civil high school students and 27,50% for military high school students, the TV – 25,96%, and 25%, and friend and acquaintances – 24,04%, and 18,33%. The classical media has an insignificant role in what concerns communication in the contemporary society, reason for which relying on the Internet entails decreased factual accuracy. To the question of "Do you believe that the information received are correct?", acknowledging this risk is equally distributed among student groups – 2.02 (50,5%) for civil students, and 2.05 (51,25%) for military students, close to the 'to a certain extent' threshold.

Question no. 31, "To what extent do you believe the received information could manipulate you?" benefits from slightly different responses, but having the same threshold value, 'to a certain extent': 2,34 (58,5%) for civil high school students, and 1,98 (49,5%) for military high school students. The slightly increased trust in the possibility of resisting manipulation is not challenged necessarily by this resistance. This aspect is verified through the sufficient permeability in relation to one of the most circulated conspirative theories regarding a parallel Government which aims at creating a New World Order. The obtained values, although not significant are an indicator of the proneness to manipulation and, more importantly, an indicator of the lack of necessary level of security education and culture: 1,35 (33,75%) for civil high school students, and 1,41 (35,25%) for military high school students. Strictly related to this conspirative theory and the anti-vaccine rhetoric, in order to verify the resistance to manipulation and fake news, we verified students' perspective towards anti-COVID-19 vaccination, both as an intention and factual reality. In civil high schools, the number of vaccinated students at the moment the questionnaire was submitted, in relative values was of 60,58%, and those unvaccinated but which were going to 19,23%. With a total of 79,18% vaccinated people or intending to vaccinate, the relative value of the openness to vaccination for civil high school students was of approximately identical with the value registered by military high school students (65%-vaccinated and 14,17% aiming to, in total, 79,17% openness to vaccination). Therefore, regarding the request for a response related to a national security issue- vaccination in order to avoid the spread of the virus and to decr3ease the infection rate-, the subjects tended to react positively (despite a small delay) by 4/5. Even so, in relation to the question "To what extent do you consider that the low level of vaccination among the Romanian population is inflicted by the lack of security culture?", the responses were different: 2,46 (61,5%), meaning 'to a certain extent' was the answer of civil high school students, and 2,09 (52,25%) – of military high school students. The results entail lack of problem-understanding skills, potentially caused by a lack of security culture, while this low level of understanding is motivated also by the short, blunt students' reactions: "COVID-19 is real and it is used as a manipulation tool", "COVID-19 is real, but was not created because of an accident".

To sum up and trying to insert another filter, we questioned the subjects on the most pregnant security issue Romania is confronting with, without offering pre-defined responses. To this open question, if is previously, through the 34 questions there have been suggested certain security-related issues, we received a large array of responses touching upon various aspects from different domains. The differences in what concerns the answers given by civil high school students and military high school students were rather slim, with the exception of signaling the low technological level (by 10 respondents) and energetic insecurity (by 6 respondents) in the case of military high school students. There are nonetheless certain aspects deserving to be brought to light: the rate of nonresponses comes close to 25% (for civil high school students-23,08%), and the aspects with whom security-related issues gather more than 10% are only two out of 30: cyberattacks – 11,54%, lack of culture/low level of education – 10,58%. Another conclusion would be the one linked to the acknowledging of vulnerabilities – 61,33% of responses –, and threats – 14,66 % (mostly cyberattacks and Russian aggressive behavior), also taking into account the 24% of students preferring to withhold an answer or couldn't think of one. After ordering the deficits of the national security system, we could encounter: fake news, internal political instability, educational shortcomings, technological backwardness, low vaccination rates, economic instability, inactivity and poor army supplies, COVID-19 pandemic, energetic insecurity, security system, public order, and health system gaps, lack of professionalism in state institutions, the preeminence of extremist parties in Romanian Parliament, malicious protection of personal data, etc. The lack of coherence and the indecisiveness of respondents indicate that, although security-related aspects were touched upon, there is a low level of opinion aggregation about security-related issues, fact that implies a low level of security culture as well.

4. CONCLUSIONS

After cross-sectioning the information received with the pre-established objectives resulted from the operationalization scheme of the security culture concept, we reached the conclusion that, regarding almost each objective (with the exception of OS6-entailing comparative analysis), the level of security culture reached by the experimental and reference groups can be established as follows:

Table no 1 The estimated level of 'security culture'

Objectives	Experi-mental group (civil high school students)	Refe-rence group (military high school)
OS1 trust level	**<2**	**<2**
In institutions	2	2
In politicians	1	1
OS2 being familiar to the institutions with national security competences	**2**	**2**
OS3 identity perspective	**<2**	**≈1**
OS4 knowing the risks, threats, and vulnerabilities to the national security	**2**	**2**
Perceiving the development potential of Romania	2	3
perceiving the geopolitical landscape	2	2
perceiving the probability of regional conflicts	1	1
perceiving potential aggressors	2	2
identifying the resolution possibility of security-related issues	3	3
distinguishing between different types of risks, threats, and vulnerabilities	2	2
OS5 contributing to the resolution of national security problems	**1**	**2**
willingness to give up liberties	<1	<1
willingness to become part of the security system	1	3
Civic activism	2	2
Other aspects	**>1**	**>1**
the credibility of information sources	1	1
Resistance to manipulation	1	1
Getting involved	2	2
the crystallization of opinions on national security	1	1
Average	≈1,66	≈1,83

Equaling this estimated result of the security culture with a grade, according to the Romanian grading system, it would be 5 or 6 which corresponds with a C or C – in the American grading system. All in all, we could conclude that the level of security culture is dangerously low in relation to the resulted value, similar to "functional illiteracy" specific to the Romanian educational system, a problem comprised by the National Defense Strategy (2020). This level that we can call "security illiteracy" might be improved though preparation programs, reason for which the experimental group will be subjected to in the next phases of the research, an ameliorative program entitled "5 minutes of security culture".

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MAPPING THE PROPAGANDA AND ACTIVITY OF "THE TRINITY OF TERROR" IN THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT

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Abstract: *The "trinity of terror" – salafi-jihadism, right-wing and left-wing terrorism - have been feeding on each other's propaganda, strategy and means, in a symbiotic relationship. Strategical enemies at surface, the three become rhetorical allies through a mutually reinforcing hate speech, using fear to divide communities and gain new members. The current terrorist threat in Europe has evolved beyond the general ideological classification, creating the need to use a different set of spectacles to understand the generic and context-specific dynamics of the violent radicalization among individuals and groups. The traditional perspective of analysis based on radicalization causes and patterns, multiple trajectories, effects, and consequences should be adapted to a new understanding of terrorism as a transcending phenomenon. The current research proposal aims to map, underline, and explain the evolution of the relation between the three ideologies' speech and their symbiotic relation in and beyond the European geographical, social, political, and cultural context.*

Keywords: *terrorism; "trinity of terror"; propaganda; radicalization; Europe*

1. INTRODUCTION

The world is currently witnessing increasing unrest and turmoil, facing unprecedented security threats that are harder to predict, understand and tackle. Our society is exposed to hybrid challenges, most of which can no longer be treated separately, but rather contextually understood as "transboundary wicked issues" (Head & Alford, 2015). A vast majority of the security threats of today have the potential to pass borders and boundaries, developing in transnational spaces, controlled by

> overlapping jurisdictions, interlinked policy spheres, fuzzy or ambivalent ethical standards, and much contestation, threat, aggression, emotion and fear, as well as time pressure (Noordegraaf *et al.*, 2017).

This paper is based on the perspective that terrorism is a "transboundary wicked issue", no longer limited by space delimitations such as local and global, cause and effect framework, static knowledge, and stubborn belief systems.

The current global terrorist phenomenon has developed beyond its initial classifications based on elements such as chronological evolution, geographical influence, ideological background, modus operandi, and social network. As a transboundary wicked issue, today's terrorist threat forces us to adapt faster to the increasing need of using a different set of spectacles to understand the generic and context-specific dynamics of the violent radicalization among individuals and groups.

Focusing on the "trinity of terror" – Salafi-jihadi, right-wing, and left-wing violent extremism, the main aim of this research is to map, underline and explain the current transcendence of the terrorist threat beyond the limits imposed by the specific boundaries of each branch, into a symbiotic relation developing within and beyond the European space, acknowledging the global implication.

In order to fulfil its aim, this paper is structured in three main parts: firstly, it provides an overview of the "trinity of terror" concept and the branches of Salafi-jihadi, right-wing and left-wing violent extremism; secondly, it describes the current trends of the phenomenon witnessed within the European context through the analysis of online and offline activity of the representative groups; thirdly, it points out towards the main strengths and weaknesses in the European countries' response to the phenomenon. Based on the correlation of the research findings described in the three main parts, the paper will finally elaborate recommendations to serve the counterterrorism strategy development of the institutions and stakeholders that are active in this field.

2. THE "TRINITY OF TERROR"

As implied by the "transboundary wicked issue" perspective, the terrorist phenomenon is deeper and more complex than its internal ideology or motivation-based categorization.

Still, this paper uses the concept of “trinity of terror” to reflect the symbiotic relation between the most dominant ideologies in Europe and, at the same time, to emphasize the transcendence of the threat beyond any type of classic boundaries.

Moreover, the “trinity of terror” highlights that, disregard any kind of differentiating or separating element such as background, motivation, or ideology, all the three actors are ‘beyond’ equal: they are the representation of the same ‘one’ terrorist threat. In this way, the paper positions itself, from the very beginning, against the hypocritical and subjective understanding of terrorism.

Unfortunately, ever since the emergence of the Salafi-jihadi branch of terror, the modern society, in this case – Europe, has proved double-standards in its counterterrorism strategy and failed in acting equally towards all the three personas within the “trinity of terror”. Often, within the European context, the Salafi-jihadi terrorism has been treated as the “alien” or the outside threat. Meanwhile, the other two branches have been given credit for their common internal roots – “the threat among us” or “the threat that we know”. To leave behind this absurd understanding of the terrorist threat, the paper uses the “trinity of terror” to reflect that terror today should be tackled disregard any prejudice.

Still, some might argue that even this terminology is not fully encompassing all types of terror active on European soil, focusing mostly on the ideological background. Although ethno-nationals and separatist violent extremism is also present among the terrorism map within Europe, the focus on the “trinity of terror” is motivated by the possibility to see the transcendence of terror beyond the ideological background, with groups feeding on each other’s online and offline strategy in a perfect mutual symbiotic relation.

Further on, the paper will provide a short overview of the three branches within the “trinity of terror”. It is common knowledge that each of these has its own origins, evolution, and characteristics. However, in the current post-pandemic context, the common platform between them has grown wider, providing the opportunity for ‘indirect cooperation’ or share of means and tools based on the other’s experience.

2.1. The Salafi-jihadi branch. As jihadism is identified as a violent sub-current of Salafism, the term ‘Salafi-jihadi’ represents a movement that rejects the modern values such as democracy and elected parliaments and promotes the instauration of an Islamic state that is governed entirely by a subjective twisted interpretation of the Islamic law (Shari’a). While the major group identified with this branch has initially been al-Qaeda, in the past decade a new group occupied the scene, challenging the al-Qaeda’s status – Daesh. In the context of the Arab Spring, vital to the formation of Daesh, it was not al-Qaeda that re-emerged in Daesh, but the jihadist movement, or Sageman's “global neo-jihad” (Sageman, 2016). This movement has reinvented itself and adapted its instruments to the modern society, thus succeeding in gaining followers and imposing itself in a new form. Al-Baghdadi and his team of former important army and intelligence officers of Saddam Hussein, in front of al-Klifawi, saw the opportunity represented by the chaos created by the population uprisings and used the context in favour of and ISI strategy - the first form of Daesh. On the other hand, Osama Bin Laden's successor, Ayman al-Zawahiri, was taken by surprise by the uprisings in the Arab world, and al-Qaeda has lost the train towards the leadership of a new wave of jihadism.

At present, Daesh still controls small territories in north-eastern Syria and the Middle Euphrates River Valley along the Iraqi border. In Iraq, Daesh continued its underground activities by reintegrating into the population and reuniting in some provinces such as Anbar, Diyala and Salah al-Din and conducting guerrilla attacks. At the same time, official sources point to some 30,000 Daesh members still alive in the region, while the number of returnees to their homelands is difficult to estimate. There is also a high number of Daesh fighters that were redirected to other conflict zones, such as Libya and Afghanistan.

The global brand created by Daesh has survived due to an unknown number of terrorist partners and sympathizers around the world. Virtual interaction remains an important activity of the group, which continues to recruit supporters through online propaganda. On the internet, the terrorist militia is inspiring a new generation of jihadists, making Daesh a lingering threat. Daesh has never limited itself to territorial organization in Iraq and Syria but is a transnational expression of Salafi Jihadism and a developed form of a global neo-Jihad wave as defined by Sageman; it may lose power and territory, but it does not end there.

2.2. The right-wing branch. To begin with, violent right-wing extremists do not belong to a homogeneous movement. On a general basis, right-wing terrorism refers to the use of terrorist violence by people with extremist views such as neo-Nazism, neo-fascism, and ultra-nationalist formations (Bjorgo & Ravndal, 2019). Similarly to Salafi-jihadism, right-wing terrorism seeks to change the entire political, social and economic system, not to a religious interpretation of law, but to a right-wing extremist model that includes the following ideas and values: supremacism or the perception that a certain group of people, unified by a certain element such as nation, race, or culture is in a supreme position, and has a natural right to dominate the rest of the population; hateful sub-cultures, commonly fighting back against diversity in society and equal rights of minorities; racism, authoritarianism, xenophobia, misogyny and hostility to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ+) communities and immigration are also common attitudes among right-wing extremists (Bjorgo & Ravndal, 2019).

In the context of Europe, right-wing terrorism appears in various forms incorporating ultranationalist, racist and anti-Semitic elements to different degrees and pursuing correspondingly different objectives. The right-wing violent extremist and terrorist threat often comes from lone actors, small cells, or very small groups (Gill, 2015). Right-wing extremism has been witnessed intensively after 2006 (Taylor *et al.*, 2013; Hemmingby and Bjorgo, 2016).

Unfortunately, due to the long-term international and scholarly focus on salafi-jihadist terrorism, there is a gap in research regarding the topic of violence and extremism from the extreme right – in particular, on target selection, perpetrators, patterns of action, and facilitating conditions (Bjorgo, 1995; Hemmingby and Bjorgo, 2016; Gill, 2015; Laquer, 1980; Rapoport, 2003; Wilkinson, 1974; Wilson, 2020). The current increasing trend provided a sufficient motivation for this gap to be filled, but there is still much work to be done and many elements of this phenomenon are to be understood as the events are developing. Attacks in Western countries such as Norway, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States and New Zealand, as well as foiled attacks in France, have shown that there is a need to further strengthen the EU approach in tackling right-wing extremist violence: Right-wing violent extremism and terrorism in the European Union: discussion paper, 11756/19, Council of the European Union.

2.3. The left-wing branch. Left-wing terrorism, also known as far left, have presented significant definitional challenges both for researchers and policymakers "due to the malleable nature of what a leftist ideology was, what it came to be, and what it is considered today" (Carson, 2016:310). On a common basis, like in the case of the previous two branches in the 'trinity of terror', the left-wing terrorist groups aim to bring an end to the political, social, and economic system of a state, to introduce socialism and eventually establish a communist and a classless society (Carson, 2016).

During the 1960s, opposition to the Vietnam War, combined with varying influences from socialist/communist ideologies, produced a wave of 'New Left terrorism'. The Marxist-Leninist-Maoist political agendas backed by demands for social justice have motivated groups around the globe to pursue campaigns of political kidnappings, assassinations, and bombings for achieving their aims (Orsini, 2015).

While seeing themselves as the vanguards for minorities and marginalised groups within their societies and in the Third World, many of these groups are supporters of Lenin's 'vanguard strategy': the belief that revolutionary conditions will rarely occur spontaneously from within the exploited lower classes or group. Therefore, revolutionary conditions must be created by a committed and disciplined revolutionary movement, which will build a generalised climate of change (Carson, 2016).

In current times, left-wing extremists use the online environment to attack their opponents, using a method called 'doxxing' to release personal information about their adversaries that could endanger their livelihood and safety (Orsini, 2015).

Throughout time, although little research has been done in comparison with other extremist groups, left-wing terrorist groups have been generally inspired by anti-government, anti-police, anti-capitalist, and anti-conservative ideology. Most recent activity of the left-wing terrorist groups reflect a focus on opposing governments in their country of origin, that they perceive as fascist or against their leftist ideals. Recurrent themes such as concerns of climate change and animal cruelty are also present in the extremist left-wing doctrine: environmental militancy, particularly, uses civil disobedience, economic sabotage, and guerrilla warfare to stop what they perceive to be the exploitation and destruction of the environment.

3. EUROPE AND THE TRANSCENDING TERRORIST THREAT

In the shadow of 9/11, the terrorist groups have enlarged their strategy and modus operandi, targeting regions outside the US territory. Although seen as a secondary chessboard for the terrorist game, Europe has been reflecting most of the global trends in the terrorist phenomenon. Moreover, due to several geopolitical events such as the Arab Spring and the civil wars that followed it in the Middle East and North Africa and the war in Ukraine (2014 and

2022), Europe is today at the crossroads of the 'trinity of terror', witnessing a historical transcendence of violent extremism beyond the ideological, political, social, cultural, ethnic, or geographical borders. The current times bring within a 'karmic' effect, pushing the European counterterrorism strategy to face its own hypocrisy: the double-standard.

Bearing in mind that Europol has not yet released its yearly report of the terrorist threat in Europe for 2022, this paper will assess the most current one available - the 2021 Europol Report on the European Union Terrorism Situation (TE-SAT). According to Europol, in 2020 a total of 57 terrorist attacks were reported in six member states, compared to 55 in 2019 and 69 in 2018 (Europol, 2021). Attacks conducted by Salafi-jihadi perpetrators, mostly related to Daesh, have dominated the Europol's reports ever since the auto-proclamation of the so-called "Islamic State" in Syria and Iraq. In the same way, the developing European counterterrorism narrative has been focused on the Salafi-jihadi threat, losing from sight the other growing terrorist groups within its own borders. According to the TE-SAT 2021 report, in 2020, Salafi-jihadi terrorism has no longer caused the highest number of attacks in the EU countries. In 2020, 14 attacks were related to Salafi-jihadi terrorism, while left-wing and anarchist-inspired attacks came first with 25 attacks. Ethno-nationalist and separatist-inspired groups were also responsible for 14 attacks, while the remaining 4 were attributed to right-wing militants (Europol, 2021).

Moreover, based on the personal database of Salafi-jihadi related terrorist attacks in the European context, only three Salafi-jihadi motivated attacks took place in Europe in 2021. This is the lowest number of religiously motivated attacks in Europe since 2014 and represents a 80 per cent decrease when compared to the 14 attacks recorded in 2020. Based on this preliminary analysis of the personal database, the Salafi-jihadi predominance of the terrorist scene in the European context is in a continuous decrease. However, this only leaves the place for transcending threat in the form of the 'lone wolf' phenomenon – harder to predict, prevent and counter. The 'lone wolf' is, at the same time, one perfect reflection of the developing transboundary identity of the 'trinity of terror': most of the recent terrorist attacks come mainly from lone wolves, who set a "role model" for other aspiring attackers. For instance, the Halle attacker declared during his court trial that Brenton Tarrant, the far-right terrorist responsible for the death of 51 Muslims in 2019 in Christchurch, New Zealand, inspired him, while Tarrant himself, was said to be inspired by Andres Behring Breivik (Bjørgo and Ravndal, 2019). The latter committed two attacks in Norway in 2011 killing 77 people (Bjørgo and Ravndal, 2019).

Still, this is just the peak of an iceberg that continues to grow deeper, in the dark. While the Arab Spring and the connected civil wars created the perfect context for a Salafi-jihadi dominated flow of foreign terrorist fighters, the current war in Ukraine sets a similar scene, but this time with a right-wing extremist dominance. In fact, the scene for today's events was set back in 2014, when several reports of scholars, counterterrorism practitioners and journalists on the ground warned of an increasing number of foreign terrorist fighters travelling to Ukraine from Europe or from conflict zones in the Middle East and North Africa (Bustikova, 2018; Centre for Global Policy, 2020; Ishchenko, 2016; Shekhovtsov & Umland. 2014; Umland, 2019).

Today Europe is facing an evolving transboundary terrorist threat: a complex mix of classic and hybrid threats, the "Pandora box" of uncontrolled migration from conflict zones, low and medium scale attacks with lone-wolf perpetrators, and highly dangerous plots. Progressively visible during the Covid-19 pandemic, the most recent cases of terrorist attacks are a mix-and-match combination of blurred ideology, superficially assessed motivation, psychological issues and neurological misfunctions, easy-access modus operandi and, nevertheless, the online cradle of extremist inspiration and support. Still, all these elements and much more, aim at the heart of an increasingly debated European identity and ideals, challenging the stability and security of a region that has struggle for a long time to hide the dust of unsettled migration and political polarization under the carpet. While the pandemic became the central subject since the end of 2019, the spread of the virus has not erased any of the existing threats faced by the European countries, but rather exacerbated them and our society's vulnerabilities, forcing people into the online environment, and further exposing them to extremist content that came only as a perfect fit to the emotional, psychological, and mental effects of the pandemic. And the 'trinity of terror' was the first to strive in the newly created environment: Salafi-jihadi, right-wing, and left-wing extremist groups moved to an online-based mutual symbiosis.

In modern history, left-wing and anarchist terrorist organizations have been active in countries such as Italy, France, Spain, Greece, and Germany. Although traditionally these groups deal with anti-fascism, anti-racism, and state repression ideas, they have added to the changing political regional and global trends, adding to their narrative elements related environmental issues, distrust towards technological and scientific developments, and, in the context of the pandemic, the COVID-19 restriction measures (Europol, 2021). In the same way, both the Salafi-jihadi and the right-wing violent extremist propaganda has used every opportunity as a tool to develop their strategy and propaganda, while the online environment provided the perfect scene with an enlarging audience.

The 'trinity of terror' has a strong symbiotic presence on the Internet, using social media platforms to spread the extremist message, hold meetings, radicalize target crowds, publish manifestos, gather funding, pre-announce attacks, and even live-stream them or upload their videos afterward. An example of this would be the Halle terrorist, who recorded the attack from a camera strapped to his helmet and posted his manifesto online just before the onslaught, stating that he chose to attack Jews, instead of Muslims, as "they posed a greater threat" (Schuetze & Eddy, 2019).

On a common basis, scholars and practitioners in strategic communication and countering violent extremism have pointed towards the reciprocal accessibility between the online extremist propaganda and the vulnerable audience. This accessibility has also benefitted from the Covid-19 lockdowns that, not only created the opportunity for further propaganda, but also weakened the audience's resilience to the extremist attractions. In this way, adopting terrorist ideologies has become more facile and empowered the connection between the extremist group and the vulnerable potential recruit. The online context gives the chance to a second life or alternative reality, where anyone can choose or tricked into choosing who they want to be. Nevertheless, the web can provide an unlimited source of resources for taking a step further from interaction and sympathetic flirt to real action. For instance, in 2021, a 26-year-old French citizen was arrested for allegedly trying to source uranium powder on eBay, as part of a plan to incorporate the material into pipe bombs that he had already built at home. When police raided his studio in Rouffach, France, they found "Nazi badges and a complete Ku Klux Klan outfit in sight on a mannequin." (Pantucci, 2022) In line with the previous discussion on the psychological and neurological issues related to the current terrorist threat, the 'uranium seeker' was also reported to have suffered from undefined "psychiatric disorders" (Pantucci, 2022).

Another worrying trend of the terrorist threat in the European context is a different type of transcending borders – this time, the ones between law enforcement and conviction. While examples have come from the entire spectrum of the 'trinity of terror', the extreme-right wing groups tend to attract several members from European security forces to their side. In Belgium, a large network linking politicians, soldiers, and activists was discovered in 2021. In the UK, a policeman was jailed for membership in a neo-Nazi group, while a special forces unit in Frankfurt had to be disbanded in June 2021. In other parts of Germany, groups of police officers were detained on similar charges (Flade, 2021).

The 'trinity of terror' is a symbol of the transboundary wicked terrorist threat in Europe. As the Salafi-jihadi branch has been considered central and most dangerous in the past, turning a blind eye to the right-wing and the left-wing terrorist groups can no longer be an option. It is even a bigger mistake to naively believe that any of the three is currently more dangerous than the other. Both the context and the threat has changed together with the current developments on the regional and global level. Although trying to pose as more united than ever, the European countries have never been as divided as they are today, both at national and continent scale. The war in Ukraine has the potential to detonate ideological, geopolitical, social, ethnic, cultural, and economic mines that have been deeply planted at our proud European roots.

The current landscape of violent extremism in Europe, symbolically named as the 'trinity of terror', is characterised by a hybrid dimension that calls into question the traditional conceptual and practical boundaries of counterterrorism.

4. ACTION vs. REACTION: THE EUROPEAN RESPONSE TO TERRORISM

As publicly declared on the European Commission internet page, all relevant European Union, and national actors, within the lines set by their responsibility for upholding the national law and safeguarding internal security, should work together to counter terrorist threats emanating from home-grown or foreign terrorists, acting alone or in a group and regardless of the ideology that is being pursued by terrorist means. Bearing in mind that the current terrorist threat that was previously discussed has a transboundary wicked nature, the European countries should adapt its strategy and tools to the rocky security landscape that is about to get take shape.

In 2005, the EU Counterterrorism Strategy was adopted as the first step towards a common European action against the terrorist threat, in line with the values of the human rights and allowing its citizens to live in an area of freedom, security and justice. However, the strategy has not proved efficient enough to stop the rising number of foreign terrorist fighters leaving for the battlefields of Syria, Iraq, Libya, Yemen and other conflict zones. Nevertheless, the strategy was not bounding enough to provide the common platform among the European states for the vital exchange of intelligence that could have prevented the attacks that were to hit the continent since 2011. Following the 2015 Charlie Hebdo attack, understanding the gravity of the situation and the lack of preparedness on its side, the European Commission proposed in its Agenda on Security to establish a European Counter Terrorism Centre (ECTC). This step aimed to improve the exchange of information and the operational support to Member States' investigators. Within Europol, the EU Agency for law enforcement cooperation, the ECTC pools specialized resources, expertise and information on foreign terrorist fighters, explosives, firearms, financial intelligence, and online propaganda to support Member States' law enforcement counterterrorism units. Although this represented a progress towards a better understanding of the unfolding terrorist phenomenon, it was not sufficient to help the European states adapt fast to the changing security environment.

On 15 March 2017, the EU adopted the 'Directive on combating terrorism', reinforcing the legal framework to more comprehensively cover conducts related to terrorism. All EU countries had to ensure that they criminalize conduct such as training and travelling for terrorism, as well as terrorist financing. Aware of the gaps within their common counterterrorism perspective and strategy, the EU states put their efforts in harmonising definitions of terrorist offences serve as a benchmark for cooperation and information exchange between national authorities.

Further on, in 2020, one of the four priorities of the newly adopted EU Security Union Strategy was "Protecting Europeans from terrorism and organised crime". The Strategy announces the adoption of a Counter Terrorism Agenda for the EU, together with renewed action to prevent and counter radicalisation. Most recently, in April 2021, the EU adopted a regulation to prevent the dissemination of terrorist content online by allowing competent authorities of the Member States to require hosting service providers to remove terrorist content (Regulation 2021/784). In terms of exchanging data information, a Directive was adopted in 2016 on passenger name record (PNR) data during flights as a countermeasure to the foreign fighters' phenomenon (Directive 2016/681).

Lastly, combating the financing of terrorism has been one of the EU's top priorities. EU's efforts on cutting terrorist financing include additional legal measures with non-EU countries lacking an efficient anti-money laundering prevention system (Directive 2015/849) and the fifth anti-money laundry directive adopted in 2018 aiming to improve transparency, the cooperation between financial intelligence units, and transaction checks on high-risk third countries (Directive 2018/843).

While the legislative narrative has followed its path and reflected common European effort towards counterterrorism cooperation, most of the strategy has been based on reactive measure, that were mostly focused on the 'outside threat' – the Salafi-jihadi terror. Even so, due to the complex bureaucratic processes at both national and EU level, the European states have never been able to adapt and react to the fast-changing security landscape withing and outside the borders.

Moreover, the existing documents, presented chronologically above, have deepened the gap between the focus on one side of the threat, while leaving aside the other two: the right wing and the left-wing violent terrorism. Despite its effort, the Europe, and the EU as an entity, has reached structural limits about broad, all-of-society efforts to curb extremism and prevent terrorist violence – in all its forms. Most importantly, in a 'karmic' domino, Europe is facing a threat that it can hardly understand and accept - the 'trinity of terror'.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Bearing in minds the shifting sands in the current multidimensional and volatile security landscape at European and global level, this paper aimed to provide an assessment of the current terrorist threat that is part of this context. In this regard, the concept of "trinity of terror' was used with the direct purpose to reflect the transboundary wicked nature of terrorism, at a time when most of the problems faced by our world are bond in most complex, yet logical manners.

As the European policy measures have remained vague and disperse, suffering from increasing fragmentation and lack of common sight, the current trend of violent extremism, symbolically named as the 'trinity of terror', is characterised by a hybrid dimension that calls into question the traditional conceptual and practical boundaries of counterterrorism.

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BRIEF ANALYSIS ON HAMMAS'S RECENT SPREAD OF TERROR ACROSS ISRAEL

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Abstract: *Nearly 85 Palestinians and 7 Israelis were killed in a reciprocal bombardment, and nearly 1,500 different missiles were fired at the state of Israel. It is the fiercest conflict from the two sides in recent years. A 13-storey residential building has collapsed in Gaza, and another has been severely damaged by hundreds of Israeli airstrikes in May 2021, while Hamas and Palestinian factions have shot down a dam in Tel Aviv and Beersheba. The resurgence of the conflict between the Jewish state and Hamas is proving to have worse consequences than the last war in 2014, gaining international concern, for fear that this situation will spiral out of control. The regional instability has only largened the gap between third-world countries and global power-states, which aim to provide a solid democratic reset for the society in those areas. Hamas, as an international terrorist organization, aims not only to regain part of the lost territory, but also to punish the Jewish community as a whole, by provoking suffering on the civilian and military society of Israel.*

Keywords *(max.5): Hamas; bombardment; Israeli airstrikes; Islamic jihad; conflict*

1. INTRODUCTION

Hamas is a militant development and one of the Palestinian territories' two major political parties. It governs more than two million Palestinians within the Gaza Strip, but the group is best known for its armed resistance to Israel. Handfuls of nations have assigned Hamas a terrorist organization, in spite of the fact that a few apply this name only to its military wing. Iran provides it with fabric and monetary support, and Turkey allegedly harbors a few of its best pioneers. Its opposition, Fatah, which overwhelms the Palestine Freedom Organization (PLO) and rules within the West Bank, has disavowed viciousness. The part in Palestinian authority and Hamas's unflinching antagonistic vibe towards Israel have lessened prospects for steadiness in Gaza (Laub, 2021).

The recent escalation of violence in the Gaza Strip is a source of deep concern about a potential 'large-scale war,' as UN Middle East envoy Tor Wennesland warned in May 2021, according to Agerpres. urges Palestinians to fight even harder for Israel. According to Iranian state television, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said the Israelis 'only understand the language of force.' "Zionists only understand the language of force, so Palestinians must develop their strength and resilience to force criminals to surrender and stop their brutal acts," Ayatollah said. Mohsen was assassinated, and the then defense minister declared Israel's revenge (we will strike with lightning) that is, it is very clear that Iran supported this terrorist attack (Watt, 2021).

2. DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONFLICT

Israeli Defense Serve Benny Gantz cautioned on May 11, 2021 that the bombarding of the Gaza Strip, is 'just the beginning' (Watt, 2021) after a missile assault from Hamas on the Israeli city. In an explanation from Prime Minister Netanyahu, he said he had given the green light to pronounce a state of crisis within the city of Lod, whereas police reported riots nearby Middle Easterner minority after the death of an Israeli civilian. Whereas Israel is seeing a rocket bombarding, Gaza is focusing on enormous airstrikes (Schanzer, 2021:120-155), considering the proceeding heightening of the battle between Palestinian groups and Israel, which has escalated.

On Wednesday, May 12, 2021, Israel killed a senior Hamas leader and bombed several buildings, including tall buildings and a bank, which were linked to the movement's activities, while Hamas raised the banner of defiance. "The confrontation with the enemy is open" (Watt, 2021) said Ismail Haniyeh, head of his political bureau. Israel has launched military actions after Hamas fired missiles in response to clashes between Israeli and Palestinian police near the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Ramadan.

Violence has opened a new front by fueling tensions between Israeli Jews and the Arab minority[1]. Jewish attacks on Arab spectators have increased day and night in mixed areas in Israel (Friedman, 2022:220-265). Police said a person was in critical condition after being shot by Arabs in the town of Lod, where authorities imposed a search. Police say more than 150 people have been arrested overnight in the northern Israeli cities of Lod and Arabs. This prompted Israeli President Reuven Rivlin to warn of a civil war between Arabs and Jews. "Please stop this madness" (Watt, 2021) Rivlin said, his ceremony largely ceremonial.

On May 13, 2021, Israel started preparations to knead tanks and troopers on the Gaza Strip, raising fears of a ground attack. Hamas and Islamic Jihad had sufficient weapons to start an assault and were already sending drones and other intelligence-gathering devices to inspect the planned targets.

Concurring to the Israeli armed forces representative, "a special Hamas unit tried to infiltrate Israel through a tunnel in the southern part of the Strip" (Watt, 2021). This shows that the Israeli armed forces have received a warning in this respect not to attempt any assault. The head of the Gaza Strip's Hamas movement, Yahya Sinwar, has reported for the first time that Palestinian groups within the Gaza Strip are mobilizing at the slightest 70,000 equipped military soldiers, cautioned Israel against "committing any nonsense" (ال شرق, 2021:1:22-1:45) during a gathering for recruiting young fighters in Gaza. Al-Sinwar's response provided details regarding Gaza Strip's weaponry, saying that they own Russian ground-to-ground missile have been introduced through burrows within the Sinai Egyptian Peninsula (which have been utilized in later times), unlike Hamas' locally made missiles. Proved to be true, these facts would suggest Iranian involvement (Sekulow, 2018:279-323). Also, information played a vital part in building this industry, having been bombarded a vast number of times by the neighboring countries. Be that as it may, clearly in later a long time the major Israeli invasion into Gaza in 2014, the human fetched are exceptionally tall. However, given the major Israeli incursion into Gaza in 2014, the human costs were and still are very high. Violence has halted talks with Netanyahu's opponents to form a coalition government to oust him after inconclusive elections on March 23, 2021. Although recent events in Jerusalem have sparked escalation, Palestinians are frustrated by failures in their hopes. to establish an independent state in recent years. These failures include Washington's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital and an American plan to end the conflict, which the Palestinians see as biased in favor of Israel, and the continued construction of the settlement of the Israeli people.

During the operation, 2,251 Palestinians were killed, including 1,462 civilians, while 67 soldiers and 6 civilians were killed (RT Arabic, 2019) on the Israeli side.

3. INTERNATIONAL REACTIONS

Amid concerns that the violence could spiral out of control, numerous states have taken action (RT Arabic, 2019), at least at a political level. Washington planned to send its envoy, Hadi Amr, to the region for talks with Israel and the Palestinians. Mediation efforts by Egypt, Qatar and the United Nations have not progressed so far. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has called for 'escalation'. "Violence must stop, all parties must commit to de-escalation, reduce tensions, take concrete steps to calm things down." "We need an immediate de-escalation from all sides and no more targeting of civilians," said British Foreign Minister Dominic Raab. "The significant outbreak of violence in the occupied West Bank, including in East Jerusalem, as well as in the Gaza Strip and its environs, must end immediately," said Josep Borrell, a spokesman for EU foreign policy chief. "The Gaza Strip on Israel's civilian population is completely inadmissible and fuels escalation" the spokesman said in a statement.

The Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif stated during a Twitter post "It was not enough for the Israeli regime to steal land and people's homes, create an apartheid regime and refuse to vaccinate civilians under illegal occupation. He had to shoot innocent believers in Islam's third holiest mosque." On May 15, 2021, Iran urged the United Nations to condemn what he called Israel's 'war crime' in Jerusalem (Demsas et.al, 2021). The Egyptian Foreign Ministry has strongly condemned "the new incursion of Israeli forces into the Al-Aqsa Mosque."

The Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed that at the disposal of Minister Bogdan Aurescu, a Task Force was set up, at an institution level, which met urgently for "permanent monitoring and evaluation of the situation in Israel", as well as identifying the main directions of action, in order to support Romanian citizens and their family members who are in the area affected by the conflict. The MFA says it is closely monitoring the situation in Israel and strongly condemns the rocket fire launched from the Gaza Strip, targeting civilian areas inhabited by

[1] which makes up 21 percent of the population and live in common neighborhoods.

Israel. Despite the implications, Romania's diplomatic missions in Tel Aviv and Ramallah have not received any request for consular assistance from Romanian citizens. At the same time, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs recommended to the Romanian citizens in the region to show increased attention, vigilance and avoid the areas declared in a state of emergency.

Tunisia, Norway and China have called for a new emergency session of the UN Security Council on the Israeli-Palestinian escalation, which are planned to be made public this time. This session, in which Israelis and Palestinians are expected, will be the third in the Security Council. A second closed-door emergency meeting on the escalation was held, during which the United States again opposed the adoption of a resolution, considering it would lead to 'adverse results'.

"I expect and hope this will end soon" US President Joe Biden told reporters after a phone call with Netanyahu, while British Prime Minister Boris Johnson called for a rapid reduction in escalating violence. Netanyahu said Israel would continue strikes against the military capabilities of Hamas and other groups in Gaza. As it is already known, Israel and the United States consider Hamas a terrorist organization.

4. HISTORICAL ANALYSIS ON THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

The organizations' name is an acronym, which stands for Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya[2]. It was founded by Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, who was a basic Palestinian cleric who got to be an extremist in nearby branches of the Muslim Brotherhood after committing his early life to Islamic grant in Cairo. Starting with the late 1960s, Yassin lectured and performed charitable work within the West Bank and Gaza, both of which Israel occupied after the 1967 Six-Day War (Laub, 2021).

Yassin set up Hamas as the Brotherhood's political arm in Gaza in December 1987, after the episode of the primary intifada, a Palestinian rebellion against Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem. At the time, Hamas's goal was to counter Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), another organization whose commitment to savagely standing up to Israel debilitated to draw Palestinians' back from the Brotherhood. In 1988, Hamas distributed its constitution, calling for the pulverization of Israel and the foundation of an Islamic society in notable Palestine. In what eyewitnesses called an endeavor to moderate its picture, Hamas displayed an unused archived document in 2017 that acknowledged an interim Palestinian state along the "Green Line" border set up some time prior to the Six-Day War but that still denied recognizing Israel.

Hamas began to utilize suicide bombarding in April 1993 (Lazaroff, 2021), sometime before PLO pioneer Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Serve Yitzhak Rabin marked the Oslo Accords.

The noteworthy settlement set up constrained self-government for parts of the West Bank and Gaza under a recently made organization called the Palestinian Specialist (PA). Hamas condemned the Accords, as well as the PLO's and Israel's acknowledgment of each other, which Arafat and Rabin formally concurred to in several letters (Kingsley, 2021). In 1997, the United States assigned Hamas as a terrorist organization. The development went on to initiate rough resistance amid the second intifada, within the early 2000s, in spite of the fact that PIJ and Fatah's Tanzim local army were moreover responsible for viciousness against Israelis. At the moment, Ismail Haniyeh serves as political chief, having supplanted longtime pioneer Khaled Meshaal in 2017. Haniyeh has worked from Doha, Qatar, since 2020, supposedly since Egypt does not permit him to travel into and out of Gaza. Hamas extended their organization in Qatar after falling out with their past host-country, Syria, when Palestinian displaced citizens had intensified the 2011 Arab Spring phenomenon (Laub, 2021). Western intelligence still believe that Hamas true leadership to operate out of Turkey.

Following this short qualitative method of historical analysis on Hamas as an organization, this paper presents a chronology of some of the most important moments of the great confrontation in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Watt, 2021):

1987 – The founding of the Hamas movement at the beginning of the first Palestinian intifada against the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Two years later, the movement carried out its first attacks on Israeli military targets, including the abduction and killing of two Israeli soldiers.

1993 – After years of violence, the Oslo Accords are signed with the aim of establishing peace between Israel and the Palestinians. Hamas opposed the peace process and tried to stop it with bus bombings and armed attacks inside Israel.

2000 – Israel and the Palestinians fail to reach a final agreement on a peace process during a US-hosted summit in July 2000. Two months later, the visit of then-Israeli opposition leader Ariel Sharon

[2] Eng. Islamic Resistance Movement.

ignited the Al-Moscow Mosque Complex. Aqsa from East Jerusalem, the second intifada.

2001-2002 – Hamas carried out a series of suicide bombings in Israel, including the killing of 21 Israelis outside a nightclub in Tel Aviv in June 2001 and 30 Jewish citizens during the Netanya Passover. Israel has killed Hamas military commander Salah Shehadeh in an airstrike and has begun besieging Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's complex in the West Bank city of Ramallah.

2004 - Israel kills Hamas spiritual leader and co-founder Sheikh Ahmed Yassin in an airstrike, as well as co-founder and political leader Abdel Aziz Rantisi in Gaza for two consecutive months. Hamas leadership disappears.

2005 – Israeli forces begin a unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, which they captured from Egypt in the 1967 Middle East war, leaving the settlements and densely populated strip to the Palestinian Authority.

2006 – Hamas wins majority in Palestinian legislative elections. Israel and the United States have cut off aid to the Palestinians because of Hamas' refusal to renounce violence and to recognize Israel. Hamas captured Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit in a cross-border raid, prompting Israel to launch airstrikes and push into the Strip. Shalit was released five years later in a prisoner exchange.

2007 – Hamas takes control of Gaza in short fighting and eliminates Fatah forces loyal to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas based in the West Bank.

2008 – Israel launches a 22-day military offensive on Gaza after Palestinians fire rockets on the southern Israeli city of Sderot. Reports indicate that 1,400 Palestinians and 13 Israelis were killed before an armistice was agreed.

2012 – Israel kills Hamas military commander Ahmed al-Jabari, followed by Palestinian militants firing missiles into Israel and Israeli airstrikes for eight days.

2014 – The abduction and killing of three young Israelis by Hamas leads to a seven-day war that allegedly killed 2,100 Palestinians in Gaza and 73 Israelis, including 67 soldiers.

2018 – Palestinian protests erupt on the Gaza Strip border with Israel and Israeli forces open fire to keep them behind the border. Reports indicate that more than 170 Palestinians have been killed in protests over the past few months, which has also led to clashes between Hamas and Israeli forces.

2021 – After months of tension, during Ramadan, Israeli police confront Palestinian protesters near the Al-Aqsa Mosque for a trial in which eight Palestinian families face a possible eviction from their homes in East Jerusalem in favor of Jewish settlers. Hundreds of Palestinians are wounded in clashes with Israeli security forces at the Al-Aqsa Mosque complex after two days of sporadic violence. After urging Israel to withdraw its security forces from the complex, Hamas launched a missile barrage from Gaza into Israel. Israel responded with airstrikes on Gaza.

An interesting aspect observed during the seige is that most of the missiles used by Hamas are named after their former leaders, such as Major Al Atar[3] (Watt, 2021).

4.1. Hamas Structure.

After thorougly analyzing multiple sources[4], we have established a confirmed structure of the Hamas Organization.

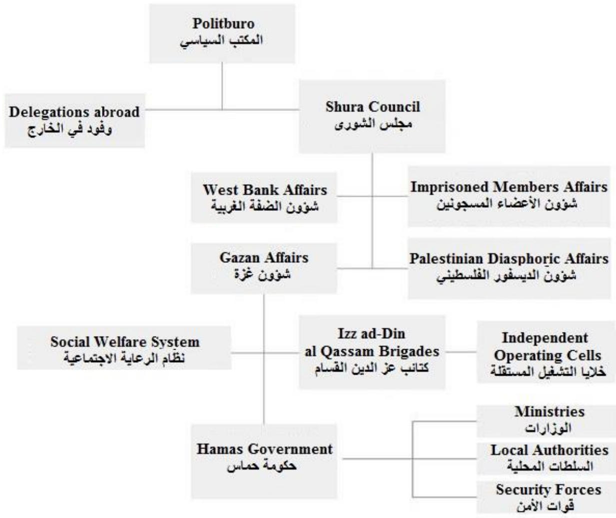

Fig.1 Hamas structure

In a deeper dive towards understanding the mentality of the terrorist organization, we will detail each section presented in the above figure.

The Politburo has a number of fifteen members, and is currently headed by Ismail Haniyeh; The Shura Council is the consultative body that elects the Politburo members – confirmed information about membership is not accesible to the public; The West Bank Affairs is led by Saleh al-Arouri; The Imprisoned Members Affair is led by Salameh Katawi; The Gazan Affairs section is headed by Yahya Sinwar.

Special significations hold the so-called Social Welfare System sub-section, that provides the brute

[3] Aiash (A120 / 220km), which is the most modern model; (M302 / 200km); (R160 / 120km); (Alfajer80 / 100km); (SH85/85 km); (M75 / 75 km); (WS-1-E / 55km); (Alkuds101 / 16km); (Alkasam / 10km).

[4] See https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/hamas; https: //ecfr.eu/topic/hamas/;https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/; http://www.passia.org/.

force for implementing the extremist ideology. Notably, we are talking about The Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, which are commanded by Marwan Issa and Mohammed Deif. The independent cells function as local monitoring stations for maintaining the self-proclaimed equilibrium of society. They are also known to engage in undercover missions, the aftermath and responsibility of which require to be separate from the Hamas organization. Last, we have the Hamas Government, which implements policies and is headed by Prime Minister Issam al-Da'alis (Staff, 2021).

4.2. Hamas Funding.

As a assigned terrorist organization, Hamas is cut off from official help that the United States and European Union give to the PLO within the West Bank. Generally, Palestinian expatriates and private givers within the Gulf given much of Hamas' financing. Expanding, a few Islamic charities within the West have channeled cash to Hamas-backed social benefit entities (Laub, 2021), inciting resource freeze by the U.S. Treasury.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The conclusion is that the Hamas Movement and its activity in Gaza create great difficulties for the Palestinian authorities as well as for the Israeli state, so Hezbollah's current policy also causes economic problems, energy, gas and especially a permanent state of war in Lebanon. Both movements are based on very strong external support, Iran, Syria.

Hamas began in 2021 preparing to run in the Palestinian Legislative Council elections in a military confrontation with Israel. Surprisingly, however, the movement implemented these two steps with unexpected enthusiasm, which raises the question: which approach best reflects its essence? The election provided Hamas with a real, albeit limited, opportunity to reappear in the West Bank, where it has been overshadowed by Israel and the Palestinian Authority, and to engage in Palestinian national structures, represented by a peaceful parliament and the Palestine Liberation Organization. Hamas hoped to control a very large group in a divided parliament, and if it did, it would find itself involved in Palestinian decision-making and an active party that could no longer be controlled or ignored. He has just elected a new leadership that is ready to make concessions to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Fatah to make progress in organizing elections and achieving Palestinian reconciliation. When Abbas canceled the election for fear of divisions within his movement. Hamas left empty-handed, with no seat in parliament. However, he has faced rival parties that are now torn apart by divisions and a president who lacks credibility and has limited options.

This political vacuum that followed the cancellation of the elections provoked a deep-rooted crisis over Jerusalem, exacerbating the traumas that Palestinians are experiencing today and those they have suffered in the past. When Israel expelled Palestinians living in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood, it reminded them of the events in Nakba, which led to the expulsion of Palestinians from their lands in 1948, after the founding of Israel. However, his desire to take control of the entire city, to revive Jewish property claims over pre-1948 real estate, and to continue to violate Palestinian rights, made Nakba seem more like an act in unfolding than a historical act. Apparently, these steps also coincided with the abandonment by the international Palestinian community. The Trump administration has supported the efforts of Israeli extremists to expel Palestinians from their homes in Jerusalem and to replace them with Israeli settlers. But this issue has taken on a religious character, after Israel imposed strict measures to restrict traffic in the city during the month of Ramadan and targeted those in the courtyards of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, which is one of the most sacred. places for Palestinians and Muslims around the world. Images of clashes inside the mosque complex and videos that were widely viewed and showed Israeli police storming the mosque have led to growing Palestinian anger. It is noteworthy that Hamas did not have a hand in initiating waves of mobilizations against evacuations, nor did it take the lead. But these measures have given rise to action, as Hamas leaders believe they will not be held accountable for the heavy costs that Gaza citizens pay today for Israeli attacks on residential areas and the killing of civilians, knowing that previous rounds of fighting -based on this equation. For his part, the head of Hamas's political bureau, Ismail Haniyeh, said the war was not Hamas's choice, but rather that the Palestinians had "called for a move" and called on them to intervene, before calling for a new Palestinian leadership.

The conflict has so far killed at least 200 people in Gaza, including 58 children and 35 women, as 11 Israelis have been killed in rocket attacks. Hamas continued the war by firing rockets into West Jerusalem in response to an Israeli police attack on the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Hamas hopes to use this to ease the severity of its rule in Gaza, as the movement pays special attention to its position among the people, especially the people's control of its steps and its chosen leadership. In this context, the re-election of

Yahya Sinwar in 2021 as the leader of the Gaza Strip movement was a victory for a pragmatic approach to the issue of elections and the division of power. Hamas has decided to run in the by-elections to break the deadlock. Since the military took over the Gaza Strip in 2007, Hamas has suppressed dissenting voices. Many young people have come to see the movement's behavior as 'corrupt,' just like Fatah's rule. In addition, living under siege is not a viable way.

To continue the forms of resistance. Israeli authorities in the Gaza Strip have prevented Hamas from fulfilling its promises and implementing its electoral and social programs, undermining its position at the local level. On this basis, many Gaza residents believe that the Hamas project to combine armed resistance with the ruling authority has largely failed. However, recent hostilities have given Hamas the opportunity to assert its support for the people of Gaza and to assure them that their suffering has not been in vain. While communicating with the people of Gaza via WhatsApp, many of those who criticized the previous military confrontations between Hamas and Israel spoke about their support for the steps of today's movement. In a speech, Haniyeh carried the 'defender' flag of Sheikh Jarrah and Al-Aqsa Mosque and portrayed himself as a representative of the Palestinian people. But at least for now, the contrast with Fatah's inefficient movement is strong, allowing Hamas to claim that it is paving the way for national unity.

5. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

May 2021 marks one year since the loss of many Israeli and Palestinian souls. This article is written in memoriam to them.

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WEAPONIZED INFORMATION AND DEMOCRATIC RESILIENCE

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Abstract: *The virtual environment, represented mainly by social media, is being used more and more frequently and aggressively as a space for a new type of war, which uses information as a weapon. This essential change in the way war is conducted poses a considerable challenge to a democratic society, which must develop appropriate responses to the threats it faces, usually generated by an undeclared and especially invisible enemy.*

Keywords*: weaponized information; democratic resilience; hybrid war; social media*

1. INTRODUCTION

The last decades insistently revealed the manifestation of tendencies that attest significant transformation of the way wars are conducted, increasing the stake on non-military resources and capabilities. The main ways to do this are the *information warfare* (IW) – insidious, usually unassumed, conducted by various *proxies*, as well as the *economic warfare* (EW) – which uses, as a weapon, the imposing of sanctions by which it is largely limited or even blocked a state's access to the global market, weakening it considerably. However, waging a war by non-military means is far from being the prerogative of contemporaneity. Actually, 2,500 years ago, the famous Chinese general and strategist Sun Tzu noted the following, in his treatise *The art of war*[1] *(Sūn Zǐ Bīng Fǎ):* "to fight and conquer in all your battles is not supreme excellence; supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy's resistance without fighting." (Sun Tzu, 2004:37).

To a greater extent, today's actors seem to align themselves with this goal. "War as politics by other means", as the Prussian general von Clausewitz called it, is no longer necessarily carried in the trenches of the battlefield, it no longer uses bullets and missiles. Today, it is conducted rather in front of the computer and in the offices of political and economic factors. It involves different strategies and aims with the purpose of controlling and dominating the opponent rather than annihilating it.

If regarding the economic war, the measures ordered and the actions are still clear and easy to identify, things get significantly more complicated when it comes to activities that are subject to propaganda, misinformation and, more recently, fake-news/ deep-fake.

What answers should be given, what countermeasures are required in such situations? The purpose of this material is to make a brief and hopefully equally edifying presentation on the concepts evoked in its title, while also revealing the relationship between them, and to show some measures and directions of action.

2. LOOKING BACK TO THE HISTORY

Throughout history, information has been a weapon since ancient times. It has been used both as a notable resource for substantiating operational decisions on the battlefield with the purpose of supplementing the knowledge of the enemy by revealing its vulnerabilities and intentions, and as a direct way of influencing it, in order to "crush its resistance without a fight", as the influential above-mentioned Chinese strategist put it.

In the second perspective, it is circumscribed to the modern concept of information operations, in which propaganda and misinformation are included, as typical actions in the course of the war. Such actions have been known since antiquity – and even since prehistory, according to P. Taylor, who notes that Neolithic murals depicting groups of people fighting each other with weapons could be "perhaps the earliest form of war propaganda" (Taylor, 2003:20).

For the ancient period, the Australian author Haroro J. Ingram, interested in terrorist propaganda, notes in a study published under the auspices of the International Center for Counter-Terrorism –

[1]In fact, the book's literal name is *Master Sun's Military Methods*.

The Hague, as a significant example, the actions of Alexander the Great who built his empire not only on the basis of his military and political genius, but he also “deployed a range of propaganda strategies including PSYOPS (‘psychological operations’) against enemies, narratives that framed him as one with the gods, ensuring Greek culture and even the Greeks themselves were part of the conquered societies” (Ingram, 2016:7).

A much more present narrative in war propaganda uses the feeling of fear, which seeks to ‘paralyze’ the opponent, who is thus determined to give up the fight. Conclusive in this direction is an example mentioned by the American professor James J. F. Forest, author of several books in the field of international security studies, who recalls the practice of the Mongol hordes that devastated Europe in the 13th century: “they deliberately spread news of the atrocities they perpetrated on cities that did not surrender.” (Forest, 2001:17). Many cities fell this way.

The golden age of disinformation and propaganda, carried out as part of the war, is undoubtedly the twentieth century, with the two world conflagrations that have left their mark on contemporaneity. The development of mass media, especially the radio, facilitated, already in the First World War, the propagation of messages in order to model behaviors. Information warfare also played an essential role in World War II, with the allies' actions succeeding in tipping the balance decisively on their side.

More than ever, propaganda became the most widely used weapon during the Cold War period, supporting the ideological battle between communism and capitalism.

The magnificent triumph of the Western world did not mark also “the end of its history”, as predicted by the American philosopher Francis Fukuyama in the early 1990s. Instead, after what seemed to be more of a ‘short break’, history continued to manifest itself in force, with new challenges, fears and answers to them.

3. THE WEAPONIZATION OF INFORMATION

Representing a way of action that has been part of the arsenal of war since ancient times, the information acquired new operational valences in the first years of the third millennium, under the auspices of an unprecedented expansion and diversification of the media. More than ever before in history, information today sustains its vital resource feature, capable of bringing about considerable change by altering the perception of targets for the intended purpose, as notedby Rand Waltzman (2015), senior information scientist at the RAND Corporation.

The new global reality, characterized by interconnectivity, social media, and real-time events, has led to the exploitation of these facilities, in a framework that reveals the aspect of instrumentalization. One of the representative facets of this situation, which marked significant development in the recent years, is the dimension highlighted by a new concept: ‘the weaponization of information’.

In general terms, it refers to the act of assigning new valences to information, which is thus adapted and used as a weapon of war. Through this, an alteration of the information is made, to which the essential feature of objectivity is confiscated, necessary for correct information. According to the specialized literature (Polyakova & Boyer, 2018; Giles, 2016), the concept has evolved in close connection with Russia's actions, in the context of its support for the separatist movement in eastern Ukraine (Donbas and Luhansk), as well as the annexation of Crimea. The media coverage of these events (and not only) by the state channels in Russia revealed the subordination of the factual reality to the propaganda action, an aspect that founded the designation of these actions through the theme of ‘weaponized news’ (Roudakova, 2017).

In this context, ‘weaponized information’ means, according to a standard definition, “messages or content that is designed to affect the user's perceptions and beliefs in a way that will harm a target” (Wigmore, 2017). It is the most widely used form of ‘cognitive hacking’, defined as “a cyber-attack that seeks to manipulate people's perceptions by exploiting their psychological vulnerabilities” (Wigmore, 2017) (contrary to the common belief that these actions are mostly non-technical, and do not involve unauthorized access to systems or their corruption)[1].

An important contribution to the understanding of weaponized information acts on public perception is brought by the American political scientist Joseph S. Nye Jr., former chair of the National Intelligence Council and a trustee of the Center for Strategic & International Studies, a non-profit policy research organization headquartered in Washington, DC.

[1] Instead of the conventional term *cyber-attack*, which turns out to be relatively inappropriate in this context, James J. F. Forest proposes the use of *digital influence*. This action “is not about the functional integrity of a computer system”; “rather”, the author points out, it aims “to use those computer systems against the target in whatever ways might benefit that attacker’s objectives” (James J.F. Forest, 2001:19).

Analyzing the above-mentioned concept, the author places it in the sphere of ‘sharp power’ and illustrates the harmful consequences that it brings to the integrity of the information. Referring to the totalitarian regimes, Joseph S. Nye (2018) identifies Russia and China as the main actors carrying out such actions.

4. WHEN SOCIAL MEDIA GOES TO WAR

In the inventory of technological resources exploited as weaponized information, social media qualifies itself, by far, as the most used - and probably the most effective. The assessments made in this regard in the specialized literature are as clear as possible: “No technology has been weaponized at such an unprecedented global scale as social media” (*Mercy Corps*, 2019). Highlighting the implications of such actions, Catherine A. Theohary, an American specialist in National Security Policy and Information Operations, points out the following aspects:

> social media is used as a tool of information warfare - a weapon of words that influences the hearts and minds of a target audience and a weapon of mass disruption that can have effects on targets in the physical world (Theohary, 2015).

In an iconic work on the phenomenon, called *LikeWar – Weaponization of Social Media,* its authors, P. W. Singer and Emerson T. Brooking (2018), point to the fundamental change in the way war is conducted today and its consequences. They codify five fundamental principles relating to how social media is actually being weaponized: (1) ‘The internet has left adolescence’; (2) ‘The internet has become a battlefield’; (3) ‘The battlefield changes how conflicts are fought’; (4) ‘This battle changes war means’ and (5) ‘Were all part of this war’.

In the light of them a new paradigm is emerging: war by means of psychological influence, the path to ‘supreme excellence’ as Sun Tzu called it – obtaining the victory without fighting. In practice, the actions – that illustrate the manifestation of the notion of weaponization of social media - cover a wide range, highlighting the multiple possibilities of engaging in such approaches, as well as their insidious nature which makes them difficult to identify and label as such. According to Mercy Corps (2019), the well-known global non-governmental humanitarian aid organization, these manifestations can be categorized into four categories, as follows:

– *Information Operations* (IO) – ‘coordinated disinformation campaigns are designed to disrupt decision making, erode social cohesion and delegitimize adversaries in the midst of interstate conflict’ (Russia has carried out such actions in Syria, portraying the humanitarian organization White Helmets as a terrorist group, which has led to violent attacks against it);

– *Political Manipulation* (PM) – ‘influencing news reporting, silencing dissent, undermining the integrity of democratic governance and electoral systems, and strengthening the hand of authoritarian regimes’ (It is classic Russia's involvement in the US election process and the interference with Brexit);

– *Digital Hate Speech* (DGS) – ‘creating opportunities for individuals and organized groups to prey on existing fears and grievances’ (A tragic example is Myanmar through its violent actions against the Muslim minority);

– *Radicalization & Recruitment* – social media became ‘a channel of choice for some violent extremists and militant organizations, as a means of recruitment, manipulation and coordination’ (Al Quaeda has been a pioneer in this field, while these type of activities have been substantially developed later by ISIS).

Undoubtedly, it can be argued that social media has developed a fertile ground for propaganda and misinformation. By conveying fake content and conducting deceptive campaigns, the actors behind them seek to produce offline instability and violence in order to undermine democratic values and the foundations of the EU. The response to these aggressions must not be delayed.

4. SUSTAINING DEMOCRATIC RESILIENCE

The evolution of the Internet in the new space of warfare inevitably calls into question the state's ability to respond effectively to such situations.

In specialized terms, the aspects of this issue reflects the concept of resilience[2], which can be qualified, from the perspective of threats to a democratic state, as its ability to deal with them and to mitigate the crises, as Timothy D. Sisk (2017:4-5) argues in a consistent study. The author states, *ab initio,* that there is a ‘complicated relationship’ which is based on two essential principles, both specific to democracy: ‘value resilience’ and ‘demand resilience’. The first refers to the so called ‘in-build values’ of a democratic society, which help it to act

[2] The term was originally used to refer to major changes in the environmental system. In this sense it was being associated, mainly, with the manifestation of natural disasters. In recent years, however, it has also established itself in the field of social systems, being frequently encountered in the documents of international institutions.

successfully in the challenges and crises it faces; the second claims that 'democracy is resilient because of the continuing demand for democracy'. In this context, democratic resilience designates the actions of the system

> that through its attributes of flexibility, recovery, adaptation, and innovation is capable of addressing complex challenges, and weathering and responding to the crises that affect its survival or durability, and its overall quality and performance (Sisk, 2017:4-5).

In order to properly manage the threats posed by the new dimension of war, Western states have developed significant resources in this direction, both by calibrating the actions of existing entities and by setting up new ones, dedicated exclusively to this phenomenon.

A conclusive example is provided by the US, through the Department of Defense Cyber Strategy; developed in 2018, this document introduces the concept of 'defend forward', substantiating preventive strikes in cyberspace against a foreign cyber actor (Kane, 2019:52).

Important actions has been also taken by NATO, which materialized in the establishment, in 2014, of the Strategic Communication Center of Excellence, based in Riga, Latvia. In addition, significantly and fully conclusive is the concern showed by the EU that set up, in 2015, an East European Strategic Communication Task Force with the purpose of countering Russia's misinformation campaign against it and the Member States.

Last but not least, we must mention the salutary approach of the Romanian state, which established, in May 2021, The Euro-Atlantic Center for Resilience, under the authority of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. According to a special report prepared, in October 2021, under the auspices of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, this new institution "is organized around three pillars: risk mitigation through anticipation and adaptation, the development of analytical tools and best practices, and cooperation in education, training and joint exercises", and it aims to facilitate "research and cooperation in the development of resilience across the Alliance" (Sanchez, 2021:15).

Through their attributions and their intended purpose, these bodies have a clear role of early warning. Acting from this perspective, they identify and label harmful manifestations carried out in the virtual space which are used in the new arsenal of war. In this context, they are, in fact, 'the first guardian of the Internet'. Ironically, their guard is determined by the very need that the freedom of this space, still largely unrestricted, is not to be exploited, and thus directed by an unseen enemy against those who hold it and can enjoy its benefits.

An absolutely necessary step forward to limit the manifestation of weaponized information in the virtual space also involves taking appropriate measures to regulate it[3]. Certainly, these must be achieved through a fair balance between freedom of expression and the preservation of the public interest, in accordance with the values of a democratic society. All of this can have some costs and will require the active participation of democratic society at large. After all, as the old saying goes, 'freedom is not for free'.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The opportunities and advantages offered by the digital age have shifted the context of the war, which today places it, to a significant extent, in the virtual space. Through its characteristics, this new form of manifestation of the war threatens the very essence of the democratic society which it aims to dispel from the shadows.

In response to these threats, Western states have begun to take significant steps to counter them effectively. Until this goal is reached, however, there seems to be enough to do.

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HOW THE FAKE NEWS AND DISINFORMATION IMPACT NATIONAL SECURITY. CASE STUDY FROM THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract: *As defense planning evolves and main defense planning documents are developed on the basis of emerging and new threats, the role of Media on both the internal and external environment rises. Innovative technology has meant the creation of social media, which in itself has become a distributer of shared information. This unprecedented flow of information has created an environment where real news and fake news are very difficult to tell apart. For security decision makers these is problematic as social pressure has to be mitigated if certain decisions necessary for achieving security goals and objectives are contested because of the spread of fake news. It is the aim of this paper to analyze by using the descriptive method how fake news have contributed to the impeding/ the implementation of decisions and assuring security measure in times of crisis. The case study that will be presented in the paper is that of the Covid-19 Pandemic and how measures to fight the pandemic have been affected by the spread of fake news. In the second part of the paper we will address means and ways by which the negative impact that media has on security and defense measures can be reduced and mitigated.*

Keywords*: fake-news, social media, decision making, national security, misinformation, disinformation*

1. INTRODUCTION

Ever since 2017 when the Collins Dictionary added the word fake news to the vocabulary the spread of this phenomenon has increased affecting countries and international organization. Fake news have been described by specialists (Zimbars, 2020) as

> purposefully crafted, sensational, emotionally charged, misleading or totally fabricated information that mimics the form of mainstream news.

On the other hand to important terms that help the spread of fake news are those of misinformation and disinformation. Misinformation represents "false information that is spread, regardless of whether there is intent to mislead" while disinformation can be defined as "deliberately misleading or biased information; manipulated narrative or facts; propaganda." (*Dictionary.com*, 2022).

Inside the European Union, starting with 2018, the European Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society Mariya Gabriel considers that

> fake news is suppressing the media and society as a whole, calling for an EU-level analysis in order to assess the amount to which fake news menaces the EU and pinpoint whether it is likely to find a common solution regarding this issue. (Gergana & Belova, 2018).

The Covid-19 Pandemic that has developed since the beginning of the December 2019 in China from where it spread to the European continent as early as February 2020. The effects of the pandemic have not only impacted the medical area, but the economic, geo-political and security areas as well.

2. THE SPREAD OF FACKE NEWS INSIDE EU BORDERS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The Pandemic brought about an increase in spreading fake news at an unprecedented level, especially after the vaccination process started worldwide. A study conducted in Europe (Klug, 2022) shows that inside the EU and Germany one out of three Germans cannot differentiate between real news and fake news

Fake news have therefore penetrated all social categories, regardless of their degree of education, income and so forth. The development of social media and online interconnections has enhanced this phenomenon. The lack of fact checking has led to many people being misinformed and acting irrationally because of the negative information that is usually presented in fake news.

One of the aims of this paper has been to collect by using the descriptive method a series of fake news that have impacted the European society and have created negative reactions in more than just one EU member state.

One such piece of news has been that vaccines cause infertility. The fake study distributed using social media and that some anti-vax politicians have used in their public speeches as well declared that antibodies formed after vaccination will not attach only to the spike protein of the Coronavirus but also to a similar protein called syncytin-1, which plays a role in the development of babies inside the uterus. Several responses from medical specialists were required to shut down the rumor, but the effects were already there, as the anti-vax protesters complained in many of the nationwide protests of 2021 that have covered Europe that the risk of infertility for those who get vaccinated still remains.

Another largely spread theory has been that the ARN vaccines from Moderna and BioNTech Pfizer modify the human DNA. This fake news that scientists had again to disprove has been one of the earliest that penetrated social media ever since the vaccines first appeared at the end of 2020. Even though experts have shown that ARN does not enter the nucleus of cells where it could potentially modify DNA, the fast spreading of this news, the fact that ARN and DNA sound similar has confused and triggered a great number of people living inside the European Union Borders.

More recently, other fake news rolled in the public opinion has been that the Delta version of Covid-19 or even the Omicron version have actually been triggered by vaccines themselves and therefore only vaccinated people would get these new versions of Coronavirus. This then became an argument for the anti-vax community to once again reject vaccination. Scientists have come with studies that claim that all these allegations are false and on the contrary those who are not vaccinated contribute to the incubation of the virus and the creation of new versions of Covid-19.

Fake news have been also used to attack individuals like political figures or medical staff. One such example is the allegation that Ugur Sahin, founder of BioNTech has not vaccinated himself and is afraid of the potential effects that the vaccine might bring. The video streaming platform YouTube was used for the spread of an online video in 2021 that shown an interview with Ugur Sahin that mentioned he was not vaccinated. However, that video was actually older than a year, and by that time, in 2020, the BioNTech founder could not have vaccinated himself as vaccines were not available at that particular moment. After the vaccine became available and Ugur Sahin vaccinated himself, the rumors were eventually shot down even though the effects they produced in terms in mistrust in the vaccinated process had already been produced. Other fake videos suggested that political figures did not actually vaccinate themselves but instead used fake needles to mimic an actual vaccination. All of this rumors had to be shut down individually and with little or late effect on the public opinion that had already formed an impression on the matter.

Throughout the pandemic another means for misinformation has been not just to track the potential negative effects that vaccines might develop but to also spread fake cures and remedies that might cure the virus without the use of typical Coronavirus vaccination. Several such fake cures and remedies have been presented in 2021 in most European countries. In Fig.1 we present a list of these so called alternative solutions and how they were distributed in some of Europe's countries with the largest population including Germany, Italy, France, Spain and the United Kingdom.

Fig. 1 Disinformation Map in Western Europe
Source: https://www.niemanlab.org/2020/07/why-do-people-share-misinformation-about-covid-19-partly-because-theyre-distracted/

As we can see from Fig.1 several fake cures have been presented in Europe from the hydroxychloroquine medicine that specialists have established has no effects on treating the Coronavirus infection from gargling water, from the fake fact that nicotine users, smokers, are less likely to get the virus, to the fact that there are planes in the skies spraying disinfectant and simple breading tests can determine whether you have Coronavirus or not.

All of these fake negative effects of fake solution in dealing with the virus have made it difficult for authorities to actually manage the pandemic as increasing percentages of the population became reluctant to respecting the rules that countries sought to implement during the pandemic or they didn't comply to getting vaccinated and thus ending the pandemic earlier.

In the following chapter we aim to present the means by which the European Union has tried to answer to these increase of fake news, an increase that affected not just the medical management of the Coronavirus situation but would also have negative effects concerning the economic specter and the international security one.

3. MEANS TO MITIGATE DISINFORMATION

Because of misinformation, in 2021 a special commission inside the European Parliament was created with the purpose of trying to identify and combat informational cybernetic attacks that would take the shape of fake news. This idea started to develop in spring of 2021 when Vice-president Vera Jourova of the European Commission had already signaled that Europe had been flooded with campaigns of fake news regarding the pandemic (European Commission, 2020). The European Union came to understanding that these campaigns represent more than just an attack on the healthcare domain but rather they represent a way of increasing mistrust in countries governments, national and international institutions, and thus they could represent a threat on the security of the European Continent.

In explaining why the need for a commission that could counter fake news is needed, the EU gave the example of Germany, a country where because of fake news regarding the vaccine, the willingness for vaccination as a percentage dropped in just one month with almost 20%.

The foreign representative for External Policies Josep Borrel came to the conclusion (Trullols, 2020) that fake news during the pandemic has the potential to take away human lives as for those unvaccinated the risk for death is much higher than for those who get the vaccine shot.

One conspiracy theory was considered a direct threat on the Integrity of the EU as this particular fake news claimed that Microsoft founder, Bill Gates has planned together with EU leading officials to vaccinate the entire population of the European Union in order to monitor people through chips installed through the vaccination. Therefore the EU would make vaccination mandatory, which of course has not been the case.

Fighting the spread of fake news has been a slow process as in 2020 as it can be seen in Fig.2, just two EU member states blocked by their internal laws the spread of fake news by deciding to close those online sites that were considered guilty of constant misinformation. Those two countries were Romania and Hungary.

Fig. 2 Countries that have passed fake news laws. Source:https://www.economist.com/international/2021/02/11/censorious-governments-are-abusing-fake-news-laws

The EU has long been under the impression that fake news and the spread of alarming conspiracy theories are not random and are actually well directed by other countries especially Russia and China, with the aim of decreasing the stability and strength of the European Union. The commission on fake news is a first step that the EU is establishing in this matter, as though there have been many attempts by now, so far, legally the European Union has no acted in developing an actual legal framework for countering misinformation.

The aim of the new commission will be to identify what are some of the key areas and domains where fake news are mostly spread in order to then be able to mitigate the effects. One key area that is considered of vital importance and that has been under the impact of misinformation even before the pandemic, during European elections and will be under impact after the pandemic will end, the Russian war on Ukraine being a clear example, is the domain of security, both national for EU member states but also international around the European Borders.

It is therefore the aim of this paper to present in the following chapter the means by which fake news affect security and what are some of the ways ahead in stopping misinformation from impacting the European Union.

4. FAKE NEWS AND SECURITY

Since misinformation represents a form of hybrid warfare and is perpetuated through cyber-attacks on social online platforms it can be considered that *spreading fake news has a clear impact on security. The way through which the EU can counter the impact on security when it comes to cyber threats is by partnering up with online social platform.*

Some of the EU's biggest partners in this area are Facebook, Twitter and Google. The EU is looking at way that would make it mandatory for these platforms to better intervene and monitor even closely the spread of misinformation and conspiracy theory and to accept access of EU's own specialists to some of the stocked data that these online companies detain. Vice president of the European Commission, Vera Jurova considers that there is still a long road ahead for the collaboration between the EU and online platforms, as there is a lack of transparency and responsibility when it comes to the information that is publically distributed by the use of these platforms (Chee, 2020).

During the pandemic the collaboration has met some positive results, and the newly organized commission inside the EU Parliament is slowly starting to do its jobs. As such, it has become easier to fact check information, fake news content is much easily being taken out, and Facebook and Instagram have direct links to the WHO, while red flags appear on information that is distributed regarding the virus without being checked beforehand. One example of fake material being taken out of the online social media has been that of coronavirus medicine with exaggerated market prices. Some specialists consider that these measures are not yet enough to control the spread of fake news and increase security inside the EU when answering to this threat. Regulations are still not mandatory for online platforms, while the European Commission can only just rely on the well intent of these social online media providers (Claesson, 2019).

On the other hand it is clear that it is not easy to balance a fact checking device and differentiate between real and fake news. In other news the path to actually signaling which information is true and which it is not, is not a straightforward one. The line between mitigating misinformation and censorship must not be crossed in mitigating these risks, even if they can represent a threat to the EU's security.

One aspect to also take into consideration is which are the actors involved in spreading disinformation. As such the first category of fake news distributers are the so called external actors. They use fake news as medium for organized disinformation campaigns. These external actors can be state and non-state actors that by proxy represent those states agenda. When speaking about the Covid-19 Pandemic, Russian and Chinese agencies can be given as such as examples. The Russian official sites like Russia Today and Sputnik have uses throughout the European Continent to spread lies, fear and disinformation by the means of fake news in order to reduce the trust of citizens in state authority when it came to implement measures for managing the pandemic and increasing the process of vaccination.

Besides external actors, there is a second category of internal actors that can also be state and non-state actors. In the case of the Covid-19 Pandemic we have seen the rise of political parties with an anti-vaccination agenda as well as NGOs that share the same agenda and actions towards building a rhetoric that is centered around conspiracy theories regarding the state's role in diminishing civil rights, taking control and reducing citizen liberties through the actual means of combating the pandemic. All of the false claims that have presented in these fake news have since been proven false, as the reduction in Covid-19 cases at the beginning of 2022 has led to the lift of almost all pandemic restrictions inside the EU and all rights and liberties are protected for EU citizens regardless of their status of being vaccinated or not.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND TAKEAWAYS

The fight against fake news seems to take a more advanced step as the European Union Resilience plan is being developed. This resilience plan calls on member states to intensify proactive and objective communications to provide positive counter-narratives to disinformation campaigns. (Claesson, 2019). It is our opinion that besides pre-emptive measures the management of crisis situation should also include reactive measures in countering disinformation and fake news.

An example of a need for legal framework that could enable reactive measures is the ongoing situation with the Russian Invasion of Ukraine. The EU has taken down all Russian propaganda sites like including sputnik and Russia Today. However without a clear legal framework, the action in itself has triggered an aggressive response from Russian representatives who claim that the closures of these propaganda sites on EU territory is no less than censorship.

The disinformation developed during the pandemic can therefore serve as a lessons learned manual on how to better understand the origins, the means of spread and ultimately the best legal way of managing and countering fake news as their effects have an impact on national security, international security inside the EU while taking a toll on both the economic and political fields as well.

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SOLVING AND MANAGING MORAL DILEMMAS. FROM THE CYBER BATTLE FIELD TO THE FUTURE OF MANKIND

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Abstract: *The way individuals make choices when faced with moral dilemmas defines them, gives them coherence, authenticity, and contributes to their self-image. When they are attracted to opposite and incompatible directions, people make choices that are predominantly dependent on irrational elements and, very rarely, rationality becomes a working criterion. Morality, principles of conduct, truth, fairness can take on different connotations depending on the pressures of the situation. Traditional examples of professions that often face moral dilemmas are soldiers or intelligence officers. In this paper, we aim to detail the specifics of a new profession, which puts skills of the future in the service of crime or of the community good, weather in time of peace or war, analyzing the dyad hacking/ethical hacking. We will use the Anonymous Group as a case study, an ideology with a specific specificity, which in the context of the Russian - Ukrainian war can turn into a community resource or may turn hacktivism into a source of future anarchism in society.*

Keywords*: hacktivism; ethical hacking; cyber battlefield*

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most important elements that we need to be aware of is that every social change is accompanied by important changes in the social norms that govern the behavior of the community, and the moral values associated with them. Social activists have proven to be a key factor in generating socio-political change (Arquilla & Ronfeldt, 2001, Ganesh& Zoller, 2012; Shragge, E., 2013), and contemporary reality offers us many examples of civic activism that needs to be closely monitored (Vevera & Ciupercă, 2019). In order to bring about the desired change, groups of social activists identify certain components of society that they consider inappropriate for the society of the future and that they will constantly attack.

Understanding how social activists are able to set the moral and ethical agenda of society can only be achieved if the way in which the main social institutions caught up in the roller coaster of change are understood. People behave in different ways because in the background act a series of values and rules that have been promoted by certain social institutions and adopted by individuals. Therefore, every time society undergoes important changes, transformation nullifies a source of society's ethics and morals. The more authoritative and inflexible this source is, the more affected and at risk of extinction it is (Jordan & Taylor, 2004).

2. SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE CROSSROADS OF SOCIAL ACTIVISM

Social activism as a source of social change needs to be properly understood so that its patterns of manifestation are quickly recognized and the effects anticipated. History has shown that social activism determined the future direction of the evolution of societies, whether progressive or destructive: The Bolshevik Revolution was a regressive factor, while the abolition of slavery was a huge step in social history. Political conflicts and social turmoil have been specific to all the great changes that society has undergone, creating the framework for social participation, the emergence of social movements and popular political activism.

Activist networks have generated protests, social movements, but also new forms of ethics and morality, moved social norms to spheres less explored by the majority, questioning the actions of most members of society.

The behavior and effects of these groups have long attracted the attention of experts in many fields who have sought to understand how they work and the mechanisms by which they manage to change the course of history - while political science has studied them from the perspective of the way they generate new forms of socio-political organization or even anarchy, sociology has been interested in how they propose new social norms, and social psychology has studied them as active minorities being focused on the intrinsic mechanisms of this paradoxical process in which people without significant resources of social capital, money, prestige or any other power can innovate (Moscovici & Faucheux, 1972; Maass & Clark, 1984). Examples of past activism are numerous - from Christianity, to animal rights, environmentalism, feminism, progressivism are just a few examples that have changed the course of social history.

The study of social activism groups highlighted some common dimensions of their behavior (Jordan & Taylor, 2004):

- they PROPOSE NEW FORMS OF SOCIAL ETHICS, of social justice, which will guide the future functioning of society;
- they are in a HURRY - they want to bring about social change quickly, without any delay;
- they propose NON-FAMILIAR models of future societies, which involved TRANSGRESSION from the normal lifestyle to an unusual one;
- they are UNITED and people feel that they belong to these groups with which they identify;
- they are CONSISTENT in denigrating what is considered bad and intend to change;
- they manifest itself directly, VISIBLE against an item of the society considered to be wrong, which they want to change.

The relationship between democracy and activism has embraced a winding path over time, as activist movements in the physical or online environment have rather authoritarian characteristics and may promote social change that contains the germs of anarchy.

3. ONLINE SOCIAL ACTIVISM AND HACKTIVISM

Today, the new social structures are characterized by revolutionary communications, new patterns of family association, transnational production lines, new types of spiritual communities, all united in a simplistic name – the information society. With the emergence of a new environment for the manifestation of human daily activities, namely the cybernetic one, a new dimension for manifestation of socio-political activism has become available. When the activity of the questioned institutions is essentially characterized by the cyber compromise in the name of an ideology, we deal with a new type of online social activism – hacktivism, often considered the main way to fight in the digital space (Wray, 1998).

Online social activism should not be confused with hacktivism. The first refers to the use of the Internet and digital space to support causes or ideals especially by creating websites, posting materials, identifying information, sending emails, setting up forums, forming associations, without disturbing in any way the activities of other users. In contrast, hacktivism consists of operations that use the same techniques that hackers use to cause malfunctions of the normal operation of some sites, still without causing serious damage. It can be said that hacktivism is politically motivated hacking. Failure to comply with this criterion and involvement in operations that end in significant costs to the other party, including material and / or human damage, go beyond the specific area of hacktivism and place those operations in the category of cyberterrorism (Scott & Cupp, 2017).

The infusion of social activism into the digital space has reinvented hacking. Until the advent of hacktivism, hacking was rightly considered an activity to hardly avoid, with significant deviations from ethics and morals. Public perceptions of hackers were improved when they assumed higher motivations and engaged in illegal clandestine activities in the service of a common good and seemingly progressive ideologies (Hampson, 2012, McNutt, 2018).

Hacktivism is currently in a gray area between protesting against things going wrong in society and illegal activity, with involved people being labeled as freedom fighters or as a group that pursues the digital lynching of chosen targets. Therefore, although hacking is rightly perceived as a type of theft and is associated with illegal, criminal activities, hacktivism (sometimes called electronic civil disobedience, Wray, 1998) is considered only another form of protest, being totally acceptable to the proponents of the idea in favor of which it is protested.

As daily activities move into the digital space, hacking and hacktivism become more and more prominent. Today's hacktivism tends to cling to the spirit of the times and to assume the support of progressive causes of the time - for example, digitally correct hacktivism.

The profile of the activists involved in social activism and hacktivism is a difference between these types of protest that should be considered more often.

In the case of those who advocate for a social change in the physical world, the identity of the protesters is known, and those people generally have no criminal record. Hacktivism is, however, carried out by anonymous people, people who probably have previously performed activities of decryption, violation of privacy, access for personal financial gain, not for a political stake. Therefore, the accumulation of high social and trust capital by people with dangerous social values and questionable psycho-moral traits, the social change may be triggered to change to undesirable directions as soon as they may become opinion leaders

4. HACKTIVIST GROUPS IN THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINE CONFLICT

What role does the Internet play in foreign policy decisions and in international developments? It seems that it is more and more extensive as the examples do not stop to prove it. In April 1999, according to the Los Angeles Times, the Kosovo war of 1996-1999

> turned cyberspace into an ethereal war zone where the battle for hearts and minds is being waged through the use of electronic images, online discussion group postings and hacking attacks (Dunn, 1999, 10).

The conflict in Kosovo was considered the first war on the Internet, this space being used for disseminating propaganda, asking for help, demonizing the opposing camp. After that, the war acquired new dimensions, overcoming traditional ideological justifications and no longer confining itself to military power (Lesenciuc, 2007), but encompassing new fields for battle.

At the other end of the time continuum, with the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, the digital space was divided again between the followers of the two camps. The visibility of the Ukrainian conflict has attracted hundreds of hackers, volunteers from all over the world. The possibilities given by technology and their localization around the globe make it almost impossible to identify the perpetrators of the various attacks that take place subsumed by this conflagration - the hybrid war and especially the cybernetic war has reached a peak hard to imagine before.

Aware of the precariousness of the way in which this huge resource is exploited, the Ukrainian authorities have initiated several actions to centralize and direct the efforts of volunteers. In the early days of the conflict, the Ukrainian government knew how to seize the opportunity and announced, through the voice of Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Mykhailo Fedorov, the establishment of an IT Army to help countering Russian attacks by denying access to cyberspace. Through a Twitter ad, he channeled volunteers to a Telegram channel with precise directions that could be followed by volunteers to contribute to a more complex overall puzzle of defense and attack A 14-page document detailed specific instructions - what software to use, how to hide their identity. Targets were posted every day, targeting mainly telecommunications companies, banks, ATMs. In about one week, the channel had 285,000 subscribers. The co-founder of the Ukrainian cyber security company Cyber Unit Technologies, Yegor Aushev, has called on programmers to get involved in the conflict and offered $ 100,000 for those who identify flaws in the code of Russian cyber targets. To be accepted each participant should have someone else's recommendation to be accepted.

The involved hackers have mostly used DDoS attacks, in which a server is overwhelmed by a wave of requests. These are relatively easy to do and only temporarily disconnect websites. The most salient hacktivist groups in the Russian – Ukrainian conflict are by now (blog.checkpoint. com/2022/03/03):

- **AgainstTheWest** is an active hacktivist group since October 2021, which used to attack entities suspected of having links with the Chinese Communist Party before the war. On February 13, 2022, they decided to dissolve due to lack of motivation, but they met again because the war and announced that they would collaborate with Anonymous against Russia.

- **KelvinSecurity** labeled itself as Private Information Hacker Company. On March 1, the group published a link that lead to the “monitoring system of the Nuclear Reactor in Dubna”, a “leaked database from the Russian nuclear institute” and the “video from nuclear reactor”. However, with the exception of some Twitter messages, there is no other evidence that the group really managed to penetrate the Nuclear Reactor at the Joint Institute for Nuclear Research in Russia.

NB65, which works also in support of Ukraine, “declared a successful campaign against ... The Institute of Nuclear Security [in Moscow] and published sensitive documents”, according to the report of the cyber security company CyberInt.

Cyberpartizan, a group of cyber activists in Belarus who oppose President Lukashenko, said they control the national railway system and will sabotage any trains carrying members of the Russian army and they have encrypted and / or destroyed databases that allow control of traffic, customs, stations in Belarus (https://www. theguardian.com/world/2022/jan/25/cyberpartisans-hack-belarusian-railway-to-disrupt-russian-buildup).

Also in Georgia, the BlackHawk group has launched attacks on Russian bank servers and TV channels.

KillNet, which operates in support of Russia, has launched a "KillNet Botnet DDoS" service and is running campaigns against Anonymous, which have announced support for Ukraine. On March 1, they announced that they had managed to compromise the Anonymous website, as well as retaliation for attacks on Russian sites.

Anonymous. Beyond these examples, Anonymous is probably the most well-known hacktivist network in the world. Formed in 2003 as a decentralized hacktivist group, united under the motto "We are a legion", Anonymous operates in an atypical manner, in the sense that anyone can adopt a cause and act in its support, under the auspices of Anonymous, provided that the attacks be directed against an organization that misuses its power. The symbol with which they became famous is the Guy Fawkes mask, made famous by Alan Moore V's graphic novel for Vendetta, in which an anarchist revolutionary overthrows a corrupt fascist government. They gained the most visibility between 2008 and 2014, following cyber-attacks against entities such as the Church of Scientology and PayPal. Anonymous has previously hit Isis, the Iraqi terrorist group and the Ku Klux Klan, as well as payment companies, local governments and the record industry. Some attacks have led to the arrest of members by US and UK authorities. Currently, the group has numerous social media accounts, with 15.5 million following only on Twitter pages.

Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the group focused on attacking the vehicles of Russian disinformation campaigns, such as media agencies, as well as hacking funds from certain Russian financial institutions to donate them in cryptocurrencies to Ukrainian efforts.

A resounding achievement was the takeover of the Russian television channel, which in its program replaced Russian propaganda with images depicting the horrors of the war in Ukraine and the atrocities committed by the Russian army. In a short video, a regular program of Russian television was interrupted by images of bombs exploding in Ukraine and soldiers talking about the horrors of the conflict. The video appeared on the third day of the war, on February 26, and was widely circulated on social media.

Anonymous also claimed a distributed denial of service attack against the Russian news agency Rostelecom, although it never commented on the veracity of the allegation. They also managed to change the international maritime records in which they changed the name of Putin's yacht in the FCKPTN to which they described the destination HELL and showed that he was shipwrecked on Snake Island, recognized as a symbol of Ukrainian resistance. The websites of the Moscow Stock Exchange, Russia's federal security agency and the country's largest bank, Sberbank, have been temporarily shut down.

Numerous independent groups were attracted under the auspices of Anonymous, an example of this being **Squad 303**, a group of Polish hacktivists who borrowed the name of a Polish fighting squadron, famous in the Second World War. They have built a website that allows everyone to send SMS and WhatsApp messages to random phone numbers in Russia where they can tell the truth about the war in Ukraine.

The public's involvement in this type of confrontation also has the disadvantage that it gives the opposing camp the opportunity to strike them with its own weapons.

> The Achilles heel of Anonymous is that anyone can claim to be Anonymous, including state actors operating against what we're fighting for. With our current rise in popularity, it's (almost) a given that there will be obvious repercussions from a government entity. As for adding to the chaos, we're used to chaos, especially online (Anon2World, *apud* https://www.bbc.com/news/ technology-60784526).

5. COSTS AND BENEFITS OF HACKTIVISTS INVOLVEMENT IN INTERNATIONAL CRISIS

The discussion on the risks and benefits of involving hacktivists in an international conflict is broad and should be carried out on short term and long term level.

a. Short term. The attacks carried out by anti-Russian groups manage to disrupt the functioning of some sites, to promote pro-Ukrainian or anti-Russian messages, where censorship would not allow them or even to take embarrassing actions for the authorities involved in the conflict. For example, the supply of electric vehicles on the Moscow - St. Petersburg highway was suspended for a day by the Russian energy company Rosseti, because the terminals displayed the message: "Putin is a dickhead". Sometimes it happens that announcements about the compromise of cyber security of certain institutions considered adverse tend not to be confirmed.

On the other hand, experts warn that these cyber guerrilla efforts could enter unexplored territory: "If one of these activists, one of these volunteers, comes across something and someone dies, then the first shot is fired," said Mike Hamilton, former Vice President of the US National Services Coordinating Board and Chief Information Security Officer of the cyber security firm Critical Insight. Thus, instead of helping to shorten the conflict, there is a risk that hacktivism will lead it to a larger scale.

"It's become an independent machine, a distributed international digital army" (Aushev, 2022). Experts already warn of the impossibility of controlling this type of fighting force

> It is crazy, it is bonkers, it is unprecedented. This is not going to be solely a conflict among nations. There are going to be participants that are not under the strict control of any government (Matt Olney, 2022).

In the absence of any control and even motivated by good intentions, these volunteers could accidentally damage critical infrastructure such as hospitals or communications.

> I've never seen anything like this. These attacks do carry risks. [They] could lead to escalation, or someone could accidentally cause real damage to a critical part of civilian life.

says Emily Taylor from the *Cyber Policy Journal*.

The risks seem to be getting bigger than the benefits every day, especially since the effects produced by hacktivists are not very impressive. The benefits of anonymity and relocation can turn into huge risks at the moment Russia decides to adopt a foreign flag and get involved in cyber-attacks behind a hacktivist identity.

Security experts believe that poor results are especially because of a lack of specialized training in cyber warfare. Due to their lack of military training, assumed coordination and a well-established global plan, the damage they do is not great enough to reverse the fate of the war or at least cause insemination damage. "The land invasion is advancing, people are suffering, buildings are being destroyed. Cyberattacks can't realistically impact this." (Lukasz Olejnik, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/04/technology/ukraine-russia-hackers.html).

The question is whether hacktivists can't or don't want to do more damage? Our hypothesis is that, in fact, hackers subscribe to the classic definition of hacktivism, their main characteristic being the production of damage, but not an irreparable one, just temporary. Voluntary hackers seem to avoid becoming cyberterrorists, probably due to the fact that they do not have a soldier's education, trained to destroy their target. According to their profile they are rather willing to cause material damage and momentary dysfunctions, not serious permanent ones.

b. Long-term. On the other hand, an unexpected result of this war is the fact that it united under the same banner entities in total opposition: the social activists and those against whom they traditionally fought – the state authorities. The hackers had previously participated in the war in Syria, but in such small numbers that it was insignificant, but the war in Ukraine has turned this behavior into a social phenomenon whose future evolution is a big question mark.

We are therefore facing a paradigm shift that requires special attention, not only for its immediate effects, but also because of the possible long-term consequences. The evolution of events must be carefully monitored, both in terms of the characteristics of the situations currently experienced, and in terms of the social capital obtained by hacktivists and the skills developed by them during the conflict.

Scenarios for the evolution of situations should be built permanently both for the war period, but especially for post-war context with the scope of rising the resilience of people and critical infrastructure (Barbu, 2016). How will the tools learned today be used and for whose purposes could they be enslaved? From our point of view, this is a crucial question for the construction of plans for rapid reaction measures for future situations that we will face in the Russian-Ukrainian post-conflict scenarios. In the absence of such concerns, which should be reflected in careful and swift response, we fear that things will turn into an undesirable directive, and that the social order could be affected in the long run.

In fact, Ukraine seems to understand the risks associated with the opening of a Pandora's Box as Victor Zhora, a senior cyber security official at the State Service for Special Communications and Information Protection in Ukraine, said that although they did not welcome "any illegal activity in cyber space" he "understands" and "appreciate" what Anonymous and other hacktivists are doing.

> The world order has changed ... and I don't think sticking to moral principles works since our enemy doesn't have any principles. We appreciate every kind of help. (*apud* Murphy, 2022).

6. CONCLUSIONS

The Russian-Ukrainian conflict is probably the most important of those who have used cyberspace as a means of full-fledged operational battle field. Hacktivists may become a constant in future wars. But the features discussed above require increased attention from decision makers, even after the end of the conflict. Reality has shown that the level of volunteering in such situations is much higher, compared to other forms of people involvement in the conflict, even for the simple fact that the conservation instinct acts to a lesser extent and no real threats are perceived for those who want to involve. Still the disorganization of a large number of relocated volunteers can have undesirable effects and can even become a danger to the evolution of the conflict and, especially, to peace negotiations. Therefore, although a first reaction to these actions may be to approve and support, the long-term consequences of these actions should not be ignored. IT, military, political, and diplomatic experts gathered in dedicated working groups should consider each type of action and its potential long-term effects to enable feedback on the needs of the community, which would be ideal based on clear documents and regulations, currently non-existent.

In this article we have tried to suggest the scale of the problem by describing the activities carried out in support of Ukraine, in order to understand that the approval for war hacktivists could degenerate later. The right reaction of decision makers is to channel these energies in a desired and socially useful direction during the war but especially afterwards. The lack of concern for regulation will create the right framework for some anarchist activities fueled by hacktivist groups that have reached their highest potential during previous conflicts.

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DIGITAL GOVERNANCE IN NATIONAL SECURITY THREAT MANAGEMENT

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Motto

"However critical may be the situation and circumstances in which you find yourself, do not despair. It is on occasions when everything is to be feared that nothing is to be feared. It is when one is surrounded by all dangers that one need not fear any. It is when one is without any resources that one must count on them all. It is when one is surprised that one must surprise the enemy himself."
Sun Tzu, *The art of war*

Abstract: *Digital public policy and national security threat management are shifting at a pace that is hardly ever synchronized. Both areas of expertise require different sets of incentives to move in one direction, nonetheless for implementing successful digital transformation strategies it is required to adapt to a common responsible approach of the toolkit that new technology offers in national security threat prevention. This study is set to outline that digital governance in an intelligence service that also assumes a digital presence is mainly represented by the framework of responsibility where role definition and decision-making are put into action. Therefore, digital governance in a national security structure means it is invested with powers by the law but also can delegate specific executive authority given the plethora of scenarios that can occur in order to efficiently prevent incidents that can potentially disrupt the status quo. Hence, it will firstly be outlined what security stands for today in a syncretic analysis that binds the principles of good governance and human rights using the filter of innovation in technology. Secondly, the paper will navigate through digital strategy, digital policy and digital standards in order to build the importance of the role of managing security disruptions that are considered possible threats to national security. A digital maturity may have been reached in national security organizationally-wise, but threats developed in the processes of future technologies must be the subject of the discussion to strengthen the wellbeing of our society.*

Keywords*: digital policy; national security threat management; digital strategy; digital standards*

1. INTRODUCTION

Threats bear the force to change security landscape but today's intelligence organizations are absorbing reforms driven by the demands the digital society requests, a society that wants to no longer be divided by territory, that is prone to be consumed in media extravaganza of scandal, facing all sorts of emotional extremes. Like the logic of commodities prevails over competitive ambitions of merchants, or the logic of war determines frequent modification of weapons, or the logic of spectacle needs a diversity of media exposure, the national security logic commands digital proficiency in all matters, including digital threat management.

The change that we have been seeing the past 10 years has been of importance both as a diversification of disruptions that appear to act as incentives to further the digital expertise of state backed organizations, but also as an intrinsic rearrangement of frameworks to meet the competition of outside players.

2. THREATS IN A DIGITAL SOCIETY

To give technology authority is to recognize it has merged into our society and stands to empower media. Then, if technology plays such an important part is it time to say that when corporate interests come to dominate media it changes the way we perceive historical truth? It is not always the case, but incentives to determine certain narratives have been observed. It presents a natural attraction to some people to gain absolute control over the information that reaches society, to model the knowledge voting people have. To build the present-day to your own liking in people's minds sounds quite tempting, a godlike tool that completes the framework of a closed society, a captive one.

To live in complete ignorance of what the government is actually conducting will always make it easier to forget when it will come out, that's why the most important facts are the ones that are mostly hidden, covered in complete secrecy - a generalized secrecy that stays behind the entertainment provided by the controlled media.

In a state-led media existence, there is no need for feedback, no need for critical thinking and apparently no sanctions. The narratives gain authority and society validates them, in its ignorance. It comes easily to become a speechless individual under such long lasting circumstances, and that's how one systematically destroys public opinion. This is the case of authoritarian states that intend to preserve power and to design an alternate history, above the law, that matches their leader's vision. What you can equally find in democratic states is the toolkit offered by new technologies.

Why is it that we find it so comforting to live in a digital society one may ask? Maybe because values and morals seem to dissipate in digital space and makes it easier to act impersonally, to spend time in such a place where no moral compass applies, so there would be no sanctions. It feels easier without having a referee. Luckily, it's only the perception users get. Of course, in the transition to digital life all the vulnerabilities that come with the territory apply. When those vulnerabilities are explored to an extent that can create serious damage, a disruption to normal life, then we can evaluate the level of danger that the emerged threat is capable of delivering on a day-to-day basis, but most importantly in times of armed conflict.

We must acknowledge that the vulnerabilities that arise in times of duress may come as an advantage for the aggressor, take for instance the outage of ViaSat[1] the day the Russian invasion started that affected the Ukrainian armed forces, police and intelligence service (Rid, 2022), that is why an effective threat management has to function properly - which goes from identifying the threat, to damage control and counteracting.

Are these measures lawless one might wonder? As long as we have a framework for the development of the toolset to actively safeguard the security, and within this framework we can clearly see the national strategy, the policy adopted and the standards employed in dealing with digital threats, the spirit of the law speaks for itself.

Besides the cyberattacks that can be distinguished by the technological factor, anonymity of the actors and tangible disruptions that we can equivalate to basic covert operations, we must equally pay attention to the increased disinformation operations that originate in state-funded media outlets of authoritarian states and their proxy social media channels that affect the mindsets of millions of followers world-wide.

Months before the start of the Russian war with Ukraine in 24th February 2022, there was a historical effort in the amount of information that was declassified to actively act as both early warning to international community (London, 2022) and deterrent to the aggressor state (Elliott, 2022). That is the time timeframe when we could consider was the beginning of a media frenzy (Dorfman, 2022) that should have been considered as legitimate warning of a full-scale armed conflict in the days that followed. First main disclosure came in December 2021 and cautioned about the amassed Russian troops on the eastern Ukrainian border that are ready to start an offensive in early 2022 (Harris, 2021), publishing satellite pictures of the troops estimated at 175,000 and 4 geographical locations of the multi-front offensive.

Meanwhile the state-funded Russian media and their proxies started pushing the narrative that NATO and the West control the Ukrainian government against the interests of the Ukrainian people, a theme that has been revisited since the illegal Russian occupation of Crimea in 2014 and supported the separatist movement in Donbas region. Officially the response Putin offered was that the NATO exercises in the Black Sea region alongside the Romanian and Polish anti-missile American systems are threats to Moscow.

In January, U.K. stated that the Russian plan is to forcefully remove Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky to be replaced with a pro-Kremlin leader, possibly Viktor Medvedchuk, a close family friend of Putin (Shuster, 2022). The U.S. warned also about Russia sending saboteurs to generate a formal reason for the war (Plett-Usher, 2022). The same day, Ukraine calls out on Russia cyberattack on almost 70 of official sites that went down with an anti-Ukrainian government message (Tidy, 2022).

The beginning of February U.S. warned about an imminent Russian attack on Ukraine and urged its citizens to leave the country. February 21st Kremlin recognizes the independence of the 2 self-proclaimed separatist regions Donetsk and Luhansk to build a legitimate pretext to proceed with the invasion. On February 23rd and 24th Russian launched 3 wiper cyberattacks that hit Ukrainian systems just hours before the airstrikes started (Guerrero-Saade, 2022).

Given the public's saturation with alarming news, disinformation accusations from all the sides

[1] A highspeed satellite broadband operator

implicated, the possibility of an actual Russian invasion has been dismissed in the mainstream public opinion until it actually happened. Few had started packing to take western refuge when clear signs of an imminent armed conflict were there - Russian ethnics started burning documents in the streets, Russian diplomats and nationals left Ukraine a couple days before the Russian air strikes started to hit Ukrainian targets.

Two days after the war against Ukraine started the claims presented officially in National Security Council by Putin on national television were that Ukraine is committing genocide against Russian ethnics and is led by Nazi ideology and drug addicts, justifying the special military operation in progress. The days that followed a movement to stop the access of Russian backed media outlets on European and American public appeared, so by the beginning of March the ban was in place (Kayali, 2022), but what is unprecedented is that Google's YouTube streaming service and other social media giants like Meta followed. Moldova also issued an order to ban Sputnik and Gagauznet media-outlets. This straight forward movement against disinformation complements the unprecedented economic sanctions put into place by the U.S. and the E.U.

Given the growing economic sanctions on Russia and the invasion that is moving slower than anticipated, Kremlin has made sure that nuclear weapons come back into people's mindsets reminding of Cold War era fear of mutual destruction, cautioning against Western military involvement in Ukraine and condemning the military technology support offered by NATO allies calling them unfriendly states and saying that foreign military support offered to Ukraine is considered a legitimate target. Also, Putin asserted that unfriendly states will have to use Russian currency to pay for oil and gas contracts given that the rouble plummeted due to sanctions on Russia National Bank.

Official declarations regarding nuclear missiles and reports of Russian military offensive on Chernobyl generating a fire close to the conservation silo has successfully raised once again fears of radiation and remembering the '86 nuclear catastrophe Romanian people already anxious about the war closing to borders have started to pile up reserves of potassium iodine in hope to have a chance to survive such an event. Alarmist channels that fed Covid-19 conspiracy theories turned into military analysts launching pro-Russian propaganda feeding most popular attractive narratives that prove to be only myths about the war in Ukraine, but their success on Romanian public is merely marginal, being met by popular detestation fueled by tragic memories of past soviet military inhumane treatment of civilians and forced deportations Romanian people suffered.

Mainstream media started to present the steps to be taken in such an event, to popularize the official locations of anti-atomic bunkers, to show that authorities renew the national reserve of medication and equipment.

Further, mid-March the focus of Kremlin disinformation shifted towards Russian population reviving an older narrative of U.S. operated biochemical laboratories in Ukraine (Price, 2022) that are the source of pathogens like Covid-19 (Lee, 2022). The Kremlin also claimed that the takeover of Chernobyl former nuclear power plant was to prevent the creation of a Ukrainian nuclear dirty-bomb (Mallard, 2022) and the military invasion of Ukraine is a peacekeeping operation. Kremlin's propaganda and disinformation have been systematically dismantled by immediate response and effort by European and U.S. agencies that also presented the public the unnecessary massive civilian targeting practiced by the Russian Army on Ukrainian territory.

Even though considered a massive win in information war, the following days other propaganda and disinformation tactics surfaced that evade Kremlin association and the restrictions but come under the anonymity umbrella offered by other social media networks such as Telegram (Scott, 2022). TikTok algorithm does not filter content by truthfulness so it effectively has become a place for active measures for both sides of the Russian – Ukrainian conflict (Hern, 2022).

Active measures step up when transparently Kremlin funded media-outlets like RT - Russia Today, Sputnik and TASS are taken out of the main reach of western population – this is where proxy come into play: troll farms, news websites, academic websites, publishing research foundations with ties to Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) like The Strategic Culture Foundation, Global Research, New Eastern Outlook, News Front, Southfront, Katehon, Geopolitica.ru (State, 2020). Dealing with this sort of disruption in a form that was not presenting new attributes, but had a baffling effect on neighboring countries, as for the scale and brutality the aggression developed throughout the days, puts to a test even the most seasoned national security organizations that implement common digital disruption strategies. It is based on a wholesome understanding of media platforms that once again proves to be an effective tool.

Adapting to the challenges that occur every hour fueled by an armed conflict that uses all that technology can offer to obtain an advantage on the field, displays how an effective digital policy in threat prevention works.

Another important part of the process is effectively implementing digital standards, that are identifying disinformation models, trending patterns in media multiplier effect and creation of a fact-based adequate response.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Having a flexible analysis on how media ecosystem evolves in this European war scenario plays a crucial part in threat prevention and must take into account what are the leading shifts that form new disinformation tools and what are the effects of how the western media is tackling the challenge of scaling down by taking action against fake-news at the cost of profits.

In the digital governance of national security threat management, we reach a milestone where we surpass ideologies but use their influences to strategize in order to have efficient souple operations, integrated systems to aid decision-making. We must continue the incessant work for defining and identifying types of threats that use system vulnerabilities that have the potential to cause disruption of our status quo in order to find remedies in due time. Also, we must educate the public to correctly identify disinformation since most of times it plays to our fears and anxieties feeding false narratives to gain control over the mindset of the population. The possibility to falsify reality to a degree that history becomes flexible and convenient to those that control the information is a greater threat on the long-term than any damage that a cyberattack can cause.

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RECRUITEMENT OF WOMEN FOR MILITARY INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract: *This article was finished at the end of January 2022, with no idea of what was to come. We are faced with an unforeseeable war with no rules, with a deep impact on civilians. We are dealing with refugees escaping from war, women, girls, boys and elderly people, in their most vulnerable period of life. It is important to recognize that men and women are affected differently by the crises and we need to learn how to offer help according to their needs. Once more, these crises show us the importance of women in military environment and their presence in the peace negotiation process. I observed the complete absence of women from the negotiation table. Neither Russia nor Ukraine has any in their negotiation teams. Both teams are discussing issues with tremendous importance for women's lives, but they are not present there. I want to give you an example: I volunteer in this crisis at the Bucharest North Railway. We offered food, drinks and hygienic products to the Ukrainian refugees. We try our best to provide them with the goods they need. The need for the participation of women with full rights and obligations in the military system was a topic that gave birth to passions, in the debate of which energy was consumed and which is still contested. The subject is still very topical because the factors that were taken into account in its debate have changed. Nowadays we no longer face a classical war, in which there is a front line or the relief of the rear. There have been studies that have proven the different influence of armed conflicts on women and girls. In this article, I will look at how the military institution is prepared to address women for recruitment.*

Keywords*: participation; women; military system; recruitment*

1. INTRODUCTION

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 recognized, for the first time, the impact of war on women and women's contribution to conflict resolution and the achievement of a stable peace. Subsequent resolutions related to this topic represented the commitments of the Member States to take all necessary measures to build resilient societies, where human security and social inclusion will contribute to the development of the capacity to withstand emerging threats. Is legislative adaptation enough, though? Does the passing of the law guarantee its implementation? The plan of the Romanian Ministry of National Defence for the implementation of Resolution 1325 has been approved since 2014. From 2020, under the coordination of the Ministry of National Defence, the National Strategy and the National Action Plan on the implementation of Resolution 1325 (2000) of the United Nations Security Council on women, peace and security for the period 2020-2023 were adopted.

In 2014, for the first time, the Republic of Moldova has undertaken to implement UN Resolution No. 1325, when the two-year Program of Action within the Individual NATO Partnership for 2014-2016 was approved. In the next program, approved for 2017-2019, Moldova reiterated its intention to implement Resolution 1325. Thus, with the National Program of the Republic of Moldova for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on the role of women in ensuring peace and security, for the period 2018-2021, it was developed with NATO support and implemented by the Institute for Inclusive Security (ISI) and the NATO Information and Documentation Centre (CID NATO), in partnership with the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Moldova and with the financial support of the NATO Program "Science for Peace and Security".

2. FROM EXPECTATIONS TO MESSAGES

2.1. Methodology. Results. In order to understand the degree of acceptance of female military personnel in the Romanian Ministry of National Defence, I conducted a study on the perception of men on women in the military institution. As a methodology, I realized a series of eight interviews, with colleagues of mine, with the ages between 40-57 years old, with university studies, six of them being in the military system from the age of 14.

The research questions were: (1) How do you perceive the presence of women in the Armed Forces? (2) Do you consider women to be valuable to the military system? (3) Are mixed teams more efficient? (4) Are women started with the same chance in life as men?

Overall, the responses have been positive about the presence of women in the military, but some believe that women are not being used to their full potential, given that the Army is seen as an institution where physical strength prevails.

> Women are more valuable. The army is seen in terms of force. There still is reluctance from the perspective of strength, the lack of physical strength of the woman. A woman cannot do what a man can do. Tasks should be divided according to one's abilities and training. A woman is valuable for her perspective and does not have to do what a man does. A group is valuable with a woman in it. Tasks should be assigned to the benefit of the group. Women do not have the same chances as men in life. I think the solution would be to educate children. (CR, 40 years old)

> It simply came to our notice then. I don't see them in the special operations forces. There are some physical limitations, they are the weak link. A strong woman has lost her femininity. Comparing the femininity of the female soldier with a skater or ballerina who does pirouettes with their skirts... in my opinion, the skater/ballerina always wins. (DR, 42)

Standard conditions also appear.

> Women are valuable, as long as the standards are the same for women and men. Some women can cope with physical effort, but some cannot. However, the female psyche is even better than most men. Certain conditions of women need to be taken into account and it is not yet clear whether they are used properly. They must be used very well. (TB, 49)

> A woman (in the Armed Forces, author's note) must impose herself as a leader. Enforcement is not good. The career of women in the army is different from that of men. They filled the offices and they agreed with too, but they were taken out of the military. Men protected the military male environment by eliminating women from that environment. When it doesn't suit them and they want to get some benefits, they use the fact that they are women. They have not yet got rid of this victim attitude. (MZ, 56)

My comment on this colleague's opinion was that, from the point of view of the environment in which they live, men do the same. They have even begun to construct a victim-like attitude in relation to the feminist movements on equal opportunities.

The interviews also revealed the idealization of the kindness and sensitivity of the woman, who does not have in her nature to kill in cold blood.

> Women and men leave with the same chance in life. It's about being in the right place at the right time and that's it. I don't think the woman's place is in combat. It may be okay to pass the same standards of physical fitness and (there is, A/N) the ability to kill. It's a man's nature to be able to kill what's not a woman's nature. It's about most women and men. The scales should be the same, ready to do the same.

Regarding how long a female military officer can perform, in the context of interrupting childbirth and parenting services, he considers that the military invests resources in training women and does not benefit from them because they interrupt their careers for childbirth and raising children.

> You have to train people to use them when you need them. In a few years I will not do my job as I do now (when they are active, A/N) (AC, 49).

I had a counter-argument with the large number of soldiers retiring from the activity, before reaching the retirement age, benefiting from the provisions of law 223/2015, with subsequent amendments and completions.

> Women are more emotional than men. They have this in their intrinsic nature. At the age of 18, I used to say that women have a 'red fibre' inside them from head to toe, a vein related to motherhood, the fact that they can procreate, which increases their state of emotion. Women, subconsciously, feel the need for protection, they feel the need for stability and protection. From the beginning, everyone leaves life equally. (And yet, A/N) Women are viewed with a second chance at life. It's a philosophical fact. They are attracted to more liberal occupations that require less physical strength. I had young female colleagues who were better professionally than men. There are few trades where only physical qualities are required. In any community it is good to have mixed teams. Women bring balance to the group. Within the Romanian Army, the perspective of equal opportunities is respected. I don't think that the presence of women in the Special Operations Forces, in ship's crew or infantry brings added value, but everyone finds their place in the institution depending on their training. Only 5-10% of women who complete a form of military training continue their careers in the classic way. Many girls want a military career, but few pursue a command line career. Many go to support areas, to office jobs. They have been prepared for a military career, and they prefer positions in the military administration and not in the actual fighting zone. (TF, 57)

Two discussion partners took a progressive approach in favour of women.

> Women in the military are important and not a vulnerability. They bring an advantageous through

> their simple presence. They decrease the level of aggression and vulgarity in a system that does not have to be aggressive because it's very high power. (Women A/N) They adapted better in units. They do what their male colleagues do. The central structures have several women but are mistresses or family members. Women who have attended the same schools as their male colleagues are perceived in the same way. (IM, 53)

> Women are justified in their efforts to gain a place in public life. We are born equal and then there must be absolute equality. In the army, (women, A/N) are very valuable because they have more balance. They are not appreciated now, but they are very important. The reason may be the lack of education of men, the church. Women do not leave with equal chances in life. In the army, the subject of gender is well aware, for the leaders, minister, secretary of state, secretary general. It's not enough, but I don't think there can be more in the near future. The entry of women (into the military system A/N) is relatively recent. I agree with the differentiated scales for admission to the military system, given the morphophysiological differences. Women are more analytical and somehow see the solution of problems different from men. Women and men train together to create cohesion. (CN, 50)

In conclusion, the value of women in the military is recognized, they are analytical and they bring balance to a very strong institution. However, they are not suitable in all areas because they cannot sustain the same physical effort. If they claim equality, then they should start with the moment of entering in the military system, namely sports scales equal to those of men. They (men) don't understand the benefits of affirmative policy and consider themselves discriminated.

As for the "positive discriminations" regarding the testing of the candidates' sports skills, on the Ministry of National Defence website, created to promote the recruitment process and on the social network Facebook, the sports scales for physical tests are presented. I find that all candidates perform the same utilitarian-application route, tests with differentiated scales are on the spot, and some elements are performed only by men (fixed bar pulls) and others only by women (push-ups) (MApN, 2020a,b).

2.2. Aim up, be the best! In order to observe the way in which the communication to the public was influenced by the Ministry of National Defence Plan for the implementation of Resolution no. 1325, in 2020, I made an analysis of the recruitment campaign 'Aim up, be the best!'.

The Romanian Ministry of National Defence built the campaign for the virtual space and developed three official websites and two Facebook accounts, the last two websites being affiliated with www.mapn.ro.

I want to note that all sites have been changed. After a content analysis, I observed that two websites contain legislation, job postings, vacancies and their results. The form and language used are official, specific to the topics presented. To create a more friendly approach, the institution builds two platforms dedicated to promoting the military career, with more friendly messages, close to the public and with the possibility to receive feedback. Therefore, the campaign 'Aim up, be the best!' was promoted on both platforms. The presence of such a large number of platforms has confused me; I found certain materials, and later it was hard to remember where I had seen them for the first time. I performed the content analysis of what is loaded on both platforms, paying special attention to materials such as photos, posters and videos.

When accessing the "recrutare.mapn.ro website" (MApN, 2021), we are greeted by a page with a dynamic and friendly architecture, clearly structured, from where we can obtain the necessary information on the military recruitment process. It consists of a frontispiece, a horizontal and two vertical menu bars, one to the left and one to the right of the contents.

In order to have a complete image, I went through the entire content of the site and I noticed professional messages, strictly related to its purpose. As I scrolled through the horizontal bar, I discovered the 11th question on the FAQ page (frequently asked questions and answers):

> 11. Is the military profession suitable for a woman?
> There are no professions reserved exclusively for men. There are only professions that are not available to all women because they require the existence of special skills, vocation, special capacity for effort, physical endurance, a strong motivation and special personality traits, usually attributed to men. One such profession is the military profession. There are many requests from women, most of them seeing the military profession as a chance for personal and professional affirmation, a way to highlight their personality and to capitalize on the qualities and knowledge they have. However, women who want to pursue this profession must know that their work will not be an office job, that it will not be easy at all, that they will not benefit from standards other than those applied to men or from special conditions. Positive discrimination is not accepted. In other words, we encourage women to pursue a military career, but we want them to make this informed choice, because the military means more than just a job and a secure income, the opportunity to have a prestigious career, but also rigor, discipline, some personal sacrifices, intense and sustained

physical effort, the observance of strict rules of conduct and dress, of the military hierarchy and the adaptation to the barrack life, very different, often, from the civil one. Being able to have a military career, as a woman, in a field 'reserved', traditionally, for men, can only be a reason for pride for any woman. In addition, there are even things that a woman can often do even better than a man - to command a platoon of soldiers, to fly a plane, to take care of a wounded, etc., because from the point of view of perseverance, ambition, perseverance, conscientiousness, intuition and courage, women regularly manage to take precedence over men.

I may confess that this answer surprised me for the highlighted stereotypes, the expired language and the inconsistency of everything that the institution officially transmits. The discourse is that the issue of women's right to be included in the military is more about equality between women and men than about national security (Herbert, 1994:25-48). At the end of the gender-sensitive analysis, I tried to demonstrate whether the message sent through the recruitment campaign highlights these opinions and expectations that the institution has from women. Somehow, they are automatically fulfilled by men. The fight is in the job description of all soldiers, men and women, even more today when we are facing with the transformation of warfare in the 21st century, where the front line is no longer physically perceptible, as there is no calm and security behind the front. Today we are talking more and more about hybrid warfare, cyber threats and space forces. How does the Romanian Armed Forces recruiting its personnel, bearing in mind all these notions?

To have some answers, I performed a content analysis of images, posters and video materials from the "recrutare.mapn.ro site", a quantitative one to the photos. I paid attention to the women presence (single or in groups, how they are dressed and equipped, and whether we can identify if he holds a position in the office or in combat).

From those analysed, it emerged that 24.56% of the pictures represents a man as a character, compared to 3.5% where the character is a woman. 29.82% of the pictures contain mixed images and 10.52% are images with objects and landscapes. Of all the images, none have a female character or more female characters in a dynamic posture. Only 10.52% of the images, representing mixed groups, are dynamic. There are seven times as many images of men as women in the main shot and 13 times more images of men than women as central characters. Looking at the uniform, there is no image of women in uniform like any man in civilian clothes as the main characters. Most are images of men in combat (12) and mixed groups (11) in gala uniforms.

As for the roles they play, the images with men, alone or in groups, as well as in a safe picture, with a mixed group, play active roles, they wear combat uniform and they are carrying weapons, in two images the female characters are at the office, and most are with mixed groups with inconclusive attitudes. No inclusive language was identified for women in any of the images. In the vertical bars of the recrutare.mapn.ro website as well as the menu button, four campaign posters are included.

Fig.1. Advertising poster of MoND (MApN, 2021; offline online source, site under construction)

Two of them are collages with male figures in all poses, static and dynamic, on display and with weapons on them. In one is also introduced the image of a woman, wearing camouflage uniform (non-commissioned officer) (fig. 1), with a static posture, placed in the third plane, marginal. Although there is a woman in the poster, the language of presentation is exclusively masculine, 'the best'.

In the Figure 2, there are three women out of the total of the ten figures included in the collage, portrait-type pictures, in static positions (one is represented at the office and two are in a basic unit formation). In comparison, six male colleagues are presented in dynamic positions, armed, camouflaged, and only one is presented in a static position. In addition, the message in this poster seems to be addressed only to men being used only the masculine gender in the Romanian language (e.g. officer, military foreman, non-commissioned officer, soldier / professional rank, student). The fact that the message also addresses to women may be implied by their presence in posters.

Fig.2. Advertising poster of MoND (MApN, 2021; offline online source, site under construction)

As video materials, in the platform are uploaded 28 short presentation videos (in which 11 are women), two materials to support the military career of some national famous tv and radio personalities (Dan Negru and Daniel Buzdugan) and a video presentation of the process of to recruit until the moment of becoming a professional soldier. We meet the same policy of masculinizing employments. All are presented as belonging to men, even if the speakers are women, who have succeeded professionally. As a general observation, women are not portrayed as carrying weapons or in action. Even when they are talking about being a female soldier. There are two small exceptions, in the category of non-commissioned officers and in the presentation film, at 7:50 (2 sec). In the first example, a military woman presents herself as an armoured amphibious transport mechanic and leaves it, and in the second, a female aspirant for military career performs push up, an element required only of them during the recruitment process. The boys do fix bar traction.

The presentation film was created in accordance with the same policy of using the masculine form of nouns of the Romanian language. The background voice is that of a woman, there is a young female who is interested in this job, but the "candidate" (the masculine form) is introduced, she talks to a female recruiter, we only hear the word "recruiter", and the examples can go on (https://www.recrutaremapn.ro/foto.php). Even if we see young females coming to give Physical Fitness tests, they are not shown how they actually test. Women are represented in offices, learning, filling out forms or taking tests. They are part of the test teams but none of them have physical activities. Instead, when it comes to the medical examination, we hear 'nurse' and 'physician' (the masculine form), even though both are women. So, it was more convenient to give the female 'nurse' and the natural 'physician' to the male.

As for how military or civilian women share their experiences gained and argue their choices during their careers in the MoND, I've only heard romantic, 'pink' stories that seem easy to get into without explaining the challenges they pose. they exceeded. The places where they were filmed are idyllic, without highlighting those weights and stereotypes specific to the field. In fact, in any material on this website, female personnel do not wear weapons, do not perform military training, do not sweat, are not get dirty, do not wear combat uniform and generally do not move much. Currently, the website is completely changed, with very few pictures and the video materials are not there anymore accessible.

Regarding the Recruitment Campaign analysis on the social network Facebook, I present a content analysis with a smaller number of items, given the reduce amount of information on the platform, with the style close to viewers, target audience or people who can influence the target audience. As described by authors, the mission of the page is to show to those who want to embrace the military profession what should do, to provide them with updates on the professional and educational opportunities in the Ministry of National Defence, to motivate them and help them choose the path. the most suitable for them. This page was created on February 1, 2016. Until June 12, 2020, 100,993 people have rated this page and 114,249 have viewed it.

In this analysis, I was interested in the way the women are presented (images the young female appears alone, in a group of girls and in a mixed group, in how many they carry weapons). It turned out that: 26.88% of all images contain women; 6.39% of all female pictures (1.72% of total pictures) contain pictures of women carrying guns. Women are generally presented statically. They pose, look straight into the lens, smile. They are very present in March, for the International Women's Day, in fact, a day dedicated to the civic awareness of women and the fight against sexism.

Young females and women are also the subject of the image on the occasion of other national or 'imported' holidays (Easter, Valentine's Day, Christmas) or in activities related to them (carolling, checking boots for bunnies, on the occasion of onomastics. This habit of making women invisible is also seen in messages of encouragement. There are images that include girls/ women and the message is addressed only to boys/ men: 'Are you determined?' 'Do you want to be our colleague?' (in Romanian the masculine gender is used.) (Recrutare MApN, Facebook, https://www.facebook.com/RecrutareMApN/photos/). As I said before, in 90 percent of the images that contain women, they sit, pose, look at the camera, smiling and playful, or looking sideways. I noticed a few images of women standing with hands folded in front, imitating (Pease, 1997:133) the position of male colleagues but not being like them. It is a dominant position, of authority but also closed at the same time, it does not leave room for communications and negotiations (Pease, 1997:77).

In very few occurrences military females are presented in action, running, marching, with boots full of mud or equipped for a mission. The most 'appropriate' occasions when women can be photographed are official ceremonies and representation activities. For the most part, women appear in idyllic images, on a field with the gun next to them, with their feet in the sea water, with the sun at sunset or sunrise, smiling that the weekend is coming.Although the mission of the page is to convey informed information about entering the military career, I noticed that its editors want to highlight the humanity behind the uniform, people with various concerns, complex, with their families. I noticed the presence of the family with the young graduates of the different military schools or academies, a message that conveys the fact that the parents are proud and support the career chosen by the child. I also noticed the civilian partner with the military (man) from whom we understand that the family supports the constraints of the barracks life, I noticed the couples both soldiers, in which they understand and support each other. I noticed only one image with a couple in which the military is a woman and the partner is a civilian, from which I conclude that there are few such couples. What caught my attention was the fact that, regardless of gender, the military partner protects the civilian one (Recrutare MApN, Facebook, https://www. facebook.com/RecrutareMApN/photos/).

Even if the tone on this socializing page is relaxed, I have encountered cases in which stereotypical messages appear under the pretext of jokes. Thus, in highly impactful images of professionalism, military women think only of fashion and the way they look, giving their followers the opportunity to make superfluous comments. They are also annoying, so mentally unstable, they get upset with jokes (Recrutare MApN, Facebook, https://www.facebook.com/ RecrutareMApN/photos/).

But in my opinion the most confusing are the images in which couples, in military outfit, express to each other intimate behaviours, such as kisses, hugs, looks, intimate gestures inappropriate to the professional dimension, there is a risk of creating false habits or impressions and slipping into inappropriate behaviours (Salome, 2015:36). As Jacques Salome rightly pointed out, it is important to admit that the relationship between professional and personal life, as a couple or as a family, is based on the principle of communicating vessels. If there are slips, tensions, conflict situations on a professional level, they will also affect the personal life - and vice versa.

From most of the images in which women/ girls are present, the message emerges that for them, military rigor is somehow more relaxed. I followed two aspects: the hairstyle and the uniform. I consulted with the colleagues of mine, women in uniform, and they confirmed to me that there are regulations for wearing hair when they are wearing the uniform. Long hair should be braided and not dyed in bright colours. If the second condition, from my point of view, is unclear, the first one is unequivocal. And yet there are many images of the female military personnel, in official situations, when they do not comply with this regulation. Also, according to the Regulation on the description, composition and wearing, in peacetime, of military uniforms of the personnel of the Ministry of National Defence (published in the Official Gazette no. 307 bis of April 5, 2018) the length of the skirt must be 3-4 cm below the knee joint. The two have an eloquent effect (Recrutare MApN, Facebook, https:// www.facebook.com/RecrutareMApN/photos/).

Fig.3 MoND Facebook's account (MApN, 2021; online source: https://www.facebook.com/RecrutareMApN/ posts/1194785580541981/)

I think it is important for the women in uniform to take themselves seriously, because that is one of the areas that require seriousness. It does not mean that military personnel cannot be funny and to show love but in civilian clothes, because in the army, events with irreparable effects can take place, those around them must understand that they are trustworthy. I want to end this analysis of the Facebook page with an image that I consider appropriate to reward the work of women in uniform: cheerful, hardworking, strong and with a team spirit.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Criticisms of sexist behaviour and military rituals in the military turn 'male behaviour' into crime. All this time, women are taking up more space in the discourse of war and peace as speakers and subjects, changing policies. Digitization and new weapon systems are changing the face of war from face-to-face physical combat to distant and hybrid forms. "Women in war disrupt the order of things," says Kinsella (2011), and yet it seems that the order of things is constantly being rebuilt, as are the concepts of 'war,' 'peace,' 'man,' and 'woman.'

My belief is that in this high-risk area, we need to take into consideration the cohesion and functionality of the group, its members need to be trained to deal with various challenges, and diversity is an advantage. It is very important to overcome obstacles and missions to be carried out successfully, without human or material losses, if possible. For these reasons delivering a correct, ethical and open-minded message is very important in the recruitment process. In my opinion, gender advisers are very important in military units. I believe that, in addition to advising the leadership to include a gender perspective in all aspects of military life, he/she can be a good mediator between commanders and subordinated personnel on particular occasions. In some situations, the communication may be unfortunate, the messages may not be correctly understood or they may be interpreted in a different register from the one expressing them. Invest in their training!

The process of continuous training is imperative to include training modules for relational hygiene, to develop campaigns suitable for both, candidates and institution. Confusion is useless and bring anything good.

Obliged by our country membership to international organizations and in accordance with our foreign policy, we have to transform ourself, as we have done before, and this journey is not easy to achieve, but we know what it looks like (Fernbach, 2018). My recommendations to the leadership of the Ministry of National Defence, but also to commanders and military personnel at all levels, are: (1) to set up recruitment campaigns in which to be included messages addressed to women, using images with female military personnel in dynamic postures, wearing battle dress uniform, carrying guns, in command posts; (2) to reflect the expectations of the institution regarding its personnel and to point out what are the specific challenges of the military career; (3) to invest in staff training and in areas that are not only specialized but are important for the development and performance of the team such as hygienic relational; (4) to include women in the working groups for the areas that concern them (the wearing of military uniforms, rules on the hairstyle, make-up, jewellery and manicure) and to amend these regulations in order to be fashionable. In the same time, any deviation to be punished; (5) and last but not least, to use all the human resources at disposal. Invest in the logical and useful implementation of existing legislation.

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Intercultural Communication

INTERCULTURALITY IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD

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Abstract: *Touraine (2012) observes that development is no longer a stage that follows tradition: in the globalized society space and time, private and public life are compressed. With networked communication systems, billions of individuals do the same things, wear the same clothes, watch the same films, drink the same cola and use the same language. International concerns revolve around the same problems: environmental pollution, the greenhouse effect and the pandemic (financial flows and technologies). Nevertheless, the things we share that allow us to affirm we belong to the same culture are not these. Each society and social group has a culture of its own and "globalization" certainly means world distribution, but there is a separation between the circulation of goods and services and the bond with a particular culture or society. The term "multiculturality" implies multiethnicity and these two words often coexist within one country or big city. Communication between different cultures may take place at the level of interpersonal communication, but also at the level of formal written messages, on the Internet or in the press.*

Keywords*: interculturality; globalization; pluralism; intermediarity, multiethnicity*

1. FOREWORD

Intercultural communication cannot be taught; however, a competence model can be learnt by observation, day by day and experience by experience, until the person becomes skilled in this kind of communication. What can be taught is that each culture has its own dignity, equal to that of every other culture. It is important to bear in mind the lifelong learning process according to which one learns through contact with others, whether it be singular individuals or groups of people of another culture. Intercultural communication is constantly evolving because it belongs to the "life" of every nation and every social group, so much so that calling it "intercultural" does not make sense: "cultural" would suffice to define it (Balboni, Caon, 2015; Balboni, 2006). All possible critical areas and sources of friction must be taken into account in communication between people of different culture; this is an operation that we perform within our specific culture too. We are not always aware of the existence of cultural values because those values often appear natural to us, so that we assume everybody shares them. The main tools for intercultural communication are verbal and non-verbal language. Events are governed by universal rules, but also by cultural rules that are limited to a specific culture; their limitation is precisely why they cause friction in case of differentiation.

Intercultural logic must not be compared with the idea of the "melting pot". The great migrations from Europe to the US between the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century were met with the theory of a crucible, melting and sieving all cultural differences – thus giving rise to a new reality; this led to a process of homogenization of the peoples meeting in a territory in which they wished to belong, because they were in search of a new homeland. The key for understanding this kind of integration is not multiculturality, which refers to a transitional situation due to contingent needs and limited in time, but rather a life choice. Unlike the melting pot, interculturality[1] is generally a constant attitude that acknowledges the richness existing in variety, but that does not aim to homologation, as its goal is merely allowing smooth interaction between different cultures[2].

Every state is individual as such, but that does not imply that internally there is homogeneity. What primarily defines a state as a unit is language; but one language is not shared by all people in every state. Interculturality becomes alive when someone comes in contact with others belonging to different cultures. There are factors that bring about the awareness of defending one's own identity, which in turn corresponds to one's own difference. This is why it becomes necessary to understand and accept diversity as a common element.

[1] Assimilation is not a concern in interculturality; the understanding of a culture that is different from ours, to which one does not necessarily wish to belong, but that needs to be understood is though.
[2] UNESCO promoted intercultural communication through 800 organizations and 3000 programmes (Bennett, 2015).

Nowadays universalism and particularism are no longer opposite terms. We have come to affirm the universality of our condition as human beings endowed with equal rights. The rights of every person are universal, given that they are independent of wealth, political power, religious authority, family condition (Touraine, 2012: 66). We have not attained equality, but although we live in separate worlds we are "equal" according to the law.

2. CONSEQUENCES OF TECHNOLOGICAL EVOLUTION

Both the consequences of the technological revolution and the phenomena of individualization marking the postmodern period invite speaking of a complex, fragmented society, bearer of malaise. The current society offers an individual great freedom, but also great loneliness (Elias, 1990). "Wellbeing" is found in the constant search to which postmodern man is doomed. The promotion of individual wellbeing is among the primary commitments of postmodernity, because only by pursuing wellbeing can we go toward peace and the hope of a more human life for all the peoples on the planet. The narcissism, fragility and fragmentation to which man is subject today are negative perspectives. One outsider voice is that of Sen (1986), who defines development as a process of expanding the real freedoms enjoyed by people. Human freedoms are the core of Sen's thinking: if it is true that the increase in individual income leads to expanding the freedom of individuals, it is just as true that such freedom also depends on other factors, such as social and economic systems, political and civil rights. What matters is to become aware that in order to attain wellbeing for all, a transcultural, interdisciplinary and content-related perspective needs to be embraced, capable of highlighting the role of all the factors involved in promoting wellbeing understood as an overall harmonious condition regarding the whole person in their mental, bodily and environmental dimensions (Tessarolo, Laloli, 2009).

It should be considered that every historical period has to thematize the linguistic self-interpretations and affirmations by which it is ridden. Koselleck observes that on the whole the language of the sources of each historical period may be considered a great metaphor of the period under consideration (Scuccimarra, 2009: VII). Comprehension is understood as a conceptual processing of the multiple happenings, to the extent that a concept gathers the multiplicity of a historical experience, as well as an amount of theoretical and practical relations in a context that, as such, is given, and may only be experienced by means of that concept (Koselleck, 2009: 101). This shows that the role of language is an ultimate and methodologically irreducible aspect of historical research. The meaning and usage of words do not correspond symmetrically to the so-called reality of a specific historical period. Concepts and reality each have their own history and these histories, although referring to each other, change in different ways (Koselleck, 2009: 38). In studying the period between 1750 and 1850, Koselleck finds that all the concepts in use show a deep, long-term shifting of experience, in which the actual beginning of the modern age can be identified. The German scholar examines the conceptual categories that present specific routes of semantic innovation and notes the problematic comparison with an increasingly complex context of experience. This is mainly highlighted by the numerous concepts of "movement", mostly coinciding with an "-ism", where the increasingly explicit claim of historical change characterizing almost all the modern political subjects of movement finds its complete expression.

It is interesting to juxtapose the category of progress to that of decadence. Progress is a modern category, whose content of experience and consequence of expectation did not exist before 1750. Similarly, in the modern age, the premodern concepts of decadence or decline have gained a new topological placement. The notion of progress is tailored to describe modern experiences[1]. The term "progress" expresses a modern concept because its history affirms that "progress" is different from "modern", since its basic meaning – proceeding along a space – fell into oblivion, while the notions of decadence and decline did not succeed in erasing their natural and biological meaning. The new meaning of "progress" is given by the pair: experience of the past/expectation of the future. This new meaning represents modernity, which has generated unpredictable novelty that is hardly or not at all compatible with any past.

2.1. Globalization. Globalization[2] is a phenomenon with a multidimensional and multidisciplinary nature. Paradoxically, every phenomenon is traced back to globalization and it should be acknowledged that the difficulties in the

[1] Among such experiences: railways, cars, jet planes etc. (Koselleck, 2009: 52).

[2] There is a deceiving analogy between global and universal. Universal relates to human rights, culture and democracy; globalisation concerns techniques, market and information. Globalization appears to be irreversible, while universalization is on its way to extinction.

debate result from the complexity of the phenomenon and the struggle to understand it. At the end of the 20th century, this word took the space previously belonging to the term "modernization". For the first time in history, the globe's finitude emerged and this limit feeds back in social life; that is why the issue is relevant (Morin, 2004).

The cohesion of symbolic and value-based systems needs to be strong enough to retrieve some traits of traditional society. This is the sense in which the term "society" has been used for decades in common sense, indicating a social organization coinciding with the national state. Globalization, whatever it means, challenges such a representation (Giaccardi, Magatti, 2001). In the 20th century, the protest movements of the 60's and 70's wiped out the hope of reproducing society and its internal order through tradition and political indication of the goals to be reached. If there is a legacy from that period, it is the recomposition of subjectivity and social order.

Harvey (1993) and Castells (1996; 2002) study the reorganization and assessment of the forces that are demolishing the spatialization of social life imposed by national states. What is created is a globalized financial system that is increasingly detached from any political or territorial grounding, but also from the real economy itself. The structural dimension of globalization centres on the macrostructural level, and it is actually a push to demolish the spatialization of social life imposed by national states (Harvey, 1993). In this new situation, a reorganization of subjective experience is required. The awareness of living in one context is a distinctive element of our times. In the globalized world we can no longer ignore what happens elsewhere. The events occurring in a given location have a very wide resonance. Furthermore, with cinema, television, videogames, fashion, sport, social networks etc., the chance of being subjected to cognitive risks and stimulations increases for children, youngsters and adults. Very often all mediations between local and global are skipped, thus directly exposing the individual to flows coming from heterogeneous and distant spatial contexts, in an order that is neither sequential nor predefined in any way. The short-circuits between local and global involve the real and the possible as well. This process of expanding possibilities and collective risks can hardly be controlled. Material factors by themselves are not sufficient to explain social behaviour, because most of the meaning of human experience remains in the shade. In fact, individuals should be studied not only as rational actors or representatives of classes, strata or other social groupings, but also as producers of meaning and manipulators of symbols.

This places us before a reality in which culture calls into question passions that surpass the merely economic or political level. Understanding the cultural bases of conflicts and of past and current misunderstandings may help avoid repeating costly mistakes. Such understanding will enable us to live our personal and professional lives as informed and efficient citizens, in a world in which cultures, as well as society, are changing faster than ever.

Very often the term "globalization" is passed off for homogenization, but most of the processes and relations do not affect the rest of the world: the term "transnational", though less grandiose, is more appropriate. Globalization means interconnection at an increasingly greater distance, even within national borders. From the early years of their lives, individuals are exposed to a recombination, unique and different every time, of worlds that are distant in space and in time, and that social or cultural belongingness cannot control and standardize (Hannerz, 2001: 10). This historic moment should promote school teaching and strengthen the educational resource, considering the fact that relations and interactions among individuals – as well as their belonging to a collective identity or community – are less and less governed by relations of spatial proximity. The fact of being spatially close (or far away) no longer guarantees closeness (or distance) in a cultural, emotional and/or project-related perspective (Hannerz, 2001:12).

In a historical period in which the concept of embodied mind, according to which mind and body are joined (Damasio, 1995), has become established, Morin (2007) also observes that scientific culture cannot be detached from humanistic culture and speaks of a kind of teaching whose task is preparing "well-made heads". The sense is that of a head with something more than notion-driven traditions of knowledge: "something more" is not merely acquiring information, which sometimes is not enough for untangling a given situation; but rather the ability to think, and in order to think, the different kinds of thinking need to be mingled. Hybridization leads to a "well-made head". Therefore, there is a need for a reform of thought.

2.2. Terminological problems. Several terms with the same object of knowledge are used, such as globalization, interculturality, pluralism and cosmopolitanism. In order to understand the meaning of the term "interculturality", as it occurs with intersubjectivity and incorporeity, we run into a sphere whose feature of intermediarity cannot be brought back to universal laws. What happens between us does not belong to each individual, nor does it belong to us together. A "no man's land" cannot be built because it is not possible to connect and separate at the same time; we may only separate our own culture from an extraneous one. Both of these have in themselves something "more" that cannot be taken away because one of the two cultures would then disappear (Tessarolo, 2013).

Globalization is made easier by the web network, use of social media and electronic mail; all these online approaches provide an extended chance of meeting[3]. Beck (1999) explains why the cosmopolitan look is a cosmopolitan look. The term "cosmopolitan" is the opposite of "patriotic": patriotism is unilateral, small, practical, useful, it makes one happy and quiet; cosmopolitism is glorious, great. Nowadays reality itself has become cosmopolitan: global risks and global media involve all mankind simultaneously. The cosmopolitan look is the result and the assumption of a conceptual restructuring of perception. This kind of look forgets the humanity and individuality of human beings. The national dimension and the cosmopolitan dimension should be regarded as complementary for redefining the national and local dimension (Beck, 2003: 17-18).

To conclude, in a globalized world the only possible defence force needs to be placed above the economic and social reality. Touraine (2012) appeals to the universal rights of all human beings, i.e. the right to existence and freedom.

In the global society, the tendency should be toward lessening discrimination and sub-representation of minorities, particularly in states that are defined as multi-ethnic or multinational; but this is not the case, because daily life takes place in a local reality, not in an imaginary reality called "global society". In his essay *Oltre le nazioni* [Beyond the nations] (2019), Bauman mentions "imaginary communities". He affirms that all communities are imaginary and the global community is no exception; imagination, however, becomes a powerful and coagulating force if it is supported by institutions of self-identification and collective self-government, as is the case for modern nations and the sovereign states to which they give rise. The exercising of sociological imagination[4] brings a sudden feeling of enlightenment to the minds of men that moved only within a system of closed circles, as if finally opening their eyes in a "house" that they thought they knew. They experience a transposition of values and do so by means of reflection and sensitivity, grasping the cultural meaning of social sciences. This kind of imagination is the most fruitful form of such awareness (Bauman, 2002).

According to Simmel (1998), the term "society" indicates a circle of individuals connected by reciprocity, and a circle of individuals is an area of intersection of several circles. If it is a small circle, i.e. undifferentiated and not numerous, there is no risk for a person of undertaking a process of individualization. If the circle is or becomes larger, a person can develop their sense of autonomy. Over the last decades, we have witnessed a shifting from a society of shared rules to a society of individualized risks and discontinuous change.

Morin (2007) in his book on the "well-made head" affirms that in such a problematic time, traditional education systems should no longer prepare one-dimensional mind-sets, but open minds. Furthermore, he insists on the urgency of educating in a different way, by rethinking methodological issues – understanding that as an aid for facing the challenge of complexity – and by providing a precise and articulated sense for the term "complexity", which is often used simply to express an inability to describe or explain. Morin (2007) suggests developing a citizenship – and therefore knowledge and responsibility – that does not replace the traditional national, regional and local ones; but that integrates all of them and sets the foundations for new individual and collective identities, which may be multiple, flexible, complex, evolutionary. This new humanism will have to enhance and connect the individual and collective diversities of the human species, because it is only by mobilizing the whole variety of past and present human experiences that a new and fruitful process of coevolution of the planet may be initiated.

The emergence of a new "order of time" that seems to quickly propagate through all layers of society is the distinctive dimension of modernity, making our age an exemplary "new time". Vocabulary progressively soaks up expressions aimed at reflectively articulating a new conception of time, such as history, progress, crisis, revolution, emancipation.

3. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Koselleck (2007) proposes an original deconstruction of the order of time for modernity, based on the sophisticated hermeneutical use of an innovative pair of categories: "space of experience" and "horizon of expectation". This is an interpretive

[3] The term "offline" conveys a sense of loss, of going in the background – as compared with being "online", a virtual presence on the Internet.
[4] The idea of a sociological imagination was presented by American sociologist Wright Mills.

perspective in which concrete history always matures in the midst of specific experiences and specific expectations that define the new time, the groups that effectively work to fulfill the social and political movement (Koselleck, 2007: 303). The specific purpose of conceptual history is to historically show the shifting of the coordination between experience and expectation and its transformation over the course of history, thus giving rise to diversified modes of experiencing historical time. The pairing of the experience/expectation categories recurs as the authentic keystone of a reconstructive system dominated by the reference to a composite, uneven temporality; a system that was cancelled or fell into oblivion while proceeding along a certain space. The visual reference disappeared from the etymology of the word "progress"[5] (Koselleck, 2007:52).

Man must proceed towards the unknown, uncertainty, insecurity, while trying to achieve both security and freedom in the best way possible. However, there are ways to create interculturality understood as an encounter of cultures: also accepting the cultures of others (at least knowing and respecting them), acknowledging the relationship between cultural experiences and looking for what draws us together; finally, a recomposition of the world (considering that cultures are ways to handle changes). A universal culture is utopia; perhaps it is not even desirable because the pleasure of diversity and interest would disappear. When entering a new group, anyone – child or adult – has to adapt because somehow they are extraneous[6] and need to find a "way in".

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[5] The origin is from Latin: *progressus*, from *progredi*, to advance, consisting of *pro* (forward) and *gradi* (to walk). The advance of progress proceeds step by step, because he who proceeds must be wise and look where he sets his foot, trying the ground and calibrating the direction every time. The positivistic explosion of progress, with the illusion of infinite progress, suffers the disconnection from this image: the advancing of progress is not infinite, but indefinite.

[6] From Latin, *extraneus*, external/outside.

ON THE CHANGES IN THE KOREAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN THE PAST 30 YEARS

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Motto:
Education does not make life easier, but better and richer (Leopold, 1949, vol 3: 188)

Abstract: *The objective of our paper is to bring to light some changes that took place in the field of education in South Korea in the recent past, starting from the assumption that the rapid development of this country was triggered, among other factors, by an increased interest in education. To this aim, we have administered an online questionnaire containing some questions meant to offer us socio-demographic data concerning our respondents, followed by 10 scaled questions (or "opinionaires", because "[t]hese are often used to elicit opinions rather than facts" - McDonough & McDonough, 1997:176) focused on education. We obtained information from 322 respondents of various ages, levels of education, and professions. The data have been statistically analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 23.0); we also conducted frequency and cross analysis, as well as a t-test considering the gender, age, as well as the level of education of the respondents. The general results indicate that the Korean subjects are aware of the changes concerning various aspects related to education, such as the equal treatment of children with different social backgrounds, the evaluation of teachers by students, to mention just a few, and that most of these changes have been for the better, but at the same time that there are also differences in their opinions depending especially on the respondent's age.*

Keywords*: changes; South Korea; education; questionnaire survey; statistical analysis*

1. INTRODUCTION

No other country in the world has made such an astounding progress in the time span of a century like South Korea. While a mainly agrarian country at the beginning of the 20th century, secluded from the rest of the world, nowadays the country boasts top technology, a booming economy, and the highest rate of university graduates in the world. Within this last century, the Korean society has been affected by a number of events that brought about changes in all domains of life, particularly in education. As Breen nicely explains:

> In this century, Korea has been in such constant upheaval that each young generation has found itself faced with a completely different world from that of its parents. Christianity, Communism, colonialism, national division, war, industrialisation and communications have wreaked havoc on the old structures. (Breen, 2004:160).

Until the beginning of the 20th century, education in Korea was the benefit of children pertaining to the social elite, but the spread of Christianity and, later on, the Japanese colonization of the peninsula enabled children from all walks of life to attend school. After the Korean War (1950-1953), when the country was in a dire situation, one solution out of poverty found by the country's leaders was industrialization. This made large masses of rural population move to the cities where they were given jobs in factories, but where they also had the chance to attend the evening classes of various vocational schools. Many female workers seized this opportunity to further their education, which for various reasons – the war or the Confucian social norm of sacrificing the girls' education for the sake of sending the sons to school when the family could not afford to keep all children in school - was put to a halt. Nowadays, globalization also has a say in the Korean field of education: while at the beginning of the century only a couple of Korean students could study abroad, mainly in Japan and in the USA, nowadays, as we shall see in the next section of the paper, a large number of Korean school children, some as young at 7 or 8, are send to study in foreign countries, basically in English-speaking one. Moreover, nowadays there is also a large influx of foreign students and professors in Korean schools and universities, who contribute to a certain extent to the modernization of the Korean education system.

Despite the rapid changes, especially after the 1980s, when Korea managed to change itself inside out form a cultural and social point of view, not everything modernized at the same pace. The Korean mind-set is very much influenced by Confucianism, which, to our mind, becomes a barrier for development, at least in education. Nevertheless, what is to be praised about this old-age philosophy is that it considers education as a "primary value in Korean society (Peterson, Marguiles, 2009:xiv).

The main objective of this study is to offer a picture of the current state of Korean education and to point out how the Koreans perceive the changes that have taken place in this domain in the past three decades. The roadmap of the paper is as follows: section 2 is meant to familiarize the reader with facts concerning the beginning of institutional education in South Korea; section 3 contains the research methodology, the working hypothesis, and the research questions. Part 4 of the paper is dedicated to the statistical analysis of the questionnaire data: first the frequency analysis will be dealt with, followed by the identification of differences in terms of gender, age, and degree of education of the respondents. The last section of the paper comprises the answers to the research questions and some conclusions.

2. KOREAN EDUCATION IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY

Before embarking on the analysis of the data obtained by means of a questionnaire survey aimed at identifying the Korean people's opinion about the changes in education in the past 30 years, a brief look at the state of education in the peninsular country in the 20th century would provide the reader with a benchmark for the current situation.

The philosophy that was (and still is) the cornerstone of the Korean education system was that a successful and powerful country should have well-educated people. But despite this belief, until the beginning of the 20th century, education in Joseon (former denomination of Korea) was meant only for boys and only for those belonging to affluent families, the so-called *janban*[1]. In the most fortunate cases, girls were educated at home, by their mothers, their education being limited to things pertaining to the household. At the end of the 19th century, the situation started changing, but very slowly. The first to trigger this change were a few Korean students and politicians who had the chance of studying or travelling abroad, where they witnessed female education. Thus, on their return to Korea and on meeting King Kojong[2], "they recommended schooling for both boys and girls" (Yu, 1987:19). Apparently, Kojong was a very progressive monarch, as at the end of his reign he established in Seoul schools of all kinds – for law, engineering or medicine (Hamilton 1904, quoted in Cumings, 2005:312).

Another phenomenon that encouraged the education of children, in general and of girls, in particular at the end of the 19th century was the spread of Christianity in Korea. The Western missionaries

> built schools and universities (making modern education available in Korea), inaugurated equal education for women, (…) and encouraged the learning of English, which eventually opened graduate-level educational opportunities in Great Britain and the United States to (…) Korean students (Kohls, 2001:43).

English was not the only foreign language what started being taught, even at the end of the 19th. Language schools for Japanese and French "were opened in 1895; for Russian in 1896; and for Chinese and German in 1900" (Peterson, Marguiles, 2009:150). In 1884, Protestantism was introduced in the country and the early female missionaries thought that their mission was to educate women and to improve their status. Thus, they set up education programs, which started with bible classes and encouraged the participation of Korean women in church services. According to Yu (1987:19), between "1886 and 1908 twenty-five mission schools were founded, about half being girls' schools." One such female missionary was the American Mary F. Scranton, who in 1886 started the first modern school meant for girls in Korea. This school has developed into the current Ewha Girl's High school and Ewha Women's University, the latter being considered one of the largest universities in the world (Yu, 1987).

Later on, at the beginning of the 20th century, education in Korea took a new turn under the Japanese colonial rule (1910-1945), although the Korean people would not readily acknowledge it. For most of the Koreans, the Japanese colonization was "anything but illegitimate and humiliating" (Cumings, 2005:336). This was because, among other things, the colonizers coerced the Korean

[1] The term *janban* refers to the elite upper class in the Joseon dynasty.

[2] Kojong (Romanized also as Gojong) was the last emperor of Korea, who was forced by the Japanese to abdicate, in 1907.

population to use the Japanese language instead of their mother tongue, they banned the use of *Hangeul*[3], and burnt all Korean history books. But the little good the Japanese did was to enable education of non-elite people, girls included. It is true that the children of the Japanese colonizers and those of the Korean people studied in separate schools, and while at the beginning of the Japanese occupation the native children would be taught by Korean teachers, little by little these were replaced by Japanese ones, who, very often, had no training in this profession. Still, the Japanese put the Korean children in a regimen of public education and despite all the afore-mentioned disadvantages, many Koreans parents sent their children to school. So, the beginning of the 20th century marked the point in which the Koreans started having the right to institutional education and also militated for social equality in this respect.

In the very beginning, schools were single-gendered. Co-educational schools began to appear during the Japanese occupation. The topics to be learned by the Korean children of all social strata were the Confucian norms and virtues, as well as the classical Chinese language and writing system, which implied rote memorization, this learning method being still the main way of accumulating knowledge among the Korean students.

As more and more Koreans realized the advantage of education, the level of literacy started increasing. While in 1945 only 20% of the Korean population could read and write (Breen, 2017), between 1945 and 1970, literacy among adults rose to 86.7% (Tudor, 2012). Today, illiteracy in the country is almost zero.

> By the late 1970s, Korea had the highest level of education vis-à-vis wages in the world. Today, literacy is one hundred percent, thanks to the Hangul spelling system which is so uniform that a young person does not need to spend years learning how to read and write in it. Ninety-five percent of all Koreans graduate high school and, of these, four in five enrol in college. These figures make the Koreans the most highly educated in the world" (Breen, 2017: 245, epub).

As Kim (2017:39) explained, "South Korea's unrivalled educational achievement is basically a family achievement". What she means by that is that families are oftentimes sacrificed for the sake of helping children become high-achievers. Thus, many young mothers give up their jobs (which they have studied hard for and fought hard to obtain) in order to stay at home and push their children to study. At the end of the 20th century, the more affluent parents started sending their children to elementary, middle, and high schools abroad, mainly in English-speaking countries like the USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, where they could learn English with a native-speaker's accent. In most of the cases the children would be accompanied by their mothers, the fathers living alone in South Korea and flying over now and then to see their families abroad. This is the reason why they were nicknamed "goose fathers". In 2011, the number of Korean pupils studying abroad peaked to 262,465 (Breen, 2017).

The Korean parents, especially mothers, are known for constantly pressuring their children to do exceptionally in schools, because this will grant them an upper hand in their competition for entering the best universities, and later on for getting highly prized jobs in government and private companies. Very frequently parents would make recourse to corporal punishment in order to make the children keep their noses in the books.

Getting into one of Korea's best universities totally depends on the results high school graduates obtain in the national exam called *suneung*[4], which is the Korean abbreviation for the College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT). This is a national examination organized every year on the third Thursday in November. Since the fate of the young people depends on this extremely difficult and long exam (8 hours), on this particular day airplanes are grounded, shops are closed, and students who are late are given a ride by motor bikers or by the police. While the candidates struggle with the questions connected to the subjects the exam is based on (Korean language, maths, English, Korean history and Chinese or a second foreign language), their mothers spend the day in Buddhist temples or in Christian churches, praying for their children's success. In order to be successful in this exam, children prepare for it from as early as the age of 4. It is an extremely tough exam, meant to check whether the candidates have the ability to study in college. Not all candidates are fortunate to take the exam on their first attempt, so some will have to take it a number of times. Several others choose to commit suicide (Breen, 2004).

[3] *Hangeul* is the Korean alphabet, invented by King Sejeong in the 15th century. It is a phonetic alphabet containing 14 consonants and 10 simple vowels, which are combined in syllables. According to scholars, it is the most logical and easiest to learn alphabet.

[4] The Korean *suneung* is equivalent to the Romanian *baccalaureate*, but it is much longer and tougher.

Entering college or university is not a new trend among the Korean youth; it existed even in the 1950s and the 1960s, when despite the fact that literacy was pretty low as compared to other countries, such as the USA or the UK, "a far higher percentage of the populace attended college in Korea than in England (by 1965, 1 of every 280 Koreans was in college, compared with 1 in 425 people in England)" (Cumings, 2005:834 epub). What is new for the Korean youngsters is the tough competition to get into universities, which causes a high level of stress that is detrimental to the students' mental wellbeing. According to a Seoul-based psychologist, quoted by Sharif (2018),

> Korean children are forced to study hard and compete with their friends. They are growing up alone, just studying by themselves. This kind of isolation can cause depression and be a major factor in suicide (https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-46181240).

After this overview of education in the Korean peninsula in the 20th century, it is now time to see what has changed in this domain in the past 30 years.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of our survey was to obtain a fine-grained picture of the changes that occurred in the field of South Korean education in the past 30 years. In order to gather the necessary and sufficient data, which should provide answers to our research questions, we have devised a questionnaire meant to reveal which particular aspects of Korean education have been affected by the socio-political, cultural, and historical events in the peninsula, as well as by the phenomenon of globalization. The choice for this research instrument has been dictated by three reasons: it could be administered online[5], to informants from other countries, it does not involve a significant budget, and, more importantly, "[t]he knowledge needed is controlled by the questions, therefore it affords a good deal of precision and clarity" (McDonough, McDonough, 1997:171).

In devising the questionnaire, we have employed "scaled questions", which are actually statements in connection with which the subjects are invited to express their agreement or disagreement. According to McDonough, McDonough (1997:176), "[t]hese are often used to elicit opinions rather than facts and are sometimes called 'opinionaires'". For our questionnaire, we have employed scaled questions with 5 alternatives: strongly agree (S.A.), agree (A.), undecided (U.), disagree (D.), strongly disagree (S.D.).

We have adopted Kahn and Cannel's (1957) idea of 'funnel sequencing' of the questions: we started with broad questions and gradually narrowed down to specific ones related to the topic. The questionnaire design went through a number of stages. First, a draft was produced by the first author, which was discussed and analysed with a colleague[6] of hers from the Faculty of Sociology of *Transilvania* University of Brasov. This draft was e-mailed to the Korean project partner, professor Jin-hee Kim, who changed some of the items, making them more relevant for the Korean society. Eventually, this improved version of the questionnaire was pre-tested on 12 subjects, acquaintances of Professor Kim's and further improved, considering the shortcomings identified after we had run the pre-test. The final version of the questionnaire was created by dr. Kim via Google Form and launched on the Korean equivalent of Google, i.e. Naver, on the 5th of January 2021. We aimed for 300 filled-in questionnaires, but already in a week's time, we collected 322. Each of the respondents was rewarded for the time taken to fill in the questionnaire with a coupon for a Starbucks coffee, which they received as a surprise once they submitted the filled-in questionnaire.

The hypothesis our research started out from is that education, like many other domains of Korean life, such as the family institution, traditions, career, openness to foreigners or economic development, has undergone changes caused by the historical events that occurred in the country. Derived from this hypothesis, the following research questions have been formulated, guiding both our questionnaire design, as well as the data analysis:

1) Which particular aspects of education have changed?

2) How did the Korean people perceive these changes (for the better/for the worse)?

3) Is there a correlation between gender, age, and the education background of the respondents

[5] This was the best choice in the time of the Covid-19 pandemic.

[6] We take this opportunity to express our gratitude and indebtedness to Luiza Meseșan Schmitz, our colleague from the Faculty of Sociology (*Transilvania* University of Brașov), who helped us in producing the first draft of the questionnaire, as well as to the data analyst, Kyungwon Byun, from Andong National University. Also, many thanks to Ana-Maria Cazan for her encouragement and enlightenment on some statistical issues.

and their views on the changes in the domain of South Korean education?

The **respondents** in the survey differed along the following socio-demographic factors:

a) **Gender:** there were 92 male participants (28.6%) and 230 female participants (71.4%) in the study, which shows a deeper implication of Korean women as far as education is concerned;

b) **Age:** we have identified 5 age groups of our informants: 20s (n=52, representing 16.1%), 30s (n=67, representing 20.8%), 40s (n=62, representing 19.3%), 50s (n=89, representing 27.6%), and people over 60 years of age (n=52, representing 16.1%);

c) **Level of education:** along this factor, 3 sub-groups of respondents have been identified: *high school graduates* (n=54, i.e. 16.8%), *college graduates* (n=166, i.e. 51.6%), and *university graduates* (having an MA or a PhD) (n=102, i.e. 31.7%).

The data obtained from the questionnaires concerning the changes in the field of education in South Korea in the past 30 years were analysed by using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 23.0, by means of which we conducted frequency and cross analyses for the investigated domain, i.e. education. Within this domain, finer-grained statistics were obtained by means of the t-test, which was performed along the four dimensions (variables) that differentiated our informants, mentioned above. The analysis of the data is presented in the following section of the paper.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

We shall now proceed to analysing the data obtained from the online questionnaire survey. First the frequency analysis will be dealt with (section 4.1); in the second part (4.2) we will try to find a correlation between the 3 variables and the responses provided by our subjects.

4.1. Frequency analysis and descriptive statistics. As mentioned above, we have adopted the funnel sequencing of the questions. Thus, the first question was aimed at identifying how our respondents perceived these changes in their country. Most of the respondents consider that in the past 30 years, the socio-cultural life in South Korea has changed for the better (n=270, i.e. 83.9%), whereas a minority of subjects was either undecided (n=23, i.e. 7.1%) in this respect or thought that the changes were for the worse (n=29, i.e. 9%) (see table A-1).

Table A-1: Korean's perception of the overall changes in their society.

I don't know	For the worse	For the better	Total
23 persons (7.1%)	29 persons (9.0%)	270 persons (83.9%)	322 persons (100%)

The second question/statement was specifically focused on education and our intention was to find out whether the respondents felt that changes had indeed occurred in this particular domain. The answers varied between 'strongly disagree' = 1 to 'strongly agree" = 5. The statistical analysis showed an average of 3.66, which is an indication that Koreans are aware of changes taking place in education, as revealed by table A-2.

Table A-2: Koreans' awareness of changes in education.

Issue	S.D.	D.	U.	A	S.A	Total	Average
There have been significant changes in education	8 (2.5%)[7]	25 (7.8%)	81 (25.2%)	162 (50.3%)	46 (14.3%)	322 (100%)	3.66

The following question invited the respondents to express how they perceive the changes to have affected the domain of education, i.e. whether they consider that the changes have been positive or negative. More than half of the subjects (n=204 (63.4%)) opined that the changes have been rather positive (for the better) than negative (for the worse). A small number (n=70 (21.7%)) thought that what happens nowadays in education has a negative impact on the students, in particular and on the society, in general, while an even smaller number of participants in the survey (48=14.9%) expressed no opinion whatsoever.

Starting with the fourth item in the questionnaire, we narrowed down the investigation

[7] The figures in the table should be interpreted as follows: the first figure stands for the number of respondents, the figure in brackets standing for the percentage of the respondents in the total, i.e. 8 respondents out of 322, representing 2.5% of the total.

to specific details regarding the changes in the domain under investigation. There were 10 scaled questions, each focusing on a particular education-related issue, such as social and gender equality among students, students' right to express their own opinions, the *hakwons* (cram schools or private academies), preference or non-preference for vocational schools, students' option to assess their professors' activity in class, methods of learning, or preference for male over female professors in tertiary education. For each individual question the average has been calculated, which illustrates whether the change is considered significant or not. If the values exceed the means, this would be an indication of a change.

The statistical analysis revealed that in the past 30 years, the domain of education has suffered changes in a number of respects, but they do not parallel in any way the radical economic and technological development of the country. As Hong (2014:31) stated, "[no]where is the gap more apparent than in the Korean school system". First, it seems that in current South Korea, unlike in the beginning of the institutional education in the country, children coming from diverse social backgrounds (i.e. divorced, monoparental, low-income or multicultural families) are treated rather equally by their educators, without being discriminated against (statement/issue 1 in the questionnaire), 165 respondents (representing 51.3%) of the total of 322 showing agreement in this respect. At the beginning of the 20th century, mostly children of the *yangban*[8] class enjoyed formal education, whereas the children of the low-borns or those of the *paekcheong*, a "low-status hereditary group in Korea" (Seth, 2010:67), were not welcomed to share the same classroom with the offspring of the social elite or were discriminated against. Even in the late 20th century, children of various socio-economic backgrounds were treated differently. Euni Hong, an American-born Korean, who moved to Korea in the late 1990s, when she was 9 years old, recalls the rich parents' habit of paying off teachers either to 'soften' them not to corporally punish the pupils because of their disobedience or low marks, or to make teachers overlook a few wrong answers in the schoolchildren's exam papers (Hong, 2014).

In order to avoid a discriminatory treatment of the pupils by their teachers, many Korean schools imposed certain rules to make the social status disparities less visible. Thus, in a large number of schools, schoolchildren are required to wear uniforms and to refrain from having expensive shoes or from carrying overpriced watches. At the same time, children are not to be dropped off at school by private car.

On the other hand, given the fact that for a long period of time, Korea did not welcome foreigners and discriminated children born in international marriages, it doesn't come really as a surprise that nowadays such children, who are often of mixed-race and who stand out easily in class may be marginalized. This is also one of the reasons why many international couples, in which one of the parents is Korean, prefer to live abroad, mainly in a country with a longer tradition in multiculturalism, such as the UK, Australia, Canada or America, in this way preventing their children from being bullied on racial issues. Table A-3 below contains the data related to how the respondents perceive the treatment of children coming from various sociocultural backgrounds by their teachers.

Table A-3: Equal treatment of children with diverse socio-cultural backgrounds.

Issue 1	S. D.	D.	U.	A.	S.A.	Total	Average
Schools treat children with diverse sociocultural backgrounds equally.	7 (2.2%)	52 (16.1%)	98 (30.4%)	130 (40.4%)	35 (10.9%)	322 (100%)	3.42

As the Korean society is still strongly patriarchal, male society, we wanted to see whether under the influence of the Western culture, Korean girls have the same rights to education and whether they are treated equally to their male peers (statement/issue 2 in the questionnaire). When schools started teaching both boys and girls in the 1920s, as a result of the Kabo Reforms[9], the schoolboys outnumbered the schoolgirls. This was

[8] *Yangban* refers to the hereditary aristocracy in Korea, which was made up of landowners and government officials (Seth, 2010).

[9] In 1894-95, the pro-Japanese Korean officials initiated a program of social reforms, known as the Kabo (or Kap-o) Reforms (after the year Kabo -1894), which aimed at the modernization of various domains of the Korean society, including the educational system. "They noted that girls attended school in Western countries and that Japan had drawn up plans in the 1870s to make basic education compulsory and universal for girls as well as for boys" (Seth, 2010: 65).

the outcome of a long-standing Korean tradition, which encouraged boys, but not girls to study. But even when girls started being taught in an institutional setting, their schooling period was shorter than that of boys; moreover, the subjects taught varied according to gender. According to Oh, Kim (2013), in 1922 the Korean educational system comprised 6 years of primary school course for boys and girls, but secondary education covered 5 years for boys and only 4 for girls. Moreover, there was also inequality in the way in which within a mixed class, boys and girls were treated, the boys having more advantages over their female peers, even at the end of the 20th century, as shown by the fragment below, excerpted from Cho's (2018) novel, *Kim Jiyoung, Born 1982*, a novel that has caused heated debates about the social discrepancies in South Korea:

> Number 1 on the roaster was a boy, everything began with the boys, and that felt like the right, natural thing. Boys lined up first; boys led every procession no matter where they were headed, boys gave their presentations first, and boys had their homework checked first while the girls quietly waited their turn, bored, sometimes relieved that they weren't going first, but never thinking this was a strange practice. Just as we never question why men's national registry numbers begin with '1' and women's begin with '2'. (Cho, 2018:36).

Also, girls were punished if they did not comply with the dress code imposed by their school, while boys were not. And if boys bullied girls in school, it was the latter who took the punishment. At the same time, in the late 1990s, schoolchildren's gender was still an indicator of destiny, as Hong pointed out:

> South Korean students had to study another foreign language in addition to English. Excellent idea. But at many high schools, they would only let boys take German and girls take French. No boys allowed in French class and no girls allowed in German class. No exceptions. (Hong, 2014:16).

Nowadays, time span for each educational cycle is equal for boys and girls (6 years of primary school, followed by three years of middle school and 3 years of high school), the topics covered by the curriculum do not differ depending on the student's gender (both girls and boys may study technology and domestic science), and apparently teachers treat boys and girls equally. The responses in the questionnaire survey indicate a positive change in terms of equality between genders in class (see table A-4 below), in that about 60% of the respondents opined that boys and girls are treated in the same way.

Table A-4: Equal treatment of pupils, irrespective of their gender.

Issue 2	S. D.	D.	U.	A.	S.A.	Total	Average
Co-ed schools treat boys and girls equally	6 (1.9%)	25 (7.8%)	96 (29.8%)	147 (45.7%)	48 (14.9%)	322 (100%)	3.64

Another important issue concerning the domain of education is the students' freedom to express their own opinions in connection with the subjects they are studying (statement/issue 4), even if they are in contradiction with those held by their professors. Korea being a patriarchal society, strongly influenced by Confucianism, which preaches total obedience of the less powerful to the more powerful people, pupils and students were not encouraged to contribute with personal ideas on certain topics debated in the classroom and neither were they allowed to suggest or to complain about anything, since the teacher/ professor was considered the guru, having the answers to all issues. This attitude stems from the previous centuries, when the teacher/instructor was more educated than the majority of his schoolboys' parents, and as such, his word could not be contradicted or questioned. This attitude has not completely disappeared nowadays, many students preferring to be lectured, rather than to contribute with their own opinions to the class or to any extracurricular activity as they know that these do not have any intrinsic value. Jiyoung, the heroine Cho's novel (2018), on finding out that a classmate of hers wanted to suggest to their home teacher that they should change the order in which boys and girls ate lunch, uttered: "Suggest to the teacher? Are we even allowed to say something like this to the teacher?" (Cho, 2018:35).

Nowadays, as Korean students and professors came in touch with Western ways of teaching/ learning due to the process of internationalization of education, we assumed that little by little the situation has changed, the Korean students interacting in a more constructive way with their professors. More than half of the questionnaire respondents indicated agreement with this change (184 subjects - A & SA -, representing 57.1% of the total). The results of the statistical analysis indicate that additional effort needs to be made in order to grant pupils more freedom in expressing bluntly their queries related to the subjects taught in class or to various problems they are confronted with in school, rather than to speak to their teachers after class, in private (Diem *et al*, n.d.).

Table A-5: Students' right to openly express their opinions.

Issue 3	S. D.	D.	U.	A.	S.A.	Total	Average
In schools and educational institutions, students are respected for expressing their opinions.	5 (1.6%)	35 (10.9%)	98 (30.4%)	144 (44.7%)	40 (12.4%)	322 (100%)	3.56

As stated by OECD (2014) (quoted in Kim 2017:9),

> [a] notable feature of Korea is the widespread participation in supplementary education to gain a head start for competitive examinations, which can facilitate admission to top universities and improve life prospects.

Parents have a major contribution in this endeavour, sending their children at an early age to *hakwons* (some kind of Western after-school programs), where they are prepared for all types of exams and where they spend long hours (sometimes until after 10 pm). According to Hong (2015), parents may pay for this extra tuition somewhere between $1,000 and $ 4,000 per month. In the late 1980s, the Korean law prohibited cram schools (*hakwon*) because they put the children coming from wealthy family at an advantage. Even so, Koreans found ways of eluding this law. In the late 1990, cram schools were re-legalized, so that at the end of the decade "70 percent of elementary school students and 50 percent of middle and high school students were receiving some form of private tuition" (Tudor, 2012:187, epub). In this respect, we wanted to find out whether nowadays, Koreans still want to help their children gain an advantage by sending them to *hakwons* (statement/issue 4). Much to our surprise, the average of the responses was lower than 3 (2.70), a large number of subjects (n=126, 39.1%) mentioning that they were undecided with respect to the *hakwons* being a good solution for improving students' knowledge and, thus, increasing their chances of entering prestigious universities, whereas another group of respondents indicated disagreement with this form of education (95 subjects=29.5% disagreed and 38 informants=11.8% of the total strongly disagreed with *hakwons*). Possible explanations for the decrease in importance of this private tuition form could be the high prices charged per child per month, the fact that it increases inequality between students coming from families with different financial means, but more plausible could be the high level of corruption – many such institutions having opened the subjects for the exams before the due date and released the questions to the students (Hong, 2015). Despite all these shortcomings, many Korean parents still consider *hakwons* to be the springboard for their children's academic success.

We were wondering what happens to those young Koreans who, despite their parents' desire and efforts to prepare them by means of supplementary private tutoring, do not make it to the university: will they give up on continuing their education or would they rather opt for attending a training course in a vocational college which would offer them the opportunity to become skilled workers in various domains (statement/ issue 5)? Almost 200 out of 322 respondents found this alternative a good solution for the adolescents, 90 (28.0%) were undecided, while almost 40 subjects would not find it appealing at all. The change of priorities from earning a university degree to graduating from a vocational college might have been influenced by South Korea's increasing unemployment rate. According to *Statistics Korea* (https://www.statista.com/tatistics/263701/unemployment-rate-in-south-korea/), in 2016 the unemployment rate in the country was 3.68%, while in October 2021 it reached 4.6%. Thus, rather than being a university graduate without any chance of getting the desired job, many young Koreans choose to enter two- or three-year vocational schools, where they can get a qualification in domains such as social welfare, nursing, physical therapy, or primary education (Park, 2015), and will get a job right after finishing the training. Tudor (2014: 89) stated that "[e]ducation mania and high aspirations were great for Korea in the beginning – but now they are double-edged swords."

On the other hand, the students who are accepted at universities and who also graduate from them, very often choose a double major, which despite placing additional burden on the young Koreans, ensures them better employment opportunities and higher earnings (statement 8). Thus, the average calculated for this issue is the highest from among all responses related to education – 3.96, indicating that Koreans consider the double major a plus for their future careers. Almost 200 respondents in the survey opined that having a double major is very important nowadays, while more than 50 subjects considered it to be extremely useful (see Chart A-1 below). It is true that in current Korea, many young people are over-educated and expect to find jobs corresponding to their level of education. But the job market does not always meet their expectations. In order to solve the "double-edged" crisis of over-education, South Korea should not reduce the young people's opportunities to enrol in university studies, but should try to "improve the connections between tertiary education and the labour market" (OECD 2009, quoted in Kim 2017:11).

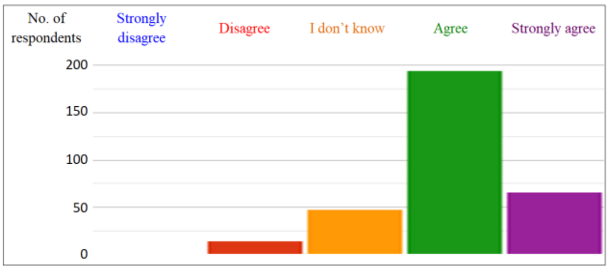

Chart A-1: Koreans' opinion related to a double major.

It is a well-known fact that Koreans value education and that they hold scholars in high esteem. Students and their parents worship South Korean teachers and professors, the roots of this attitude being hundreds of years old. The explanation for the respect paid to scholars comes from the times when the teachers/tutors were more knowledgeable than their pupils' parents and for this reason, "parents entrusted their children to teachers" (Hong, 2015:36), so questioning or assessing a teacher's knowledge on the subject taught or on his teaching methods would have been considered rude. Nowadays, as many of the students' parents may be just as educated as the teachers, this situation led to some friction between parents and teachers concerning students (Hong, 2015) and also to a decrease in the respect for teachers. This is the reason why in our study we wanted to find out if in the current South Korean higher education institutions students are encouraged or discouraged to evaluate their professors' performance in class (statement 6 in the questionnaire). Half of the respondents (n=162, 50.3%) showed agreement with the idea that professors should be evaluated by their students, another 51 subjects (representing 15.8% of the total) strongly agree with the idea, while 81 showed uncertainty concerning the issue. On the other hand, less than 10% of the participants in the study expressed their disagreement (whether strong – 1,6%, or mild - 7.1%) concerning the teachers being evaluated by their students, this latter group probably thinking that the professors are the gurus and that it would be offensive on behalf of the students to assess their knowledge or teaching methods, as they believed teachers could do no wrong.

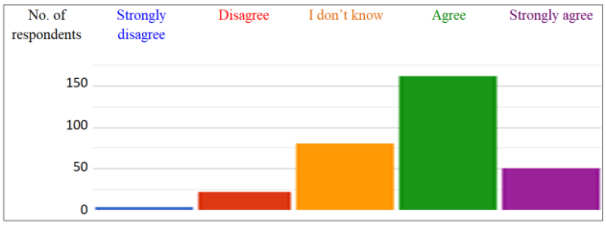

Chart A-2: Koreans' opinion related to the professors' assessment by their students.

Given the country's long tradition of Confucian culture, the Korean society is strongly male-oriented, as "a person's identity is determined by the male side of the family" (Hong, 2015:71). This is reflected, among other things, in the parents' preference of male children over female ones or in institutions managers' favouring male over female workers. Most of the positions in universities were initially occupied by male professors because Korean men are perceived to be more professionally trained than their female peers, as they have more time to dedicate to their profession than women have. In a relatively recent article published in *Korea Time* (Kim, 2018) it is mentioned that although one of the three best universities in South Korea, namely Seoul National University has had an economics department since 1946, it was only in 2018 that a woman professor was hired. The reason invoked by one of the higher education institution's representative was the fact that the economics department had mostly male students. This shows that while Korean men and women are equal in achieving education, there is a gender gap with respect to female employment in higher education, a gender gap that is perpetuated from early childhood. In this respect we wanted to find out whether, despite the much smaller number of female staff members in universities (approx. 18.3%, according to Kim, 2018), students show a preference for male over female teacher/professors (statement 7).

Table A-6: Students' right to openly express their opinions.

Issue 7	S. D.	D.	U.	A.	S.A.	Total	Average
University students prefer male professors over female professors	65 (20.2%)	119 (37.0%)	100 (31.1%)	31 (9.6%)	7 (2.2%)	322 (100%)	2.37

As the results in table A-6 show, a wind of change is blowing in tertiary education as far as women are concerned. The fact that more than half of the respondents (65+119) disagreed with the idea that students prefer male professors is indicative of a certain degree of trust in women's capacity to do a good job. A possible reason could be that, just like their male peers, many women professors have attended foreign universities (mainly in the USA), have earned a PhD abroad, are as good as (if not better than) their male colleagues, and may have a better understanding of their students' minds and souls.

One other aspect concerning education that we were interested in was the respondents' opinions related to the huge amount of information that Korean students assimilate by memorization (statement/issue 10), as in the Western cultures this method of education is discouraged, students' creativity being very much appreciated. As Hong puts it,

> [a]nnoying or not, being trained in rote memorization, along with discipline, obedience, worship of authority, and good old-fashioned terror of failing is one of the cornerstones of Korea's accelerated success (2015:47).

Learning by heart has its roots in the time when children had to become familiar with the Chinese language and writing system. But this happened a long time ago.

The responses provided by the subjects (summarized in table A-7) indicate that Koreans are still in favour of rote learning; only 52 (i.e. 16.2%) respondents seem to be against this method of learning, 101 subjects (31.4%) were undecided in this respect, while almost half of the respondents consider rote memorization to be the best way of learning.

Table A-7: Korean students' preference for rote learning.

Issue 10	S. D.	D.	U.	A.	S.A.	Total	Average
Students are educated through infusion and rote memorization.	9 (2.8%)	43 (13.4%)	101 (31.4%)	126 (39.1%)	43 (13.4%)	322 (100%)	3.47

A possible explanation for this attitude could be the decade long tradition of memorization in the Korean educational system, which is at the basis of preparing pupils for getting high scores in their exams that will determine their GPA (grade point average) and their success in entering famous Korean universities. This method of learning has led to the emergence of *hakwons* meant for memory honing. While in South Korea students are encouraged by both families and professors to learn the core subjects, continuously, through memorization, as they will be all tested in the same subjects at the end of high school period, Western education lays more focus on students' creativity, on their individual interests concerning school subjects, at the same time encouraging them to partake various extracurricular activities, with the aim of finding their true passions, which, eventually, will make students enjoy school life better. As De Mente states:

> The method of education in Korea is changing slowly. New methods of teaching have been introduced, and there is a growing realization that real-life experiences and the interest of the students should take precedence over old ideas and old ways. But education is still mostly a one-way experience, with professors and instructors lecturing and students learning by rote memorization. (De Mente 2017:860).

The last issue we were interested in when administering the questionnaire was to find out the Koreans' opinion concerning the time spent by schoolchildren and university students on studying (issue 9). While most of the Western children and young people do have some leisure time after school hours, the majority of Korean schoolchildren will go to *hakwons* (private academies), where they will continue studying until late at night (sometimes even after 11 pm)

(Tudor, 2012). Apart from the long hours spent at school and in *hakwons*, when they come home, Korean children have to do their homework both for the school subjects and for those taught in the private academies, which leaves them with less than 6 hours of sleep. Not even during the summer or winter vacations do Korean children have time to relax as they are sent by their parent to study in *hakwons*. And this is all because of the fact that in schools children are tested and ranked, so there is a strong competition among them. University students, on the other hand, having double-majors, will have to study for both programs they are enrolled in, so if they get 3 or 4 hours of sleep per night they would consider themselves fortunate.

The results of the survey confirmed our prediction that in such a competitive society as the Korean one, learning hard and long is the norm. Thus, 151 respondents (representing 46.9% of the total group) agreed and 68 (21.1%) strongly agreed with the statement that students spend a lot of time studying. At the opposite end of the scale, only 5 respondents strongly disagreed with the idea that Korean students spend too much time on learning, while 28 of them (8.6%) disagreed with it. A considerable number of respondents (70=21.7%) did not provide any opinion in this respect.

Although continuous study proves to be counterproductive, as children are deprived of sleep and feel under pressure all the time, apart from a limitation of the time they could study in *hakwons,* nothing has been done to ease their lives. As Tudor (2012:329-330) shows:

> The saddest part is that everyone knows this is a bad thing, but when other parents force their kids to study when they should be sleeping, it is hard for people not to feel pressure to do the same—especially since failure to keep up may result in their child being rejected from the top universities that will make his or her career and lead to success in life.

A by-product of Korea's educational competition and fear of failure is the sudden rise of suicides since the last decade of the 20th century (Kim, 2017). According the *Statistics Korea* (https://www.statista.com/statistics/1267450/south-korea-main-causes-of-death-by-age/), the suicide rate among teenagers is about 41%, while among persons aged between 20 and 29, the rate is almost 55%.

Despite the high rate of suicide among the Korean teenagers and young persons who fail (in part) in their academic endeavours, despite the negative comments and the dissatisfaction expressed on various media by Korean or Korean-born students studying abroad, the educational system in South Korea is too deeply rooted to change soon and radically.

4.2. Difference verification by gender, age, and educational background of the respondents. The second part of the analysis aims to provide answers to the 3rd research questions, namely whether there is a correlation between our respondents' perceptions concerning various changes in the field of education and their socio-demographic characteristics, i.e. gender, age, and level of education. We shall start with the first characteristic of our respondents, namely gender.

(1) **Difference verification by gender.** We performed a cross-analysis in order to find out which of the two genders perceived the socio-cultural changes that occurred in South Korea in the past three decades to have been for the better or for the worse. The significance probability (P) value is .275, which indicates a statistically insignificant difference between gender and each possible answer ('I don't know", 'For the worse', and 'For the better') in question 1 (i.e. how they perceived the changes in education to have occurred). But when we look at the crossover frequency between the two groups determined by sex and the items, we notice that in the **male** group the highest frequency was for the item "for the better" (80.4%), followed by "for the worse" (13.0%), and "I don't know" (6.5%). In the **female** group, the percentage for "for the better" is slightly higher than in the male group, i.e. 85.2%), followed by "for the worse" and "I don't know" with an equal percentage (7.4%).

In question 2 we narrowed down our focus, asking the respondents whether they have perceived any changes in the field of education. The independent sample t-test for this domain according to gender showed no statistical significant difference, the female group having a slightly higher average than the male group, as shown in **table B-1** below. We interpret this difference in the mean values as proof of a deeper implication of women in children's education, and thus, a higher familiarity with the changes in this domain.

Table B-1: Male vs. female perceptions of changes in education, in general.

Domain	M±SD Mean±standard deviation		t
	male (N=92)	female (N=230)	
There have been significant changes in education	3.53±1.084	**3.71±.818**	-1.441

Next we checked the differences in terms of **gender** for the specific areas in the field of education where changes seemed to have occurred. The specific results are presented in table **B-2.**

Table B-2: Correlation between each issue/statement in the field of education and gender.

Statements	M±SD Mean±standard deviation		t
	Male (N=92)	Female (N=230)	
1. Schools treat children with diverse sociocultural backgrounds (e.g. low income, divorced families, multiculturalism, etc.) equally.	**3.42±1.008**	3.41±.939	.092
2. Co-ed schools treat boys and girls equally	**3.66±.917**	3.63±.886	.295
3. In schools and educational institutions, students are respected for expressing their opinions.	3.54±.954	**3.56±.878**	-.157
4. For the education of elementary, middle and high school students, academy education (*hakwon*) is a good solution.	**2.74±1.108**	2.68±.939	.431
5. Specialized high schools (vocational colleges) are helpful for adolescents' diverse career choices.	**3.62±.936**	3.54±.859	.700
6. In college, students evaluate professors' activities through lecture evaluation.	3.64±.846	**3.75±.880**	-.992
7. University students prefer male professors to female professors.	**2.46±1.104**	2.33±.927	.968
8. Although it is difficult to choose a double major in college, it is a good opportunity for students.	**3.99±.719**	3.95±.743	.407
9. Students spend a lot of time studying.	**3.84±.929**	3.75±.933	.775
10. Students are educated through infusion and rote-memorization.	**3.74±.888**	3.36±.991	3.184**

**P<.01

The independent sample t-test for each statement related to the domain of education showed the following results: in Statements 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, and 9 the male group had a slightly higher average than the female group, and in Statements 3 and 6, the female group had a slightly higher average than the male group. However, there was no statistically significant difference. In Statement 10 (related to the students' rote-memorization), the male group's mean value (M=3.74) was higher than the female group's (M=3.36), and statistically there was a significant difference. The explanation for this difference could be that fact that from the very beginning of Korean education it was boys who had the chance to study and the method that was ingrained in them was rote memorization, which has been perpetuated to a great extent among the current schoolchildren and students. And as the current teachers and professors have been trained to acquire knowledge by rote memorization, they ask the same thing from their students.

(2) Difference verification by age. We shall next check whether there is any correlation between the **age** of the Korean respondents and their perceptions concerning the changes in the domain of education in the past thirty years. The respondents in all age groups agreed that there have been changes, as indicated in table **B-3** below).

Table B-3: Correlation between the age of the respondents and their perceptions related to the changes in education.

Distri-bution	**I don't know**	**Nega-tive change**	**Positive change**	**Total**
20years (and less)	5 (9.6%)	9 (17.3%)	38 (73.1%)	52 (100%)
30 years	16 (23.9%)	17 (25.4%)	34 (50.7%)	67 (100%)
40 years	9 (14.5%)	18 (29.0%)	35 (56.5%)	62 (100%)

50 years	11 (12.4%)	15 (16.9%)	63 (70.8%)	89 (100%)
60 years (and over)	7 (13.5%)	11 (21.2%)	34 (65.4%)	52 (100%)
SUM	48 (14.9%)	70 (21.7%)	204 (63.4%)	322 (100%)
χ^2=12.175, *df*=8, *p*=.144				

The result of the cross-analysis to find out the correlation between **age** and the respondents' perceptions of the changes in the domain of Korean **education** shows that the significance probability (P) value was .144, indicating that the association between each scale value by age and education was not statistically significant. In the group under 20s, 'positive change' showed the highest frequency with 38 respondents (73.1%), followed by 'negative change (9 respondents= 17.3%) and 'I don't know (5 respondents = 9.6% of the total). In the 30s group, 34 respondents (representing 50.7%) considered the changes in the field of education to have been 'positive', 17 (25.4%) consider that these changes have been 'negative', while 16 (23.9%) provided no opinion in this respect. In the 40s group, 'positive change' showed the highest frequency with 35 (56.5%) people, followed by 'negative change' (18 persons=29.0% of the total of respondents) and 'don't know' answers provided by 9 respondents (14.5%). In the 50s group, 63 (70.8%) respondents opined that the changes in the domain of education have been 'positive', 15 (16.9%) perceived these changes to have been 'negative', while 11 (12.4%) people had no opinion in this respect. In the last age-group (60 years and over), 'positive change' showed the highest frequency with 34 (65.4%) people, followed by 'negative change' 11 (21.2%) and 'I don't know' 7 (13.5%).

The data in table B-3 obtained by applying a one-way ANOVA test, show that there is a statistically significant difference among the groups. To understand this difference, a post-evaluation using the Scheffe (for equal variance)/ Dunnet T3 (for bi-variance) test has been performed, its results showing, indeed, a meaningful difference among age groups in their responses concerning education. Looking at the data in table B-4, we notice that the 30s group (M=3.48) and the 40s group (M=3.44) showed significant differences in comparison to the 50s group (M=3.90) (see table B-4 at the end of the paper).

The difference between the younger and older respondents can be accounted for in terms of a generational change: those who grew up in the early 1960s and were too poor (or had friends who were too poor) to afford secondary or tertiary education, made sure to help their children through high school and college. Thus, the parents' dream of being enrolled in high school or college education was fulfilled by their children.

We then tried to identify whether there are differences for specific areas of **education** that underwent changes, depending on the **age** of the respondents. The results of the statistical analysis are presented in table **B-5**, at the end of the paper.

The one-way ANOVA test indicated significant differences for Statements 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 9, and 10. In order to understand the differences between groups in detail, we checked these results by means of the Scheffe (in case of equal variance)/ Dunnett T3 (in case of bivariate) post-test. Meaningful differences between the groups appear for Statement 1, Statement 2, Statement 3 and Statement 4. Looking at the differences among groups we notice that as far as Statement 1 is concerned, there was a significant difference between the group in their 30s (M=3.09) and the group in their 50s (M=3.70), while with regards to Statement 2, there was a significant difference between the 20s group (M=3.31) and the 30s group (M=3.48) on the one hand, and the group in their 50s (M=3.93), on the other. As far as Statement 3 is concerned, there was a significant difference between the respondents in their 30s (M=3.22) and in those in their 50s (M=3.81). With regard to Statement 4, there was a significant difference between the group aged 50 years (M=2.40) and the group in their 20s (M=3.15). In many of the statements where statistically significant differences were noted, these were between respondents in group (d) (i.e. people in their 50s) and respondents in groups (a) and (b) (i.e. people in their 20s and 30s), which comes to reinforce the idea of a generational change.

(3) The next step in our research was to look into the correlation between the respondents' **level of education** and their opinion about the changes in the field of education in Korea. For this purpose, as mentioned in section 2, we have divided our respondents in three classes, according to their highest degree of education: high school graduates: n=54 (16.8), college graduates: n=166 (51.6%), and holders of MA and PhD degrees: n=102 (31.7%), the respondents with a college certificate representing more than half of the total. Table B-6 below contains the frequency data.

Table B-6. Correlation between the respondents' education background and their perception of changes in Korean education.

Distribution	I don't know	For the worse	For the better	Total
(a) High school or lower	12 (22.2%)	8 (14.8%)	34 (63.0%)	54 (100%)
(b) University	24 (14.5%)	36 (21.7%)	106 (63.9%)	166 (100%)
(c) Graduate School Master's or PhD	12 (11.8%)	26 (25.5%)	64 (62.7%)	102 (100%)
Sum/total	48 (14.9%)	70 (21.7%)	204 (63.4%)	322 (100%)
χ^2=4.502, *df*=4, *p*=.342				

The significance level (P) value obtained by the cross-analysis was found to be .342, indicating that there is no statistically significant difference between the respondent's level of education and each type of suggested answer (i.e. "I don't know", "For the better", "For the worse"). Looking at the frequency of crossover between groups and items (*i.e*. type of response), we found that the percentage of answers from all three groups indicating positive changes in the field of education was almost the same: 63.0% in group (a), 63.9% in group (b), and 62.7% among the MA and PhD holders. Further on, we checked whether the there is any correlation between the education background of the respondents and their opinions with respect to various aspects of education in South Korea. The results are shown in table B-7, presented at the end of the paper.

The results of the one-way ANOVA test for each statement related to the domain of education indicate that there were some differences in 7 out of the 10 statements (Statements 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 9, and 10) according to the respondents' highest level of education. Therefore, in order to understand the differences between groups in detail, we also considered the results of Scheffe (in case of equal variance)/Dunnett T3 (in case of bivariate) post-test, which indicate meaningful differences between the 3 groups for statements 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, and 10. Examining the differences between groups, with respect to Statement 2 (*co-ed schools treat boys and girls equally*), the mean value of the group of high school graduates (M=3.39) and the mean value of the university graduates (M=3.52) differed considerably from that of the holders of MAs or PhDs (M=3.97). A somewhat similar difference was found in connection with statement 3 (*in schools, students are respected for expressing their opinions*). Another significant difference was found in connection with Statement 6 (*in college, students evaluate professors' activities through lecture evaluation*). Thus, the respondents in group (b) had a mean value of (M=3.50), those in group (a) showed a value of (M=3.52), while MA and PhD holders had a mean value of (M=4.21). In Statement 8, there was a significant difference between the respondents with high school background (M=3.54), the university graduates (M=3.95), and the group with a master's degree or PhD (M=4.21). Finally, in Statement 10 related to the Koreans' rote memorization, there was a significant difference between the group of MA or PhD holders (M=3.26) and the group of university graduates.

These differences between respondents in group (c) (representing respondents with an MA or a PhD) and those in groups (a) and (b) could be accounted for by various facts. First, most of the persons who have a PhD are university professors, which means that they are familiar with the changes that occurred in the field of education, especially because many of them have experienced them themselves. On the other hand, the respondents in group (c) are also those who, due to globalization, might have had the chance to further their education not only in their own country, but also abroad. Once they obtained their MA or PhD, they returned to South Korea to contribute to the country's educational and, implicitly, economic and technical development.

Also worth a mention is the fact that, as South Korea is one of the leading producers of high-tech products, many MA and PhD programs are sponsored by famous companies such as Samsung, LG or KIA, which want to make sure that their future employees will be top-specialist who will guarantee the global success of the respective companies. So, there is a strong connection between the work-market and the post-graduate programs.

Table B-4: Respondents' perceptions of changes in education, in general, according to age.

Domain	M±SD Mean±standard deviation					*F*	After verification
	20yrs (a) (N=52)	30yrs (b) (N=67)	40yrs (c) (N=62)	50yrs (d) (N=89)	60 (e) (N=52)		
There have been significant changes in **education**	3.75±.813	3.48±.8 41	3.44±1.06 5	3.90±.8 12	3.67±.923	3.426**	b,c<d

Table B-5: Correlation between the age of the respondents and their opinion related to the changes in each area of Korean education.

Statement	Mean±standard deviation					*F*	After verification
	20 yrs (a) (N=52)	30 yrs (b) (N=67)	40 yrs (c) (N=62)	50 yrs (d) (N=89)	60 yrs (e) (N=52)		
1. Schools treat children with diverse sociocultural backgrounds (e.g. low income, divorced families, multiculturalism, etc.) equally.	3.37±1.0 10	3.09±.84 8	3.34±.97 4	3.70±.95 8	3.50±.89 7	4.263**	b<d
2. Co-ed schools treat boys and girls equally	3.31±1.0 94	3.48±.80 4	3.56±.89 8	3.93±.80 9	3.77±.75 7	5.402***	a,b<d
3. In schools and educational institutions, students are respected for expressing their opinions.	3.44±.87 3	3.22±.86 7	3.53±.90 0	3.81±.90 3	3.69±.82 9	4.780**	b<d
4. For the education of elementary, middle and high school students, academy education (*hakwon*) is a good solution.	3.15±1.1 27	2.81±.87 5	2.73±.96 1	2.40±.92 6	2.58±.95 7	5.413***	d<a
5. Specialized high schools (vocational colleges) are helpful for adolescents' diverse career choices.	3.73±.86 6	3.66±.70 8	3.37±.94 5	3.63±.85 8	3.40±1.0 15	1.970	
6. In college, students evaluate professors' activities through lecture evaluation.	3.83±.78 5	3.49±.92 7	3.69±.84 1	3.89±.81 8	3.63±.95 0	2.342	
7. University students prefer male professors to female professors.	2.31±1.0 20	2.18±1.0 14	2.63±.92 7	2.25±.94 5	2.56±.95 8	2.645*	difference×
8. Although it is difficult to choose a double major in college, it is a good opportunity for students.	3.79±.84 8	3.90±.58 1	4.02±.71 3	4.10±.75 4	3.92±.76 3	1.796	
9. Students spend a lot of time studying.	3.58±1.0 36	3.67±.87 7	4.00±.78 9	3.94±.78 9	3.54±1.1 63	3.364*	difference×
10. Students are educated through infusion and rote-memorization.	3.96±.83 9	3.67±.84 2	3.48±.98 7	3.11±1.0 05	3.31±.96 1	7.993	
*P<.05, **P<.01, ***P<.001							

Table B-7. Correlation between the respondents' level of education and each statement about changes in South Korean Education.

Statements	Mean ±Standard Deviation			F	(Post-test)
	(a) **High school or lower** (N=54)	(b) **University** (N=166)	(c) **MA or PhD** (N=102)		
1. Schools treat children with diverse sociocultural backgrounds (e.g. low income, divorced families, multiculturalism, etc.) equally.	3.28±.856	3.34±.931	3.62±1.025	3.437*	× Difference
2. Co-ed schools treat boys and girls equally	3.39±.856	3.52±.906	3.97±.802	11.350***	a,b<c
3. In schools and educational institutions, students are respected for expressing their opinions.	3.26±.894	3.43±.856	3.91±.869	13.426***	a,b<c
4. For the education of elementary, middle and high school students, academy education (*hakwon*) is a good solution.	2.98±1.189	2.69±.939	2.56±.929	3.278*	a<c
5. Specialized high schools (vocational colleges) are helpful for adolescents' diverse career choices.	3.48±1.059	3.53±.791	3.67±.916	1.052	
6. In college, students evaluate professors' activities through lecture evaluation.	3.52±.885	3.50±.879	4.18±.651	23.704***	a,b<c
7. University students prefer male professors to female professors.	2.48±.841	2.32±1.021	2.38±.985	.575	
8. Although it is difficult to choose a double major in college, it is a good opportunity for students.	3.54±.818	3.95±.621	4.21±.762	16.015***	a<b<c
9. Students spend a lot of time studying.	3.46±1.077	3.75±.891	3.97±.873	5.474**	a<c
10. Students are educated through infusion and rote-memorization.	3.48±1.005	3.59±1.003	3.26±.889	3.574*	c<b

$^{*}P<.05$, $^{**}P<.01$, $^{***}P<.001$

5. CONCLUSIONS

The overall picture offered by the paper is that education is one of the cornerstones of South Korea's rise from the ashes. Horace Underwood, an American professor at Yonsei University in South Korea and the great-grandson of the Presbyterian missionary by the same name, who had founded the afore-mentioned higher education institution, is quoted by Breen (2004:183) saying that "[w]ithout the educated manpower to plan the development, the wisdom to put it into effect, and the educated skill to do the work, the economic development would never have taken place." This shows the close connection between education and economic development, which seems to have run in parallel, especially in the latter part of the 20th century, bringing about an "economic miracle within a single generation" (Diem *et al.* n.d.) in the peninsular country.

Our analysis has also tried to offer answers to the research questions. Thus, as far as **research question 1** is concerned, we have seen that changes have affected a number of aspects pertaining to education to a larger or a smaller extent. From a foreigner's perspective, one of the issues the Koreans still have to work on is to diminish rote memorization and to encourage imagination, creativity, and discussions in class. The old method of acquiring knowledge will prevent young Koreans from dealing constructively with problems they face in everyday life. In this respect, it seems that Confucianism is still strong in South Korea. In the same vein, male professors are still very much preferred to female professors, a preference that comes from the Confucian belief that literacy and knowledge is a prerogative of masculinity. Another aspect the Koreans have to pay more attention to is encouraging pupils and students to express their own opinions in class and not to be satisfied with being lectured by the teacher. To our mind, the dialogue between teachers and pupils/students will develop that latter's creativity, their confidence, will also help them communicate rather than compete with each other, and will eventually break the rigid barrier between the two parties, without diminishing the respect students have for their teachers. More alarming than all these is the fact that because the Korean pupils' and students' life is determined by scores, they study extremely long hours, may feel unhappy, frequently show symptoms of depression, or have suicidal thoughts. From a foreigner's perspective, the first author thinks that the Korean Ministry of Education should try to improve the education system, to make it gentler to the school children in the sense of lessening the burden of scores placed on their shoulders.

Nevertheless, some progress has been noticed in the tendency of diminishing the class and gender gap in the field of education, by adopting an impartial treatment of children in terms of social background or gender. Hopefully, in the next generation we shall witness an equal preference for male and female professors in universities.

A somewhat surprising finding was that more respondents (n=134) disagreed with the *hakwons* (cram schools) than those who agreed (n=63) with this kind of private education. Possible reasons behind this opinion could be the high prices parents have to pay, as well as the corruption found among some of the teachers working in them.

With respect to the **research question 2**, the results of the questionnaire survey indicate that for a large number of Koreans (204 respondents out of a total of 322) the changes that have taken place in education were for the better. This could be an indication of a slow detachment from the old practices and of embracing some Western ones. By no means should Koreans give up the traditional values while committing themselves to modernization and globalization.

In terms of the correlation between the changes in education and variables such as the respondents' gender, age, and educational background (**research question 3**), the findings indicate that in terms of gender, the results show that female respondents in general perceive the changes in education to have been for the better, which could be accounted for on the basis of their stronger involvement in their children's education. The only significant difference between genders concerned the last statement in the questionnaire (related to the still very much employed rote memorization), where the male respondents had a considerable higher mean value than the female respondents, i.e. 3.78 vs. 3.36. Two possible explanations could account for this: one is the long period of time in which Koreans employed the Chinese script that contains complex characters of up to 23 strokes. This develops children's ability at pattern recognition, but it also imposes the need for rote learning. The second reason has to do to the fact that Confucianism encouraged only boys' education. At the end of the 19th century, the few foreigners that were allowed to enter the Joseon Kingdom were surprised to see groups of boys sitting around their teacher and reciting by heart Confucius' teachings.

In what concerns the age variable, we have noticed some differences between the respondents in their 50s and the respondents in the younger age groups (20s and 30s). These differences are indicative of a generational gap.

As far as the last variable is concerned, i.e. the respondents' level of education, no relevant statistical difference was identified. All three groups of respondents (high school graduates, BA holders and MA/PhD holders) perceived the general changes in education to have been positive. But when it came to the changes in specific areas of education, the statistic results indicated a slightly higher mean value of the group represented by the respondents with an MA or a PhD degree as compared to the other groups in six out of the ten areas investigated. This might be an indicator of the fact that people with a higher degree of education, who also dedicated more time to this activity, were more aware of how the field of education had changed.

Returning to our motto, Korean education can make pupils' and students' lives very difficult, sometimes almost unbearable. Nevertheless, they consider it the only avenue for social position and power in the Korean society. And no matter how advanced the Korean society might be nowadays, the education system is still very much dominated by Confucianism.

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POLITICAL INTERVIEW AND ARGUMENTATIVE STRATEGIES

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Abstract: *Among journalistic genres, political interview holds a special place, considering the multiple components that need to be analyzed. One of them is the targeted communication medium, and we specify that it is the television interview. As such, it has a certain amount of time, a fixed number of participants and a well-defined theme to be addressed. The specialty literature has attempted to identify the milestones in the study of political interview. To begin with, it is considered by some linguists as a verbal exchange between two people, the interviewer and the interviewee, in order to communicate information of public interest to interested parties. This kind of communication can be analyzed from a linguistic point of view, taking into account the achievements of verbal exchanges, of argumentative strategies, such as argumentative scales, rhetorical argumentation and other possible argumentative strategies. Such an analysis would imply also a study of lexical and semantic means, such as recurrent lexemes and their connotation in the context. It would also imply a study concerning the notion of the ethos, which is vital in our casa of study for the interviewee. The present article deals with two interviews of two French politicians, both belonging to the Far Right wing. We try to identify the similarities and differences between the two interviewees as shown in their interviews.*

Keywords*: political interview; argumentative strategy; verbal exchange; irony; interrogation*

1. INTRODUCTION

In a political debate, the media is the most direct and fastest way to reach an audience. Among journalistic genres, political interview holds a special place, considering the multiple components that need to be analyzed. One of them is the targeted communication medium which is, in our case, the television interview. As such, it has a well-defined format, a certain amount of time, a fixed number of participants and a well-defined theme to be addressed. The specialty literature has attempted to identify the milestones in the study of political interview, which is considered by some linguists as a verbal exchange between two people, the interviewer and the interviewee, in order to communicate information of public interest to interested parties. We intend to analyze this process of this kind of communication from a linguistic point of view, taking into account the achievements of verbal exchanges, of argumentative strategies, rhetorical argumentation and other possible argumentative strategies which are going to be developed further on. Such an analysis would also imply a study of the lexical and semantic means and resources, such as recurrent lexemes and specific connotations. As presidential elections are quite near in France, the candidates from all parties and orientations try their best to convince the voters that they and their programs are the solution to their problems and they deserve their vote. To achieve this goal, they need to address the voters and they give interviews to the well-known and appreciated channels.

This article will deal with two such interviews, one of Marine Le Pen, the leader of the National Rally, a Far Right party, and the second of Eric Zemmour, who is considered one of her opponents, even if he has the same political orientation. The first part of the article will deal with the theoretical approach of the interview as a journalistic genre. The second part of the article will deal with detailed analyses of their interviews, both with famous and experienced journalists of British media.

2. THEORETICAL APPROACH

2.1. Political interview as media communication. The specialty literature dealt a lot with the concepts of media communication and mass media, trying to decide whether they are synonyms or not. Although they are used as such by some scholars, others consider that mass communication refers to a process, while mass media refers to channels of information dissemination. (Potter, 2013:3-4).

Information and communication are two concepts of great importance in the life of societies and concern all fields: politics, economy, finance, technology and science. At the same time, the information transmitted by the media helps to build an image according to certain values generally accepted in society: politicians work for the good of citizens, technology and science make research and efforts to ensure the progress of society in order to facilitate people's lives, the economy ensures the production and consumption of goods and services to ensure a respectable standard of living for members of society. That is why information must be carefully chosen and even more carefully transmitted and it represents a real art of making. It implies a well-chosen discourse, a well-chosen rhetoric meant to persuade the audience, good and persuasive arguments and examples, a certain confidence in the exposition of his point of view. It is at the limit of persuasion and manipulation, but it is well known that politicians use the media to manipulate public opinion.

This is done through all kinds of journalistic genres, including the political interview. If it is televised, so much the better, the interviewed politician will have a larger audience, he will be heard by his adherents but also by the undecided and by his opponents. The two last categories mentioned may be watching and listening by mere curiosity. So, the interviewee must choose well his words, his arguments, to strengthen his support from his adherents and to convince, perhaps, the undecided and, hopefully, some of his opponents.

It's a tough job, but politicians who are well versed in it do very well, sometimes you get the impression that they already see themselves winning their race. If they succeed in giving this impression, this means that they are good rhetoricians and that half the race is won.

Political interview is characterized by certain particularities: the time, the circumstances and the people involved, as it is the case of the communication situation. Journalists know too well who needs to be interviewed and when. Sometimes, more than often, they know by whom, because it is important for the interviewee to have a well-intentioned and kind interlocutor instead of a malicious interlocutor, with whom one can suppose to have clashes. These remarks concern the participants in the communication situation: the interviewee and the interviewer. It is well-known that the French president François Mitterrand accepted only interviews with chosen journalists and refused the others. With regard to the moment of the interview, this is also an important element to be taken into consideration important. It very much depends on social-political circumstances: elections of all kinds, social movements or unrest, international conflict situations, natural disasters or disasters caused by humans. The third element to be taken into consideration is the topic of the interview: is it of political interest, of humanitarian interest, entertainment? Depending on the topic, there could be a friendly ambiance, or quite the opposite, a tense and even confrontational ambiance. The interviewer would want to extract as much information as he can from the interviewee, on one side, and on the other, the interviewee would want to express only the convenient words and opinions, the ones we usually call "politically correct" or those who are in accordance with the ideology he is trying to promote. In this way, the conversation becomes a confrontation and both participants try to show in their best light. It all depends on what side they represent or on what they try to emphasize, to criticize or to promote alongside a certain audience. The interviewer is supposed to be well informed on the topic addressed, while the interviewee should be well prepared to give the right answers. This kind of interview is considered by Charaudeau (1997:229-232) as a media agreement entailing situational constraints and discursive constraints, developing into strategies and media event.

Other linguists (Andersen, 2020-2021: 2-3) see the interview as a social activity, more like a game, in which the interviewer and the interviewee engage in a question and answer exchange. In this way they build together a dialogue, a verbal exchange. More often than not, the journalist has his own style of conducting the interview, but things can indeed become interesting when the interviewee has his own style of approaching his dialogue partner or a certain topic. From a journalistic point of view, it is considered that the two participants create some kind of discourse. It is a discourse if we take into account Maingueneau's considerations (2007:29-34) on discourse, summing up that discourse is made up by communication of a message by an enunciator to an enounce in a specific communication situation. Their discourse develops according to rules which correspond to various fields, and it is considered a discourse from the point of linguistic analysis, a dialog from a pragmatics point of view and an argumentative point of view.

2.2. Argumentative strategies in political interview. Political interview is not only a verbal exchange. Both participants in a verbal interaction must construct their intervention in such a way that, on the one hand, the question is asked with full knowledge of the subject, and, on the other hand, the answer is formulated to show in-depth knowledge of the problem and the ability to provide a viable solution. We are already entering the field of argumentation: the interviewer formulates a short speech to support his question and the interviewee has to think about arguing his point of view as best he can. He has to convince not only his interlocutor, but also the audience, invisible, but supposedly known. On both sides, this implies a well-chosen speech, prepared in advance. Normally there should be no backlash, but sometimes it happens. From the point of view of argumentation, the argumentative speech is supposed to convince the audience and make them adhere to its point of view. Both participants in the verbal exchange that is the interview do their best to convince the audience that their knowledge about the topic being discussed is correct and complete.

At the same time, it is in their interest to present themselves in a favorable light: the interviewer by the questions he asks and the way he formulates them, while the interviewee pursues the same goal in the answers he gives. This notion goes back to Aristotle, quoted by Ruth Amossy (2000:61) where she defines ethos as “the self-image that the speaker projects in order to act through speech”. She also cites Roland Barthes’ definition of ethos (Amossy, 2000:61) who is not so benevolent, as he considers that ethos “consists of the character traits that the speaker must show to the audience (no matter how sincere) in order to make a good impression”.

The interview is considered by some scholars as discourse constructed by both participants. To construct this speech, both participants must carefully choose their arguments. In their study, Anscombre and Ducrot (1997:51-57) and Ducrot (1980) mention the intervention of two important concepts: argumentative scales and implicative scales As far as the argumentative scales are concerned, it is important to know how to choose the right order of the arguments: either we start with the strongest argument and go to the weakest; or the opposite.

For implicative scales, one assertion implicates the previous and the next one. The study covers the strategic operators that have the role of orienting the discourse in a certain direction.

Obviously, the most important part in a political interview consists of the message conveyed by the two participants. In order to do so, they will choose carefully not only their argumentative strategy, but also a specific vocabulary to sustain their opinions. Some politicians try to use politically correct language.

Others do quite the opposite, hoping in this way to be more convincing to their adherents.

3. POLITICAL INTERVIEW. COMPARATIVE APPROACH OF TWO CASES

In what follows we intend to analyze two political interviews with two French politicians engaged in the race for the presidency of France in 2022. They belong to the same political orientation, the Far Right Wing, to different political parties, they defend the same political ideas, but they express them in different manners.

Their intention is, obviously, to win votes from French people living in Great Britain in order to enlarge their voting base, since they accept to be interviewed by British media.

3.1. Interview with Marine Le Pen. The interview we are going to analyze dates back to The 7th of February, 2022 and it was shown on BBC, an English television channel with a large audience all over the world. The programme, *Hard talk*, and its presenter, Stephen Sackur, are also well known, the programme having a long existence and its presenter has extensive experience in political interviews.

As any interview, it begins with a brief presentation of the interviewee, Marine Le Pen, who is introduced as a “veteran of French politics, an unsuccessful candidate in the last presidential elections and now campaigning to win the Elysée the third time”. In a brief incursion in her life as a politician, the interviewer mentions some of her notable acts: she dismissed her own father from the party leadership, and then threw him out of the party, as she considered him the cause of her failure in the 2012 elections. She seemed to realize that the main cause of her failure was the hard line anti-immigrants, anti- European Community policy and populist politics. She changed the name of her political party to National Rally and she engineered a modification of her party’s image. The former political party was accused of racism and anti-Semitism. Now, for the present race, it is considered that she has to beat Emmanuel Macron. In addition to that, she faces other challenges from her own political orientation, that of Eric Zemmour. After a second failure in presidential elections, she decided to get rid of some of some of her collaborators. Stephen Sackur’s introduction of the French politician ends with a question addressed to the viewers of the programme: is this third race the beginning of the end of Marine Le Pen as a “torch bearer for the Far Right?” It is obvious that such a presentation and most of all the final question addressed to the viewers of Hard Talk lead from the beginning to a tense, or at least, less friendly relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee. The proper interview begins with the usual polite exchange, followed by a question implying Marine Le Pen's lack of political support. The next question deals with some "severe political blows coming from her own family, represented by Marion Maréchal Le Pen and by his opponent, Eric Zemmour". Marine Le Pen is always ready to counterattack. With a tone that shows a strong self-confidence, she answers questions punctually. Her argumentative strategy consists of contradicting her interlocutor. Her arguments are plausible, such as "I defend the interests of the French people, I'm not a studio candidate, I am the candidate of France's forgotten people". We think that "forgotten people" is not the best translation for "la France profonde", which means for any French the people who live in other parts of France then the capital or major cities and who know and respect the old, classical values of the French Nation. It is not the first time when she discusses concepts belonging to the extreme right, such as Nation, but now she tries to construct a new image of the Nation, in the sense that now she refers to "la France profonde". The difference between her former political discourse, a national political discourse, and the present one is some kind of renouncement to discussion of religious conflicts on the territory of France, car she declares herself as "the leader of a large popular movement which does not intend to have a clash of civilizations or conflicts between religions". Another topic discussed during the interview is that of immigration, which was one of the points she insisted on in her previous campaigns. The question consists in asking her why she moderated her attitude regarding immigration. Some of the questions of the interviewer are counteracted with humor, which consists of an ironic remark addressed to the BBC. Her response is constructed as if she has followed the model of argumentative scales: she does not want to add division to division, she does not want to be over the top, she does not want violence in the country. Some other times, she combines negation with irony: "Non! Non! Non, Monsieur ! Vous n'avez rien compris. Laissez–moi vous expliquer." ("No! No! No, sir, you have got it all wrong. Let me explain it to you."). She explains that she is against chaotic, massive and illegal immigration that could cause major problems, among which insecurity, social problems, cultural problems, identity problems and budgetary problems. Here is one of the topics usually developed by the Far Right parties, the national identity, linked with the notion of nation. It seems as if for the most part of the interview, Marine Le Pen counteracts accusing BBC of presenting a caricature of her political view and intentions, instead of presenting it in a proper state. In order to support her point of view, she uses examples, such as her visit to Mayotte, where the population is half black, half Muslims; nevertheless she won 45% of the votes. As for the topic of the economy, which we know from the previous election of 2017, is not the strongest point of Marine Le Pen campaign, she tries to divert the discussion to the cost of living, unemployment and to her proposals to help medium people go on with their life. Obviously, the interview could not leave aside the previous idea of the French politician which she has now abandoned, that of France getting out of the European Union. Showing she is an experienced politician, Marine Le Pen's answer could convince her audience, as she explains that her new position is determined by a change in the European Union politics. She seems to have an answer to any question, and moreover, an answer to her advantage. Other major topics are tackled, such as the European Union response to the Covid crisis, her political friendship with some European leaders, openly opposed to Brussels institutions. All the inconvenient questions are answered by criticism on the part of Marine Le Pen, based on a lack of comprehension of political French life, of European situation in present days and of the necessity to oppose some of Brussels decisions. The relationship with president Putin is also questioned, and the answer is again from the point of view of a politician. Nevertheless, she considers that Europe made a mistake conducting a cold war against Putin and pushing him towards China. By the end of the interview, another topic constantly approached by the Far Right parties is brought into discussion, that of the sovereignty of France and the integrity of its territory. The French politician expresses her strong conviction that her political party will fight for these values.

In this political interview, it is not difficult to remark a certain tension between the two participants, which lead to violent reaction on the part of the interviewee. In most cases, she criticizes his approach of some topics, the approach of the BBC as a television channel so everyone is to blame except for her. Certainly, this kind of approach could win her some more votes coming from French people living in Great Britain. T he question is how many remained in Great Britain after Brexit and what percentage of them are her supporters.

3.2. Interview with Eric Zemmour. This is an interview with Eric Zemmour conducted by Freddy Gray, *The Spectator's* deputy editor, about immigration, Islam, Brexit and Emmanuel Macron. (http://www.spectator.co.uk.flashsale) First of all, we must say that *The Spectator* is a weekly British magazine, having as main subject areas politics and culture. Being of conservative orientation, having a long period of existence, one can easily imagine what influence it has in the political world, at home and abroad.

Eric Zemmour is a well-known French journalist, writer, essayist, essayist, editorialist, columnist, polemicist and politician of the Far Right Wing. He only became a politician recently, but he can make up for his lack of experience in politics with his extensive experience as a journalist. As a journalist, he has been taken to court several times for his claims, released but convicted of provoking racial hatred and provoking hatred towards Muslims. This looks like the perfect portrait of a presidency candidate on behalf of the Far Right Wing, which sees its ranks and its members multiplying. Even if Eric Zemmour is an opponent of Marine Le Pen, the historic and flamboyant representative of the extreme right, another candidate could improve their chances of winning the race. Zemmour's family history is not insignificant, as he is, according to his origins, an Arab Jew. We will see in his interview how he explains and seek advantage of his own family life history. As we said before, he is an experienced observer of political life, so he knows exactly what he must say and what he must not say during an interview.

As in each and every political interview of some importance, the interviewer presents the interviewee. Most of the adjectives characterizing Eric Zemmour are superlatives, "the most famous journalists in France", and we know why he is famous, for all his controversial apparitions on television channels. When the interviewer speaks about his intellectual capacities, it goes down to positive grade of an adjective, he, Eric Zemmour, is "only" a French intellectual. In the first part of the interview there is an explanation for his coming to United Kingdom, to raise funds for his presidential campaign. Despite the support he shows to Eric Zemmour, the British reporter can't help but tell us that his coming to the United Kingdom was not welcome everywhere he went. He was banned from an event he was supposed to attend at the Royal Institution and the event was cancelled, the reason being his toxic attitude on Islam and immigration. Nevertheless, the *Spectato*r's reporter presents him as 2nd or 3rd in the presidential polls.

A remark is necessary: the interview in entirely in French, the questions are quite short and targeted, the answers well prepared in advance. Sometimes, the British journalist, who does not seem to master the subtleties of the French language, often needs Eric Zemmour's help to finish his sentences. And, what is more important in a political interview, the relationships seem quite cordial, the interviewer and the interviewee seem to have common opinions on the subjects discussed.

At the beginning of the interview, in order to provoke a certain answer on behalf of the interviewer, the journalist brings into discussion the relation between the two countries, France and United Kingdom. For the time being, no explanation is given, but it will be approached later on. In his answer, Eric Zemmour insists on the "fundamental error" made by Brussels technocracy and by the French, represented by Emmanuel Macron who is, in his opinion, "a hard-core European", they consider that the choice of the English people to leave the European Community is a mistake consequently they must pay for that. On the contrary, Zemmour considers that the choice of the English people must be respected. He even praises the representatives of the British conservative elites for having respected the choice of the British people expressed by vote. Nevertheless, he expresses his concern about the interests of French fishermen who saw their fishing rights suppressed. In an argumentative approach he tries to show himself as a patriot, defending the rights of his own people. Another conflicting topic between the two countries is brought into discussion, that of the immigration problem. The problem is an old one, beginning with the immigrants' camps in Calais who constantly try to cross the frontier between France and United Kingdom. In his opinion, "it is a shame that France has accepted to be paid to protect British borders". In what follows, he expresses his firm conviction that all these migrants should have never arrived in Calais. He considers that a strong opinion on this matter could be to his advantage in the presidential elections. For the first time during this interview we can notice a difference between his opinion and the opinion of Marine Le Pen, more moderate in her remarks. His rhetoric against the migrants is well documented and well organized in a mounting argumentative scale: they receive social benefits, they are accepted into French society, which is to their advantage, but they make life unbearable in Calais. It seems that the British journalist has given Zemmour the opportunity to criticize the French policy by allowing him to say what he would do if he were president. As a response, Zemmour refers extensively to the measures he would be able to take to prevent this critical situation. He criticizes the weakness and inefficiency of Frontex. He has the courtesy not to accuse Macron of using migrants as a weapon against the United Kingdom. In exchange he accuses him of wokeism. Wokeism is quite a new concept which supports the idea that every individual is basically the same and that he can live wherever he chooses, as he chooses. The concept also alerts against racism and social discrimination. It seems as if the interviewer is encouraging the interviewee to develop on this idea, which seems to have some importance in the economy of the interview. Eric Zemmour takes the opportunity to criticize all those philosophies which "deviate from Christian humanism, it's Christian virtues gone mad". He goes even further saying that Christianity is" indeed respect for the human being, but that is rooted in a culture, a religion, a people, a land". This is a another good opportunity to criticize globalism, the Republicans who gave up defending the values they once believed in and this little discourse culminates with an accusation of cowardice on behalf of both right and left parties. The next question of the interviewer gives Zemmour the opportunity to tackle another of his favourite topics, Islamism. In the past it was also a favourite theme for the National Front, now the National Rally, but Marine Le Pen seems to have given up to approach it or approaches it in a moderate way. The two participants to the interview seem to converge in their view on global events, so this seems to be a calm and easy interview. Another topic of the interview is the origin of Eric Zemmour, and he insists on his origins: his parents were Jews from Algeria, with French nationality. They immigrated to France during the France-Algeria war. He very much insists on the fact that he was raised according to French values and principles. The importance of this mention is that he grew up with them, he appropriated them and, most of all, he believes in them. This is an opportunity for Zemmour to express the importance he gives to the concept of Nation. Again, a concept very dear to the Right Far, previously, but now a little bit neglected by Marine Le Pen, who did not want to return to the old faults which were reproached to her or to her father. Therefore, the French can trust him, Eric Zemmour, he will never betray his principles and values, which are the same as the ones of the French people. Even if he says that he is some kind of "a Romanized barbarian, a Gallo-Roman", he is very proud of his origin. Being a Gallo-Roman is, indeed, a reason to be proud of and to make disappear all fears of deception. He considers that his family should be proud for its attitude of assimilating French culture and civilization and sincere patriotism. He even prides the French colonization, which is contrary to other opinions, most of them expressed quite recently in several former colonies, both of France and of Great Britain. This is an opportunity to bring again into discussion the concept of Nation saying that nations are "the pinnacle of civilization". His arguments are well chosen, he considers that "there is no democracy outside nations, there is no proximity without nations." He comes back to the topic of globalization, which destroyed these boundaries. He insists on the fact that globalization and all its consequences must be fought against. To underline this position as a patriot, he says that globalization should be fought against to protect French unity and values.

We must say that his words are more explicit and his comments direct to specific topics and to a specific audience. In his discourse, he sometimes shows some hesitation, and this is in order to convince his audience that the interview was not rehearsed, that it was genuine. No one doubted that, given his extensive experience as a journalist and given his fame of a controversial one. After so many years of experience of a political journalist, he could very well face any kind of interview.

4. CONCLUSIONS

This approach to political interview tries to establish the most important components and the real strategies of what is usually called a genre of journalistic writing or broadcasting. The elements involved are to be considered with special attention, due to the specific of television interview. All the components of this media communication have a certain importance in the communication economy. It involves the partners of the communication, the interviewer and the interviewee, the message to be communicated, and the expected results. We also must take into consideration the importance of the interviewer, the importance of the interviewee the timing of the interview and of course, the audience.

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A VIEW OF LIFE, FICTION AND CULTURE WITHIN *THE BALKAN TRILOGY*. A LITERARY AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL PORTRAIT OF OLIVIA MANNING

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Abstract: *An author worth considering, Olivia Manning, is the creator of an exquisite and stunning writing style. This work begins with an overall view of Manning's masterpiece, The Balkan Trilogy, which targets her experience as a British journalist's wife refugee, her husband, and her friends' adventures in a hostile environment at the beginning of World War II in Romania and Greece. Focused on aspects of life, fiction, and culture, this piece of work will relate her vision of the war, reflected on the keen overview of the social situation of the Balkan space in those years, her couple's hardships to adapt to a new society and its different rules make her a keen observer of a polemic world which finds on the border of the Occident and Orient. This paper highlights the author's vision of narrating her drama as a fictional transposed autobiography in a foreign background and displays the importance of culture in the authorial vision as a refugee. The article will conclude with a hint on the autobiographical traits in the context of a culturalized writer.*

Keywords*: community; intercultural context; communication; autobiography; literature*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the broad literary picture of the twentieth century, Olivia Manning, one of the most controversial, skilled, and fascinating British writers, created an original and unique narrative style which is perfectly embodied throughout her works, especially in her masterpiece, *The Balkan Trilogy* (1960).

Literary criticism often settles Manning's literary creations as being biographical and autobiographical; however, beyond the evident description of the self, a refined reader may foresee subtle nuances of fiction deliberately introduced by the author in the three volumes that compose *The Balkan Trilogy*: *The Great Fortune* (1960), *The Spoilt City* (1962), and *Friends and Heroes* (1965).

More profound research into author's life story, which represents an origin and a transposition of a portrait on the later writings, may provide a deeper sense to history, autobiography, and literary fiction.

2. *THE BALKAN TRILOGY*

The Balkan Trilogy might not amaze the reader throughout its dynamism: its narrative thread is relatively logical and straightforward, more typical of a drama movie. Taking place at the eve of the Second World War, due to the tense political situation in Great Britain, a young couple; Harriet and Gut Pringle, are forced to travel to Romania, a country that sets its frontiers and mentality between Occident and Orient. In this hostile background, where society is displayed as immoral and decadent, they need to survive physically and mentally, yet, their marriage is initiated hastily and apparently as a sexual appeal (Deirdre, 2012:62). As part of the British Legation in Bucharest, Harriet and Guy Pringle have a reasonably fast social integration; their young friends form a lively group with Professor Inchcape as the leader. Unfortunately, all of them experienced the bitter taste of the war during a year, especially the vehement political changes (Iron Guard, Armand Călinescu's assassination, King Carol I abdication, the Nazy Occupation), caused the escape to Greece a year after. This place seems much more tolerant and is finally the take off-ramp to their final jump to the Orient.

David Deirdre sharply noticed Olivia Manning's perception of war in his work, *Olivia Manning: A Woman at War* (2012), and this perception comes also as family tradition: her father worked as a navy official. She recalls hard times of war when she unwillingly took part in conflictive actions or backgrounds (Deirdre, 2012:6).

Apart from this, Olivia Manning has never surpassed her inferiority complex and her feelings of deprivation and limitation. She seemed to have suffered due to her parents' continuous fights, and, as a child, her social class inferiority and provincial manners obstructed the expectations to live in a better world. This personal drama did not cease even when Manning achieved considerable success, and a consequence was that, in time, the writer inherited a certain forlorn way of being. The war also targets the psychological infliction caused by her humble social class origin, an endless source of inferiority complex she will manifest all her lifetime (Deirdre, 2012:19-20).

A pained witness to her parents' quarrels, Olivia never overcame her feelings of deprivation and liminality. As a child, she felt shut out from a better world elsewhere by her social inferiority, her pitiful wardrobe, and her provincial manners, and even when she had achieved considerable professional success, spoke in a remarkably polished accent, and was surrounded by a bevy of bright and accomplished friends, she sometimes appeared almost forlorn, according to Victoria Orr-Ewing, the daughter of Olivia's closest friend. (Deirdre, 2012:19-20).

Leading this reason, *The Balkan Trilogy* deals with the war and the ultimate survival as the actual subject. Not its causes, or its purpose, not primarily its horrors and cruelties, but its all-embracing scope, the way it has swallowed up like a flood innumerable lives (Graham, 1980:203). War is the very synonym for destiny; hence, it appears as an obsession that can mark and create a sort of living of her own. As a journalist in London (in real life) and a keen observer of reality, as a young literature teacher's wife in Bucharest (in The Balkan Trilogy), Olivia Manning draws the essential difference between the novelist and the fictional character. The former is that she was already a working writer, whereas the latter (despite her pre-war employment in an art gallery) seems unemployed and possesses an invalid social identity.

3. A VIEW OF CULTURE AND CIVILIZATION WITHIN *THE BALKAN TRILOGY*

The writer evokes the Balkanic space in a Dickensian antithetic description: Bucharest at the beginning of WWII is a place where the Romanian people manifest an unsatisfied appeal for food, which is abundant.

> The heart of the display was a rosy bouquet of roasts, chops, steaks and fillets frilled round with a froth of cauliflowers. Heaped extravagantly about the centre were aubergines as big as melons, baskets of artichokes, small coral carrots, mushrooms, mountain raspberries, apricots, peaches, apples and grapes. On one side there were French cheeses; on the other tins of caviar, grey river fish in powdered ice, and lobsters and crayfish groping in dark waters. The poultry and game lay unsorted on the ground. (Manning 2021, 29).

The smell of garlic persists everywhere, whereas the beggars roam through the streets.

> All the beggars set upon the Pringles. One hid a loaf behind his back to join in the age old cry of: "*mi-e foame, mi-e foame*". They were hemmed in by a stench of sweat, garlic and putrid wounds. (Manning, 2021, 22-23).

Two classes inhabit Olivia Manning's novel: the old, arrogant, snobbish, middle class and the peasants, appearing poor and needy. Nevertheless, there could be another appearance in this social landscape: the remains of an old aristocracy (Princess Teodorescu, Princess Mimi, Princess Lulie, Cici Palu), a class ready to trade their nobility in favour of different favours (money as the most important) (Godeanu, 2005:205-207).

> Hadjimosco's face, that had been agleam with mischeaf, straightened at the sight of Yakimov and assumed an enchanted smile. 'Ah, there you are, *mon cher*.' He pressed Yakimov's arm. 'Allow me to present you to my charming friends, Princess Mimi and Princess Lulie. Surnames do not matter. (Manning 2021, 54).

Besides, Harriet Pringle, Olivia Manning's alter ego, struggles to comprehend the unclear direction her relationship with Guy Pringle (Reggie Smith, his real name) takes. She longs for love in the form of a demonstrated act, while he offers almost all his attention to Sophie, his half-Jew, half-Romanian ex-student in a previous stay in Bucharest, to their mutual friends, Dobson, Clarence, Yakimov and many other characters, along with the novel. His permanent and deliberate involvement in his job as a teacher causes her unbearable frustration and an acute sense of lacking nearness. Harriet sees herself obliged to look company desperately, in some cases a cat, in others chatting to Clarence, one of the members of the British Legation in the capital. She attempts to have an artificial compensatory relationship with him, failing before starting.

> Harriet grew pink, realising she had felt a pitying sympathy for Clarence as she had watched him picking himself up and taking himself so quietly, so unoffendingly, out of the flat. (Manning, 2021:201).

The same intention and result will occur in Athens, this time with an official in the army, Charles Warden: “Charles was as good as forgotten; […]” (Manning, 2021:850). Her wrecked intentions to find sentimental and even suggested refuge in others come from Guy's personality. Guy Pringle is the type of worldwide altruistic man who thrives on helping others, a simple, intelligent, and diplomatic character and precisely these features make him loved for the rest of the world and both loving and hated for his wife. Although later, after twenty years, when she wrote the trilogy, Manning recognized she was using history and autobiography, inspiring herself from the realistic experience and knowledge. The truth is quite different. She proves to be a marvellous creator of her life story, using dramatized terms, fabulations about her family, lovers, professional conflicts and figuring herself as a dramatic character, thus creating a personal style and freedom of writing:

> Biographical exploration sometimes gets complicated, but always in fascinating ways, by Olivia’s tendency to relate her life in literary, often highly dramatized terms: in interviews with friends and journalists, she often figured herself as a literary character who might have stepped out of an Olivia Manning novel. Fashioning fictions more exotic than the tedious contingencies that she felt had shaped her early life, she created a self-freed from the unexciting stuff […].Olivia was also given to a good deal of self-fabulation, about her family, her lovers, and her perceived professional injuries. (Deirdre, 2012:9-10).

In all the twisted living as a foreigner and as a runaway from the colourful world of Bucharest or Athens, Harriet finds it fundamental to stay in contact with the culture in all its forms: war and propaganda movies at the cinema, cocktails with her husband's group, at the university, meeting with artists, different social classes.

> Harriet Pringle, no longer fearing that she and her husband would have to flee at any moment, began to look for a flat, buy clothes and take an interest in the invitations that were arriving now that the university term had started. (Manning, 2021:95).

One of the most emblematic episodes in the novel is the Pringles' visit to the Druckers, a wealthy, cultivated, influential Jewish family. In this ambient, Harriet meets Emanuel Drucker, a banker, and his son, Sasha, who, apart from the intelligent, charismatic, and intellectually superior Guy Pringle, the second cultural landmark for the reader, symbol which demonstrates the author's visible preference towards him. The author centres her narrative lenses at their maximum power and sensitivity: thus, Sasha's portrait seems angelic, with white skin, long pianist fingers, very thin, tall, sensible, and respectful (Manning, 2021:102-103). The physical description supports, in fact, the author's deliberate intention of evincing the moral and emotional purity of the ideal transposed into people. Even so, Olivia Manning utilizes the details to construct an antithesis between the raw and polemic world of day by day and the little moments of delight that life scarcely offers, on the one hand, on the other, she puts in front of reader's eyes the contrasting features that target the Jews and the rest of the world. Sasha Drucker is more explicitly different from his father, showing opposite occupations and ideals.

Furthermore along the entire narrative thread, the writer adorns the main picture with rich and minutious literary and descriptive devices to draw a vast fresco of an Epoque in which the reader receives the power to see, taste, and feel the truth of time, actions, and personal passions. In a novel that seems autobiographical, fiction can make the difference: the realistic elements that compose the narrative panorama, additional elements such as hope, doubt, self-deception, cowardice, disloyalty, and the vision of the inner complete the unique film that opens in the reader's mind and soul:

> Hay pocas dominantes en las que todos ellos coincidan; quizá las dos que mejor mueven los hilos de la historia se engranan en Harriet, siendo compartidas por todos: la incertidumbre y el desamor, dos fuerzas terribles que son capaces de devastar el mundo cuando se entrecruzan. Cuando estas dos fuerzas se mezclan en medio de una guerra, la única opción para sobrevivir. La guerra convierte el desamor en deslealtad y cobardía, los dos sentimientos más destructivos para el ser humano (Sanz Barajas, 2020:352).

Writing about a complex world, creating numerous characters, each displaying complex behavioural characteristics, involves leaning on an expert mind and divine creative gift. At the beginning of the first chapters, Olivia Manning confessed she used the first person, specifically for previously mentioned reasons. Furthermore, while acquiring more experience, she adopted the third person, creating a distant posture regarding the novel and the personal involvement (Sanz Barajas, 2020:352).

> And when asked in by a skeptical interviewer for The Times where she had managed to ferret out so much extraordinary material, she replied crisply that she had experienced it 'mostly at first hand . . . In effect the characters in the books are real . . . all the background comes from my own or my husband's knowledge and experience. (Deirdre, 2012:4).

The type of culture Olivia Manning comes in contact with within her wandering experiences through Europe proves to be decadent, aimless, and confused, the same as the Belic background (imaginary or real) in which she was always involved. In Bucharest or Athens, people organize public events, such as concerts, theatre plays, or lectures. The characters use these acts to release the pressure of war, initiate social relationships, and be in contact, obviously, due to the isolation and fear the war causes in everyone. A mere example of this kind is a scene where Professor Inchcape requires The Pringles invite Professor Pinkrose, a polemic, stern, and shallow character. He misbalances the yet fragile line of the novel (he becomes obsessed with sustaining a famous conference about Coleridge), a concert given by The Iron Guard in the name of the German invader army, where the three attend due to terrible place confusion (they realize it when, instead of Mozart, it was Wagner):

> Guy, eager and short-sighted, had bought the tickets without consulting the boards outside the theatre. This was a German propaganda concert. […] Pinkrose stared at him in acute irritation. He whispered: 'It's no good. I'm going'. […] Guy tried to apologise again but Pinkrose held up his hand. (Manning, 2021:570).

In the eyes of the writer, a great lover of cultural events, Harriet Pringle exposes her permanent need to be part of a group. When Guy organizes a play of Shakespeare, Troilus and Criseyde, she receives a role that she refuses because of the jealousy for Sophie, Guy's former fiancée. However, Harriet enjoys the play from a distance to her manner. Thus, she builds a certain distance between personal aspirations and the authentic fact of reality. The permanent waving between unmotivated conflicts and the desire to have social relationships within the surrounding reality is practically a definitory feature of the main character in The Balkan Trilogy. This tendency breaks the routine of reading and keeps the narrative rhythm alert. Undoubtedly, Olivia Manning reveals her genius by initiating a new stunning style in literature, the one in which she plays both parts, biographer and fabulist, an elegant, incisive, devilish, and psychologically penetrating manner of exposing the historical and literary facts (Foster, 1980:894).

4. CONCLUSIONS

If one should come to analyse her life synchronically and diachronically, it becomes evident that Manning's passion for culture and literature was a lifetime habit; in her early childhood, her mother enjoyed listening and seeing her reading from her compositions. She was a fervent visitor of Portsmouth public library, and later, her favourite peers were Stevie Smith, William Gehardie, and Francis King, all famous writers (Andrés Oliver, 2018). Moreover, she maintained this habit throughout her life, especially travelling around Europe and Africa.

Nevertheless, in this novel, culture does not necessarily mean only intellectual culture. From the very beginning, Harriet meets the lowest and purest Romanian culture, the folk depicted under the shape of a raw exoticism. Olivia Manning meets it during her sole wonderings through Bucharest or occasionally when she visits Predeal. In this context, the image of the bothering beggars and the harsh peasants mark her awareness and sense of sensibility. This contradictory archaic and modern world, the train and the views are reversed one by one, whereas the connection between inclusion and exclusion becomes a sine qua non motif for the entire trilogy:

> The 'civilized' space and the wild space of the new territory, the train and the landscape, respectively, are thus juxtaposed, while their relation of mutual isolation and exclusion is symbolic for the whole approach that is to be used in the rest of the book. The method Manning chose to render the novelty of this 'edge of Europe' less threatening is that of connecting it to known elements of the familiar world the Pringles belonged to — the West, but also to their accepted version of exoticism — a romanticized Orient with its age-long accepted characteristics: "its eccentricity, its backwardness, its silent indifference, its feminine penetrability, its supine malleability". (Godeanu 2005, 202).

This unfortunate pendulation in time and space makes the author and her ego experience a profound ruefulness of being an involuntary part of the war, no matter where she lives or does. In addition, she imagines an original way of surviving the war's horrors, a completely different approach than her male writers. While they portray the female excitement that energizes sexuality and see the war as paralysis and pollution, women writers focus on the excitement and the freedom of the war (Gilbert, 1983:438). It is precisely Olivia Manning's case: she deploys a talent in using the detail as the purest version of reality. Sometimes, her descriptions are tolerant, like in Florica's case, the famous singer in Bucharest, the Romanian minister Ionescu's mistress (Manning, 2021:35). Other times, she has a morbid predilection of characterizing the disfiguring ugliness in individuals and living spaces (Yakimov, Romanian gypsies/beggars), a tendency she acquired since she was a child in Laburnum Grove and recalled her mother, a fastidious figure, and her father, Commander Manning, a lively character.

Eventually, as the present study has analysed, Olivia Manning's power of example mingled with the genius of creation, and a sophisticated or somewhat controversial character must be providential in Olivia Manning's life and writings. The literary universe marked her existence thoroughly and irreversibly at such a point that she took the practice of writing as a personal religion. Although huge success was never a recognized fact for her permanent dedication (she did not gain any important award), her extraordinary captivating literary style received positive criticism along the 20th century and settled as a brand in universal literature. The Balkan Trilogy reveals a sublime touch of a culturalized woman writer and explores, at the same time, the vast territories of the human soul and mind in front of the most perilous face of the universe: destiny.

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A HISTORICAL AND PSYCHO-SOCIO-POLITICAL ANALYSIS CONCERNING THE EVOLUTION OF POLITICAL CORRECTNESS IN NORTH AMERICA BETWEEN THE 1960's AND 1980's

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Abstract: *This article focuses upon the evolution of political correctness between the 1960's and 1980's from a socio-psychological point of view. In time, the socio-psychological vision, through scientific experiments carried out both in the laboratory and on the field, has also dealt with themes inherent to inter-group relations and prejudice. In the article The field of socio-psychological study will be defined and various studies regarding groups, prejudice and the real possibility of their being applied on a large scale and not only to small groups in a laboratory will be illustrated briefly. Through the previously mentioned studies will analyze the emergence and evolution of political correctness. In the second part of article will concern focused regarding the North American racial integration policies which were introduced by advocates of political correctness in relation to those policies brought in by less extreme liberal groups. The latter, owing to the philosophy of their laws inherent to social policy followed the modus operandi suggested by social science. The conclusion will regard whether those social policies inherent to ethnic integration which were introduced according to the theory of political correctness have achieved better results than those proposed by less extreme liberal groups.*

Keywords*: American Creed; Black Planters; Contact Theory; New Left; Political correctness*

1. INTRODUCTION

As a specific field of reference, social psychology investigates the connection between the psychic world and the social world. The interaction between the individual and other group members refers both to the affective sphere, family, and friends, and to the working sphere or to that sphere relative to inter-group interaction (Zamperini, 2006). No group is ever static but always in evolution; due to the conduct of its members a group modifies itself dynamically from within, and at the same time its members modify themselves when assuming the values of their group of belonging (Lewin, 1948). Sherif (1966) noted that there are two constants in the formation of groups: the creation of a hierarchy and the creation of shared norms. Owing to shared norms, whether or not behaviour is to be retained socially acceptable is established by the group (Abrams *et al.*, 2000).

In 1958, W. G. Allport wrote *The Nature of Prejudice* in which he underlined that prejudice is to be considered as a normal cognitive process and not as an abnormal process as some theories of the times postulated: *The Theory of Frustration and Aggression* by Donald and Miller, and Adorno's *Theory of the Authoritarian Personality*. According to Allport, prejudice emerges the moment in which a *Process of Categorization* is used. *Categorization* is a process used by individuals to cope with their reduced capacity to elaborate the heavy flow of information coming from outside, from people, objects and situations, and that information which comes from within generated by emotions. An individual uses strategies to facilitate his ability to give meaning to the large amount of information to which he must give an answer. *Category* corresponds to a cluster of stimuli which share common features; a *generalization.* When a person is solicited to elaborate new requests, that is, *information*, he consults the knowledge already in his possession, that is, *category*, so as to give it meaning (Tajfel *et al.*, 1971). Allport considered *the process of categorization* in the following way:

> The human mind must think with the aid of categories (equivalent of generalization). Once formed, categories are the basis for normal prejudice. We cannot possibly avoid this process. Orderly living depends upon it. (Allport, 1958:171)

According to Allport, people use *category* and prejudice on a daily basis when making decisions. When an individual is in doubt as to the *categorization* of a stimulus, this stimulus may assume either a positive or negative meaning. This is due to the fact that both individuals and groups use their own categories to give meaning to those stimuli most similar to *the new* which must be categorized (Brown,1995). For instance, should an individual or a group have a negative vision of Afro-Americans, it is more likely that they will categorize a person of mixed race either negatively or positively according to whether his features are more *Negroid* or *Caucasian*.

Prejudice manifests itself through stereotyping and with time has taken on a negative value (Mazzara, 1996). This is notwithstanding the fact that prejudice, and so the category of reference, depend upon the information which an individual has in his possession regarding a given concept or group of people (Voci, 2003). In the event of an individual's entering into possession of new information inherent to things or people previously considered as negative, he might reconsider the value he attributed initially. When facing new elements, remodelling a general category into a *sub-category* allows an individual to change his point of view with the exception of when he finds himself in certain scenarios, such as in the case of a struggle for limited resources or the maintenance of dominant status. Thus, to bring about a change of vision, whether positive or negative, an individual always uses a strategy of categorization which manifests itself through stereotyping. Given this, it is not prejudice itself which is negative but the capacity of the individual to construct ever more sub-categories inherent to the information which surrounds him. When directed at groups of people, *the process of categorization* takes the name of *social categorization*[1].(Capozza and Brawn, 2000).

In the chapter entitled "Formation of the Ingroup" in his book *The Nature of Prejudice*, Allport presupposed that ingroup behaviour was "psychologically primary" in the sense that ties and the favouring of ingroup members were antecedent to the development of any attitude shown towards outgroup members (Kenworthy, Turner, Hewstone & Voci 2005; Pettigrew, 1998). Allport identified that positive attitudes towards the ingroup were not necessarily only bound to hostile attitudes towards the outgroup due to competition for material resources, as sustained by Sheriff (1966) in his *Theory of Realistic Contact*, but could be linked to other factors such as the maintenance of superior status over other groups.

According to Allport, when the ingroup feels threatened, it will activate negative prejudice towards the outgroup and this prejudice may be expressed through the following behaviour: (1) Anti-locution prejudice; talking ill of the outgroup; (2) Avoidance; keeping a distance from members of the disliked group even perhaps at the cost of considerable inconvenience; (3) Discrimination; making detrimental distinctions of an active sort, not employing outgroup members in some areas of work, refusing to rent out cars and apartments to them; (4) Physical attack; violence or semi-violence; (5) Extermination; lynching progrom.

The *Contact Theory* was first postulated in the 1950's. This theory studies the effects of contact between groups which are different in terms of: status, ethnicity, educational level and gender in reference to the lessening of the prejudice held by differing groups one towards the other. There are many studies regarding *The Contact Theory* which provide proof both in favour and against that inter-group contact can be effective in the attenuation of prejudice (Sheriff 1966, Admir1969, Brewer 1988, Brown and Capozza 2000, Hustone and Brow, 2005). In 2006, the empirical validity of the *Contact Theory* was unequivocally highlighted by the meta-analysis of Pettigrew and Tropp who examined 515 studies for a total of 250,494 participants from 38 different nations.

In 1954, Allport defined *Contact Theory*. This theory identified four fundamental elements through which diverse groups might relate to one another both positively and efficiently: positive and pleasant interaction, similar status, possibility of prior consciousness and institutional support (Robert, 2000). In the United States between the 1960's and 1970's, *Contact Theory* had an application effect which aimed to control and reduce the forms of racism which hindered the recognition of civil rights (de Carvalho, 1993).

In 1954, during the *Brown vs Topeka Board of Education Case*, The United States Supreme Court accepted the requests from Brown. The ruling in favour of Brown ended racial segregation in American schools. Allport was also highly impressed by the fact that a clear reference was made in the

[1] The concept of social categorization would be readdressed and furthered by Tajfel in the 1970's in his Theory of Social Identity and later, by his pupil Thurner in his Theory of the Self. These two theories would then be readdressed by other academics such as Hustone and Brown. For ulterior information one can consult Capozza, D., Brown R. (2000) Social Identy Process, Sage, London

ruling to the results of the social sciences (Cheney, 2011).

2. POLITICAL CORRECTNESS

One difficulty with the debate regarding *Political Correctness* is that there is little agreement as to what the expression actually means. Here are two definitions of *Political Correctness* to show the differing and animated visions underlying debate on the subject. It is widely believed that the term *Political Correctness* was first used by Lenin following the Russian Revolution and by Mao Tse-tung during the Cultural Revolution in China[2]. Lenin hypothesized that the orthodoxy of an individual's behaviour towards *the Stat*e, that is, *the Party*, should correspond to the dicta given by *the Stat*e to its citizens. Thus, *political correctness* described the behaviour of a citizen who followed the rules of *the Stat*e in every area of society (Ellis, 2002:409). As a member of the *Chinese Communist Party* from the early 1920's, Mao Tse-tung adopted a form of *Communism*, later known as *Maoism,* which drew upon both *Marxism* and *Leninism.* This vision of *Socialism* was operationalized, just as in Russia under Lenin, by means of the creation of *Party Officers* and the formation of citizens who were needed for the modernization of China; "*correct attitudes and beliefs*" (Lin, 1991, p.57) corresponded to what *the State* required of its citizens.

At the end of the 1960's, the New Left emerged as a counter-culture. This movement expressed itself through cultural and political rebellion against the socio-political values which *capitalist America* had hitherto upheld. C. Wright Mills, considered one of the most eminent New Left theorists, addressed the concept of *Utopia* in his 1960 article "Letter of the New Left":

> New Left, what needs to be analysed is the structure of institutions, the foundations of policies. In this sense, both in its criticism and in its proposals, our work is necessarily structural and so, for us, just now. (Mills, 1960:3)

The New Left were contrary to *Capitalism* based on *Liberalism* and the bureaucracy of *Communism*. The New Left's aim was to change socio-cultural values by means of both violent and non-violent methods (Kristhol, 2005).

As a theoretical framework, the New Left adopted the Frankfurt School model. This model was a combination of Marxist-style analysis and Freudian psychoanalysis which was later to be known as *Critical Theory* (Deutscher & Lafont, 2017). This theory consisted largely of destructive criticism towards the principal components of Western culture:

> Christianity, capitalism, authority, the family, patriarchy, hierarchy, morality, tradition, sexual restraint, loyalty, patriotism, nationalism, heredity, ethnocentrism, convention and conservatism. (Sutton, 2008:16).

As far as the struggle for civil rights is concerned, the New Left adopted the thinking of Fanon, Du Bois, Malcolm X, Asante and Diope. Between the 1960's and the 1980's, the still ongoing struggles of the New Left were centred upon human rights: freedom of speech, equality for men and women and, over the last few years, the acknowledgement of LGBT rights (Stein, 2015). This focus entailed criticism of *the Establishment* in a merely theoretical context, that is, without considering either feasibility or the resources available to satisfy requests which were made. New Left thinking was based upon what was regarded as *right* or *wrong* and once that something was deemed *right*, it had to be applied since it was morally correct, that is, *politically correct*, to do so. The New Left's ideas were unequivocal and not dialectically questionable. In an attempt to denigrate New Left philosophy, it was the conservatives to call this way of thinking *Political Correctness* as they believed that the New Left operated only in accordance with their own ideology (Moller, 2016).

Following their ideals of *Political Correctness,* since the 1960's, the New Left has operated in various fields: linguistics, history, sociology, pedagogy, psychology, political science and urban planning. In Western Society today, at least at a formal level *Political Correctness* has remodelled the norms of socially acceptable behaviour both at an interpersonal and inter-group level (Dzenis, 2020).

A definition of *Political Correctness* poses many problems given that socially acceptable norms are those which follow New Left thinking and clash ideologically with the thinking of Liberals and Conservative Democrats and this has triggered what is known as *The Cultural War* (Hunter, 1991). This term refers to the struggle for the affirmation of the

[2] However, Wilson (1995) traced the earliest origins of the expression *Political Correctness* as far back as 1793 to a Supreme Court case in the United States, but at that time, it was used in the literal sense as a political process that was not in the correct form For ulterior information one can consult (Wilson, J. K. (1995). The myth of political correctness: The conservative attack on higher education. Durham: Duke University Press.

New Left's political vision versus the conservative vision inherent to beliefs, values and social practice.

3. CIVIL RIGHTS AND POLITICAL CORRECTNESS

The civil rights issue entered the North American political agenda a few years prior to the outbreak of the American Civil War (1861-1865) with the debate in favour of the abolition of slavery in all states (Ranney, 2006). One of the earliest analyses regarding the condition of Afro-Americans was the study published by Gunnar Myrdal[3] in his book *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*. Written in 1944, this book made an accurate analysis of the socio-economic and psycho-social situation in which Afro-Americans were living in the United States (Kinball, 1944). Myrdal (1948:197) paid attention to the plight of Afro-Americans seeing it as a moral issue which concerned aspects inherent to a group's basic values and he made particular reference to the concept of *the American Creed*:

> I believe in the United States of America as a government of the people, by the people, for the people; […] established upon those principles of freedom, equality, justice, and humanity for which American patriots sacrificed their lives and fortunes.

In his analysis, Myrdal underlined how the ideals of *the American Creed* were not extended to the Afro-American population in that Afro-Americans were the target of prejudice, limitations regarding access to employment, education and the right to vote. Myrdal believed that education and work were the two fundamental elements in the Afro-American struggle for emancipation. In 1948, Myrdal wrote:

> For the Negro masses, the absence for several years of mass unemployment in America must have given them some real chances; for all to get employment and earn incomes; for an increasing proportion of Negro workers to enter the better-paid trades and to acquire also, in time, the training necessary for keeping those jobs and even advancing in them. (Myrdal, 1948:197)

Myrdal verified that it was the Afro-Americans themselves who were the most trusting of *the American Creed;* they believed that emancipation could be achieved through Constitutional Dictate. Myrdal supported the non-violent struggle for the affirmation of black minorities advocated by Martin Luther King, the then leader of *The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)*. The fact that King was an ardent supporter of *the American Creed* allowed him to forge relationships with Institutional Establishments so that his cause might be legitimized through Constitutional Dictate (Craig, 1996).

King's strategy for the acknowledgement of civil rights for Afro-Americans succeeded in merging the moral ideals of *the American Creed* at the level of Nation with positive practical effects and this favoured the battle for equal rights and duties in a nation where a distinction between *Black* and *White* should have no place (Kennedy, 1989).

During the 1960's, the New Left, as champions of political correctness, regarded the American Civil Rights issue differently (Lichtenstein N., Flacks R. (2015). The 1960's witnessed the formation of radical New Left groups fighting for the self-determination of Afro-Americans and these groups requested the Government to introduce equal rights immediately (Breines, 1988). The led to human rights being a much-debated topic in those years. At the end of the 1960's, American society began to question all those values upon which its society was based, that is, *White Anglo-Saxon Protestantism* (Hosman, 1997).

From the mid 1960's, civil rights groups other than the NAACP began to appear. These new groups considered non-violent resistance as something formal yet insubstantial (Mammarella, 1984). For this reason, these groups recognized that New Left ideas combined with a more radical and violent approach constituted the most effective way to acquire rights (Williams, 2015). One of the most widely-known radical groups of the period was the Black Panther Party (BPP) which, in 1967, published its *Ten-Point Program*, the first point of which included the following statement: "We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our Black Community." Underlining their constitutional right to freedom, the BPP would have to accept all other aspects of the Constitution (Abron, 1986). Since the BPP regarded the Black Community as being distinct from other communities in American society, implied the non-recognition of the Constitution and hence, an antagonistic approach towards the State (Heynen, 2009). Following the declamation of their *Ten-Point Program*, the BPP began to carry out armed patrols in the San Francisco Bay area (Boykoff & Gies,

[3]Myrdal (1898-1987) was an academic and a politician. He was a member of the Swedish Social Democratic Party and held various governmental positions. In 1950, he was one of the signaturies of "The Race Question" drawn up by UNESCO and in 1974, sharing the prize with Friedrich von Haye, he won the Nobel for Economics.

2010). These patrols were introduced to defend the BPP themselves from the Police who the BPP looked upon as being "representative of a government from which one had to protect oneself, even using arms." (Benvenuti, 2016)

4. CONCLUSIONS

Evaluating their policies from a scientific psycho-social angle and not from an ideological point of view, one can see that the Afro-American racial integration policies adopted by Martin Luther King and the BPP involved the use of different strategies. King's strategy for the acknowledgement of civil rights for Afro-Americans succeeded in merging the moral ideals of *the American Creed* at the level of Nation with positive practical effects and this favoured the battle for equal rights and duties in a nation where a distinction between *Black* and *White* should have no place (Johnson L. B, 1964).

This idea of a *Single Nation* offered the vision that the *Black Minority Group*, that is, the outgroup, did not constitute an obstacle in the achievement of a more prestigious status for the Nation. This allowed for the beginning of a restructuration of the Afro-American category by means of a process of sub-categorization. This also called a halt to a large proportion of the white population's stereotyping of Afro-Americans and the beginning of their looking upon the Afro-American population as a potential resource. This was also facilitated by the attention given by Federal and Governmental Institutions. Owing to his policy, King was able to achieve three out of the four points of Allport's *Contact Theory*: positive and pleasant interaction, possibility of prior consciousness and institutional support.

The BPP's strategy for the recognition of civil rights for Afro-Americans was based upon the differentiation between the black ingroup and the white outgroup. The BBP did not regard established institutions as a means through which they could achieve their ends; they did not acknowledge the norms of the *American People*, the group to which they belonged, and this bolstered the stereotyping of Afro-American sub-culture. Initially, the BPP's *Zandov* vision gained the support of both the elite and the poor Afro-American population. After only a few years, however, approval began to decline. Differently, King's strategy which gained public approval more slowly proved more effective in the struggle for the acquisition of civil rights for Afro-Americans.

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MASS MEDIA IN POST-1990 ROMANIA'S NATIONAL MINORITY LANGUAGES: FROM MEANS OF COMMUNICATIONS TO LEVER OF INFLUENCE

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Abstract: *A major right that national minorities in Romania acquired after the Revolution of 1989 was the freedom of speech. With the establishment of representative organizations of ethnic communities, the first publications in the native language appeared. Subsequently, most of them were transformed into bilingual publications, so that they were accessible to the majority population. The role of the media in the native language was initially to promote the languages of national minorities among the communities and to strengthen the community around this primary element of identity. However, there were also ethnic communities which, due to the very close relations with the country of origin, generated the appearance of satellite communities, formed by citizens of the respective countries established in Romania after 1990. They in turn organized themselves into non-governmental entities, with various objects of activity. However, they also paid special attention to the native language press, so that in turn they set up a series of mass media, the latter targeting only the language-speaking population of that language, which are written exclusively in native language. This article examines the publications set up by the representative organizations of ethnic Turks and Tatars in Romania, respectively the Turkish Democratic Union in Romania and the Democratic Union of Turkish-Muslim Tatars in Romania, in the mirror of the mass media set up and supported by Turkish citizens established after 1990 in Romania, aiming to identify the specific characteristics of each category of publications. Although apparently each of them has its own target audience, in reality the publications set up by Turkish citizens settled in Romania after 1990 address not only their own organizations and citizens, but also address issues related to the life and work of historical communities of Turks and Tatars. from our country. From a methodological point of view, the case study will be used to create the article, using the content analysis technique. The conclusions of the article will highlight the role of the two categories of publications in the daily life of communities, the influence of the messages sent, the importance given by the communities to each of the two categories of publications, the common elements and those that differentiate them.*

Keywords: *ethnic communities; national minorities; mass media; Turks; Tatars*

1. INTRODUCTION

The revolution of December 1989 represented for the national minorities in Romania a redefinition from the point of view of identity (Cupcea, 2018; Bănescu, 2019; Bănescu & Ciornea, 2019). The main gain, freedom, quickly left its mark on the daily life of the ethnic communities that have set up organizations to officially represent them, including in the Romanian Parliament.

The most numerous communities in Dobrogea were and still are Turkish and Tatar. According to the 2011 census, in Constanța and Tulcea counties there were 22,500 ethnic Turks out of a total of 27,698 declared at the national level and 19,720 Tartars out of a total of 20,282 declared at the national level. In the first census of the population conducted after December 1989, that of 1992, the figures did not differ much. At the national level, 29,832 citizens had declared themselves of Turkish ethnicity, of which 26,685 in Constanța and Tulcea counties, and 24,596 citizens had declared ethnic Tartars, of which 24,185 were registered in Constanța and Tulcea counties (RPL, 2011). In this context, the national leadership structures of the two communities were established in Constanța, most of the activity taking place in this region.

2. TURKISH AND TATAR MEDIA

Focused on cultural activities, the life of the Romanian ethnic communities after 1989, gravitated mostly around the representative organizations: the Turkish Democratic Union in Romania and the Turkish-Muslim Tatar Democratic Union in Romania. According to the statutes of the two organizations, their purpose is to preserve and promote identity values, in terms of ethnicity, culture, language and religion.

The two statutes also included, since the establishment of the organizations, the publishing of magazines/ newspapers in the mother tongue, the press being thus considered an important lever in the identity process. Thus, in 1990, the first issue of the publication *Karadeniz* (Black Sea) was published by the Democratic Union of Turkish-Muslim Tatars in Romania, and five years later, in 1995, the first issue of the *Hakses* (The Authentic Voice) magazine appeared, published by the Turkish Democratic Union of Romania, as magazines to express the identity (Cupcea, 2017). Both publications originally appeared as a black and white newspaper. Turkish and Tatar writers, as well as young people who were to be introduced to the secrets of the press, were also found in the editorial teams that laid the foundations of the two publications. From the very beginning, the two publications appeared in bilingual format, so that access to newspaper information was facilitated by those members of the Turkish and Tatar communities who did not have a good command of the mother tongues and the majority population. This was the first signal of the opening of the representative organizations for the Turkish and Tatar communities in Dobrogea to the majority population and to the members of the other ethnic communities. The publications, both registered at the ISSN National Center, are now in public libraries, being an official source of information about the two ethnic communities.

From a structural point of view, both Karadeniz and Hakses had, from the outset, in addition to information of general interest and interviews with community figures, permanent headings and even thematic pages: “Women's page” and “Children's page” in the Tatar community's *Karadeniz* magazine, or the page dedicated to religion or traditional cuisine section from *Hakses* magazine. With a sporadic appearance, we also mention the appearance of supplements of the two publications, named “Çaș” (The Young Man) and “Kadınlar Dünyası” (Women's Page), of the publication *Karadeniz* of the Democratic Union of Turkish-Muslim Tatars in Romania, and “Genç nesil” (Young Generation), supplement of the publication *Hakses* of the Turkish Democratic Union in Romania.

The information that can be found in the two publications since their appearance and until now refers primarily to the activity of the two organizations and the activity of their deputies. Then we find information on activities related to the two unions, respectively events whose themes are included in object of activity of the representative organizations of Turks and Tatars in Romania. Also, another category gives information about the collaboration with the Embassy of the Republic of Turkey in Bucharest and the Consulate General of the Republic of Turkey in Constanța. A constant presence at the activities of the two organizations, Turkish diplomats can be found especially in the publication *Hakses* with extensive interviews or messages on the occasion of various holidays. Regarding the publication of the Tatar community, we can talk about two periods. Here, too, we met until 2012 a constant presence and large spaces allocated to the activity and messages of Turkish diplomats accredited in Romania. After 2012, however, a greater share of articles on Crimean Tatars and the Tatar diaspora, as well as international relations on the situation of Tatars around the world, can be seen. It should also be noted that the specific feature of the publication *Karadeniz*, whose writing changes from July 2016 in *Qaradeñĭz* (spelling specific to the Crimean Tatar language), is the fact that since its inception, in the pages of the publication we find both articles in Tatar and Romanian, as well as in Turkish, this being a confirmation of the closer relations with the Republic of Turkey, the Tartars being also recognized as members of the family of nations of the Turkish world. Also as a particularity of the publication *Karadeniz*, we mention the generous spaces allocated to Tatar writers. In the pages of the magazine are constantly found fragments of both the literary creations of established writers of the community and the creations of young writers. The role of the magazine is thus to support literary activity and to encourage creations in the mother tongue. On the other hand, in the magazine of the Turkish Democratic Union in Romania we can see that the extensive articles are those dedicated to political analysis, especially the Romanian - Turkish bilateral relations, these being written mostly in Romanian.

Although in the pages of both publications are found in each issue articles in the mother tongue, it can be seen, however, that writings in Romanian have the largest share.

3. THE TURKISH BUSINESS COMMUNITY AND A NEW CATEGORY OF PRESS

Also after 1990, a new community began to be formed in Romania. This time it was about Turkish citizens, businessmen, who settled in our country, many of them applying for obtaining Romanian citizenship. We are talking about a completely different community from the two historical communities of Turks and Tatars in Dobrogea, but which still have one thing in common, especially with the ethnic Turks in Romania: culture and mother tongue. From the beginning, their interest in the area of the Turkish and Tatar ethnic communities can be seen. As can be seen from the articles in *Karadeniz* and *Hakses*, we note, first of all, the constant presence of Turkish businessmen in the activities organized by the two unions. Also, in the activities organized by the Turkish business associations can be seen the participation of the Turkish and Tatar unions that ensure the artistic program, so the relations between ethnic Turks and Tatars in Dobrogea and Turkish businessmen established in Romania are strengthened in particular in terms of the cultural compound (Constantin *et al.*, 2008).

The need for representation in the public space and communication was felt in the new more and more numerous community, so that the first publications appeared. In this article we will pay attention to two publications, which are, moreover, the most long-lived ones: the newspaper *Hayat*, published in Romania in 2001, and the newspaper *Balkan* – the Romanian edition of a publication that already appeared in Turkey, which was launched in our country in 2005. Both publications written exclusively in Turkish also appeared out of the need to ensure the best possible information of the Turkish business community for which access to the Romanian press was difficult due to lack of knowledge of the Romanian language. Most publications contain mostly economic information articles. However, information about the Romanian political life, about the politicians, about the Romanian-Turkish relations, but also the articles regarding the activity of the Turkish diplomats accredited in Romania have a great weight. The activity of the Turkish and Tatar communities in Romania is very little present in the pages of the two Turkish language publications. Most of the time, the articles dedicated to the two communities focus on the two deputies who represent the unions in the Romanian Parliament. A special aspect was the period 2016-2020, when the Democratic Union of Turkish-Muslim Tatars in Romania had no representative in the Romanian Parliament and at the community level there were some dissensions, these being the subject of articles in the publications *Hayat* and *Balkan*, the largest space allocated being in the last publication. The cultural component is present in the pages of publications only in specific cases and are related either to important holidays marked at the headquarters of the Embassy of the Republic of Turkey in Romania, or to the participation of artists from Turkey in events organized in Romania. Although there is an increasing interaction with the two ethnic communities in our country, do notice a well-defined configuration of areas of interest.

The target audience of the publications *Hayat* and *Balkan* were, from the very beginning, the Turkish-speaking community in Romania. However, between 2011 and 2013, the publication *Hayat* also appeared in Romanian, with the largest share still being the articles in Turkish. The articles translated into Romanian were mainly from the field of tourism in Turkey and from that of Turkish investments in Romania. Cultural articles also played an important role. Unlike the publications of the two unions, which are financed from public funds allocated each year to national minority organizations in Romania, the publications *Hayat* and *Balkan* are financially supported by advertising contracts, which can be seen in the presence of many advertising materials, advertorial articles and advertisements, both in print and online editions.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The publications that have been analyzed in this article can be considered niche publications. The main objective of the four publications is to inform the communities they address to, and in the case of the publications of the Turkish and Tatar unions we are also talking about the role of preserving and promoting identity values. In the case of *Karadeniz* and *Hakses* we also see a concern to strengthen the communities around the organizations that represent them. Although with a very large share of articles in Romanian, the two publications reflect the activity of the Turkish and Tatar unions, areas of interest less targeted by the general public. They come as a forum for the two communities, a space for debate and a way of promotion.

On the other hand, the publications *Hayat* and *Balkan*, although written in Turkish and intended for the Turkish-speaking community in Romania, are not only a way of communication for their target audience, but also a connecting factor with the economic, social and political life of our country.

From the analysis we could see that the two categories of communities, of ethnic Turks and Tatars and of Turkish businessmen, are organized separately and interfere only in specific situations. Their publications each have their own target audience and own messages that require a clear delimitation of areas of interest.

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