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# CHALLENGES OF CONFLICT AND COOPERATION IN SUB-SAHARIAN AFRICA

## THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF THE SECESSIONIST CRISIS IN CAMEROON

Roxana Mateş\*

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### Abstract

*The article aims to illustrate the evolution and international reactions to the current secessionist crisis in Cameroon. Firstly, the anglophone crisis is presented as the result of a minority's identification with a colonially inherited identity, as well as the consequence of the regime's authoritarian style and constant exclusion of the anglophone elites from the structure of power. Secondly, the article concentrates on analyzing the reactions of various organizations, institutions and states regarding the Cameroonian secessionist conflict. However, although there are certain minor measures which have been taken against Cameroon, the actions of the international community are still below the expectations of the anglophones, who are the ones directly affected by both the government's and separatists' use of extreme violence. In addition, the international support for the fight against terrorism in the region is perceived with suspicion due to the double security crisis the country is facing.*

**Keywords:** secessionist crisis, authoritarianism, BIR, internationalization, terrorism

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## Analysis of the metamorphosis of Cameroon's anglophone problem

The anglophone problem in Cameroon represents a secessionist claim, constructed on the anglophones' feeling of marginalization in the francophone-dominated post-colonial state. The roots of the conflict can be traced back to the unequal division of the German Kamerun Protectorate between the French and the British after the First World War. After gaining independence, the reunification of the two territories was achieved through the 1961 Foumban constitutional talks, whose result was the establishment of a "sham federation", which was only "safe for appearances."<sup>1</sup> Moreover, in 1972, through the organization of a referendum, the federal structure of the state was abandoned and the United Republic of Cameroon was created. After the 1984 presidential elections, Paul Biya changed the name of the country to simply the Republic of Cameroon,<sup>2</sup> an action which emphasized the president's superiority and control over the constitution, which has also been modified over time in order to ensure Biya's perennial position of power.<sup>3</sup> In addition, among the strategies of Biya to stay at power, there can be ineluctably illustrated the exclusion of the anglophone elites, who were only provided with insignificant jobs within the state. On the other side, the anglophones who were provided with important positions had to prove loyalty and submission to the regime.<sup>4</sup>

Hence, based on the authoritarian regime, on their constant exclusion and on their elites' passivity and duplicity, the anglophone population in Cameroon initiated the 2016 protests, which quickly turned into a genuine conflict. The radicalization of the peaceful movement was possible because of the regime's use of violence against the so-called terrorists. However, although there is a myriad of proofs of the Cameroonian army's numerous abuses against the population and despite

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<sup>1</sup> Piet Konings and Francis B. Nyamnjoh, "Anglophone Secessionist Movements in Cameroon", in L. De Vries et al (eds.), *Secessionism in African Politics*, Palgrave Series in African Borderlands Studies, 2019, p. 65.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph Takougang and Milton Krieger, "African State and Society in the 1990's / Cameroon's political crossroads", Boulder: Westview Press, 1998, p. 50.

<sup>3</sup> Sergiu Mişcoiu, Louis-Marie Kakdeu, "Authoritarian clientelism: the case of the president's 'creatures' in Cameroon", in *Acta Politica*, No. 1, Vol. 56, 2021, pp. 1-29.

<sup>4</sup> Roxana Mateş, "Cameroun : analyse de la littérature sur la crise sécessionniste anglophone", in Simona Jişa, Sergiu Mişcoiu et Modibo Diarra (dir.), *Raconter les politiques conflictuelles en Afrique. Regards croisés*, Paris: Editions du Cerf, 2021, pp. 43-59.

the fact that the measures taken by the government proved to be ineffective and superficial, the international reactions are still considered to be precarious. In the following part of the article, there are illustrated the international implications in the anglophone crisis in Cameroon and how actors such as, France, US, China, UK and Nigeria, particularly approach the evolution of the conflict.

### **The international reactions to the anglophone crisis**

The first and only harmonious international action taken in relation to the anglophone crisis in Cameroon was the United Nations Security Council's informal meeting on May 13, 2019.<sup>5</sup> While China, Russia, France and some other African countries, such as, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia and Côte d'Ivoire, voted against including the anglophone crisis on the agenda of the Security Council, the US voted in favor of such a decision, while the UK abstained. Switzerland is also the only state which has committed to mediate the anglophone crisis in Cameroon,<sup>6</sup> although the population's trust in the neutrality of this actor is reduced due to the long stays of Paul Biya and his family in this European country.

Secondly, the African Union is generally criticized for its lack of involvement and action regarding the development of civil wars on the continent, sometimes taking a longer period than expected in order for it to provide even a "perfunctory statement of acknowledgment or concern".<sup>7</sup> From this regard, the strategy embraced by the African Union when approaching the diverse conflicts from the continent is one defined by incoherence, being limited by the principles of national sovereignty and non-interference.<sup>8</sup> This passivity can also be illustrated by the fact that although the political situations in Cameroon, Burundi, Mozambique and

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<sup>5</sup> "UN: Shine Spotlight on Brutality in Cameroon", *Human Rights Watch*, 13 May 2019, accessed at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/05/13/un-shine-spotlight-brutality-cameroon>, on 30.11.2021.

<sup>6</sup> "Switzerland mediates in Cameroon crisis", 28 June 2019, accessed at: [https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/diplomacy\\_switzerland-mediates-in-cameroon-crisis/45061332](https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/diplomacy_switzerland-mediates-in-cameroon-crisis/45061332), on 30.11.2021.

<sup>7</sup> Chris Olaoluwa Ogunmodede, "When it comes to African crises, the African Union is no solution", *World Politics Review*, 24 November 2021, accessed at: <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/trend-lines/30146/when-it-comes-to-african-crises-the-african-union-is-no-solution>, on 26.11.2021.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*.

Comoros have been tackled by the AU Assembly in 2020, they were not eventually included in the discussion of the African Union Peace and Security Council.<sup>9</sup> One of the reasons for this general silence may be represented by the fact that the AU does not support the separatist struggles, encouraging instead the unity and territorial integrity of the countries.<sup>10</sup> Thus, when the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, visited Cameroon in November 2019, he praised the implementation of the Major National Dialogue and the measures taken by the president Biya,<sup>11</sup> despite the population's general dissatisfaction in relation to the development of the dialogue. At the same time, when the opposition leader Maurice Kamto began protesting against what he considered the fraudulent results of the 2018 presidential elections, Mahamat demanded the political elites in Cameroon to refrain from statements that could "generate tensions".<sup>12</sup> Moreover, when Switzerland proposed the initiative of mediating the conflict in Cameroon, the AU was the last actor supporting the necessity of this action.<sup>13</sup> As a consequence, based on the above-mentioned actions which illustrate more the protection of the current regime in Cameroon, the African Union is ineluctably expected to provide a firmer response to the violent conflict in the country, whose negative consequences outweigh the superficial measures taken by the government.

On the other side, the resolution of the European Parliament from 24 November 2021 on the human rights situation in Cameroon

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<sup>9</sup> Shewit Woldemichael, "The reality of the AU's response to crises", *Institute for Security Studies*, 7 January 2021, accessed at: <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/the-reality-of-the-aus-response-to-crises>, on 26.11.2021.

<sup>10</sup> Cheryl Hendricks and Gabriel Ngah Kiven, "African Union needs a more robust response to conflict in Cameroon", *The Conversation*, 2 March 2020, accessed at: <https://theconversation.com/african-union-needs-a-more-robust-response-to-conflict-in-cameroon-132449>, on 27.11.2021.

<sup>11</sup> "Joint Final Declaration of the Tripartite Visit of the Chairperson of the AU Commission and the Secretaries General of the OIF and the Commonwealth", *African Union*, 28 November 2019, accessed at: <https://au.int/cpauc>, on 27.11.2021.

<sup>12</sup> "Présidentielle au Cameroun : l'Union africaine appelle à la « retenue »", *Jeune Afrique*, 10 October 2018, accessed at: <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/642891/politique/presidentielle-au-cameroun-lunion-africaine-appelle-a-la-retendue/>, on 27.11.2021.

<sup>13</sup> "Cameroon: African Union endorses Swiss mediation to end Anglophone crisis", *Journal du Cameroun*, 29.07.2019, accessed at: <https://www.journalducameroun.com/en/cameroon-african-union-endorses-swiss-mediation-to-end-anglophone-crisis/>, on 27.11.2021.

acknowledges the fact that the radicalization of the initially peaceful protests was possible because of the extreme violence of the state authorities, therefore defining the current secessionist conflict as the result of the government's marginalization of the anglophone regions. The refusal of the president Paul Biya's government to initiate any dialogue with the separatists is also mentioned in the recent resolution. The human rights violations perpetuated by both the government and the secessionists are highly criticized and this situation has led to the death of more than 3000 civilians and of hundreds of members of the security forces. Nevertheless, although the government admitted that it involved in certain attacks, such as the one in Ngarbuh, and promised to establish a commission of inquiry, it eventually failed to provide any further information on these sensitive aspects. In addition to this issue of the government's lack of assumption and responsibility towards its actions, the resolution highlights the general failure of the implementation of the National Dialogue, suggesting the reluctance of the government to accept taking the necessary measures for successfully dealing with the dimension of the crisis.<sup>14</sup> Hence, the resolution of the European Parliament firmly condemns the abuses and attacks perpetuated by the two parties, admitting that the rule of law is definitely not upheld by the state of Cameroon and that the lack of accountability for previous atrocities provokes further violence.

While referring to the responsibility of France towards the present strenuous situation in Cameroon, there needs to be emphasized the fact that the same violence perpetuated by the Biya administration today was also used by the French against the anti-colonial movement in the country, a fact which left indelible marks in the collective Cameroonian memory.<sup>15</sup> Hence, the members and the suspected collaborators of the pro-independence and nationalist party, the Unions of the Populations of Cameroon (UPC), had to deal with a myriad of difficult obstacles, such as, mass arbitrary detentions, torture and extra-judicial killings. The party was considered a communist one and its leaders were eventually killed by the

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<sup>14</sup> Joint Motion for a Resolution, European Parliament, Plenary Sitting, 24 November 2021, accessed at: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RC-9-2021-0553\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RC-9-2021-0553_EN.pdf), on 27.11.2021.

<sup>15</sup> Marc Michel, "Une décolonisation confisquée? Perspectives sur la décolonisation du Cameroun sous tutelle de la France 1955-1960", in *Revue française d'histoire d'outre mer*, vol. 86, no. 324-325, 1999, p. 229.

French troops during the so-called France's "dirty war" in Cameroon.<sup>16</sup> The exclusion of the UPC members enabled France to provide the position of Prime-Minister to Ahmadou Ahidjo, a French loyalist, who subsequently became the president of the future federation created in 1961. Although the military confrontation led to an estimated number of 120 000 casualties, the French administration did not publicly assume any responsibility, a reason why the war has not been still tackled by the international community.<sup>17</sup> It was only in 2015 that the President François Hollande vaguely referred to this common chapter from the history of both countries, during the first visit of a French president in Cameroon since 1999. Within his public statement, he only admitted that there are certain "tragic episodes"<sup>18</sup> which remained imprinted in the collective consciousness of the Cameroonian people, without assuming yet any official responsibility for the role of France in the above-described conflict. However, as long as France had to deal recently with the truth of the genocide in Rwanda and Germany with its atrocities committed in colonial Namibia,<sup>19</sup> there can be felt this current reluctance of further accepting to discuss about other forgotten genocides. As a consequence, one of the factors justifying France's passivity in relation to the current anglophone crisis in Cameroon can be indubitably represented by its extremely repressive movement against the nationalist protesters in the decolonization period, as well as in the '60's and '70's.

Furthermore, France's constant military presence and support for Cameroon highlights the fact that the African country still depends on the French government, trying therefore to diminish at all costs the internal anti-French sentiments, as Emmanuel Macron demanded during a news

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<sup>16</sup> "Survivors tell of France's "dirty war" in Cameroon independence", *France 24*, 28 December 2019, accessed at: <https://www.france24.com/en/20191228-survivors-tell-of-france-s-dirty-war-in-cameroon-independence>, on 28.11.2021.

<sup>17</sup> Roxana Willis, James Angove, Caroline Mbinkar, Joseph McAuley, " 'We remain their slaves' / Voices from the Cameroon conflict", *A Working Paper*, University of Oxford, Faculty of Law, April 2020, p. 72.

<sup>18</sup> "Au Cameroun, François Hollande brise un tabou", *Radio France Internationale*, 3 July 2015, accessed at:

<https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20150703-cameroun-francois-hollande-paul-biya-guerre-upc-lydienne-yen-eyoum>, on 28.11.2021.

<sup>19</sup> Simon Marks, "France and Germany face up to the past in Africa", in *Politico*, 29 May 2021, accessed at: <https://www.politico.eu/article/france-germany-colonial-past-africa-genocide/>, on 28.11.2021.

conference at the NATO summit in Watford, UK, on December 4, 2019.<sup>20</sup> Although the US announced to halt some military assistance to Cameroon based on the human rights violations committed by the security forces, France did not sanction Cameroon in this regard, promising instead to maintain and consolidate its defense cooperation with the African state by promoting the official purpose of fighting against the terrorist Islamist groups in the region.<sup>21</sup> As such, in 2019, France provided to the Far North region in Cameroon an aid of 45 million euros,<sup>22</sup> while it had also previously made a donation of military hardware to the Cameroonian Armed Forces. The donation entailed ten French tactical vehicles and five transport trucks, as well as an all equipped sanitary unit.<sup>23</sup> At the same time, Macron assured its African partner of France's support in relation to the Cameroonian authorities' efforts to protect the paramount principles of cohesion and the stabilization of the situation in a "clear national context".<sup>24</sup> Through this statement, there can be incontestably observed France's unwillingness to approach a more critical position regarding the evolution of the anglophone crisis.

The strong economic connections and cooperation between France and Cameroon can be illustrated through the presence of over 100 subsidiaries of French companies in the African state and approximately

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<sup>20</sup> "Macron tells G5 leaders to address 'anti-French sentiment' for continued military cooperation in Sahel", *France 24*, 4 December 2019, accessed at: <https://www.france24.com/en/20191204-macron-tells-g5-leaders-to-address-anti-french-sentiment-for-continued-military-cooperation-in-sahel>, on 28.11.2021.

<sup>21</sup> John Irish, "France says to continue military cooperation with Cameroon", *Reuters*, 7 February 2019, accessed at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-france-cameroon-idUSKCN1PW1RA>, on 28.11.2021.

<sup>22</sup> "Cameroun : la France accorde une aide de 45 millions d'euros à l'Extrême-Nord touché par Boko Haram", *Jeune Afrique*, 25 October 2019, accessed at: <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/847523/politique/cameroun-la-france-accorde-une-aide-de-45-millions-deuros-a-lextreme-nord-touche-par-boko-haram/>, on 29.11.2021.

<sup>23</sup> Abdur Rahman Alfa Shaban, "France gives Cameroon equipment worth \$700,000 to combat Boko Haram", *Africanews*, 30 November 2016, accessed at: <https://www.africanews.com/2016/11/30/france-gives-cameroon-700000-worth-equipments-to-combat-boko-haram/>, on 29.11.2021.

<sup>24</sup> Meredith Terretta and Melchisedek Chétima, "The US and France backs Cameroon's reign of terror", 8 September 2018, accessed at: <https://africasacountry.com/2018/08/the-us-and-french-backed-reign-of-terror-in-cameroon>, on 28.11.2021.

200 businesses which belong to French nationals.<sup>25</sup> One of the most important corporations that can be mentioned in this specific context is Perenco, an independent Anglo-French oil and gas company, which has operated in Cameroon since 1993.<sup>26</sup> The French significant involvement in this sector, as well as the future investments France plans to develop in Cameroon, suggest France's stringent necessity of contributing to the controlled and artificially imposed peace in the African country.

A recent episode which happened at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic also highlights France's support for the regime in Cameroon. While the dimension of the pandemic was alarmingly evolving, the president Paul Biya had been totally absent from the public space for a period of several months, a situation which fueled the outrage and suspicion of the population. At some point, the main opposition leader, Maurice Kamto, called on Cameroon's legislature to declare a power vacancy in the country.<sup>27</sup> The first public sign Biya made was posting a photo with him and the French ambassador to Cameroon, the last one declaring that he found the Cameroonian president "always on alert".<sup>28</sup> Through this action, supported by the French ambassador, there was intended to justify and legitimate Biya's ability to rule the country, his long silence being considered only "a sign of gravitas".<sup>29</sup>

Regarding the United States approach to the current crisis in Cameroon, one paramount aspect which needs to be illustrated is represented by the US significant support for the BIR, the elite part of the Cameroonian armed forces, directly responsible to Biya. Thus, since 2015, approximately 300 US armed forces members have been deployed to

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<sup>25</sup> "Cameroon – France – Exemplary Development Partners", *All Africa*, 4 June 2021, accessed at: <https://allafrica.com/stories/202106050037.html>, on 28.11.2021.

<sup>26</sup> "Cameroon", accessed at: <https://www.perenco.com/subsidiaries/cameroon>, on 28.11.2021.

<sup>27</sup> Danielle Paquette, "The mystery of Cameroon's unusually absent president: 'Sir, are you alive?'" , *The Washington Post*, 16 April 2020, accessed at: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/cameroon-paul-biya-mystery-coronavirus/2020/04/16/9bdd4172-7ff8-11ea-8de7-9fdff6d5d83e\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/cameroon-paul-biya-mystery-coronavirus/2020/04/16/9bdd4172-7ff8-11ea-8de7-9fdff6d5d83e_story.html), on 29.11.2021.

<sup>28</sup> "Cameroun : Paris agacé par la polémique visant son ambassadeur à Yaoundé", *Jeune Afrique*, 28 April 2020, accessed at: <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/936509/politique/cameroun-paris-agace-par-la-polemique-visant-son-ambassadeur-a-yaounde/>, on 29.11.2021.

<sup>29</sup> "Cameroon President makes first appearance in two months", *Aljazeera*, 20 May 2020, accessed at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/5/20/cameroon-president-makes-first-appearance-in-two-months>, on 29.11.2021.

Cameroon to conduct "airborne intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance operations in the region".<sup>30</sup> The involvement of the US in arming and training this group is justified in the official discourses with the purpose of successfully dealing with terrorism across the Sahel Region. However, although there is clear evidence that the armored vehicles, munitions, small arms, helicopters and surveillance drones which had been initially provided in the fight against Boko Haram were redeployed in the anglophone regions,<sup>31</sup> the US support for combating terrorism in Cameroon still continues.

Moreover, the abuses and human rights violations committed by the BIR even before the beginning of the anglophone crisis were ignored by the USA. According to a 2016 research conducted by Amnesty International, more than 1000 people who were (in many situations, subjectively and unjustifiably) suspected of collaborating with Boko Haram, had to deal with the horrific treatment perpetuated by the BIR members.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, by strengthening the military capacity of a state which uses it in order to abuse the local population, the US support appears to be against the conditionalities imposed by the so-called Leahy Law, which prevents US funded assistance for the force units or individuals who have committed gross violations of human rights.<sup>33</sup>

Nevertheless, there have been certain sanctions which the United States applied to Cameroon, this representing the only situation in which a

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<sup>30</sup> "Letter from the President –War Power Resolution regarding Cameroon", *The White House Office of the Press Secretary*, 14 October 2015, accessed at: <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/10/14/letter-from-president-war-powers-resolution-cameroon>, on 29.11.2021.

<sup>31</sup> Chris W. J. Roberts and Billy Burton, "Cameroon's Government is deceiving the West while diverting foreign aid", *Foreign Policy*, 22 November 2020, accessed at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/11/22/camerouns-government-is-deceiving-the-west-while-diverting-foreign-aid/>, on 29.11.2021.

<sup>32</sup> "Cameroon: More than 1,000 people accused of supporting Boko Haram held in horrific conditions , some tortured to death", *Amnesty International*, 14 July 2016, accessed at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/07/cameroun-conditions-de-detention-effroyables-voire-tortures-a-mort-pour-plus-de-1-000-personnes-accusees-de-soutenir-boko-haram/>, on 29.11.2021.

<sup>33</sup> Daniel R. Mahanty, "The Leahy Law Prohibiting US assistance to human rights abusers: Pulling back the curtain", *Just Security*, 27 June 2017, accessed at: <https://www.justsecurity.org/42578/leahy-law-prohibiting-assistance-human-rights-abusers-pulling-curtain/>, on 29.11.2021.

country tried to actively criticize and take action against the Cameroonian government. Hence, in 2019, the US decided to cut \$17 million in military aid to the government of Biya, while in 2020 the African country was excluded from the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGO).<sup>34</sup> In addition, in June 2021, the US also imposed visa restrictions on individuals believed to support the crisis.<sup>35</sup> However, this measure is considered to be cosmetic inasmuch as the Cameroonian citizens already living in the USA are the ones financially sustaining the secessionists. Therefore, despite the United States' dissatisfaction with the human rights situation in Cameroon, the relations between the two states remain "excellent",<sup>36</sup> as the US ambassador insisted, this aspect questioning the effectiveness of the above-mentioned measures.

In addition to the US considerable support for the BIR, the Israelis are also involved in the training, command and supply of weapons to the Cameroonian elite forces. The close links between Cameroon and Israel have their roots in the 1984 failed coup in the African state, after which the president Biya had to look for new partners to ensure his security.<sup>37</sup> At present, Mayer Heres, a retired Israeli army general, is the head of the Rapid Intervention Battalion, which is composed of over 5 000 individuals.<sup>38</sup> The Israeli interest in Cameroon may be better justified by the

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<sup>34</sup> Ilaria Allegrozzi, "US cuts Cameroon trade privileges over rights abuses", *Human Rights Watch*, 5 November 2019, accessed at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/11/05/us-cuts-cameroon-trade-privileges-over-rights-abuses>, on 29.11.2021.

<sup>35</sup> "United States imposes visa restrictions over Cameroon separatist crisis", *Reuters*, 8 June 2021, accessed at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/united-states-imposes-visa-restrictions-over-cameroon-separatist-crisis-2021-06-07/>, on 29.11.2021.

<sup>36</sup> Edwin Kindzeka Moki, "US ambassador say Cameroon relations good despite aid cut", *AP News*, 7 February 2019, accessed at: <https://apnews.com/article/1b8ed4fbcf2b462c85e3f34087147685>, on 29.11.2021.

<sup>37</sup> Emmanuel Freudenthal and Youri Van der Weide, "Making a killing: Israeli mercenaries in Cameroon", *African Arguments*, 23 June 2020, accessed at: <https://africanarguments.org/2020/06/making-a-killing-israeli-mercenaries-in-cameroon/>, on 30.11.2021.

<sup>38</sup> Georges Dougueli, "Cameroun: Paul Biya sous protection israélienne", *Jeune Afrique*, 19 November 2015, accessed at: <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/mag/276021/politique/cameroun-paul-biya-sous-protection-israelienne/>, on 30.11.2021.

fact that Cameroon is one of the two African countries, along with Eritrea, which do not recognize the State of Palestine.<sup>39</sup>

Considering the anglophone crisis an internal issue, China did not sanction in any form the regime in Cameroon. Conversely, through its considerable loans and debt reliefs, China encouraged the passivity and total negligence of the Cameroonian authorities regarding the respect for the rule of law, but also regarding its continuous credit problems. More specifically, although in 2007 only 12% of Cameroon's gross domestic product was represented by the public debt, in September 2020 the figure had reached over 45% of the country's GDP.<sup>40</sup> According to the International Monetary Fund, Cameroon's total debt is 5.8 trillion Central African CFA francs (\$10 billion), about a third of which is owed to China, its largest creditor. However, China has granted Cameroon, throughout time, the following debt reliefs: in 2001, a debt of \$34 million was wiped out, in 2007, another \$32 million, while in 2010, a sum of \$30 million was also cancelled.<sup>41</sup> In May 2021, China again agreed to cancel Cameroon \$19 million interest-free loan.<sup>42</sup> Eventually, due to Cameroon's clear inability to repay its debts to China, there has been justifiably developed the fear regarding the necessity of ceding temporary ownership of facilities funded by these external creditors.<sup>43</sup>

One of the most important projects China began to develop in Cameroon, in 2011, is represented by the building and financing of a new port in the town of Kribi. As long as the already existing port of Douala had been overworked and filled with sediment, China committed to build the largest deep-water port in Central Africa, which will be connected by

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<sup>39</sup> "Diplomatic Relations", *Permanent Observer Mission of the State of Palestine to the United Nations*, 29 July 2021, accessed at: <https://palestineun.org/about-palestine/diplomatic-relations/>, on 30.11.2021.

<sup>40</sup> R. Maxwell Bone, "China's role in Cameroon's Risk of Debt Distress", *The Diplomat*, 16 June 2021, accessed at: <https://thediplomat.com/2021/06/chinas-role-in-camerouns-risk-of-debt-distress/>, on 30.11.2021.

<sup>41</sup> Jenni Marsh, "China just quietly wrote off a chunk of Cameroon's debt. Why the secrecy?", *CNN*, 5 February 2019, accessed at: <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/02/04/china/cameroon-china-debt-relief-intl/index.html>, on 30.11.2021.

<sup>42</sup> Kevin Acker, Deborah Brautigam, and Yinxuan Wang, "Summary: Tracking global Chinese debt relief in the COVID-19 era", *China-Africa Research Initiative*, Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, Version 1.5, July 2021, accessed at: <http://www.sais-cari.org/debt-relief>, on 30.11.2021.

<sup>43</sup> Bone, "China's role in Cameroon's Risk of Debt Distress".

railways to iron ore mines from the east of Cameroon. During the initial construction period, the village of Lolabe was destroyed, a situation which caused the deep dissatisfaction of the 400 residents.<sup>44</sup> At the same time, more than half of the jobs available in building the port were provided to the Chinese workers, who were accused by the Cameroonians of discriminatory treatment.<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, China's attention to the respect of human rights in Cameroon proved insignificant, its main actions being concentrated on the objective of extracting valuable natural resources and establishing itself as the main economic and military power in the region.

Although connected by a colonial past, the relations between Cameroon and the United Kingdom were defined by a certain absence of interest from the former colonial power. Thus, although there are significant British enterprises which exist in Cameroon, they are definitely outnumbered by the French and Chinese companies. Nevertheless, the British financial interests in Cameroon could be eventually and particularly reflected by the fact that in 2018, the London based oil and gas company, New Age, and the Cameroon government signed a deal for the development of the Etinde gas field using a floating gas facility.<sup>46</sup> As long as Etinde is situated in the anglophone region in Cameroon, the secessionists consider the deal as being void inasmuch as it does not have the consent of the Ambazonia government, representing a theft of the anglophones' resources.<sup>47</sup> Based on the recent economic interests and the need of enhancing its trade relationships especially after the withdrawal from the European Union, Great Britain did also not embrace an active critical position towards the conflict.

Last but not least, Nigeria's approach to the current conflict in Cameroon is also worth mentioning firstly because of the fact that both countries have had to deal with secessionist feelings and attempts. During the Nigerian Civil War between 1967 and 1970, Cameroon was definitely

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>45</sup> "China invests in phase II of Kribi port", *Economist Intelligence*, 21 April 2017, accessed at: <https://country.eiu.com/article.aspx?articleid=1025342686&Country=Cameroon&topic=Economy&subtopic=Forecast&subsubtopic=Policy+trends>, on 30.11.2021.

<sup>46</sup> "Report: New Age pens deal to develop Etinde field using FLNG unit (Cameroon)", *Offshore Energy*, 12 June 2018, accessed at: <https://www.offshore-energy.biz/report-new-age-pens-deal-to-develop-etinde-field-using-flng-unit-cameroon/>, on 30.11.2021.

<sup>47</sup> Willis, Angove, Mbinkar, McAuley, " 'We remain their slaves' - Voices from the Cameroon Conflict", p. 63.

against the secessionist tendency of the Biafrans, Ahidjo having done any possible effort to support the Nigerian government's objective of unity. Therefore, Nigeria is also, at present, supporting the Yaounde government, a fact which has been incontestably proved by the arrest and extradition to Cameroon of more anglophone separatists.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, the mutual support and close cooperation between the two countries are also based on the efforts for achieving the common objective of significantly diminishing the Boko Haram threat in the region.

## Conclusion

The article has illustrated that the current secessionist crisis in Cameroon represents, on the one side, the result of the authoritarian post-colonial government's mismanagement of the colonially inherited identities. In addition, the radical evolution of the conflict has also been highlighted as the consequence of the international community's reluctance to approach a more active criticism regarding what has been portrayed as one of the world's most neglected crises.

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<sup>48</sup> Christian Pagbe Musah, "Cameroon-Nigeria relations in the face of secessionist tendencies in both countries", *International Journal of Liberal Arts and Social Science*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2021, pp. 16-17.

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## MIRAGE DÉMOCRATIQUE ET IMMOBILISME POLITIQUE EN AFRIQUE SUBSAHARIENNE : LE CAS DU CAMEROUN

### DEMOCRATIC MIRAGE AND POLITICAL IMMOBILISM IN SUB- SAHARAN AFRICA: THE CASE OF CAMEROON

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#### Abstract

*The objective of this work is to understand the strategies that have been put in place by the Biya regime in order to lock the controls of the central power in Cameroon. To achieve this, we used a qualitative investigative method, combining techniques of documentary research, direct observation and interviews. It appears that to stay in power in perpetuity, Paul Biya relied on a form of "belly politics" based on clientelism and electoral donation on the one hand. On the other hand, he knew how to put in place an authoritarian democratization allowing him to manipulate the constitution to represent himself for life, to obtain the triumph of the ballot boxes thanks to the electoral tampering with which his "Creatures" are responsible, and to ensure the control of social and political order through efficient use of coercive and repressive resources. All of these make up what we have chosen to call the democratic mirage.*

**Keywords:** clientelism, Creature, political immobility, democratic mirage.

#### Introduction

Les racines de la démocratie s'étendent dans l'organisation politique née à Athènes au V<sup>e</sup> siècle avant J.C, fondée sur le gouvernement

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direct du peuple. L'historien Thucydide parlait de ce régime politique comme étant celui à l'intérieur duquel les décisions émanent de la majorité et non pas de la minorité. C'est le gouvernement du peuple (le plus grand nombre) par le peuple (la majorité). Ces dernières années ont été les témoins de l'expansion rapide et englobante de la démocratie. Celle-ci s'est progressivement imposée comme le modèle de gouvernement le plus compatible au progrès et au développement durable des sociétés modernes. Ainsi, après les années 1975, s'est opérée la « troisième vague de démocratisation », marquée par une importante transition démocratique un peu partout dans le monde. Il faudra attendre les années 1990 pour assister à une entrée historique des pays de l'Afrique Subsaharienne dans cette galaxie politique.<sup>1</sup> Ce qui entraîna des transformations importantes en termes d'alternance au pouvoir, de respect des libertés individuelles, d'égalité de droit des citoyens dans certains de ces pays dont le Bénin restera le modèle. De telles transitions ont été rendues possibles grâce à l'instauration du multipartisme qui marqua non seulement la fin des régimes autoritaires bâtis sur le système de parti unique, mais également l'organisation d'élections libres à la faveur de la compétition politique. Par ailleurs, la consolidation véritable du modèle démocratique va se heurter aux résistances et persistance de l'autoritarisme au sein de ces certains de pays : tel semble bien être le cas du Cameroun.

En effet, depuis bientôt quatre décennies, l'espoir d'une transition démocratique du pouvoir semble s'être évaporé au sein de cette société dominée par « *l'un des systèmes de gouvernement parmi les plus opaques, les plus centralisés et les plus prosaïques de l'Afrique postcoloniale* ». <sup>2</sup> L'illusion voilée d'une promesse de démocratisation faite par le président Biya en début de son règne dans les années 1982, fait finalement irruption au moment où sa ferme volonté de confiscation du pouvoir a fini par susciter la répulsion populaire tant de l'intérieur que de l'extérieur du pays ; une répulsion populaire qui se traduit d'avantage par la multiplication d'appels

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<sup>1</sup> V., entre autres, Simona Jişa, Sergiu Mişcoiu et Buata Malela (dir.), *Littérature et politique en Afrique francophone. Approche transdisciplinaire*, Paris : Editions du Cerf, 2018, pp. 7-9 et 345-347.

<sup>2</sup> Achille Mbembe, « Au Cameroun, le crépuscule d'une dictature à huis clos », *Le monde Afrique*, [https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2017/10/09/au-cameroun-le-crepuscule-d-une-dictature-a-huis-clos\\_5198501\\_3212.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2017/10/09/au-cameroun-le-crepuscule-d-une-dictature-a-huis-clos_5198501_3212.html), 2017.

à la démission du pouvoir et d'expression de soif du changement total du gouvernement.

L'élection présidentielle du 7 octobre 2018 restera gravée dans les annales de l'histoire camerounaise avec le marqueur des plus belles occasions d'extériorisation du ras-le-bol populaire à l'égard du régime Biya, le RDPC (Rassemblement Démocratique du Peuple Camerounais). Non seulement, elle a été le témoin de l'émergence d'une nouvelle figure de l'opposition qui a su mettre en mal les « technologies » classiques de domination de cette machine politique, mais elle a également stimulé une forte mobilisation des populations (semblable à celle des années 1991) autour d'un objectif commun : en découdre avec le régime de Biya par tous les moyens. Cette expression de « soif du changement politique » au Cameroun a été largement véhiculée à travers un langage commun à tous les citoyens le long des rues : « *Paul Biya doit partir, Paul Biya must go* ». Par la même occasion, s'est formée une atmosphère de tension et de violence entre forces de l'ordre et manifestants. La peur de « disparaître » pour faire « triompher » le changement n'a pas sommé la bravoure de la plupart des camerounais, surtout ceux de la diaspora, qui ne voient plus que dans la violence l'unique espoir de venir à bout d'une dictature perpétuelle.

L'épicentre des tensions par excellence contre le régime au pouvoir est sans aucun doute le Nord-Ouest et le Sud-ouest (le NOSO ou la partie anglophone) du Cameroun, qui est, depuis 2016, le théâtre d'une guerre séparatiste connue sous l'appellation de *crise anglophone*, et dont le bilan humain à ce jour se chiffre en milliers de morts et de déplacés internes et externes. Cette crise a saisi l'opportunité exhibée par le scrutin de 2018 pour retentir, en rendant quasi impossible le déroulement de l'élection dans la plupart des localités des régions anglophones. Eu égard aux importantes pertes en vies humaines, la crise anglophone n'est pas passée inaperçue aux yeux de la communauté internationale qui s'adjure depuis lors au débat sur l'état de droit et la démocratie au Cameroun, faisant ainsi croître la pression sur le gouvernement de Paul Biya.

A la faveur des figures politiques nouvelles telles que le Professeur Maurice Kamto du Mouvement pour la Renaissance du Cameroun (MRC), Cabral Libii<sup>3</sup> du parti UNIVERS, et Joshua Osih du Social Démocratic Front

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<sup>3</sup> Cabral Libii est actuellement député à l'Assemblée Nationale du Cameroun et Président du parti PCRN (Parti Camerounais pour la Réconciliation Nationale).

(SDF), pour ne citer que ces trois exemples, l'opposition aura quant à subit un dynamisme qui laissait transparaître l'assurance de l'émergence d'une nouvelle page de l'histoire politique du Cameroun. Ces leaders de l'opposition ont tenté avec succès, d'une manière ou d'une autre, de captiver l'attention des populations par la fourniture de programmes politiques pertinents, respectivement au sein de leurs différents partis politiques – tout en mobilisant des stratégies innovantes en termes de contrôle électoral et de résistance nationale visant à déjouer la traditionnelle supercherie électorale du parti au pouvoir.

Entre soulèvement populaire, dynamisme des partis politiques d'opposition, crise sécessionniste et pression internationale, les chances d'une alternance n'auraient jamais été aussi grandes au Cameroun.<sup>4</sup> Toutefois, malgré la consistante mobilisation de tous ces ingrédients électoraux à la faveur de l'opposition, Paul Biya, âgé de 87 ans, est parvenu, à se faire réélire avec dextérité pour un septième mandat consécutif ; déjouant ainsi tous les espoirs et pronostics transitionnistes du pouvoir avec un score de 71,09 % du suffrage contre 14,40 % pour Maurice Kamto, 6,32 % pour Cabral Libii et 3,35 % pour Joshua Osih.

L'opposition camerounaise se retrouve alors désarmée face à la superpuissance du parti RDPC, car toutes tentatives d'une révolte par les urnes semblent, comme le souligne Achille Mbembe, vouées à l'échec. Le système politique camerounais révèle ainsi l'image d'un mirage démocratique, dans la mesure où il donne une apparence démocratique, sans pour autant l'être de l'intérieur. La dictature en place contrôle et instrumentalise l'arme de la démocratie, surtout l'argument électoral, pour légitimer sa position et conforter sa domination sur les partis de l'opposition. Ce qui invite à se demander : comment le mirage démocratique participe-t-il à la reproduction perpétuelle de l'hégémonie politique du régime Biya au Cameroun ? Notre argument est que : afin de se maintenir au pouvoir à vie, le président Biya a mis en place un *mirage démocratique* afin de dissimuler son autoritarisme, et obtenir la légitimité de son pouvoir sur la scène nationale et internationale. Il procède ainsi par une démocratisation autoritaire et une politique du ventre. Pour réaliser ce

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<sup>4</sup> Roxana Mateş, "Cameroun : analyse de la littérature sur la crise sécessionniste anglophone", in Simona Jişa, Sergiu Mişcoiu et Modibo Diarra (dir.), *Raconter les politiques conflictuelles en Afrique. Regards croisés*, Paris : Editions du Cerf, 2021, pp. 43-59

travail, nous procédons par une recherche qualitative qui s'appuie sur la recherche documentaire, les entretiens et l'observation de la scène politique camerounaise.

### **Définir le mirage démocratique**

Tenter de définir un concept « nouveau », c'est accepter, dans un premier temps, d'assumer le risque initial de l'abstraction, et s'efforcer par la suite, à proposer des illustrations qui visent à attester de sa validité sous différentes déclinaisons, afin de rendre intelligible un phénomène précis.

L'enclenchement de la troisième vague de démocratisation selon l'expression de Samuel Huntington a été, sous l'effet de l'instauration du pluralisme politique, de l'Etat de droit et de l'organisation d'élections libres et justes<sup>5</sup>, le vecteur de l'alternance et du changement de leadership politique dans la plupart des pays africains. La remarquable mobilisation des systèmes de gouvernement vers la démocratie libérale et sa généralisation avait alimenté l'espoir d'une entrée irréversible du continent africain dans la « galaxie des pays démocratiques »,<sup>6</sup> jusqu'à ce que l'épreuve de la réalité vienne dévoiler, une décennie après leur avènement, le caractère « fondationnel »,<sup>7</sup> réversible et même régressif de l'évolution de ces transitions démocratiques. Ces dernières prenaient désormais l'allure d'un « mirage démocratique ». Nous entendons par là un régime politique qui présente de loin l'image d'une démocratie véritable, et dont son observation en profondeur révèle tout autre chose : de l'autoritarisme, de la dictature. Cela s'assimile à ce qu'Owona Nguini qualifie dans le contexte camerounais de « *démocratisation-janus* » ;<sup>8</sup> « une démocratisation biface qui oscille entre pluralisme et autoritarisme ». Ce concept permet dans le cadre de ce travail, de rendre intelligible le phénomène du recul démocratique,

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<sup>5</sup> Voir Sergiu Miscoiu (dir.), *Recul démocratique et néo-présidentialisme en Afrique centrale et occidentale*. Edité par Institutul European, 2015, p. 11

<sup>6</sup> Babacar Guèye, « La démocratie en Afrique : succès et résistances », *Le Seuil « Pouvoir »*, 2009/2 n° 129, pp. 5-26

<sup>7</sup> Selon l'expression de Guillermo O'Donnell et Philippe Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule. Tentative Conclusion about Uncertain Democracies*, Baltimore : Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986. Cité par Babacar Guèye, *Op.Cit.*

<sup>8</sup> Eric Mathias Owona Nguini « La gouverne politique et institutionnelle du Cameroun à l'épreuve de la démocratie pluraliste : de la démocratisation-janus », *Enjeux*, n° 52, 2017, pp. 10-17.

voire de son déficit dans les pays de l’Afrique subsaharienne, en cherchant dans les profondeurs des phénomènes sociaux « cachés », les explications au système politique « apparent ». Car comme le souligne Jean Ziegler:<sup>9</sup> « tout système culturel, toute idéologie, toute religion – masque, cache, ment et révèle tout à la fois. Ce qui est le plus caché est le plus véridique. Ce qui est montré est à expliquer par ce qui ne se montre pas ».

Le mirage démocratique se veut le travestissement de la dictature dans les principes démocratiques. Car, de la même manière qu’un mirage provoque une déformation de l’image observée en donnant l’impression que l’objet regardé se situe à un endroit autre que son emplacement réel, bon nombre de chefs d’Etats de l’Afrique subsaharienne comme au Cameroun, au Gabon, en RDC, au Tchad, en Guinée Equatoriale ont entre autres, entrepris d’une manière ou d’une autre, sous l’effet de la pression internationale et des mouvements nationalistes qui ont donné matière à la libéralisation politique dans les années 1990 par le truchement des conférences nationales – d’instrumentaliser la démocratie en vue de légitimer leur emprise sur le pouvoir. Ainsi, bien que le parti unique semble s’être effrité, le divorce entre démocratisation et autoritarisme n’a pas été effectif au Cameroun. Bien au contraire, l’autoritarisme de l’ancien parti unique s’est revêtu du manteau de la démocratie pour mieux s’exprimer à l’écart des regards critiques et autres discours internationaux, et afin de résister au vent violent de la troisième vague de démocratisation qui soufflait sur les anciennes dictatures générées par le colonialisme.

Pour Karl Popper, la démocratie renvoie à la capacité ou la possibilité qu’incarne le peuple en vue d’exercer un contrôle institutionnel sur les dirigeants. Dans son célèbre ouvrage *La société ouverte et ses ennemis*, il voit dans le pouvoir qu’a le peuple d’apprécier les résultats des actions menées par les dirigeants, ainsi que sa capacité de s’en débarrasser sans procéder par la violence ou la révolution, c’est-à-dire l’effusion du sang, la caractéristique principale de la démocratie. Et donc, si cette capacité d’évincement par le peuple de ceux à qui il a confié des responsabilités collectives, représente si bien le moyen par excellence d’éviter les abus de pouvoir,<sup>10</sup> le peuple semble être dépossédé de cette souveraineté dans la plupart des pays de l’Afrique subsaharienne. Les récents coups d’Etat en

<sup>9</sup> Jean Ziegler, *Retournez les fusils ! Manuel de sociologie d’opposition*, Seuil, 1980.

<sup>10</sup> Karl Popper, *La société ouverte et ses ennemis*, Ed. Seuil, Paris, tome 1, 1979, pp. 101-107.

Guinée, au Mali, les récurrents conflits politiques en Côte d'Ivoire, au Tchad, en RCA, au Gabon, l'émergence des révoltes populaires au Cameroun, au Burkina-Faso, au Soudan, en RDC entre autres, attestent non seulement de la fragilisation des institutions, mais surtout de l'illusion du « pouvoir par le peuple et pour le peuple ».<sup>11</sup> Dans cette optique, les élections dites libres et transparentes ne constituent qu'un poison politique dont la plupart de ces régimes au pouvoir servent à l'opposition en vue de provoquer leur suicide dans les urnes. Ce sont des cordes électorales dont parle Jean-François Bayart, qui leur sont offertes pour se pendre. En réalité, tous les moyens sont mis en œuvre en amont dans le dessein de garantir la victoire des dirigeants au pouvoir avant même la tenue du scrutin qui, pour sa part, ne constitue qu'une formalité : en Afrique « on n'organise pas les élections pour les perdre, mais pour la gagner » comme le disait l'ex-président du Gabon, Omar Bongo.

L'illusion du principe de liberté d'expression et d'égalité de droit s'est avérée à plusieurs égards dans nombre de ces Etats dits « démocratiques ». Un simple regard jeté sur la réalité sociale des pays subsahariens en général et au Cameroun en particulier permet de faire un tel constat : comment parler de liberté d'expression et/ou de manifestation lorsque des citoyens sont détenus pour avoir participé à des rassemblements politiques ou pour avoir exprimé leur désaccord vis-à-vis du régime au pouvoir à travers une marche pacifique ! Lorsqu'un citoyen est contraint de se fondre en larmes, demandant pardon au Chef de l'Etat après avoir dénoncé la mal gouvernance dans son pays – au risque de ne pas « voir ses enfants grandir » !<sup>12</sup> Lorsque l'autorisation de manifestation est refusée à répétition aux partis de l'opposition ! Etc. L'indépendance de la justice a pour sa part, depuis longtemps, été un slogan pour diluer le contrôle total de tous les pouvoirs par un seul individu. Elle ne saurait d'ailleurs être autrement lorsque la nomination des juges dépendra du décret du Chef de l'Etat, afin d'assurer l'instrumentalisation de la justice. Tous ces éléments constituent entre autres le voile qui empêche la

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<sup>11</sup> V. Sergiu Mișcoiu, *Au pouvoir par le Peuple! Le populisme saisi par la théorie du discours*, Paris : l'Harmattan, 2012.

<sup>12</sup> Cette phrase : « je veux voir mes enfants grandir », prononcée par l'artiste musicien Longue Longue en larmes, présentant des excuses au président Biya, est devenue virale sur les réseaux sociaux en 2019.

perception réelle des faits dans une dictature déguisée. Jean-Bruno Tagne<sup>13</sup> permet à cet effet de remarquer que depuis l'indépendance de ce pays, les élections n'ont jamais représenté une compétition loyale qui garantit l'égalité de chance aux différents partis politiques. Au contraire, elles ont été depuis le temps d'Ahidjo à celui de Biya, un simple outil permettant de légitimer un pouvoir contrôlé par un système déterminé à se maintenir : « le gouvernement perpétuel ». D'où les multiples contestations des résultats électoraux au Cameroun.

L'évidence est plus que claire : les efforts du gouvernement perpétuel de Biya n'ont été consentis depuis environ quatre décennies que pour la consolidation de son *statu quo* politique ; ce que Fred Eboko et Patrick Awondo qualifient d'« Etat stationnaire ».<sup>14</sup> Il faut y voir « *une organisation politique qui produit un système d'allégeances clientélistes dont l'objectif central est la conservation du pouvoir, [qui...] met à profit les ressources du pays et celles des partenaires internationaux, mobilise les élites administratives pour nourrir son dessein de perpétuation du pouvoir* ». <sup>15</sup> Cette conception renvoie à une sorte de conquête de légitimité d'une entreprise de reproduction politique par la mobilisation de tous les moyens efficaces au sens machiavélique. Le mirage démocratique est dans cette optique une technique de confiscation du pouvoir par la mise en place d'un semblant de démocratie : une cosmétique politique.

Dans les lignes qui suivent, nous tenterons de saisir le rôle du mirage démocratique dans la reproduction perpétuelle du pouvoir du président Biya à travers quatre stratégies politiques principales à savoir : la politique du ventre, l'usage de la répression, le tripatouillage constitutionnel et électoral.

## **I. Du recours à la « politique du ventre » : entre clientélisme et don électoral**

Le concept de « politique du ventre » n'est certes pas récent, mais la pertinence qu'elle offre dans l'analyse des sociétés postcoloniales africaines

<sup>13</sup> Jean Bruno Tagne, *Accordée avec fraude. De Ahidjo à Biya, comment sortir du cycle des élections contestées*. Ed. du Sahel, 2019.

<sup>14</sup> Fred Eboko et Patrick Awondo : « L'Etat stationnaire, entre le chaos et la renaissance », "Politique africaine", 2018/2 n° 150, pp. 5-27

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 7

nous invite sans relâche à la revisiter afin de mieux situer l'évolution des recherches concernant ces pays. Elle renvoie, en effet, à un phénomène social total tel que l'entendait Marcel Mauss.<sup>16</sup> Elle consiste en la redistribution, par le haut, des prébendes et des divers avantages du pouvoir. Cette redistribution met en jeu un ensemble de pratiques socio-politiques et économiques, caractéristiques des luttes acharnées menées par des individus (en l'occurrence une minorité), en vue d'occuper des espaces symboliques qui leur élargissent les possibilités de satisfaction matérielle. Une telle pratique s'observe généralement dans les sociétés de l'Afrique subsaharienne, où l'Etat présente l'aspect d'un « Rhizome ».<sup>17</sup>

De la sorte, la priorité pour ceux qui ont en charge l'exercice du pouvoir, comme au Cameroun, semble ne pas être l'amélioration des conditions de vie des populations, mais l'accumulation primitive et personnelle des richesses et de gloire. En ce sens, le terme « manger » désigne, dans le contexte camerounais, des envies et des pratiques autres qu'alimentaires : il traduit avant tout « *les activités d'accumulation, qui ouvrent la voie à l'ascension sociale et qui permettent aux détenteurs de la position de pouvoir de « se mettre debout »* ». <sup>18</sup> C'est d'ailleurs ce que traduisent les expressions « on lui a enlevé la bouffe » ou « on lui a donné la bouffe », lorsque par exemple un décret présidentiel vient relever un ministre, directeur, préfet ou cadre administratif de ses fonctions ; ou dans le cas contraire, lorsqu'il s'agit d'une nomination à un poste d'envergure. De la même manière, parce que l'octroi du crédit par les banques est le plus souvent conditionné par des considérations politiques, on parle au Cameroun de « *kel di* », ce qui signifie en langue locale « aller manger ». Cette expression de la « politique du ventre » se traduit au Nigéria par « le partage du gâteau national » ; en Afrique orientale, la fonction se nomme *kula*, c'est-à-dire « manger » en swahili – tandis que les Congolais parlent de « deuxième bureau ».<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Jean-François Bayart, *L'Etat en Afrique. La politique du ventre*, Paris : Fayard, 1989, Nouvelle édition 2006, p. 12

<sup>17</sup> Pour Bayart, l'Etat postcolonial fonctionne comme un rhizome de réseaux personnels qui assure la centralisation politique et la gouvernementalité par l'appui des liens de parenté, de cooptation, d'alliance et d'amitié.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 12

<sup>19</sup> Jean-François Bayart, *Op. Cit.*, p. 12

Entant que stratégie de reproduction politique, la « politique du ventre » se veut une sorte de contrat qui se traduit de la manière suivante dans les interactions entre le chef de l'Etat et ses partisans : « *battez-vous pour ma réélection, et vous serez nommés ou maintenus à des postes de responsabilité élevés* ». Nous observons cette stratégie à travers les grilles d'analyse clientélistes en général, et du « don électoral » particulier, comme formes d'expression modernes de la politique du ventre.

### **I.1- Formation des réseaux clientélistes et contrôle total de l'ordre politique et social**

De façon générale, le clientélisme politique est le fait pour un individu de s'appuyer sur des clientèles pour élargir son pouvoir politique. La clientèle renvoie ici à l'ensemble des partisans et/ou électeurs d'un parti ou d'un homme politique. Cette pratique est assez courante, et reste profondément ancrée dans le jeu politique au Cameroun. Son rôle dans la monopolisation et la pérennisation de l'hégémonie politique du régime Biya est non négligeable. Depuis l'instauration du système de parti unique, cette technique a d'abord servi de serrure au président Ahidjo pour verrouiller les commandes du pouvoir central, avant de devenir une arme centrale dans l'implémentation du projet de « gouvernement perpétuel » de Paul Biya depuis son accession à la magistrature suprême et suite à la restitution du multipartisme dans les années 1990. Cela n'est rendu possible que grâce à un groupuscule de partisans qui assurent l'annexion systématique et le contrôle stratégique de la quasi-totalité du territoire national : ces personnalités constituent ce qu'on qualifie couramment de « Créature de Paul Biya ».

En effet, la notion de « Créature », largement employée dans l'espace publique camerounais résulte d'un discours prononcé en 2011 par le ministre camerounais de l'Enseignement supérieur, Jacque Fame Ndong, actuel Ministre d'Etat du même département ministériel. Ce dernier laissait alors entendre : « Nous sommes tous les créatures ou les créations du Président Paul Biya ; c'est lui qui a droit à la gloire de tout ce que nous faisons. Aucun de nous n'est important, nous ne sommes plus que ses serviteurs ou, mieux encore, ses esclaves ». Cette déclaration rapidement devenue virale amène à appréhender la « Créature » comme toute élite politico-administrative dont : « les ministres, secrétaires d'Etat et

assimilés, les directeurs généraux et directeurs centraux, les commissaires spéciaux, les hauts représentants de l'Etat et délégués permanents du parti, les gestionnaires du budget et plusieurs autres sous-catégories de ces personnes », qui doit sa carrière à un décret présidentiel.<sup>20</sup> Toutes ces figures auxquelles s'ajoutent les autorités traditionnelles et religieuses<sup>21</sup> participent à la consolidation de « l'Etat stationnaire ».

L'édifice clientéliste du régime Biya s'est également bâti sur les soubassements d'un certain nombre d'intellectuels parmi les plus éminents du milieu académique dont les prises de positions sur des grandes questions de société ont un impact considérable au milieu des masses. Ils défendent ainsi l'idéologie *rdpciste*, s'opposent à toute sorte d'opinions contradictoires qui démasqueraient les défaillances de l'action publique. Ces intellectuels issus de plusieurs confessions disciplinaires, se transforment généralement, pour la plupart, en « intellectuels organiques », instrumentalisent le discours scientifique pour promouvoir l'image du parti au pouvoir. Ils ont en charge l'analyse de l'évolution des contextes socio-économiques et politiques du pays. Ils proposent, de façon permanente des méthodes appropriées au gouvernement central afin d'éviter tout risque de soulèvement populaire et contourner les crises diverses qui traversent le pays depuis des années. La cooptation et l'entretien de leur « ventre » par le régime en place les poussent ainsi à aller à l'encontre des principes de l'objectivité et de l'honnêteté intellectuelle ; à opérer un changement brusque de paradigme dans leur prise de position sur des questions sensibles.<sup>22</sup> Généralement, ces intellectuels organiques sont réputés, en début de carrière, pour leurs critiques à l'égard système de gouvernance du RDPC. Mais en fin de carrière ou presque, ils finissent par rejoindre le camp de la dictature dont ils furent le symbole de la dénonciation. Car en réalité, toutes les critiques intellectuelles se sont avérées impuissantes face à la machine politique du gouvernement perpétuel de Paul Biya. Deux possibilités se présentent les intellectuels

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<sup>20</sup> Sergiu Mișcoiu, Louis-Marie Kakdeu, "Authoritarian clientelism: the case of the president's 'creatures' in Cameroon", in *Acta Politica*, No. 1, Vol. 56, 2021, pp. 1-29.

<sup>21</sup> En 2018, le Conseil National des Chef Traditionnels du Cameroun a manifesté son soutien indéfectible à Paul Biya à travers leur appel à la candidature de celui-ci, <https://www.crtv.cm/2018/07/presidentielle-2018-paul-biya-le-choix-des-chefs-traditionnels/>

<sup>22</sup> Le cas de l'éternel débat sur la forme de l'Etat, le problème anglophone, la corruption, etc.

camerounais : soit ils acceptent de se rallier au projet du régime au pouvoir, en se garantissant, par la même occasion, les chances d'une ascension dans le milieu administratif et académique. Soit ils s'opposent à l'idéologie du régime Biya, adoptent une posture critique des exactions de son pouvoir, anéantissant ainsi toute chance d'une ascension administrative qui soit proportionnelle à leur mérite.

Certains partis politiques de l'opposition ne se font pas rares au sein de cette clientèle politique du RDPC. En effet, la plupart d'opposants camerounais n'aspirent vraisemblablement pas à accéder au pouvoir. Leur vocation est au contraire de disperser l'électorat afin d'éviter une réelle mobilisation populaire et collective qui entraînerait la transition démocratique du pouvoir. Ils constituent ce que l'on qualifie de « l'opposition du ventre ». Une opposition qui ne cherche qu'à prélever sa part dans le partage du « gâteau national ». En réalité, après plusieurs tentatives stériles de renversement du régime au pouvoir, ces opposants sont persuadés de l'incapacité de l'opposition ; ce qui les amène à devenir alliés du RDPC de Paul Biya. Dès lors, ils mènent des campagnes électorales à la faveur de ce dernier, mobilisent leurs membres et électeurs pour sa cause, et lui garantissent une écrasante victoire aux différentes élections présidentielles. Celle de 2018 a permis d'observer un tel phénomène à travers la coalition de 20 partis politiques (« *Collectif des 20* »), qui ont déclaré leur soutien total à Paul Biya. Car selon eux, il réunit « les qualités et les atouts nécessaires pour maintenir la paix ».<sup>23</sup> Il faut pour autant remarquer que la plupart des leaders de ces partis associés du RDPC sont soit membres du gouvernement,<sup>24</sup> soit d'anciens redoutables détracteurs du pouvoir qui se sont reconvertis en défenseurs de Paul Biya.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Présidentielle 2018, 20 partis politiques soutiennent Paul Biya, <https://www.crtv.cm/2018/07/presidentielle-2018-20-partis-politiques-soutiennent-paul-biya/>

<sup>24</sup> Cas de l'actuel Ministre de l'Emploi et de la Formation Professionnelle, Issa TCHIROMA Bakary, président du parti FSNC (Front pour le Salut National du Cameroun) ; de BELLO Bouba Maigari, Ministre d'Etat, Ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs, président du parti UNDP (Union Nationale pour la Démocratie et le Progrès), etc.

<sup>25</sup> On peut citer le cas de Jean de Dieu Momo, actuel Ministre Délégué auprès du Ministère de la Justice Garde des Sceaux. Ce dernier qui traitait le président Biya par le passé « d'assassin », celui qui tue le Cameroun, est devenu le défenseur numéro 1 du chef de l'Etat à l'occasion de l'élection de 2018. Ce qui lui valut cette nomination.

Le type de clientélisme établi dans les régimes semi-autoritaires africains comme le Cameroun est assez particulier et joue un triple rôle grâce au recours étendu à l'influence des « Créature », dans le but d'assurer la réélection du président en exercice : il s'agit de « (1) mobiliser les réseaux locaux et régionaux pour les élections, (2) d'assurer la discipline du parti et leur allégeance aux décisions du président, et (3) d'agir en tant que négociateurs entre le centre de commandement politique qui distribue les ressources et les acteurs locaux fournissant directement le soutien électoral ». <sup>26</sup>

Les membres du réseau clientéliste du RDPC sont de ce fait chargés d'établir, d'étendre et de maintenir l'influence et le rayonnement du parti et de son leader Paul Biya auprès du grand public. Pour ce faire, ils ventent et inventent les mérites de ce dernier lors des campagnes électorales durant lesquelles ils s'offrent en spectacle : se livrent en spectacles au rythme des chants et des pas de danse pour, célébrant la gloire et la haute intelligence de leur leader politique. Ils mobilisent les ressources de l'Etat (véhicules, fonds publics, l'armée, etc.) au service du RDPC. Ce qui donne souvent lieu à des occasions de détournements massifs des deniers publics qui, toutefois, sont exempts de poursuites judiciaires, car ne se font que pour le plus grand honneur du « prince ».

Sur les médias et durant leurs descentes sur le terrain, ces « Créature » formulent des farces, ornées de belles paroles et de beaux discours, parfois en déphasage avec la réalité des faits, pour endormir le peuple et obtenir leur soutien électoral. Par la même occasion, ils brandissent toute figure politique de l'opposition d'envergure comme étant une menace pour la stabilité et la cohésion sociale du pays : « Paul Biya est la seule personnalité capable de conduire le Cameroun à son émergence », telle est l'opinion la plus répandue et défendue par ces clientèles à qui l'on doit la pratique du culte de la personnalité du chef de l'Etat à savoir : « le Biyaïsme ».

Les « Biyaïstes » se doivent d'assurer le triomphe politique du régime au pouvoir, à tout prix et même à tous les prix ; le résultat électoral obtenu dans la circonscription électorale de chaque responsable politique étant déterminant pour la conservation de son portefeuille ministériel ou pour sa promotion à un poste plus élevé. En d'autres termes, la

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<sup>26</sup> Sergiu Miscoiu et Louis-Marie Kakdeu, *Op. Cit.*, p.5

pérennisation du président Biya à la tête de l'Etat camerounais est une opportunité pour les « *gérontocrates* »<sup>27</sup> qui l'entourent de préserver leur « *mangement* »<sup>28</sup> et de défier les lois de la retraite. Car « la chèvre broute là où elle est attachée ». C'est là le véritable sens de ce que François Bayart appelle la « politique du ventre ».

## 1.2- « Don électoral » et manipulation des électeurs

Dans le prolongement du clientélisme, un autre mode opératoire de la politique du ventre dans l'implémentation de la stratégie de perpétuation du régime du RDPC réside dans ce qu'Antoine Socpa qualifie de « *don électoral* ».<sup>29</sup> Dans une étude comparative sur l'organisation de sociétés mélanésiennes, Marcel Mauss<sup>30</sup> définit le don/contre-don comme « *une prestation obligeant mutuellement donneur et receveur et qui, de fait, les unit par une forme de contrat social* ». Parce qu'en effet, le « don » stimule un « contre don ». Le don électoral peut être appréhendé de ce fait comme un contrat fondateur des liens sociaux entre membres d'un parti politique et un groupe d'électeurs. Aussi, constate-t-on qu'au Cameroun « *la pratique du « don électoral » est devenue une réalité massive des développements politiques et qu'elle gouverne désormais les rapports entre marchands politiques et clientèle électorale, voire ethnique* ».<sup>31</sup>

L'observation des processus électoraux au Cameroun révèle une pratique de corruption assez particulière : celle de l'offre de cadeaux par les responsables des partis politiques aux populations (potentiels électeurs) venues assister aux meetings politiques afin de les amener à voter pour le parti au pouvoir. Le don électoral revêt deux formes dans le jeu politique camerounais : les « pressions alimentaires » (corruption matérielle) et les « pressions ethniques » (corruption morale). Les pressions alimentaires

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<sup>27</sup> La gérontocratie est un régime politique dans lequel le pouvoir est exercé par les personnes les plus âgées de la société, car jugées plus sages. Le cas du gouvernement camerounais en est une illustration parfaite.

<sup>28</sup> On emploie généralement ce concept au Cameroun pour traduire une sorte d'intérêt ou de profit que l'on tire en fonction de son poste ou de la position qu'il occupe dans la société.

<sup>29</sup> Antoine Socpa, « Les dons dans le jeu électoral au Cameroun », *Cahiers d'Etudes africaines*, Editions de l'EHESS, 2000, pp. 91-108.

<sup>30</sup> Marcel Mauss, « Essai sur le don. Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques », *l'Année sociologique*, seconde série, 1923-1924

<sup>31</sup> Antoine Socpa, *Op. Cit.*, p. 92

consistent à : « offrir à manger et à boire à son électorat, soit à promettre la nomination d'un fils de la localité à un poste important dans les hautes sphères de l'Etat, soit encore à entrevoir la réalisation d'une infrastructure de développement afin d'obtenir ses suffrages », tandis que les pressions ethniques consistent plutôt « à demander aux électeurs à voter pour leur « frère » ou pour celui qui les parraine ». <sup>32</sup>

Dans un contexte de « rareté matérielle » où le peuple camerounais vit pour la plupart sous le seuil de la pauvreté, c'est-à-dire qu'il a « faim », l'élection devient une opportunité dont se saisit le parti au pouvoir pour le corrompre en lui proposant un troc : son vote contre la « nourriture » ; c'est ce qu'Achille Mbembe qualifie d' « économie de prédation ». <sup>33</sup> Dans cette optique, la stratégie du régime Biya consiste à faire des promesses d'infrastructures (routes, nouvelles unités administratives, écoles, hôpitaux, forages, etc.), ou à octroyer des offres ponctuelles de denrées alimentaires aux populations d'une région donnée en échange de leur soutien total et indéfectible à l'élection. La réalisation d'une infrastructure dans un village, l'initiative de certains projets de développement à la faveur d'un groupe social donné, est généralement perçue comme un acte de générosité du chef de l'Etat qui, en retour, mériterait la reconnaissance des bénéficiaires dans les urnes. Cette façon de gouverner, Valéry Ntwali la qualifie de « philanthropique » <sup>34</sup>; une philanthropie dont l'impact sur la conservation du pouvoir verrouille toute alternative de développement des pays africains. Ainsi, en 2017, le fameux « don du chef de l'Etat » de 500 000 ordinateurs (PBhev) aux étudiants était sans doute teinté d'intention politique pour l'élection présidentielle de 2018. Toutefois, les 75 milliards de FCFA de dette consentis à cette fin n'ont pas réellement favorisé le développement du secteur numérique dans le pays.

La logique du gouvernement perpétuel est donc de maintenir les populations dans la précarité pour faire perdurer un tel troc de génération en génération. Ceci s'explique par le fait que certaines promesses

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 92-93

<sup>33</sup> Achille Mbembe, « Une économie de prédation. Les rapports entre la rareté matérielle et la démocratie en Afrique subsaharienne », *Foi et Développement*, 241, pp. 1-8

<sup>34</sup> Valéry Ntwali Nantondo, « Gouvernance philanthropique et conservation du pouvoir en Afrique », 23 p. Dans : Joël Baraka Akilimali et Trésor Makunya Muhindo, *L'Etat africain et la crise postcoloniale. Repenser 60 ans d'alternance institutionnelle et idéologique sans alternative socioéconomique*, Paris : L'Harmattan, 2021.

d'infrastructures, certains chantiers qui démarrent à l'approche des élections sont soit abandonnés, soit interrompus au lendemain de l'élection. On ne s'en souvient qu'à l'approche de la prochaine élection et en fait un nouvel objet de campagne.<sup>35</sup> De la même manière, les dons alimentaires n'ont d'impact qu'à l'immédiat, sur le très court terme. L'on a pu observer à plusieurs reprises des scènes de partage de « pain-sardine »,<sup>36</sup> du poisson frais, de poulets, de boisson etc. aux populations pendant les campagnes du RDPC.

## II. De l'usage de la répression : gouverner par le fouet

Le recours à la répression, ce qu'on qualifie de « gouvernance du bâton », est une vieille technique de l'immobilisme politique qu'emploie le RDPC depuis la tentative de coup d'Etat du 6 Avril 1984 qui alerta le nouveau chef d'Etat sur l'urgence du renforcement des capacités militaires nationales en vue de prévenir tout éventuel soulèvement interne ou attaque externe, qui viendrait perturber la stabilité de son pouvoir.

Les responsables politiques du régime au pouvoir (sous-préfets, gouverneurs, ministres, etc.) n'hésitent pas à recourir aux ressources répressives mises à leur disposition par le pouvoir central pour interdire ou sanctionner toute initiative contestataire, toute mobilisation populaire ou revendication à caractère démocratique ; de peur que soit dévoilé l'illégitimité de l'Etat. Contrairement à certains Pays africains où les mobilisations et les soulèvements populaires ont, parfois avec le soutien de la communauté internationale, provoqué le changement de la forme de l'Etat ou le départ des chefs d'Etats aux allures dictatoriales : les cas du Burkina Faso, du Mali, de la Côte d'Ivoire, de la RDC, de la Libye, de la Tunisie, du Soudan, etc. Paul Biya est parvenu à conserver les commandes de la formation sociale et étatique camerounaise, en dépit de mobilisations collectives fortes (janvier-octobre 1991, février 2008, octobre 2016 et février 2018) contestant son emprise sur le pouvoir central du pays.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Le cas du projet d'électrification de la ville de kyé-ossi (frontière Cameroun, Guinée, Gabon) en dit plus, selon certaines confidences des citoyens que nous avons interrogés.

<sup>36</sup> On qualifie les partisans de ce parti de « sardinard », à cause du pain-sardine qu'ils offrent ou reçoivent lors des campagnes électorales.

<sup>37</sup> Eric Mathias Owana Nguini et Hélène-Laure Menthong, « « Gouvernement perpétuel » et démocratisation janusienne au Cameroun (1990-2018) », *Politiques africaines*, 2018/2 n°150, p. 98

Les poursuites, arrestations et détentions arbitraires d'opposants constituent des mesures d'anesthésie des initiatives révolutionnaires dont l'effet d'entraînement susciterait une mobilisation de masse à la faveur du renversement du statu quo politique du régime en place. Selon les sources d'Amnesty International,<sup>38</sup> près de 500 personnes, des militants du MRC pour la plupart, ont été arrêtées à l'occasion des manifestations du 22 septembre 2020, lancées par le parti d'opposition MRC (Mouvement pour la renaissance du Cameroun); et au moins 160 sont aujourd'hui en détention. Parmi elles, 13 ont été condamnées à des peines de prison ferme par des tribunaux civils, tandis que 14 ont été renvoyées devant un tribunal militaire. Les protestations des résultats de l'élection présidentielle de 2018 ont donné matière à des scènes de répression violente des manifestants, bafouant ainsi le principe démocratique de la liberté de manifestation. Des images vidéos de policiers tirant à balle réelle sur certains manifestants à l'instar de Me. Michelle Ndoki, ont fait le tour des réseaux sociaux.

Par ailleurs, l'emprisonnement des leaders et membres de partis de l'opposition est une mesure dissuasive qui ralentit l'émergence de toute forme de résistance populaire ou de tout mouvement contestataire contre le gouvernement perpétuel de Biya. Ce fut le cas de l'arrestation de Maurice Kamto (placé en garde à vue à son propre domicile par la suite), de Christian Penda Ekoka, d'Albert Dzungang et de près de 80 autres partisans du MRC le 28 janvier 2019 à Douala : c'est cette réalité que Boris Bertolt qualifie de « *main basse sur la démocratie* » au Cameroun.<sup>39</sup> Cette main basse se traduit tant bien par le refus de l'autorisation de manifestations pacifiques que par la répression des manifestants.

Afin de déjouer tout risque de coup d'Etat qui viendrait d'un proche collaborateur ou d'un membre du gouvernement, le Président Biya a mis sur pied une opération dite Epervier. Bien que l'objectif officiel de cette initiative soit la lutte contre la corruption, la réalité en dit tout le contraire. On compte à ce jour environ quatre gouvernements du régime Biya à la prison centrale de Yaoundé (Kondengui); d'autres y laissant

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<sup>38</sup> Amnesty International, Cameroun, détentions arbitraires et tribunaux militaires, dernier épisode de la répression contre les opposants, 9 décembre 2020

<sup>39</sup> Boris Bertolt, *Main basse sur la démocratie. Secrets d'un complot contre Maurice Kamto*. Independently published, 2020, 336 p.

progressivement leur vie.<sup>40</sup> L'opération épervier paraît plus être un instrument de prévention contre toute tentative de renversement du président Biya par un quelconque membre du gouvernement qu'un organe performant de lutte contre la corruption. Ce dans la mesure où, le Cameroun demeure l'un des pays les plus corrompus du monde : un pays où les médiocres occupent des postes de responsabilité, tandis que les plus performants sont au chômage. Un pays où ceux qui pillent les richesses de l'Etat sont laissés en liberté à partir du moment où ils n'empiètent pas le pouvoir de Biya. Car dans le cas contraire, ils sont rapidement mis hors d'état de nuire.

La crise anglophone est l'exemple parfait de l'implémentation de la stratégie de répression du régime au pouvoir. En effet, la révolte anglophone commence avec le « problème anglophone » qui remonte pour sa part aux revendications corporatistes d'avocats et d'enseignants à la fin de l'année 2016 autour de deux enjeux structurants : un système juridique du *common Law* et un système éducatif anglo-saxon, progressivement abandonnés dans les deux régions anglophones du pays, qui ont vu l'affectation de magistrats et d'enseignants francophones.<sup>41</sup> Par l'intermédiaire de *Cameroon Teachers Trade Union* (Cattu), les enseignants lancent, le 05 octobre 2016, avec l'appui d'autres couches sociales, un mot d'ordre de grève illimitée massivement suivi. Puis, va s'en suivre la grève d'avocats anglophones. Ces derniers réclamant à leur tour la traduction du traité OHADA (Organisation pour l'Harmonisation en Afrique du Droit des Affaires) visant la sécurisation de l'environnement juridique des affaires en Afrique ainsi que d'autres instruments juridiques.<sup>42</sup> Le 21 novembre de la même année, le collectif des enseignants anglophones se mobilise pour une descente dans la rue en vue de protester contre l'affectation d'enseignants francophones dans les établissements anglophones – une contestation soutenue par la revendication de diverses primes de la part des étudiants de l'Université de Buea le 28 novembre. A

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<sup>40</sup> Le cas le plus récent, celui du Pr. Gervais Mendo Ze, ancien Directeur de la CRTV (Cameroon Radio and Television, 1988-2005), et ministre délégué au Ministère de la communication (2004-2007).

<sup>41</sup> Nadine Machikou, « Utopie et dystopie ambazoniennes : Dieu, les dieux et la crise anglophone au Cameroun », *Politique africaine*, Art 2018/2 n° 150, p. 119.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibidem*

ce stade de revendications plus ou moins pacifiques, l'on est encore en face de ce qu'on pourrait qualifier de « problème anglophone ».

Cependant, face à ces revendications pacifiques pour l'essentiel, les manifestants anglophones vont subir une répression féroce soutenue de la part des autorités et des forces de sécurité et de la défense. Ce sera alors le début de la crise anglophone qui se poursuit encore jusqu'à ces jours, ayant déjà enregistré de lourdes conséquences pour l'Etat camerounais.

Ces stratégies mobilisées jusqu'ici renseignent sur la forme de démocratie en place au Cameroun : une démocratisation autoritaire.

### III. Du tripatouillage constitutionnel et électoral

Dans leur traité de droit paru en 1757, intitulé : *Le droit des gens ou Principes de la loi naturelle, appliquée à la conduite et aux affaires des Nations et des souverains*, Vattel et Emer, au sujet de la constitution de l'Etat, écrivent : « le règlement fondamental qui détermine la manière dont l'autorité publique doit être exercée est ce qui forme la Constitution. En elle se voit la forme sous laquelle la Nation agit en qualité de corps politique; comment et par qui le peuple doit être gouverné, quels sont les droits et devoirs de ceux qui gouvernent ».<sup>43</sup> La constitution donc, dans un Etat de droit, la règle la plus élevée de l'ordre juridique, située au sommet de la hiérarchie des normes. Elle constitue une charte, un ensemble de lois qui régleme le fonctionnement des institutions, en définissant les droits et les libertés des citoyens, l'organisation et la séparation des pouvoirs. Dans un régime dit démocratique, l'accession au pouvoir passe par l'élection présidentielle. Il en résulte alors un lien étroit entre tripatouillage constitutionnel et électoral dans la mesure où le premier donne au second les moyens de sa réalisation. Cette relation s'observe en permanence dans les affaires politiques de la plupart des pays de l'Afrique subsaharienne à l'instar du Cameroun.

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<sup>43</sup> Emer Vattel, *Le droit des gens ou Principes de la loi naturelle, appliquée à la conduite et aux affaires des Nations et des souverains*, chapitre III, 1757, par. 27, cité par Aubert J-F, « la constitution, son contenu, son usage », Die Deutsche Bibliothek, p. 18, disponible en ligne sur :

file:///C:/Users/JAMES/Desktop/M2%20ETUDES%20Ints.Szeged/Dossier%20m%C3%A9moire/AUBERT-La%20Constitution%20son%20contenu%20son%20usage.pdf

### III.1- Révisionnisme constitutionnel et confiscation du pouvoir

Bien qu'il puisse exister quelques cas d'exception où la constitution a été révisée pour une fin utile au progrès démocratique et du multipartisme – ce qui est le cas par exemple de la révision de la constitution sénégalaise par la loi du 16 mars 1976 qui a rompu avec l'imposition de fait d'un parti unique<sup>44</sup>, cette pratique est devenue depuis le début du 21<sup>e</sup> siècle, une stratégie redoutable de la confiscation du pouvoir dont se servent sans modération certains chefs d'Etats aux aspirations dictatoriales. Ils y font généralement recours pour légitimer leur longévité au pouvoir, et conforter la perpétuation de leur régime politique en conférant un fondement juridique à leur présidentielisme. Ainsi, « *réviser la constitution apparaît le plus souvent en Afrique comme un moyen de contourner les normes constitutionnelles déjà en vigueur. Il s'agit tantôt d'éliminer un adversaire politique, d'allonger le mandat présidentiel, ou encore de modifier la clause de limitation de mandat* ». <sup>45</sup> On parle dans ce cas de figure de « *tripatouillage constitutionnel* » dans la mesure où une telle pratique contribue à fausser le jeu politique, en rendant la tâche de conservation de pouvoir ou de règlement de compte politique facile au régime en place.

Le révisionnisme constitutionnel revêt un caractère « *déconsolidant* » au sein des pays de l'Afrique francophone, dans la mesure où il « *porte atteinte aux avancées démocratiques en mobilisant le texte constitutionnel pour l'accomplissement de visées personnelles* ». <sup>46</sup> Selon le journal *Le monde Afrique*, onze chefs d'Etat africains ont changé leur constitution depuis 2000 pour rester au pouvoir. <sup>47</sup> Il s'agit de ceux : des Comores (en 2018), du Rwanda (en 2015), de la République du Congo (en 2015), du Burundi (en 2018), du Zimbabwe (en 2013), de Djibouti (en 2010), de l'Algérie (en 2008), du Cameroun (en 2008), de l'Ouganda (en 2005), du Tchad (en 2005), du Togo (en 2002), du Burkina Faso (où la tentative de

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<sup>44</sup> Mouhamadou Ndiaye, « La stabilité constitutionnelle, nouveau défi démocratique du juge africain », *Annuaire internationale de justice constitutionnelle*, Année 201, 33-2017, p. 667, [https://www.persee.fr/doc/aijc\\_0995-3817\\_2018\\_num\\_33\\_2017\\_2608](https://www.persee.fr/doc/aijc_0995-3817_2018_num_33_2017_2608)

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 669

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>47</sup> *Le monde Afrique*, « Depuis 2000, onze chef d'Etat africains ont changé leur Constitution pour rester au pouvoir », disponible en ligne sur: [https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2019/12/24/depuis-2000-onze-chefs-d-etat-africains-ont-change-leur-constitution-pour-rester-au-pouvoir\\_6023936\\_3212.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2019/12/24/depuis-2000-onze-chefs-d-etat-africains-ont-change-leur-constitution-pour-rester-au-pouvoir_6023936_3212.html)

modification de la constitution a échoué sous l'effet du soulèvement populaire qui a contraint Blaise Compaoré à l'exil en 2014), du Malawi (où l'initiative révisionniste s'est heurté à l'opposition des Eglises), de la RDC (où Joseph Kabila a entrepris de se maintenir au pouvoir à l'issu de son second mandat en 2016). Il faut remarquer que la quasi-totalité de ces changements constitutionnels concernent les dispositions relatives à la durée du mandat des chefs d'Etats. Elles surgissent le plus souvent à la fin d'un mandat présidentiel censé marquer la transition politique, et offrent alors une nouvelle possibilité juridique au président sortant, souvent au pouvoir depuis les indépendances, d'être candidat à sa propre succession. Le cas du Cameroun nous intéresse particulièrement dans cette étude.

En effet, dans un élan de démocratisation de la vie politique camerounaise, la constitution de 1996, adoptée sous la houlette du parti au pouvoir prévoyait une limitation du nombre de mandats du chef de l'Etat. En son Article 6 alinéa 2, elle stipule que « le président de la République est élu pour un mandat de sept (7) ans renouvelable une fois ». Ainsi, ayant été réélu en 2004 pour un nouveau septennat, la fin du mandat du président Biya était en 2011. Cependant, en 2008, il entreprit de réviser la constitution pour se maintenir au pouvoir. Dans cette optique, la nouvelle version de l'Article 6 alinéa 2 stipule que « le président de la République est élu pour un mandat de sept (7) ans. Il est rééligible ». L'adoption de ce projet de loi par une Assemblée nationale largement dominée par les députés du RDPC<sup>48</sup> a donné un nouveau souffle de vie politique à la carrière du président Biya. Cet évènement, tel que le décrit Pigeaud Fanny,<sup>49</sup> a causé la mort de plusieurs dizaines de personnes qui ont manifesté contre l'adoption d'un tel projet par un gouvernement qui restait indifférent face à la vie chère et aux conditions socio-économiques difficiles des populations ; et va finalement éteindre les derniers espoirs nourris en 1982 par le tout nouveau chef d'Etat, d'une transition démocratique du pouvoir au Cameroun.

Il se pose le problème de la séparation véritable des pouvoirs dans les pays de l'Afrique subsaharienne en général et au Cameroun en

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<sup>48</sup> Ces derniers occupaient 153 des 180 sièges à l'époque. Ce chiffre est aujourd'hui de 152 suite aux dernières élections législatives du 9 février 2020.

<sup>49</sup> Fanny Pigeaud, *Au Cameroun de Paul Biya*, Ed. Karthala, 2011.

particulier. Ici, l'Assemblée nationale qui est l'organe chargé de l'exécution des lois est constituée à plus de 80% des députés du régime au pouvoir. Aussi, sur le plan judiciaire, c'est le chef de l'Etat qui nomme les juges. Ces derniers ont à cet effet, une obligation morale d'obéir et même de participer à l'implémentation de son projet de pérennisation au pouvoir.

Une autre composante de la démocratisation autoritaire tout aussi pertinente est la fraude électorale.

### **III.2- Fraude électorale et déstabilisation des partis d'opposition**

Le RDPC s'appuie sur la fraude électorale pour anéantir toutes les chances de l'opposition d'accéder au pouvoir par la voie des urnes.

De façon générale, la fraude électorale est une stratégie politique mise en place par un parti pour dominer la compétition électorale. Elle se traduit par des pratiques déloyales qui s'inscrivent tout au long du processus électoral. Il s'agit, en effet, d'une grave violation du droit des peuples à l'autodétermination. Elle s'assimile à « *toute action menée en violation de la loi en vue de favoriser un candidat ou une liste de candidats au détriment des autres. Elle est aussi considérée comme toute manipulation ou mauvaise interprétation de la loi en vue de favoriser un candidat ou la liste d'un parti politique durant une élection* ». <sup>50</sup> Cette pratique n'est pas un privilège exclusif des pays africains ou du Cameroun en particulier. Elle est universelle car se révèle un peu partout dans le monde selon des formes, des modalités et des degrés variables.

La fraude électorale s'enracine dans l'histoire politique du Cameroun depuis l'instauration du parti unique. Malgré la restauration du multipartisme et la tentative de démocratisation dans les années 1990, toutes les élections organisées ont été, selon la plupart d'observateurs nationaux et internationaux, entachées de nombreuses irrégularités traduisant les intentions de fraude électorale. <sup>51</sup> De ce point de vue, l'élection n'est qu'une « *corde électorale* » que le RDPC offre à l'opposition pour se pendre. Cette pratique se manifeste en trois phases : les fraudes en phase pré-électorale, en phase électorale et en phase post-électorale.

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<sup>50</sup> Fondation Friedrich Ebert, *Prévenir et lutter contre la fraude électorale au Cameroun : Manuel pratique*, Editions CLE, Yaoundé, 2012, p. 9

<sup>51</sup> *Ibidem*.

### *Les fraudes en phase pré-électorale*

La fraude s'étend à partir de la période préparatoire du scrutin. Son implémentation passe généralement par : l'allocation de la majorité des circonscriptions dans les zones favorables au parti au pouvoir, l'entretien du flou en ce qui concerne la date exacte de l'élection, le refus d'inscrire sur les listes électorales, l'inscription multiple sur les listes électorales, le refus de délivrer un récépissé à un électeur après inscription, l'insuffisance d'information envers le public sur le processus de la part d'ELECAM, non production des cartes d'électeurs, la production des cartes ne répondant à aucune inscription sur une quelconque liste électorale, la production de plusieurs cartes pour un même électeur, le choix des centres de vote difficilement accessibles au public, le non affichage ou affichage tardif des listes électorales, le non affichage ou affichage tardif des listes des bureaux de vote.<sup>52</sup> Nous nous limiterons à l'analyse des cas les plus fréquents.

- *l'allocation de la majorité des circonscriptions dans les zones favorables au parti du régime en place :*

Cette stratégie tire sa légitimité de l'article 149 alinéas 2 du code électoral, qui confère au Président de la République, le pouvoir du décret sur le découpage spécial de certaines circonscriptions, du fait de leur situation particulière. Le régime au pouvoir n'hésite donc pas de saisir ce privilège pour ouvrir les circonscriptions électorales dans des zones qui lui sont favorables en termes d'électeurs. Ce qui permet de compenser le déficit dans certaines zones où son électorat est faible. Cette technique consiste également à créer des bureaux de vote de façon continue, même jusqu'à la veille du scrutin, comme ce fut le cas en 2007, avec l'ouverture de 60 circonscriptions électorales à moins d'un mois des élections législatives et municipales. De même, l'ouverture des bureaux de vote dans les zones du Nord-ouest et du Sud-ouest (NOSO) aux dernières élections présidentielles était perçue aux yeux de l'opposition comme un moyen illégal pour le RDPC de truquer les résultats, compte tenu des difficultés pour les citoyens de se rendre dans leurs lieux de vote respectifs.

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 14-21

- *l'inscription multiple d'un même électeur sur les listes électorales et la production de plusieurs cartes pour un même électeur :*

Ces stratégies consistent à inscrire un électeur plusieurs fois sur la même liste d'électeurs, ou alors faire figurer son nom sur plusieurs listes différentes. Cette approche est une violation de l'article 73 alinéa 1 du code électoral qui stipule que « nul ne peut être inscrit sur plus d'une liste électorale ou plusieurs fois sur la même liste ».<sup>53</sup> Cette multi inscription d'un même électeur sur des listes électorales favorise la fabrication de plusieurs cartes d'électeurs pour ce dernier, en modifiant certains éléments de son identification, lui donnant ainsi la possibilité d'effectuer plusieurs votes dans différents bureaux de vote à la faveur du parti au pouvoir durant le scrutin. Selon de nombreux témoignages recueillis lors de nos entretiens, cette pratique frauduleuse est récurrente qui contribue au gonflement des scores du RDPC pendant les élections. Durant l'élection présidentielle d'octobre 2018, certains électeurs ont été soupçonnés ou surpris en flagrant délit d'effectuer un double vote. Ces inscriptions multiples relèvent généralement d'une conspiration de la part des membres d'ELECAM, qui est largement contrôlé par le président de la République, avec qui il semble ne former qu'un même corps : « *Paul Biya – Elécam* ».<sup>54</sup>

- *production des cartes fictives ou ne correspondant à aucune inscription sur une quelconque liste électorale :*

Une telle approche vise souvent à croître le pourcentage de vote du RDPC. Elle se traduit par une augmentation du nombre d'électeurs fictifs à travers la production de cartes qui ne correspondent à aucune identité. Ce qui est une violation de l'Article 85 alinéa 3 du code électoral qui dispose que « les cartes électorales ne peuvent être délivrées aux intéressés qu'au vu de la carte d'identité de chaque titulaire ou du récépissé portant date, lieu et numéro d'inscription ». Pendant la phase électorale, cette stratégie, bien préparée en amont, permet aux agents du régime au pouvoir qui coordonnent le déroulement de vote dans certains bureaux, de faire voter

<sup>53</sup> Elécam, Code électoral, <http://www.electionpassport.com/files/Cameroon-Electoral-Code-French.pdf>

<sup>54</sup> Cameroun, bureau de vote dans les camps militaires : la leçon d'arithmétique électorale de Biya à l'opposition, <https://cameroonvoice.com/news/2018/08/03/cameroun-bureaux-de-vote-dans-les-camps-militaires-la-lecon-d-arithmetique-electorale-de-biya-a-l-opposition/>

des non-inscrits sur les listes électorales au profit de leur parti. Cette technique est confortée : soit par le non affichage volontaire des listes électorales à l'entrée de certains bureaux de vote, afin d'empêcher toute possibilité de vérification des noms de ceux qui votent. Soit par la création des bureaux de votes fictifs dans certains centres de vote lors la phase électorale. Ces derniers sont ainsi enregistrés de façon officielle, mais ne connaissent pas un déroulement réel d'opérations électorales, et servent de réservoir pour le trucage du suffrage.

*-Le choix de bureaux de vote difficilement accessible ou non ouvert au public :*

Cette stratégie consiste à implanter les bureaux de vote dans des lieux d'influence où l'expression de la liberté de vote des électeurs est influencée par la présence d'un certain nombre de leaders de parti au pouvoir, qui sont susceptibles d'exercer une influence psychologique sur les votants. Il s'agit donc d'une forme d'intimidation qui se traduit par le droit de regard des uns sur le libre arbitre électoral des autres. Le plus souvent il s'agit des chefferies, des domiciles privés, des camps militaires, les lamidos, entre autres ; qui représentent autant de lieux sous le contrôle du gouvernement. En l'occurrence, en 2018, les partis politiques de l'opposition ont dénoncé la localisation des bureaux de vote dans les casernes militaires. Ce qu'ils assimilaient à une tentative d'intimidation des électeurs dans le cadre du contrôle rigoureux de leur vote qui était préconisé comme stratégie de sécurisation et de fiabilisation des résultats du scrutin.

### *Les fraudes en phase électorale*

Celles-ci peuvent être regroupées en deux grandes catégories : les fraudes liées aux opérations de vote et les fraudes liées au dépouillement.<sup>55</sup>

Pour ce qui est des fraudes liées aux opérations de vote, l'on peut énumérer : le non-affichage des listes devant le bureau de vote, l'existence de bureaux de vote fictifs, la présence de bureaux de vote dans des lieux non ouverts au public, l'absence ou l'insuffisance du matériel électoral, le déplacement des urnes vers des destinations inconnues ou non éclairées,

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<sup>55</sup> Fondation Friedrich Ebert, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 29-34

coupure volontaire d'électricité à la tombée de la nuit le jour de vote, l'achat de votes, l'autorisation du droit de vote aux électeurs illégaux, le soutien du vote multiple à un électeur qui possède une fausse identité. Pour les fraudes liées au dépouillement, elles consistent généralement en l'expulsion des représentants de certains partis politiques ou candidats afin de les priver du droit de contrôler le scrutin ; la défense des électeurs de participer au dépouillement.

### *Les fraudes post-électorales*

S'il est vrai qu'elles sont moins nombreuses que les formes précédentes, il n'en demeure pas moins vrai qu'elles restent aussi dangereuses pour ce qui est de l'impact négatif sur l'intégrité du scrutin. Ces fraudes consistent principalement en la modification des procès-verbaux, la corruption des membres de la commission communale de vote, le rejet des recours, l'annulation fantaisiste et cavalière des élections<sup>56</sup>. Ainsi, les principaux partis de l'opposition dont le MRC de Maurice Kamto, ont saisi le Conseil Constitutionnel au lendemain de la présidentielle de 2018, pour dénoncer de nombreuses irrégularités ayant accompagné le déroulement des élections. Dix-huit requêtes en annulation totale ou partielle de cette élection ont été introduites. Toutefois, « irrecevable » fut la réponse du Conseil Constitutionnel à seize plaintes post-électorales qui portaient pour l'essentiel sur la modification des procès-verbaux par les partisans du parti au pouvoir, la corruption des électeurs, les votes fictifs,<sup>57</sup> le refoulement ou brutalisation des représentants des partis de l'opposition dans certains bureaux de vote, la crise anglophone. Ce contentieux post électoral a été l'occasion pour l'opposition de dénoncer la mainmise du parti au pouvoir sur la démocratie au Cameroun, en soulignant le fait que les membres du Conseil Constitutionnel étaient non seulement nommés par le président Biya, mais qu'ils étaient également des membres influents, pour la plupart, du parti au pouvoir. Une telle affinité remettait en cause, avant toute chose, la neutralité et l'objectivité de tout jugement rendu par

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<sup>56</sup> Fondation Friedrich Ebert, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 49-51

<sup>57</sup> Le président du parti politique (UNIVERS) ayant investi le candidat Cabral Libii à cette élection s'écriait sur les plateaux de télévision de Vision 4 après avoir vu le nom d'un membre de sa famille décédé bien avant les élections, être figuré parmi les votants : « comment un mort peut-il voter ? », demanda-t-il.

cet organe selon Maurice Kamto, qui récusait environ huit juges de cette cour.<sup>58</sup>

Les différentes fraudes électorales susmentionnées sont pour l'essentiel confortées par des controverses du code électoral dont les partis de l'opposition n'ont cessé de dénoncer. Ces derniers dont : Maurice Kamto (Mouvement pour la Renaissance du Cameroun, MRC), Cabral Libii (Parti Camerounais pour la Réconciliation Nationale, PCRN), Joshua Osih (Social Democratic Front, SDF), Hermine Patrice Tomaino Ndam Njoya (Union Démocratique du Cameroun, UDC), Pierre Kwemo (Union des Mouvements Socialistes, UMS), ont récemment pris la ferme résolution de faire front commun pour parvenir à une révision des dispositions<sup>59</sup> du code électoral qui entravent la compétition politique. Cette résolution s'est matérialisée par la signature d'un traité conjoint le 31 mars 2021, la mise en place d'un secrétariat technique,<sup>60</sup> et la tenue d'une conférence de presse le 1<sup>er</sup> avril à Yaoundé, dans le but d'informer le public du travail collectif pour la réforme consensuelle du système électoral qui s'effectue désormais :

*« Nous, partis politiques signataires du présent communiqué, avons décidé de travailler ensemble dans un cadre républicain inclusif, avec toutes les parties prenantes du jeu démocratique, afin de mettre en place un système électoral nouveau ou amendé pour la stabilité et la prospérité de notre pays »,* déclare la coalition.

En réaction à cette initiative de l'opposition, le parti au pouvoir, le RDPC, a réagi délibérément à travers un communiqué signé de son secrétaire national à la communication, Jacques Fame Ndong, laissant entendre que le code électoral en question ne subira aucun changement en dehors d'un vote à l'assemblée nationale. Et eu égard au déséquilibre des rapports de forces qui pèsent en faveur du parti au pouvoir au sein de cette institution, les chances d'assister à l'aboutissement de cette initiative sont faibles.

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<sup>58</sup> Pour illustration, l'épouse du président du Conseil constitutionnel, est député du RDPC, de même pour Emmanuel Bondé, membre du Conseil constitutionnel faisant parti du comité central du RDPC et/est membre du bureau politique du RDPC.

<sup>59</sup> L'opposition revendique par exemple, l'instauration du bulletin unique dans les urnes, afin de limiter la corruption des électeurs.

<sup>60</sup> Ce secrétariat est chargé de recevoir, aux fins d'exploitation, toutes les contributions venant des acteurs désireux de participer à cette dynamique, à travailler ensemble (partis politiques, organisations ou personnalités de la société civile).

## Conclusion

L'objectif de cet article était d'analyser les stratégies qui ont permis au président Biya de se maintenir au pouvoir malgré la libéralisation politique des années 1990, les vives oppositions et les soulèvements populaires allant à son encontre. Ainsi, qu'il s'agisse de la fraude électorale, du recours à la répression, du clientélisme ou du don électoral (la politique du ventre), du révisionnisme constitutionnel, tout cela participe de l'autoritarisme démocratique qui produit un effet de confiscation du pouvoir politique au Cameroun. Ces stratégies constituent ce que Michel Foucault qualifie de « *technologies de pouvoir* », qui sont autant de procédés fabriqués, perfectionnés, transmis, reconduits, imités, adaptés et appliqués dans des contextes socio-politiques particuliers afin de prévenir et contrôler tout risque de perturbation du pouvoir établi. L'immobilisme politique se traduit ainsi au Cameroun par la capture de la trajectoire de la démocratisation libérale. La démocratie camerounaise s'apparente alors à un « janus », une démocratie biface qui présente deux faces différentes ; celle de la démocratie d'un côté (face externe) et de la dictature de l'autre (face interne) : c'est donc une démocratie ; un mirage démocratique.

Cependant, en prenant un peu de recul au-delà de tout ce qui précède, l'on devrait reconnaître, d'une manière ou d'une autre, la superpuissance politique du RDPC et de son leader, Paul Biya. Car en effet, « ne dure pas au pouvoir qui veut, dure qui peut », disait-il. Etre parvenu à confisquer les commandes de l'ordre social et politique, à se maintenir au pouvoir durant près de quatre décennies dans un pays qui compte environ 27 millions d'habitants, et dont l'une des principales caractéristiques est sa multiethnicité, traduit non seulement une maîtrise de la population, mais surtout la compétitivité du parti au pouvoir. Dans le même temps, cela invite à questionner les raisons de l'échec des partis de l'opposition à créer des dynamiques favorables au renversement du pouvoir dans un contexte de compétition politique.

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# NATIONAL SECURITY AND FULFILLED PROMISES? A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE STATE OF SIEGE IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

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## Abstract

*Already in the middle of his first term, Felix Tshisekedi has understood that his re-election depends only on the pacification of the eastern region of his deeply damaged country. For over 20 years, informality, corruption, death, trafficking, theft represented a modus vivendi in the North Kivu province. The state of siege implemented on May 6, 2021 is intended to be a major restoration of North Kivu and Ituri provinces. At that time, the provinces fell under the military control of the FARDC (Armed Forces of the DRC), which raises two main questions Is this measure fit to meet the goal established by the President, namely the pacification of the eastern region? Or is it a tool to reinforce the control of the President over the country? However, the State of Siege is more than an exceptional measure: it is a promise of the President to his people. Active, determined and involved in the two territories, with appropriate words addressed to the grieving population, Tshisekedi not only repeats the sensitive elements known worldwide, but he exceeds the usual limits: he desires to remove the "maguilles" from the national army and he wants institutions on which he can rely. Basically, the one who embodies the system is fighting it today. Within this article we aim at exploring if new approach to conflict is prolific and has the potential to succeed at least in its early stages. This study could be performed due to field data provided by Kivu Security Tracker.*

**Key words:** Democratic Republic of Congo, discourse, State of Siege, North Kivu, Ituri, conflict, militarization, power

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## Introduction

An unexpected announcement marks a new beginning for the national security: the military will take full control of two eastern regions. The President of the Republic, Félix Tshisekedi confirmed on May 3<sup>rd</sup> the state of siege measure in two provinces of North Kivu and Ituri hit by the violence of armed groups and the massacres of civilians (Ordinance 21/061 of May 3).<sup>1</sup> This measure was adopted on April 30, 2021 at the 1st Meeting of the Council of Ministers under the Sama Government.

## Nord-Kivu and Ituri – Areas cut from the rest of the country

The dimensions of the Congolese conflict have varied tremendously across the time, which has led to a complex situation difficult to manage. Armed violence in the eastern Congo is the direct consequence of two bloody wars: the first Congolese war between 1996-1997 (the overthrow of Mobutu by the revolutionary rebellion of Laurent Desiré Kabila) and the second one, known also as the African World War, during 1998-2002 (triggered by self-proclaimed President Kabila who turned against those who brought him to power: Rwanda and Uganda).<sup>2</sup> The peace agreements did not bring the peace so needed, on the contrary, the bloody events continued up to now at different levels both nationally and internationally.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, compared to previous years, a decrease in the number of belligerents can be noticed. This period corresponds to the new ascent of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), the main actor in the theatre of violence in North Kivu. Kivu Security Tracker inventory counts around 122 across the entire eastern Congo, including North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri

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<sup>1</sup> Ordonnance n° 21/016 du 3 mai 2021 portant mesures d'application de l'Etat de Siege sur une partie du territoire de la République Démocratique du Congo, Cabinet du Président de la République, Kinshasa.

Ordinance n°21/016 of May 3, 2021 on implementing measures for the State of Siege on part of the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Office of the President, Kinshasa.

<sup>2</sup> Andreea Bianca Urs, Sergiu Mișcoiu, "The USA's return to the heart of Africa. Strategies, conflicts and counterfeit terrorism in the Democratic Republic of Congo" in Valentin Naumescu, Raluca Moldovan, Anda Ghilescu (eds.) *The new transatlantic relations and the perspectives of the global order*, Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2021, pp. 65-83.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*.

and Tanganyika.<sup>4</sup> Actually, the ADF are the main actor in the theatre of violence in North Kivu, they are accused of the massacre of more than 1,000 civilians since November 2019 in the territory of Beni and it is the only group in this region to be considered a terrorist organization.<sup>5</sup> The ADF gradually expanded to Ituri, province affected by the violence committed by CODECO (Cooperative for Development of the Congo).<sup>6</sup>

The Congolese state is profoundly influenced by society and the powerful actors. The rebels from these 122 groups fight for various reasons, especially economic.<sup>7</sup> Generally, living largely in the exploration and exploitation of its raw materials, DRC's economic structure is highly dominated by the mining sector.<sup>8</sup> Rebels operating areas include many factors that support the growth of the informal economy as porous borders, local trade and domination of the local population.<sup>9</sup> As Kristof Titeca argues, "state is a priori absent from the informal economy"<sup>10</sup> the informal economy had already become a dominant survival mode in light of an incapable and violent state.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, absence of the state does not mean that a void exists in its place.<sup>12</sup> Thus, in the absence of state support, it is perfectly understandable that civilians accept the protection received from the rebels or other non-state entities.

Many of those who join armed groups, including the ADF, do not do so for ideological reasons but for economic reasons and because it gives

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<sup>4</sup> Kivu Security Tracker, "The Landscape of Armed Groups in Eastern Congo: Missed Opportunities, Protracted Insecurity, and Self-Fulfilling Prophecies," *Kivu Security Tracker/Congo Research Group*, February 2021.

<sup>5</sup> Andreea Bianca Urs, « Du conflit au terrorisme en RD Congo », in *Studia Europaea*, LXV, 1, 2020, pp. 55-73.

<sup>6</sup> Andreea Bianca Urs, « Comprendre le conflit actuel de l'Ituri », in *Analele Universității din Oradea*, 2021, pp. 209-218.

<sup>7</sup> Kivu Security Tracker, "The Landscape of Armed Groups ...".

<sup>8</sup> Andreea Bianca Urs, "Überlegungen und Perspektiven zur neuen chinesischen Ordnung in der Demokratischen Republik Kongo", in *Studia Europaea*, No. 1, 2021, pp. 61-82.

<sup>9</sup> Sergiu Mișcoiu, Louis-Marie Kakdeu, „Authoritarian clientelism: the case of the president's 'creatures' in Cameroon“, in *Acta Politica*, N<sup>o</sup>. 1, Vol. 56, 2021, pp. 1-29.

<sup>10</sup> Kristof Titeca, "A Historical Perspective on State Engagement in Informal Trade on the Uganda-Congo Border", Bridenthal, R. (ed.) *The hidden history of crime, corruption and states*, New York: Berghan Books, 2013, p. 174.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*. p. 178.

them social status. In addition, in places, the ADF has merged into the population, and it has become very difficult to say who is part of it. You can't just say there are the "good guys" and the "bad guys", the reality is much more complex. The state-society approach argues that it is necessary to leave a state-centric approach in studying regulation in particular localities.<sup>13</sup> Thus, in a country where everything changes depending on military contingencies, a change in strategy based on local needs could work. Local life in the eastern region is characterized by ongoing conflicts and negotiation between the non-state armed actors.

### **Second year of Félix Antoine Tshilombo Tshisekedi**

In the capital Kinshasa, things have changed with the election of Félix Tshisekedi in December 2018 and especially with the political switch he operated in December 2020. In the presidential elections of 2018, the incumbent President Joseph Kabila, who was no longer allowed to run, initially supported his party's candidate, Emmanuel Ramazani Shadary, before realising that the latter's chances were low and that the best strategy would be to support the less radical opposition candidate, Tshisekedi. Tshisekedi made a governmental alliance with the former President's party but started to mark his differences with his predecessor's political orientation and agenda.<sup>14</sup> The lethal coup took place in December 6, 2020 through a lightening speech, when Tshisekedi announced the end of the incumbent coalition and proclaimed the 'Sacred Union' of the nation, which meant in fact that Kabila's supporters (and most notably the MPs and the governors) had the 'patriotic duty' to join the new presidential majority, isolating in this way his former ally. In terms of foreign policy and attracting foreign aid, Felix Tshisekedi, Chairperson of the African Union for the year 2021, certainly has a major lead over his predecessor, which did not have such a definite position in this direction. Noticed by the international community, the actions of the new president have consequences on several levels: economic, political and security.<sup>15</sup>

Despite his growing popularity, the survey report signed by Congo Research Group reveals that management of Covid-19 was the least

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<sup>13</sup> Kristof Titeca, *art.cit.*, p. 175.

<sup>14</sup> Andreea Bianca Urs, Sergiu Mişcoiu, *art.cit.*, pp. 65-83.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*.

appreciated action.<sup>16</sup> According to this rapport, the apparent popularity of Tshisekedi contrasts with the persistent frustrations of Congolese people. Respondents are critical of the government insecurity: 58% of them consider that Felix Tshisekedi has not kept his promise campaign to pacify the East, but 57% of respondents, mainly in the western provinces of the country, argue that the defense and security forces are less abusive under the current president. Furthermore, the majority (64%) were dissatisfied with the curfew, with respondents, especially in the provinces of Bandundu, Kivu and Central Congo, not praising the government's response strategy to the coronavirus pandemic. At least 32 parliamentarians have died since the start of the pandemic, but that has not affected Congolese skepticism about the virus. Especially since few respondents say they don't know infected people around them. Not surprisingly, 74% of them say they would not get vaccinated. As a result, health authorities had to reallocate 75% of 1.7 million vaccines AstraZeneca supplied to the Congo due to a lack of capacity and interest in the vaccine (GEC, 2021).<sup>17</sup>

Instead, things have remained the same in the East. Nevertheless, considering the high level of violence and increased number of killings, including the death of Italian ambassador in the DRC in February 2021, Tshisekedi understood that the pacification of eastern region can't be postponed. In this regard, he implemented the State of Siege in North-Kivu and Ituri provinces starting with May 6, 2021.

### **National security and fulfilled promises? A brief analysis**

Generally, a state of exception (*Ausnahmezustand*) is a concept introduced in the 1920s by Carl Schmitt, similar to a state of emergency but based in the sovereign's ability to transcend the rule of law in the name of the public good.<sup>18</sup> Schmitt establishes clearly: "whoever decides on a state of exception is sovereign"<sup>19</sup> this distinction being the key to understanding

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<sup>16</sup> GEC / BERCI, « L'an 2 de Tshisekedi. Année de l'émancipation ? », *Groupe d'étude sur le Congo, Bureau d'études, de recherche et de consulting international (BERCI)*, July 2021.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>18</sup> Carl Schmitt, *Politische Theologie. Vier Kapitel zur Lehre von der Souveränität*, [1922], Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2009, p. 13

<sup>19</sup> „Souverän ist, wer über den Ausnahmezustand entscheidet“, Carl Schmitt, *op.cit.*, p. 14.

this concept and in most cases it is about the President. This concept is developed in Giorgio Agamben's work *State of Exception* and Achille Mbembe's *Necropolitics*. Firstly, Agamben traces the origin of the state of exception back to the French Revolution and he claims that the state of exception has become "the dominant paradigm of government in contemporary politics".<sup>20</sup> Based on intensive theoretical and circumstantial research and in a tumultuous post-war context, Giorgio Agamben tried to formulate a very-general theory of the state of exception:

the state of exception is neither external nor internal to the juridical order, and the problem of defining it concerns precisely a threshold, or a zone of indifference, where inside and outside do not exclude each other but rather blur with each other.<sup>21</sup>

These nuances become more contoured in *Necropolitics* where Achille Mbembe claims that the colony is "the site par excellence where controls and guarantees of judicial order can be suspended—the zone where the violence of the state of exception is deemed to operate in the service of civilization"<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, Mbembe stresses that the permanent simulation of the state of exception justifies "the war against terror"— "a war of eradication, indefinite, absolute, that claims the right to cruelty, torture, and indefinite detention—and so a war that draws its weapons from the "evil" that it pretends to be eradicating, in a context in which the law and justice are applied in the form of endless reprisals, vengeance, and revenge".<sup>23</sup> In our case, the evil to be eradicated is the well-known ADF.

What is State of Siege in the Democratic Republic of Congo? Basically, State of Siege means the transfer of power from the central government to the military sector. During the State of Siege, a soldier assisted by a police officer will be at the head of the provinces. Provincial assemblies and provincial governments will also be suspended during the same period and their powers will be transferred to the provincial military authorities. The effects of the state of siege imply a transfer of authority and is characterized by an increase in the content of ordinary police powers, by the possibility of a relinquishment of civil authorities by the

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>21</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005, p. 6.

<sup>22</sup> Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, Durham: Duke University Press, p. 88.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem.*, p. 49.

military authorities and by the expansion of the jurisdiction of military courts. Concretely, the superior direction and the responsibility for the internal defense are transferred to the military authority. The powers vested in the civilian authority for the maintenance of law and order and the police pass entirely to the military authority. The civilian authorities, however, continue to exercise powers which the military authority does not relinquish, and, in practice, the military authorities are often reluctant to take the place of the civilian authorities and prefer to collaborate with them in the maintenance of public order.

The State of Siege is therefore a regime restricting public freedoms that can be applied to all or part of the territory. The suspension or restriction of public freedoms may concern: individual freedom (movement, demonstration); the rights of foreigners; the right to property; freedom of assembly; the right to strike; the freedom to come and go; the inviolability of homes and searches; the right to property; freedom of commerce and industry, freedom of expression and communication, national mobilization, replacement of civil courts by military courts; increased surveillance of the population. The State of Siege was extended 9 times so far and, according to the President's discourse at UN on September 21, 2021, "the state of siege will be lifted in North Kivu and Ituri when the circumstances that motivated it will disappear".<sup>24</sup> But, in the ninth extension of the State of Siege, the National Assembly had demanded from the government a "management plan to exit the state of siege" before the 10th extension of the State of Siege.<sup>25</sup>

General Constant Ndima Kongba (military governor of North Kivu) and General Luboya Nkashama (military governor of Ituri) are in charge for the military process. They have extensive military experience and have at their disposal serious human and financial resources. Also, President

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<sup>24</sup> « Félix Tshisekedi à l'ONU : « Nous avons assisté au discours d'un chef qui rassure » (UDPS Tshilumbayi)", 23.09.2021, [Félix Tshisekedi à l'ONU : « Nous avons assisté au discours d'un chef qui rassure » (UDPS Tshilumbayi) | Radio Okapi], accessed on 25.09.2021.

<sup>25</sup> « Assemblée nationale : examen ce jeudi du projet de loi portant prorogation de l'état de siège pour la 10e fois », 14.10.2021, [<https://actualite.cd/2021/10/14/etat-de-siege-en-ituri-et-au-nord-kivu-le-gouvernement-na-pas-transmis-lassemblee>], accessed on 20.10.2021.

Félix Tshisekedi authorized the deployment of US anti-terrorist experts.<sup>26</sup> Interestingly, in eastern DRC, not only the autonomous armed groups but also the Congolese army itself was being held responsible for human rights abuses and the maintenance of a climate of fear and impunity against the citizens it is supposed to protect.<sup>27</sup>

The results of this measure are long awaited. After 4 months, there is no significant progress in the area. On the contrary, violence is gradually amplifying: 533 people were killed between May and July alone in North Kivu and Ituri,<sup>28</sup> a record that calls into question the effectiveness of the State of Siege. According to data collected by the Kivu Security Tracker (KST) since the state of siege was decreed by President Félix Tshisekedi on April 30, civilian security as a whole has, in fact, gotten worse in North Kivu and Ituri provinces: at least 723 civilians have been killed by armed actors the North Kivu and Ituri since May 6. Two questions are required. Firstly, is this measure fit to meet the goal established by the President, namely the pacification of the eastern region? It can't be estimated yet based on existing results. Nevertheless, despite the obvious shortcomings, this measure represents a new strategy, which does not resemble with what has been used so far. An important aspect is the fact that the FARDC soldiers are well acquainted with the territories affected in the case and are aware of the real ruling needs.

Security issues in the East require a lot of financial resources and especially good management of them. The results of the State of Siege are negative following embezzlement, said national deputy Gratien Iracan. In an interview with Radio Okapi on Sunday August 8, Ituri's elected official

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<sup>26</sup> "DR Congo Accepts US Military Help Against ADF Militia", 15.08.2021, [[https://www.voanews.com/a/africa\\_dr-congo-accepts-us-military-help-against-adf-militia/6209612.html](https://www.voanews.com/a/africa_dr-congo-accepts-us-military-help-against-adf-militia/6209612.html)], accessed on 16.08.2021.

<sup>27</sup> Koen Vlassenroot, Emery Mudinga, Josaphat Musamba, "Navigating social spaces: armed mobilization and circular return in Eastern DR Congo", *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 4, 2020, Oxford University Press, pp. 832-852.

<sup>28</sup> « RDC : le mouvement citoyen Lucha demande la levée de l'état de siège dans l'est », 12.08.2021, [<https://actualite.cd/2021/08/12/rdc-le-mouvement-citoyen-lucha-demande-la-levée-de-letat-de-siège-dans-lest>], accessed on 17.08.2021.

regrets that 33 million USD has been released to finance the state of siege, but the two provinces have only been able to receive 8 million USD.<sup>29</sup>

These elements lead to the answer to the second question. This ambiguous context can be used for the benefit of the president and his election campaign. The President has repeatedly promised the pacification of the eastern region and by implementing this measure, he can say that he has fulfilled his promise. This measure is also a response to very serious concern among public opinion. According to the poll by the Congo Research Group, 20% of respondents believe that security should be the government's priority, which ranks this issue in second place behind "social/living conditions", and ahead of "economy/jobs". During the month of April, there were protests (including in North Kivu) which not only called for MONUSCO to leave but also for the president to keep his word.<sup>30</sup>

In this direction, media propaganda plays a colossal role, because the national army maximizes in public even the slightest success. For instance, a classic model found in the media: "A total of X people in connection with the ADF were arrested including X women alongside X firearms and several bladed weapons with military effects.....", usually coming from Nasson Murara, Beni's local police communicator. Moreover, at the start of June 2021, Kinshasa announced the pacification of the Mbau-Kamango trunk road, in the territory of Beni. Yet the reopening of this trunk road had already been announced in September 2020 by the then minister of defense, and no incident had been recorded on this road by KST in 2021.<sup>31</sup> At first appearance, army-led operations are successful and have the expected effect: it raises public awareness. But in reality, these glorious media appearances are counterproductive, because most of the time the following strategies are announced in advance. For instance, there is public talk about the infiltration of fardc soldiers within the rebel groups. Thus, the rebels know where and how to attack and act in order to win. This

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<sup>29</sup> RDC : le bilan de l'état de siège est négatif à la suite de détournement de fonds (Gratien Iracan), 08.09.2021, [<https://www.radiookapi.net/2021/08/09/actualite/securite/rdc-le-bilan-de-letat-de-siege-est-negatif-la-suite-de-detournement-de>], accessed on 22.09.2021.

<sup>30</sup> GEC/BERCI, « L'an 2 de Tshisekedi Année de l'émancipation ? », *Groupe d'étude sur le Congo, Bureau d'études, de recherche et de consulting international (BERCI)*, July 2021.

<sup>31</sup> Pierre Boisselet, "Has the State of Siege Improved Security in the Eastern DRC?", *Kivu Security Tracker/Congo Research Group*, 15.06.2021, [<https://blog.kivusecurity.org/has-the-state-of-siege-improved-security-in-the-eastern-drc/>], accessed on 11.08.2021.

aspect also explains the symmetry of the attacks in the territories: when the army attacks, the ADF responds and vice versa, everything being extremely predictable.

For Agamben, “the suspension of the law is pivotal in that it directly affects people’s lives, not as subjects of politics or citizens, but as human beings as such”.<sup>32</sup> Since the proclamation of the State of Siege, the provincial institutions have slowed down. According to the Ordinance seven people make up the political staff of the provincial government under the state of siege: the military governor and his deputy, as well as the five members of his cabinet. Seven people to replace a team made up of the governor, his deputy, ten provincial ministers and their respective advisers, or just over 70 people.<sup>33</sup> Clearly, more than military inefficiency, administrative and judicial<sup>34</sup> lockdown is seriously hurting the population. The dissatisfaction of part of the population with the state of siege is intensifying gradually in Ituri and North Kivu: thirteen militants of the *Lutte pour le changement* (Fight for Change-Lucha), which pleads for the demilitarization of administrations, were arrested and handed over to military justice.<sup>35</sup>

## Conclusions

To finish in Mbembe’s distinction, “perhaps more than about difference, the era is about the fantasy of separation, and even extermination”.<sup>36</sup> The complexity of the Congolese state is underestimated, and the general tendency is to highlight what the state isn’t and can’t. As we noted in the previous pages, beyond the question of the effectiveness of the State of Siege in solving short-term security problems in the eastern part of the country, there is the question of the functioning of the state in

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<sup>32</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *op.cit.*, p. 88.

<sup>33</sup> Fred Bauma, “Etat de Siege ou disfonctionnement de l’état au Nord Kivu”, *Congo Research Group/ Groupe d’Etude Sur le Congo*, Jul. 22, 2021, <http://congoresearchgroup.org/etat-de-siege-ou-dysfonctionnement-de-letat-au-nord-kivu/?lang=fr>, accessed on 16.09.2021.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>35</sup> « RDC : la Lucha en guerre contre l’état de siège », 13.11.2021, [<https://www.jeuneafrique.com/1265265/politique/rdc-la-lucha-en-guerre-contre-letat-de-siege/>], accessed on 14.11.2021.

<sup>36</sup> Achille Mbembe, *op.cit.*, p. 49.

these provinces. The solution is not that simple and visible, nor does it stop at a simple exceptional measure. Like the multiple failures of the DDR (Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration) program, the State of Siege emphasizes the unprofessionalism and frivolity of the FARDC and accentuates the colossal distance between the capital and the eastern part of the country. A predictable and irreparable effect could be the total decrease of the population's support for the national army.

On the other side, through this approach, president Tshisekedi has double gain: nationally, it will gain the trust of the population affected by ADF attacks over time; internationally, it will seem that he came out victorious in the fight against the terrorist threat, as he highlights on every occasion. Thus, ending the State of Siege with no palpable result could have enormous political costs for President Felix Tshisekedi, who has already announced his ambition to stand for re-election.

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LA CONSTRUCTION D'UNE PAIX DURABLE DANS LA RÉGION  
DES GRANDS LACS AFRICAINS: CAS DE LA RÉPUBLIQUE  
DÉMOCRATIQUE DU CONGO, DU BURUNDI, DU RWANDA  
ET DE L'OUGANDA

BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE PEACE IN THE AFRICAN GREAT  
LAKES REGION: THE CASE OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC  
OF CONGO, BURUNDI, RWANDA AND UGANDA

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**Abstract**

*For historical, sociological and documentary approach based on a chronological analysis of the facts on armed conflicts in the Great lakes region, in this article, we show how the construction of sustainable painting is possible in this Region. This implies the purpose and roles of the various actors which are the states supported by regional organizations, the international community and civil society. Thus, do entered strategies applied by regional policies to set up cooperation for the management and exploitation of the natural resources in the municipalities. These common development policies thus contribute to the strengthening of collective security in application to the national defenses of the states and their political and legal mechanism of dispute rules.*

**Keywords:** Peace building, states and strategies, great lakes-region, Africa

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## Introduction

La région des Grands Lacs africains est une succession de Lacs qui occupent la partie méridionale de la vallée du Grand Rift<sup>1</sup>, entre le 30<sup>ème</sup> et le 35<sup>ème</sup> méridien au niveau de l'équateur, entre 5° nord et 15° sud. Cette recherche s'intéresse aux Etats compris entre les Lacs Albert et Tanganyika à savoir la République Démocratique du Congo, le Burundi, le Rwanda et l'Ouganda. Il s'agit ici d'un système politique et non géographique.

Cette région intéresse le Monde entier par ses potentialités économiques et ses ressources naturelles immenses (métaux précieux, terres fertiles, climat doux, diversité de la faune et de la flore, etc.).

Malheureusement, c'est une région meurtrie par des conflits armés.<sup>2</sup> L'exemple le plus frappant est la situation de l'Est de la République Démocratique du Congo en proie à des groupes armés étrangers et locaux.<sup>3</sup> Depuis les années 1980, la région des Grands Lacs est victime d'une guerre secrète par procuration. Elle serait une mission visant le changement de régimes politiques et de géostratégie en faveur des Etats-Unis d'Amérique et de la Grande Bretagne.<sup>4</sup> Ce plan s'opère par l'accession au pouvoir de dirigeants issus des mouvements rebelles comme Yoweri MUSEVENI en Ouganda, Paul Kagame au Rwanda, Pierre Nkurunziza au Burundi ou encore Laurent Désiré Kabila en RD Congo.<sup>5</sup>

Dans ces vagues de guerres, certains groupes rebelles et forces d'opposition de l'Ouganda, du Rwanda et du Burundi sont venus s'installer à l'Est de la RD Congo où ils sèment terreur et désolation contre

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<sup>1</sup> La région des Grands lacs africains-Encyclopédie Universalis en ligne sur <https://www.universalis.fr/encyclopedie/grands-lacs-africains/>, consulté le 13 février 2020 à 17h.

<sup>2</sup> Sergiu Mişcoiu, Sèdagban Hygin Faust Kakaï, Kokou Folly Hetcheli (dir.), *Recul démocratique et néo-présidentialisme en Afrique centrale et occidentale*, Iaşi : Institutul European, 2015.

<sup>3</sup> L'Inter-Cluster Régional du Sud-Kivu avec le soutien d'OCHA : « Plan de réponse stratégique et opérationnel face à l'impact humanitaire de la crise conflit intercommunautaire dans les Moyens et Hauts-Plateaux de Fizi et Mwenga » article en ligne sur le site de *Relief web*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>4</sup> Pierre Péan, *CARNAGES, Les guerres secrètes des grandes puissances en Afrique*, Fayard, 2010, p.316.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*.

la population Congolaise.<sup>6</sup> Nous pouvons citer les Forces Démocratiques Alliées (ADF) venues de l'Ouganda ; les Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda (FDLR) et leurs alliés ; les Forces Nationales de Libération (FNL) du Burundi.<sup>7</sup>

Ces successions de guerres et de régimes politiques d'un pays à un autre, d'une époque à une autre, répondraient à la philosophie de la guerre, comme un choix légitime de réaliser des visées politiques et/ou militaires en usant de la violence réciproque.<sup>8</sup> Or, à l'exception des hypothèses de recours à la guerre légitime lorsque la paix et la sécurité internationale sont menacées par un acte d'agression,<sup>9</sup> la Charte des Nations Unies interdit toute guerre dans les relations internationales. Le fait que ces guerres aient été menées en violation de la Charte des Nations Unies, serait l'évidence d'une guerre visant à déstabiliser la région des Grands Lacs.<sup>10</sup>

Les conséquences de ces guerres sont exprimées par des chiffres alarmants. La région des Grands Lacs est devenue celle de la mort et du malheur et ce, dans une indifférence quasi générale. Le bilan de ces guerres fait état d'un million de Rwandais exterminés ; plus de six millions de Congolais tués et massacrés ; de milliers de Burundais tués ; plusieurs femmes Congolaises victimes de viols et violences sexuelles ; de millions de déplacés et réfugiés ; d'innombrables assassinats de chefs d'Etat, dirigeants, ministres et autres personnalités ; le pillage systématique du patrimoine

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<sup>6</sup> Andreea Bianca Urs, « Du conflit au terrorisme en RD Congo », in *Studia Europaea*, LXV, 1, 2020, pp. 55-73.

<sup>7</sup> Césaire Nyalumya, *La diversité culturelle en République Démocratique du Congo : Une contribution à la paix et à l'unité nationale*, Berlin : Editions Universitaires Européennes, Novembre 2019, p. 40.

<sup>8</sup> Adrien Schu, « Qu'est-ce que la guerre ? Une réinterprétation de la 'formule' de Carl von Clausewitz », in *Revue française de Sciences politiques*, Volume 67- Numéro-avril 2017, pp. 291-297.

<sup>9</sup> Moïse Cifende et Smis Stefaan, « Charte des Nations Unies-article 36 et suivants » in *Code de Droit international africain*, Bruxelles : Larcier, 2013, p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> Il ne s'agit pas de la seule région où nous avons affaire à des guerres et des rébellions internes. Voir, par exemple : Mathilde Leyendecker, Sergiu Mișcoiu, „Passé militaire, trajets militants : La poursuite politique de la lutte armée par les indépendantistes en Casamance”, dans Michel Catala (dir.), *L'Europe et l'Afrique - Conflits nationaux et coopérations régionales, des indépendances à nos jours*, Rennes: Presses Universitaires des Rennes, 2020, pp. 117-130.

culturel, de la ressource disponible, des ressources du sol et du sous-sol de la RD Congo.<sup>11</sup>

Comme on peut le remarquer, la construction comme la destruction de la paix, dépend en grande partie de la volonté et de la mobilisation des acteurs en présence.<sup>12</sup>

Martin Luther King disait : « Nous devons apprendre à vivre ensemble comme des frères ou périr ensemble comme des idiots ».

Au regard des atrocités des conflits armés dans cette région, il est de l'intérêt de tous de se mobiliser pour construire la paix dans une prise de conscience pour bâtir la cohésion régionale entre les différentes communautés.<sup>13</sup> Il faudrait reconstruire une région dans laquelle toutes les communautés cohabitent dans la tolérance, la promotion de la paix et de la justice, la coexistence pacifique et la bonne coopération entre les Etats.

Eu égard à ce qui précède, quel rôle doivent jouer les différents acteurs dans la construction d'une paix durable dans la région des Grands Lacs ? Quels sont les stratégies et les mécanismes pour y arriver ?

Par une approche historique, sociologique et documentaire basée sur une analyse chronologique des faits sur des conflits armés dans la région des Grands Lacs depuis les années 1980 à nos jours, un regard sur les actions des acteurs et la revue documentaire sur la région des Grands Lacs africains, nous allons, par cet article, démontrer le rôle que devraient jouer les acteurs (1) et la nécessité d'un choix orthodoxe des stratégies et mécanismes pour amener ces acteurs (politiques, société civile, population) à s'approprier la paix comme source d'une stabilité durable dans la région concernée (2).

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<sup>11</sup> Pierre Péan, *Op Cit*, p. 10.

<sup>12</sup> V., par exemple : Sergiu Mișcoiu, Louis-Marie Kakdeu, « Authoritarian clientelism: the case of the president's 'creatures' in Cameroon » in *Acta Politica*, no. 4, vol. 56, 2021, pp. 639-657.

<sup>13</sup> Simona Jișa, Sergiu Mișcoiu et Modibo Diarra (dir.), *Raconter les politiques conflictuelles en Afrique. Regards croisés*, Paris : Editions du Cerf, 2021 ; Simona Jișa, Sergiu Mișcoiu et Buata Malela (dir.), *Littérature et politique en Afrique francophone. Approche transdisciplinaire*, Paris : Editions du Cerf, 2018.

## **1. De l'action et du rôle des acteurs dans la construction d'une paix durable dans la région des Grands Lacs**

La construction d'une paix durable dans la région des Grands Lacs ne peut se réaliser que par l'implication des Etats de la région (1.1) bénéficiant du soutien des organisations régionales (1.2), des partenaires internationaux (2.3) et de l'implication active de la société civile (1.4).

### **1.1. Les Etats de la région des Grands Lacs**

L'Etat est présenté en Droit international public comme un sujet souverain bénéficiant d'une position dominante dans l'ordre international. Il dispose de la plénitude des compétences à l'intérieur de ses frontières et d'une personnalité juridique sur la scène internationale.<sup>14</sup> Cette souveraineté confère à l'Etat une égalité vis-à-vis d'autres Etats et une liberté d'action avec un principe de réciprocité dans les engagements qui le lient aux autres.

Par sa qualité de sujet de Droit international, il a une aptitude illimitée à conclure des traités d'où la plénitude de la capacité étatique.<sup>15</sup> L'Etat souverain est tenu à l'obligation de respecter le Droit international notamment de s'abstenir de mener des actes de guerres ou de violer les conventions légalement établies.

De la même manière que la bonne foi est le principe fondateur et fondamental dans le système du Droit civil,<sup>16</sup> elle est également indispensable dans les rapports interétatiques. Il faut donc que les Etats agissent dans le respect des conventions qui les régissent pour atteindre les objectifs communs. D'où leur vocation visant à unir les peuples par une participation large à la construction permanente de la paix qui est la garantie contre le retour des catastrophes guerrières qui ont habité leurs mémoires.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Philippe Blacher, *Droit des relations internationales*, Lexis Nexis, 3<sup>ème</sup> Edition, Paris, 2008, p. 19.

<sup>15</sup> Raphaële Rivier, *Droit international public*, Paris: PUF, 3<sup>ème</sup> Edition, , 2017, p. 41.

<sup>16</sup> «La Bonne foi », Tome XLIII, in *Travaux de l'Association Henri CAPITANT*, Université Pathéon-Assas, (Paris II), Librairie de la Cour de Cassation, Paris, 1992, p. 479.

<sup>17</sup> Louis Arnaud et Michel Drancourt, *Le Pari européen*, Librairie Artheme Fayard, 1968, p. 262.

Malheureusement, il y a des Etats qui vont carrément à contre sens de la construction de la paix. Dans la région des Grands Lacs, certains Etats dont le Rwanda, l'Ouganda et le Burundi sont impliqués dans la guerre en RD Congo. Ces Etats sont cités dans plusieurs rapports des Experts des Nations Unies pour avoir engagé leurs armées et groupes rebelles dans les épisodes des guerres en RD Congo depuis 1996 à nos jours.<sup>18</sup>

D'après Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), les Hommes sont régis par leur état de nature. Cet état de nature est décrit comme un état de *bellum omnium contra omnes* c'est-à-dire la guerre de tous contre tous. D'où la célèbre formule : *homo homini lupus* « l'Homme est un loup pour l'Homme ».<sup>19</sup>

Pour Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) dans le *Contrat social*, un conflit peut être vu comme un mode de régulation sociale. Il s'agit d'une construction politique relationnelle entre les individus ou les groupes sociaux qui passe par un règlement pacifique : la médiation, la négociation ou la coopération. Le conflit peut permettre ainsi de construire l'unité.

Et pour rejoindre le sociologue Georg Simmel, le conflit est une forme de coalition qui peut aboutir à de potentielles résolutions des antagonismes. Il faudrait donc l'existence d'une cause réelle avec une bonne volonté de la résoudre.<sup>20</sup>

La guerre dans la région des Grands Lacs qui a commencé dans les années 1980 a mobilisé plusieurs acteurs étatiques, régionaux et internationaux avec des motivations différentes. Elle est passée d'une guerre impliquant des Etats avec une dimension physique (affrontement des armées étatiques) pour devenir une guerre civile des groupes armés géographiquement constitués dans le Kivu. Répandant ainsi le principe vicieux « diviser pour mieux régner », les meneurs de ces conflits armés ont opposé différentes communautés les unes contre les autres par des idéologies ethno-partisanes ou encore des identités meurtrières. D'où l'émergence des guerres dites interethniques dans l'Est de la RD Congo.

<sup>18</sup> Lire à ce sujet l'évolution des Guerres du Congo : De la guerre de l'Alliance des Forces Démocratiques de Libération entre 1996 et 1997, en passant par celle du Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie et du Mouvement de Libération du Congo de 1998 à 2003 ou encore celle du Congrès National pour la Défense du Peuple en 2004 et du Mouvement du 23 Mars en 2012 et des guerres actuelles dites intercommunautaires.

<sup>19</sup> Amaël Cattaruzza et Pierre Sintès, *Géopolitique des conflits*, Bréal, 2017, p.11.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, pp.12-13

D'autres groupes armés se sont transformés carrément en mouvement terroristes telles sont les ADF ougandaises.<sup>21</sup> Il s'agit ici d'un système idéologique répandu par le pouvoir militaire et politique d'occupation en vue de légitimer son pouvoir auprès des groupes dominés.<sup>22</sup> C'est ce que Bourdieu appelle la « magie de l'Etat » qui se traduit par la capacité des Etats ou des acteurs politiques et militaires à diviser la population pour des intérêts égoïstes.

Etant donné que les Hommes passent et que les plans changent, il en va aussi du mobile d'un conflit. La fin des conflits armés dans la région des Grands Lacs a nécessité des traités de paix entre les Etats sous l'égide des Organisations régionales (l'accord de Lusaka du 10 juillet 1999, l'accord de Sun City du 19 avril 2002, les accords du 23 mars 2009, l'accord cadre d'Addis-Abeba du 24 février 2013, l'accord de Nairobi du 12 décembre 2013, etc.).

Ce processus de paix a évolué dans une phase sous une dimension chronologique entre la paix et la guerre. Les institutions ou organes supra étatiques voulus par les Etats, sont appelés à prendre des mesures décisionnaires en faveur de la paix : maintien ou imposition de la paix, retour des réfugiés et déplacés, pacification et réconciliation, mise en place des instances judiciaires ou politiques spécialisées. C'est cela le processus de la reconstruction d'une paix durable.<sup>23</sup>

## 1.2. Les Organisations régionales

Parmi les acteurs onusiens de maintien de la paix, il y a les Organisations régionales. C'est un mécanisme prévu au Chapitre VIII de la Charte des Nations Unies. Il concerne le regroupement régional des Etats géographiquement proches. Elles concourent ainsi au maintien de la paix et de la sécurité internationale en réglant pacifiquement les différends au niveau local et régional. Elles concluent des accords compatibles avec les buts et les principes des Nations Unies sur l'initiative des Etats intéressés

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<sup>21</sup> RDC : Les Etats-Unis annoncent des sanctions contre 6 membres clés des ADF, en ligne sur <https://l'interview.cd/rdc-les-etats-unis-annoncent-des-sanctions-contre-6-membres-cles-des-adf/>, consulté le 11 décembre 2019 à 19h.

<sup>22</sup> Amaël Cattaruzza et Pierre Sintès, *Op. Cit*, p. 20.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 75.

ou sur renvoi au Conseil de sécurité.<sup>24</sup> L'implication des Organisations régionales dans le maintien de la paix et la sécurité internationale répond à un processus de décentralisation ou de coopération avec les Nations Unies. Elles concourent à la mission du Conseil de sécurité et diffusent un sens de la participation et de la démocratisation dans les affaires internationales.<sup>25</sup>

Dans la région des Grands Lacs, quatre Organisations régionales et sous régionales interviennent activement dans le processus de la paix. Il s'agit de l'Union Africaine (UA), la Communauté pour le Développement de l'Afrique Australe (SADC), la Conférence Internationale pour la Région des Grands Lacs (CIRGL) et la Communauté Est-africaine (EAC). Pour le règlement pacifique des conflits dans cette région en général et en RD Congo en particulier, plusieurs accords de paix sont déjà intervenus. Il s'agit de l'Accord de LUSAKA sur le cessez-le-feu signé par les Etats impliqués dans la guerre sur le territoire de la RD Congo. Conclu sous l'égide de l'Organisation de l'Unité Africaine (actuelle Union Africaine) et de la SADC, cet accord fut signé par la RD Congo, l'Angola, le Zimbabwe, la Namibie, le Rwanda et l'Ouganda.<sup>26</sup> Le Conseil de sécurité s'est inspiré de l'Accord de LUSAKA pour créer la Mission d'Observation des Nations Unies au Congo (MONUC) sous la Résolution RES/1279 du 30 novembre 1999. Le mandat de la MONUC a évolué pour devenir la Mission d'Organisation des Nations Unies pour la Stabilisation au Congo (MONUSCO) conformément à la Résolution RES/1925 de 2011. Poursuivant le même objectif, un accord-cadre fut conclu. Il s'agit de l'Accord-cadre d'Addis-Abeba pour la paix, la sécurité et la coopération pour la RD Congo et la région signé le 24 février 2013 entre les pays membres de la CIRGL et ceux de la SADC.

Aux termes de cet Accord-cadre, les engagements étaient pris au niveau de chaque partie signataire. Du côté de la RD Congo, l'engagement était le renforcement de l'autorité de l'Etat, la mise en place des réformes dans le secteur sécuritaire, etc. Au niveau régional, les Etats se sont engagés

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<sup>24</sup> Moïse Cifende et Smis Stefaan, « Charte des Nations Unies-article 52 points 1,2 et 3 », *Op Cit*, p. 2.

<sup>25</sup> Michel Liégeois, « Le rôle des organisations régionales dans le maintien de la paix et de la sécurité internationales : Eléments pour une approche comparative », in *UCL*, Bruxelles, 2010, p. 4.

<sup>26</sup> Césaire Nyalumya, *La Nature juridique de la Brigade d'intervention des Nations Unies en RD Congo*, mémoire du second cycle, Faculté de Droit, UCB, Bukavu, 2015, p. 7, inédit.

contre l'ingérence dans les affaires intérieures des Etats voisins, le renforcement de la coopération régionale, etc. Les Nations Unies par le biais du Conseil de sécurité se sont engagées à soutenir la stabilité à long terme de la RD Congo et de la Région.<sup>27</sup>

Le Conseil de sécurité s'est inspiré de cet Accord-cadre pour mettre en place la Brigade d'intervention de la MONUSCO. Elle a été adoptée sous le Chapitre VII avec un mandat coercitif pour neutraliser conjointement avec les Forces Armées de la RD Congo (FARDC) tous les groupes rebelles opérant sur le territoire Congolais. Elle a été constituée des 3069 casques bleus fournis par la Tanzanie, la République Sud-africaine et le Malawi. Elle a agi dans une opération militaire conjointe avec les FARDC pour vaincre le Mouvement du 23 mars (M23).<sup>28</sup>

Dans cette volonté de régler les conflits et de renforcer le maintien de la paix et de la coopération régionale, plusieurs sommets sont régulièrement convoqués sous l'égide des Organisations régionales en vue de réconcilier différents Etats en conflit. C'est notamment l'Accord politique du 21 août 2019 à Luanda entre le Rwanda et l'Ouganda sous la médiation des Chefs d'Etat de la RD Congo, de l'Angola et de la République du Congo.

Malgré cette présence des organisations internationales et régionales dans la région des Grands Lacs, des interrogations persistent sur l'efficacité des moyens matériels et techniques dont disposent ces organisations pour ramener et maintenir la paix dans cette région.

Toutes fois, au regard des objectifs poursuivis et des résultats obtenus dans la coopération pour la pacification de cette région, nous pouvons noter un avancement positif. Cependant, il faudrait une bonne volonté de la part de différents acteurs impliqués et le renforcement de la mise en place des organes permanents de suivi des résolutions prises. L'aboutissement de cette coopération régionale peut aussi s'appuyer sur les partenaires telles que les Nations Unies et la Communauté Internationale.

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<sup>27</sup> Accord-cadre pour la paix, la sécurité et la coopération pour la République Démocratique du Congo et la Région, paragraphe 5 relatif aux engagements pris par les différents partenaires.

<sup>28</sup> Césaire Nyalumya, *Op. Cit*, p. 28.

### **1.3. Les partenaires internationaux : l'ONU et la Communauté internationale**

Pour maintenir la paix et la sécurité internationale, les Nations Unies agissent par le Conseil de sécurité pour adopter des mesures selon la situation. Les Chapitres VI et VII concernent essentiellement des opérations militaires allant de l'interposition entre les forces armées protagonistes à l'imposition de la paix par des moyens coercitifs. Le Conseil de sécurité demeure l'organe habilité pour adopter des mesures appropriées. Il dispose des pouvoirs discrétionnaires en s'appuyant sur l'attente entre les cinq membres permanents. Il met en place un dispositif permanent d'agir au cas où l'ordre international serait menacé ou quand les principes fondamentaux de la Charte de l'ONU seraient violés.<sup>29</sup>

Dans la région des Grands Lacs, les Nations Unies concourent à la paix par différentes missions. C'est le cas de la MONUSCO ou encore du groupe d'Experts des Nations Unies sur la RD Congo. Le mandat de ces missions comprend à la fois des volets militaires, civils et le développement socioéconomique, allant de la reconstruction de la paix à l'assistance au système électoral, à la publication des rapports sur la situation sécuritaire et les Droits de l'Homme ou encore des projets d'intégration régionale.

Cependant, la paix n'est pas seulement l'absence de guerre. Certains phénomènes peuvent menacer la paix. C'est le cas des phénomènes économiques, humanitaires, écologiques (ex. réchauffement climatique), sanitaires (ex. COVID-19), des régimes dictatoriaux et autoritaires, etc.<sup>30</sup> Les intérêts économiques entre les Etats peuvent aussi nuire au maintien de la paix. Les pays dits « grandes puissances », « émergents » convoitent la région des Grands Lacs. Ils sont là directement par leurs missions diplomatiques et indirectement par leurs multinationales, leurs Organisations non gouvernementales internationales (ONGI) et leurs médias. Les pays des Grands Lacs doivent prendre conscience de ce qu'ils peuvent offrir, et dans l'unité, ils sont appelés à renforcer la coopération « gagnant-gagnant ».

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<sup>29</sup> Alexandra Novosseloff, « Le Chapitre VII et le maintien de la paix. Une ambiguïté à construire », in *Bulletin de maintien de la paix*, n°100, Paris, 2010, p. 1.

<sup>30</sup> Olivier Corten, *Le droit contre la guerre : l'interdiction du recours à la force en Droit international contemporain*, Paris: Editions Redore, , 2008, p. 10.

La paix devient ainsi un processus dynamique par lequel des partenaires différents sont appelés à élaborer et à concrétiser ensemble la justice sociale sur le fondement de la dignité humaine.<sup>31</sup>

Dans cette dynamique de coopération, l'apport et la mobilisation des acteurs de la société civile sont indispensables.

#### **1.4. La société civile**

Travailler pour la paix exige des personnes actives sur place. Des acteurs qui connaissent le terrain et qui peuvent inspirer confiance. C'est le rôle de la société civile.

La société civile est présentée comme l'ensemble des organisations qui travaillent pour le bien-être de la population. Il s'agit d'une dynamique associative qui regroupe des acteurs privés, des associations et des ONG. Elle regroupe aussi un certain nombre de forces vives organisées ou non et qui sont engagées aux cotés de l'Etat dans sa quête de développement social.<sup>32</sup> L'objectif de la société civile vise ainsi un développement humain dans une gamme de choix offerts à la population et qui permettent de rendre le développement plus démocratique et plus participatif. L'individu a ainsi la possibilité de participer largement aux décisions de la communauté et de jouir des libertés sociales, économiques et politiques.<sup>33</sup>

Comme acteur de développement durable, la société civile joue un rôle important dans la région des Grands Lacs.

Les confessions religieuses, les ONG, les médias, les mouvements citoyens et les associations des jeunes font partie intégrante de la société civile.

A travers l'espace « Commission Justice et Paix » ; l'Eglise catholique s'affirme comme un acteur important de la société civile dans la région des Grands Lacs pour une justice de proximité. Elle éveille la communauté et les pasteurs à la conscience de leur rôle et de leurs responsabilités pour la justice, la paix et les droits humains. Elle se réfère à

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<sup>31</sup> *Transformation des conflits et construction de la paix, Cadre d'orientation de la Diaconie œcuménique*, Stuttgart, juillet 2010.

<sup>32</sup> Olivier Thome, « La Société civile et l'Etat », notes inédites du module *Engagement citoyen et Développement durable*, Lyon, 2018. p. 5.

<sup>33</sup> PNUD, « Rapport mondial sur le développement humain », 1991.

la doctrine chrétienne en vue de la transformation des structures sociopolitiques et économiques qui oppriment l'Homme.<sup>34</sup>

Des ONG interviennent également à travers des projets de soutien et de collaboration avec les populations locales.

Poursuivant cet objectif, la démarche de l'ONGI « INTERPEACE » est novatrice. « INTERPEACE » est une organisation internationale non gouvernementale de consolidation de la paix. Elle mène plusieurs projets et programmes en RD Congo, au Rwanda, Burundi, etc. Son approche vise à « soutenir les initiatives de consolidation de la paix menées localement. Elle adapte son approche à chaque société et veille à ce que son action soit menée localement. Elle est en étroite collaboration avec ses équipes et partenaires locaux dans une mise en place de processus qui relie les communautés locales, la société civile, le gouvernement et la communauté internationale ». <sup>35</sup>

Les Médias comme acteur de la société civile, offrent un espace essentiel dans la diffusion de l'information et la communication dans la région des Grands Lacs. Ils agissent dans des conférences de presse, communiqués, dossiers spéciaux, interview dans des émissions télévisées ou radiodiffusées pour éclairer l'opinion publique sur l'évolution de l'actualité. Il est capital de veiller à la qualité, à la sincérité et à la régularité des informations. D'où la nécessité de la neutralité et de l'objectivité face aux facteurs économiques (financement), aux facteurs politiques (régime politique) et aux facteurs géographiques et sociaux (zones couvertes).<sup>36</sup>

L'expression du peuple demeure déterminante dans le choix des acteurs politiques, la participation et la mise en œuvre des politiques publiques. De nos jours, on constate un éveil et une prise de conscience des populations des Pays des Grands Lacs pour barrer la route aux groupes rebelles, surmonter les manipulations politiciennes et idéologiques et exiger le respect strict des législations en vigueur et les mandats des Chefs d'Etat.

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<sup>34</sup> Travaux de la Commission Episcopale Justice et Paix (CEJP) en RD Congo en ligne <https://www.alternatives.ca/allies/commission-episcopale-justice-et-paix-cejp-rdc-0>, consulté le 10 octobre 2019 à 19h.

<sup>35</sup> « Our Track 6 approach » en ligne sur <https://www.interpeace.org/our-approach/track-6/>, consulté le 25 septembre à 16h.

<sup>36</sup> Pierre Albert et Christine Leteinturier, *Les Médias dans le monde : enjeux internationaux et diversités nationales*, Paris: Edition Marketing, , 1991, pp. 81-82.

La dynamique du peuple Congolais est un exemple d'une prise de conscience affirmée et d'un éveil citoyen. Ce peuple est demeuré ferme et vigilant contre tout projet de « balkanisation » du pays depuis 1998 et contre la révision constitutionnelle en 2016. Il a su arracher une alternance démocratique dans un environnement tendu et répressif lors des élections de décembre 2018. Il manifeste également la volonté de s'émanciper de tout pouvoir ou mode de gouvernance qui s'écarte de la volonté du souverain primaire et ce, en violation des textes légaux.<sup>37</sup>

Les groupes des jeunes comme les « GUIDES et SCOUTS » ; le Mouvement de la Lutte pour le Changement (LUCHA), le Syndicat du Peuple-SDP, représentent une volonté de la participation citoyenne à la bonne gouvernance, à l'éducation civique et à la diffusion large de la diversité culturelle dans la région.

Grâce à ses moyens de participation aux politiques publiques, le pouvoir de la société civile est renforcé dans la mise en œuvre des stratégies et mécanismes pour un développement durable. Parmi ces moyens, on peut citer : le vote, la pétition, les manifestations, les villes mortes, le lobbying, le plaidoyer, etc.<sup>38</sup>

## **2. Des stratégies et des mécanismes pour consolider la paix dans la région des Grands Lacs**

Dans la dynamique d'une paix durable, il faut des politiques régionales pour asseoir une coopération en vue de la gestion et l'exploitation des ressources naturelles communes (2.1). Ces politiques de développement commun impliquent le renforcement de la sécurité collective en appui aux défenses nationales des Etats (2.2), mais aussi des moyens politico-juridiques de règlement des différends (2.3).

### **2.1. La coopération pour la gestion et l'exploitation des ressources naturelles communes**

La région des Grands Lacs, en dépit des conflits armés auxquels elle est confrontée, possède plusieurs ressources naturelles et atouts nécessaires pour relancer son développement. De grandes réserves mondiales des

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<sup>37</sup> Césaire Nyalumya, *Op Cit*, p. 38.

minerais stratégiques pour l'avenir écologique de l'humanité se trouvent dans cette région : cobalt, coltan, lithium, or, cuivre, diamant, terres rares, etc.

En plus de ces minerais précieux, elle dispose de grandes ressources naturelles protectrices de la planète. Le bassin du Fleuve Congo constitue la deuxième réserve de forêts et d'eau dont l'humanité a besoin pour sa survie écologique. Le secteur agricole de la région est vaste et très prometteur. Or, il faut nourrir l'Afrique et le Monde en aliments propres « BIO ». C'est autant de solutions et de potentialités pour répondre aux défis écologiques et alimentaires mondiaux.<sup>39</sup>

Il importe que tous les Etats de la région associent leur pouvoir, leur bonne volonté et leurs intérêts dans une coopération « gagnant-gagnant ». C'est cette dynamique qui permettra aux Etats de la région de réaliser des projets pertinents et durables pour maintenir l'unité et la coopération. Cette réalisation ne peut être possible que par des politiques de « Soft power » c'est-à-dire la capacité à mettre en place des alliances d'intérêts communs plutôt que de faire usage de la force ou de la violence armée. Ainsi donc, les Etats peuvent sécuriser, agir et accroître des intérêts suprêmes (protection des frontières), des intérêts vitaux (influences stratégiques) pour arriver aux intérêts tactiques (libre circulation et le respect des normes internationales).<sup>40</sup>

Le modèle européen est un exemple à suivre. Après plusieurs années de guerre, les Etats européens construisent aujourd'hui une Europe forte et unie comme entité politique et économique.

La RD Congo, par sa superficie et sa position géostratégique, partage ses frontières avec neuf pays voisins : la République du Congo, la République Centre Africaine, le Soudan du Sud, l'Ouganda, le Rwanda, le Burundi, la Tanzanie, la Zambie et l'Angola. Ce partage des frontières implique également le partage de plusieurs ressources naturelles et matières minérales.

Nous pouvons en illustrer quelques-unes :

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<sup>39</sup> Césaire Nyalumya, « L'Afrique que nous voulons », projet du *Concours essais jeunesse AUDA/NEPAD 2019*, Toulouse, 2019.

<sup>40</sup> La Géopolitique : l'essentiel pour tout comprendre en ligne sur <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tpj-4L27oOk>, consulté le 30 septembre 2019 à 12h.

- L'enclave de Cabinda regorgeant de puissants puits pétroliers entre la RD Congo, l'Angola et la République du Congo ;
- Le bassin du Fleuve Congo partagé entre la RD Congo, la République Centre Africaine, la République du Congo, le Gabon etc. ;
- Le Lac Albert partagé entre la RD Congo et l'Ouganda. En plus d'une grande diversité animale dont il dispose, il possède aussi une quantité suffisante de pétrole dans son fond marin ;
- Le Grand Virunga, une réserve touristique partagée entre la RD Congo, l'Ouganda et le Rwanda avec une diversité de faune, de flore et d'hydrographie ;
- Le Lac Kivu qui est partagé entre la RD Congo et le Rwanda. Il se déverse dans le Lac Tanganyika par la Rivière Ruzizi en passant par la plaine de la Ruzizi. Le Lac Kivu est réputé pour son gaz méthane riche en électricité et son espèce poissonneuse.
- La Rivière Ruzizi sur laquelle sont érigées les Centrales hydro-électriques Ruzizi I et II, et un projet en cours pour la Ruzizi III<sup>41</sup>, offre à la RD Congo, au Rwanda et au Burundi des potentialités énergétiques énormes.
- Quant à la Plaine de la Ruzizi, elle offre un espace agropastoral important et une réserve pour la recherche médicale et botanique.
- Le Lac Tanganyika qui relie la RD Congo au Burundi et à la Tanzanie, offre un environnement propice pour le commerce lacustre et la pêche maritime.

En plus de ces quelques ressources partagées, chaque pays dispose d'autres potentialités sur son territoire.

La RD Congo possède à elle seule plus de « 80 millions d'hectares de terres arables capables de nourrir plus de deux milliards d'individus ».<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> La construction du Barrage Ruzizi III : les partenaires prêts à déboursier 400 millions d'euros en ligne sur <https://interkinoinis.net/construction-du-barrage-ruzizi-iii-les-partenaires-prets-a-debourser-400-millionsdeuros>, consulté le 30 septembre 2019 à 17h.

<sup>42</sup> Allocution du chef de l'Etat (RD Congo)-74eme Assemblée Générale des Nations Unies en ligne sur [http://data.over-blog-kiwi.com/0/93/22/16/20190926/ob\\_654f41\\_allocution-du-chef-de-l-etat-74.pdf](http://data.over-blog-kiwi.com/0/93/22/16/20190926/ob_654f41_allocution-du-chef-de-l-etat-74.pdf), consulté le 1<sup>er</sup> octobre 2019 à 10h.

C'est une solution pour faire face à l'urgence mondiale d'éradiquer la pauvreté et la faim. Cette coopération des Etats doit faire face aussi aux défis liés au développement.

Des projets d'intérêt commun devraient être menés pour relier les différents Etats. Les infrastructures routières, ferroviaires, portuaires et aéroportuaires sont prioritaires pour faciliter le contact et la circulation des personnes et des biens. Au lieu de la concurrence et de la méfiance, les Etats doivent agir ensemble pour la solidarité qui est une finalité pour réaliser des projets communs.<sup>43</sup>

Ces projets impliquent une sécurité collective entre les Etats et le renforcement de la défense dans chaque Etat.

## 2.2. La sécurité collective et les défenses nationales des Etats

L'ONU est le garant de la sécurité collective à travers sa mission de maintien de la paix et de la sécurité internationale. Elle recourt aux organisations régionales et aux Etats membres pour atteindre cet objectif.

Dans les relations internationales, la sécurité collective est assurée par la défense des Etats et les alliances qu'ils mettent en place. Elle est assurée par tous pour tous et contre chacun s'il viole les règles communes.<sup>44</sup>

Pour faire face aux menaces récurrentes dans la région des Grands Lacs en général et à l'Est de la RD Congo en particulier, le Président de la RD Congo, Félix Tshisekedi avait recommandé à ses homologues Chefs d'Etat, la création d'une « coalition régionale » à l'image de la coalition mondiale contre le terrorisme.<sup>45</sup> S'inspirant de résultats obtenus par la Brigade d'intervention de la MONUSCO, une coalition régionale s'avère une priorité.

L'avantage d'une coalition régionale peut s'apprécier à différents niveaux :

- La connaissance du terrain et des langues de la région ;

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<sup>43</sup> « Concurrence et solidarité, l'économie de marché, jusqu'où » ? In *Semaines sociales de France*, Edition ESF, Paris, Issy-les-Moulineaux, 1991, p. 11.

<sup>44</sup>L'ONU, garant de la sécurité collective en ligne sur <https://www.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/dossiers/maintien-paix/operations-maintien-paix.shtml>, consulté le 07 octobre 2019 à 12h.

<sup>45</sup> Tshisekedi propose à la SADC, une coalition régionale contre le terrorisme en ligne <https://afrique.lalibre.be/39937/tshisekedi-propose-une-coalition-regionale-contre-le-terrorisme-a-la-sadc/> consulté le 07 octobre 2019 à 13h.

- Le déploiement rapide des unités dans la région ;
- Le bénéfice de la confiance et de la collaboration des communautés locales ;
- L'intérêt d'agir au service de sa région, etc.

Cependant, il ne suffit pas de décider d'une coalition régionale, faut-il encore définir la nature du mandat, les moyens financiers, matériels et logistiques et surtout la composition des unités dans la hiérarchie de commandement<sup>46</sup>. Autant de questions et de préalables auxquels les Etats sont appelés à trouver des réponses. En plus de s'appuyer sur le succès de la Brigade d'intervention, les Etats de la région peuvent s'inspirer d'autres forces militaires engagées dans la sécurité collective. L'Organisation de l'Atlantique Nord (OTAN) peut fournir des données stratégiques à exploiter.

Pour réaliser cet objectif, il est impératif d'appliquer de bonne foi les différentes Chartes constitutives des Organisations régionales et sous régionales à savoir l'UA, la SADC, la CIRGL et l'EAC. Le suivi et la mise en œuvre de l'Accord-cadre d'Addis-Abeba du 23 juin 2013 permettront un début de réalisation de la paix dans la région. Cela favorisera une suite judiciaire au Rapport Mapping des Experts des Nations Unies de 2010 pour des faits commis sur le territoire congolais contre les Congolais et les réfugiés Hutu rwandais. Les auteurs de ces actes étant non seulement des Congolais mais aussi des acteurs régionaux et internationaux.<sup>47</sup>

### 2.3. La justice et les modes alternatifs de résolution des différends

Gérer le post-conflit implique que la justice soit rendue au nom de la paix. Les Etats doivent permettre à l'administration judiciaire de faire son travail en toute indépendance et aux instances supra étatiques de prendre des mesures conséquentes. C'est le moment de la signature d'un traité de paix qui est un « accord international proclamant la fin d'une guerre et contenant souvent des contre parties réciproquement acceptées par les

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<sup>46</sup> V. Andreea Bianca Urs, Sergiu Mișcoiu, « De la continuité à la rupture : une analyse discursive de la présidence de Félix Tshisekedi (RDC) », dans Sergiu Mișcoiu, Delia Pop-Flanța (dir.), *Communication de crise et résolution des conflits en Afrique francophone*, Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Știință, 2021, pp. 11-28.

<sup>47</sup> Césaire Nyalumya, *Op. Cit*, p. 40.

anciens belligérants».<sup>48</sup> Les clauses d'un traité de paix contiennent des engagements fermes entre les Etats. Au nom de la paix, ils admettent le non-recours à la guerre dans toutes ses formes : guerre préventive, guerre préemptive, agression et ingérence, pour se soumettre aux instances de résolution des différends. Il peut s'agir également de l'adoption des mesures préventives contre toute violation de clauses du traité de paix. C'est le cas de contre-mesures.

Par contre-mesures, il faut entendre les « représailles et rétorsions, les boycotts et les embargos ainsi que les autres sanctions économiques et financières. Elles sont décidées par les Etats soucieux de réagir à des événements considérés comme graves, flagrants et grossiers du droit international » (Article 60 de la Convention de Vienne sur le Droit de Traité de 1969). Elles sont revêtues du caractère proportionnel et doivent respecter le Droit international humanitaire et les Droits de l'homme.

La dimension judiciaire intervient pour répondre au droit de savoir, à la connaissance de la vérité, au devoir de mémoire. Il est impérieux que les citoyens des pays des Grands Lacs, victimes de décennies de conflits armés connaissent les événements du passé, les circonstances et les raisons qui ont conduit aux violations massives et systématiques du Droit humanitaire, des droits humains et la commission de crimes graves. Ceci afin d'éviter que de tels actes ne se commettent plus jamais. Cette recherche de la vérité, veut que le peuple connaisse son histoire.<sup>49</sup>

Qui a fait quoi et pourquoi ? Le pardon est une condition de toute réconciliation. Les auteurs des violations devraient manifester leur repentir. Pour permettre une réconciliation juste et durable au sein des Etats des Grands Lacs, il est exigé qu'une réponse effective soit apportée aux besoins de la justice.

L'adoption des lois d'amnistie au sortir de chaque conflit armé a démontré ses limites et ses faiblesses dans la construction de la paix dans la région des Grands Lacs en général et en RD Congo en particulier.

Les Etats ont le devoir de permettre à la justice d'enquêter sur les faits commis, de prendre des mesures appropriées pour de bonnes et justes

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<sup>48</sup> Mario Bettati, *Le Droit de la guerre*, Paris: Odile Jacob, novembre 2016, p. 23.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 320-321.

poursuites à l'encontre des auteurs des violations. Il faut également assurer des voies de recours accessibles et efficaces pour les victimes.<sup>50</sup>

En poursuivant les auteurs des infractions, des crimes et des autres violations du Droit international, la justice concourt au rétablissement de la paix. Patrick BAUDOUIN disait : « une paix réelle repose et se construit par la justice effective »<sup>51</sup> et à Benjamin FERENCZ d'enrichir en disant : « Il ne peut y avoir de paix sans justice ».<sup>52</sup>

## Conclusion

Construire une paix durable dans la région des Grands Lacs (RD Congo, Burundi, Rwanda, Ouganda) devrait obliger à privilégier l'intérêt commun et la bonne foi. Les acteurs étatiques sont appelés à sortir de l'illusion d'une vérité unique et du déni de leurs responsabilités pour des faits commis. Pour écrire l'histoire de cette région, il faudrait interroger les faits et les actions des uns et des autres.

La construction d'une paix durable dans cette région devrait passer par la justice. Celle-ci implique une juste peine et une juste réparation. Il s'agit de favoriser l'exercice des libertés individuelles, collectives, le droit à la citoyenneté, l'accès à l'emploi et à la propriété, la cohésion régionale, la diversité culturelle, la coopération régionale et le développement durable.

Cette paix favorise ainsi des mesures d'indemnisation pour les préjudices subis tels que les souffrances physiques et morales ; les chocs émotionnels ; les dommages matériels et les pertes de revenu. C'est également la mise en place des mesures de réadaptation (soins médicaux, psychologiques ou psychiatriques) ainsi que les services sociaux et juridiques appropriés.

La paix suppose bien évidemment des mesures de satisfaction comme la reconnaissance publique par les Etats de leur responsabilité, les déclarations officielles de réhabilitation de la dignité des victimes, l'érection des monuments mémoriaux et des hommages aux victimes.

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<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>51</sup> Patrick Baudouin, « une paix réelle repose et se construit par une justice effective et affraichie de toute tutelle politique » en ligne [www.aidh.org/Justice/02rome02.htm](http://www.aidh.org/Justice/02rome02.htm), consulté le 28 octobre 2019.

<sup>52</sup> Benjamin Ferencz, "Defining aggression: where it stands and where it's going" in *American Journal of Law*, vol. 66, N°3, July 1972, pp. 490-491.

Il s'agit d'écrire l'histoire de manière fidèle et cohérente. La paix dans la région des Grands Lacs implique justement la diffusion et le contrôle des mécanismes de suivi issus des accords et des résolutions entre les Etats. C'est le cas des commissions régionales, interministérielles et juridiques, des échanges d'informations, les commissions nationales et régionales de réconciliation ou d'indemnisation des victimes. Une paix réelle repose et se construit par une justice efficace et effective.

Les faits de guerre dans la région des Grands Lacs, et les crimes commis en RD Congo depuis plus de deux décennies de guerre ont pour acteurs et auteurs des personnalités congolaises, des acteurs régionaux issus des Etats voisins et des acteurs internationaux. Des documents officiels fournissent des preuves jusque dans les moindres détails comme on peut le lire dans le Rapport du Projet Mapping concernant les violations les plus graves des Droits de l'Homme et du Droit international humanitaire commises entre mars 1993 et juin 2003 sur le territoire de la RD Congo.

A ce rapport, s'ajoutent d'autres rapports fournis annuellement par différents experts et auteurs (onusiens, internationaux, nationaux). Le milieu universitaire et doctrinal offre aussi une documentation riche et importante. Il faudrait donc une suite judiciaire.

En réponse aux besoins de la justice, certains faits et auteurs peuvent être déférés devant les juridictions de l'ordre judiciaire des Etats. D'autres en revanche, peuvent être entendus par des juridictions à compétences universelle et subsidiaire, devant un Tribunal Pénal International ou devant la Cour Pénale Internationale. Rendre la justice c'est construire une paix durable dans cette région. Il s'agit d'appliquer le Droit comme l'art du bien et du juste.

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# THE INFLUENCE OF CHINA'S FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT ON THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL FRAMEWORK OF AFRICA (A CASE STUDY OF NIGERIA)

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## Abstract

*China has been spreading its tentacles across continents particularly sub-Saharan Africa and Nigeria. The objective of this paper is to investigate the influence of Foreign direct investment on the economic and political framework of Africa, using Nigerian as a case study. The foreign direct investments from China to Africa and particularly to Nigeria has not been received well in the pool of public opinion. However, the benefits the investment pool has on the economic and political framework is positive. Yet, researchers, believe that caution should be taken to avoid excessive FDI from China. The method of regression analysis was employed to prove the relationship between FDI inflow and annual GDP. The result showed that there is a strong and significant influence of FDI on GDP and vice versa.*

**Keywords:** Foreign Direct Investment, Gross Domestic Product, China, Nigeria, Political Framework, Economic Framework.

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## 1. Introduction

The public's opinion in international affairs holds a significant role. Challenges and opportunities of international affairs must be carefully and strategically forecasted and assessed by policymakers because the opinion of the public can be a deciding factor that changes the course of politics. And as the world becomes more and more globally connected, it is imperative to understand how China is perceived and how this perception affects the world.<sup>1</sup> The extent of China's trade with Nigeria and Africa appears to be generally considered as seen in the consistency with China's interaction with other international markets and also her ability to almost produce anything of high quality at low cost which is having a huge influence on the global economy.<sup>2</sup> According to a study conducted by Lawal (2010), there is a probable explanation for the robust relationship that exists between indicators of economic development and corruption level. The relationship is such that development is hinged on good governance as economic development creates the demand for a good institution. Therefore, the world over, the emphasis on good governance is predicated on the output it generates which included but is not limited to 1. higher economic development level, 2. higher quality of life, 3. higher average income, and 4. less corrupt but more democratic society". Based on controlling corruption to re-enforce the need for infrastructural development which will pave way for more economic growth and development, the China-Nigeria relationship became imperatively important. This is because China has characterized itself with its trade relations with Nigeria of 7.6% accounting for \$7.2billion in 2018.<sup>3</sup>

Olugboyega et al, and Adewumi & Akinnuga, suggested that "even though China-Nigeria relationship dates back to 1971, the dimension and nature of economic interactions between them required a careful and detailed analysis of their relationship with the prospect of establishing its

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<sup>1</sup> Sunday Adiyoh Imanche, Tian Ze1, Moses Chia Ayom, S. G. Dalibi, "An Assessment of Nigerians Perception towards Chinese Foreign Direct Investments and Its Acceptability in Nigeria", in *Open Journal of Business and Management*, 2021, 9, pp. 1151-1168.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 118.

<sup>3</sup> Abada, Chika Felicia, Tobechukwu C. Leo-Nnoli, Abada, Michael Ifeanyichukwu & Omeh, Paul Hezekiah, "Politics of BRICS: Re-engaging Nigeria-China trade relations and development of manufacturing industries in Nigeria", in *University of Nigeria Journal of Political Economy*, 2021, 11, pp. 32-47.

potential impact on the economies".<sup>4,5</sup> The political and economic challenges Nigeria is experiencing since its return to democracy has tremendously inhibited the growth of the country.<sup>6</sup> The anticipation that developmental constriction can be resolved by democracy has opened a channel of attraction for analysing the connection between corruption, political instability, and economic growth.<sup>7</sup> Hence, the complementarity economic relationship between China and Nigeria is revealed because of 1. major deficit in infrastructure progress, complemented with huge investment needs, 2. China's ability to have developed one of the biggest and most viable construction industries in the world, with critical consideration on civil works in infrastructural development and 3. China's ability to provide the needed financial assistance to countries and indeed Nigeria.<sup>8</sup> However, a strong recommendation for caution is made that as much as Nigeria develops trade benefits with the Chinese Government, protectionist policies should be swiftly put in place to protect the small and indigenous businesses within the country which is also seen across Africa.<sup>9</sup>

The objective of this research is to find out the connection the influence the Chinese FDI has on the economic growth of Africa with a specific focus on Nigeria.

## 2. Literature Review

The underlying concern of foreign direct investment (FDI) as a growth and development tool has been comprehensively examined and described in economic development literature; however, the resultant

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<sup>4</sup> Olugboyege, A. Oyeranti, M. Adetunji Babatunde, E. Olawale Ogunkola and Abiodun, S. Bankole, "The Impact of China-Africa Investment Relations: The Case of Nigeria", in *AERC Collaborative China - Africa Project*, 2010, 8, pp. 1-6

<sup>5</sup> Eytayo Folashade Adewumi, Samuel Oluwatobiloba Akinnuga, "Beyond Rail Revolution: Rethinking Nigeria-China Relations for the Next Decade", in *KIU Journal of Humanities; Kampala International University*, 2021, 6.2, pp. 33-39.

<sup>6</sup> Lawal Rahanatu, "Trends of Corruption, Economic Growth and Political Instability in Nigeria-2002-2018", in *SAU Journal of Management and Social Sciences*, 2020, 5.2, pp. 36-44.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 118.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 33.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 1.

disagreement lies mainly unresolved.<sup>10</sup> However, substantial study efforts have continued to be directed to finding the main supporting causes of FDI as well as its influences on growth and other related effects. The reasoning behind these mutually joint efforts at the point of academics and policymaking is mainly associated with the possible advantages obtainable from FDI by the host countries.<sup>11</sup> Among the key benefits of FDI is the bridging of the savings-investment gap, particularly in developing countries suffering from a dearth of resources to meet their overall investment obligations. Additionally, its influence on technology transfer, creation of employment, stimulation of domestic competition and economic growth has been well recognized.<sup>12,13</sup> But it must be pointed out that GDP has its defects particularly in measuring final output which includes difficulties of distinguishing between final intermediate products that may result in double counting.<sup>14</sup> Awareness, in recent years, has been unwaveringly fixated on China's economic progress. China has received much attention as it has appeared in recent years as a key actor on the world economic stage, by expanding relations with other emerging states; this is importantly seen in how the Sino-African relations have increased since 2000.<sup>15</sup> Due to the attraction of the emerging economies to FDI, several studies have examined the role of foreign capital flows to the emerging markets and developing countries. Most researchers agree that foreign capital flows, especially FDI, contribute to domestic savings and investments.<sup>16</sup> The demand for economic development has concerned policymakers across the years. Particularly the transnational south such as

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<sup>10</sup> Fiza Qureshi, Saba Qureshi, Xuan Vinh Vo, Ikramuddin Junejo, "Revisiting the nexus among foreign direct investment, corruption and growth in developing and developed markets", in *Borsa Istanbul Review*, 2021, 21-1, pp. 80-91.

<sup>11</sup> Suleiman Zangina and Sallahuddin Hassan, "Corruption and FDI Inflow to Nigeria: A Nonlinear ARDL Approach", in *Journal of Financial Crime*, 2020, 27.2, pp. 635-650.

<sup>12</sup> Josef C. Brada, Zdenek Drabe, Ichiro Iwasaki, "Does Investor Protection Increase Foreign Direct Investment? a Meta-Analysis" in *Journal of Economic Surveys Journal of Economic Surveys*, 35:1, 2021, pp. 34-70.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 68

<sup>15</sup> Carike Claassen, Elsabé Loots and Henri Bezuidenhout, "Chinese Foreign Direct Investment in Africa", in *African Journal of Business Management*, 2012, 6:47, pp. 11583-11597.

<sup>16</sup> Jian Zhang, Ilan Alon, Yanan Chen, "Does Chinese investment affect Sub-Saharan African growth?", in *International Journal of Emerging Markets*, 2014, 9:2, pp. 257-275.

Nigeria, which is tormented with an infrastructural deficit and less foreign direct investment and financial development attraction, has had the attention of stakeholders and government officials drawn for exploration of different ways for sustainable development, which corresponds with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals-8 (UNSDG's).<sup>17</sup>

According to Mohammed, "For decades, the influence of China in Africa has been growing and has raised many questions on the real intention of the Chinese state; although economic growth in African has been lethargic, China has, however, seen extraordinary economic growth and relative social stability. Furthermore, China has taken on global roles as political and economic power and put its money where its mouth is".<sup>18</sup> Having an economy of over USD 12.0 trillion and a population of 1.39 billion, China has extended its dominance far beyond Asia,<sup>19</sup> by leveraging on global organizations and contracts<sup>20</sup> to wield its presence internationally.<sup>21</sup> To be able to pursue the maximum profit on investment, economists and other experts tend to support the open movement of capital across national borders.<sup>22</sup> Every country of the world, especially developing economies, strives to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) because it is a major source of external finance.<sup>23, 24, 25, 26</sup> What FDI does is to afford the

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<sup>17</sup> Lukman A. Olorogun, Monsurat A. Salami, Festus Victor Bekun, "Revisiting the Nexus between FDI, financial development and economic growth: Empirical evidence from Nigeria", in *Journal of Public Affairs*, 2020, pp. 1-10.

<sup>18</sup> Abdullahi Mohammed, "China-Nigeria Relations: An Opportunity or Opportunism?", in *Tallinn University of Technology School of Business and Governance Department of Law*, 2019, pp. 1-41

<sup>19</sup> Corina Joseph, Juniati Gunawan, Nero Madi, Tamoi Janggu, Mariam Rahmat, "Realising Sustainable development Goals via online integrity framework disclosure: Evidence from Malatsian and Indosiesian local Authorities", in *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 2019, 215, pp. 112-122.

<sup>20</sup> Abdullahi Mohammed, *op.cit.*

<sup>21</sup> Mohammed Belal Uddin, Md. Riad Hassan, Kazi Md. tarique, "Three-Dimensional Aspect of Corporate Social Responsibility", in *Daffodil International University Journal of Business and Economics*, 2008, 3:1, pp. 199-212.

<sup>22</sup> Sergiu Nwannebuike Udeh, John Onyemeachi Odo, "Impact of Foreign Direct Investment on the Economic Growth of Nigeria", in *Journal of Global Accounting*, 2017, 5:2, pp.10-17.

<sup>23</sup> Panagiotis G. Liargovas, Konstantinos S. Skandalis, "Foreign Direct Investment and Trade Openness: The Case of Developing Economies" in *Social Indicators Research*, 2012, 106, pp. 323-331.

countries with little capital, the opportunity to get finance from wealthier countries. Several experts mentioned that foreign direct investment (FDI) has the potential of turning up the economic growth practice of developing countries.<sup>27</sup> As a country, Nigeria is considered a high-risk market for investment because of such factors as 1. governance, 2. unstable macroeconomic policies, 3. insecurity, 4. policy inconsistency, and 5. increased window dressing in financial statements presentation. Pragmatically re-investigating the relationship concerning foreign direct investment (FDI), financial development, total labour force, gross capital formation, and economic growth using Nigeria an example for Africa and Sub-Saharan countries explicitly, revealed that FDI influences GDP. Thereby suggesting that economic growth is directly influenced by FDI indicative of the policymakers.<sup>28</sup>

### 2.1 A Case of China's FDI strategy to Africa.

The influence that international trade is having on economic growth remains the major subject of theoretical and policy perspectives. The benevolent influence of the China-Africa trade and the Foreign Direct investment of China on the economic growth of African countries remains dependent upon a suitable strategy to improve the institutional quality of African countries and the synergies between them.<sup>29</sup> The relations between contemporary China and Africa can be traced back to the Bandung Conference in Indonesia – the first important meeting of Asian and African

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<sup>24</sup> John C. Anyanwu, "Why does foreign direct investment go where it goes? New evidence from African countries", in *Annals of Economics and Finance*, 2012, 13:2, pp. 425–462.

<sup>25</sup> Sufian Eltayeb Mohamed, Moise G. Sidiropoulos, "Another Look at the Determinants of Foreign Direct Investment in Mena Countries: An Empirical Investigation", in *Journal of Economic Development*, 2021, 35:2, pp. 75-90.

<sup>26</sup> Mihaela Peres, Waqar Ameer, Helian Xu, "The impact of institutional quality on foreign direct investment inflows: evidence for developed and developing countries", in *Economic Research-Ekonomska Istrazivanja*, 2018, 31:1, pp. 626-644.

<sup>27</sup> Ogunjimi Joshua and Amune Benjamin, "Impact of Infrastructure on Foreign Direct Investment in Nigeria: An Autoregressive Distributed Lag (ARDL) Approach" in *Munich Personal RePEc Archive SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2019, 75996, pp. 1-17.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 1

<sup>29</sup> Miao, Miao, Qiaoqi Lang, Dinkneh Gebre Borojo, Jiang Yushi, and Xiaoyun Zhang, "The Impacts of Chinese FDI and China-Africa Trade on Economic Growth of African Countries: The Role of Institutional Quality", *Economies*, 8.3, 2020.

states held in April 1955. Since then, China's commitment to Africa has been growing in terms of trade, aid, and investment, so that by 2019 the People's Republic of China (PRC) had established formal diplomatic relations and has direct investments in nearly all African countries. Investment has played a key role in the growth of Africa's fastest-growing economies but up until recent years, China's contribution was not so relevant because Chinese investment-share in total FDI was quite low in several African countries.<sup>30</sup> In 2018, Chinese President Xi Jinping pledged 60 billion USD for development across the boundaries of Africa during the triennial Forum on China-Africa Co-operation, a two-day summit hosting some African leaders. China's influence in Africa at large has seen a significant rise in the past couple of years. China has become the continent's most important economic partner. The partnership extends beyond economic investments to military, information technology and agricultural investment developments. Despite all these, opinions remain divided on the China-Africa relations. The partnership has received a wide range of criticism from the western media and legislators as debt-trap diplomacy.<sup>31</sup> According to Gbadamosi and Oniku, "it is no surprise that China has positioned itself as a country to be reckoned with".<sup>32</sup> The flood of economic activities from foreign investors who are attracted to the presence of a market for their products and services is proof.<sup>33</sup> There is also some relationship between China and other countries like those in sub-Saharan Africa that supplied 77% of oil, 13% of metalliferous ore, 3% pear and precious stones, 3% cotton, and 2% wood to the Chinese economy. While on the demand side, the African economy sourced 5% industrial equipment, 7% electrical appliances, 8% telecommunications equipment, 8% transport vehicles, 14% clothing wears, and 16% textiles from the Chinese economy. This positive development about China has been linked

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<sup>30</sup> Sena Wildan Utama, "From Brussels to Bogor: Contacts, Networks and the History of the Bandung Conference 1955", in *Journal of Indonesian Social Sciences and Humanities*, 2016, 6.1, pp. 1-14.

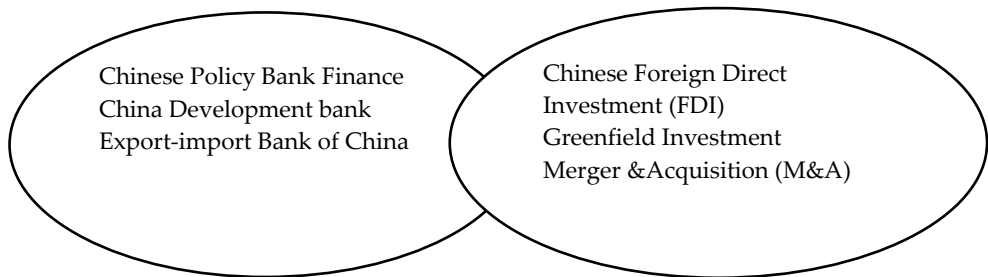
<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 7.

<sup>32</sup> Ayantunji Gbadamosi, Ayodele, C. Oniku, "The Strategic Implications of China's Economic Pacts with Sub-Saharan African Countries: The Case of Nigeria", in *Conference of the International Journal of Arts and Sciences*, 2009, 1:18, pp. 115 - 130.

<sup>33</sup> Gloria Claudio-Quiroga, Luis A. Gil-Alana, Andoni Maiza-Larrarte, *op.cit.*

severally to its open-door policy which took effect from the 1980s and eventually to join the world trade organization in 2001. Between 2000 and 2018, the Chinese Global Power (CGP) database exhibits that Chinese companies and policy banks have invested in 777 power plants overseas at 186.5GW of generation capacity across 83 countries in the world. Of this, 106.2GW is already online, with the remainder planned into the future. Forty per cent of China's overseas power plant capacity is in the form of coal-fired power plants; 27% is hydroelectric and other renewable energy only accounted for 11% of the total capacity. The CGP shows that China's fossil fuel power plants are currently leading to approximately 314 million tons (Mt) of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per year, which is about 3.5% of the annual CO<sub>2</sub> emission from the global power sector outside of China.<sup>34</sup>

**Figure 1.** Scope of China's Global Power database.



## 2.2 Relationship between China and Nigeria

Apart from the influx of investments into China, it also has several other trade deals with other countries including Sub-Saharan African countries such as Nigeria. Perhaps due to the overshadowing effects of the existence of this large consumer market which propels various countries to troop to the Chinese economy, the diplomatic relations between the People's Republic of China and the Federal Republic of Nigeria historically dates over five decades when the bilateral relations between the two countries have been smoothly and consistently developed. This relationship resulted in many more bilateral agreements, in economic, trade, culture, and educational ties. Reports have it that, about 20,000

<sup>34</sup> Helen Xinyue Ma, "Understanding China's Global Power", in *Boston University Global Development Policy Center Policy brief*, 2020, 342.2019, pp 335-342.

Chinese live in the major cities of Nigeria.<sup>35,36</sup> China has extended its dominance far beyond Asia and leveraged international institutions and agreements to exert its presence globally. China's influence has continued to grow in leaps and bound on the African continent and particularly Nigeria.<sup>37</sup> The poorly managed Nigerian economy and outdated infrastructure have culminated in both countries' sustained alliance to drive growth.<sup>38</sup> However, critics of the Chinese so-called 'win-win' foreign policy have continued to point out that the alliance seem to favour one side, with fragmented evidence suggesting that Nigeria's relations with China, rather than create other social-economic and political problems for Nigeria, thereby stalling the growth. Some levels of decadence in some industries have been ascribed to the growing dependence on China by Nigeria. Thus, there is a certain level of academic legitimacy in asking a question on whether China's relations with Nigeria is about realising a great opportunity or it is simply of opportunistic relations. This discussion is bound by both international trade relations and neo-colonialism frameworks.<sup>39, 40</sup> The agitation in the oil-rich area of Nigeria meant that sharp growth in the domestic gross product (GDP) was driven by the non-oil sector of the economy. And even with a 3.4% rating in 2000, there was a significant increase that averaged 8.9% in the mid-2000s. But by 2009, the growth performance had fallen to 4.5% because of the global financial crisis. The anxiety the situation created economically was what was needed for the regulatory bodies to promulgate large scale regulatory oversight policies. It was clear that a sector-specific policy was needed to complement

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<sup>35</sup> Ayantunji Gbadamosi, Ayodele, C. Oniku," The Strategic Implications of China's Economic Pacts with Sub-Saharan African Countries: The Case of Nigeria", in *Conference of the International Journal of Arts and Sciences*, 2009, 1:18, pp. 115-130.

<sup>36</sup> Ni Xiaoze," Do the host country's party system and electoral rules influence Chinese FDI? Evidence from Sub-Saharan African countries in the new", in *Online Summer Research Programme*, Pembroke College, Cambridge University, 2021, pp. 1-31.

<sup>37</sup> Derrick Anquanah Cudjoe, He Yumei and Hanhui Hu," The impact of China's trade, aid and FDI on African economies", in *International Journal of Emerging Markets*, 2020, pp. 1-22.

<sup>38</sup> Matthias Busse, Ceren Erdogan, Henning Mühlen," China's Impact on Africa – The Role of Trade, FDI and Aid", in *KYKLOS*, 2016, 69:2, pp. 228–262.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 6

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 2

fiscal and monetary policy measures to preserve and protect the labour market.<sup>41</sup>

According to Olusanya, “the impact of Foreign Direct Investment inflow and economic growth in a pre and post deregulated Nigerian economy, between 1970 – 2010 while de-aggregating the economy into three periods; 1.) 1970 to 1986, 2.) 1986 to 2010 and 3.) 1970 to 2010, revealed that there is an interconnecting relationship in the pre-deregulation era that is (1970-1986) from economic growth (GDP) to foreign direct investment inflow (FDI) which means GDP causes FDI; but there is no causality relationship in the post-deregulation era that is (1986-2010) between economic growth (GDP)”<sup>42</sup> and foreign direct investment inflow (FDI) which means GDP did not cause FDI.<sup>43</sup> However, between 1970 to 2010 it shows that there is an interconnecting relationship between economic growth (GDP) and foreign direct investment inflow (FDI) that is economic growth drive foreign direct investment inflow into the country and vice versa. In 1999, democracy returned with its corresponding economic growth to the entity called Nigeria. Economic reform programs laid out and monitored by the international monetary fund (IMF) and world bank which were implemented brought about the transformation within the macroeconomic framework. Regardless of this transformation on the macroeconomic level of the economy, the microeconomic level has been left wanting. Particularly the manufacturing sector of the economy has been affected adversely, to say the least.<sup>44</sup>

### 3. Theoretical framework

Classical and neo-classical economics theory projected convergence between poor developing countries and the developed countries in the long

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 41

<sup>42</sup> Olusanya Samuel Olumuyiwa, “Impact of Foreign Direct Investment Inflow on Economic Growth in a Pre and Post Deregulated Nigeria Economy: A Granger Causality Test”, in *European Scientific Journal*, 2013, 9.25, pp. 1857–7881.

<sup>43</sup> Chinyere Udude Celina, Christian Chibuikwe Nkwagu, Ogbonna Micheal Agbafor, Igwe Lawrence Oruta, “Foreign Direct Investment and Poverty Reduction in Nigeria”, in *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention*, 2017, 10.5, pp. 28-35.

<sup>44</sup> Joseph Nnanna, “Is China’s investment in Africa good for the Nigerian economy?”, in *Journal of Chinese Economic and Foreign Trade Studies*, 2015, 8:1, pp. 40-48.

run largely due to the transfer of technology and capital from the developed countries to the developing countries. One of the ways capital and technology are transferred from developed countries to developing countries is through the inflow of foreign direct investment.<sup>45</sup> Most findings on foreign direct investment and growth are cross country pieces of evidence, while the role of foreign direct investment in economic growth can be country specific. Further, only a few of the country-specific studies took conscious note of the endogenous nature of the relationship between foreign direct investment and growth in their analysis, thereby raising some questions on the robustness of their findings. The relationship between foreign direct investment and growth is conditional on the macroeconomic dispensation the country in question is passing through.<sup>46</sup> Therefore, it is important to note that according to Olusanya, "the degree to which foreign direct investment impacts growth, hangs on the economic and social condition or, the quality of the new environment of the recipient country".<sup>47</sup> The connection between Foreign Direction Investment (FDI) and the state of the economy have been extensively discussed both from the empirical and theoretical point of view in other economic works of literature with mixed assumptions. Macroeconomic theory on FDI shows that a functional relationship exists between FDI and the state of the economy. There are proofs in other works of literature that the inflows of FDI have a substantial influence on macroeconomic variables.<sup>48</sup> Previous studies have also focused on examining the impact of FDI in driving the aggregate economy, with very few studies examining the impact of pull factors in attracting FDI inflows. Besides, most of the studies that inquire into the impact of FDI inflows on home economies focus on Asia with very few on Africa, Nigeria inclusive. There are vague theoretical forecasts

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<sup>45</sup> Orogwu C. David, Fakayode, B. Segun, Mohammed H. Itopa, and Ahmed Abdulbasi, "Sectoral analysis of foreign direct investment and growth in Nigeria", in *Applied Journal of Economics, Management, and Social Sciences*, 2021, 2:1, pp. 33–41.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 344.

<sup>47</sup> Olumuyiwa Samuel Olusanya, "Impact of Foreign Direct Investment Inflow on Economic Growth in a Pre and Post Deregulated Nigeria Economy: A Granger Causality Test (1970-2010)", in *European Scientific Journal*, 2013, 9.25, pp. 335-356.

<sup>48</sup> Babajide Abiola Ayoopo, Lawal Adedoyin I, "Macroeconomic Behaviour and FDI Inflows in Nigeria: An Application of The Ardl Model", in *British Journal of Economics, Finance and Management Sciences*, 2016, 11:1, pp. 84-107.

about the impacts of FDI on economic growth. Foreign investment helps transfer technology and business know-how from rich countries to poor countries, which may help poor countries improve their productivity and hence benefit economic growth. Using a model with adverse selection and costly state verification, argue that FDI may affect the current allocation of investment capital and slow down economic growth.<sup>49</sup> Under certain policy conditions however, other models suggest that FDI will lead to economic growth.<sup>50</sup> The pivotal role of capital and labour as a driver of growth has generated many documented debates in the macroeconomic literature through the neoclassical Solow's growth model.<sup>51</sup> The fact is that the existence of FDI induced growth hypothesis has witnessed a glut of documentation with no agreement in the existing body of knowledge. There are diverse opinions of positive and negative impacts of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) on the global economy, that are acceptable theories among researchers, policymakers, and corporate entities.<sup>52</sup>

Udeh and Odo observed that the "impact of foreign direct investment on the economic growth in Nigeria among others showed that there is a significant strong positive relationship between foreign direct investment and gross domestic product between 1981-2013 in Nigeria. This implies that an increase in foreign direct investment in Nigeria, if well managed could be used to enhance the gross domestic product. Their study recommended among others that the Nigerian government should create a conducive business environment that will attract more foreign direct investment into the country".<sup>53</sup> Also, Orogwu et al, further emphasise the fact that "foreign direct investment not only exert a direct positive effect on the aggregate growth rate of Nigeria economy but also exert a positive

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 259.

<sup>50</sup> Zhang Jian, Alon Ilan, Yanan Chen, "Does Chinese investment affect Sub-Saharan African growth?", in *International Journal of Emerging Markets*, 2014, 9:2, pp. 257-275.

<sup>51</sup> Ayres U. Robert, Warr Benjamin, "The Economic Growth Engine: How Energy and Work Drive Material Prosperity", 2009, pp. 1-393.

<sup>52</sup> Babajide Abiola Ayoopo, Lawal Adedoyin I., "Macroeconomic Behaviour and FDI Inflows in Nigeria: An Application of the ARDL MODEL", in *British Journal of Economics, Finance and Management Sciences*, 2016, 11:1, pp. 84-107.

<sup>53</sup> Sergius Nwannebuike Udeh, John Onyemaechi Odo, "Impact of Foreign Direct Investment on the Economic Growth of Nigeria", in *Journal of Global Accounting*, 2017, 5.2, pp.10-17.

indirect effect through labour". The benefits and the impact associated with the inflow of FDI are inexhaustible; the benefits include the affordability of developing countries to have access to modern technology and key administrative ingenuity that can increase domestic output, creating more jobs, lowering the cost of production, and raising worker's wages and standard of living among others.<sup>54</sup> Direct Foreign Investment can be illustrated in numerous ways. It may involve a parent company injecting equity capital by purchasing shares in foreign affiliates; it could also take the form of reinvesting the affiliates' earnings or it may entail short-or-foreign investment as a share of Gross Domestic Product has grown rapidly, becoming the large source of capital moving from developed nations to developing nations.<sup>55</sup> The theories of capital market and portfolio investments were used to describe the initiation of FDI initially. Direct investment originally was an international capital movement only. FDI was regarded as a subset of portfolio investment before 1950. It can therefore be asserted that the most important reason for capital flows lay in the differences in interest rates accordingly. This approach stated that when there were no uncertainties or risks, capital tended to flow to regions where it gained the highest return. But this context failed to incorporate the fundamental difference between the portfolio and direct investment. Direct investment involves control.<sup>56</sup> Hence the theoretical shortcomings of the interest rate theory are that it does not explain control. Therefore, if interest rates are higher abroad, an investor will consider lending money abroad, but there is no logical necessity for the investor to control the enterprise to which will lend money.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>55</sup> Oyatoye, E. O., Arogundade, K. K., Adebisi, S. O., Oluwakayode, E. F., "Foreign Direct Investment, Export and Economic Growth in Nigeria", in *European Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2011, 2:1, pp. 66-86.

<sup>56</sup> <sup>53</sup> Nayak Dinkar, Rahul N. Choudhury, "A selective review of foreign direct investment theories", in *Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade (ARTNeT)*, 2014, 143, pp. 1-35.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 13.

### 3.1 The Keynesian and Acceleration Theories of investment.

The Keynesian theory of investment referred to the term investment as a real investment that adds to capital equipment that consequently leads to an increase in income and production by increasing the production and purchases of capital goods.<sup>58</sup> There are types of investment to be noted in this literature, 1. Induced investment is profit or income motivated. It shows that as factors such as prices, wages, interest change, there is a corresponding effect on the profit hence influencing the induced investment; 2. Autonomous investment is independent of the level of income and is thereby income elastic. It is influenced by exogenous factors such as innovations, population growth and labour force growth, and is thereby not influenced by changes in demand but by the demand.<sup>59,60</sup> The accelerated theories of investment, on the other hand, based their principle on the reality that the demand for capital goods is derived from the demand for consumer goods which the capital goods help to produce. Furthermore, the accelerated theories of investment described the process by which an increase or decrease in the demand for consumption goods leads to an increase or decrease in investment in capital goods. In this case, the accelerator coefficient will be the ratio between induced investment and the initial change in consumption expenditure.<sup>61</sup> Figuratively,  $\beta = \Delta I / \Delta C$  or  $\Delta I = \beta \Delta C$ , where  $\beta$  is the accelerator coefficient,  $\Delta I$  is the net change in investment and  $\Delta C$  is the net change in consumption expenditure.<sup>62,63,64</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Olusanya Samuel Olumuyiwa, "Impact of Foreign Direct Investment Inflow on Economic Growth in a Pre and Post Deregulated Nigeria Economy: A Granger Causality Test", in *European Scientific Journal*, 2013, 9:25, pp. 335-336.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 345.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 349.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 345.

<sup>62</sup> Lawal Muhammad, Victor Ushahemba Ijirshar, "Empirical Analysis of the Relationship between Foreign Direct Investment and Economic Growth in Developing Countries-Evidence from Nigeria", in *International Journal of Business Administration and Management Research*, 2015, 1:1, pp. 15-25.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 345.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 350.

### 3.2 Harrod-Domar

According to Boianovsky<sup>65</sup> the conception that physical capital build-up is the main cause of economic growth, have frequently been attributed to Harrod's and Domar's proposal that the amount of growth is the product of the saving rate and the output-capital ratio<sup>65</sup>. Nevertheless, neither Harrod nor Domar fits in this idea referred to as capital fundamentalism. In the 1950s, development planners adapted the growth formula to their agenda. During this period, a lot of development economists have been conscious that the growth models addressed economic instability issues and not long-run growth. Eventually, the application of the concept of the natural growth rate to economic development was made by Harrod concept asserting that the growth of emerging markets is defined by their capability to execute technological development. Likewise, Domar noted that the incremental capital-output ratio was more likely a passive result of the interaction between the tendency to save and technological progress, not a causal factor.<sup>66</sup>

Hochstein stated that "Harrod-Domar model of economic growth is the first to use the Keynesian framework to examine the conditions necessary for continuous full employment equilibrium income growth. This is because it focuses on the full employment of capital, with labour assumed to be in infinite supply"<sup>67</sup>. Furthermore, the model argues that should there be any deviation in investment from the critical growth rate, full employment is doomed to degenerate into hyperinflation or depression which is referred to as the knife-edge growth rate. The Harrod-Domar growth model designates a key responsibility to invest in the development of economic growth while placing prominence on the dual elements of investment. The theory demonstrated that investment generates income which can also be referred to as the demand effect and then also enhances the productive capacity of the economy through increasing its capital stock which is also referred to as the supply effect of investment.<sup>68</sup> Tarasov and

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<sup>65</sup> Mauro Boianovsky, "Beyond capital fundamentalism: Harrod, Domar and the history of development economics", in *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 2018, 42, pp. 477–504

<sup>66</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 477

<sup>67</sup> Alan Hochstein, "The Harrod-Domar Model in a Keynesian Framework", in *International Advances in Economic Research*, 2017, 23, pp. 349–350.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 345.

Tarasova (2019) noted that “the model illustrates the dynamics of national income  $Y(t)$ , that is determined by the sum of non-productive consumption  $C(t)$ , the induced investment  $I(t)$  and the autonomous investment  $A(t)$  over a period. The balanced equation of the model is written as: 1.)  $Y(t) = C(t) + I(t) + A(t)$ ; in the standard Harrod–Domar model of growth without memory, the following assumptions are used.<sup>69</sup> (a) In the Harrod–Domar model, the autonomous investment  $A(t)$  is deemed as an exogenous variable, which is independent of national income  $Y(t)$ . (b) In the model without memory, the consumption  $C(t)$  is a linear function of national income that is described by the linear multiplier equation: 2.)  $C(t) = c Y(t)$ , where  $c$  is the marginal propensity to consume ( $0 < c < 1$ ).<sup>70</sup>, and (c) In the standard Harrod–Domar model of the growth without memory, it is assumed that induced investment  $I(t)$  is determined by the rate of the national income.<sup>71</sup> This assumption is described by the linear accelerator equation: 3.)  $I(t) = v Y(1)(t)$ , where  $v$  is the positive constant, which is called the investment coefficient indicating the power of accelerator or the capital intensity of the national income, and  $Y(1)(t) = dY(t)/dt$  is the first-order derivative of the function  $Y(t)$ . Equation (3) means that the induced investment is a constant proportion of the current rate of change of income. Substitution of Equations (2) and (3) into (1) gives; 4.)  $Y(t) = c Y(t) + v Y(1)(t) + A(t)$ . This equation can be written as  $v Y(1)(t) = sY(t) - A(t)$ ; where  $s = 1 - c$  is the marginal propensity to save ( $0 < s < 1$ ).<sup>72</sup> The economic dynamics, which is represented by Equation (5), can be qualitatively described in the following form. If independent investments  $A(t)$  grow, for example, due to the sudden appearance of large inventions, the multiplier gives rise to a corresponding increase in  $A(t)/(1 - c)$  output where  $c$  is the marginal propensity to consume ( $0 < c < 1$ ). The expansion of output drives the accelerator and is accompanied by the appearance of other (induced) investments. In turn, these additional investments, increase the products

<sup>69</sup> Vasily E. Tarasov, Valentina V. Tarasova, “Harrod-Domar growth model with memory and distributed lag”, in *Axioms*, 2019, 8.9, pp. 1-15.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 2.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibidem*.

due to the economic multiplier, and a new cycle begins. In general, the result is a progressive increase in national income.<sup>73</sup>

### 3.3 The New Growth Theories

In the 1980s, as a response to the criticism of the neoclassical growth model, the new growth theory was developed. The endogenous theory of the growth model proposes that policies can have a long-run impact on the growth rate of an economy. This means that policies that embrace openness, competition, change and innovation, promotes growth and vice versa.<sup>74</sup> The new growth model is an endogenous growth theory that works with a simple model: 1.)  $Y=AK$ , where Y is national income, K is the capital stock and A is the constant assumption of constant returns to capital.<sup>75</sup> It should also be noted that the constant returns to capital assumption stem from additional physical capital to other forms of reproducible capital such as human capital. And if the idea of a global absence of diminishing returns may seem unrealistic, but the idea becomes more credible if K is considered in a broad sense to include human capital, 2.)  $dY/Y = A(dK/Y) - A(I/Y)$ .

## 4. Methodology

Kinnear and Taylor on "Research Methodology" defined it as the basic plan which guides the data collection and analysis phases of the research work. It is the framework, which specifies the types of information to be collected, the sources of data and the date of collection/procedure.<sup>76</sup> For this study, the working standards deal extensively with the methods and designs used in this paper. It includes the following: research design, sample and sampling technics, instrumentation, validity, reliability, data collection procedure and method of data analysis. The data employed is secondary data. The data was sourced from the World Bank databank base

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<sup>73</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>74</sup> Olusanya, *op. cit.*, p. 346

<sup>75</sup> Khaled Hussein, A. P. Thirlwall, "The AK Model of "New" Growth Theory Is the Harrod-Domar Growth Equation: Investment and Growth Revisited", in *Journal of Post Keynesian Economics*, 2000, 22:3. pp. 427-433.

<sup>76</sup> Charles Blankson, Stavros P. Kalafatis, "The Development and Validation of a Scale Measuring Consumer/Customer-Derived Generic Typology of Positioning Strategies", in *Journal of Marketing Management* 2004, 20:1-2, pp. 5-43.

and the Central Bank of Nigeria databank base. The following questions are formulated to guide this investigation; 1. What is the foreign direct investment? 2. What is the need for foreign direct investment, 3. Does foreign direct investment positively influence economic growth? 4. Does economic growth influence foreign direct investment? The research work is tested using regression analysis; the specifically ordinary least square approach is used in analysing the data used for this study. The model assumes that the variable has a linear relationship. The model used are estimated using Nigeria data on Foreign Direct Investment net inflow (FDI) and some macroeconomic indicators like the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and for the period 1990 – 2020.

The method of estimation is based on the use of multiple regression techniques using the regress and regressor terminology. The ordinary least square regression techniques explain the relationship between an explained variable (regressor) and two or more explanatory variables (regressed). The relationship between  $Y$  and variables  $a_1, a_2, a_3, a_4, \dots, a_n$  is in econometric form. It can be expressed mathematically as

$$Y = f(a_1, a_2, a_3, a_4, \dots, a_n)$$

If we want to change it to linear form, it then becomes

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 a_1 + \beta_2 a_2 + \beta_3 a_3 + \dots + \beta_n a_n$$

For us to explain and show the factors that can influence real output per head “ $a$ ,” denotes the value of factor that can determine or affect  $Y$ . The co-efficient  $\beta_0$  represents the intercept of the “function while co-efficient  $\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4, \dots, \beta_n$  denotes the marginal effect of “ $a$ ” on  $Y$ . Economic theory does not allow for random fluctuations or random elements which might affect the relationship between the independent and independent variables. But in the econometric model, the fluctuation in the random element is taken care of. A random variable “ $U$ ” known as stochastic, error term is introduced into the model. This is because other important variables can be left out or not included in the model. With this modification and the introduction of stochastic error term or disturbance term ( $U$ ), we have a functional form model in this form  $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 a_1 + \beta_2 a_2 + \beta_3 a_3 + \dots + \beta_n a_n + U$ . The least-square techniques will be used to estimate the structural parameters  $\beta_0, \beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4, \dots, \beta_n$ . This is because the least square technique is the best linear unbiased estimate, and the result will lie unbiased. An estimator is preferred to others because it has the least-square property. This least

square estimator has been chosen because it is an estimator that generates a set of parameter estimates with the smallest error of the regression. There are some assumptions of ordinary least square which must hold or else the above assertion will not hold. Therefore, the following must be assumed for "U" for the estimation techniques to hold. The assumption of OLS is based on the distribution of stochastic error terms.

- i) Error term (U) is random and normally distributed
- ii) The error term has zero i.e.,  $E(U) = 0$
- iii) The error term has a constant variance i.e.,  $E(U^2) = \sigma^2$

Assumption i to iii above can be combined into one mathematical formula:  $U \sim N(0, \sigma^2)$ .

iv) The error term (U) in one period is uncorrelated with the error in the other period, that is,  $COV(U_i, U_j) = 0$  for  $i \neq j$ . The implication of assumption four shows that our Y depends only on the aggregate of  $\beta$  and not on any other variables.

v) The explanatory variable independent variable assumes fixed values so that they are uncorrelated with the error term.

Mathematically  $COV(U_i, U_j) = 0$ . In this paper, we shall use monetary and fiscal variables. Under the monetary policy variables, the following shall be employed, investment, capital market volume of trade. While both Government expenditure and taxation policy shall be employed under the fiscal policy. The econometric analysis of the estimate will be carried out using a statistical test for significance. These statistical tests include t-ratio, co-efficient of multiple determination; F Statistics and Durbin Watson statistic (DW). The  $R^2$  measure is to examine the explanatory power of the independent variable. It will determine how effective the independent variables are in explaining the variables in the dependent variables. The F- statistic will also be used to determine the significance of the parameter of the estimates or simply, it will be used to check for the precision of the regression. Durbin-Watson statistics will also be used to test whether there is a presence of autocorrelation or not.

#### **4.1 Hypotheses, Model Specification and Econometric Model Specification**

Considering the statement of the problem and the purpose of the study, the following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

- A. **H<sub>0</sub>**: That there is no significant relationship between Foreign Direct Investment and the gross domestic product.  
**H<sub>1</sub>**: That there is a significant relationship between Foreign Direct Investment and the economic and political framework.
- B. **H<sub>0</sub>**: That Foreign Direct Investment has a positive influence on the annual gross domestic product.  
**H<sub>1</sub>**: That increase in Foreign Direct Investment has a negative influence on the annual gross domestic product.

$FDI = f(GDP)$ , where FDI = FDI Net inflow to Nigeria  $f(GDP) =$  Nigeria's Total GDP under the hypothesis that:

$$\mathbf{H_0}: = \beta_0 = \beta_1 = \beta_2 = 0 \text{ and } \mathbf{H_A}: \neq \beta_0 \neq \beta_1 \neq \beta_2 \neq 0.$$

From the above, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) states that the values of the estimated parameters are not significantly different from zero, while the alternative hypothesis ( $H_A$ ) states that the values of the estimated parameters are significantly not equal to Zero, which is the theoretical expectation. This study will employ the use of multi-regression analysis to examine that:

$$FDI = \beta_0 + \beta_1 GDP + U$$

This model will be regressed following a stepwise regression with the expectation that the  $H_A$  is expected to be positive since the higher the gross domestic product the more economic growth increases; also, that  $\beta_2$  is also expected to be positive since it has a direct positive relationship with FDI.

#### 4.2 Empirical Result and Interpretation of the Regression Results.

In the above, the models to be used for macro-economic policy and economic development were stated, discussed in detail, and analysed in detail. In presenting the estimated equations, the figures in parenthesis represent Model 1:  $FDI = \beta_0 + \beta_1 GDP + U$  and Model 2:  $GDP = \beta_0 + \beta_1 FDI + U$ . In model 1, the result showed that there is a significant relationship between foreign direct investment inflow and annual gross domestic product. The value of R, the coefficient of correlation is 0.721 mean that there is a strong relationship between FDI and GDP. The value of  $R^2$ , the coefficient of determinants (0.519) shows that 51.9% of the variables that influences the FDI inflow rate is caused by total annual GDP. On the test

hypothesis, the t-calculated at 0.296 level of significance is -1.065 while the t-tabulated is 5.400 at 0.001 level of significance shows that the t-tabulated is greater than the t-calculated. The Durbin Watson test of autocorrelation while is 0.464 shows that there is no autocorrelation in the model. The F-statistic is 29.161 at a 0.001 level of significance mean that  $H_0$  is rejected while  $H_1$  is accepted; showing that there is a significant relationship between Foreign Direct investment inflow and annual gross domestic product. In model 2, the result showed that there is a significant relationship between foreign direct investment inflow and annual gross domestic product. The value of R, the coefficient of correlation is 0.721 mean that there is a strong relationship between GDP and FDI. The value of  $R^2$ , the coefficient of determinants (0.519) shows that 51.9% of the variables that influence GDP is caused by total annual FDI inflow. The Durbin Watson test of autocorrelation while is 0.253 shows that there is no autocorrelation in the model. The F-statistic is 29.161 at a 0.001 level of significance mean that  $H_0$  is rejected while  $H_1$  is accepted showing that there is a significant relationship between annual gross domestic product and Foreign Direct investment inflow.

Table 1 Models

Models	R	$R^2$	F	DW	P	t	Hypothesis
1	0.721	0.519	29.161	0.464	<0.001	-1.065	Accepted
2	0.721	0.519	29.161	0.253	<0.001	6.049	Accepted

## 5. Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

The outcome of the investigation was consistent in showing a remarkably high, positive, and significant relationship between foreign direct investment and gross domestic product, capital expenditure and government revenue. The implication of this is that FDI could be channelled for the all-around growth of the country. Based on this investigation, therefore, the following suggestion is proffered: 1.) the federal government of Nigeria should do everything possible to create a conducive business environment that will attract more FDI into the country, 2. the) government should make deliberate efforts to prevent and manage domestic violence and conflicts in a way that will repel foreign investors or compel them to repatriate their earnings to their host countries. 3.) the struggle against corruption should not only be sustained but

extended to all sectors of the economy to make the impact of FDI on government revenue and capital expenditure more meaningful. Therefore, these subjects will be suggested for further review in the light of some constraints encountered during this investigation: 1. similar research that will make use of more indices of economic growth within the economic framework; 2. Comparative research on the topic will include Nigeria and other African countries that are comparable and the history.

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## EMERGENCE IN THE WAEMU AND EMCCA AREAS

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### Abstract

*The Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (EMCCA) and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) have succeeded in stabilizing their monetary systems, but this monetary stability has not been accompanied by real emergence. The economies of most of the member states of these two organizations are based on commodities and cocoa, which means that they are completely volatile and therefore lack the stability necessary for real emergence. This study based mainly on documentary research through the exploitation of reports produced by various international and regional institutions such as the IMF, the World Bank, the African Development Bank, ECOWAS, etc., and the writings of various emergence theorists, shows the role that industrialization and diversification of the economies of the WAEMU and EMCCA zones should play in the development of the economies of the member states and the improvement of the living conditions of the populations.*

**Keywords:** Emergence, Spaces, WAEMU and EMCCA

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## Introduction

S. Delannoy maintains that emergence is "a convenient, all-purpose expression to designate a small group of large countries in the South, or even all of the developing countries. However, this expression speaks to us: the tilting of the world is not a fantasy and every day new signals appear that confirm it.<sup>1</sup> The same author, citing Van Agtmaël (first theorist of emergence 1981), specifies that this "concept, in fact, creates the expression of emerging markets which is confined to the world of investors at the dawn of financial liberalization: it promises profitable investments in fast-growing countries".<sup>2</sup> This concept thus appeared in the 1980s, with the development of stock markets in developing countries. In this regard, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) refers to capital markets in developing countries that have liberalized their financial systems to promote capital flows and that are widely accessible to foreign investors.<sup>3</sup>

Professor Achille Houssou, applying this concept to states and drawing inspiration from the same theorist Van Agtmaël, notes that the expression "emerging country or emerging economy is often used to designate a country or group of countries that are experiencing impressive economic dynamism in the new globalized economy of the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century".<sup>4</sup> A number of criteria are attached to emergence:<sup>5</sup> a level of per capita income that progressively moves into the middle range; a structural transformation of the economy that is materialized by a greater diversification and sophistication (with the transfer of labor from low productivity sectors to high productivity sectors); an economy that is open to the rest of the world (insertion in

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<sup>1</sup> Sylvia Delannoy, "Greeting the concept of emergence right. Definition and classification of emerging countries", *Geopolitics of Emerging countries*, 2012, p. <https://www.cairn.info/geopolitique-des-pays-emergents--978213059>. Consulté le 12/03/2021.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>3</sup> Mamoudou Gazibo, Olivier Mabilia, "Index of Emergence in Africa", *Observation of emergence Africa, Pole of Research on Africa on the Emerging world* (PRAME), 2017, p. 8.

<sup>4</sup> Achilles Houssou, Africa Emerging continent course, Master 2, International studies-DEA, University of Szeged, 2019-2020.

<sup>5</sup> Bernard Haudeville, "Emergence: an interpretation in terms of the knowledge economy", *Developing world*, 2012/2, n° 158, pp. 13-24.

global value chains) "The word insertion" here does not add anything to the sentence.<sup>6</sup>

To these criteria considered as standard, the ICAE (International Conference for African Emergence) has added two others, particularly in the African context:<sup>7</sup> a process that develops the capacities of populations to eradicate poverty and reduce inequalities (human development); modes of production and consumption that respect environmental preservation (sustainable development).

Applying these criteria to states, Lafargue notes that "emerging countries are characterized by:<sup>8</sup> a regular increase in their GDP and per capita income; an increase in their foreign trade greater than that of international trade; diversified economies that do not rely solely on the export of raw materials; a demographic dynamism offering promising prospects due to the size of their market.<sup>9</sup>

With regard to the contours of emergence, Haudeville notes that "an emerging country is a non-OECD country capable of sustaining rapid growth in an open economy over a relatively long period without jeopardizing its external balance. It is worth remembering that many past experiences of rapid growth have come up against the unsustainable nature of foreign trade in goods, services and capital in the medium and long term.<sup>10</sup> According to this author, the contours of emergence, would like a non-OECD country to be able to have a fast-growing, open economy without jeopardizing its internal economic balance or stability.

With this being the case, the country in question must avoid falling economically into situations of "serial devaluations, a collapse in the value of the exchange rate, episodes of inflation, even hyperinflation, and sometimes, in the end, the destruction of the monetary system. Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Nigeria, Ghana, Russia or Poland at the beginning of the

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<sup>6</sup> Other criteria besides the strictly economic ones should be also taken in consideration. See, for instance, Sergiu Mişcoiu, Louis-Marie Kakdeu, "Authoritarian clientelism: the case of the president's 'creatures' in Cameroon" in *Acta Politica*, no. 4, vol. 56, 2021, pp. 639-657.

<sup>7</sup> Mamoudou Gazibo, Olivier Mabilia, *op.cit*, p. 8.

<sup>8</sup> Achilles Houssou, *op.cit*, p. 8.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>10</sup> Bernard Haudeville, *op.cit*, p. 2.

transition, Thailand... illustrate, to varying degrees, this situation that can be found on all continents.<sup>11</sup>

Clearly, "emergence thus puts forward the competitive capacity of the economy. That is to say, its ability to offer products that are in demand on the world market, in terms of range, quality, compliance with international health or technical standards, delivery times, services accompanying the delivery of products, and this at prices compatible with the prices in force on this market. But this capacity is renewed over time".<sup>12</sup>

It has a dynamic character. In this sense, Haudeville argues, citing K. Nelson, "it differs from export capacity based on the exploitation of natural resources or on the presence of cheap labor, which is not renewed over time. In the case of emerging countries, these are advantages that are built and rebuilt over time".<sup>13</sup>

In the classification of emerging countries, D. Chenaf notes that "the international financial institutions refer largely to macroeconomic performance, which makes these countries the new locomotives of world growth. Indeed, developing countries, including emerging countries, now represent 50% of world GDP in purchasing power parity, 40% of world GDP in value and 45% of world trade. The 5 BRICS alone represent 18% of the world GDP in purchasing power parity, 40% of the population, 15% of trade and 40% of the world's monetary reserves. According to the IMF, the BRICS should also ensure more than 60% of world growth in 2015, which naturally upsets the global balance of power and reverses the North-South balance of power".<sup>14</sup> This means that the issue of development is not at the forefront of these considerations. This may explain the fact that in some countries, even though they are well ranked in terms of emergence criteria, there is a population in extreme poverty.

An analysis of the economic dynamics within EMCCA and WAEMU gives an idea of the emergence of their member states in light of the above criteria. EMCCA's mission is "to promote peace and the harmonious

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>14</sup> Dalila Nicet-Chenaf, "Emergence countries: performance or development ? ", [www.la-vie-des-idees.fr](http://www.la-vie-des-idees.fr). Consulté le 13/03/2021/

development of member states, within the framework of the establishment of two unions (economic union and monetary union).<sup>15</sup> Similarly, WAEMU has as its objectives, "the strengthening of the competitiveness of the economic and financial activities of member states, ensuring the convergence of the economic performance and policies of member states, the creation of a common market with the four freedoms plus the right of establishment, monetary union, common external tariff and a common trade policy".<sup>16</sup>

For Diop, "whether or not the EMCCA and WAEMU zone has contributed to the development of African countries, the experience accumulated by its members in managing a common currency constitutes an asset that could guide the entire African continent toward the creation of a single currency".<sup>17</sup> Diop's position is limited to praising the performance of WAEMU and EMCCA in managing the common currency, and the influence that this performance could have on the management of a single currency at the continental level, leaving aside the question of the emergence of EMCCA and WAEMU member countries. In light of this observation, which is real, this study seeks to determine whether the emergence of financial markets and the management of a common currency has been accompanied by the development of the emerging economies that host them within the WAEMU and EMCCA areas?

To give an appropriate answer to this question, it is important to examine the growth rate and trade balance in the WAEMU and EMCCA areas, which will give an idea of the economic dynamics in this region, before analyzing the emergence in question in the WAEMU and EMCCA areas. This approach accounts for the current level of emergence in the two economic and monetary organizations and the major challenges they face.

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<sup>15</sup> Article 2 of Treaty creating EMCCA, March 16, 1994, revised June 25, 2008.

<sup>16</sup> Article 4 of the Treaty creating WAEMU, 1<sup>st</sup> May 1996, revised in 2003.

<sup>17</sup> Touna Mama and Patrice Ongono, "Does the Franc zone hinder the structural transformation of member countries economies? ", *Economic Intervention Review*, 61/2019, p.7. <http://journals.openedition.org/interventionseconomiques/5397>. Consulté le 15/03/2021.

## **Growth Rate, Balance of Payments and Trade Balance in the WAEMU and EMCCA Areas**

This section will focus its analysis on the growth rate in the two areas (WAEMU and EMCCA), the balance of payments and the trade balance in the WAEMU and EMCCA areas.

### *Economic Growth Rates in the WAEMU and EMCCA Regions*

According to the World Economic Outlook published by the IMF in January 2018, and repeated in a study by Ngomba bodi published by BEAC (BEAC-EMCCA), "in sub-Saharan Africa, the growth rate should gradually strengthen to reach 3.3 percent in 2018, compared to 2.7 percent in 2017 and 1.4 percent in 2016, supported in particular, by the recovery of the global economy and the rise in commodity prices. The performance of oil-exporting countries should gradually recover. In Nigeria, it is expected to be 2.1% in 2018, compared with 0.8% in 2017. For oil-importing countries, growth is expected to continue to consolidate, despite more moderate activity in South Africa, at 1 percent in 2018".<sup>18</sup> Nigeria's growth rate also saw an increase in 2018, compared to the 2017 figure, unfortunately, it is neither a member of the WAEMU, let alone the EMCCA.

In the West African Economic and Monetary Union, for 2017, economic growth came in at 6.7 percent, after 6.6 percent in 2016 and 6.2 percent in 2015. The year-on-year inflation rate stood at 1.2 percent in the third quarter of 2017 after 0.1 percent in the previous quarter, resulting from the increase in food prices as a result of insufficient supplies of local cereal products, vegetables, and fishery products to the markets.<sup>19</sup> These figures also show that economic growth increased in the WAEMU area in 2017, unlike in 2016 and 2015.

In the EMCCA zone, on the other hand, BEAC estimates for 2017 show: i) a real GDP growth rate down by 0.1% (-2.2% for the oil sector and +0.3% for the non-oil sector), after a zero rate in 2016, ii) a deceleration of price pressures, with the inflation rate falling to 0.9 percent from 1.1

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<sup>18</sup> Francis Ghislain Ngonba Bodi, "Economic diversification in EMCCA", *Bank of Central African States, Economic and statistical Bulletin*, ESB, n° 01-March, 2018, p.6.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*.

percent in 2016, (iii) a deficit in the fiscal balance, on an accrual basis, including grants, falling from -5.6 percent of GDP in 2016 to -2.8 percent of GDP in 2017, and (iv) a contraction in the current account deficit (down 78.0 percent to \$1,489.1 billion) to -3.1 percent of GDP from -14.7 percent of GDP in 2016. On the currency front, the money supply declined by 0.4 percent to 10,602.9 billion at end-December 2017, and the external currency coverage ratio declined to 57.5 percent from 59.1 percent at the end of December 2016. Net claims on governments increased by 12.4 percent in one year to 2,745.8 billion at the end of December 2017. However, their annual rate of increase has been steadily declining since April 2017. Outstanding loans to the economy contracted by 1.9%, to 7,794.2 billion at December 31, 2017".<sup>20</sup>

Over the same period, i.e. 2015, 2016, and 2017, the growth rate was higher in the WAEMU area, i.e. a growth rate of 6.7% without total control of inflation, which rose to 1.2% in 2017, whereas in 2016 it was 0.1%, compared with a growth rate of 0.1% in the EMCCA zone, and an inflation rate that was moderately controlled, i.e. 0.9% in 2017 compared with 1.1% in 2016.<sup>21</sup> According to the figures given by the BEAC, this is justified by the fall in oil prices during the 2015-2017 financial year.

In the EMCCA area, the growth rate by country, notes "a deceleration of economic growth in the Central African Republic (+3.9% in 2017, compared to +4.9% in 2016), Cameroon (+3.0% in 2017, compared to +4.5% a year earlier) and Gabon (+0.3% in 2017, compared to +2.4% a year earlier). On the other hand, while remaining negative, the growth rate recovered in Congo (-2.0% in 2017, compared to -2.8% a year earlier) and Equatorial Guinea (-2.7% in 2017, compared to -8.5% in 2016), while it deteriorated in Chad (-5.3% in 2017, compared to -3.3% a year earlier)".<sup>22</sup> This growth rate, remains largely dependent on petroleum products. Industrialization is still totally lacking.

On the other hand, in the WAEMU region, there has been an increase in the primary sector, which can be explained by actions to improve agricultural production, which would benefit from favorable climatic conditions and continued investment efforts in the framework of

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 7.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*.

the implementation of national agricultural development programs in the Member States. In the secondary sector, the dynamism is expected to continue, driven by the continued implementation of structuring infrastructure projects and mining industries. The tertiary sector will benefit from the development of transport, trade, communication and banking services. By country, the growth rate in 2018 is as follows: Benin (6.8%), Burkina Faso (6.7%), Côte d'Ivoire (7.7%), Guinea-Bissau (3.8%), Mali (5.1%), Niger (5.2%), Senegal (6.8%) and Togo (4.8%).<sup>23</sup>

#### *Balance of Payments and Trade Balance in the WAEMU and EMCCA Areas*

First, it is important to give a concept of the balance of payments and the balance of trade, before looking at the situation in the areas under study, namely WAEMU and EMCCA. It is therefore important to define these two important concepts in the analysis of the economic growth of States before presenting the situation in the two areas (WAEMU and EMCCA) covered by this study.

The balance of payments is defined as "a statistical document that records all economic transactions carried out during a given period between the residents of a country (region, union) and the rest of the world".<sup>24</sup> F. Bittner defines the trade balance as "a macroeconomic indicator par excellence of the trade balance, an indispensable tool for determining economic policies and for evaluating the performance of the national economy"<sup>25</sup>. It is part of the balance of payments. The trade balance records the value of a country's exports and imports of goods with the rest of the world.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Waemu, Semi-Annual multilateral surveillance implementation Report, Décembre 2018. [http://www.uemoa.int/sites/default/files/bibliotheque/rapport\\_surveillance\\_multilaterale\\_decembre\\_2018\\_final\\_04022019.pdf](http://www.uemoa.int/sites/default/files/bibliotheque/rapport_surveillance_multilaterale_decembre_2018_final_04022019.pdf). Accessed March 16, 2021.

<sup>24</sup> Bank of France, "Balance establishment and presentation", International Affairs Directorate. <http://www.enpc.fr/ceras/martin/Balpaiements.pdf>. Accessed March 15, 2021.

<sup>25</sup> Fabrice Bittner, *Course in macroeconomics*, <https://www.cours-gratuit.com/cours-balance-commerciale/document-d-introduction-a-la-balance-commercial>. Accessed March 16, 2021.

<sup>26</sup> "The balance of trade".

[https://www.lafinancedepourtous.com/html/IMG/pdf/presse/DICO\\_2306.pdf](https://www.lafinancedepourtous.com/html/IMG/pdf/presse/DICO_2306.pdf). Accessed March 16, 2021.

In the EMCCA region, the balance of payments for 2016 and 2017 shows that "the current account balance of EMCCZ member countries in 2017 showed a contraction in the deficit, including grants (down 78.0% to 1,489.1 billion), to 3.1% of GDP, compared with -14.7% of GDP in 2016. This situation reflects the rebound in the trade balance surplus, which increased more than sevenfold, and the reduction in the services balance deficit (-36.6%, to 3,088.3 billion), despite the 17.1% increase, to 2,945.7 billion, and 44.2% increase, to 108.1 billion, in the respective deficits of the income balance and the transfer balance".<sup>27</sup> A reduction in the current account deficit was observed in 2017 in most member countries of the subregion, apart from the Central African Republic, with Gabon and Equatorial Guinea even recording surpluses.

The situation by country in 2017 was marked by "a reduction in deficits in Cameroon (-1.6 percent of GDP, after -3.2 percent of GDP a year earlier), Congo (-17.9 percent of GDP, after -82.6 percent in 2016), and Chad (-5.9 percent of GDP, after -16.6 percent of GDP in 2016), a return to surpluses in Equatorial Guinea (+2.8 percent of GDP, compared with -11.7 percent of GDP in 2016) and Gabon (+0.6 percent of GDP, compared with -2.4 percent of GDP in 2016), and an increase in the deficit in the Central African Republic (-8.2 percent of GDP, compared with -5.6 percent of GDP in 2016)"<sup>28</sup>. There is a positive trend for some countries except for the Central African Republic, which has experienced a deficit situation, unlike 2016. The trade balance in this zone was CFAF 550.3 billion in 2016, CFAF 4436.7 billion in 2017 and CFAF 4416.3 billion in 2018.<sup>29</sup>

For the WAEMU balance of payments, "the regional current account deficit (including grants) continued to narrow from 6.1 percent of GDP in 2014 to 5.6 percent in 2015, due to favorable terms of trade developments. Current and capital transfers declined slightly, by about 0.2 percent, to 5.5 percent and 1.7 percent respectively".<sup>30</sup> WAEMU's economic and financial transactions with the rest of the world resulted in an overall balance of payments deficit of 946.8 billion in 2016, after a deficit of 189.8 billion in

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<sup>27</sup> Francis Ghislain Ngonba Bodi, *op.cit*, p.21.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>30</sup> Imf, Waemu, Staff Report on common policies of Member states, IMF Report N0 16/96, March, 2016.

2015. This development essentially reflects the decline in net capital flows on the financial account, in a context of increased financing needs.<sup>31</sup>

With regard to the trade balance in this WAEMU zone, "the trade deficit improved in 2016, coming out at CFAF 1,037.1 billion against CFAF 1,232.2 billion a year earlier, due to a decline in imports (-1.5%), partially offset by a slight decline in exports (-0.03%).<sup>32</sup>

## **Emergence in Question in the WAEMU and EMCCA Regions**

The purpose of this section is to determine whether the emergence criteria examined in the first section of this study have been met in the WAEMU and EMCCA regions, especially in light of the macroeconomic stability that seems to have been achieved to some extent within these two organizations, as demonstrated by the growth rate examined in section two, and if not, what the main challenges are. Therefore, the advent of a per capita income and its progression in the middle bracket will be analyzed, structural transformation, diversification of the economy and their opening up to the global value chain in the WAEMU and EMCCA areas would also be analyzed. An analysis of these different points shows whether or not the two organizations have experienced real emergence.

### *The Advent of a per Capita Income and Its Progression into the Middle Range*

It is important to recall that according to the World Bank, "a per capita income of \$1025 or less defines low-income countries, and it is at this level that the majority of Sub-Saharan African countries are classified. Per capita income between \$1026 and \$4035 defines lower-middle income countries, while per capita income between \$4036 and \$12475 defines upper-middle income countries, and finally, per capita income greater than or equal to \$12476 defines high income countries".<sup>33</sup> This classification will enable us to understand the situation in the WAEMU and EMCCA areas.

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<sup>31</sup> Bceao, Balance of payments and regional international investment position to the Waemu for the year 2016.

<sup>32</sup> World Bank, New income classification of countries 2016: update. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/fr/opendata/nouvelle-classification-des-pays-en-fonction-de-leur-revenu-actualisation-2019-2020>. Accessed March 15, 2021.

<sup>33</sup> World Bank, *op.cit.*, p.34.

Most of the countries have a GDP per capita evaluated in purchasing power parity (PPP) of less than \$5,000 and those above this threshold are either oil or mineral exporters or more diversified economies (Cape Verde, Egypt, Morocco, Mauritius, Tunisia and Seychelles).<sup>34</sup> The analysis of the evolution of living standards (GDP per capita) in French-speaking African countries over a long period (1980-2016) by ATANGANA and al. "shows significant differences. As the following figures illustrate, ten African countries Sub-Saharan countries recorded average annual GDP per capita growth rates above 2 percent for the period 1980-2016. These are Equatorial Guinea (10.5%), Mauritius (4.1%), Cape Verde (3.4%), Mozambique (2.9%), Ethiopia (2.6%), Seychelles (2.5%), Chad (2.3%), Egypt (2.2%), Burkina Faso (2.2%), Morocco (2.2%) and Tunisia (2.2%)".<sup>35</sup>

The same authors note that during this period, "9 African countries experienced positive average annual growth in their standard of living but less than 2 percent. These countries are Ghana (1.6%), Rwanda (1.5%), Angola (1.3%), Mali (1.1%), Congo (1%), Senegal (0.6%), Guinea-Bissau (0.4%), Benin (0.4%), and Cameroon (0.3%). These were the Democratic Republic of Congo (-2.2%), the Central African Republic (-1.2%), Madagascar (-1.1%), Togo (-0.8%), Niger (-0.7%), Gabon (-0.5%), Comoros (-0.4%), São Tomé and Príncipe (-0.3%) and Burundi (-0.1%).

These data from the authors shows that, some WAEMU and EMCCA member countries have experienced positive developments in terms of GDP per capita and standard of living, but most of them have not managed to bring per capita income up to an intermediate level. Only Equatorial Guinea has experienced very good progress in terms of figures, but the instability of its economy, which is totally dependent on oil, does not allow this dynamic to be maintained. In Senegal, for example, per capita income has remained stuck at \$561.9. Beyond this aspect, there is the issue of unemployment and inequality, which persists within the WAEMU and EMCCA areas.

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<sup>34</sup> Shantayan Devaradjans and Wolfgang Fengler, "Africa's economic rise, reasons for optimism and pessimism", *Development Economics Review*, 14 (Vol. 21), 2013, pp. 97-113

<sup>35</sup> Henri Antangana Ondo, "Economic observatory, Economic situation in Francophone Africa: issues and perspective", *Francophone Economic Observatory*, University of Montreal, Quebec, 2018, p.8.

*Structural Transformation, Diversification of Economies and Their Openness in the WAEMU and EMCCA Areas*

The franc zone, which is the geographical area of the majority of CEMAC and WAEMU countries, is the corner of the continent that is the most backward in terms of implementing this criterion of the structural transformation of the economy. It should be noted that "industrialization is one of the factors to which this performance can be assessed. It refers to a process of structural transformation characterized by an increase in the value added of the industrial sector in GDP"<sup>36</sup>. The industrial sector includes mining, construction and manufacturing. However, the literature suggests that the manufacturing sector is the component of industry that offers more opportunities in terms of economic growth and job creation.<sup>37</sup>

As a result, T. Mama and P. Ongono, states that "while the problem of the weak structural transformation of economies is general to the entire African continent, it seems to be even more acute in sub-Saharan Africa, and particularly in the countries of the Franc zone. Of all the existing economic communities on the African continent, the two main unions of the Franc zone, the economic community and monetary from central Africa (EMCCA) and the Union economic and monetary West Africa (WAEMU), are lagging behind in terms of industrial production. The manufacturing output of the economic communities not including the Franc zone countries is far higher than that of EMCCA and WAEMU; the best performances are recorded in the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), and the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU)".<sup>38</sup>

In addition to having a small manufacturing sector, many Franc zone countries are also among the poorest in the world.

In addition to having a small manufacturing sector, many Franc zone countries are also among the poorest on the African continent. Indeed, of the 47 countries classified in 2017 by the United Nations as "Least

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<sup>36</sup> Serigne Bassirou, Fousséni Ramde, "Financial development and structural transformation of African Franc zone countries: a panel-VAR approach," *Economic Interventions Review*, 61, accessed January 2019, p.29.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>38</sup> Touna Mama and Patrice Ongono, *op.cit*, p. 5.

Developed Countries" (LDCs), 33 are on the African continent, and 11 of them belong to the Franc zone. The Franc zone thus seems to be a grouping of the poorest countries on the planet; this may justify the recurrence of the debate on the appropriateness of maintaining this area of economic and monetary cooperation established since 1945 between France and certain countries of its former colonial empire.<sup>39</sup>

One of the main economic effects expected from the establishment of a regional agreement is to stimulate growth and development through the intensification and diversification of trade flows within the unions. The elimination of tariffs and other costs to trade between member countries of the same agreement allows countries to access a larger market than domestic markets while remaining partially protected from competition from imports outside the area.<sup>40</sup> Since Viner, "the effects of a customs union on trade creation and trade detour are well known. It is important to quantify these phenomena while identifying the share of these redirections of trade flows attributable to the establishment of trade agreements on the one hand and the existence of a single currency on the other".<sup>41</sup>

Trade in both organizations remains concentrated at the intra-community level, and this trade appears to be significantly more diversified (the test for the difference in means is always significant at the 1 or 5 percent level). Thus, within WAEMU, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal and Togo export on average 15% more diversified products to their regional partners than to the rest of the world. Within the EMCCA, the differences are less pronounced, although they are still significant. Cameroon has the greatest diversity of exports to the regional market.<sup>42</sup> The delay in industrialization explains why the two organizations do not have much in the way of statistics for extra-community trade with the rest of the world, especially for manufactured products.

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<sup>39</sup> Vincent Duchaussov, "Monetary zones and development: the Franc zone, from decolonization to internalization", *World (s)*, vol. 1, N° 13, 2018, p. 108.

<sup>40</sup> Celine Carrère, "WAEMU, EMCCA: what performance in trade", *Development economics journal*, 1 Vol. 21, 2013, pp.33-60. <https://www.cairn.info/revue-d-economie-du-developpement-2013-1-page-33.htm+pdf>. Accessed March 15, 2021.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibidem*.

It should therefore be noted that the WAEMU and EMCCA economies have generated trade detour, with a significant increase in intra-regional trade appearing in the case of the WAEMU but not in that of EMCCA; the stability of exchange rates conferred by the sharing of a single currency has enabled the countries of each union to improve intra-regional trade while limiting the phenomenon of trade detour. Countries that are relatively concentrated in their export structure experience a high degree of trade detour, while countries that are more concentrated in their export structure experience a low degree of trade detour.<sup>43</sup>

## Conclusion

By way of conclusion, it should be noted that the two zones examined in this study, namely EMCCA and WAEMU, have managed to stabilize their monetary systems, but this monetary stability has not been accompanied by real emergence. The economies of most of the member countries of these two organizations are based on raw materials and cocoa, which means that they are totally volatile, and therefore lack the stability needed to foster real emergence. This can be explained by the fact that the economies of these two economic and monetary areas have not yet undergone structural transformation, which explains why WAEMU and EMCCA are lagging behind SADC and COMESA in this respect. Per capita income has also not evolved towards a middle range. As a result, inequalities and a high level of unemployment are observed. Insofar as the observation of trends in the sectoral distribution of jobs reveals that the share of industrial employment in total employment in Africa has grown least in the Franc zone countries. This low rate of growth shows that the industrial sector in Franc zone countries has not developed sufficiently to bring about a massive and irreversible shift in the labor force from the traditional agricultural and rural sector to the industrial sector and modern high value-added services, compared to non-member countries. With regard to the external openness of the economies of the EMCCA and WAEMU zones, trade remains concentrated at the intra-community level, and there are therefore fewer influences outside the two zones, due to a lack of industrialization.

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*.

Ultimately, the WAEMU and EMCCA countries are on the road to emergence, but economic factors (lack of diversification and infrastructure) are still a problem, and deserve special attention from the two organizations and their member states. Problems of governance, armed conflict, and terrorism also affect a number of member states of these organizations and complicate their progress toward emergence.

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## VARIA

# PUBLIC PERCEPTION ON THE WESTERN BALKAN STATES' ACCESSION TO THE EU. SOCIAL-CONSTRUCTIVIST INTERPRETATIONS\*

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### Abstract

*The purpose of the article is to analyse, from a social constructivist perspective, public perception on the accession of Western Balkan States to the European Union. Public opinion is an important indicator of the current situation in the region, as well as of the level of preparedness, engagement, and availability of the society to the European project and to internalize European values. For a more comprehensive understanding of the evolution and dynamics of public opinion, and whether we can discuss enlargement or accession fatigue, we have made a*

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*comparative analysis of polls conducted in 2010 and 2020. Moreover, since general polls are sensitive barometers and cannot be properly understood without placing them in a wider context, we have extended our research to the factors that influence public perception and the exposure to disinformation.*

**Keywords:** Western Balkans, EU accession, public perception, social constructivism

### **Introduction: methodology and theoretical underpinnings**

There are two main goals that this article sets: on the one hand, to investigate how EU discourse or discursive constructions create a gap between the European Union and the countries included in the Western Balkans, therefore fostering the construction of *Otherness* (by building on previous research). On the other hand, a secondary goal is to identify and analyse the ways in which the countries included in the label “Western Balkans” react to this, by exploring public opinion polls in the Western Balkan countries and by analysing how perceptions regarding the European Union are shaped. The methodology of this paper centres on constructivist and interpretative approaches. Additionally, the interpretative approach also rests upon interviews conducted with academics and policy makers in Serbia and Montenegro in November 2021.

There are a few social-constructivist tenets which provide us with a framework of analysis. First of all, we aim to present the context in which the EU (understood as social micro-structure or social and normative regional structure) interacts with agents/states included in the “Western Balkan” label. Therefore, one chief social-constructivist postulate is that human agents construct and reproduce reality through their daily practices<sup>1</sup> and that constructivism is based on a “social ontology which insists that human agents do not exist independently from their social environment and its collectively shared systems of meanings i.e. culture.”<sup>2</sup> By extrapolation, the social character of international life and of

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<sup>1</sup> Berger and Luckmann called this “the social construction of reality”. See Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality. A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, Anchor Books, 1966.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Risse, “Social Constructivism and European Integration”, in Antje Wiener and Thomas Diez (eds.), *European Integration Theory*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

institutions, as explained by Alexander Wendt,<sup>3</sup> is also meant to complete the Realist ontology, by showing that brute or material facts in world politics play a role insofar as states assign shared meanings to them; such meanings are ultimately social facts.<sup>4</sup> By focusing on symbolic interactionism,<sup>5</sup> constructivists show how individuals define the *Self*, the *Other* and, ultimately, *Reality*.

A secondary, intertwined sociological tenet focuses on the co-determination of social structures and agents (institutions/organizations and their components/members/states). The mutual constitutiveness of (social) structures and agents is amply emphasized in social-constructivist scholarship<sup>6</sup> and is meant to show that “the social environment in which we find ourselves, defines (constitutes) who we are, our identities as social beings. “We” are social beings, embedded in various relevant social communities”.<sup>7</sup> The mutual co-determination and co-constitution of structures and agents has been employed to show the impact of Europeanization and the ways in which European integration transforms collective identities. This is also one of our research goals in this study: to analyse the extent, level, and depth of identity transformation in the case of

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<sup>3</sup> Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

<sup>4</sup> Hidemi Suganami, “Alexander Wendt and the English School”, *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 4 (December), Centre of International Relations, 2001; Michael Barnett, “Social Constructivism”, in John Baylis and Steve Smith (eds.), *The Globalization of World Politics. An Introduction to International Relations*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005; Friedrich Kratochwil, “Constructing a new orthodoxy? Wendt’s Social Theory of International Politics and the constructivist challenge”, in Stefano Guzzini and Anna Leander (eds.), *Constructivism and International Relations*, London and New York: Routledge, 2006; Maja Zehfuss, *Constructivism in International Relations. The Politics of Reality*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

<sup>5</sup> See George Herbert Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society from the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist*, University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1934; Herbert Blumer, *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1969.

<sup>6</sup> See Emanuel Adler, “Seizing the Middle Ground: Constructivism in World Politics”, *European Journal of International Relations*, 1997, Vol. 3(3), pp. 319–363; Emanuel Adler, “Constructivism in International Relations: Sources, Contributions, and Debates”, in Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse, Beth A. Simmons (eds.), *Handbook of International Relations*, SAGE Publications, 2013; Alexander Wendt, “The agent-structure problem in international relations theory”, *International Organization*, 41, 3, Summer 1987, pp. 335-354.

<sup>7</sup> Risse, *op. cit.*, pp. 145-146.

the four countries included here, namely Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia. When exposed to EU interaction/norms/rules, are the identities of the countries changing? Or, rather, are they simply shifting a foreign policy agenda, focused on other national interests?

Another crucial pillar of social-constructivist theorizing revolves around the importance of rules and norms, together with the constitutive effects of social norms and institutions.<sup>8</sup> James March and Johan Olsen explored the “logic of appropriateness” and emphasized the differences between strategic interaction and the rule-guided behaviour.<sup>9</sup> Building on March and Olsen, Thomas Risse pinpointed to the two different logics, shown below (the table is designed by us as a way to synthesize Risse’s arguments).

Logic of consequentialism (Realist & Neoliberal)	Logic of appropriateness (Constructivist)
Social institutions (EU) constrain the behaviour of actors with given identities and preferences	Rule-guided behaviour differs from strategic and instrumental behaviour
These actors follow a 'logic of consequentialism'	Actors try to 'do the right thing' rather than maximize or optimize their given preferences.
They try to realise their preferences through strategic behaviour. The goal of action is to maximize or to optimize one's interests and preferences	Social institutions (EU) can no longer be viewed as 'external' to actors

<sup>8</sup> Nicholas Onuf, *World of Our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations*, Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1989; Friedrich Kratochwil, *Rules, Norms, and Decisions: On the Conditions of Practical and Legal Reasoning in International Relations and Domestic Affairs*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

<sup>9</sup> James G. March, Johan P. Olsen, *The logic of Appropriateness*, ARENA Working Papers, 2004, DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199548453.003.0034. See also James G. March, Johan P. Olsen, “The Institutional Dynamics of International Political Orders”, *International Organization*, Vol. 52, No. 4, Autumn, 1998, pp. 943-969.

Institutions constrain or widen the range of choice available to actors

Actors are deeply embedded in *and* affected by the social institutions in which they act

Source: Thomas Risse, "Social Constructivism and European Integration", in Antje Wiener and Thomas Diez (eds.), *European Integration Theory*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 147-148.

As underlined by Risse, social norms do not merely regulate behaviour, by enabling the actors to do something or by punishing deviating behaviour, "they also constitute the identity of actors in the sense of defining who 'we' are as members of a social community".<sup>10</sup> Moreover, "EU membership implies the voluntary acceptance of a particular political order as legitimate and entails the recognition of a set of rules and obligations as binding".<sup>11</sup> Therefore, successful Europeanization would entail the genuine incorporation and internalisation of rules, vales, norms by states within the Western Balkan region, and identity transformation. EU's rules and norms would gradually be accepted as most legitimate path, and not perceived as expected behaviour which triggers strategic thinking and calculated action.

### **The European Union's Attitudes and Actions towards the Western Balkan Countries**

The European Union has been, to some extent, engaged in the Western Balkan countries, but has shown inconsistency towards the region as well. When regions, more precisely states in a region, are not promised future integration, how efficient is the transfer of norms, rules and how deep is Europeanization? In this section we aim to analyse the EU's approach towards the Western Balkan countries and to show that the success of Europeanization is contingent not only on transformation occurring because of exposure to EU normativity, but also on the ways in which the EU presents the *Self* and the *Other* during processes and interactions with other countries.

<sup>10</sup> Risse, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem.*

Thomas Diez argued that “‘normative power Europe’ is a discursive construction rather than an objective fact, and that the ‘power of normative power Europe’ rests in the identity it provides for the EU and the changes it imposes on others, partly through its hegemonic status”.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, Diez and Pace argue that “the self-construction of the EU as a normative power has positive effects on its potential influence to bring about positive conflict transformation, while at the same time it remains problematic in the Othering that it performs”.<sup>13</sup> As indicated in the previous section, Europeanization entails “a logic of appropriateness” and a process of persuasion: “European policies, norms, and the collective understandings attached to them exert adaptational pressures on domestic-level processes, because they do not resonate well with domestic norms and collective understandings”.<sup>14</sup> According to Börzel and Risse, the internalization of norms and the development of new identities, shaped by the incorporation of shared beliefs and norms, are facilitated by “norm entrepreneurs” or “change agents”.<sup>15</sup> The latter are individuals, experts in close contact with the European Union that have the opportunity to persuade domestic elites and the population to change their interests, expectations and beliefs.

As shown in previous works,<sup>16</sup> we argue that a process of Europeanization cannot be linear. It is contingent on historical and political experience. Olsen showed that “an institutional perspective suggests that diffusion will be affected by the interaction between outside impulses and internal institutional traditions and historical experiences. Diffusion processes are unlikely to produce perfect cloning of the prescriptions offered. What is diffused is likely to be transformed during the process of

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<sup>12</sup> Thomas Diez, “Constructing the Self and Changing Others: Reconsidering ‘Normative Power Europe’”, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 2005, 33 (3), pp. 613-636; Thomas Diez; Michelle Pace, “Normative Power Europe and Conflict Transformation”, *EUSA Conference*, Montreal, 17-19 May 2007.

<sup>13</sup> Diez and Pace, *op. cit.*

<sup>14</sup> March, Olsen, *The Institutional Dynamics...*, 1998; Tanja A. Börzel; Thomas Risse, *When Europe Hits Home: Europeanization and Domestic Change*, European Integration Online Papers. 4:15, 2000, pp. 1-24, <http://eiop.or.at/eiop/pdf/2000-015.pdf>, accessed 22 November, 2021

<sup>15</sup> Börzel, Risse, *op. cit.*, 2000.

<sup>16</sup> Laura M. Herța; Adrian G. Corpădean, “Europeanisation in the Western Balkans: Challenges and Pitfalls”, in Miriam Sette (ed.), *Europe: Critical Thinking in Critical Times*, London Centre for Interdisciplinary Research, 2021, pp. 25-41.

diffusion.”<sup>17</sup> Therefore, there might be very different processes of Europeanization.<sup>18</sup> The Europeanization of Cyprus or of Romania might very well differ from the Europeanization of Serbia, Albania or Montenegro. The process itself is not simply replicated in different areas. It entails a complex interplay between the EU structure, the “change actors”, the perceptions of people in countries confronted with Europeanization processes, the impact local communities or local historical factors have upon the structure etc. In other words, Europeanization entails a set of norms, shared beliefs and rules which are susceptible to adaptation, consolidation or altering, depending on the interplay among several historical, political, and even geographical factors.

The Europeanization of the Western Balkans is faced with other challenges, such as the question: What is behind the label ‘Western Balkans’? As indicated elsewhere,<sup>19</sup> the term Western Balkans was coined in 2003 at the EU-Western Balkan Summit in Thessaloniki. In geopolitical terms, the phrase reflected a group of states which emerged after the dissolution of Yugoslavia (except for Slovenia) plus Albania. In social-constructivist terms, the phrase represents both a geographic reference and a social construction; it is the representation of a region via EU discourse and practices. The term Western Balkans incorporates pejorative recollections of previous perceptions of the Balkan wars, but also retains the “Balkan” enduring character of the region (often presented as opposed to the developed and civilized Europe). Therefore, the countries have been “placed” in the Western Balkans region through discourses and practices of

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<sup>17</sup> Johan P. Olsen, “The Many Faces of Europeanization”, *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*. Volume 40. Number 5, 2002, pp. 921–52.

<sup>18</sup> For examples see details and extended analyses on the cases of North Macedonia/FYROM or the case of Montenegro in Adrian Corpădean, “Assessments and prospects for the integration of the West Balkans. The case of Montenegro”, *On-line Journal Modelling the New Europe*, no. 25/2018, pp. 86-105; Adrian Corpădean, “What Macedonia? Some considerations on the current perceptions of the name dispute amid FYROM’s EU integration bid”, *On-line Journal Modelling the New Europe*, no. 26/2018, pp. 15-25; Adrian Corpădean, « Les fondements de la bonne gouvernance au Monténégro dans le contexte de son intégration euro-atlantique », *Synergies Roumanie*, n° 14/2019, pp. 55-67.

<sup>19</sup> Laura M. Herța; Adrian G. Corpădean, “The social construction of identity and belonging. Perceptions of EU in the Western Balkans”, in Anna Skolimowska (ed.), *Perceptions of the European Union’s Identity in International Relations*, London: Routledge, 2019, pp. 42-88.

the European Union. Their belonging to this social and geographic representation was exogenous to their agency. People in countries associated with the Western Balkans have thought a lot about their former Yugoslav identity (some believing it was frail or imposed, but many strongly identifying with it), but one could easily expect them not to self-identify in “Balkan” terms. The historical narrative and representation of the Balkans as ridden by barbarity and backwardness, especially the break-up of Yugoslavia which was tackled by the media and political discourses in the West in terms of “Balkan wars”, lead to the idea that their “features” and “belonging” are decided by outsiders.

According to Kristijan Fidanovski, the label triggered certain negative effects: “it has perpetuated the ever-present stereotype of Balkan backwardness; restored the old stereotype of ‘Balkan-ness’ as ‘Westernness’ in waiting; pitted (Western) Balkan nations against each other; and, most importantly, delayed the region’s European integration that it was allegedly created to accelerate.”<sup>20</sup> Consequently, the term Western Balkans incorporates pejorative recollections of previous perceptions on the Balkan wars, but also retains the “Balkan” enduring character of the region (often presented as opposed to the developed and civilized Europe).

Treated as an interactive, on-going process, Europeanization refers to an agent-structure relation: the European Union as a structure impacts the agents’ national policies and transfers a framework of normative knowledge and expected behaviour; at the same time, however, the agents also play a role in altering or revisiting the key attributes of the structure.

If Europeanization entails a process in which the sense of Europeanness is perceived as belonging solely to one part of Europe and is believed to be *terra incognita* to others, it is fair to assume that the outcome will only strengthen the creation of *otherness*. It has often been shown that the Western Balkans re-emerge in the European discourse in contexts of crisis (such as the refugee crisis) or when other key players (such as Russia or China) are moving closer. We re-iterate the idea that the Western Balkan countries could end up as victims of a self-fulfilling prophecy. They will always exhibit setbacks and lag behind in the integration process because

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<sup>20</sup> Kristijan Fidanovski, “Why I don’t like the term ‘Western Balkans’. A comment”, *Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso*, <https://www.balcanicaucaso.org/eng/Areas/Balcani-notizie/Why-I-don-t-like-the-term-Western-Balkans-187621>, accessed 28.05.2018.

this is expected of them anyway. As such, lack of positive development will not be explained by pinpointing to specific manageable issues, but by correlations with some sort of endemic character of the region. In other words, they will allegedly fail because they are Balkan, because they still carry the burden of the violent historical past. In other words, an attempt of re-imagining the Balkans, as embedded in EU practice towards Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, would be helpful in avoiding reified negative features along geographical, historical and civilizational separating lines.<sup>21</sup>

Does this ohering or hiatus shaped by the EU's approach to the region create a deadlock in which enlargement fatigue produces accession fatigue?

## Reactions from the Western Balkan Countries

### 1. Public opinion across the polls

In order to observe the evolution of the public perception on the accession of the Western Balkan states to the European Union, we have analysed the results of two polls conducted in an interval of ten years and published in 2011 and in 2021. The choice of the two polls was made based on the relevance and legitimacy of the publishers and authors, as well as their reach, and, consequently, their impact. Thus, we have focused on the reports published by the Institute for Security Studies (EUISS), an agency of the European Union, namely *The Western Balkans and the EU: 'the hour of Europe'*<sup>22</sup> of June 2011 and the *Public Opinion Poll in the Western Balkans on the EU Integration*,<sup>23</sup> published in November 2021 by BiEPAG - The Balkans in Europe Policy Advisory Group and resulting from a public opinion poll

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<sup>21</sup> Laura M. Herța, "Why Re-imagining the Western Balkans is important for the New European Union", in Valentin Naumescu (ed.), *The New European Union and Its Global Strategy: From Brexit to PESCO*, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020, pp. 237-256.

<sup>22</sup> Institute for Security Studies - EUISS, *The Western Balkans and the EU: 'the hour of Europe'*, Ed. Jacques Rupnik, Caillot Papers, June 2011, [https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/cp126-The\\_Western\\_Balkans\\_and\\_the\\_EU\\_0.pdf](https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/cp126-The_Western_Balkans_and_the_EU_0.pdf), accessed on 03.07.2021.

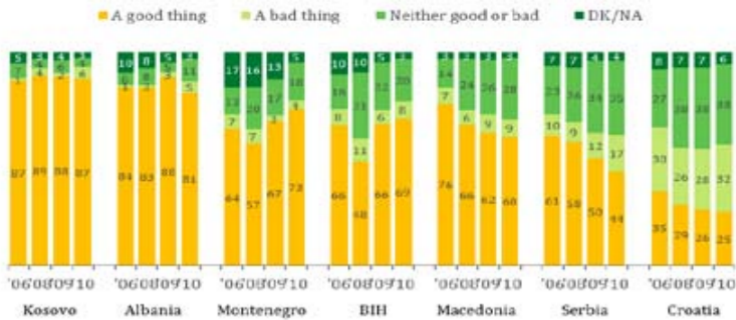
<sup>23</sup> BiEPAG - The Balkans in Europe Policy Advisory Group, *Public Opinion Poll in the Western Balkans on the EU Integration*, 08.11.2021, <https://biepag.eu/news/public-opinion-poll-in-the-western-balkans-on-the-eu-integration/>, accessed on 12.11.2021.

commissioned by the European Fund for the Balkans and conducted by IPSOS Strategic Marketing in Western Balkan countries in October 2020. The four counties that represent the subject of our analysis are Serbia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Albania.

The first aspect we have analysed is whether the state’s accession to the EU is considered as being a good or a bad thing. Since the graphs available also cover the evolution in this respect from 2006 to 2010, the 2011 report enabled us to have an even wider perspective on the evolution of public perception.

As we can observe in the chart below, in the case of Serbia positive attitudes towards EU accession decreased from 2006 to 2010 (61% vs 44%). Respondents in Montenegro, even if fluctuations have been registered in this above-mentioned interval, declared having more a positive attitude in this respect and we can observe a small increase from 64% to 72%. In the case of Albania, even though there is a small decrease in positive attitudes for 84% to 81%, note should be taken that, in comparison with the other three states, the highest percentage of those perceiving EU membership as a good thing was registered. North Macedonia registered the highest decrease in positive attitudes in the interval 2006-2010, from 76% to 60%.

No consistent pattern in the level of EU support – increases in BiH and Montenegro, but decreases elsewhere

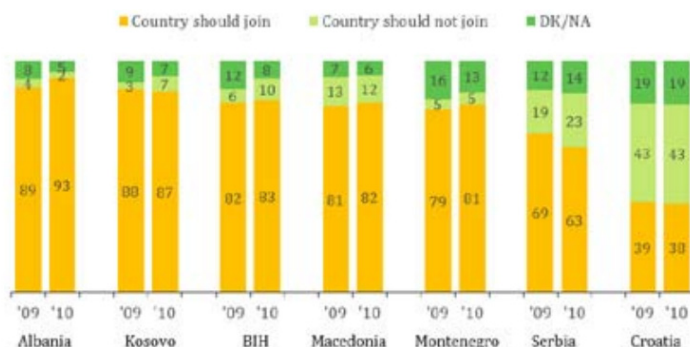


Generally speaking, do you think that [country]’s membership of the European Union would be a good thing, a bad thing, or neither good nor bad?

Figure 1. Attitudes on country’s membership of the EU<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Institute for Security Studies (EUISS), *op. cit.*, p. 166.

However, what is interesting to observe is the high percentage of respondents that were undecided on whether EU membership is a good or a bad thing (particularly in Serbia and North Macedonia) and how they related to voting in favour of EU membership. Based on the discrepancies between the results presented above and those in the chart below, we can presume that the undecided respondents caused the differences in percentages.



*If there was a referendum on Sunday on whether [country] should join the European Union, which way would you vote?*

Figure 2. *Voting for/against country joining the EU - 2011.*<sup>25</sup>

Hence, in all four countries the percentage of respondents that would vote for EU membership is higher than those perceiving this membership as being a good thing:

Country	% in favour of EU membership
Serbia	44% vs 63%
Montenegro	72% vs 81%
Albania	81% vs 93%
North Macedonia	60% vs 82%

Taking into consideration these differences, we have used both results to make a comparison with the reports from 2021. As illustrated in

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 167.

the chart below, the respondents in three out of the four countries have been mostly in favour of joining the EU, whereas in Serbia only approximately half of the respondents have been in favour of EU membership.

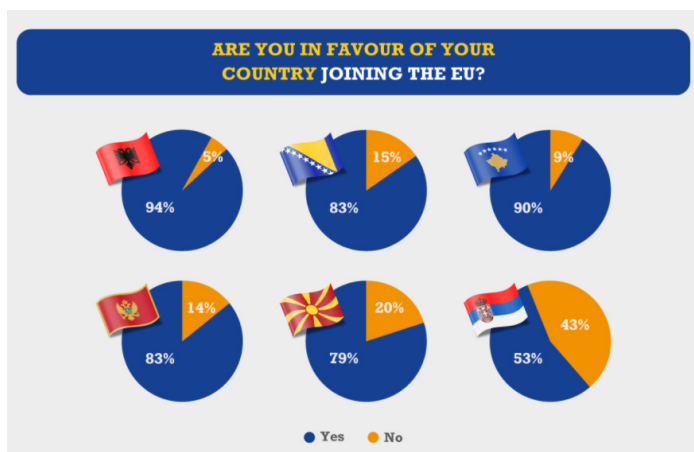


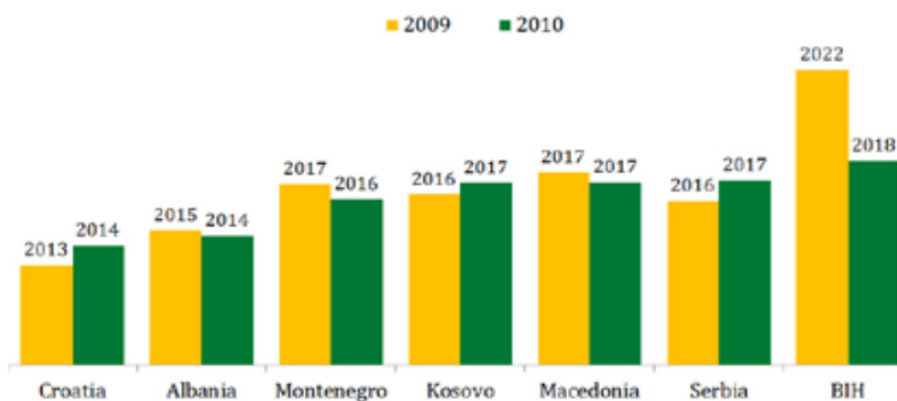
Figure 3. For/against country joining the EU<sup>26</sup>

Summarizing the results illustrated in the charts above, we can observe that Serbia is also the country that registered the highest decline in positive perception on EU membership from 2010 to 2020, North Macedonia registered a lower decline, whereas Montenegro and Albania registered a slight increase in positive attitudes. However, when examining the percentages from 2010 and 2020 in comparison, we should also take into consideration that the question addressed did not refer to how citizens would vote, but to whether they are in favour of joining the EU or not.

Country	2010	2020
Serbia	44% / 63%	53%
Montenegro	72% / 81%	83%
Albania	81% / 93%	94%
North Macedonia	60% / 82%	79%

<sup>26</sup> BiEPAG - The Balkans in Europe Policy Advisory Group, *op. cit.*

Another aspect that we have analysed refers to the estimations that the respondents have made on the year when their countries are to join the European Union. According to the report from 2011, the respondents from Albania have been the most optimistic regarding the date when they would join the EU (estimated 2014-2015), whereas those from Serbia, Montenegro and North Macedonia, with small discrepancies in trends, estimated the interval 2016-2017 as period of accession.



*When, in which year do you think [country] will be a part of the European Union?*

Figure 5. Estimates on when WB countries will join the EU - 2011<sup>27</sup>

In contrast, the results of the study from 2021 portray a completely different perception in this respect, with approximately a quarter of respondents in the region believing they will never join the EU. The highest percentages have been registered in Serbia (44%), followed by North Macedonia (34%), and the most optimistic predictions have been made by the respondents from Montenegro (46% - in the next 5 years).

<sup>27</sup> Institute for Security Studies (EUISS), *op. cit.*, p. 169.

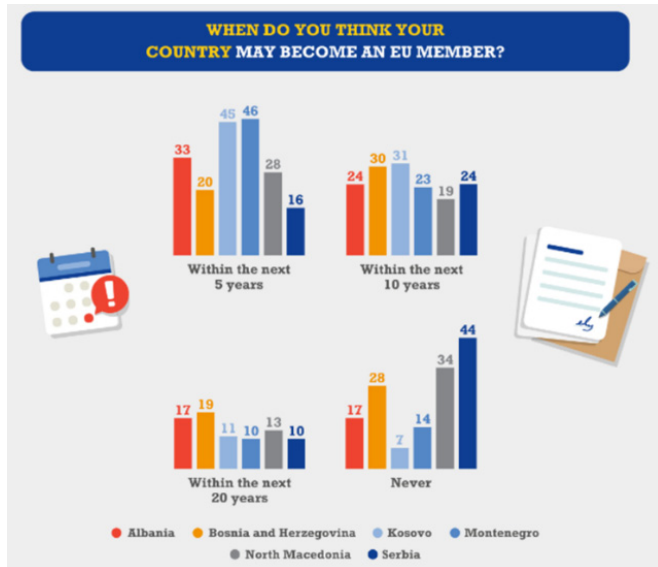


Figure 5. Estimates on when WB countries will join the EU - 2021<sup>28</sup>

In this context, the so-called *accession fatigue*<sup>29</sup> is justifiable, as it is visible that the expectations of the citizens from 2010 are far from having been met.

Another indicator of the expectations of the citizens is represented by their responses related to what measures should be taken by the EU to support the accession of Western Balkans states. Corruption continues to be a challenging problem in the region<sup>30</sup> and an impediment to EU accession. However, when asked what the EU could do to help the country advance towards EU membership, “softening the conditions of accession” and “providing more financial assistance” scored higher than “being tougher with national politicians in the Balkan countries” and “better monitoring of EU financial assistance”. Hence, we can conclude that interference in the

<sup>28</sup> BiEPAG - The Balkans in Europe Policy Advisory Group, *op. cit.*

<sup>29</sup> Velina Lilyanova, *The Western Balkans and the EU Enlargement and Challenges*, European Parliamentary Research Service, September 2016, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu>, accessed on 23.11.2021.

<sup>30</sup> Mathias Bak, *Western Balkans and Turkey: Overview of corruption and anti-corruption*, U4 Anti-Corruption Research Center, Transparency International, 12.11.2019, <https://www.u4.no/publications/overview-of-corruption-and-anti-corruption-in-the-western-balkans-and-turkey.pdf>, accessed on 03.09.2021.

internal affairs of the states is not considered as being opportune by the citizens and that the role of the EU is regarded more as a provider and enabler than as an active actor within the states.

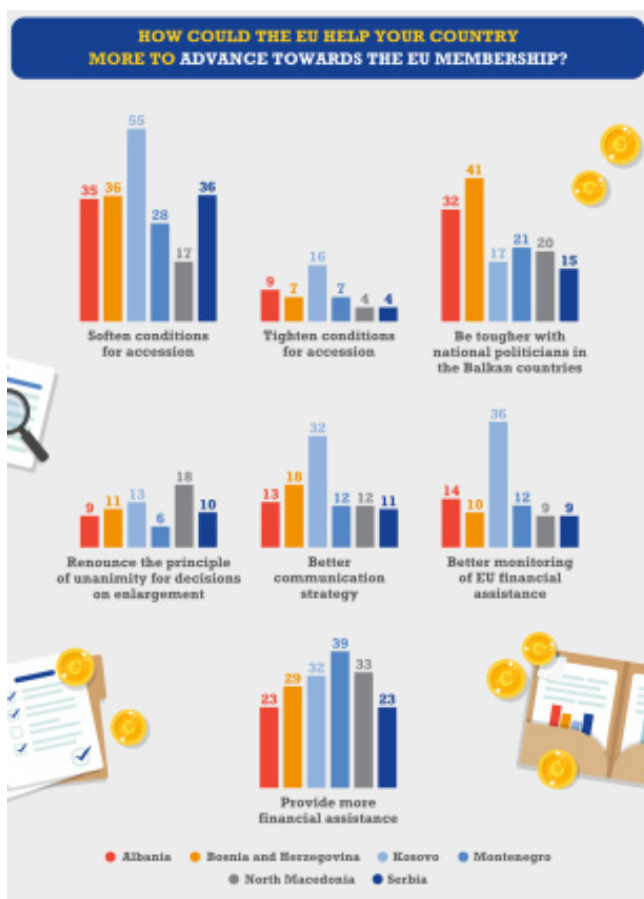


Figure 6. The manner in which the EU can support the accession of Western Balkans states <sup>31</sup>

Nevertheless, apart from the slow progress towards EU accession relative to the expectations of the citizens a decade ago, there is another important aspect that we should look into, namely what influences the perception of the citizens in the region and to what extent they are exposed and susceptible to disinformation.

<sup>31</sup> BiEPAG - The Balkans in Europe Policy Advisory Group, *op. cit.*

## 2. What influences public perception on the EU in the region?

For a better understanding of the degree to which the citizens in the Western Balkans region are susceptible to fake news and disinformation, we have consulted the study *Mapping Fake News and Disinformation in the Western Balkans and Identifying Ways to Effectively Counter Them*,<sup>32</sup> requested by the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs and authored by King's College London academics, which provides a comprehensive analysis of the events and disinformation in the region in the period from 2018 to 2020.

Next, since each state has its own particularities and a regional perspective is insufficient to properly understand the state of affairs, we will present what the findings of the study are for Serbia, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Albania.

The findings for Serbia portray a “deterioration in the quality of media coverage” and a government that is undertaking campaigns to weaken the support for the EU and NATO. Disinformation is presented as originating mostly from within the country, the media being dominated by the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) and by President Alexander Vučić, whereas “international actors play a relatively minor role in the Serbian disinformation landscape”. State-sponsored TV stations, such as TV Pink, or tabloids, are considered as being a consistent source of disinformation. Pro-Russia discourse and “negative reporting about the EU, NATO and the west in general” are visible on social-media as well, although less impactful than the sources mentioned above. Allegations of fake social media profiles have been made, and the authors give in this respect the example of more than 8558 Twitter “state-backed” accounts deleted in April 2020 for spreading disinformation. Through these campaigns, European values are not presented as compatible with, but as opposing the development of the state.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Samuel Greene *et al.*, *Mapping Fake News and Disinformation in the Western Balkans and Identifying Ways to Effectively Counter Them*, Study requested by the AFET committee, European Parliament, February 2021, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2020/653621/EXPO\\_STU\(2020\)653621\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2020/653621/EXPO_STU(2020)653621_EN.pdf), accessed on 04.10.2021.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 31.

On the opposite side, the CNN affiliate N1 TV station, the major independent TV station in Serbia, is facing constant attacks on social media, smear campaigns and intimidation, according to RSF - Reporters without Borders.<sup>34</sup> A Human rights Watch 2021 report on the freedom of media confirms the conclusions above related to the attacks against independent journalists and those that are not pro-government, and evaluates the response from Serbian authorities as being “inadequate”.<sup>35</sup>

For Montenegro, the *Mapping Fake News and Disinformation* report indicates that there is a very strong influence from the Serbian media, as well as the Russian one. However, similar to the case of Serbia and in spite of the interrelations observed between the media in the two neighbouring countries and the other external influences presented, most of the disinformation is considered to be domestic. Russian and Serbian external influence in disinformation is exemplified by the coup d'état from 2016, against Prime Minister Đukanović, when activities in this respect aimed to prevent Montenegro's NATO accession. With regards to social media, the study does not provide much information and Facebook is portrayed as not being “particularly popular”.<sup>36</sup>

Nevertheless, some of the findings of the study discussed above have been questioned and deemed inaccurate. The Digital Forensic Center, for example, established by The Atlantic Council of Montenegro to fight against fake news and disinformation, demanded clarifications for certain aspects that they considered incorrect. Hence, Facebook is presented as having a substantial number of users, more than 400.000, which, relative to the population of the country of approximately 620.000 citizens, shows a high reach of the platform. Moreover, the conclusion that most disinformation is produced within the country is contradicted as the authors of the article believe that “given the popularity of the Serbian media in Montenegro – the media recognized for spreading tendentious content and disinformation – it is evident that a large number of such

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<sup>34</sup> Reporters without Borders, *Independent Serbian TV channel subjected to smear campaigns*, 20.11.2019, <https://rsf.org/en/news/independent-serbian-tv-channel-subjected-smear-campaigns-intimidation>, accessed on 04.11.2021.

<sup>35</sup> Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021 - Serbia*, 2021, p. 585, [https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media\\_2021/01/2021\\_hrw\\_world\\_report.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2021/01/2021_hrw_world_report.pdf), accessed on 04.11.2021.

<sup>36</sup> Samuel Greene et al., *op. cit.*, pp. 27-28.

content is foreign".<sup>37</sup> Still, in cases where both internal and external actors are involved, we consider it is difficult to identify which of them has a higher influence and, as shown in the cases of Serbia and Montenegro, disinformation actions from abroad have been enabled internally.

Moving on to the case of North Macedonia, the *Mapping Fake News and Disinformation* report shows that disinformation is a stringent problem as well and, to exemplify, it brings forth the role played by such actions in discouraging participation in the 2018 name-changing referendum. However, a change of direction is observed, as "the recent change of government has pushed disinformation largely out of the state and mainstream media and into the margins, where it nevertheless remains a powerful force distorting internal politics".<sup>38</sup> Apart from the marginalization of biased mainstream media that used to be under the influence of the ruling party, the Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity, another noticeable change is considered to be the increasing influence of disinformation by Hungarian nationalists through the media outlets they purchased. Although traditional media is the main outlet of disinformation campaigns, social media platforms (particularly Facebook, YouTube and Twitter) are considered as important components.<sup>39</sup>

*The Media Pluralism Monitor*, a project conducted by The Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom, validates the claim that significant changes can be observed in this respect, namely an improvement in media freedom and pluralism from 2016 to 2020. On the other hand, a concerning conclusion is that the young population is "greatly exposed to disinformation and hate speech" via social networks.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Digital Forensic Center, *Distorted Perception of Montenegro in the Study Conducted for the European Parliament*, 21.12.2020, <https://dfcme.me/en/distorted-perception-of-montenegro-in-the-study-conducted-for-the-european-parliament/>, accessed on 10.09.2021.

<sup>38</sup> Samuel Greene et al., *op. cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 29-30.

<sup>40</sup> Snezana Trpevska; Igor Micevski, *Monitoring media pluralism in the digital era : application of the Media Pluralism Monitor in the European Union, Albania, Montenegro, The Republic of North Macedonia, Serbia & Turkey in the year 2020 : country report : The Republic of North Macedonia*, Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom, European University Institute, Issue 2021, pp. 23-24. [https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/71968/the\\_republic\\_of\\_north\\_macedonia\\_results\\_mpm\\_2021\\_cmpf.pdf?sequence=1](https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/71968/the_republic_of_north_macedonia_results_mpm_2021_cmpf.pdf?sequence=1), accessed on 10.09.2021.

Finally, in the case of Albania, the sources of disinformation appear to be mostly domestic “both in origin and purpose”, and, in comparison with the other three countries, much less credit is given in the study *Mapping Fake News and Disinformation* to external actors. The scope of fake news is mostly to boost traffic and for political figures to gain notoriety, and less to influence the international landscape. The attitude of the citizens is presented as largely pro-EU and pro-NATO, which undermines the capacity of disinformation campaigns to go against the west.<sup>41</sup>

We will end our short description of the Albanian media environment, with a controversial initiative of the government, the proposed “anti-defamation package”. The proposal, with the declared aim of fighting against disinformation, is considered by some national and international media and journalism organizations, such as Reporters without Borders, as an attack against media freedom of expression, since the supervision of the Albanian Audiovisual Authority (AMA) of all online media is perceived as a tool of control that could worsen the media climate.<sup>42</sup>

Apart from the disinformation campaigns discussed above, citizens in the region are also faced with messages from EU officials that are sometimes inconsistent with a clear desire of further EU enlargement in the near future<sup>43</sup> and which can easily create more confusion and lead to accession fatigue, especially in the context of the current pandemic situation.

In Serbia and North Macedonia, we can observe a decrease in positive perception and in Albania and Montenegro a slight increase in the degree of positive perception regarding EU membership, comparing the reports from 2011 and 2021. However, the necessity of reading and interpreting across the polls and looking into the particular situation of

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<sup>41</sup> Samuel Greene *et al.*, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-23.

<sup>42</sup> Alice Taylor, *Albania's declining media freedom won't impact EU accession*, EURACTIV.com, 13.10.2021, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/albanias-declining-media-freedom-wont-impact-eu-accession/>, accessed on 23.10.2021.

<sup>43</sup> Aleksandar Ivković, *After two weeks of intensified EU-WB activities, what is the state of the enlargement?*, European Western Balkans, 13.10.2021, <https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2021/10/13/after-two-weeks-of-intensified-eu-wb-activities-what-is-the-state-of-the-enlargement/>, accessed on 03.11.2021.

each Western Balkan state should not be disregarded, in order to properly understand the complexity of the situation in the region.

Generally speaking, there are still high degrees of disinformation in the region, whether internal or external. Hence, this problem needs to be addressed at an international level, especially since national actors are in many cases actively engaged in civil society manipulation and polarization campaigns.

## Conclusions

The countries from the region labelled as Western Balkans have been going through a difficult post-socialist and post-war reconstruction. As discussed in previous works,<sup>44</sup> the identities in the region have always been multiple and intersecting. As a whole, the identity of the region is decided by outside actors and seems to be exogenous to the countries' agency. The term Western Balkans incorporates both prospects for future European integration, but also recollections of Balkan-ness, as opposed the rest of Europe. Such identity (with all its historical burden and innate stereotypes) has been attributed to the region. There are both rejections of this "given" identity and forms of incorporation, as if one cannot escape it.

Ever since 2003, the Western Balkans have resurfaced within the European Union's discourse. By now, phrases such as "sharing everything but institutions", "the need to keep a European perspective", "the future of Western Balkans is within the European Union" have become famous and have been quoted in various policy recommendations, articles, books, analyses.

The fact that the Western Balkans have regularly returned to the European Union's spotlight, whilst seemingly being continuously left outside, led some to believe that the region is taken for granted.<sup>45</sup> Others

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<sup>44</sup> Herța, Corpădean, *The social construction of identity and belonging...*, pp. 42-88; Herța, *Why Re-Imagining the Western Balkans is Important for the New European Union*, pp. 237-256; Herța, Corpădean, *Europeanisation in the Western Balkans: Challenges and Pitfalls*, pp. 25-41; Laura M. Herța; Adrian G. Corpădean, "The European Union's Conflict Resolution Mechanisms and their Impact on the Serbia-Kosovar Reconciliation", in Raluca Moldovan (ed.), *The European Union. Policies, Perspectives and Politics*, New York: Nova Science, 2020, pp. 303-324.

<sup>45</sup> Horia Ciurtin, *Left Behind? Reassessing the Balkan Quest for EU Integration*, European Institute of Romania, Policy Briefs Series, No. 2, Bucharest, February 2017, accessed September 28, 2018, p. 6, [http://ier.ro/sites/default/files/pdf/Policy\\_Brief\\_nr.%202\\_Horia\\_Ciurtin\\_Left\\_behind\\_0.pdf](http://ier.ro/sites/default/files/pdf/Policy_Brief_nr.%202_Horia_Ciurtin_Left_behind_0.pdf)

assessed the post-Yugoslav space in terms of “in, almost in, and out” and as a three-layered area, namely 1) EU members Slovenia and Croatia, 2) strong candidates Macedonia and Montenegro and 3) the complex cases of Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo.<sup>46</sup> Others have distinguished among the “entrants, candidates and potential candidates”.<sup>47</sup>

What do the opinion polls across Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia indicate? On the one hand, there is still commitment towards *and* strong belief in the European Union; this is visible in Montenegro and Albania, but North Macedonia is not very much behind. On the other hand, there are also opportunities for disinformation campaigns which are grabbed by populist politicians or bred by accession fatigue and disappointment.

In the case of Serbia, there seems to be a painful stalemate, the case of Kosovo causes a sort of hurtful deadlock, in which the EU is superposed on the West that crippled Serbian territory, but also a state of apathy, confusion and of disillusionment. The EU integration is perceived as something to be discussed later, after major transformations occur within domestic politics. Main priorities are believed to be internally oriented. The interviews we conducted indicated a sort of “coalition of unwillingness”, namely the EU declared that Western Balkans countries are important, Serbia declared that this is important for its foreign policy as well, but nothing more and consistent follows.

The case of Montenegro is different, the interviewees tend to indicate a form of consistent commitment towards the EU. Policy makers refer to the revised methodology and fight against corruption as something that needs to be tackled, “not because the EU says so, but because this is the only way forward.” In social constructivist terms, we might say that there seems to be a process of appropriateness of EU rules and norms. Also, Montenegro is presented as a small state which cannot not be focused on one path. Relations in the region are important, but the incorporation of EU norms and rules are the guiding line. The EU is not presented as an external actor, but rather as a social institution in which Montenegro places its trust.

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<sup>46</sup> Branislav Radeljić (ed.), *Europe and the Post-Yugoslav Space*, Ashgate, 2013.

<sup>47</sup> Adam Fagan, *Europe's Balkan Dilemma. Paths to Civil Society or State-Building?*, London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010.

It has often been said that “Western Balkans” is a term born in Brussels and, hence, it is assigned to a region that finds itself in a position of just filling in the label. For example, Igor Štiks noticed that “the geopolitical landscape in the Western Balkans is not as uniform or homogenous as the umbrella term might suggest” and that “the region christened ‘the Western Balkans’ by Brussels is basically a space squeezed between EU Member States, supposedly destined to join them but without a clear accession timetable”.<sup>48</sup> The interviews conducted in the region strongly corroborate this point. Also, others emphasized that the “gaps in understanding the regional approach(es) for the Western Balkans”, since it “did not reflect any bottom-up idea pushed for by the local actors”.<sup>49</sup> It should be noted that identification to this label or geographic representation was not indigenous; instead, it was assigned by external actors.

In conclusion, EU’s relations with the candidate countries from the Western Balkan region should be understood as a two way street, an ongoing, interactive agent-structure interaction, in which agents are transformed and both their interest and identities might change, but also the very identity of the (social) structure is shaped by this interaction.

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<sup>48</sup> Igor Štiks, “The European Union and citizenship regimes in the Western Balkans”, in Jacques Rupnik (ed.), *The Western Balkans and the EU: ‘the hour of Europe’*, Chaillot Papers, June 2011, pp. 123-134.

<sup>49</sup> Christos Marazopoulos, *Constructing the Western Balkans: Understanding the European Commission’s Regional Approach from a Constructivist Perspective*, PhD Thesis, University of Bath, August 2013, [http://opus.bath.ac.uk/44950/1/MARAZOPOULOS\\_Christos\\_PhD\\_Thesis\\_final.pdf](http://opus.bath.ac.uk/44950/1/MARAZOPOULOS_Christos_PhD_Thesis_final.pdf), accessed 30.05.2018.

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**LA RÉPRESSION, FACTEUR D'ANNIHILATION DU TERRORISME  
OU DE SA RADICALISATION ? LE CAS DU CONFLIT BASQUE**

**REPRESION, WAY OF ANIHILATING TERRORISM OR OF  
RADICALIZING IT? THE CASE OF THE BASQUE CONFLICT**

**Caroline Guibet Lafaye\***

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**Abstract**

*Faced with a terrorist movement, the authoritarian or democratic power deploys a repressive response. At certain times, it was massive against the armed group Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA). To study its effects on the group's operability, we used two original databases (ETA actions, arrests of its activists). Statistical analysis underlines that the most intense deployments of police repression had a radicalising effect on the Basque national liberation movement, whether under authoritarian or democratic regimes until at least the 1980s, and that this radicalisation phenomenon does not occur at the end of a protest cycle as a backlash against its exhaustion. The effectiveness of repression is only real when it is not only police-related but also judicial, and when it is supported by transnational cooperation.*

**Keywords:** Counter-terrorism, Basque country, ETA, legal and illegal repression, statistical analysis.

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## Introduction

Le général et chef d'état-major de la Garde civile, Andrés Casinello, déclare le 25 septembre 1985, dans le journal de droite *ABC*, à propos de la situation au Pays basque : « Deberíamos aplicar las leyes de la guerra. Prefiero el terrorismo a la alternativa KAS<sup>1</sup> y la guerra a la independencia de *Euskadi* [Pays basque] ». <sup>2</sup> Ainsi se trouve posé le cadre du rapport de l'État espagnol à l'organisation armée *Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* (ETA), dans les premières années de la démocratie espagnole. ETA a vu le jour en décembre 1958 et s'est faite connaître dès 1959 par des actions illégales de portée symbolique (déploiement du drapeau basque [*ikurriña*] alors interdit, distribution de tracts, graffitis) jusqu'à l'explosion de trois bombes artisanales au gouvernement civil de Gasteiz, à la rédaction du journal phalangiste *Alerta* à Santander et au commissariat de police d'Indautxu (Bilbao) en décembre 1959. <sup>3</sup>

À l'exception de brèves phases de discussions (1976-1977, 1999) puis de négociations (1989-1990, 2006), la stratégie de l'État espagnol à l'égard du groupe clandestin s'est concentrée sur une logique répressive massive. Celle-ci a connu de brusques phases d'accélération, que ce soit durant le régime de Franco ou pendant la période démocratique. L'intensification de la répression constitue-t-elle une réponse à des actions clandestines d'ETA, témoignant de la sorte d'une séquence action-répression-action ou bien répond-elle à une autre logique ? Est-elle l'outil le plus efficace d'anéantissement du « terrorisme » basque ou bien intervient-elle comme un vecteur de radicalisation de la contestation ?

L'étude de la répression policière de la contestation armée au Pays basque permet d'en saisir les effets aussi bien en régime autoritaire qu'en régime démocratique. Dans des pays autoritaires où la sphère de contestation démocratique est très limitée, certaines organisations recourent à la violence instrumentale<sup>4</sup> mais également à la violence

<sup>1</sup> Cooridination abertzale [patriote] socialiste de la gauche indépendantiste basque.

<sup>2</sup> « Nous devrions appliquer les lois de la guerre. Je préfère le terrorisme à l'alternative KAS et la guerre à l'indépendance de l'*Euskadi* ». (*ABC*, 25.09.1985)

<sup>3</sup> Casanova Alonso Iker, *ETA 1958-2008. Medio siglo de historia*, Tafalla (Navarre) : Txalaparta, 2007, p. 17.

<sup>4</sup> Bozarслан Hamit, *Violence in the Middle-East : From Political Struggle to Self-Sacrifice*, Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2004.

symbolique ou à des actions clandestines transgressives. L'émergence de formes de radicalisation a fait l'objet d'explications théoriques dans chacun de ces contextes. Le modèle tillyen<sup>5</sup> a été convoqué hors du monde occidental pour expliquer les mobilisations en régimes autoritaires avec des succès limités.<sup>6</sup> Certains travaux ont *a contrario* fait le choix de ne pas postuler une différence intrinsèque des effets de la répression étatique, policière et judiciaire, en situation dite autoritaire ou en situation dite démocratique.<sup>7</sup>

Plus largement, l'interprétation de l'action politique par les sentiments d'injustice (*grievance*) et la théorie de la mobilisation des ressources divergent dans leurs prédictions sur les effets de la répression, tout de même que les recherches empiriques suggèrent des effets différents de cette dernière.<sup>8</sup> Quatre modèles explicatifs des interactions entre mobilisation sociale et répression ont été formalisés.<sup>9</sup> L'hypothèse de la courbe en U-inversé suggère que la coercition réduit la contestation et que celle-ci accélère la coercition. L'hypothèse de l'instabilité veut que protestation et répression oscillent durant le temps de la mobilisation. Celle du contrecoup suggère qu'une coercition brutale accélère la protestation. Dans ce cas, la répression loin de dissuader la protestation a un effet de radicalisation et stimule le comportement prohibé.<sup>10</sup> Enfin, l'hypothèse de l'adaptation souligne que les manifestants modifient leurs actions pour

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<sup>5</sup> Charles Tilly (1984) envisage les mouvements sociaux comme des entreprises porteuses d'une confrontation avec les autorités publiques, grâce à laquelle ils cherchent à obtenir de nouveaux droits. Ces mouvements se définissent alors comme « une série continue d'interactions entre les détenteurs du pouvoir et ceux qui les défient (et qui peuvent prétendre s'exprimer au nom d'un groupe dépourvu de représentation formelle) » (C. Tilly, "Social Movements and National Politics", in C. Bright, S. Harding (eds), *Statemaking and Social Movements. Essays in History and Theory*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1984, pp. 297-317.).

<sup>6</sup> Mounia Bennani-Chraïbi et Olivier Fillieule (dir.), "Retour sur les situations révolutionnaires arabes", *Revue Française de Science Politique*, vol. 62, n° 1-2, octobre-décembre 2012.

<sup>7</sup> *EJTS*, n° 15, 2012.

<sup>8</sup> Karl-Dieter Opp et Wolfgang Roehl, "Repression, micromobilization, and political protest", *Social Forces*, vol. 69, n° 2, 1990, pp. 521-548.

<sup>9</sup> Francisco Ronald A., "Coercion and Protest: An Empirical Test in Two Democratic States", *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 40, 1996, pp. 1181-1182.

<sup>10</sup> Karl-Dieter Opp, "Repression and Revolutionary Action. East Germany in 1989", *Rationality and society*, vol. 6, n° 1, janvier 1994, p. 103.

échapper à la coercition. Plus finement l'étude des mouvements sociaux<sup>11</sup> décrit un cycle en quatre temps (création de nouvelles organisations, routinisation de l'action collective, satisfaction des demandes, désengagement du plus grand nombre associé à la radicalisation d'une minorité) permettant de situer l'émergence de groupes armés.<sup>12</sup> Ces modèles explicatifs permettent-ils de saisir les phases d'ascension et de régression du groupe armé basque ainsi que les effets de la répression sur ce dernier ? Conservent-ils une pertinence, lorsque les revendications des clandestins s'inscrivent dans un « cadrage » de lutte pour la libération nationale ? L'un des intérêts de l'étude du conflit au Pays basque et des interactions entre l'État espagnol et ETA est de pouvoir appréhender les phénomènes dits de radicalisation dans un double contexte, celui d'une dictature *et* celui d'un régime démocratique.

Sur un second versant, l'étude des phases d'accélération de la répression permet d'envisager l'efficacité de cette dernière sur l'action clandestine. De façon inattendue, nous soulignerons l'effet de radicalisation, au sens d'un accroissement de la violence politique clandestine, de la répression policière, légale et illégale, lorsqu'elle intervient *seule*. Nous verrons notamment comment l'échec d'une répression policière exclusive conduit, d'une part, l'antiterrorisme espagnol à convoquer des moyens occultes tels que l'infiltration, la « guerre sale », le détournement des instruments répressifs à l'occasion du coup d'État du 23-F pour tenter de venir à bout d'ETA. Nous soulignerons, d'autre part, comment se construit la complémentarité des champs d'action de l'antiterrorisme face à l'échec d'une répression strictement policière. Celui-ci ouvre en effet la voie à ce qui deviendra une constante de la lutte antiterroriste espagnole contre le mouvement abertzale, laquelle se déploie sur plusieurs fronts à la fois légaux (juridiques, législatifs, policiers) et illégaux notamment para-policiers.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Sydney Tarrow, *Power in Movement. Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics*, Cambridge: CUP, 1994.

<sup>12</sup> Isabelle Sommier, *La violence révolutionnaire*, Paris : Presses de Sciences Po, 2008, p. 27.

<sup>13</sup> C. Guibet Lafaye, "Succès et limites de l'antiterrorisme espagnol : le cas d'ETA", *Cultura de la República. Revista de Análisis Crítico*, 2022. [À paraître.]

Afin d'envisager ces questions, nous exposerons dans un premier temps la méthodologie mise en œuvre dans cet article puis nous montrerons comment, à l'époque franquiste, la répression policière, pourtant massive, a constitué un facteur de radicalisation. Nous envisagerons ensuite comment ces pratiques, en contexte démocratique, ont eu le même effet, au moins jusqu'à la fin des années 1980, pour enfin esquisser les transformations de la politique antiterroriste espagnole face aux échecs qu'elle essayait, lorsqu'elle n'avait recours qu'à la répression policière, dans ses volets légaux et illégaux.

## 1. Étudier les dynamiques de répression/radicalisation

### 1.1 La répression des mouvements sociaux, facteur de radicalisation ?

La littérature académique sur les mouvements sociaux a établi que les effets de la répression variaient en fonction des circonstances politiques sans nécessairement parvenir à élucider les raisons et mécanismes de ces variations.<sup>14</sup> De même, les études sur le terrorisme suggèrent que la répression étatique peut provoquer des réactions voire des contrecoups.<sup>15</sup> Néanmoins demeurent dans l'ombre les mécanismes en vertu desquels l'incitation à la mobilisation, nourrie par la répression, s'avère plus efficace que les effets de dissuasion. Les effets de la répression varient selon les lieux et les époques, selon qu'elle est spécifique ou indiscriminée, selon la façon dont elle est perçue par la population, dont les attitudes diffèrent à l'égard du pouvoir établi, et selon la façon dont elle est (re)cadree par les groupes illégaux.<sup>16</sup> Des événements de répression, particulièrement traumatisants et susceptibles d'avoir un pouvoir transformatif, ont une portée différente selon la socialisation politique antérieure des individus. Pour ceux dont la socialisation antécédente les a sensibilisés à une culture antisystème et antiautoritaire, la répression joue un rôle de confirmation de

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<sup>14</sup> Ignacio Sánchez-Cuenca, "Terrorism and the State", in Victor Nee, Tomas Snijders et Rafael Wittek (dir.), *Handbook of Rational Choice Social Research*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013, p. 393.

<sup>15</sup> Jeffrey Ian Ross et Ted Robert Gurr, "Why Terrorism Subsides: A Comparative Study of Canada and the United States", *Comparative Politics*, vol. 21, 1989, pp. 405-426.

<sup>16</sup> Donatella Della Porta, *Social Movements, Political Violence and the State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

l'illégitimité du régime. Elle (re)mobilise les individus.<sup>17</sup> En revanche, pour des personnes qui ne sont pas familières de ce type de culture ou de sous-culture, la répression induit une « perte d'innocence » qui conduit à délégitimer le régime et révèle ce qui semble être une nature maligne. Elle justifie alors certaines micro-mobilisations individuelles dans des groupes armés. En ce sens, les mouvements sociaux sont fortement influencés par le comportement de leurs adversaires : un degré plus élevé de répression est généralement associé à un comportement radical du côté des opposants.<sup>18</sup> De même, certains groupes, émergent voire se créent dans le cours des interactions répétées avec l'État.<sup>19</sup> Les phénomènes de radicalisation, *i.e.* d'usage de la violence politique illégale, ne s'expliquent donc pas tant par des pré-conditions politiques que par les processus au sein desquels ils s'inscrivent.

La répression sera ici considérée comme un processus (c'est-à-dire comme une stratégie déployée dans telle ou telle direction, sur la base de l'anticipation des coups des adversaires comme des alliés). Au sein de ce processus, se jouent des événements répressifs, des « coups joués à un moment donné du temps ».<sup>20</sup> Nous accorderons un intérêt spécifique à certains de ces « coups joués », aux acmés répressives afin d'en déterminer les raisons et la portée en termes de radicalisation. Pour préciser ces effets, il convient de tenir compte de plusieurs variables telles que le niveau de répression, le degré d'engagement dans la protestation et le soutien populaire aux élites et aux opposants. Nous esquisserons, dans ce qui suit, une étude des dynamiques de la violence politique afin d'en obtenir une compréhension plus globale, en nous centrant sur les effets des phases d'accélération de la répression. Nous développerons cette analyse à partir du cas particulier des dynamiques entre l'organisation clandestine ETA et

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<sup>17</sup> Lorenzo Bosi, "Social Movement Participation and the 'Timing' of Involvement: The Case of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Movement", *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change*, 2007, pp. 37-61.

<sup>18</sup> D. Della Porta et Dieter Rucht, "Left-Libertarian Movements in Context : Comparing Italy and West Germany, 1965-1990", in C. J. Jenkins et B. Klandermans (dir.), *The Politics of Social Protest. Comparative Perspectives on State and Social Movements*, Minnesota: Univ. Press of Minnesota, 1995, pp. 229-272

<sup>19</sup> Donatella Della Porta, *Clandestine Political Violence*, Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2013, p. 35.

<sup>20</sup> Bennani-Chraïbi et Fillieule, 2012, p. 793.

les interactions répressives que lui oppose l'État espagnol, en partant de l'hypothèse selon laquelle la relation entre le terrorisme et le contre-terrorisme est non-réursive et stratégique, c'est-à-dire que le pouvoir politique et l'activisme clandestin réagissent aux actions des uns et des autres.<sup>21</sup>

Concernant ces deux acteurs, la littérature scientifique a proposé des analyses quantitatives de l'incidence des politiques répressives sur l'action armée d'ETA à partir de modèles multivariés. Néanmoins aucune n'a pu s'appuyer sur une base de données des arrestations des militants d'ETA, dans la mesure où il n'en existait aucune. En outre, l'effet de la répression a été saisi à partir des victimes commises par le groupe plutôt qu'à partir de l'ensemble des opérations menées par ce dernier. C'est sur cette double dimension que notre approche est originale et apporte un complément remarquable aux travaux publiés. Nous tiendrons toutefois compte de ces résultats pour les faire dialoguer avec nos conclusions.

Deux séries de travaux retiennent l'attention. D'une part, ceux de Barros<sup>22</sup> et de Barros *et al.*<sup>23</sup> : le premier appréhende les effets dissuasifs de mesures politiques et économiques sur les « incidents terroristes » à partir de séries chronologiques entre 1968 et 2000. Ces effets semblent mitigés et révèlent un décalage entre mesures politiques et diminution des actions du groupe clandestin. Barros *et al.* (2006) s'intéressent aux périodes d'interruption entre les attaques d'ETA, afin de clarifier les attentes de l'organisation. Les auteurs utilisent des spécifications paramétriques et semi-paramétriques du modèle de risque pour déterminer les covariables qui expliquent les opérations d'ETA et la dépendance sous-jacente à la durée. Des variables de « dissuasion » (arrestation, Ertzaintza,<sup>24</sup> GAL) ont été introduites. La principale conclusion est que les attaques d'ETA paraissent augmenter en été et diminuer sous l'effet d'autres variables, telles que la dissuasion, les gouvernements politiques répressifs, les

<sup>21</sup> B. Hoffman et J. Morrison-Taw, "A strategic framework for countering terrorism", in F. Reinares (ed.), *European Democracies Against Terrorism: Governmental Policies and Intergovernmental Cooperation*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999.

<sup>22</sup> C. Barros, "An Intervention Analysis of Terrorism: The Spanish ETA Case", *Defence and Peace Economics*, vol. 14, n° 6, 2003, pp. 401-412.

<sup>23</sup> C. Barros, J. Passos et L. Gil-Alana, "The timing of ETA terrorist attacks", *Journal of Policy Modeling*, vol. 28, 2006, pp. 335-346.

<sup>24</sup> L'Ertzaintza désigne la police autonome basque (voir infra).

activités terroristes successives, les meurtres et les accords politiques.<sup>25</sup> En l'occurrence, « la détention diminue le risque de -1,791, ce qui signifie qu'il s'agit de la politique de dissuasion la plus efficace, par rapport aux autres variables de dissuasion comme "Gal" et "Ertzainza" ». <sup>26</sup> Cette conclusion demandera donc à être appréciée, non pas à partir des victimes causées par le groupe, mais à la lumière des actions qu'il a menées.

La seconde série de travaux a été réalisée par Sánchez-Cuenca.<sup>27</sup> Ce dernier a exploré l'effet sur les actions meurtrières d'ETA de variables indépendantes (les élections, l'activité anti-ETA des organisations d'extrême droite et des Groupes Antiterroristes de Libération (GAL), les arrestations policières et d'autres événements, tels que les referendums pour la Constitution et le Statut d'autonomie de Guernica). Plusieurs modèles ARIMA ont été exploités pour envisager la série chronologique des victimes faites par ETA entre 1968 et 2007. L'auteur souligne qu'« une variable fondamentale pour l'analyse des variations de la violence d'ETA est l'activité antiterroriste de l'État, c'est-à-dire le nombre d'arrestations effectuées par les forces de sécurité »<sup>28</sup> mais déplore que dans les années 2000 n'existe pas de « données de qualité » sur les arrestations.<sup>29</sup> À partir des données qui étaient les siennes, l'auteur a toutefois pu établir que « la violence d'État et la violence paramilitaire ont eu des effets ambivalents sur le mouvement » indépendantiste. Ainsi la guerre sale, c'est-à-dire le terrorisme d'État (voir infra 3., 4.1), menée par les GAL, organisée et contrôlée par le gouvernement socialiste de Felipe González, semble être sans effet sur le cycle de violence d'ETA et n'a pas non plus été une réaction à celle-ci.<sup>30</sup> Néanmoins la violence moins organisée de l'extrême

<sup>25</sup> Barros *et al.*, 2006, p. 344.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>27</sup> Ignacio Sánchez-Cuenca, "Explaining temporal variation in the lethality of ETA", *Revista Internacional de Sociología*, vol. 67, n° 3, 2009, pp. 609-629.

<sup>28</sup> Sánchez-Cuenca, 2009, p. 10.

<sup>29</sup> Le ministère de l'Intérieur a mis à disposition, durant une brève période, sur sa page web une série annuelle d'arrestations en Espagne et en France de membres d'ETA pour la période 1968-2001 mais les dépôts ont pris fin.

<sup>30</sup> La raison de l'étonnement de l'auteur tient à ce qu'il prend en compte les victimes commises par ETA plutôt que les actions menées par le groupe. Nous avons considéré ce point dans d'autres travaux (Guibet Lafaye et Brochard, 2020). Sánchez-Cuenca souligne en effet que le coefficient de corrélation a un signe positif, indiquant qu'à court terme, la relation entre les deux variables : « une augmentation des décès des groupes d'extrême

droite entre 1978 et 1982 a eu un effet statistique sur les actions d'ETA. Donc, d'une part l'effet des GAL sur la diminution ou l'augmentation des actions d'ETA est difficile à mettre en évidence, contrairement aux conséquences des attentats perpétrés par l'extrême droite, dont l'auteur considère qu'ils « intervien[nen]t comme une réponse aux actions d'ETA mais tend[ent] aussi à accroître la violence de celle-ci. »<sup>31</sup> « ETA augmente le niveau de violence de ses attaques après que l'extrême droite a réalisé des actions meurtrières. Ainsi la violence de l'extrême droite visant ETA ne contribue pas à réduire les actions d'ETA, bien au contraire. En effet, elle semble plutôt provoquer une spirale de vengeance »,<sup>32</sup> autrement dit un effet de radicalisation. « Tel n'est en revanche pas le cas avec les GAL que ce soit sur le court terme ou avec un décalage temporel ». <sup>33</sup>

## 1.2 Méthodologie

La présente analyse s'appuie sur deux bases de données originales. La première convoque les actions menées par ETA sur l'ensemble de ses soixante années d'existence. Elle a été constituée par C. Guibet Lafaye et P. Brochard<sup>34</sup> et recense 3 095 actions entre 1959 et 2018, là où les bases de données s'appuyant sur les victimes faites par ETA comptent 837 occurrences de 1973 à 2003.<sup>35</sup> La seconde est issue d'une enquête menée auprès des acteurs du mouvement abertzale qui ont connu des phases d'incarcération à la suite d'un jugement, ayant mis en évidence un lien avec

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droite est associée à une augmentation des décès d'ETA. L'accroissement des actions violentes de l'extrême droite est corrélé à la recrudescence de la violence d'ETA. Toutefois une analyse plus précise est requise afin de déterminer le rapport de causalité et permettre de savoir lequel des deux groupes réagit aux actions de l'autre. » (Sánchez-Cuenca, 2009, p. 13)

<sup>31</sup> Sánchez-Cuenca, 2009, p. 14.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>34</sup> C. Guibet Lafaye et P. Brochard, "Conséquences de choix méthodologiques sur l'analyse de l'évolution de l'organisation clandestine ETA", *Studia Europaea*, vol. 2, 2020. C. Guibet Lafaye et P. Brochard, "Methodological approaches to the evolution of a terrorist organisation: ETA, 1959-2018", *Quality & Quantity*, 2021.

<sup>35</sup> Sur la méthode de constitution de cette base de données, voir Guibet Lafaye et Brochard (2020, 2021).

l'organisation clandestine et dont la présentation discursive est proposée dans Bustillo Kastrexana *et al.*<sup>36</sup>

Au cours de son histoire, ETA a subi plusieurs vagues d'arrestations et d'incarcérations dont les raisons, motivations et fondements ont évolué au cours de l'histoire politique espagnole. Le graphique ci-dessous (Figure 1) permet de les appréhender.<sup>37</sup> La Figure 1 présente l'évolution des incarcérations de militants présumés d'ETA. Nous avons retenu ces incarcérations plutôt que des arrestations dans la mesure où bien souvent les personnes arrêtées sont relâchées en particulier lors de rafles d'envergure. En effet, les arrestations s'opèrent au-delà du cercle des personnes activement impliquées dans le groupe clandestin. Les données sur lesquelles nous nous appuyons permettent donc de mieux apprécier l'effet de la répression sur l'opérationnalité du collectif car les incarcérations concernent des personnes présentant une implication plus tangible au sein d'ETA.

Afin de privilégier l'analyse des effets de la répression policière – qui n'avait pu jusqu'alors être étudiée en détail faute de données disponibles – nous nous concentrerons sur les pics d'incarcérations de militants d'ETA. La raison en est double. Elle tient, d'une part, à la volonté d'étudier la réalité et les effets de la stratégie « action-répression-action » dont on a considéré qu'elle caractérisait le mode opératoire du collectif clandestin. Elle s'explique, d'autre part, par le choix d'analyser les effets de la répression policière en tant que telle. Or celle-ci, à partir des années 1990, s'inscrit dans un dispositif plus complexe dont elle n'est qu'une pièce parmi d'autres, le pouvoir judiciaire avec le juge Baltasar Garzón et la stratégie du « Tout est ETA » devenant la clef de voûte du dispositif antiterroriste.

Nous mettrons en outre en perspective ces données statistiques avec une enquête de sociologie qualitative sur la violence politique au Pays basque. Cette enquête s'est déroulée entre mars 2016 et juillet 2020 auprès de 70 militants impliqués dans des organisations clandestines (ETA,

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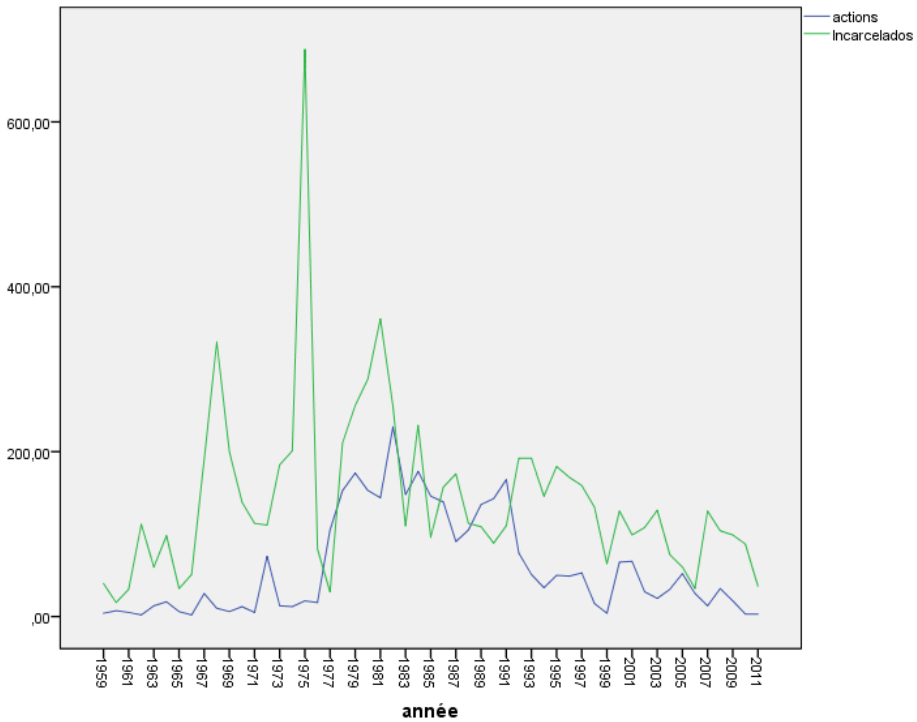
<sup>36</sup> Bustillo Kastrexana Joxerra, Eugenio Etxebeste Arizkuren (Antton), Iñaki Egaña Sevilla (dir.), *Askatasun haizea. Vents de liberté : six décennies de prison pour des motifs politiques en Euskal Herria : 1958-2020*, Andoian: Euskal Memoria Fundazioa, 2020.

<sup>37</sup> Le traitement statistique de la base de données des arrestations a été réalisé par Antoine Vérétoit (CNRS - Centre Émile Durkheim, UMR 5116).

Iparretarrak, les Commandos autonomes anticapitalistes [CAA]), depuis les années 1960 jusqu'à l'autodissolution d'ETA en 2018. Ses principaux résultats ont été exposés dans Guibet Lafaye.<sup>38</sup>

Figure 1

Dynamique des interactions entre arrestations de militants d'ETA et actions clandestines<sup>39</sup>



Les coefficients de corrélation de la Figure 1 permettent de dire que lorsque l'on fait *précéder* les actions par rapport aux incarcérations et que l'on décale les attentats et les incarcérations de deux ans, le coefficient baisse (0.44). En revanche, lorsque l'on fait précéder les incarcérations par

<sup>38</sup> Caroline Guibet Lafaye, *Conflit au pays basque : regards des militants illégaux*, Oxford : Peter Lang, 2020.

<sup>39</sup> Coefficient de corrélation = 0.242. Il est de 0.52 si l'on excepte les années 1968 et 1975 dont nous verrons à quels événements historiques elles correspondent.

rapport aux actions, le coefficient augmente (0.55). En première analyse et à la lumière des seuls coefficients de corrélation, les politiques répressives légales et illégales, incluant la torture et le terrorisme d'État, semblent avoir eu au Pays basque, un effet de radicalisation sur l'action politique clandestine violente.

## 2. La répression policière, facteur de radicalisation

Nous avons, en d'autres lieux, traité des phases et de l'histoire de l'interaction et de la dynamique répression-actions clandestines dans le conflit basque.<sup>40</sup> Toutefois la Figure 1 demande également de porter attention aux temps forts de la logique répressive, en l'occurrence les années 1968, 1975, 1981, pour saisir ses effets sur les processus de radicalisation. En premier lieu, à quel moment et pourquoi le pouvoir décide-t-il de frapper plus fort et avec quels objectifs ? À quelle logique répond cette intensification de la répression ? « Frapper fort », est-ce arrêter des vagues numériquement considérables de militants ou tenter de décapiter l'organisation ? L'État espagnol s'est essayé à ses deux stratégies à des époques différentes de son histoire (franquisme, démocratie représentative), en mobilisant des moyens distincts (arrestations indiscriminées, torture, terrorisme d'État, coopération transfrontalière). En second lieu, ces accélérations répressives s'inscrivent-elles dans une logique de l'« action-répression-action », dont on a coutume de considérer qu'elle est structurante des modes idéologiques et opérationnels des groupes clandestins ? Les études exploitant des données agrégées sur des conflits politiques nationaux utilisent un modèle Action-Réaction (AR) qui produit des résultats contradictoires sur le lien entre répression et dissidence,<sup>41</sup> au sens où la répression peut soit accroître, soit réduire la dissidence des groupes d'opposition. Quelle pertinence le modèle AR a-t-il dans le conflit étudié et à quels résultats conduit-il ? Dans le cas présent, peut-on affirmer que la répression massive a pour effet de décourager la masse des militants et de porter une minorité d'entre eux vers l'action illégale ? Quelle incidence ces « pics d'incarcérations » ont-ils sur les actions réalisées par le

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<sup>40</sup> C. Guibet Lafaye, "Succès et limites de l'antiterrorisme espagnol : le cas d'ETA", *Cultura de la República. Revista de Análisis Crítico*, 2022. [À paraître.]

<sup>41</sup> Mark Irving Lichbach, "Deterrence or Escalation? The Puzzle of Aggregate Studies of Repression and Dissent", *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 31, 1987, pp. 266-297.

groupe et son éventuelle démobilisation ? Faut-il considérer, conformément à ce que la littérature suggère,<sup>42</sup> que c'est la répression policière qui réduit l'activité clandestine d'ETA ? Doit-on conclure que c'est en « tapant fort », via la répression policière, qu'on parvient à annihiler la violence politique clandestine ? Il apparaît, de façon préliminaire, que bien qu'à certaines époques (années 1970, années 1980) les arrestations soient massives, l'incorporation dans les rangs d'ETA semble très peu faiblir, ce qui tend à remettre en question l'efficacité réelle de la répression policière, ne serait-ce qu'en termes de dissuasion. Afin de souligner les effets de radicalisation qu'elle induit, nous allons entrer dans le détail des événements caractérisant ces trois moments forts de la répression policière, légale et illégale.

### 2.1 La « guerre chaude contre ETA » : 1968

La première action d'éclat d'ETA a lieu le 18 juillet 1961. Elle visait à faire dérailler un train à Usurbil (Guipúzcoa) transportant des partisans de Franco vers San Sébastian, pour la célébration des 25 ans de la victoire de ce dernier durant la guerre civile. Bien que manquée, l'opération donne lieu à une répression sévère : près de 200 personnes sont arrêtées et torturées. Parmi elles, 29 sont emprisonnées et 7 jugées. Les condamnations prononcées par le Conseil de guerre du 20 octobre 1961 vont de 5 à 20 ans de prison.<sup>43</sup> Les premiers exilés, suivant en cela le chemin pris par Txillardegi et Jon Ozaeta, traversent la frontière vers la France. L'organisation est quasiment décimée mais une poignée d'individus déterminés parviennent à la reconstituer dans un contexte favorable aux luttes de libération. En effet, se tient en mai 1962, la première Assemblée d'ETA au couvent des Bénédictins de Belloc (Pyrénées-Atlantiques). Le groupe s'y définit comme un « mouvement révolutionnaire basque de libération nationale » plutôt que comme un parti. Puis, en août 1962, ETA fait exploser une bombe dans la résidence d'été de Franco, le Palacio de Aiete, à San Sébastian. Des dizaines de personnes sont arrêtées et

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<sup>42</sup> Voir supra Barros *et al.*, 2006, p. 344 ; Sánchez-Cuenca, 2009, p. 10.

<sup>43</sup> En novembre 1961, ETA publie les noms des auteurs des tortures commises durant le mois de juillet. Figurent notamment ceux du colonel et juge militaire Enrique Eymar Fernández et de l'inspecteur Melitón Manzanás (Casanova, *op.cit.*, p. 19).

torturées.<sup>44</sup> Pourtant les clandestins se réunissent pour leur deuxième Assemblée en mars 1963 à Capbreton dans les Landes. Des graffitis, symboles d'ETA, apparaissent dans l'ensemble du Pays basque.

Le témoignage d'une militante historique du groupe, Amalia, permet de saisir la façon dont l'organisation s'est reconstituée après les premières arrestations des années 1960 qui étaient sur le point d'en avoir raison :

*« Sur le chemin du retour, de Londres à Paris, nous avons rencontré des Basques qui vivaient là.<sup>45</sup> Ce fut une coïncidence. À Passy, les Basques se retrouvaient dans un bar... Ces trois garçons étaient trois évadés, trois réfugiés d'ETA. À cette époque, ETA était comme une toute petite chose. Mais elle avait déjà commencé à fonctionner... J'étais encore très jeune et je ne savais pas quelles pouvaient être les dimensions d'ETA, mais ces trois garçons étaient réfugiés là-bas. Et au lieu de rentrer chez nous, nous sommes restés quelques mois de plus à Paris, et cela nous a beaucoup appris, politiquement parlant [...], sur la politique, sur l'économie, sur les dimensions qu'ils ont vues dans la lutte du peuple basque. Et puis j'avais déjà beaucoup réfléchi, et je me suis lancée dans le métier. Avec les trois qui étaient en exil, on a pensé à reconstruire ETA [...], à revenir ici en Euskal Herria [au Pays basque], à commencer à chercher un peu, à faire venir des gens qui pourraient s'intéresser à nos idées... C'était comme reconstruire le peu d'ETA qui avait existé. Et [...] je me suis engagée, [...] j'ai signé un contrat à durée indéterminée dans cette société appelée ETA. Et toute ma vie, j'ai gardé ce contrat. [...] À ce moment-là, beaucoup de gens qui avaient été à ETA ou à la naissance d'ETA ont été réunis... Nous sommes aussi de la naissance d'ETA... Beaucoup de gens qui étaient dispersés – certains se sont échappés –... et, petit à petit nous étions comme en train de reconstruire cette base, et ici à Getaria, c'était la fameuse Ve Assemblée<sup>46</sup>. Ensuite, tous les Etxarras, les quelques uns d'entre nous qui étaient là, venaient parler. Des militants nous ont rejoints de différents endroits. »<sup>47</sup>*

Bien que quasiment décimée par les arrestations après ses premières actions, ETA renaît de la volonté et des efforts de quelques militants dispersés et exilés. Sans revenir sur les méandres de sa reconstruction, considérons le premier moment répressif le plus significatif dans son

<sup>44</sup> Casanova, *op.cit.*, p. 22.

<sup>45</sup> Elle évoque l'année 1963. Elle était alors baby-sitter à Paris.

<sup>46</sup> La Ve Assemblée d'ETA se tient les 7-11 décembre 1966 à Gaztelu (Guipúzcoa). ETA s'y définit comme un Mouvement Basque Socialiste de Libération Nationale et y désigne son idéologie comme un « Nationalisme Révolutionnaire ».

<sup>47</sup> Amalia est née dans les années 1940 (nous ne précisons pas son année de naissance pour des raisons d'anonymat). Elle a 17 ans lorsqu'elle rencontre ces exilés basques.

histoire. Sur le plan des arrestations, l'année 1968 est l'occasion d'une répression sans pareille dans l'histoire d'ETA. 333 personnes sont incarcérées et bien plus arrêtées. Au début de l'année 1968, le chef de la police de Bilbao reconnaît que « nous avons déclaré une guerre chaude contre ETA ». Javier Etxebarrieta Ortiz, dit *Txabi Etxebarrieta* et membre historique d'ETA, répond à cette déclaration dans un manifeste publié en mars 1968, à l'occasion de *l'Aberti Eguna* (jour de la patrie). Ce cadre est posé lorsqu'intervient un événement inattendu, le 7 juin 1968 : un contrôle policier, au cours duquel le garde civil José Antonio Pardines Arcay est tué par Txabi Etxebarrieta. Une heure plus tard, c'est au tour de ce dernier d'être exécuté par la police à la périphérie de Tolosa à Benta Haundi. Dans le n° 49 de *Zutik* (juillet 1968), le groupe dénonce les circonstances de cette mort.<sup>48</sup> Le témoignage d'Amalia permet de comprendre comment l'escalade de la violence se met en place à partir de cet événement fortuit :

*« Il s'est passé quelque chose de décisif à ce moment-là, Txabi Etxebarrieta, celui qui m'a dit [quelques années auparavant], vous voulez [étudier] la révolution en quatorze volumes ou bien vous restez ici [au Pays basque] avec un fusil... ? Nous étions tous armés mais nous n'étions pas armés pour attaquer. Nous étions armés pour nous défendre. À un poste de contrôle [de police]... deux militants ont été arrêtés, l'un d'entre eux, Txabi Etxebarrieta, qui était un de nos idéologues, a été reconnu par le policier ; il l'a tué. Il... a vu qu'il allait lui tirer dessus, Txabi, c'est pour ça qu'il avait le pistolet, puis la Guardia Civil l'a tué. Alors, c'est là que ça a commencé, comme dans la vie... on fait un pas et commence un processus, non ? Et c'est là l'un des déclencheurs, qui a fait que nous avons commencé à utiliser l'arme. [...] Puis, nous nous sommes réunis à nouveau. Bien qu'on y ait pensé avant, il a été décidé que l'un des plus grands tortionnaires de prisonniers basques... Certains de mes camarades disent que nous y avons pensé à ce moment-là. Non ! À ce moment-là, nous n'avons pas pensé immédiatement à tuer Manzanos. Parce que nous n'avions pas le temps, mais la décision a été prise de tuer Manzanos à San Sébastian et l'autre policier à Bilbao. On a tout organisé et ça a bien marché, sauf que celui de San Sébastian est parti en vacances. »*

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<sup>48</sup> Voir l'article intitulé « Los hechos, los mecanismos del opresor, los mecanismos del pueblo. ETA y la violencia ».

L'événement répressif suscite le processus de radicalisation et fait entrer le groupe clandestin dans un « cycle provocation-répression-violence »,<sup>49</sup> comme ce fût le cas en Allemagne avec la mort de Benno Ohnesorg le 2 juin 1967.<sup>50</sup> La répression se voit alors utilisée comme une ressource politique à des fins de renforcement et d'extension du mouvement par la solidarité et l'indignation qu'elle suscite mais aussi, dans certains cas, à des fins de justification de la nécessité de construire l'organisation. Cependant l'« Operación Sagarra », menée par ETA le 2 août 1968 à Irún et visant à éliminer Melitón Manzanos, n'est pas seulement une réponse à la mort de Txabi Etxebarrieta. Elle a un sens intrinsèquement politique dans la mesure où M. Manzanos est le commissaire en chef de la Brigade politique et sociale de Guipúzcoa et tortionnaire notoire. Ce dernier est considéré par l'organisation comme le reflet du régime franquiste et de sa répression (voir *Gudari* n° 48 et le communiqué de presse d'ETA du 13 octobre 1968).<sup>51</sup>

Cette année est marquée par un nombre record d'arrestations. Cette intensification de la répression s'inscrit dans le cadre de ce que le chef de la police de Bilbao reconnaît être, début 1968, une « déclaration de guerre chaude contre ETA ».<sup>52</sup> Parmi celles ayant été finalement incarcérées et dont le mois d'arrestation a pu être identifié, 95 l'ont été avant l'opération et 174 après.<sup>53</sup> S'y ajoutent 100 incarcérations au 1<sup>er</sup> semestre 1969. Ce sont plus largement des centaines de personnes qui sont arrêtées durant ces mois.<sup>54</sup> Si dans la foulée de cette action, les forces de sécurité espagnoles (FSE) procèdent à des arrestations remarquables comme celle d'Arantza Arruti,

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<sup>49</sup> Isabelle Sommier, *La violence révolutionnaire*, Paris : Presses de Sciences Po, 2008, p. 60.

<sup>50</sup> B. Ohnesorg est tué par la police lors d'une manifestation. Sa mort suscite une indignation et constitue l'une des raisons qui conduit un groupe d'étudiants d'extrême gauche à former la Fraction armée rouge (RAF).

<sup>51</sup> « Nous ne voulons pas que l'exécution soit considérée comme un événement isolé, comme une vengeance privée, dénuée d'importance. L'exécution du policier Melitón Manzanos est un important pas en avant dans notre lutte révolutionnaire et acquiert sa véritable valeur en étant placée dans cette lutte. » (Communiqué d'ETA, *Euskal Herria y la libertad*, vol. 2, p. 111). L'action est également analysée dans *Zutik*, n° 50, décembre 1968, p. 5.

<sup>52</sup> ETA répond à cette déclaration dans un manifeste rédigé par Txabi Etxebarrieta et publié en mars 1968 à l'occasion de l'*Aberrri Eguna*.

<sup>53</sup> 61 autres ont été incarcérées en 1968 mais le mois de leur arrestation n'a pu être identifié. 205 personnes sont incarcérées au 2<sup>ème</sup> semestre 1968.

<sup>54</sup> Casanova, *op.cit.*, p. 64.

responsable de l'*herrialde* (territoire) de Navarre, en novembre 1968, en revanche l'exécution de Manzanás a fait grossir les rangs d'ETA qui compte alors 600 militants.<sup>55</sup> Entre 1966 et 1970, 102 personnes ont assumé des tâches de « *liberados* ». <sup>56</sup> En août 1968, ETA procède encore à des actions d'approvisionnement de matériel et d'explosifs.<sup>57</sup> Ainsi ce premier « coup répressif » illustre le fait que, dans des régimes autoritaires, la répression « influence le degré d'acceptation de la violence parmi les groupes de référence et, par conséquent, l'utilisation par ceux-ci de formes de violence plus létales et brutales ». <sup>58</sup> Dans le cas du conflit au Pays basque, elle suscite la radicalisation d'une frange importante de la population.

## 2.2 Se débarasser d'ETA : 1973-1975

Après la tentative de démantèlement de l'organisation en 1968, qui parvint quasiment à ses fins, la politique répressive se déploie de 1969 à 1974 selon un schéma « classique » conduisant à l'incarcération d'en moyenne 158 personnes par an. Faute de parvenir par ce biais à l'éradication du mouvement, le pouvoir franquiste tente une autre stratégie qui passe par la déclaration de l'état d'urgence. Une première phase intervient en décembre 1973 mais son acmé répressive a lieu en 1975 à une période où ETA ne mène que 17 actions et où ETA-militaire (ETA-m) est entrée, depuis le début de l'année jusqu'en mai 1975, dans une période de « trêve tactique ». <sup>59</sup> Le 25 avril 1975, au lendemain de l'arrestation de Juan Miguel Goiburú, dit *Goierri*, reconnu pour avoir des responsabilités au sein d'ETA-politico-militaire (ETA-pm), l'état d'urgence est déclaré en Biscaye et en Guipúzcoa pour trois mois. Le bilan est spectaculaire : 4 625 personnes sont arrêtées<sup>60</sup> et pour la plupart torturées ; 628 sont

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<sup>55</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 65.

<sup>56</sup> Rui Pereira, *La guerra desconocida de los vascos*, Tafalla: Txalaparta, 2001, p. 105. Les *liberados* sont les « militants professionnels de la révolution basque ». Leur vie est entièrement dédiée à l'organisation qui pourvoit à leurs besoins. Elle se déroule dans la clandestinité.

<sup>57</sup> Casanova, *op.cit.*, p. 64.

<sup>58</sup> Donatella Della Porta, *Clandestine Political Violence*, Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, p. 203.

<sup>59</sup> Casanova, *op.cit.*, p. 111.

<sup>60</sup> Dans la seule nuit du 8 au 9 mai 1975, 400 personnes sont détenues (Casanova, *op.cit.*, p. 115).

incarcérées.<sup>61</sup> L'ensemble des peines prononcées se monte à 3 500 ans de prison.<sup>62</sup> Cette vague répressive culmine dans le second procès de Burgos qui se tient le 28 août 1975.

La mise en place de cet état d'exception s'explique, non seulement par la volonté d'éradiquer le groupe clandestin et de produire une démonstration de fermeté à un moment où le régime est fragilisé par la santé défaillante de Franco, mais également par le déploiement d'ETA sur le « front ouvrier ». <sup>63</sup> En effet, celle-ci vient en appui aux mouvements sociaux qui se multiplient alors et affirme une volonté de soulever les masses. Ces mois sont le théâtre d'une mobilisation sociale sans précédent, poussée et appuyée par le groupe armé. La répression contre l'organisation donne lieu à des grèves générales pour lesquelles la mobilisation est remarquable.<sup>64</sup> ETA apparaissant comme une menace grandissante, le régime prend des mesures exceptionnelles en déclarant l'état d'urgence. Celles-là semblent d'autant plus justifiées qu'ETA n'œuvre pas uniquement sur le front ouvrier mais aussi sur le front militaire, le groupe multipliant les actions ciblées contre les FSE. Au cours de l'année 1975, ETA mène 19 opérations dont dix visent les FSE. Ces dernières font dix victimes mortelles.

Ces mesures d'exception sont doublées de dispositifs d'exception plus discrets. Une deuxième stratégie, mise en place par les FSE, porte ses fruits et conduit à la quasi-annihilation d'ETA-pm. Elle s'appuie sur l'infiltration du policier, Miguel Lejarza Egia, dit *El Lobo*, auquel ETA-pm

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 116. Notre base ne permet pas d'identifier le mois d'incarcération de 18 individus pour l'année 1975.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>63</sup> Lors de sa Ve assemblée, qui se tient en 1966-1967, ETA redéfinit sa stratégie autour de quatre fronts : culturel, politique, ouvrier et militaire.

<sup>64</sup> Les 2-3 décembre 1974, ETA-pm lance un appel à la grève générale sous le slogan « Liberté pour les prisonniers politiques, indépendance du Pays basque et unité du peuple basque » (Casanova, *op.cit.*, p. 109). Dans la perspective du procès de Burgos qui s'ouvre le 28 août 1975, ETA-pm appelle en juin 1975 à une journée de protestation contre le jugement en Conseil de guerre des militants d'ETA. Des dizaines de milliers de travailleurs se mettent en grève (Casanova, *op.cit.*, p. 118). Une nouvelle grève générale se tient au Pays basque les 29-30 septembre à la suite de l'exécution des cinq condamnés du deuxième procès de Burgos : Jon Paredes dit « Txiki » et Angel Otaegi ainsi que des trois membres du Front Révolutionnaire Antifasciste et Patriote (FRAP), José Luis Sánchez-Bravo Sollas, José Humberto Baena Alonso et Ramón García Sanz, le 27 septembre 1975.

avait confié sa logistique. Cette stratégie permet, le 18 septembre 1975, de démanteler le commando Madrid d'ETA-pm et d'arrêter vingt militants, dont Iñaki Mujika Arregi, dit *Ezkerra*,<sup>65</sup> figure phare d'ETA-pm. Le lendemain, le commando Barcelone d'ETA-pm est également défait. Fin 1975 et à la suite des opérations commanditées par *El Lobo*, ETA-pm n'a plus qu'un seul commando opérationnel.<sup>66</sup> Les données statistiques soulignent l'effet de cette infiltration puisque l'on compte 289 arrestations avant le démantèlement des commandos d'ETA-pm grâce à *El Lobo* sur une période de huit mois et demi et 374 après ce démantèlement, c'est-à-dire entre le 19 septembre et le 31 janvier, *i.e.* en trois mois et demi. Au total, l'opération *El Lobo* permet l'arrestation de 150 membres d'ETA-pm.<sup>67</sup> Au-delà de ces démantèlements immédiats, quels ont été les effets de cette politique répressive sur l'opérationnalité du groupe ? Le Tableau 1 permet de répondre à cette question.

Tableau 1

Actions clandestines menées par ETA entre 1976 et 1979

Années	Périodes	Nb d'actions annuelles	Nombre d'actions
1976	1 <sup>er</sup> semestre	17	14
	2 <sup>nd</sup> semestre		3
1977	1 <sup>er</sup> semestre	105	77
	2 <sup>nd</sup> semestre		28
1978	1 <sup>er</sup> semestre	153	72
	2 <sup>nd</sup> semestre		81
1979	1 <sup>er</sup> semestre	173	107
	2 <sup>nd</sup> semestre		66

S'il est manifeste que dans un premier temps l'opérationnalité du collectif est sévèrement ralentie, celle-ci repart de plus belle dans les années qui suivent pour atteindre en 1978-1979 une intensité inégalée. Il est incontestable qu'ETA-pm a été mise en difficulté par les démantèlements évoqués, toutefois la mort de Franco en décembre 1975 et la transition

<sup>65</sup> Casanova, *op.cit.*, p. 117.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>67</sup> Giuliano Cavaterra, Au cœur du conflit basque. Pourquoi des citoyens du Pays basque nord ont-ils intégré ETA ?, Mediabask, 2020, p. 106.

politique qui s'annonce expliquent également le ralentissement des actions clandestines durant l'année 1976. La VII<sup>ème</sup> Assemblée d'ETA-pm à Donapaleu (Saint-Palais) en septembre 1976 montre que le groupe parvient toujours à réunir une centaine de militants. Des facteurs méso-sociaux permettent aussi de comprendre la baisse des actions de l'année 1976 : dans les premiers mois de 1976, ETA-m suspend son activité dans l'attente des orientations prises par le gouvernement Suárez.

On observe donc que « dans l'Espagne autoritaire de Franco [...], la répression dure n'a généralement pas réussi – du moins à court terme – à démobiliser les protestataires » mais a plutôt contribué à « une radicalisation d'autant plus qu'elle allait de pair avec un soutien populaire croissant. »<sup>68</sup> Plus cette répression policière massive est perçue comme indiscriminée et injuste, plus la solidarité de la population est grande ou, au moins, plus se note une tolérance à l'égard des groupes militants réprimés. Ce phénomène n'est pas propre à l'Espagne franquiste. On le retrouve avec le régime de Moubarak en Égypte et avec l'occupation israélienne en Palestine.<sup>69</sup> Le caractère massif et indiscriminé de la répression tend à nourrir un sentiment d'absence d'alternative. Celle-là est appréhendée comme la preuve de la nécessité de prendre les armes pour résister à un État autoritaire. Ainsi plus un régime foment une politique d'exclusion, plus il nourrit des actions violentes : ceux qui s'y spécialisent prospèrent. Ces derniers sont vus, par une partie de la population, comme potentiellement plus efficaces que les politiciens modérés qui tendent à être perçus comme fâcheusement impuissants.<sup>70</sup>

Dans le contexte de la dictature franquiste et de la répression massive qu'elle nourrit, on ne peut donc faire coïncider l'émergence d'ETA avec la quatrième phase du cycle décrit par Tarrow).<sup>71</sup> Le groupe s'est

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<sup>68</sup> Della Porta, 2013, p. 285.

<sup>69</sup> Della Porta, 2013, p. 284.

<sup>70</sup> Jeff Goodwin, "The Libidinal Constitution of a High-Risk Social Movement: Affectual Ties and Solidarity in the Huk Rebellion, 1946 to 1954", *American Sociological Review*, vol. 62, n° 1, 1997, p. 18.

<sup>71</sup> Sydney Tarrow, "Cycles of Collective Action : Between Moments of Madness and the Repertoire of Contention", *Social Science History*, vol. 17(2), 1993, pp. 328-339. Sydney Tarrow, *Power in Movement. Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics*, Cambridge: CUP, 1994. Le phénomène de radicalisation coïncide, selon Tarrow, avec le moment ultime d'un cycle de quatre phases marqué par la création de nouvelles organisations, la routinisation de

constitué en décembre 1958 dans un contexte d'étouffement de toutes formes de contestation. Dans ce régime autoritaire, l'action collective au Pays basque n'a nullement connu de « routinisation » et c'est précisément parce que les demandes du mouvement abertzale (patriote)<sup>72</sup> n'ont pas trouvé de satisfaction que l'action clandestine s'est amplifiée. Dans ce contexte particulier de dictature puis de régime de transition, vécus depuis le Pays basque, il semble que la thèse de Tarrow relative à la radicalisation d'une minorité d'un mouvement protestataire ne se vérifie pas. L'interprétation à partir du « paradoxe autoritaire »<sup>73</sup> semble en revanche plus pertinente.

Ce paradoxe désigne les « effets contradictoires de la répression par rapport aux contradictions des mécanismes répressifs eux-mêmes » (ibidem). En effet, « devenir militant dans un contexte autoritaire comporte des coûts beaucoup plus élevés que dans un régime démocratique »,<sup>74</sup> qu'il s'agisse de la répression « directe » ou « indirecte ». La première caractérise le contrôle de la rue, la violence contre les manifestants, l'emprisonnement des dissidents, l'absence de garanties pour les détenus, la torture ou encore les punitions dans les prisons politiques. La seconde empêche les militants de l'opposition de trouver un travail, de poursuivre leurs études, d'avoir des relations sociales. Pourtant, ces formes de répression qui ont caractérisé l'interaction entre l'État espagnol et le mouvement abertzale n'ont pas fait reculer ce dernier.

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l'action collective, la satisfaction au moins partielle des demandes, le désengagement du plus grand nombre qui s'accompagne de la radicalisation d'une minorité.

<sup>72</sup> Elles se résument alors pour l'essentiel dans l'alternative KAS et l'obtention de « voies constitutionnelles démocratiques minimales pour l'expression de la volonté populaire basque » (*Zutik*, n° 67, novembre 1976, p. 20).

<sup>73</sup> Accornero Guya, « La répression politique sous l'*Estado Novo* au Portugal et ses effets sur l'opposition estudiantine, des années 1960 à la fin du régime », *Cultures & Conflits*, n° 89, printemps 2013, pp. 93-112.

<sup>74</sup> Accornero Guya, « La répression politique sous l'*Estado Novo* au Portugal et ses effets sur l'opposition estudiantine, des années 1960 à la fin du régime », *Cultures & Conflits*, n° 89, printemps 2013, p. 111.

### 2.3 « Action-répression-action » : un jeu de miroir déformé

Les « effets contradictoires de la répression » sont intériorisés voire théorisés dans la logique « action-répression-action ». Elle s'explique à travers le schéma voulant que les manifestants (et les gouvernements) réagissent directement aux événements antécédents et « s'adaptent ensuite pour maximiser leurs gains potentiels et minimiser leurs risques. »<sup>75</sup> Toutefois l'effectivité de cette dynamique, dans le cas des interactions entre les FSE et ETA, demande à être nuancée. Le décalage de deux ans que révèle la Figure 1<sup>76</sup> entre les actions menées par ETA, notamment les plus spectaculaires (attentat contre Carrero Blanco, explosion au café Rolando), et les vagues répressives souligne la nécessité de complexifier l'interprétation de l'interaction et de la logique dans lesquelles organisation clandestine et pouvoir d'État se placent.

En premier lieu, le décalage entre les actions d'ETA et les phases répressives manifeste la différence de temporalité dans laquelle chacune des parties s'inscrit dans ce conflit asymétrique. Alors que les FSE déploient des stratégies exploitant le temps long – telles l'infiltration (voir 2.2) – ou le moyen terme, l'organisation armée exploite un temps plus immédiat – ce qui ne signifie pas que ses opérations ne sont pas préparées sur le moyen terme ni réfléchies (l'exemple emblématique étant l'attentat contre Carrero Blanco).

Ensuite la formule et la théorie de l'« action-répression-action » tendent à occulter la disproportion de moyens convoqués par les parties impliquées dans le conflit et à susciter une représentation déformée de la violence mise en œuvre. Sur le plan théorique, on considère que « plus le niveau de violence est élevé des deux côtés [État et organisations clandestines], plus les préférences en faveur des méthodes violentes sont intenses. »<sup>77</sup> Sánchez-Cuenca (2009) estime que la première étape du développement stratégique d'ETA coïncide avec le régime franquiste (1959-

<sup>75</sup> Ronald A. Francisco, "Coercion and Protest: An Empirical Test in Two Democratic States", *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 40, 1996, p. 1181.

<sup>76</sup> Sur les coefficients de corrélation associés à ce décalage, voir 1.2.

<sup>77</sup> Luis De la Calle et Ignacio Sánchez-Cuenca, « The Production of Terrorist Violence : Analyzing Target Selection within the IRA and ETA », Working Paper, Instituto Juan March, n° 230, 2006, p. 7.

1975) et repose sur une stratégie de l'action-répression-action.<sup>78</sup> Cette séquence serait caractéristique de ces années.

Ces thèses demandent toutefois à être nuancées du fait du décalage évident, pendant le franquisme, entre le « niveau de violence » du groupe armé et la répression du régime. En premier lieu, ce « niveau de violence » requiert d'être caractérisé finement. Faut-il tenir compte du nombre de morts causés ou bien de l'intensité des actions conduites ? D'autre part, s'observe un décalage quantitatif manifeste entre des actions *ponctuelles* du groupe armé et la répression massive qu'elles induisent. Le gouvernement de Franco a opté pour une « stratégie d'éradication » d'ETA, reflétée par le pic des arrestations de 1968 (N = 333) qui se poursuit en 1969 (N = 200), alors que le groupe a causé un mort et un blessé en 1968, réalisé dix actions et cinq opérations en 1969 sans faire alors de victime. La victime de 1968 est toutefois la figure « célèbre » de Melitón Manzanas (voir supra 2.1).<sup>79</sup>

De même, l'attaque à la bombe du café Rolando, calle Correo à Madrid, le 13 septembre 1974, pourrait être un exemple de la séquence action-répression-action. Elle est conçue comme une réponse à l'exécution de Juan José Urcelay Imaz par la police, dans le quartier de Zorrotza à Bilbao, le 11 septembre.<sup>80</sup> Le café Rolando est situé près de la Direction générale de la sécurité et d'un autre bâtiment de police. L'explosion tue 12 policiers<sup>81</sup>, et blesse 71 personnes dont le numéro deux de la police du renseignement espagnol. Bien qu'ETA se dissocie de l'action dans un communiqué du 15 septembre 1974<sup>82</sup>, elle la défend implicitement.<sup>83</sup> Cette

<sup>78</sup> Nous avons, pour notre part, montré que cette stratégie n'est pas propre à la première période d'activité d'ETA mais se retrouve en différentes étapes de son histoire, jusque dans les années 2000 que l'article de Sánchez-Cuenca de 2009 n'a pas réellement exploré (Caroline Guibet Lafaye, *Conflit au pays basque : regards des militants illégaux*, Oxford : Peter Lang, 2020).

<sup>79</sup> Nous n'avons pas retenu l'exécution du garde civil José Antonio Pardines Arcay par Javier Etxebarrieta Ortiz, le 7 juin 1968, car l'événement était fortuit (il s'agissait d'un contrôle routier) et non planifié.

<sup>80</sup> Casanova, *op.cit.*, p. 107.

<sup>81</sup> [https://elpais.com/diario/1979/05/27/espana/296604007\\_850215.html](https://elpais.com/diario/1979/05/27/espana/296604007_850215.html)

<sup>82</sup> « ETA niega totalmente la responsabilidad de la preparación y ejecución del atentado de la cafetería Rolando [...]. Intentar determinar quién o quiénes eran los responsables auténticos de la explosión ha sido la razón de nuestro silencio. » (Biltzar Txikia, IV, octobre 1974 ; cité in Letamendia Beldunce F., *Historia del nacionalismo vasco y de ETA*, 3 vol., San Sébastian : éd. R&B, 1995, p. 517) Dans le climat de l'époque, des doutes subsistent quant à la paternité de cette action et certains soupçonnent l'extrême droite (Casanova, *op.cit.*, p. 107).

action spectaculaire (très ciblée quoique tournant mal) s'inscrit dans une trame où les actions d'ETA sont peu nombreuses (N = 12 en 1974).

Pourtant l'opération a un retentissement très important en matière répressive. Le second semestre 1974 connaît 122 incarcérations. Le décalage quantitatif entre les actions menées par ETA et la réponse répressive immédiate pourrait se comprendre à partir du prisme de l'action-répression-action, quoique la séquence répressive soit absolument disproportionnée. L'impact des actions clandestines n'est pas tant quantitatif que stratégique et symbolique. Tel est précisément le cas en ces années 1970 où la puissance d'action d'ETA est réduite du fait du contexte très surveillé du franquisme mais où des actions spectaculaires comme l'exécution de Carrero Blanco (l'« Operación Ogro »<sup>84</sup>) le 20 décembre 1973 instituent un rapport de force de premier ordre. Le nombre exceptionnel d'arrestations qui l'a suivi le confirme (N = 688).

Au cours des années 1960, ETA théorise le principe de la « spirale action-répression-action » qui s'appuie sur l'idée qu'

*« à partir de la décade des années 1950, la violence exercée contre le peuple basque par les forces de répression espagnoles a été intégrée comme un autre élément du processus révolutionnaire basque. Les interdictions, les amendes, les personnes envoyées en exil, les tortures, les condamnations des tribunaux spéciaux, les contrôles massifs de la population, etc. permirent aux masses de prendre conscience de qui était leur ennemi »* (in Letamendia, 1975).

La mise sur le premier plan de ce principe s'opère en mars 1967, au cours de la Seconde Partie de la Ve Assemblée d'ETA. Il y est adopté et approuvé officiellement. Zunbeltz en est le théoricien (voir son texte de 1967 *Hacia una estrategia revolucionaria vasca*). Ce principe avait déjà été esquissé lors de la IVe Assemblée d'ETA (juin-juillet 1965) par Zumalde « el Cabra », responsable de la branche militaire du groupe. Il se trouve réactualisé en 1974 avec la publication de *Fines y medios en la lucha de*

<sup>83</sup> Casanova, *op.cit.*, p. 107.

<sup>84</sup> L'« Operación Ogro », menée par le commando *Txikia*, tue Carrero Blanco, président du gouvernement espagnol promis à la succession de Franco. Il était à l'origine de la réorganisation des nouveaux services secrets espagnols, le SECED, et dirigeait la politique anti-terroriste du régime.

*liberación nacional* de Zunbeltz. Sur le plan idéologique et de l'action révolutionnaire, la stratégie de l'« action-répression-action » signifie que

« la répression et l'action révolutionnaire grandissent ensemble et se conditionnent mutuellement. [...] À partir de nouvelles conditions, les moyens de répression produisent de plus fortes actions révolutionnaires ; et comme les actions révolutionnaires sont, à leur tour, contestées avec des moyens de répression encore plus spectaculaires, s'opère un processus en spirale où l'activité révolutionnaire et la répression se propulsent à chaque fois à des niveaux plus élevés. C'est à l'État oppresseur que ce processus d'action-répression-action nuit le plus, c'est-à-dire à la classe dominante qui agit à travers lui. En effet, les moyens dont dispose un État pour réprimer les masses, quand bien même ils sont nombreux, demeurent limités ».<sup>85</sup>

Cet extrait explique que la stratégie de l'action-répression-action soit aussi désignée par l'expression de « continuité répressive » par le groupe.<sup>86</sup> Néanmoins ce principe tactique s'inscrit dans une stratégie plus ambitieuse, celle adoptée lors de la Seconde Partie de la Ve Assemblée. Cette stratégie consiste en une lutte en quatre Fronts (culturel, économique, politique et militaire), opérant à partir de la méthode de la spirale action-répression-action, avec pour objectif la prise du pouvoir par le peuple basque.<sup>87</sup> Au-delà du principe de l'action-répression-action, la lutte armée (ou guérilla urbaine) intervient, pour le groupe, comme un outil de conscientisation de la population<sup>88</sup> : « grâce à l'activité militaire – mais en réalité politique – d'ETA, le peuple basque, violemment et récemment encore réprimé, s'est réveillé de sa léthargie ».<sup>89</sup>

<sup>85</sup> Zunbeltz (de) K. [José Luis Zabilde], *Hacia una estrategia revolucionaria vasca*, Hendaye, 1968, p. 81 et sqq., cité in Letamendia, 1995, p. 311.

<sup>86</sup> Voir communiqué d'ETA au peuple basque, 8 mars 1978 in Nuñez Astrain L. C. (dir.), *Euskadi Eta Askatasuna*, tome V, *La reforma del régimen. 1977-1980*, Tafalla, Txalaparta, 1993, p. 60.

<sup>87</sup> Letamendia, 1995, p. 322.

<sup>88</sup> La théorisation de l'action illégale voire violente comme moyen d'éveiller les consciences est développée par Krutwig (1963) dans l'ouvrage *Vasconia* où il soutient que « la violence peut être utilisée pour provoquer une large mobilisation populaire » (Krutwig Sagredo Federico, *Vasconia : estudio dialéctico de una nacionalidad*, Buenos Aires : Norbait, 1963).

<sup>89</sup> *Resolución sobre la lucha armada*, document interne, 1972, in Pedro Ibarra Güell, *La evolución estratégica de ETA*, San Sébastian: Kriselu, 1989, pp. 86-87.

ETA investit donc d'un sens théorique et parfois opérationnel la séquence action-répression-action, mais elle revêt une toute autre signification dans la perspective de l'antiterrorisme. La répression, visant un groupe social large et procédant de façon arbitraire, s'avère être à l'origine d'une logique de polarisation s'expliquant notamment du fait de l'impossibilité et de la difficulté d'un engagement légal en contexte autoritaire. Cette fermeture des possibles a pour effet que les individus se radicalisent ou, le plus souvent, se désengagent.<sup>90</sup> La répression, quelle que soit ses formes, se trouve à l'origine d'un effet ambivalent, produisant à la fois démobilisation et radicalisation<sup>91</sup> alors même qu'elle vise à démobiliser la société. Néanmoins dans le cas du Pays basque à l'époque franquiste (Guipúzcoa, Biscaye notamment), elle semble plutôt avoir stimulé une dynamique de radicalisation et pas simplement de mobilisation. L'interaction entre ETA et l'État espagnol, à cette époque, semble vérifier les conclusions des tenants des différentes versions de la théorie de la frustration, selon laquelle la répression tend plutôt à radicaliser les contestataires, là où la perspective de la mobilisation des ressources la juge plutôt dissuasive en raison d'un déséquilibre entre coûts, risques et avantages de l'action.<sup>92</sup> La pertinence de cette seconde perspective ne concerne pas même la plus large frange du mouvement, si l'on en croit l'intensité de l'engagement au sein de l'organisation clandestine<sup>93</sup> et le

<sup>90</sup> Gilles Dorronsoro, "La torture discrète : capital social, radicalisation et désengagement militant dans un régime sécuritaire", *European Journal of Turkish Studies*, vol. 8, 2008, <http://ejts.revues.org/2223> (accès le 18 juin 2013).

<sup>91</sup> Opp, 1994, p. 122 ; Gilles Dorronsoro, "Sociologie de la contre-insurrection : dynamiques sociales de la nuisance et de l'opposition à l'action de l'État", EPS n°2009/0948, *Étude de l'IRSEM*, n° 20 2012.

<sup>92</sup> Olivier Fillieule, "Le désengagement d'organisations radicales. Approche par les processus et les configurations", *Lien social et Politiques*, n° 68, 2012, p. 48.

<sup>93</sup> On recense à la fin des années 1970, outre les commandos légaux et le dispositif de passage de frontière, le commando « especial » (*La Vanguardia*, 8/07/1975), le commando Gurmendi, le commando Andarra, le commando Uzturre, le commando Gamboa, le commando Argala (1978-1990) ou commando itinérant, le commando Erdella (Lilián Aguirre, *Profesión : luchar contra ETA*, Insurgentes, 2012, p. 55), le commando Busturia (Aguirre, 2012, p. 102), le commando Orbaizeta (Aguirre, 2012, p. 66), le commando Adrapa (Aguirre, 2012, p. 105), le commando Otxobi (*El Confidencial*, 15/10/2018), le commando Telefónico, le commando Navarra o Nafarroa<sup>SEP</sup> (1978-1986), puis au début des années 1980, le commando Vitoria, le commando Donosti, le commando Iparralde qui a commencé à œuvrer en 1982-1983, le commando Iruña-Zarra, le commando Txefe Sarasola démantelé en

soutien de la population en faveur d'une autonomie du Pays basque. En ce sens, le cas basque confirme le modèle de Lichbach (1987)<sup>94</sup> qui a formalisé une énigme des données empiriques contradictoires, en l'occurrence le fait que le plus souvent, la coercition affaiblit avec succès la protestation mais occasionnellement renforce les dissidents,<sup>95</sup> comme dans le cas présent.

### 3. Exacerbation de la tension

#### 3.1 La transition « démocratique » ou l'offensive anti-ETA : 1978-1982

Durant la période de la transition dite « démocratique », la concurrence pour le pouvoir est très intense. Celle-là coïncide avec l'élaboration de la nouvelle Constitution pour l'Espagne et d'un Statut d'autonomie pour le Pays basque, dans un cadre de concurrence électorale exacerbé. Elle se double, du côté abertzale, d'une activité armée intense (voir Tableau 2). Face à cette dernière, l'antiterrorisme déploie plusieurs stratégies passant d'abord par des arrestations massives. Celles-ci donnent lieu à 274 incarcérations annuelles en moyenne. Il s'appuie ensuite sur la violence politique paramilitaire, puis sur la pression exercée sur toute organisation abertzale (patriote), accusée par les institutions de l'État espagnol de soutenir le groupe armé. De 1978 à 1984, le nombre de prisonniers politiques condamnés à des peines de prison ferme est passé de 102 à 420 ; celui des détentions prolongées, de 261 à 1 879. Certains exemples sont éloquentes, tels l'arrestation le 26 juin 1979 de la directrice du journal *Egin*, Mirentxu Purroy Ferrer, déjà incarcérée en décembre 1977 pour avoir publié un communiqué d'ETA (« El truco de la bandera ») dans la revue

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mars 1980, le commando *Txirrita* démantelé fin janvier 1981, les commando Oker et Viscaya démantelés en 1985, le commando Madrid qui émerge en 1981 et n'a de cesse de se reconstituer, le commando Gorki, le commando légal Iparaguirre, le « commando électronique » démantelé en 1982 (Giacopucci Giovanni, *ETA. Historia política de una lucha armada*, partie 2, Tafalla : Txalaparta, 1997, p. 237), le commando Gorrotxategi démantelé en 1983, le commando Izar Gorri démantelé en 1987, le commando Tontorramendi (1983-1988) et le commando Eibar (1984-1989).

<sup>94</sup> Ce modèle suggère que les contestataires réagissent à la répression de façon rationnelle. Leur attitude varie selon le degré de répression : la contestation se voit stimulée par cette dernière mais les opposants changent de tactique au fil du temps, surtout après des défaites.

<sup>95</sup> James B. Rule, *Theories of Civil Violence*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988, p. 267.

*Punto y Hora*, ou celle, en septembre 1979, du secrétaire général du parti Action nationaliste basque (ANV) et d'un dirigeant du Parti Populaire pour la Révolution Socialiste (HASI).<sup>96</sup> Le parti politique Herri Batasuna (HB - Unité populaire<sup>97</sup>) est particulièrement visé puisque, les 8-9 mai 1981, 25 personnalités en sont arrêtées en Navarre, 18 en Guipúzcoa, 9 en Biscaye, 11 en Araba.<sup>98</sup> Des arrestations de membres d'HB auront lieu jusqu'en 1994.

Tableau 2

Actions menées par ETA et arrestations de militants d'ETA entre 1978 et 1982

Années	Périodes	Nb d'actions annuelles	Nb d'actions semestrielles	Nb d'arrestations annuelles <sup>99</sup>	Nb d'arrestations semestrielles
1978	1 <sup>er</sup> semestre	153	72	211	99
	2 <sup>nd</sup> semestre		81		112
1979	1 <sup>er</sup> semestre	<b>173</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>143</b>
	2 <sup>nd</sup> semestre		66		100
1980	1 <sup>er</sup> semestre	153	70	<b>288</b>	127
	2 <sup>nd</sup> semestre		83		<b>148</b>
1981	1 <sup>er</sup> semestre	144	<b>94</b>	<b>361</b>	<b>213</b>
	2 <sup>nd</sup> semestre		50		<b>139</b>
1982	1 <sup>er</sup> semestre	<b>224</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>185</b>
	2 <sup>nd</sup> semestre		<b>132</b>		49

<sup>96</sup> Casanova, *op.cit.*, p. 176. Ces deux groupes ont été particulièrement visés car ils ont participé, avec d'autres (KAS, LAIA ; ESB et EIA) le 24 octobre 1977 aux Tables d'Altsasu [Alsasua], dont les signataires se sont engagés à lutter pour « la construction du socialisme dans une *Euskadi* libre, réunifiée et bascophone » (Casanova, *op.cit.*, p. 150).

<sup>97</sup> HB est une coalition politique fondée en 27 avril 1978, favorable à un Pays basque socialiste et indépendant.

<sup>98</sup> [https://elpais.com/diario/1981/05/10/espana/358293607\\_850215.html](https://elpais.com/diario/1981/05/10/espana/358293607_850215.html). Sont également arrêtées les personnes ayant pris part à la conférence de presse informant les medias des arrestations : Francisco Letamendia, Periko Solabarria, Jon Idígoras, Mikel Arizaleta, José Luis Cereceda et Karmel Etxebarria.

<sup>99</sup> La somme des arrestations de chacun des deux semestres ne coïncide pas avec le total par année car le mois de certaines arrestations n'a pu être identifié.

La stratégie répressive se déploie donc sur plusieurs fronts, aussi bien légaux qu'illégaux, caractéristiques de cette période de transition politique. Elle marque une inflexion eu égard à l'antiterrorisme, principalement policier, du régime autoritaire précédent. Les moyens institutionnels convoqués consistent en adaptations législatives autorisant une extension de la répression. Ainsi immédiatement après le vote de la nouvelle Constitution par le Congrès le 21 juillet 1978, ce dernier approuve le 27 juillet une nouvelle loi antiterroriste qui facilite la répression policière.<sup>100</sup> La loi 56/1978 « de mesures spéciales relatives aux infractions terroristes commises par des groupes armés », publiée le 4 décembre 1978, entre en vigueur le 8 décembre. L'application de la loi antiterroriste conduit à l'arrestation de 2 140 personnes, c'est-à-dire quatre fois plus qu'en 1979. Nous verrons que la promulgation de la loi organique 4/1981 permet que, dans les douze mois qui ont suivi le coup d'État du 23-F, 7 000 arrestations soient effectuées au Pays basque, dont 800 en vertu de la loi antiterroriste.<sup>101</sup>

La transition démocratique constitue donc une période de consolidation de la législation antiterroriste, au cours de laquelle l'État espagnol se donne les moyens juridiques et répressifs de lutter contre les oppositions armées. Plusieurs lois sont adoptées, la première étant le décret-loi 2/1976<sup>102</sup> du 18 février, révisant le décret-loi 10/75 du 26 août 1975 ; puis les lois 56/1978 du 4 décembre 1978 relative à des mesures spéciales en relation avec les délits de terrorisme commis par des groupes armés et 82/1978 du 28 décembre 1978 qui modifie le code pénal en matière de terrorisme et transforme les délits de terrorisme en délits de droit commun. Suivent le décret-loi royal 3/1979 du 26 janvier et le décret royal 3/1979 sur la sécurité citoyenne, qui amplifie les mesures susceptibles d'être prises dans le domaine, en pénalisant tous les actes d'apologie et de préparation de délits reconnus comme terroristes. Vient enfin la loi

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<sup>100</sup> Le Congrès approuve à une large majorité une loi sur la police prévoyant notamment pour les crimes commis par des groupes armés : une prolongation de la détention préventive pendant plus de 72 heures, jusqu'à un maximum de sept jours supplémentaires, par notification à l'autorité judiciaire ; la mise au secret du détenu pendant le temps jugé nécessaire, sans préjudice des droits de la défense ; l'observation postale, télégraphique et téléphonique sous contrôle judiciaire pour une période de trois mois, prorogeable pour des périodes égales.

<sup>101</sup> Casanova, *op.cit.*, p. 205

<sup>102</sup> <http://www.kosmospolis.com/2015/03/la-legislacion-antiterrorista-en-espana/>

organique 2/1981 du 4 mai pour la défense de la démocratie. Le cœur du dispositif juridique espagnol de lutte contre le terrorisme se voit donc constitué au cours des premières années de la démocratie espagnole. De la sorte et « lors de la période de transition, le terrorisme a été soustrait à la juridiction militaire et intégré au nouveau Code pénal. »<sup>103</sup>

Ce dispositif législatif se double, à partir des années 1980, d'une nouvelle stratégie répressive consistant à couper ETA de tous les mouvements sociaux et à criminaliser la gauche abertzale. Elle présente d'abord un volet militaire de renforcement de la contrainte sur le territoire basque. Ainsi le général José Antonio Sáenz de Santamaría est nommé, le 1<sup>er</sup> février 1980, délégué spécial au Pays basque, avec les pleins pouvoirs de police.<sup>104</sup> Il fut l'un des principaux responsables des FSE durant le franquisme (comme chef d'État-Major de la Garde civile) et exerça jusqu'en 1997 au sein des FSE.<sup>105</sup> À partir du 6 février 1980 se déploient au Pays basque de nouvelles forces spéciales de police, l'Unité Antiterroriste Rurale (UAR) de la Garde civile, unité ayant des fonctions d'occupation militaire dans les zones rurales, et les Groupes d'Opérations Spéciales (GEO), groupe d'assaut de la police nationale. Des véhicules blindés sont envoyés au Pays basque pour patrouiller dans les rues et sur les autoroutes. Cette « occupation » s'illustre encore dans l'institution de Lemoiz, désignée pour accueillir une centrale nucléaire, en « zone de sécurité militaire » en 1981 par le lieutenant-colonel de l'armée Tejero, celui-là même qui fut à l'origine du coup d'État manqué du 23-F. Plus largement, les années 1981-1982 se distinguent par un approfondissement de la politique antiterroriste espagnole avec la création de deux commandements : le MULA (Commandement unifié de la lutte antiterroriste - *Mando Unificado de la Lucha Antiterrorista*) et le MULC (Commandement unique de lutte contre le terrorisme - *Mando Único para la Lucha Contraterrorista*) à la suite d'un accord entre le roi Juan Carlos I et le chef de l'armée espagnole.

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<sup>103</sup> P.-E. Guittet, *Antiterrorisme clandestin, antiterrorisme officiel. Chroniques espagnoles de la coopération en Europe*, Outremont : Athéna éditions, coll. Sécurité, 2010, p. 76.

<sup>104</sup> Casanova, *op.cit.*, p. 183.

<sup>105</sup> Il sera ensuite inculpé en mai 1996 par le juge Baltasar Garzón pour son implication dans les GAL puis acquitté en janvier 1998 (voir respectivement *El País*, 8 mai 1996 ; *El País*, 11 février 1998).

Parallèlement, la loi organique 4/1981 sur les états d'alarme, d'urgence et de siège entre en vigueur le 6 juin 1981, quelques mois après le coup d'État.

Le deuxième volet de cette stratégie antiterroriste passe par le déploiement d'une violence politique illégale. Une fois votés la nouvelle Constitution et le Statut d'autonomie du Pays basque et de la Catalogne et décrétée une extension des pouvoirs policiers de lutte contre le terrorisme, se met en place une stratégie de « terrorisme d'État ». Cette complémentarité des dispositifs est une constante de la lutte antiterroriste de l'État espagnol, qu'ils soient légaux (juridiques, législatifs, policiers) et illégaux notamment para-policiers. Le volet de violence clandestine étatique s'initie avec l'assassinat d'*Argala* en décembre 1978<sup>106</sup> qui ouvre la « guerre du nord », mise en place par Madrid. Elle implique l'Anti-Terrorisme ETA (ATE), l'*Alianza Apostólica Anticomunista* (AAA) ou Triple A, l'*Acción Nacional Española* (ANE), le Bataillon Basque Espagnol (BVE), les *Grupos Armados Españoles* (GAE) ainsi que la Garde civile et la police espagnoles. Il s'agit bien de « terroriser » la population, en ayant recours à des pratiques infra-légales perpétrées par des groupes para-policiers. Dès la fin de l'année 1979, des viols sont commis sur des femmes basques dont les auteurs sont soit les forces de l'ordre soit des groupes paramilitaires.<sup>107</sup> La pratique se poursuit dans les années suivantes.<sup>108</sup> Des adolescentes sont enlevées par la Garde civile. Sont également visés des représentants et sympathisants d'HB qui, dans certains cas, sont assassinés. Les groupes paramilitaires sont à l'origine d'attaques indiscriminées contre la population basque.<sup>109</sup>

<sup>106</sup> Le 21 décembre 1978, José Miguel Beñaran Ordeñana, dit *Argala*, figure phare du comité exécutif d'ETA (*liberado*), est tué à Anglet (Iparralde) par une bombe placée sous sa voiture. Il avait pourtant pris part à un processus de dialogue avec le gouvernement espagnol. Participent à l'action le Bataillon Basque Espagnol, José María Bocardo, ancien membre de la Triple A, Jean-Pierre Chérid un ancien membre de l'OAS et Mario Ricci, néo-fasciste italien. L'assassinat est revendiqué par un militaire espagnol 25 ans après.

<sup>107</sup> Casanova, *op.cit.*, p. 182 ; *Deia*, 15/01/1980 ; *Egin*, 15/01/1980.

<sup>108</sup> Le 9 janvier 1980, Ana Tere Barrueta (jeune basque de 19 ans) est violée et tuée à Loiu par des paramilitaires des GAE (Casanova, *op.cit.*, p. 182 ; [https://www.naiz.eus/eu/hemeroteca/gara/editions/gara\\_2014-07-04-07-00/hemeroteca\\_articles/ana-tere-barrueta-violaciones-y-torturas-impunes](https://www.naiz.eus/eu/hemeroteca/gara/editions/gara_2014-07-04-07-00/hemeroteca_articles/ana-tere-barrueta-violaciones-y-torturas-impunes)). Citons également le cas de María José Bravo perpétré par le BVE le 8 mai 1980.

<sup>109</sup> Évoquons à titre d'exemples : l'attentat à la bombe commandité par le BVE contre le bar abertzale Aldana à Alonsotegi le 20 janvier 1980, dans lequel quatre clients perdent la vie

Concernant cette violence clandestine étatique, autrement nommée guerre sale, on peut distinguer deux périodes. De 1978 à 1980, alors que l'Unión del Centro Democrático est au pouvoir, des membres apparemment incontrôlés des forces de sécurité, qui se sont donnés pour nom *Batallón Vasco Español* et Triple À, ont commis dix meurtres. On parle alors de complots de groupes d'extrême droite et des FSE, sous diverses bannières, pour attaquer des membres d'ETA ou des personnes liées au mouvement abertzale. Dans ce contexte, 34 personnes auraient été tuées entre 1975 et 1982.<sup>110</sup> De 1983 à 1987, sous le gouvernement socialiste, les nouveaux *Grupos Antiterroristas de Liberación* (GAL) ont commis 28 homicides de plus, ce qui a conduit à l'incarcération de plusieurs policiers et politiciens, dont un ancien ministre de l'Intérieur.<sup>111</sup> Les GAL ont ainsi opéré entre 1983 et 1987, tuant 28 personnes, dont beaucoup n'avaient aucune relation avec ETA.<sup>112</sup> Au total 61 décès peuvent être attribués au terrorisme anti-ETA.

Cette violence paramilitaire, dont il sera rapidement établi qu'elle est liée au gouvernement espagnol, participe de la radicalisation des groupes clandestins basques.<sup>113</sup> En la matière, plusieurs hypothèses ont été formulées : d'une part, les policiers et les politiciens responsables de ces dispositifs ont pu penser que la campagne violente illégale freinerait ETA, l'obligeant à être beaucoup plus prudente dans son refuge français. On a également considéré, d'autre part, que la violence paramilitaire a fourni de nouveaux arguments à ETA, lorsque sa légitimité sociale était en crise.<sup>114</sup>

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(Casanova, *op.cit.*, p. 183), ou celui contre la crèche Iturriaga de Bilbao le 23 juillet 1980 attribué au BVE et tuant trois personnes. Mentionnons enfin la fusillade commanditée par trois mercenaires du BVE d'un bar d'Hendaye (Lapurdi) le 23 novembre 1980.

<sup>110</sup> Sánchez-Cuenca Ignacio et Paloma Aguilar, "Terrorist Violence and Popular Mobilization: The Case of the Spanish Transition to Democracy", *Politics & Society*, vol. 37, n° 3, septembre 2009, pp. 428-453.

<sup>111</sup> Domínguez Iribarren, 1999

<sup>112</sup> Woodworth Paddy, *Dirty War, Clean Hands: ETA, the GAL and Spanish Democracy*, New Haven (Connecticut): Yale University Press, 2001.

<sup>113</sup> Parmi les 50 membres d'ETA rencontrés durant notre enquête, 37 ont fait mention d'une expérience directe (attentats contre leur personne) ou indirecte avec les GAL (*i.e.* qui ont touché des familiers). Tel est également le cas pour une militante des CAA et pour deux membres d'IK ayant vécu dans le contexte où les GAL frappaient.

<sup>114</sup> F. Reinares, *Terrorismo y antiterrorismo*, Barcelone, Paidós, 1998. Les scores aux élections de la gauche abertzale durant cette période contribuent à récuser cette dernière hypothèse.

Pourtant, l'étude des mouvements sociaux a montré que si la répression a un effet globalement décourageant sur la masse des militants, il est contrebalancé par la « radicalisation » d'une minorité d'entre eux. Se vérifie plutôt ici la thèse d'une intensification de l'affrontement. Face à l'escalade de la violence policière (voir infra 4.1) et illégale de l'État, « la violence [clandestine] se développe en réaction à une répression dure et aveugle, considérée par les opposants comme brutale et profondément injuste. Dans les processus d'interactions réciproques, la violence et la "contre-violence" se répondent, s'entretiennent réciproquement. »<sup>115</sup> La radicalisation est d'autant plus probable que des éléments culturels sont historiquement enracinés et surdéterminent la façon dont sont traités les opposants par des autorités, privilégiant des stratégies exclusives.<sup>116</sup> Au sentiment d'injustice, s'associe la perception d'une incohérence de la part du gouvernement qui a pour effet, dans le cadre du conflit, d'accroître les activités violentes, conformément à la troisième hypothèse du modèle de l'acteur rationnel (RA) élaboré par Lichbach (1987).<sup>117</sup> Les interactions entre organisations gouvernementales et non-gouvernementales s'inscrivent ainsi dans une logique d'action-répression-action qui exacerbe la tension.

Une nouvelle fois, on peinerait à considérer que le passage à l'action d'ETA coïncide avec la fin d'un cycle répondant à « la routinisation de l'action collective, [à] la satisfaction au moins partielle des demandes, [au] désengagement du plus grand nombre qui s'accompagne de la radicalisation d'une minorité. »<sup>118</sup> On peut difficilement considérer que le mouvement abertzale soit alors « en phase descendante du cycle de

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<sup>115</sup> Della Porta, 2013, p. 30.

<sup>116</sup> Donatella Della Porta et Mario Diani, *Social Movements, An Introduction*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999. Les théories de la (dé)légitimité de l'État offrent une explication de la longévité de certaines organisations dites terroristes en régime démocratique (Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men Rebel ?*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970 ; Engene Jan Oskar, *European Terrorism: Violence, State, and Legitimacy* [in Norwegian], Oslo: TANO, 1994).

<sup>117</sup> Cette proposition établit que des politiques gouvernementales cohérentes, d'accommodement envers l'opposition et de répression, réduisent la dissidence, alors que des politiques incohérentes l'augmentent.

<sup>118</sup> Sommier, 2008, p. 27. I. Sommier fait référence au modèle de Tarrow, 1994. De même, la première hypothèse du modèle de l'acteur rationnel (RA), formulé par Lichbach, 1987 comme alternative à celui de l'Action-Réaction (AR), et qui veut qu'un accroissement de la répression étatique de la non-violence réduit les activités non-violentes d'un groupe d'opposition mais augmente ses activités violentes ne se vérifie pas ici.

protestation », laissant apparaître les groupes radicaux.<sup>119</sup> En effet, la force du mouvement abertzale s'exprime dans ses résultats aux élections dans la Communauté autonome : le nombre de voix recueillies par *Herri Batasuna* (HB), *Eusko Alkartasuna* (EA), *Euskadiko Ezkerra* (EE) est de 505 498 aux élections du Parlement basque de 1986, ce qui, en pourcentage, représente respectivement 17,47 ; 15,84 et 10,88 %.<sup>120</sup> Ce score est confirmé aux élections des Juntas Générales (assemblées générales) de 1987 où le total des voix pour les trois formations est de 381 218, ce qui représente environ 38 % des suffrages.<sup>121</sup> Contrairement à la thèse de l'émergence de la radicalité au terme d'un cycle en quatre temps, la radicalisation, qu'illustre le nombre d'attaques perpétrées par ETA (voir Tableau 3), serait à mettre au compte du terrorisme d'État et de l'« échec constitutionnel » plutôt qu'à l'essoufflement du mouvement social sous le coup de la répression.<sup>122</sup>

**Tableau 3. Actions d'ETA entre 1981 et 1986 et arrestations de ses militants**

Années	Périodes	Nb d'actions annuelles	Nb d'actions semestrielles	Nb d'arrestations annuelles <sup>123</sup>	Nb d'arrestations semestrielles
1981	1 <sup>er</sup> semestre	<b>144</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>361</b>	<b>213</b>
	2 <sup>nd</sup> semestre		50		<b>139</b>
1982	1 <sup>er</sup> semestre	<b>224</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>185</b>
	2 <sup>nd</sup> semestre		<b>132</b>		49
1983	1 <sup>er</sup> semestre	<b>142</b>	42	110	70
	2 <sup>nd</sup> semestre		<b>100</b>		39

<sup>119</sup> On a coutume de considérer, dans ce cadre interprétatif inspiré de Tarrow, que « la radicalisation touche davantage ceux qui n'ont pas connu la phase initiale mais ont rejoint le mouvement après, ce que semble corroborer une élévation des niveaux de violence chez les 2<sup>e</sup> et 3<sup>e</sup> générations militantes. » (Sommier, 2008, p. 59) Ce fut en effet le cas avec Action directe en France mais cette théorie ne se vérifie pas dans le cas du conflit au Pays basque.

<sup>120</sup> Les résultats de l'ensemble de ces scrutins sont disponibles sur le site du gouvernement basque : <http://www.euskadi.eus/elecciones/>.

<sup>121</sup> HB, EA et EE reçoivent respectivement 18,33 ; 11,38 ; 7,78 % des votes. Il faut attendre les années 2010 pour trouver des scores électoraux comparables pour *Bildu* et *Aralar*.

<sup>122</sup> Sur l'interprétation du terrorisme comme réponse au terrorisme d'État, voir Edward Herman et Gerry O'Sullivan, *The "Terrorism" Industry: The Experts and Institutions That Shape Our View of Terror*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1989.

<sup>123</sup> La somme des arrestations de chacun des deux semestres ne coïncide pas avec le total par année car le mois de certaines arrestations n'a pu être identifié.

1984	1 <sup>er</sup> semestre	<b>176</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>117</b>
	2 <sup>nd</sup> semestre		<b>87</b>		<b>112</b>
1985	1 <sup>er</sup> semestre	<b>146</b>	<b>104</b>	96	33
	2 <sup>nd</sup> semestre		42		66
1986	1 <sup>er</sup> semestre	139	63	157	79
	2 <sup>nd</sup> semestre		76		76

Le cas de la guerre sale menée contre ETA durant ces années induit, en effet, une configuration spécifique. L'analyse statistique dissuade de surévaluer l'effet dissuasif de la répression sur le mouvement social et la radicalisation de la contestation. Qu'elle s'appuie sur les victimes<sup>124</sup> ou sur les actions menées – comme nous le faisons –, elle met en évidence une corrélation entre chaque meurtre du BVE, de la Triple A qui, deux ans plus tard, semble produire un meurtre de plus commis par ETA<sup>125</sup>. De même, nous constatons un « décalage » temporel comparable entre les incarcérations de membres d'ETA et leurs actions. Cependant et concernant les victimes, cet « effet » doit être nuancé. Une analyse plus précise est requise afin de déterminer le rapport de causalité entre les actions des groupes illégaux et pour comprendre lequel des deux réagit aux actions de l'autre.<sup>126</sup>

Alors que les actions des GAL semblent ne pas avoir d'incidence directe sur les opérations d'ETA, tel n'est pas le cas des attentats menés par l'extrême droite. La guerre sale perpétrée par les GAL, organisée et contrôlée par le gouvernement socialiste de Felipe González,<sup>127</sup> paraît ne pas avoir d'effet sur le cycle de la violence d'ETA, *en termes de victimes*.<sup>128</sup> En revanche, la violence moins organisée et plus spontanée de l'extrême droite entre 1978 et 1982 semble avoir eu un effet statistique sur les victimes

<sup>124</sup> Sánchez-Cuenca, 2009.

<sup>125</sup> Enric Martínez-Herrera, "Nationalist Extremism and Outcomes of State Policies in the Basque Country, 1979-2001", *International Journal on Multicultural Studies*, vol. 4, n° 1, 2002, p. 29.

<sup>126</sup> Sánchez-Cuenca, 2009, p. 13.

<sup>127</sup> P.-E. Guittet, *Raison et déraison d'État : les GAL (Grupos Antiterroristas de Liberación), 1983-1987*, mémoire de DEA, Univ. Paris X - Nanterre, septembre 2000.

<sup>128</sup> Ce qui ne signifie toutefois pas que les actions des GAL soient sans conséquence puisqu'elles ont, sur le court et le moyen terme, contribué à renforcer le soutien à ETA et ont ébranlé la légitimité du gouvernement espagnol au Pays basque.

d'ETA : l'accroissement des actions meurtrières de l'extrême droite est corrélé à la recrudescence de la violence d'ETA. Les actions conduites par l'extrême droite pour neutraliser ETA ne contribuent donc pas à réduire ses agissements, bien au contraire. Au cours de cette première période, « le terrorisme d'État semble avoir provoqué encore plus de violence de la part d'ETA », <sup>129</sup> ce qui explique que l'on ait pu parlé d'un renforcement de sa tendance antirépressive, pendant les premières années de la transition vers la démocratie, <sup>130</sup> essentiellement du fait de l'utilisation de moyens illégaux par les FSE (Garde civile et police nationale) et d'une politique anti-terroriste inefficace.

En revanche, l'étude statistique de la seconde période de la guerre sale [après 1982] et de l'action des GAL ne permet pas d'aboutir à de semblables conclusions, que ce soit sur le court terme ou avec un décalage temporel lorsque l'action d'ETA est appréhendée à partir de ses victimes. <sup>131</sup> Il faut se tourner vers des facteurs macro- et méso-sociaux pour expliquer la poursuite de la lutte armée par certaines organisations illégales dans une logique d'interaction réciproque. Ainsi l'attention aux actions d'ETA et aux arrestations de ses militants – dont Sánchez-Cuenca déplorait l'absence à son époque – plutôt qu'à ses seules victimes conduit à des conclusions sensiblement différentes. Elle remet en question le fait que, dans ces années, « une variable fondamentale pour l'analyse des variations de l'activité clandestine d'ETA réside dans l'antiterroriste légal de l'État, c'est-à-dire le nombre d'arrestations effectuées par les forces de sécurité ». <sup>132</sup>

En effet, les arrestations massives de ces années (N = 274 en moyenne annuelle entre 1978 et 1982) semblent corrélées à une très forte intensité opérationnelle et militaire d'ETA (voir Tableau 3). <sup>133</sup> Si cette

<sup>129</sup> Martínez-Herrera, 2002, p. 40.

<sup>130</sup> Pedro Ibarra Güell, « The evolution of radical Basque nationalism: Changing discourse patterns », in J. Beramendi, R. Máiz y X. Núñez (eds.), *Nationalism in Europe. Past and Present*, vol. 2, Santiago de Compostelle, Université de Santiago de Compostelle, 1994 ; Letamendia Beldunce F., *Historia del nacionalismo vasco y de ETA*, 3 vol., San Sébastian : éd. R&B, 1995.

<sup>131</sup> Sánchez-Cuenca, 2009, p. 14.

<sup>132</sup> Ibidem, p. 10. Dans le cas d'autres interactions entre État et groupe armé comme la Fraction armée rouge en Allemagne, que l'hypothèse de l'instabilité a une pertinence heuristique (Francisco, 1996, p. 1193).

<sup>133</sup> On observe, dans le cas du conflit basque au cours de ces années comme en Irlande du nord, que la répression ne réduit pas l'action politique violente et que, sur cette période de temps, l'hypothèse de la courbe en U inversé ne se vérifie pas (Francisco, 1996, p. 1199).

corrélation vérifie partiellement la thèse de l'action-répression-action, l'enjeu du rapport de force est à chercher ailleurs, en l'occurrence dans la concurrence pour le pouvoir et l'autonomie dans un contexte où se rebattent les cartes politiques sur le plan institutionnel. On le perçoit notamment dans le score d'HB aux élections municipales du 3 avril 1979. Le parti apparaît alors comme la seconde force politique indépendantiste après le Parti nationaliste basque (PNV) avec 15,55 % des suffrages exprimés. L'enjeu pour la gauche abertzale est l'autonomie institutionnelle du Pays basque et la transformation radicale des institutions de l'État espagnol autorisant la satisfaction de l'alternative KAS. En effet, celle-ci se voit redéfinie le 30 janvier 1978 autour de cinq points : amnistie pour tous les prisonniers politiques basques en Espagne ; légalisation de tous les partis politiques y compris indépendantistes ; expulsion du Pays basque des forces policières et militaires de l'État espagnol ; amélioration des conditions de vie et de travail des classes populaires, et satisfaction immédiate des revendications en matière socio-économique, exprimées par leurs organismes représentatifs ; institution d'un Statut d'Autonomie accru. Cette concurrence pour le pouvoir est manifeste dans l'interdiction faite le 4 octobre 1979 à HB, dont le succès aux élections municipales d'avril a été remarquable, d'utiliser les créneaux télévisés pour la campagne sur le Statut d'Autonomie du Pays basque.<sup>134</sup> Elle se lit également dans la réponse répressive opposée aux mobilisations sociales, très intenses durant cette période, qu'il soit question de l'opposition à la centrale de Lemoiz ou des grèves générales qui se succèdent au Pays basque.

Le recours à la violence comme outil de pression et moyen de négociation correspond à un moment très précis de l'histoire et de l'évolution d'ETA, en l'occurrence les années 1978 où ETA-m a fait le choix d'une stratégie offensive à finalité politique : dans un communiqué au peuple basque, ETA s'avoue décidée à se battre jusqu'à ce que les cinq points de l'Alternative KAS soient réalisés, tout en soulignant sa volonté d'arrêter l'effusion de sang. L'intensification des actions militaires vise à obliger le gouvernement à s'asseoir à la table des négociations et à prendre en considération l'alternative KAS. Elle consiste également à envoyer un signal au gouvernement et à la population montrant que la répression

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<sup>134</sup> Casanova, *op.cit.*, p. 176.

policière n'arrêtera jamais le mouvement. Nicolas, né en 1963 et interrogé dans le cadre de notre enquête, l'exprime avec lucidité :

*« La lutte armée ne peut pas gagner en Espagne. On n'est pas au Venezuela, on n'est pas dans la jungle, on n'est pas à Cuba dans les années 50. La lutte armée, en ville en plus, ne peut jamais gagner un État. La lutte armée, ça ne sert jamais qu'à attendre qu'il y ait les conditions pour autre chose. Les conditions, c'est la population, la conscientisation de la population. La population doit prendre le relais. La lutte armée ne peut rien gagner d'elle-même, dans le contexte où je parle. [...] Pour nous, on n'a jamais été tarés au point de dire : on va gagner, on va les plier parce qu'on leur tue trois généraux et deux capitaines. Ça nous faisait mal au cœur de voir les images à la télévision quand il y a des gardes civiles morts. Les autorités, ils venaient, ils leur mettaient une médaille dans la caisse. Et après ils allaient tous bouffer ensemble. Mais c'est le pauvre andalou qui est venu en tant que garde civile parce qu'il crevait la dalle chez lui et ils vont le remplacer par un autre. »<sup>135</sup>*

### 3.2 L'instrumentalisatin du 23-F (1981)

Dans ce contexte politique de transition, le pic des arrestations de 1981 se présente comme un phénomène, à première vue, difficilement compréhensible (Tableau 2, Tableau 3). Il s'inscrit certes dans le temps long d'une politique antiterroriste assez sévère puisque les années 1978-1982 totalisent à elles seules 1 371 incarcérations (Tableau 1, Tableau 2).<sup>136</sup> 1981 « est l'année où le nombre d'arrestations est le plus élevé de toute la période : selon les chiffres du ministère de l'Intérieur, 714 personnes ont été arrêtées, contre une moyenne annuelle de 222 (1981 représente à elle seule près de 9 % du total des arrestations). »<sup>137</sup> Non seulement 25 personnalités politiques d'HB sont arrêtées (voir supra 3.1) mais dans les douze mois (1981-1982) qui ont suivi le coup d'État, 7 000 arrestations ont été effectuées

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<sup>135</sup> Nicolas a rejoint ETA-m après 1982 pour participer à son appui logistique. Gaya, née en 1951, a commencé à apporter son soutien à l'organisation durant la transition démocratique. Elle a hébergé plusieurs générations de clandestins et fait écho aux propos de Nicolas : « On m'avait raconté que c'était dur de tuer. Ils disaient qu'il fallait vraiment... Ils ont tué pour quoi ? Pour faire pression contre le gouvernement qui décide, pour que le gouvernement se mette un jour à discuter. »

<sup>136</sup> Réparties comme suit : 211 en 1978, puis 256, 288, 361 en 1981 et 255 en 1982.

<sup>137</sup> Sánchez-Cuenca, 2009, p. 21.

au Pays basque, dont 800 en vertu de la loi antiterroriste.<sup>138</sup> Pour l'année 1981, nous comptabilisons 51 incarcérations avant le 23-F, 300 après et 9 dont le mois n'a pu être identifié.<sup>139</sup>

On peut s'étonner de cette offensive contre ETA. Barros *et al.* (2006) ont proposé de lier ce phénomène au coup d'État du 23 février 1981 (dit 23-F). Cette hypothèse a été récusée par Sánchez-Cuenca.<sup>140</sup> Ce dernier souligne par exemple qu'il n'est fait mention de la crainte du coup d'État dans aucun des documents internes d'ETA de l'époque. De même, l'année 1981 est marquée par des discussions entre le gouvernement de transition et ETA-pm puis par la proclamation d'une trêve par ETA-pm à la suite du coup d'État. En avril 1981 s'ouvrent des pourparlers officiels au sujet d'ETA-pm entre la direction d'EIA (*Euskao Iraultzale Alderdia* - Parti Révolutionnaire Basque), notamment Juan María Bandrés et Mario Onaindia, et le ministre de l'Intérieur Juan José Rosón. Le principal sujet de discussion concerne l'établissement de listes de militants susceptibles de bénéficier de mesures de grâce individuelles.<sup>141</sup> Est-ce à dire que la répression précédemment évoquée s'abat principalement sur ETA-m ? On peut estimer que tel est le cas puisque le 28 mai 1981, ETA-pm annonce la fin de ses actions armées. Cette très forte répression explique-t-elle qu'entre mi-juillet et octobre 1981 ETA-m fasse une parenthèse dans ses actions armées ? S'agit-il plutôt d'un repli stratégique ou de difficultés logistiques ? Sánchez-Cuenca privilégie la première hypothèse, en délaissant celle du coup d'État manqué du 23-F. Pourtant la chute des attaques en 1981 semble liée au nombre très important d'arrestations évoqué.

En effet, le coup d'État du 23-F contribue à la mise en place d'une politique antiterroriste dont la portée dépasse très largement l'origine politique et opérationnelle de ce dernier. La tentative de coup d'État a été matériellement menée par le *Frente de la Juventud* (FJ), formation d'extrême

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<sup>138</sup> Casanova, *op.cit.*, p. 205

<sup>139</sup> Pour l'année 1982, 185 arrestations ont été réalisées durant le premier semestre et seulement 76 au cours du second. Pour 20 autres, le mois n'a pu être précisé.

<sup>140</sup> Sánchez-Cuenca, 2009, p. 20-21. Considérant qu'« il n'y a pas de preuve suffisante pour croire que la tentative de coup d'État a eu un effet causal direct sur l'activité d'ETA. » (*ibidem*, p. 21)

<sup>141</sup> Casanova, *op.cit.*, p. 196.

droite.<sup>142</sup> Ce jour de l'investiture de Leopoldo Calvo-Sotelo (candidat désigné par le roi Juan Carlos I) qui succédait alors à Adolfo Suarez, des gardes civils menés par le lieutenant-colonel franquiste Antonio Tejero envahissent le palais de Las Cortes à Madrid (l'Assemblée nationale). Au même moment, le capitaine Jaime Milans Del Bosch occupe militairement la ville de Valence avec des chars. Il y déclare l'état d'urgence et un gouvernement provisoire est formé. L'objectif est la mise en place d'un régime de type militaire et franquiste.

Cependant l'opération ne dure pas plus de 24 heures. Antonio Tejero libère, après quelques heures, les députés qu'il a pris en otage et négocie sa reddition. Cependant les conséquences, en matière antiterroriste, de ce coup d'État avorté sont d'ampleur. Il permet l'extension de cette législation<sup>143</sup>. D'une part, le MULC est renforcé, à la suite d'un accord entre Juan Carlos et le chef de l'armée espagnole. L'armée y prend plus de place. Le MULC rassemble tous les secteurs de la lutte anti-ETA<sup>144</sup>. Le commissaire franquiste Manuel Ballesteros, impliqué dans de nombreux cas de torture et de guerre sale, en prend la direction. Le MULA est également créé (voir supra 3.1). Sont aussi votés le décret-loi royal 3/1979 du 26 janvier sur la protection de la sécurité citoyenne, puis adoptée la organique 4/1981 sur les états d'alarme, d'urgence et de siège. En mars 1981, José Luis Fernández Dopico, ancien officier franquiste, est nommé directeur des forces de police. L'armée reçoit la mission d'opérer au Pays basque pour la surveillance des frontières<sup>145</sup>. Des compagnies d'opérations spéciales sont déployées dans les zones montagneuses de la frontière tandis que sept patrouilleurs sont chargés de surveiller les côtes.

Ce dispositif sera encore consolidé avec la mise en service le 26 octobre 1982 de la Police Autonome Basque (*Ertzaintza*), en application du Statut d'Autonomie du Pays basque adopté en 1979.<sup>146</sup> L'*Ertzaintza*

<sup>142</sup> Casals i Meseguer Xavier, "¿Existió una "estrategia de la tensión" en España", *Historia del presente*, vol. 14, 2009, p. 35.

<sup>143</sup> Casanova, *op.cit.*, p. 192.

<sup>144</sup> En 1983, le MULC est remplacé par le GAIOE, *Gabinete de Información y Operaciones Especiales* (Cabinet d'Information et des Opérations Spéciales).

<sup>145</sup> Casanova, *op.cit.*, p. 192.

<sup>146</sup> La création de cette institution ne change pas fondamentalement la donne du lieu des arrestations. Nous verrons ultérieurement (infra et 4.2) que l'élément décisif de la répression antiterroriste consiste dans son déploiement vers la coopération transfrontalière qui permet

intervient en collaboration étroite avec la Garde civile et participe à la politique antiterroriste. Elle possède ses propres groupes d'intervention, les « Benozí Berezi Taldea » (Corps Spéciaux de Sécurité - CSE) et sa propre unité de neutralisation et de désamorçage (*Unidad de Desactivación de Explosivos* - UEDE). Bien que la politique antiterroriste soit principalement dévolue à la Garde civile et aux FSE, « l'entrée en lice de l'*Ertzaintza* modifie les conditions générales de la lutte policière. Basque, ce corps de police autonome, après avoir été regardé avec méfiance par l'opinion espagnole, est entré franchement dans la lutte contre ETA ». <sup>147</sup> Cette évolution a permis une série de coups durs contre cette dernière et son infrastructure. <sup>148</sup>

L'antiterrorisme se déploie, d'autre part, dans la formalisation d'une politique de coopération transfrontalière au cours des années 1981-1982. La stratégie espagnole est à la fois nationale, régionale (avec le plan ZEN comme nous le verrons ultérieurement, 4.1) et internationale. Dès le 29 octobre 1981 la proposition de Calvo-Sotelo de demander l'entrée de l'Espagne dans l'OTAN est approuvée par le Congrès espagnol. Il s'agit d'une étape fondamentale dans la coopération internationale contre le « terrorisme basque » (voir infra 4.2). Le 30 mai 1982, l'adhésion de l'Espagne à l'OTAN est officialisée.

Au-delà de ces dispositifs dont les effets s'appréhendent sur le moyen et le long termes, le coup d'État fomenté par l'extrême droite a un effet décisif sur la répression de l'activisme basque et de la gauche abertzale. Cette répression constitue-t-elle une « réponse » aux actions d'ETA de l'année 1980, conformément à la thèse de l'action-répression-action ou s'inscrit-elle dans une logique distincte ? Sur le plan statistique, les actions du groupe sont surtout importantes en 1978-1979, avec respectivement 153 et 173 opérations réalisées (Tableau 1). Celles-ci coïncident principalement avec des attaques contre les FSE, contre des intérêts français ou des infrastructures stratégiques sur le plan économique.

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qu'au cours des deux décennies 1980-1990 35 % des arrestations, donnant lieu à des incarcérations, s'opèrent au Pays basque nord.

<sup>147</sup> Daniel Hermant, "La question basque au miroir de la violence", *Cultures & Conflits*, n° 7, 1992, pp. 67-81.

<sup>148</sup> Hermant, 1992.

Cette ligne stratégique perdue en 1980, où ETA fait un grand nombre de victimes parmi les FSE<sup>149</sup>. On note donc un décalage temporel manifeste entre l'opérationnalité d'ETA, engagée s'agissant d'ETA-pm dans des tractations avec le gouvernement, et la répression qui s'abat sur le groupe au cours de ces années. Les mesures répressives à l'égard du militantisme basque, prises à la suite du 23-F entre 1981 et le 1<sup>er</sup> semestre 1982, sont massives : elles mènent à l'incarcération de 546 personnes, puis régressent ensuite entre le 2<sup>nd</sup> semestre 1982 et l'année 1983.

Quelles sont les conséquences de cette vague répressive ? Doit-on considérer que « la diminution des attentats meurtriers en 1981 est le résultat de l'incapacité d'ETA à se remettre de ces nombreuses arrestations » ?<sup>150</sup> Ces détentions massives auraient-elles des conséquences comparables à celles provoquées par la « chute de Bidart », c'est-à-dire la capture de l'exécutif d'ETA le 29 mars 1992 par le RAID, censée marquer le début du déclin du groupe ?<sup>151</sup> L'hypothèse des conséquences de « l'antiterrorisme diplomatique », passant par la négociation, sur l'action clandestine violente se vérifierait-elle ? Bueno de Mesquita<sup>152</sup> a élaboré un modèle formel de théorie des jeux dans lequel les concessions faites par l'État ont des conséquences positives sur une diminution de la violence politique, en provoquant notamment une scission dans le camp terroriste. Une frange du groupe, jugée modérée, accepte un pacte avec le gouvernement, tandis qu'une autre part, dite radicale, prend le contrôle de l'organisation clandestine et accroît les actions illégales notamment violentes à court terme. Le 23-F pousse effectivement ETA-pm vers l'option du désengagement militaire, pour des raisons idéologiques, et vers le choix de l'autodissolution fin septembre 1982. Franck, né en 1951, en témoigne :

*« Notre organisation [ETA-pm] avait fait une série d'opérations, quand s'est produit le 23-F, nous avons alors décidé de cesser toute l'activité. D'une certaine manière, on pensait que c'était plus important de participer en appuyant la possibilité d'une*

<sup>149</sup> C'est entre 1978 et 1980 que l'offensive contre les FSE est la plus mortelle. Au cours de cette période, 57 personnes sont tuées en moyenne chaque année.

<sup>150</sup> Sánchez-Cuenca, 2009, p. 21.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 22.

<sup>152</sup> Ethan Bueno de Mesquita, "The Quality of Terror", *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 49, n° 3, July 2005, pp. 515-530.

*transition vers la démocratie. On ne voulait vraiment pas que l'Espagne redevienne une dictature. Certaines forces disaient qu'on vivait mieux pendant la dictature parce que c'était [la transition] un processus qui était faux, qui n'était pas réel. Mais, nous pensions que non. [...] Et se sont produites des conditions qui permettaient de penser que la violence allait agir de façon régressive contre les intérêts de notre pays, et surtout – parce que nous voyions tout depuis ce point de vue – du point de vue de la classe ouvrière, du point de vue des plus défavorisés. Elle pouvait même bénéficier aux classes les plus élevées, cette violence continue, mais nous ne le voyions pas comme ça. Et nous avons dissout l'organisation en 1982. »<sup>153</sup>*

Les forces vives d'ETA-pm, en désaccord avec l'abandon de la lutte armée, rejoignent ETA-m. Les deux interprétations précédemment rappelées (Bueno de Mesquita, 2005 ; Sánchez-Cuenca, 2009) peinent toutefois à se vérifier, dès lors que l'on porte attention aux actions d'ETA plutôt qu'à ses victimes.<sup>154</sup> En effet, en 1981, ETA a mené 144 actions (avec une activité plus intense au premier semestre qu'au second) et 224, en 1982, c'est-à-dire bien plus que l'année précédente (Tableau 2). L'efficacité opérationnelle des incarcérations massives de cette période interroge puisqu'elle coïncide aussi avec une intense activité armée : on compte en moyenne 156 opérations annuelles de 1978-1981 et 172 opérations par an de 1982 à 1985.<sup>155</sup> De quelle envergure sont ces actions ? Si l'on considère les victimes – ce qui n'est pas nécessairement l'indicateur le plus pertinent puisque la portée symbolique des actions du groupe est le point central de sa stratégie –, on constate que les chiffres sont pour ces périodes respectivement de 65,5 et de 37 victimes en moyenne annuelle. Dans la mesure où l'objectif d'ETA n'est pas de tuer le plus grand nombre de

<sup>153</sup> Franck s'est engagé dans ETA-pm avant la chute du franquisme.

<sup>154</sup> L'incidence des arrestations de membres de l'IRA sur la protestation et l'action violente en Irlande du nord a également fait l'objet d'interprétations contradictoires, y compris à partir d'analyses statistiques. Peroff et Hewitt (1980) considèrent qu'elles les ont réduites. Tsebelis et Sprague (1989) remettent en question ce résultat en privilégiant l'hypothèse de l'instabilité (oscillation de la violence politique entre les deux camps sur le long terme). Francisco (1996, p. 1196) souligne, pour sa part, une absence d'effet de la répression. Kathleen Peroff et Christopher Hewitt, "Rioting in Northern Ireland: The Effects of Different Policies", *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 24, 1980, pp. 593-612. George Tsebelis et John Sprague, "Coercion and Revolution: Variations on a Predator-Prey Model", *Mathematical and Computer Modelling*, vol. 12, 1989, pp. 547-559.

<sup>155</sup> Nous tenons compte ici de l'année 1985 pour saisir l'incidence de cette politique répressive sur l'action d'ETA.

personnes possible, leur origine et fonction constituent un point nodal. Au cours des périodes évoquées, ETA a tué 47,5 et 27 membres des FSE en moyenne par an (voir Tableau 4). Les FSE constituent des cibles privilégiées de l'organisation clandestine qui se situe dans une logique d'action-répression-action plus encore que de « guerre d'usure ».<sup>156</sup> Il apparaît, une nouvelle fois, que la répression en contexte de transition démocratique et de mise en place de la démocratie représentative a un effet de radicalisation sur certains groupes clandestins, notamment sur ETA.<sup>157</sup>

Tableau 4

	1978-1981	1982-1985
Nombre d'actions réalisées (moyenne annuelle)	156	172
Nombre de victimes (moyenne annuelle)	65,5	37
Victimes parmi les FSE (moyenne annuelle)	47,5	27

En effet, même après 1981 et alors que, d'une part, le premier gouvernement élu est à l'œuvre et que, d'autre part, la répression légale atteint des sommets, ETA passe à une offensive majeure avec 224 actions en 1982. Le pic d'arrestations de 1981 n'infléchit donc pas l'intensité d'actions illégales de cette période dont l'offensive est l'une des plus importantes de l'histoire du groupe. La moyenne annuelle des actions commanditées entre 1978 et 1986 est de 164.

Cette offensive s'explique notamment par la multiplicité des commandos qui fleurissent au cours de ces années et que la répression n'a pas fait reculer. La presse fait état d'un commando légal en 1978.<sup>158</sup> L'existence de plusieurs commandos est attestée à la fin des années 1970 comme le commando Gurmendi (1979), le commando Andarra, le

<sup>156</sup> Sánchez-Cuenca, 2009. Quoique l'on puisse considérer que la frontière entre les deux logiques soit assez ténue, en particulier lorsque la temporalité est prise en compte.

<sup>157</sup> L'instabilité politique est propice à l'action politique clandestine (Guibet Lafaye, 2020 ; Petter Gleditsch Nils, Håvard Hegre et Håvard Strand, "Democracy and Civil War", in Manus Midlarsky (ed.), *Handbook of War Studies III*, Ann Arbor : University of Michigan Press, 2009).

<sup>158</sup> [http://www.cat.elpais.com/diario/1978/02/17/espana/256518037\\_850215.html](http://www.cat.elpais.com/diario/1978/02/17/espana/256518037_850215.html)

commando Gamboa, le grupo Uzturre, le commando Erdella, le commando Busturia, le commando Orbaizeta, le commando Adrapa, le commando Otxobi, le commando Telefónico, le commando Iruña-Zarra. S'y ajoutent l'appareil de passage de frontière et les commandos Argala qui vont opérer respectivement de 1978-1990 à partir du sud de la France, et Navarra o Nafarroa de 1978 à 1986. Sont opérationnels dans les années 1980 les commandos Vitoria, Donosti, le commando Madrid (qui fut d'abord commando España), le commando Iparralde, le commando Gorki, le commando Iparaguirre, le commando Araba, le commando Oker jusqu'au milieu des années 1980, le commando Gorrotxategi jusqu'en 1983, le commando Izar Gorri jusqu'en 1987, le commando Tontorramendi opérationnel entre 1983 et 1988, le commando Eibar entre 1984 et 1989, le commando Gohierri (Gohierri-Costa) entre 1985 et 1987,<sup>159</sup> le commando Barcelona actif dès 1985. Il faudrait encore mentionner le commando légal armé Pakito. Face à cette effervescence, l'État espagnol se lance dans le redéploiement stratégique de sa politique antiterroriste. Celui-ci s'articule, dans les premières années de la jeune démocratie espagnole, autour d'une forme d'occupation du territoire basque et de la recherche d'une coopération transfrontalière avec la France.

#### **4. Réorganisation de l'antiterrorisme espagnol en contexte démocratique**

##### **4.1 Le plan ZEN : 1983**

Le plan ZEN (*Zona Especial Norte*) intervient au titre d'une stratégie supplémentaire visant à contenir la protestation et l'agitation basques. Elle est d'ordre militaire et s'impose en complément de la création des UAR et de l'*Ertzaintza* (police autonome). Elle se conçoit comme une occupation militarisée intensive du territoire basque. Le plan ZEN, élaboré au sein de l'équipe du Ministère de l'Intérieur en charge de la Sécurité d'État, obéit à une logique de guerre et matérialise un raisonnement stratégique de type affrontement militaire.<sup>160</sup> Dans les faits, cette stratégie est souvent

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<sup>159</sup> Aguirre, *op.cit.*, p. 66.

<sup>160</sup> Ainsi on a considéré que le gouvernement socialiste était bien plus anti-ETA que ses prédécesseurs de droite et que cette posture entrainait en contradiction avec le discours tenu lors de la campagne électorale de 1982 (Robert Clark, *Negotiating with ETA*, University of Nevada Press, 1990, p. 37).

extrêmement violente. Elle présente également un volet « social », consistant dans le déploiement d'une « propagande noire indispensable pour délégitimer le mouvement *abertzale* aux yeux de la population ». <sup>161</sup>

Le plan ZEN, qui s'appuie sur un budget annuel de 15 000 millions de pesetas, mobilise au Pays Basque 25 000 hommes (issus de la Police nationale, du Corps spécial de sécurité et de la Garde civile) auxquels il faut ajouter plus de 25 000 hommes des Compagnies de réserve et 2 500 policiers de l'*Ertzaintza*. Le Pays basque accueille ainsi un policier pour 125 habitants, chiffre nettement supérieur à celui que connaît l'Union européenne. Ce plan permet des opérations de ratissage de grande envergure et des expéditions punitives (Pasajes, Hernani, Oyarzun, etc.). Il généralise la désinformation de l'opinion et la subvention clandestine des medias. Il autorise le harcèlement des familles de prisonniers et de réfugiés, favorise la collaboration et la délation : une enveloppe de 800 millions de pesetas est attribuée au chef du MULC pour financer un réseau d'informateurs. Il transfère les compétences des tribunaux à l'*Audiencia nacional*, tribunal spécialisé dans le traitement du terrorisme. Il verrouille militairement le Pays basque grâce au dispositif des COE (Corps opérations spéciales), de la surveillance maritime et aérienne (avions de reconnaissance, hélicoptères Maya, etc.). La Ve zone militaire de Burgos, qui englobe le Pays Basque, devient une base d'entraînement des forces aériennes de l'OTAN (polygone de tir réel de Las Bardenas).

Si le plan ZEN coïncide avec une nouvelle phase de la stratégie antiterroriste, passant par l'occupation militaire du territoire basque, l'année 1983 ouvre une phase de réélaboration stratégique autorisée par l'entrée de l'Espagne dans l'OTAN et par le processus d'adhésion à l'Union européenne. Elle est l'une des rares occasions où les courbes des incarcérations et des actions se croisent, c'est-à-dire que ces dernières sont plus nombreuses que les premières. Les opérations clandestines sont de 45 au cours du premier semestre puis de 103 au second ; les chiffres des incarcérations sont respectivement de 70 et 39. Au second semestre 1982 déjà, on dénombrait 138 actions pour 49 incarcérations. Les vagues massives d'arrestations antérieures n'ont pas « purgé » les rangs d'ETA. Pourtant le gouvernement socialiste se place quelque peu en retrait pour

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<sup>161</sup> Voir en particulier *Euskadi Information*, n° 27, août 1983 et n° 57, septembre 1988. Sur Internet, voir [www.access.ch/euskadi](http://www.access.ch/euskadi).

mettre en place une offensive d'un nouveau type, en l'occurrence la création des Groupes de libération antiterroriste (GAL) qui servira de levier pour contraindre la France à approfondir la coopération avec l'Espagne contre ETA.<sup>162</sup>

Cette stratégie présente à la fois un volet légal et un volet illégal de violence politique qui se veut ciblée mais qui, dans les faits, s'avère bien plus souvent indiscriminée. Les deux dispositifs sont échafaudés parallèlement puisque, d'une part, le CESID (*Centro Superior de Información de la Defensa*), i.e. les services secrets militaires, élabore le 6 juillet 1983 un document intitulé « Objet : actions en France ». Il sera renommé par la presse ultérieurement « Acte fondateur des GAL ». Son propos consiste dans l'évaluation des avantages et des inconvénients de la « guerre sale »,<sup>163</sup> c'est-à-dire du recours à des groupes paramilitaires dans la lutte antiterroriste.<sup>164</sup> D'autre part, s'organisent des rencontres entre les autorités franco-espagnoles dont la première a lieu en novembre 1983 entre Julio Feo, secrétaire général de la présidence et Michel Delebarre, chef de cabinet de Pierre Mauroy, alors premier ministre de François Mitterrand.<sup>165</sup> Elles ont trait à la collaboration antiterroriste entre les deux pays. Elles culminent avec l'entretien entre Felipe González et François Mitterrand sur la question basque le 20 décembre 1983. Ces rencontres ne sont pas simplement politiques mais facilitent également les contacts entre services policiers respectifs en marge de ces sommets. Le second semestre 1983 atteste donc d'une réorganisation de la stratégie antiterroriste espagnole qui réduit ses arrestations.

La baisse des incarcérations s'explique par plusieurs hypothèses : l'Espagne est entrée dans un processus de négociation avec la France en matière de coopération antiterroriste ; le relais est provisoirement passé aux GAL. L'Espagne passe d'une stratégie d'incarcérations à une stratégie de

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<sup>162</sup> Guittet, 2010.

<sup>163</sup> Casanova, 2007, p. 212.

<sup>164</sup> Entre 1983 et 1987, les GAL sont responsables de la mort de 28 personnes en Espagne et en France. Durant la première phase d'action des GAL (octobre 1983-juin 1984), le groupe tue huit personnes, en fait disparaître deux, en séquestre une et en blesse plusieurs autres (Casanova, 2007, p. 215).

<sup>165</sup> Susana Panisello Sabaté, "La internacionalización de la política antiterrorista", VI Congreso de la Asociación de Historiadores del Presente. La apertura internacional de España: entre el franquismo y la democracia, 1953-1986, Valladolid et Madrid, 2014.

liquidation et de pression sur l'État français. Il s'agit pour le royaume d'obtenir des accords d'extradition et de lutte antiterroriste sur le plan européen. Or paradoxalement ces années font partie de celles où le groupe est le plus actif avec respectivement, pour les premiers et seconds semestres 1983 et 1984, 42 actions puis 100, 89, 87 et 104 au premier semestre 1985 (Tableau 3).

Le prisme de la référence unique aux victimes d'ETA a conduit à des conclusions erronées. Négligeant les actions du groupe, on a estimé que « depuis le début des années 1980, [existait] un découplage entre la violence de l'État et celle de l'ETA. Le déploiement de l'*Ertzaintza* et l'internalisation progressive du conflit y ont contribué, tout comme les changements introduits dans la lutte contre le terrorisme. »<sup>166</sup> En effet, de 1983 à 1985, ETA a tué respectivement 37, 35 et 41 personnes, chiffre comparable à 1982 et à 1986-1987. Néanmoins les actions menées par l'organisation demeure à un niveau très élevé.<sup>167</sup> Dès lors, il s'agit moins d'une « guerre d'usure » que d'un phénomène de radicalisation voire d'un surcroît de radicalisation induit par les politiques antiterroristes. Ce phénomène s'explique par la gestion de la contestation, « perçue comme dure et, surtout, indiscriminée et injuste ; [de sorte que] les événements répressifs transformateurs ont contribué à justifier la violence et à pousser les groupes militants vers la clandestinité »,<sup>168</sup> comme le pullulement des commandos durant cette décennie en atteste.

Plus précisément, le cas basque confirme que « les effets de radicalisation de la répression sont dus à des corrélations entre les

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<sup>166</sup> Benjamín Tejerina, "Nacionalismo, violencia y movilización social en el País Vasco. Factores y mecanismos del auge y declive de ETA", *Papeles del CEIC*, CEIC (Centro de Estudios sobre la Identidad Colectiva), Universidad del País Vasco, vol. 3, n° 136, 2015, p. 7. D'autres erreurs d'interprétation émaillent la littérature académique du fait d'un souci exclusif des victimes faites par ETA plutôt qu'une attention à ses actions. Ainsi a-t-on considéré, à tort, que « les vagues de répression menées par le gouvernement espagnol contre les séparatistes basques dans les années 1980 ont coïncidé avec une diminution du soutien à l'organisation terroriste basque ETA » (Clark, 1990 ; María J. Funes, "Social Responses to Political Violence in the Basque Country. Peace movements and their audience", *Journal of conflict resolution*, vol. 42, n° 4, August 1998, pp. 493-510), ce que contredit les résultats, précédemment rappelés, de la gauche indépendantiste aux élections.

<sup>167</sup> Voir Tableau 3 ; Guibet Lafaye et Brochard, 2020, 2021.

<sup>168</sup> Della Porta, 2013, p. 33.

incitations positives [à l'engagement] et la répression ». <sup>169</sup> Isée, née en 1964 et qui s'est engagée à 16 ans dans l'organisation, se souvient de ces incitations et du poids de l'élan social sur son engagement :

*« Même... faire les graffitis de l'ETA, on avait 16 ans, on était hyper fiers.<sup>170</sup> Il y avait plein de monde autour de nous qui sortait nous soutenir, qui surveillait au cas où la police arrivait... c'est là en plus que tu te rends compte que tout le monde était avec nous. Tout le monde. On ne te laissait même pas avancer, on t'embrassait, on t'encourageait : "allez-y !", tu te sentais un peu extra-terrestre, quoi, parce que... Tu voyais les gens et je suis comme eux... comme moi quand je voyais aussi les militants [d'ETA], tu les voyais comme des héros, des gens à part, même quand je parlais avec d'autres gens en étant moi déjà organisée [i.e. engagée dans ETA], eux aussi, ils voyaient tous les militants comme des gens vraiment prêts à tout, les meilleurs. C'était les meilleurs, les meilleurs ! Donc ça... si en plus tous les gens t'applaudissent, t'encouragent... alors, là... à 16 ans, en plus, tu te dis, voilà, j'ai pris la bonne voie, il fallait faire ça... »*

Dans ce contexte de revendication d'indépendance, le processus de radicalisation n'intervient pas en phase descendante du cycle de protestation mais constitue une réponse au terrorisme d'État. Au début des années 1980, la tension est à son comble. Les interactions entre organisations gouvernementale et non-gouvernementale, dans le contexte d'une lutte vécue comme une lutte de libération nationale et où ce cadrage a trouvé un écho international, mettent en évidence un effet de radicalisation induit par la répression, en particulier du fait de la dimension illégale et indiscriminée de cette dernière.

L'analyse des dispositifs antiterroristes révèle que les mesures prises par les gouvernements successifs relèvent d'une « guerre totale » contre l'ennemi intérieur basque, qui se déploie sur une multitude de fronts et met en œuvre tous les moyens à sa disposition qu'ils soient légaux (juridiques, militaires, médiatiques) ou illégaux (paramilitaires, torture, exécutions sommaires, pressions sur l'environnement militant). À la question de savoir si la violence politique clandestine peut être liquidée par la répression policière, la réponse est probablement négative. En revanche, l'efficacité de la répression est plutôt à chercher du côté de la complexité et

<sup>169</sup> Opp, 1994, p. 122.

<sup>170</sup> Isée évoque ici une de ses premières actions illégales en 1980. Comme Amalia, elle fait partie des femmes d'ETA qui en ont marqué l'histoire.

de la complémentarité des dispositifs mis en œuvre – notamment de la coopération antiterroriste internationale (transfrontalière et européenne) – et de l'évolution stratégique interne du groupe liée, d'une part, à une transformation du contexte international (face aux insurrections armées voire aux luttes de libération nationale) et, d'autre part, à celle de la réception sociale de la violence politique illégale sur le territoire basque.<sup>171</sup> Ces éléments contribuent à préciser les liens, jusqu'alors mis en lumière, sur le rapport entre répression et radicalisation d'un mouvement social, notamment l'hypothèse d'une courbe en U inversée, voulant que la répression a des effets directs de radicalisation sur la protestation et que son effet dissuasif ne se fait sentir qu'en cas de très forte répression.<sup>172</sup>

#### **4.2 Le pacte européen : 1984**

Parallèlement aux expulsions par la France de réfugiés basques espagnols vers des pays tiers durant la première phase d'action des GAL (octobre 1983-juin 1984)<sup>173</sup>, l'année 1984 constitue un tournant majeur dans l'évolutions de la stratégie antiterroriste espagnole dont les leviers sont aussi bien européen que législatif. Tout au long de l'année 1984 les rencontres, à différents échelons diplomatiques, se multiplient pour tracer la voie à une entrée de l'Espagne dans l'Union européenne. L'Espagne monnaie sa participation à l'UE par un renforcement de la coopération antiterroriste. Dans ce jeu politique, elle n'est pas en position de faiblesse puisque l'UE pourrait redouter son possible rapprochement avec les États-Unis en cas de non-intégration<sup>174</sup>. La question de la lutte antiterroriste, étendue à celle des réfugiés et des demandeurs d'asile basques en Europe, est un point nodal des discussions relatives à l'entrée de l'Espagne dans l'UE.

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<sup>171</sup> Voir note 164.

<sup>172</sup> Opp, 1994, p. 127.

<sup>173</sup> Voir note 164.

<sup>174</sup> Au cours de la quatrième rencontre, au sommet franco-espagnol de Pedralbes (Catalogne), des ministres de l'Économie, de l'Industrie, de l'Agriculture et des Affaires européennes, les 19-20 octobre 1984, F. González fait connaître les conditions de la participation de l'Espagne à l'OTAN. Il est notamment fervent partisan d'un espace judiciaire européen. Voir éditorial, « 'Cumbre' en Pedralbes », *El País*, 21 octobre 1984.

Le nombre à nouveau très élevé d'incarcérations qui caractérise l'année 1984 (N = 232) s'explique par la stratégie multi-scalaire dans laquelle se déroulent ces négociations. Une première étape de la coopération transfrontalière est scellée par les Accords de Castellana<sup>175</sup> entre la France et l'Espagne qui permettront le « retour » des réfugiés, c'est-à-dire leur expulsion<sup>176</sup>. Les pressions de l'Espagne sur l'UE en faveur d'une intensification des mesures antiterroristes conduisent à la formulation par le groupe libéral du Parlement européen, fin octobre 1984, d'une résolution demandant la coopération permanente des Dix avec l'Espagne et le Portugal pour combattre le terrorisme international. Elle est adoptée par 112 voix contre 77 et 7 abstentions.

Les accords européens ne se déploient pas exclusivement sur le plan judiciaire mais également sur le plan policier. Non seulement des contacts « officieux » ont lieu entre police des deux pays, en marge du sommet entre les ministres Joxe et Barrionuevo à Madrid en août 1984,<sup>177</sup> mais Madrid accueille en octobre 1984 une réunion de cent trente-deux experts délégués de trente-sept pays pour la septième édition du séminaire de Haute spécialisation des forces de police et dont le thème est la coordination des méthodes antisubversives.<sup>178</sup>

Sur le plan légal toujours, une étape décisive de ce processus consiste dans la promulgation de la loi organique 9/1984 (loi antiterroriste)

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<sup>175</sup> Le 14 juin 1984, les accords de la Castellana sont signés entre les ministres de l'Intérieur Gaston Defferre et José Barrionuevo. Le président Mitterrand déclare : « Je n'accepterai pas que la France serve de base logistique contre un pays voisin et ami, respectable pour avoir reconquis la démocratie ». C'est le début de la coopération policière entre la France et l'Espagne. Au mois de septembre de la même année, le gouvernement français procède à l'extradition de trois membres d'ETA (José Carlos García Ramírez, José Manuel Martínez Beiztegui et Francisco Javier Lujambio ; voir Reventós J., *Misión en París. Memorias de un embajador*, Barcelone : Ediciones Península, 1993, p. 185). Le statut de réfugié est retiré à tous les membres d'ETA et leurs procès commencent en France.

<sup>176</sup> Voir « Francia se compromete a no considerar refugiados políticos a los terroristas », *El País*, 14 juin 1984 et texte du communiqué conjoint (*El País*, 14 juin 1984).

<sup>177</sup> Carlos Yárnoz, *Los Gobiernos de Madrid y París...* » *El País*, 13 juin 1984 ; <https://www.universalis.fr/evenement/6-24-aout-1984-france-espagne-durcissement-de-la-lutte-contre-le-terrorisme-basque/>. Sur la construction de la coopération franco-espagnole dans le domaine, voir Guittet, 2010, p. 109 *et sqq.* La fin de l'année 1984 connaît une autre occurrence de ce type de réunion « secrète », cette fois à Madrid, entre les chefs opérationnels de la lutte antiterroriste de treize pays, dont les États-Unis.

<sup>178</sup> Voir Guittet, 2010.

du 26 décembre 1984 contre les agissements de bandes armées et d'éléments terroristes. Elle étend la suspension des droits et des libertés prévue par l'article 55.2 de la Constitution espagnole.

Sur le plan académique et à l'appui du plan ZEN, le Parlement basque commande, en mars 1985, un rapport sur l'origine de la violence en Pays basque. *L'Informe de la Comisión Internacional sobre la violencia en el País Vasco* (Rapport de la Commission Internationale sur la Violence au Pays basque) est remis en mai 1986 et sert de caution universitaire au plan ZEN<sup>179</sup> et à la politique de répression élaborée trois ans auparavant. Les experts, en l'occurrence cinq universitaires européens, y analysent la violence suivant une comparaison avec le « terrorisme européen », inscrivent ETA dans la « grande nébuleuse » du terrorisme international et prônent des conseils militaires relevant d'une logique répressive contre le groupe (Zulaika, 1991). Au même moment, le gouvernement de Felipe González s'emploie à faire de la question basque un problème impliquant l'ensemble de la communauté européenne.

Ces dispositifs ne sont pas immédiatement suivis d'effets notables puisque l'on compte, en 1985, bien moins d'incarcérations que de coutume (N = 96).<sup>180</sup> De même, la baisse de moitié des arrestations ne coïncide pas avec une diminution des effectifs d'ETA dont les commandos continuent d'être nombreux et actifs.<sup>181</sup> En revanche, l'incidence de ces politiques antiterroristes se joue sur le moyen terme, comme le suggère la baisse tendancielle des actions du groupe à partir de 1992 qui marque le point

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<sup>179</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 87.

<sup>180</sup> Alors que le chiffre est de 232 en 1984.

<sup>181</sup> La consultation des sources policières et de la presse permet de dire que la reconstitution des commandos clandestins ne cesse pas au cours des années 1980-1990. Une première cellule du commando Navarra o Nafarroa est démantelée en 1986 mais elle se reconstitue immédiatement pour être liquidée à Foz de Lumbier en 1989. De même, le commando Donosti se reforme en 1984 et opère jusqu'en 1987. Parallèlement est à l'œuvre le commando Goierri Costa (Aguirre, 2012, p. 66). Le commando Madrid se redéploie également en 1985. Puis deux autres de ses cellules se forment en 1986. Durant cette seconde moitié des années 1980, œuvrent aussi le commando Izar Gorri démantelé en juin 1987, les commandos Barcelona et Araba qui sont neutralisés en 1987 quoique le premier se reconstitue pour être actif au début des années 1990. Le commando Tontorramendi est démantelé en 1988, le commando Eibar en 1989 (Aguirre, 2012, p. 79 *et sqq.*). Toutefois le commando Argala (ou commando français) multiplie les opérations au cours de cette période et n'est arrêté qu'en 1990.

culminant de la coopération antiterroriste franco-espagnole avec l'arrestation de Bidart. Cependant cette réduction ne doit pas simplement être imputée aux politiques antiterroristes. Elle présente également des raisons macro<sup>182</sup> et méso-sociales. Ces facteurs interviennent en synergie sur la stratégie du groupe qui réduit alors son opérationnalité.<sup>183</sup> Le mouvement social, y compris dans sa frange clandestine, et la répression évoluent et s'adaptent réciproquement au fil du temps. L'analyse des décennies ultérieures d'activité d'ETA montrerait que les interactions entre répression et actions clandestines présentent d'autres modalités que celles mises en évidence jusque dans les années 1980.<sup>184</sup>

Tableau 5

Années	Périodes	Nb d'actions annuelles	Nb d'actions semestrielles
1992	1 <sup>er</sup> semestre	77	48
	2 <sup>nd</sup> semestre		29
1993	1 <sup>er</sup> semestre	46	19
	2 <sup>nd</sup> semestre		27
1994	1 <sup>er</sup> semestre	35	19
	2 <sup>nd</sup> semestre		16
1995	1 <sup>er</sup> semestre	40	27
	2 <sup>nd</sup> semestre		13
1996	1 <sup>er</sup> semestre	50	16
	2 <sup>nd</sup> semestre		34
1997	1 <sup>er</sup> semestre	51	31
	2 <sup>nd</sup> semestre		20

<sup>182</sup> À la fin de la décennie, la signature du Pacte Ajuria Enea le 12 janvier 1988 par tous les partis politiques basques, à l'exception de HB, atteste de cette évolution sociale. En dépit des divergences et des différences d'interprétation de cet « Accord de normalisation et de pacification du Pays basque » entre les partis *Alianza Popular* (AP), *Centro Democrático y Social* (CDS), *Euzko Alderdi Jeltzalea*-Parti nationaliste basque (EAJ-PNV), *Euskadiko Ezkerra* (EE), Parti socialiste d'Euskadi (PSE-PSOE) et *Eusko Alkartasuna* (EA), tous s'associent pour prendre leur distance avec et condamner la violence terroriste. L'objectif de ce pacte politique est triple : a) mettre fin au terrorisme et promouvoir la coexistence démocratique par le biais d'une action politique ; b) agir dans le cadre de l'État de droit et de la légalité ; c) soutenir le dialogue et encourager l'abandon de la violence.

<sup>183</sup> Guibet Lafaye et Brochard, 2020, 2021.

<sup>184</sup> Guibet Lafaye, 2022.

1998	1 <sup>er</sup> semestre	15	15
	2 <sup>nd</sup> semestre		0
1999	1 <sup>er</sup> semestre	3	0
	2 <sup>nd</sup> semestre		3
2000	1 <sup>er</sup> semestre	66	10
	2 <sup>nd</sup> semestre		56

## Conclusion

L'étude que nous avons réalisée, s'appuyant sur deux bases de données originales, a permis de compléter une lacune de la littérature existante. L'absence de recensement des arrestations de militants d'ETA était encore rappelée à la fin des années 2000 par les auteurs espagnols spécialisés dans l'investigation sur le groupe. Notre recherche a mis en évidence, sur le plan quantitatif, une continuité entre la fin du franquisme et la période de transition dite démocratique, en matière d'arrestations des activistes d'ETA et en dépit des discussions alors menées par le gouvernement Leopoldo Calvo-Sotelo avec ETA-pm et de la trêve proposée par cette dernière, après le coup d'État du 23-F. La tendance à la répression policière *massive* s'infléchit toutefois avec le premier gouvernement élu du pays. Cette baisse de moitié s'explique par l'échec relatif de cette stratégie unique et la réorientation tactique de l'antiterrorisme espagnol vers la coopération internationale. Bien que numériquement moins importantes, les incarcérations garderont un niveau constant dans les décennies qui suivent, quelle que soit la couleur politique du gouvernement en place. L'antiterrorisme sera alors marqué par une stratégie contre le mouvement abertzale se déployant sur plusieurs fronts. La continuité de la politique répressive face à l'indépendantisme basque, sur le plan quantitatif, se doublera d'évolutions sur le plan qualitatif selon la couleur politique des gouvernements élus.<sup>185</sup>

Les travaux jusqu'alors réalisés ne disposant pas de bases de données recensant les incarcérations des militants d'ETA et encore moins les actions du groupe clandestin, ils soulignaient l'efficacité des arrestations sur le nombre de victimes commises.<sup>186</sup> Notre analyse révèle qu'il n'en est rien, lorsque l'on considère les opérations clandestines conduites.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>186</sup> Barros *et al.*, 2006, p. 344.

Contrairement à ce qui a été avancé, nos données infirment le fait que la guerre sale menée par les GAL et commanditée par le gouvernement socialiste de F. González a été sans effet sur le cycle de la violence d'ETA.<sup>187</sup> S'appuyer sur des séries de victimes pour analyser l'activité clandestine d'un groupe politico-militaire constitue, d'un point de vue méthodologique, une erreur d'appréciation car le fait de tuer participe d'une stratégie politique complexe. Ne concentrer l'attention que sur les victimes mortelles interdit de saisir cette dernière dans son amplitude et ses motivations ce qu'autorise, *a contrario*, un recensement fin des opérations du groupe clandestin.

En nous concentrant sur les phases les plus répressives de l'histoire antiterroriste espagnole, nous avons mis en évidence l'échec de la répression policière *seule*, qu'elle soit légale et/ou illégale, à moyen terme aussi bien en régime autoritaire que démocratique. En effet, celle-ci tend toujours à avoir un caractère indiscriminé qui va dresser contre elle une partie de la population. Cette répression produit alors un effet de radicalisation qui ne se voit atténué qu'à condition que des dispositifs juridiques et législatifs *ad hoc* ainsi qu'une baisse de l'acceptabilité sociale de la violence politique clandestine voient le jour.<sup>188</sup> La pluralité des instruments répressifs, relevant des seuls champs policiers (arrestations, infiltration, « guerre sale »), ne suffit donc pas à éliminer l'action clandestine violente. L'échec de la répression « classique », fondée sur la mise en œuvre de dispositifs policiers appelle l'inventivité antiterroriste qui se décline, dans le cas du conflit au Pays basque, dans le terrorisme d'État et la coopération internationale (bilatérale puis européenne). La mise en évidence de cette inventivité antiterroriste a permis de replacer dans ces justes limites temporelles et opérationnelles la thèse de l'action-répression-action qui ne coïncide, dans le cas de ce conflit, qu'avec une brève période de l'histoire du mouvement clandestin. L'entrée de l'Espagne dans l'UE permet de multiplier le nombre des acteurs mobilisables dans le rapport d'abord dialogique entre ETA et l'État espagnol, là où l'organisation clandestine ne peut s'appuyer que sur sa base et le mouvement abertzale.

Les effets de radicalisation de la répression policière prise dans ses moments les plus intenses remettent donc en question, dans le cas basque,

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<sup>187</sup> Sánchez-Cuenca, 2009.

<sup>188</sup> Guibet Lafaye, 2022. Voir note 182.

certaines modèles issus de l'étude des mouvements sociaux, considérant notamment que « c'est en phase descendante du cycle de protestation qu'apparaissent le plus les groupes radicaux ».<sup>189</sup> Dans le cas du conflit au Pays basque, la thèse de Tarrow n'a pu être vérifiée ni pendant le franquisme, ni durant la période dite de transition démocratique ni pendant la première décennie d'instauration de la démocratie en Espagne. Les phénomènes de radicalisation, au sens de la multiplication des actions clandestines d'ETA, s'appréhendent à ces périodes comme une réaction à la répression policière ou au terrorisme d'État et à partir de ce qui est perçu comme un « échec constitutionnel », c'est-à-dire comme le fait de n'avoir pas obtenu par la voie législative et constitutionnelle la satisfaction des revendications de l'alternative KAS. Sans contester que l'interprétation de Tarrow puisse trouver une pertinence dans le contexte du conflit de la fin des années 1990 voire des années 2000<sup>190</sup>, ni qu'elle soit explicative pour les mouvements de contestation des années 1970-1980 en Italie et en France, comme Action directe notamment, on peut faire l'hypothèse que sa pertinence se trouve réduite, lorsque les mouvements sociaux considérés se situent dans un cadrage de revendication de libération nationale plutôt que dans une logique politiquement polarisée de type extrême gauche ou extrême droite. L'étude ici menée suggère donc de nuancer le modèle de Tarrow (1994), lorsque les revendications formulées sont de l'ordre de la libération nationale, autrement qualifiées d'« ethno-nationalistes ».

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<sup>189</sup> Tarrow, 1994.

<sup>190</sup> Cependant la réalité de la « fin du cycle de protestation » au Pays basque au cours des années 2000 demanderait aussi à être discutée, dans la mesure où le mouvement pour l'insoumission traverse la jeunesse basque puis se voit relayé par la *kale borroka* (lutte populaire, guérilla urbaine de faible intensité). Nous renvoyons, pour une analyse de ce dernier phénomène, aux travaux de Ferret (2012, 2014).

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LA BIOGRAPHIE EN HISTOIRE DES IDÉES POLITIQUES, UN OUTIL  
SOUS-ESTIMÉ ?

LE CAS EXEMPLAIRE DE MACHIAVEL

THE BIOGRAPHY IN THE HISTORY OF POLITICAL IDEAS, AN  
UNDERESTIMATED TOOL?

THE EXEMPLARY CASE OF MACHIAVELLI

Jérôme Roudier\*

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**Abstract**

*Writing a biography of Machiavelli, especially an “intellectual” one, orientated towards the history of philosophical thought, is a challenge due to the extent of the documentation available, collected over the centuries. Nevertheless, any analysis of the origins of the Florentine author’s thought using his letters as local government officer, before he was dismissed and wrote the great texts for which he is famous, takes us back to a larger philosophical problem. Indeed, Machiavelli is a precursor of the modern political expert. Such experts are characterized by their classic academic knowledge drawn as much from Antiquity and from Scholasticism as from the everyday political action in which they got literally caught up. From there came the idea of a new way of writing about politics. Machiavelli is the first one to do so, writing in order to give practical, concrete advice to follow in the real world.*

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*We define this new way of regarding Machiavelli's political writing as a "programme", which his biography helps us to understand more completely.*

**Keywords:** Machiavelli, Intellectual Biography, Doctrine, Political Thought

« J'aime François Guichardin, j'aime ma patrie plus que... »<sup>1</sup>

L'écriture de l'histoire est prise en tenaille entre la nécessité d'établir les logiques du temps long pour produire du sens et celle, opposée, de restituer l'irréductibilité de l'action humaine. Toujours, elle s'est située entre ces deux pointes, même si les formes par lesquelles elles se réalisent et se conceptualisent varient selon les périodes et les cultures.

Au vingtième siècle, et au début du vingt-et-unième, en France, de nombreuses illustrations de cet écart ont coexisté du point de vue de l'historiographie. Par exemple, « l'École des Annales », entend articuler la vie quotidienne des individus quelconques aux structures profondes, globales, holistes. Elle s'oppose ainsi à une histoire centrée sur les individus remarquables, généralement politiques, qui ne formeraient finalement que l'écume occultant la réalité sociale. La leçon du marxisme, réfléchi à la lumière d'autres hypothèses de compréhension et aménagée selon les périodes étudiées, sert ici de point d'origine, sans pour autant constituer l'horizon idéologique de la démarche : les historiens connaissaient le temps long et l'idée de structures des sociétés bien avant que Marx ne construisît sa doctrine.

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<sup>1</sup> Lettre de Machiavel à Vettori du 16 avril 1527, in Machiavel, *Toutes les lettres officielles et familières de Machiavel, celles de ses Seigneurs, de ses amis et des siens*, présentées et annotées par Edmond Barincou, préface de Jean Giono, deux tomes, Paris : Gallimard NRF, 1955, tome II, p. 547. L'historiographie italienne donne place à de nombreux débats sur la fin de cette citation. En effet, elle fut soigneusement rayée et est quasiment illisible aujourd'hui dans le manuscrit disponible. Différentes hypothèses se dégagent dont : « plus que la vie » « plus que mon âme » ou « plus que le Christ » dans Niccolò Machiavelli, *Lettere a Francesco Vettori e a Francesco Guicciardini*, Giorgio Inglese (éd.), Milan : Rizzoli, « BUR », 1989, p. 384. Pour le philosophe, ces distinctions sont finalement de peu d'importance et le texte reste éloquent en ce qui concerne l'enthousiasme et l'emphase de son auteur.

Bourdieu souligne bien l'impossibilité de rédiger une biographie dans la mesure où l'individu n'existe pas face aux forces sociales qui lui préexistent et déterminent le champ et les possibilités de l'action<sup>2</sup>. Mais Patrice Gueniffey montre également l'irréductibilité de l'action humaine, illustrée en particulier par les grands hommes d'État du XX<sup>ème</sup> siècle, y compris les plus abominables d'entre eux, qui ont effectivement façonné le monde selon leur volonté et en dépit des grandes structurations imaginées autour de l'idéologie marxiste.<sup>3</sup>

Dans cet écart, et dans la mesure où on ne peut guère imaginer de moyen d'éviter de suivre une logique classique où l'individu est à la fois le produit de l'histoire et qu'il la dépasse, l'objection de Bourdieu renvoie donc à une impossibilité théorique sans impact pratique. Il convient dès lors de saisir l'usage propre de la biographie, en particulier, pour ce qui nous concerne, dans l'usage qu'il est possible d'en faire en philosophie politique. Patrice Gueniffey propose une voie médiane qui respecte l'insertion de la biographie dans l'histoire longue tout en dégageant son intérêt propre. Comme il le souligne, la biographie n'est ni une hagiographie ni l'illusoire restitution d'une vie dans son irréductible singularité. La biographie n'a de sens, comme toute analyse historique, que dans la mesure où elle montre, développe, analyse et tente de résoudre un problème.<sup>4</sup>

La démarche que nous proposons ici se situe dans la continuité de notre thèse, et de l'ouvrage qui en est issu. En effet, *Machiavel, une biographie : l'apport intellectuelle de sa correspondance avant septembre 1512* constitue un travail d'abord philosophique, qui entend utiliser les matériaux historiques à disposition. La pensée de Machiavel ne naît pas avec l'écriture du *Prince*. Nous avons ainsi tenté de comprendre l'évolution

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<sup>2</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, « L'illusion biographique », in *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*. Vol. 62-63, juin 1986. *L'illusion biographique*. pp. 69-72.

<sup>3</sup> Patrice Gueniffey, *A biográfia a megújuló politikatörténetben*, Aetas, 2000/3, pp. 136-149. Le texte est en hongrois. Je remercie avec chaleur Patrice Gueniffey de m'en avoir très aimablement communiqué une version française dont j'utiliserai désormais le titre en français : *La biographie et le renouvellement de l'histoire politique*. Le texte hongrois est consultable à l'adresse suivante, consultée le 27 avril 2021 :

[http://acta.bibl.u-szeged.hu/41626/1/aetas\\_2000\\_003.pdf](http://acta.bibl.u-szeged.hu/41626/1/aetas_2000_003.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Patrice Gueniffey, *La biographie*, art. cit. Le passage utilisé se situe à la fin de l'introduction, p. 136.

d'une pensée « en acte », prise dans l'action, de la part d'un individu particulier que rien ne destinait *a priori* à devenir le penseur que l'on connaît et à qui l'on attribue la naissance de la pensée politique occidentale moderne. De ce fait, nous nous sommes appuyés sur les sources biographiques secondaires disponibles, sans accéder aux documents sources et en nous appuyant sur le travail remarquable des historiens Italiens et Français.

Cet article ne prétend donc pas apporter de nouveautés historiographiques sur Machiavel mais veut interroger le sens qu'un philosophe, ou un historien des idées, peut trouver au travail biographique. Dans le cas si particulier de l'histoire des idées politiques, l'étude de la biographie de Machiavel permet de dégager une nouveauté intéressante via l'apparition, dans la pensée philosophique, d'hommes venant de l'action politique et qui en sont des experts, des professionnels. La position singulière de Machiavel dans l'histoire des idées politiques peut s'appréhender comme produisant une pensée politique nouvelle dans sa forme comme dans son fond car enracinée dans le présent de son auteur et tournée autour de ce que nous nommons, sous la forme d'un anachronisme que nous espérons contrôlé, un « programme ».

Dans le cadre de l'histoire de la philosophie, et particulièrement de l'histoire des idées politiques, la biographie est un outil peu utilisé en France. La filiation des idées, l'intertextualité, les références entre auteurs sont souvent préférées à l'influence du contexte. Ce préalable, posé en première partie, forme paradoxe avec l'abondance du nombre de biographies sur Machiavel que nous parcourrons en deuxième partie. En troisième partie, nous nous attacherons à l'étude biographique de Machiavel, centrée sur sa période d'activité politique qui précède l'écriture du *Prince* et des *Discours*, à partir de sa correspondance, privée et professionnelle, éditée depuis longtemps et traduite en français depuis les années 1950.<sup>5</sup> Cette dernière permet d'articuler l'activité et la pensée du « Secrétaire », et se conceptualise dans l'idée nouvelle de « programme », que Machiavel met en œuvre d'abord, et qui permet de comprendre ses textes politiques ultérieurs. Cette attitude nouvelle en politique, consistant à vouloir imaginer une rupture avec le contemporain et la tradition sans

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<sup>5</sup> Machiavel, *Toutes les lettres*, *op. cit.*

pour autant verser dans l'illusion se saisit particulièrement à travers l'approche biographique. Cet usage de la biographie peut, alors, être rapproché de l'usage qu'en fait Hannah Arendt<sup>6</sup> et devenir un outil privilégié pour comprendre la philosophie et l'activité de pensée élaborée en de « sombres temps ».

### **I. Les biographies de philosophe, un genre mouvant et peu utilisé**

En France, les biographies de philosophes sont rares et souvent méprisées par les historiens des idées, qui ne voient dans leur contenu que des « occasions », forcément accidentelles, du déploiement d'une pensée qui échappe à la matérialité des contingences par sa nature même. Avec Machiavel, et donc en particulier dans la philosophie politique, ce préjugé empêche d'accéder à la pensée de l'auteur et l'histoire, en particulier celle des idées politiques, devient un commentaire de commentaires où la lecture même du texte dans son contexte d'origine finit par devenir problématique. Cette situation ne correspond certainement pas à la complexité du rapport entre la théorie politique et la réalité observable. Dans le domaine qui nous occupe, la réalité ne se laisse pas mettre à distance. La politique, à un moment donné, frappe à la porte de la maison du penseur, souvent avec violence. Mieux, le philosophe ou le penseur devient politique en sortant de sa maison, parce que le monde qui l'environne - les gens, ses voisins, ses amis, sa famille - l'amène à se confronter aux réalités politiques. Comment ignorer cet apport, où le réduire à l'anecdote, par définition sans signification profonde ?

Dissenter de la philosophie politique antique sans connaître aussi finement que possible la réalité de la vie politique antique et la manière dont l'auteur étudié s'y insère est par définition paradoxal : à cette époque, l'homme est tout entier dans le citoyen. Dans le cas de Xénophon, par exemple, la biographie est inséparable de la pensée.<sup>7</sup> Socrate est lui-même parfaitement exemplaire de ce problème, puisque, comme le montre Paulin Ismard<sup>8</sup>, le philosophe fut condamné lors d'un procès proprement

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<sup>6</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Vies politiques*, Paris : Gallimard, 2019.

<sup>7</sup> C'est la position, classique, d'Édouard Delebecque, *Essai sur la vie de Xénophon*, Paris : Belles Lettres, 1957.

<sup>8</sup> Paulin Ismard, *L'événement Socrate*, Paris : Flammarion, 2017, en particulier le chapitre conclusif « Circonscrire l'énigme », pp. 199-210.

politique, où on lui reprochait sur le fond d'avoir formé la génération de jeunes aristocrates qui précipitèrent la chute d'Athènes (tel le bel Alcibiade) et s'emparèrent du pouvoir pour exercer une tyrannie (tel Critias, cousin de Platon). Paulin Isnard estime qu'il s'agit sans doute du sens véritable de l'accusation fort rare d'impiété et de dépravation de la jeunesse.

Sur ce point, il conviendrait sans aucun doute de prolonger la démarche de Jacqueline de Romilly à propos de Protagoras<sup>9</sup> pour l'appliquer à Platon : la lecture de Thucydide, la connaissance précise des remous de la politique athénienne et de sa démocratie ne peuvent être sans rapport avec un contemporain d'Aristophane, l'homme qui apostrophait les spectateurs dans ses comédies et qui nous livra une version de la vision populaire du socratisme dans *Les Nuées*. Le caractère limité du public athénien auquel était destiné, et quasiment à lui seul, les œuvres des grands esprits de l'époque oblige à nuancer un universalisme théorique de la pensée, au moins en ce qui concerne la politique. L'ironie platonicienne de la *République* s'impose alors comme hypothèse de lecture fondamentale et devient très difficile à maîtriser, proprement vertigineuse.

Concernant le moment qui va de la Renaissance aux Lumières, un très grand nombre d'écrits sur la politique sont rédigés par des acteurs dont le rapport à la théorie n'est en aucun cas d'abord philosophique. De ce point de vue, les biographies de Machiavel, de Botero, de Hobbes, de Bodin, de René de Lucinge, forment une entreprise nécessaire pour la compréhension de leur pensée. Pour ces hommes d'action, ces acteurs politiques, ces engagés dans des positions politiques partisans qui obligent à des choix draconiens,<sup>10</sup> la philosophie politique ne se conçoit plus, depuis Machiavel, comme le seul lieu d'un débat d'idées et de principes abstraits. Ils sont tous proprement immergés dans les problèmes

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<sup>9</sup> Jacqueline De Romilly, *Les grands sophistes dans l'Athènes de Périclès*, Paris, éditions de Fallois, 1988. L'analyse de Protagoras traverse l'ouvrage et montre l'importance fondamentale du conseiller et ami de Périclès. L'intérêt de la démarche de Jacqueline de Romilly consiste à s'appuyer sur Platon en le complétant par Thucydide et les connaissances historiques contemporaines sur la période.

<sup>10</sup> Ainsi Andréa Guidi, *Un segretario militante. Politica, diplomazia e armi nel cancelliere Machiavelli*, Bologne : Il Mulino, 2009. Pour un résumé magistral de ce livre, Cf. Romain Descendre, note de lecture sur « Guidi, A., *Un segretario militante. Politica, diplomazia e armi nel cancelliere Machiavelli* » in *Laboratoire italien*, « Justice et armes au XXVIème siècle », 10-2010, Lyon, ENS éditions, 2010, pp. 239-242.

de leur époque respective, des guerres d'Italie pour Machiavel aux guerres de religion pour ses successeurs. La question du caractère concret de ce nouveau type d'analyse se comprend en croisant la connaissance historique de la période considérée, le souci biographique et l'inscription dans l'histoire des idées. Par là se perçoit une nouveauté dans la compréhension et l'action politique que j'appelle l'idée de « programme », qui se dégage de Machiavel haut-fonctionnaire et se poursuit à propos de l'écrivain politique.

Ainsi, la biographie trouve une place fondamentale dans l'histoire des idées politiques, puisqu'elle permet de saisir, par-delà le substrat de centaines de commentaires, une intention politique concrète, donc un programme, précisément l'une des grandes nouveautés de la modernité. L'effort de conceptualisation des auteurs politiques du XVI<sup>ème</sup> et XVII<sup>ème</sup> siècles se déploie dans un contexte tout à fait nouveau, écartelé entre l'apparition des grandes monarchies (Espagne, France, Angleterre) qui déséquilibrent et rééquilibrent à leur profit l'espace politique de l'Europe de l'Ouest et la gestion des « guerres civiles confessionnelles »<sup>11</sup> qui déchirent la chrétienté, qui formait jusqu'alors le substrat commun et revendiqué comme tel à cette culture. Les historiens se tournent volontiers vers les problèmes de la théorie des idées politiques pour comprendre et appréhender au plus juste cette période. Ainsi, Arlette Jouanna utilise les notions d'État et de raison d'État, d'absolutisme dont elle souligne les difficultés d'utilisation : le risque d'anachronisme, le risque d'appliquer des explications et des concepts créés ultérieurement aux problèmes historiques analysés peut fourvoyer le chercheur.<sup>12</sup> La saisie du « problème », le choix de ce « problème », sa formulation en terme conceptuel lors de l'étude historique, biographique ou non, reste le cœur de l'acte historien.

L'histoire de la philosophie politique peut-elle s'abstraire de l'histoire politique, jusque dans la vie de ses penseurs ? Les idées politiques

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<sup>11</sup> Carl Schmitt, *Hamlet ou Hécube*, Paris : L'Arche, 1992, p. 42 : « Dans la personne du roi Jacques Ier, épris de philosophie et de théologie, s'incarne en effet toute la dissension de son époque, un siècle de clivage de la foi et de guerres civiles confessionnelles. »

<sup>12</sup> Arlette Jouanna, *La Saint-Barthélemy, les mystères d'un crime d'État*, Paris : Gallimard, 2007, en particulier l'analyse du poids de ce massacre dans l'évolution ultérieure de la monarchie française vers l'absolutisme et les modalités de la conception et de l'utilisation de la « raison d'État », pp. 302-305.

ne sont certes pas façonnées seulement par leur époque, mais leur l'histoire, parce qu'elle est une histoire des idées, s'incarne forcément à certains moments dans celle des hommes et ne peut parfaitement se comprendre sans faire appel à la biographie des penseurs. La théorie hobbesienne peut-elle s'abstraire totalement du spectre de la guerre civile dont Hobbes souligne bien le caractère antipolitique et dévastateur ? Si l'on peut fonder, au moins en partie, le droit moderne sur la pensée politique de Hobbes, faut-il pour autant ne le lire et ne l'expliquer qu'en fonction de ce qu'il va produire, après lui et, en un sens, malgré lui ? Ne risque-t-on pas dès lors de faire de l'histoire téléologique des idées politiques, et d'oublier sa contingence, absurde parfois, souvent totalement arbitraire ? Qu'une idée s'impose dans les faits ne lui donne aucune onction particulière, aucune légitimité du point de vue philosophique. Mais, pour le penseur politique, les faits, les données, les atomes sur lesquels il travaille et qu'il tente d'observer sont également et inséparablement de l'ordre des idées, des choses et des actions humaines. La « réalité », ce mot-valise si ample, occulte cette complexité originelle.

L'effort de restituer un penseur tel qu'il s'est pensé lui-même et tel que ses contemporains l'ont compris risque de n'apporter que peu à une histoire téléologique des idées politiques. Il restituera surtout l'accidentel de cette histoire. Paradoxalement, il acquiert ainsi son utilité et son importance philosophique propre : en politique, les idées correspondent à des actes et à des volontés qui ne concernent pas que le seul philosophe ou l'humanité conçue comme un tout abstrait, mais bien l'ensemble particulier d'une communauté de vies à un moment donné. De ce point de vue, l'histoire de la pensée politique n'est pas seulement un grand mouvement dont nous sommes le terme ultime et la fin, mais bien une succession de tâtonnements d'abord focalisés sur le moment précis de leur énonciation. Sans vouloir déprécier une histoire téléologique des idées politiques, nécessaire même pour pouvoir proposer une action à venir en rupture avec la tradition, la biographie est l'outil qui permet de mettre en avant l'irruption de la volonté, l'imagination individuelle du penseur politique. Elle vise à restituer exactement à la fois la part d'invention du penseur mais aussi le sens de ces inventions, de ces grandes intuitions dont, *a posteriori*, l'historien des idées admire le caractère anticipateur, visionnaire, parfois prophète. La biographie comporte ainsi inséparablement une analyse de la

pensée politique de l'auteur et un essai philosophique sur la grande question de l'irruption d'une pensée nouvelle. *A contrario*, Quentin Skinner offre sur Machiavel une interprétation qui limite l'originalité et la portée du Florentin en mettant l'accent sur la grande importance du mouvement de l'humanisme civique et républicain florentin qui l'a précédé.<sup>13</sup>

## **II. La diversité des biographies de Machiavel : une pluralité allant de la restitution historique aux interprétations les plus variées.**

Étudier la pensée de Machiavel par une entrée biographique se révèle un problème majeur. En effet, le nombre de biographies augmente sans cesse, porté à la fois par la découverte régulière de nouveaux documents à son sujet dans les archives florentines, mais aussi par les avancées de la recherche sur son époque. De même, le flot des interprétations savantes ne semble pas se tarir. Toutefois, cette situation reste somme toute habituelle au chercheur et à tout biographe travaillant sur une personnalité connue. La médiatisation du nom Machiavel, la massification de son usage dans des formes plus ou moins dérivées et la légende dans lequel baigne sa vie comme sa pensée constituent le cœur du problème : les strates de significations et de lectures s'accumulent quasiment depuis sa mort et constituent un phénomène d'une ampleur finalement peu courante.

Le machiavélisme est un nom commun attesté quelques années après la mort du Secrétaire<sup>14</sup>, son usage continue à être généralisé comme synonyme de « mal » dans tous les domaines et le siècle de Laurent le Magnifique, des Papes de la Renaissance, des monstrueux Borgia mais aussi de Léonard de Vinci, Michel Ange... n'aide pas à une approche proprement analytique et froide. L'Italie de cette époque, et ses acteurs, font l'objet de nombres de fantasmes, de romans<sup>15</sup>, et la simple lecture des

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<sup>13</sup> Quentin Skinner, *Machiavel*, Paris : Seuil, 2001.

<sup>14</sup> De manière certaine à partir de la fin du XVI<sup>ème</sup> siècle en France selon Claude Lefort, *Le travail de l'œuvre*, Paris, Gallimard, 1986, p. 82. Cet ouvrage, en langue française, constitue le point d'appui de tout notre raisonnement sur le machiavélisme.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. par exemple Christophe Bataille, *Le rêve de Machiavel*, Paris : Grasset, 2008. Même Patrick Boucheron a écrit son roman : *Léonard et Machiavel*, Paris : Verdier, 2009. On ne citera pas ici les diverses séries TV et films qui utilisent la période et ses acteurs.

lettres du Secrétaire renvoie effectivement à un univers qui peut sembler ahurissant, « baroque », foisonnant.

Pour permettre une vue d'ensemble, nous pouvons ordonner notre approche en suivant des traditions historiographiques nationales : Italienne, Française, Anglo-saxonne. En Italie, la biographie de Ridolfi<sup>16</sup> constitue le point de départ des études historiographiques contemporaines. Le grand historien Florentin fit la synthèse des acquis des siècles précédents. Depuis, les travaux des historiens italiens se sont orientés vers la découverte et l'organisation des écrits de chancelleries, des lettres, dont nombres étaient déjà publiées mais sans la rigueur et les moyens méthodologiques modernes. Une édition scientifique des lettres est ainsi parue<sup>17</sup>. L'analyse de ces documents fait l'objet de travaux continus et réguliers, aussi bien sous la forme de synthèses comme celle de Jean-Jacques Marchand,<sup>18</sup> que lors d'actes de nombreux colloques, qui articulent l'analyse de la pensée et l'apport plus strictement historique,<sup>19</sup> sortant ainsi du travail biographique proprement dit, mais toujours en lien avec lui. Nombre d'articles de revues scientifiques italiennes traitent de lettres ou de précisions concernant l'activité du Secrétaire, qu'il est impossible de toutes citer. Les débats et discussions sont nombreux et passionnés. Récemment, Andréa Guidi a inauguré un travail original en se concentrant sur une période de l'activité de Machiavel fonctionnaire, et particulièrement sur sa mission de création de la milice. L'ouvrage est clairement celui d'un historien, à vocation évidemment biographique tout en se focalisant sur un moment précis, considéré comme particulièrement décisif.<sup>20</sup> Enfin, pour conclure ce survol, il faut mentionner l'encyclopédie machiavélienne

<sup>16</sup> Roberto Ridolfi, *Vita di Niccolò Machiavelli*, Roma : Belardetti, 1954. Roberto Ridolfi, *Machiavel*, Paris, : Fayard, 1960.

<sup>17</sup> Machiavelli, *Legazioni. Commissarie. Scritti di governo*, Roma : Salerno Editrice, 6 tomes publiés, 2002, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2008, 2011.

<sup>18</sup> Jean-Jacques Marchand, *Niccolò Machiavelli I primi scritti politici (1499-1512), nascita di un pensiero e di uno stile*, Padova : Editrice Antenore, Medioevo e umanesimo 23, 1975.

<sup>19</sup> Par exemple, ces deux ouvrages dirigés par Jean-Jacques Marchand (ed.), *Niccolò Machiavelli politico storico letterato*, Atti del Convegno di Losanna, 27-30 settembre 1995, Roma : Salerno Editrice, 1996 et *Machiavelli senza i Medici (1498-1512) Scrittura del potere / potere della scrittura*, Atti del Convegno di Losanna, 18-20 novembre 2004, Roma : Salerno Editrice, 2006.

<sup>20</sup> Andrea Guidi, *Un segretario militante*. *Op.cit.*

dirigée et coordonnée par Gennaro Sasso et Giorgio Inglese,<sup>21</sup> qui, sans être une biographie, a vocation à synthétiser tous les acquis les plus récents. La biographie de Corrado Vivanti<sup>22</sup>, traduite en français, n'a pas reçu des historiens et des philosophes politiques l'intérêt qu'elle mérite : il s'agit d'un essai de tout premier ordre, permettant de saisir Machiavel comme un patriote engagé, donc un « inventeur » du patriotisme moderne.

En France, dans la littérature actuelle sur Machiavel et dans les biographies qui lui sont consacrées, Jean-Louis Fournel et Jean-Claude Zancarini<sup>23</sup> nous ont offert très récemment un travail remarquable qui fait référence du point de vue de l'exactitude historique en utilisant les données accumulées depuis des décennies par leur travail et celui des historiens italiens. Pour les autres biographies, Machiavel reste avant tout considéré et lu comme un philosophe : pour sa place dans l'histoire des idées politiques, généralement comme l'instigateur ou l'inventeur du « réalisme ». <sup>24</sup> Ce biais est en quelque sorte culturel : depuis sa traduction en français, Machiavel est présenté comme le penseur du mal, celui qui révéla la capacité au mal du pouvoir politique, voire sa nature quasiment maléfique.<sup>25</sup> Innocent Gentillet en forme l'assertion dès 1576, quatre années après la Saint-Barthélemy.<sup>26</sup>

Ainsi, les travaux d'Edmond Barincou,<sup>27</sup> Jacques Heers,<sup>28</sup> Ernest Weibel,<sup>29</sup> Christiane Gil,<sup>30</sup> Marie Gaille,<sup>31</sup> Sandro Landi<sup>32</sup> et Marina

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<sup>21</sup> Gennaro Sasso, (dir. Sc.) et Giorgio Inglese (codir. Sc.), *Machiavelli : enciclopedia machiavelliana*, Roma: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 2014.

<sup>22</sup> Corrado Vivanti, *Machiavel ou les temps de la politique*, Paris : Editions Desjonquères, 2007.

<sup>23</sup> Jean-Louis Fournel, Jean-Claude Zancarini, *Machiavel, une vie en guerres*, Paris : Passés Composés, 2020.

<sup>24</sup> Sur ce point, voire l'excellente présentation de Marie Gaille, *Machiavel et la tradition philosophique*, Paris : PUF, 2007.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Claude Lefort, *Le travail de l'œuvre Machiavel*, op. cit., p. 77 : « Le machiavélisme est le nom de ce mal. Il est le nom donné à la politique en tant qu'elle est le mal ; il désigne ce que l'imagination commune veut se représenter chaque fois que le pouvoir est perçu comme ce qui est absolument étranger, au principe d'actions inconnues et inconnissables, cela qui, situé à une distance infranchissable, détermine contre son gré et pour son malheur l'existence commune. »

<sup>26</sup> Innocent Gentillet, *Anti-Machiavel, Édition de 1576 avec commentaires et notes par Edward Rathé*, Genève, Droz, 1968. Titre original : *Discours sur les moyens de bien gouverner et soutenir en bonne paix un royaume ou autre principauté – contre Machiavel*.

<sup>27</sup> Edmond Barincou, *Machiavel*, Paris : Seuil, coll. « écrivains de toujours », 1957.

Marietti<sup>33</sup> ne sont pas véritablement des renouvellements mais plutôt des regards dont les variations historiques de fond avec Ridolfi sont assez légères. Si le travail du journaliste Hubert Prolongeau constitue un prolongement de cette tradition, il fait surtout sortir la biographie de Machiavel du domaine de l'expertise historique et universitaire.<sup>34</sup> Il est vrai que Machiavel est un objet de curiosité pour le grand public. Les biographies en anglais sont du même ordre : il s'agit plus d'orientations interprétatives que de travaux historiques, ainsi de John Rigby Hale,<sup>35</sup> Mauricio Viroli,<sup>36</sup> Paul Oppenheimer<sup>37</sup> ou plus récemment Robert Black.<sup>38</sup>

On peut mentionner également d'autres types de biographies, plus engagées et moins ancrées dans une tradition historiographique, qui visent à donner une interprétation politique de la vie du Secrétaire, conformément à une autre tradition d'interprétation marxisante. Outre l'ancienne et toujours rééditée biographie quasiment fantaisiste de Giuseppe Prezzolini,<sup>39</sup> Ugo Dotti a effectué un travail très stimulant et intéressant, illustrant l'importance de la question sociale dans la vie et l'œuvre de Machiavel.<sup>40</sup>

Enfin, il faut mentionner l'exception, notable et illustre, de la notice biographique « Monsieur Machiavel » écrite par Jean Giono en guise d'introduction à l'édition par Edmond Barincou de sa traduction des lettres

<sup>28</sup> Jacques Heers, *Machiavel*, Paris : Fayard, 1985.

<sup>29</sup> Ernest Weibel, *Machiavel, biographie politique*, Fribourg, éditions universitaires, 1988, réédition Paris, Ellipses, 2012.

<sup>30</sup> Christiane Gil, *Machiavel, Fonctionnaire florentin*, Paris : Perrin, 1993.

<sup>31</sup> Marie Gaille-Nikodimov, *Machiavel*, Paris : Tallandier Editions, 2005.

<sup>32</sup> Sandro Landi, *Machiavel*, Paris : Ellipses, 2008.

<sup>33</sup> Marina Marietti, *Machiavel, le penseur de la nécessité*, Paris : Payot, 2009.

<sup>34</sup> Hubert Prolongeau, *Machiavel*, Paris : Gallimard, 2010.

<sup>35</sup> John Rigby Hale, *Machiavelli and Renaissance Italy*, London: The English Universities Press LTD, 1961.

<sup>36</sup> Maurizio Viroli, *Niccolo's Smile: A Biography of Machiavelli*, New York: Hill and Wang, 2002.

<sup>37</sup> Paul Oppenheimer, *Machiavelli, a life beyond ideology*, London/New-York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011.

<sup>38</sup> Robert Black, *Machiavelli*, London: Routledge, 2013.

<sup>39</sup> Giuseppe Prezzolini, *Machiavel*, Paris : Payot, 1985 (première édition en italien en 1927).

<sup>40</sup> Ugo Dotti, *La révolution Machiavel*, Grenoble : Millon, 2006.

de Machiavel.<sup>41</sup> Le Romancier, ici, a perçu et décrit ce que les philosophes refusaient de considérer : la vie de Machiavel imprègne son œuvre et l'homme est passionnant ; le Secrétaire et l'écrivain ne font profondément qu'un.

### **III. L'apport philosophique d'une biographie de Machiavel : l'invention de l'idée de « programme » politique, mêlant action et réflexion.**

L'originalité de ma thèse a donc consisté, étant donné l'historiographie précédente, à m'appuyer sur les lettres, rapports et textes produits par Machiavel pour restituer l'émergence de sa pensée politique pendant ses années de pratique politique à la Chancellerie de la République de Florence, en articulant cette lecture avec l'analyse de leur contexte de production.<sup>42</sup> Il me fallait ainsi, en un sens, écarter de mon esprit le futur penseur et l'histoire des idées qu'il produisit malgré lui pour tenter de saisir l'originalité de ses positions. Certes, personne n'arrive à la lecture de Machiavel sans être déjà pénétré du substrat du « travail de l'œuvre ». Néanmoins, l'effort en mérite la peine. Il permet de retrouver la fraîcheur du Secrétaire, englué dans l'action, surpassant sa condition sociale pour proposer des réformes de très grande ampleur, manœuvrant au quotidien dans les circonstances du fonctionnement institutionnel de sa République et avec les hommes politiques de son temps.

L'idée de programme constitue le principal résultat. À travers l'étude de l'action et de la pensée sur l'action du Secrétaire, on voit apparaître la singularité de son approche. L'action politique de Machiavel Secrétaire prend sens à travers un contexte, à la fois géopolitique et local,<sup>43</sup> et permet une ouverture vers un au-delà de la situation présente, évidemment insatisfaisante. Pour Machiavel, l'Italie et donc Florence sont

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<sup>41</sup> Jean Giono, « Monsieur Machiavel », in Machiavel, *Toutes les lettres officielles et familières de Machiavel, celles de ses Seigneurs, de ses amis et des siens*, présentées et annotées par Edmond Barincou, deux tomes, NRF, Paris, 1955, pp. VII-XLV.

<sup>42</sup> Jérôme Roudier, *Machiavel, une biographie, l'apport intellectuel de sa correspondance jusqu'à septembre 1512*, Paris : Cerf, collection « Patrimoines », 2019, en particulier, pour la réévaluation du contexte historique, les pages 45-72.

<sup>43</sup> Jérôme Roudier, *Machiavel, une biographie, op. cit.*, La simple énumération de ses légations en-dehors du territoire florentin est significative, pp. 76-97.

au cœur d'un affrontement de puissances européennes dont elles sont l'enjeu, malgré elles. Les Italiens se battent pour les Français ou les Espagnols, non pour eux. Sa connaissance de première main de la monarchie française l'amène à comprendre que la sujétion florentine ne peut que perdurer, sauf à se procurer des armes propres et à agrandir son territoire de manière à faire pièce à ceux, infiniment plus puissants, qui l'envahissent.

Un programme, dès lors, se dessine peu à peu à travers ses lettres, ses actions concrètes, ses exhortations : l'unité de l'Italie.<sup>44</sup> Dans ses écrits de travail, Machiavel ne théorise qu'incidemment. La milice est clairement un programme mis en œuvre en même temps qu'il est conçu, mais elle n'est pas véritablement théorisée et totalement explicitée. Avec les œuvres rédigées dans l'exil intérieur et l'inaction, Machiavel achève son travail de Secrétaire en déployant une pensée qui dépasse le conseil stratégique et politique pour prendre la forme d'un appel vibrant à la réalisation d'un objectif à la fois élevé, grandiose, et nécessaire. L'unité de l'Italie constitue le seul horizon acceptable de la vie politique florentine : soit Florence la réalise, soit elle est condamnée à périr au milieu des grandes puissances monarchiques et impériales européennes. Un prince nouveau florentin ne se justifie que de ce point de vue, une république pérenne ne peut se proposer d'autre objectif.<sup>45</sup>

En ce sens, la pensée de Machiavel est programmatique et articule ainsi l'idée à la réalité : à notre avis, là est sa profonde originalité, sa modernité, la raison pour laquelle l'histoire politique occidentale, pour se comprendre elle-même, fait sans cesse retour vers les écrits du Secrétaire. Un programme consiste à établir un objectif et les moyens de le réaliser, il énonce ce qu'il faut effectuer, il donne le sens de l'action. Le programme machiavélien se singularise par sa nature de part en part politique : il implique la réduction de toutes les considérations à leurs caractéristiques politiques et la volonté de se maintenir en permanence dans ce champ.

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<sup>44</sup> La notion de programme, n'est pas employée dans notre ouvrage mais elle constitue la suite, à écrire et à paraître, de nos travaux.

<sup>45</sup> Cette interprétation de la pensée politique de Machiavel est évidemment l'objet d'une controverse scientifique entre philosophes, historiens, spécialistes de Machiavel et de l'Italie de son époque. Nous ne voulons pas alourdir encore cet article en la restituant en l'état. Sa formulation par nos soins fera l'objet d'un prochain ouvrage.

Par la notion de programme, l'apport intellectuel de la biographie de Machiavel prend son sens et s'articule avec ses écrits ultérieurs : elle apporte à l'histoire des idées une dimension différente de la philosophie politique, qui, comme le postule Kant, peut et peut-être doit se donner pour objectif des idées régulatrices par nature universalisables<sup>46</sup>. La pensée de Machiavel se situe précisément entre une science politique qui cherche à restituer les structures fondamentales de la vie politique des sociétés et la philosophie politique. Il permet, à proprement parler, de dégager une pensée politique qui intègre les idées comme le poids des réalités et les articule pour parvenir à mener une action autonome.

#### **IV. La biographie, outil pour comprendre le penseur pris dans de « sombres temps » ?**

Machiavel vécut dans des temps difficiles, politiquement marqués par une guerre entre puissances européennes dont sa patrie était l'enjeu et les Italiens les victimes. En ce sens, il existe un lien profond avec la démarche d'Hannah Arendt dans *Men in Dark Times*. Cette collection de biographies, écrites sa vie durant en fonction des circonstances, souligne leur importance pour comprendre et saisir l'unité d'une œuvre et d'une vie.<sup>47</sup> En de sombres temps, et ceux d'Arendt réfèrent aujourd'hui de manière presque proverbiale comme étant les pires que l'humanité ait pu produire et connaître, la vie de l'homme compte autant que sa pensée exprimée.

Heidegger, dont Arendt minimise l'adhésion au nazisme, vaut précisément comme contre-exemple : il est un philosophe, un métaphysicien, dont, véritablement, la vie et l'œuvre coïncident au profit, du point de vue d'Arendt, de la seule seconde :

« Nous qui voulons honorer les penseurs, bien que notre séjour soit au milieu du monde, nous ne pouvons guère nous empêcher de trouver frappant, et peut-être scandaleux, que Platon comme Heidegger, alors qu'ils s'engageaient dans les affaires humaines, aient eu recours aux tyrans

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<sup>46</sup> Ainsi d'un projet de paix perpétuelle, dont Kant indique dès l'introduction de l'ouvrage éponyme qu'il ne peut qu'être le programme intellectuel du philosophe. Cf. Kant, *Projet de Paix Perpétuelle*, in *Œuvres philosophiques*, tome 3, Paris : Gallimard, 1986, p. 333.

<sup>47</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Vies politiques*, op. cit.

et dictateurs. Peut-être la cause (...) s'en trouve-t-elle (...) dans ce que les français nomment une *déformation professionnelle*. Car le penchant au tyrannique se peut constater dans leurs théories chez presque tous les grands penseurs (Kant est la grande exception). (...) Car la tempête que fait lever le penser d'Heidegger (...) n'a pas son origine dans le siècle. Elle vient de l'immémorial et ce qu'elle laisse derrière elle est un accomplissement qui, comme tout accomplissement, fait retour à l'immémorial. »<sup>48</sup>

Le lecteur nous pardonnera de ne pas suivre Arendt sur ce point et même d'estimer que son lyrisme obscurcit plus qu'il ne convainc. Il est historiquement très contestable de généraliser ainsi le rapport entre les grands systèmes et la tyrannie. Quid de Spinoza, de Descartes, d'Aristote, de Husserl ? Le « penchant au tyrannique » n'est pas un prolongement inévitable de l'activité philosophique, ou alors il faudrait bannir de la Cité les philosophes plutôt que les poètes. Arendt, d'ailleurs, recourt à la métaphore plutôt qu'à l'argumentation et le fond de sa pensée consiste à souligner que le « penser » véritable, métaphysique, profond, creuse ou s'élève finalement bien au-delà du politique, bref qu'il n'est pas sur le même plan. La philosophie politique deviendrait alors une impasse, ce qui expliquerait ainsi qu'Arendt ait toujours refusé cette qualification.

En revanche, les réflexions d'Arendt sur Lessing, *De l'humanité dans de « sombres temps »* indiquent une direction essentielle pour mesurer l'importance de la biographie. Lessing vécut des temps difficiles et fut un polémiste passionné car évitant toujours de succomber au charme dangereux de l'adhésion à la vérité ou même à la simple opinion.<sup>49</sup> De ce fait, sa biographie par Arendt montre bien la tension propre à la culture occidentale, où la liberté de penser et d'agir affronte la liberté de croire, donc de solidifier une pensée dans une position. L'amitié, par exemple, y devient la marque de l'intimité et s'exclut du politique. Dans l'Antiquité, elle était tout le contraire : le signe de l'élection et de la qualité des élus. La valeur individuelle s'estimait à la qualité des amis.

<sup>48</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Vies politiques, op. cit.*, « Martin Heidegger a quatre-vingt ans », p. 320.

<sup>49</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Vies politiques, op. cit.*, « de l'humanité dans de « sombres temps », Réflexions sur Lessing », principalement pp. 36-39.

Ce nouveau rapport au monde caractérise parfaitement la vie de Machiavel. Ses lettres montrent des amitiés variées, en partie liées à des formes de patronage, de clientélisme donc d'intérêt<sup>50</sup> jusqu'à des amitiés improbables et irrévocables, magnifiques.<sup>51</sup> La reconnaissance explicite des qualités de l'ex-Secrétaire par le jeune Guichardin<sup>52</sup> fut de ces dernières et engendra une amitié qui pourrait faire pendant à celle de Montaigne et La Boétie. Machiavel fut engagé en des temps particulièrement sombres, désespérés à nombre d'égards. L'Italie était parcourue par des puissances étrangères, le trône de Saint Pierre était aux mains d'hommes d'une impiété scandaleuse : on pouvait difficilement trouver refuge dans la foi ou dans la politique. La tentation, bien entendu, consistait à s'exiler dans son for intérieur ou dans son jardin épicurien, attendre stoïquement la suite des événements ou espérer dans une réforme de l'Église, dont Rome ne semblait pas devoir donner l'exemple.

Machiavel inventa et surtout vécut une toute autre posture. Il décida, consciemment et dans un effort de pensée difficile qui traverse toute sa correspondance d'homme « aux affaires », de changer les données du problème politique. Il considéra qu'il fallait se fixer un but politique concret et chercher les moyens de l'atteindre : l'unité de l'Italie, son indépendance politique, conçue certes de manière vague dans ses détails, notamment géographiques, mais jugée comme une nécessité absolue, de l'ordre de la survie. Les moyens pouvaient être adaptés à la qualité des temps et aux possibilités offertes : créer une république florentine autonome militairement avec les citoyens-soldats d'une milice de 1506 à 1512 ; pousser par un écrit de circonstance un prince nouveau à unifier l'Italie lorsque le retour des Médicis à Florence s'articule providentiellement avec leur montée sur le trône de Saint Pierre de 1513 à

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<sup>50</sup> Jérôme Roudier, *Machiavel*, op. cit., pp. 164-167.

<sup>51</sup> La correspondance avec Vettori, qui début pendant la période que nous avons étudiée, est également représentative de la capacité de Machiavel à l'amitié sincère et profonde. On peut, pour plus de commodité, lire le choix de lettres proposé dans *Machiavel, lettres à Francesco Vettori*, Paris : Rivages, 2013.

<sup>52</sup> Lettre de Guichardin à Machiavel du 18 mai 1521, *Toutes les lettres*, op. cit., tome II, p. 446. Il s'agit de la troisième lettre en quelques jours de Guichardin, les deux hommes viennent de se croiser et de jouer un bon tour à des moines et Guichardin s'indigne de la déchéance de l'ex-Secrétaire, qui négocia avec des Rois et que les Médicis emploient pour trouver... un prédicateur pour le Carême.

1517 ; expliquer par un traité complet les fondements d'une république bien ordonnée et puissante aux jeunes nobles républicains florentins vers 1517, lorsque les Médicis prouvèrent leur incapacité à penser la politique autrement que sous une forme traditionnelle vouée à l'échec et à la médiocrité ; participer activement et totalement à la guerre entre 1525 et 1527, alors que Guichardin tente de sauver et d'unifier l'Italie. Chacun de ces grands moments de la vie de Machiavel est lié à son activité politique. Le dernier marque le terme de sa vie, qu'il conclut lui-même par une lettre à un autre ami, Vettori, où il synthétise avec émotion l'engagement déployé alors, et que nous avons mise en exergue de cet article.

À rebours d'hypothétiques penseurs politiques purement théoriciens, Machiavel manifeste l'idée que la politique est avant tout un programme, c'est à dire que le diagnostic, cette activité analytique, ne se départ pas de la visée. L'action politique, pour autant qu'elle est pensée et non subie, est donc pleinement biographique : elle combine une volonté et un contexte, et ne peut se comprendre autrement. La vie des penseurs politiques, en particulier ceux qui furent « aux affaires », tels Machiavel, De Lucinge, Botero, Bodin, Naudé, est ainsi inséparable de l'expression de leur pensée. Chez Machiavel, les biographes soulignent qu'il écrivit lorsqu'il ne put plus agir directement, voire que ce fut chez lui un pis-aller. C'est en partie vrai, puisque Machiavel aux affaires n'écrivit pas de traité politique ; mais ce constat doit s'articuler avec l'idée qu'ainsi il continuait à agir, à influencer ses contemporains. En ces sombres temps, celui qu'une lecture superficielle amena à fustiger comme un cynique manipulateur refusa obstinément de cesser d'agir.

Un programme, les américains utilisent aujourd'hui le terme de « doctrine »,<sup>53</sup> ne s'arrête pas aux individus qui l'énoncent ou qui le mettent en œuvre. Il forme le terme par lequel, au-delà de la pensée politique Antique, les Modernes tentèrent d'imaginer des solutions qui ne se trouvaient dans aucune forme de tradition préalable. Machiavel est le penseur de la nécessité<sup>54</sup> politique afin de trouver dans l'analyse les possibilités d'une action résolue afin d'en sortir. Une telle attitude, on en conviendra, n'est ni le lot de l'intellectuel dont l'engagement minimiserait

<sup>53</sup> Nous remercions Olivier Chopin, enseignant à Sciences-po et chercheur associé à l'EHESS, pour la suggestion de ce lien suggestif.

<sup>54</sup> Marina Marietti, *Machiavel, le penseur de la nécessité*, op. cit.

voire mépriserait les contingences, ni celle de l'homme politique ordinaire, englué dans le quotidien. Elle témoigne de la difficulté singulière d'appréhender le politique pour le philosophe et justifie le recours à la biographie comme point d'ancrage entre la pensée et le monde, à un moment donné.

« La biographie, en tant qu'elle restitue une vie dans tous ses aspects, peut constituer un apport décisif pour l'interprétation d'une œuvre artistique ou politique ; elle ne permet jamais à elle seule l'interprétation, sauf à s'adjoindre le concours de l'étude des idées ou des œuvres *en tant que telles* ». <sup>55</sup>

Tel est bien l'enjeu de l'élaboration de biographies des penseurs politiques : l'articulation entre l'histoire des idées et la vie concrète fournit une compréhension plus complète et plus juste, mieux à même d'étayer l'interprétation.

Comme le souligne Patrice Gueniffey, c'est bien dans l'histoire politique, histoire proprement humaine, que la biographie trouve son climax d'intérêt et de capacité de suggestion. <sup>56</sup> Dans la mesure où elle permet d'interroger l'irruption de l'individu, du plus petit au plus grand, dans le vaste enchaînement des faits et gestes humains, elle renvoie à la limite de l'histoire purement sociale et, de ce fait, acquiert sa légitimité. En ce sens, elle rejoint l'histoire des idées politiques et les deux disciplines peuvent, dès lors, mutuellement s'irriguer.

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<sup>55</sup> Patrice Gueniffey, *La biographie, art. cit.*, p. 139 dans la version hongroise, version française ici utilisée fournie par l'auteur.

<sup>56</sup> Patrice Gueniffey, *La biographie, art. cit.*, p. 148. Version en français des dernières lignes de l'article :

« la biographie demeurera le lieu de déploiement de la subjectivité et de la liberté des individus. C'est aussi bien pourquoi elle est indispensable à l'histoire politique. Elle devient même d'autant plus précieuse que l'histoire politique fait de plus en plus appel aux ressources de l'histoire des idées ou de la philosophie. L'histoire politique étant, par définition, une *histoire incarnée*, la biographie forme le rempart contre la désincarnation qui parfois la guette : elle lui redonne chair et vie ; elle est surtout une voie d'accès privilégiée à ce qui, dans la politique comme dans le pouvoir, échappe aux concepts : la politique et le politique comme passions. »

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# THE EVOLUTION OF ARMENIA AND AZERBAIJAN'S COOPERATION WITH THE EU IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

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## Abstract

*Since 2009, Armenia and Azerbaijan have been part of the Eastern Partnership Initiative, launched by the European Union. Armenia, with its interest and desire to cooperate with the EU in the Eastern Partnership, has also maintained its openness to Russia. The Eastern Partnership seems appealing as an opportunity for Azerbaijan. Economic openness, the prospect of securing and diversifying export routes for rich energy resources proves to be arguments in favor of fostering relations with the EU.*

**Keywords:** European Union, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Eastern Partnership, cooperation.

## Introduction

Armenia's geographical position (hard border with Azerbaijan and Turkey) has contributed to the fact that the country has a concept of complementarity in foreign policy. This concept is an attempt to balance specific interests, and on the other hand the lack of a concrete position in the direction of foreign policy.

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Armenia, with its interest and desire to cooperate with the EU in the Eastern Partnership, has also maintained its openness to Russia. When Armenia began negotiations on an Association Agreement with the EU in 2010-2012, Russia suddenly raised the price of Russian gas exports to Armenia and signed a contract with the Baku authorities for the supply of Russian weapons. Armenia was thus put under pressure to make another geopolitical option.

Even though Armenia joined the Eurasian Customs Union and later the Eurasian Economic Union, Armenia's interest in the EaP has not disappeared. Thus, it should be noted that Armenia's specific interest in the EaP is based on the concept of economic and foreign policy diversification. Given the country's geographical position, Armenia will always have to have a policy based on the principle of complementarity, and balancing Moscow's ambitions with the interests of the EU.

Azerbaijan has valuable oil resources that are proving to be very important in the management of its foreign policy. It is also the most populous state in the Caucasus region. Mostly Muslim, this country has developed special relations with the Islamic world. At the same time, it tried to break away from the model of Islamic states and give the state a strong secular character under the influence of Western culture. "Its position at the intersection of West and East has allowed Azerbaijan to develop a symbiosis of the values of both cultures".<sup>1</sup>

The Eastern Partnership seems appealing as an opportunity for Azerbaijan. Economic openness, the prospect of securing and diversifying export routes for rich energy resources proves to be arguments in favor of fostering relations with the EU. In domestic politics, however, Azerbaijan has imposed a model much closer to the Russian one. The leaders of this country embraced the Russian discourse on "sovereign democracy" in the form of the concept of "responsible democracy".<sup>2</sup>

The harsh geopolitical realities of the Caucasus, where Azerbaijan has strained relations with Armenia and cordial relations with Georgia, have led to a westward orientation of Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan has an interest in

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<sup>1</sup> Sergiy Gerasymchuk, Yaroslav Matiychyk, Oazu Nantoi, Alexandru Platon, *Concurența intereselor geopolitice în spațiul post-sovietic: perspective pentru țările Parteneriatului Estic*, Chișinău: Institutul de Politici Publice, p. 29

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*

working with the EU within the EaP and in finding a way out of its problematic relationship with its neighbours.

Its interest is therefore linked to cooperation with the EU, without any additional ambition of an integrative nature. This reality was increasingly understood over the period of 10 years of the EaP by the EU, which offered the possibility to deepen relations in the bilateral field depending on the specific level of ambition.

### **Analysis of Armenia and Azerbaijan's cooperation with the EU**

Since 2009, Armenia and Azerbaijan have been part of the Eastern Partnership Initiative, launched by the European Union. Two years after the launch of the Eastern Partnership, in 2011 a study "European Integration Index for Eastern Partnership Countries" appeared, developed by several experts from the countries participating in the EaP initiative - Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, which was a kind of barometer measuring the state of democracy in the Eastern Partnership states and included statistical information on the European integration of each EaP state, based on the analysis of the political, economic, civil and security dimension.

In order to identify and analyze the progress made by Armenia and Azerbaijan within the EaP, we used the Eastern Partnership Index, which includes aggregate statistical data on the level of integration of these states in the European space (Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum). The present analysis includes aggregated data from 2011 to 2019.

As it can be seen in the graphs below, since its launch, clear differences in preferences have been highlighted in the two countries in terms of national preferences for developing and strengthening the relationship with the EU. While Armenia perceived the program as an element of friction that could jeopardize the positive bilateral relationship with the Russian Federation, Azerbaijan differed in its balancing behavior between East and West.

The publication European Integration Index for Eastern Partnership Countries analyzes over 800 indicators and offers a three-dimensional division, as follows:

**Linkage** examines the deepening of political, economic, and social relations between each state and the European Union. This dimension includes such components as:

1. Political dialogue - international security, political dialogue and co-operation - international security, political dialogue and co-operation;
2. Trade and economic integration - sectoral co-operation and trade flows;
3. Freedom, security and justice - sectoral cooperation - sectoral co-operation and trade flows;
4. Energy and transport - sectoral cooperation - sectoral co-operation and trade flows;
5. Education and people-to-people - people-to-people - citizens in Europe;
6. Assistance - international security, political dialogue, and co-operation.<sup>3</sup>

**Approximation** aims to adjust the legislation and the activity of the institutions of the partner states to the European standards, the observance of the recommendations and requirements submitted by the European Commission. This dimension includes the analysis of the following components:

1. Democracy - deep and sustainable democracy;
2. Rule of law - deep and sustainable democracy;
3. Governance quality - deep and sustainable democracy;
4. Market economy - market economy and DCFTA - EU integration and convergence;
5. Freedom, security and justice - sectoral approximation - EU integration and convergence;
6. Energy and transport - sectoral approximation - EU integration and convergence;

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<sup>3</sup> Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, "European Integration Index for Eastern Partnership Countries 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014", [<https://eap-csf.eu/for-download/>], 20 March 2021.

7. Environment - sectoral approximation - EU integration and convergence;
8. Education and people to people - sectoral approximation - sustainable development.<sup>4</sup>

**Management** assesses the evolution of the management structures and policies of the EaP states. The management dimension includes the following categories:

1. Coordination Mechanism - institutional arrangements for european integration;
2. Legal approximation mechanism;
3. Participation of civil society;
4. Management of EU Assistance;
5. Training in the field of european integration;
6. Awareness raising about european integration.<sup>5</sup>

### *Linkage*

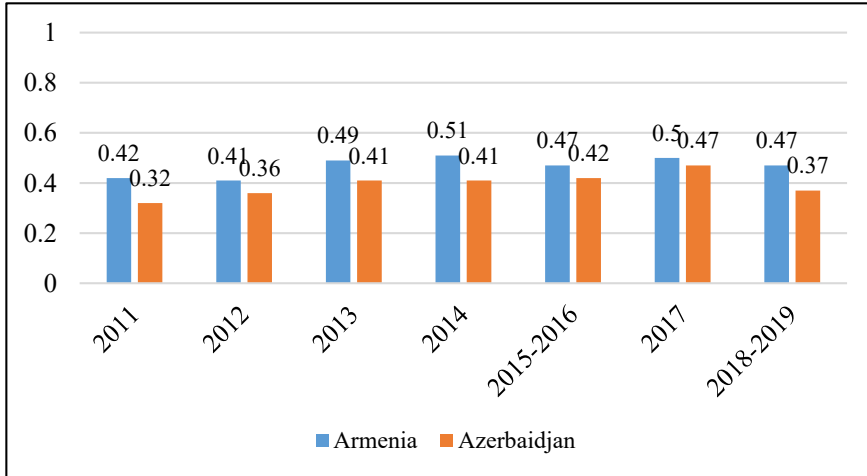
In the *Linkage* domain, we can see that the Armenian indicator has been increasing since 2011, with the best result in 2014, after which there is a decrease. At the same time, Azerbaijan has registered an increasingly positive score since 2011, the events of 2013, 2014, 2015 not changing their trajectory, and only in 2018-2019 we notice a decrease compared to previous years (see Figure 1).

It should be noted, in the case of Azerbaijan and Armenia, that they do not aspire to a high level of integration with the EU, either preferring a balancing behaviour between the EU and the Russian Federation (the case of Azerbaijan) or preferring a closer relationship with the Russian Federation (the case of Armenia). In order to understand the progress made by Azerbaijan and Armenia in this regard, we will analyze each category in the linkage dimension separately.

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<sup>4</sup> Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, "European Integration Index for Eastern Partnership Countries 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014", [<https://eap-csf.eu/for-download/>], 20 March 2021.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*

Figure 1. **Linkage Dimension**– Armenia, Azerbaijan

Source: made by the authors based on data collected from the reports of “European Integration Index for Eastern Partnership Countries 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014” and “Eastern Partnership Index 2015-2016, 2017, 2018-2019”, available online <https://eap-csf.eu/eastern-partnership-index/>, accessed 01.03.2021

The first category in Linkage Dimension is that of *political dialogue*. The deepening of the political dialogue depends significantly on the institutional structure of each EaP state. It should be noted that, since 2015, the category of political dialogue has been included in the category of “international security, political dialogue and cooperation”. This category measures how EaP and EU governments cooperate in crucial areas of international security, defence and border management.

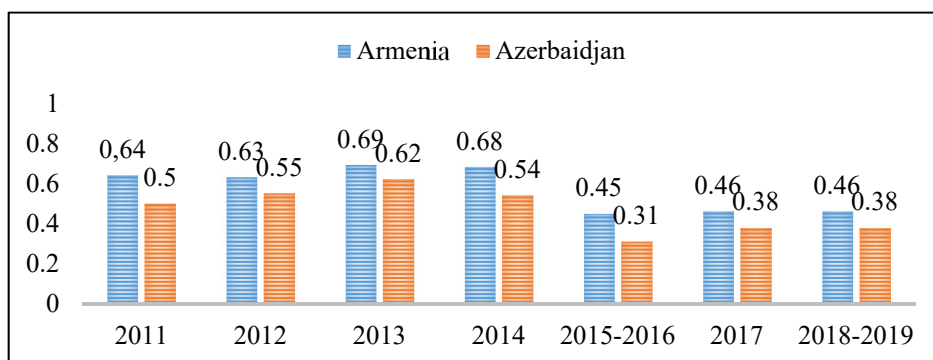
Armenia gets a good score in this category in the first four years analyzed, but since 2015 the result is worse compared to the first four years, but stable.

In the case of Azerbaijan, in the category of political dialogue, we observe the same trend as in the case of Armenia. In the first three years (2011-2013) Azerbaijan has a good score, on the increase, after which in 2014-2016 there is a decrease and in the last years (2017-2019) there is a stable result, but quite small. It should be noted that since 2015, the category of political dialogue has been included in the category of international security,

political dialogue, and cooperation, which has negatively influenced the score of Armenia and Azerbaijan.

In this dimension, in the years 2011-2019, Romania registered a better score compared to Azerbaijan.

Figure 2. **Political dialogue** - international security, political dialogue, and co-operation - sectoral co-operation and trade flows, Linkage Dimension- Armenia, Azerbaijan



Source: made by the authors based on data collected from the reports of “European Integration Index for Eastern Partnership Countries 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014” and “Eastern Partnership Index 2015-2016, 2017, 2018-2019”, available online <https://eap-csf.eu/eastern-partnership-index/>, accessed 01.03.2021

The second category in the linkage dimension is that of *trade and economic integration*, which since 2015 has been included in “*sectoral cooperation and trade flows*”. This category examines the extent to which trade and investment in EaP countries are integrated into the EU.

At the same time, the integration of energy sources/markets and the density of transport network is assessed separately, as these two sectors constitute crucial infrastructure for economic integration.<sup>6</sup>

The results obtained in this category show the efforts made towards improving trade flows, removing barriers to trade in goods and boosting foreign direct investment. This category includes the following sub-

<sup>6</sup> Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, “Eastern Partnership Index 2017, Charting Progress in European Integration, Democratic Reforms, and Sustainable Development”, [<https://eap-csf.eu/wp-content/uploads/EaP-Index-2017.pdf>], 25 February 2021.

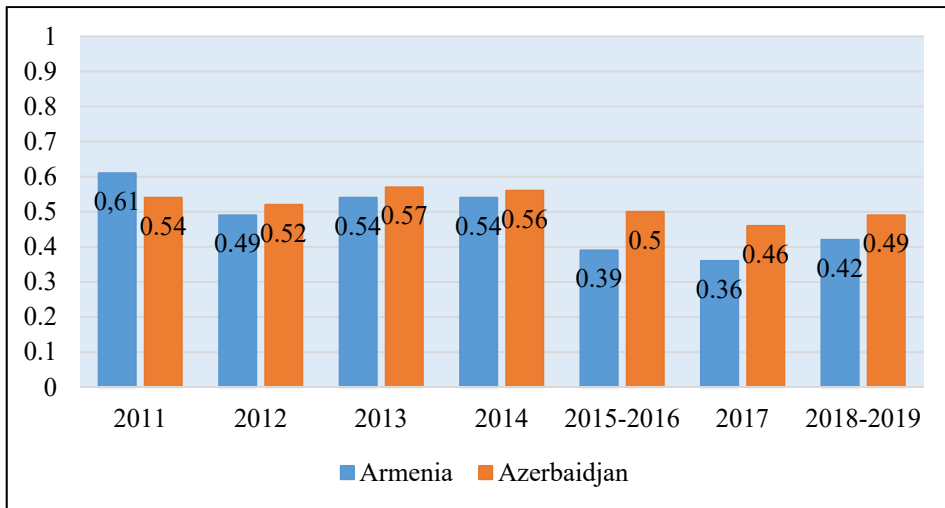
categories – Trade with EU: Commodities; Investments and Loans from EU; Trade with EU: Services; Trade Defence Instruments; Energy Interdependence; Transport: Integration with Trans-European Networks; Environment.

Carrying out the analysis of Armenia’s results in the category of trade and economic integration in the period 2011-2019, we observe the following evolution – decrease (2012) – increase (2013) – stagnation (2014) – decrease (2015-2016-2017) – increase (2018-2019).

In the case of Azerbaijan, we observe the following evolution – decrease (2012) – increase (2013) – decrease (2014-2015-2016-2017) – increase (2018-2019).

If we compare the results obtained by Armenia and Azerbaijan in this category, then we emphasize that Armenia in these years had a better score than Azerbaijan.

Figure 3. **Trade and economic integration** - sectoral co-operation and trade flows, Linkage Dimension– Armenia, Azerbaijan

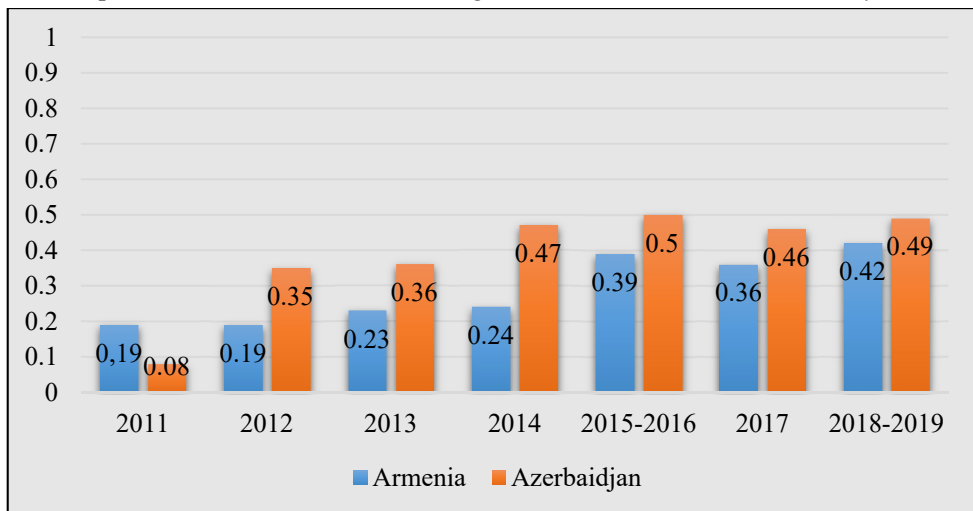


Source: made by the authors based on data collected from the reports of “European Integration Index for Eastern Partnership Countries 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014” and “Eastern Partnership Index 2015-2016, 2017, 2018-2019”, available online <https://eap-csf.eu/eastern-partnership-index/>, accessed 01.03.2021

The third category in the linkage dimension is that of *freedom, security, and justice*, which later in 2012 is included in “*sectoral cooperation*”, and since 2015 in “*sectoral cooperation and trade flows*”. Cooperation in the area of freedom, security and justice between the EU and the EaP countries is a matter of great importance, as it indicates the level of integration/cooperation in the most sensitive areas, which requires high trust between partners. Cooperation in this area is closely linked to the maturity of democratic institutions and the rule of law.

The increase of cooperation standards in this area can encourage countries to pursue reforms in the fight against corruption and organized crime, the fight against illegal migration and human trafficking and the promotion of reforms aimed at better protection of human rights, more effective law enforcement and transparent judicial system.<sup>7</sup>

Figure 4. **Freedom, security, and justice** - sectoral cooperation - sectoral cooperation and trade flows, Linkage Dimension– Armenia, Azerbaijan



Source: made by the authors based on data collected from the reports of “European Integration Index for Eastern Partnership Countries 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014” and “Eastern Partnership Index 2015-2016, 2017, 2018-2019”, available online <https://eap-csf.eu/eastern-partnership-index/>, accessed 01.03.2021

<sup>7</sup> International Renaissance Foundation in cooperation with the Open Society Foundations, “European Integration Index for Eastern Partnership Countries 2011”, [https://eap-csf.eu/wp-content/uploads/European-Integration-Index\_2011.pdf], 25 February 2021.

Armenia and Azerbaijan scores in this category are extremely low. In the case of Armenia, from 2011 to 2016 we see a small increase. In 2017 there is a decrease and in 2018-2019 again a small increase. Starting with 2012, Azerbaijan registers a small decrease, after which in 2013 an increase, in 2014 a stagnation, in 2015-2017 a decrease and in 2018-2019 a small increase.

If in the Linkage dimension and in the categories of political dialogue and trade and economic integration, Armenia had a better score, then in the category of freedom, security, and justice Azerbaijan, since 2012, has had a better result compared to Armenia.

The fourth category in the linkage dimension is that of *energy and transport*. This category is initially measured separately, but later in 2012 it is also included in the “*sectoral cooperation*” category, and since 2015 in the “*sectoral cooperation and trade flows*” category.

In terms of energy, the index examines the extent to which the energy markets of the EaP countries are integrated and organized in a similar way to the EU energy markets. As issues related to the energy sector and energy policy receive much attention in EU policy, the Index examines energy market regulation and market structure in line with EU standards. The energy trade analysis includes mineral fuels, mineral oils, and their distillation products. When it comes to transport, the basic idea is that transport connections should be easier, safer for all transport users in the EU and the EAP countries.<sup>8</sup>

Analyzing the results of the Republic of Armenia in the category of energy and transport, we find a very modest indicator in 2011, followed by a gradual increase until 2014 and a sudden increase in 2015-2016, followed by a small decrease in 2017 and a significant increase in 2018-2019, being the best score in these years.

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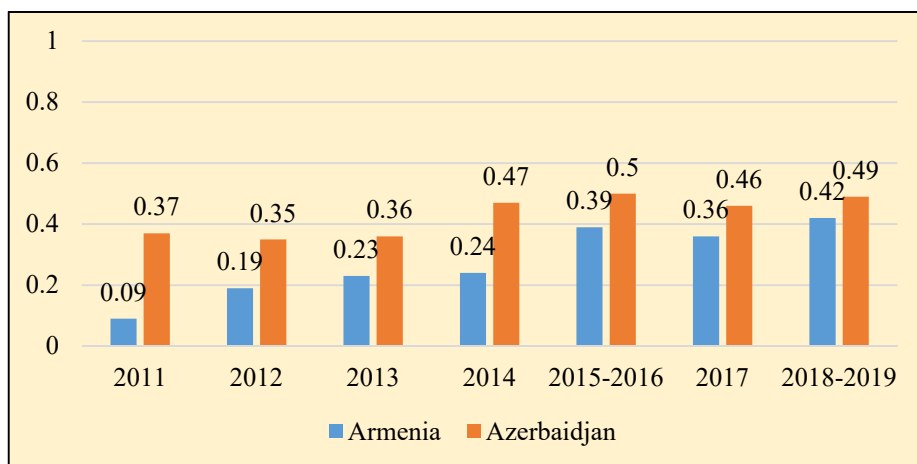
<sup>8</sup> International Renaissance Foundation in cooperation with the Open Society Foundations, “European Integration Index for Eastern Partnership Countries 2011”, [[https://eap-csf.eu/wp-content/uploads/European-Integration-Index\\_2011.pdf](https://eap-csf.eu/wp-content/uploads/European-Integration-Index_2011.pdf)], 25 February 2021.

Regarding the result of Azerbaijan, here we mention a small decrease from 2011 to 2013, a sharp increase in 2014-2016, and a decrease in 2017 and an increase in 2018-2019, the best score being recorded in 2015-2016 (0, 50 of 1.00).

In terms of energy and transport, Azerbaijan is an obvious leader over the years analyzed compared to Armenia, even if in 2018-2019, Armenia's score increases.

In this context, it should be noted that Azerbaijan is one of the main producers of natural gas, and the EU is the main consumer of Azerbaijani natural gas passing through Azerbaijan. Last but not least, the Southern Gas Corridor, a project designed to transport natural gas from the Caspian, Central Asian and Middle Eastern areas to European markets.<sup>9</sup>

Figure 5. **Energy and transport** - sectoral cooperation - sectoral co-operation and trade flows, Linkage Dimension– Armenia, Azerbaijan



Source: made by the authors based on data collected from the reports of “European Integration Index for Eastern Partnership Countries 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014” and “Eastern Partnership Index 2015-2016, 2017, 2018-2019”, available online <https://eap-csf.eu/eastern-partnership-index/>, accessed 01.03.2021

<sup>9</sup> EU – Azerbaijan relations – factsheet, European Union External Action, [[https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/4013/node/4013\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/4013/node/4013_en)], 15 March 2021.

The fifth category in the linkage dimension is that of *Education and People to People*. In 2012 the name of this category changes to “*People to People*”, and since 2015 it has changed to “*Citizens in Europe*”. This category analyzes the mobility of people, including students; educational policies, with a focus on the Bologna process; Mobility, including academic and student mobility, policies on culture, youth, information society, media, and the use of audiovisual; and Participation in EU programs and agencies.

“*Citizens in Europe*” measures the expansion of citizens’ mobility, migration, and communication flows between EaP and EU countries. The index focuses on migration as a process leading to deeper European integration. At the same time, this category includes cultural exchange and cooperation, affinity with the European Union, cooperation in science and education, mobility, including academic and student mobility, digital and information society.<sup>10</sup>

Examining Armenia’s results in this category, we see the following evolution in this period – good result in 2011; decrease in 2012; gradual increase in 2013-2016 and sudden increase in 2017 and small decrease in 2018-2019, with the best result in 2017 (0.68 out of 1.00).

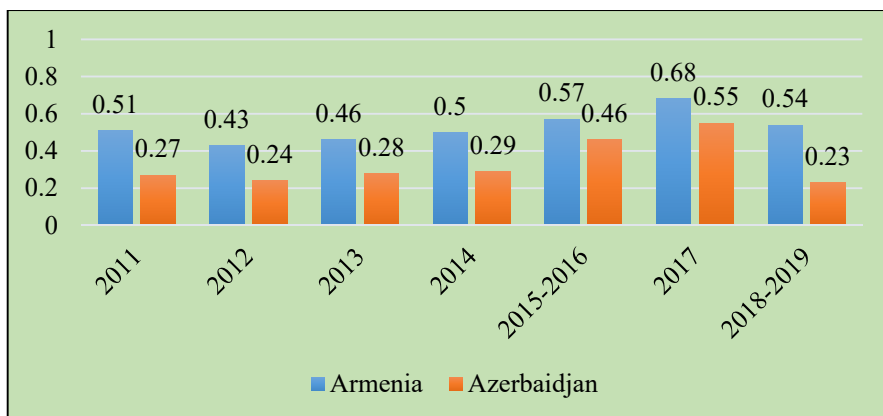
In terms of Education and Mobility, Azerbaijan in the years 2011-2014 had a fairly modest result, with an increase in 2015-2017 and a decrease in 2018-2019, recording the best score in 2017 (0.55 out of 1.00).

We can see that in 2017, Armenia and Azerbaijan recorded the highest scores. At the same time, in recent years, in the field of education and mobility, Armenia has a much better result compared to Azerbaijan.

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<sup>10</sup> Eastern Partnership Index 2017, Charting Progress in European Integration, Democratic Reforms, and Sustainable Development. [<https://eap-csf.eu/wp-content/uploads/EaP-Index-2017.pdf>], 25 February 2021.

Figure 6. **Education and people-to-people** - people-to-people - citizens in Europe, Linkage Dimension– Armenia, Azerbaijan



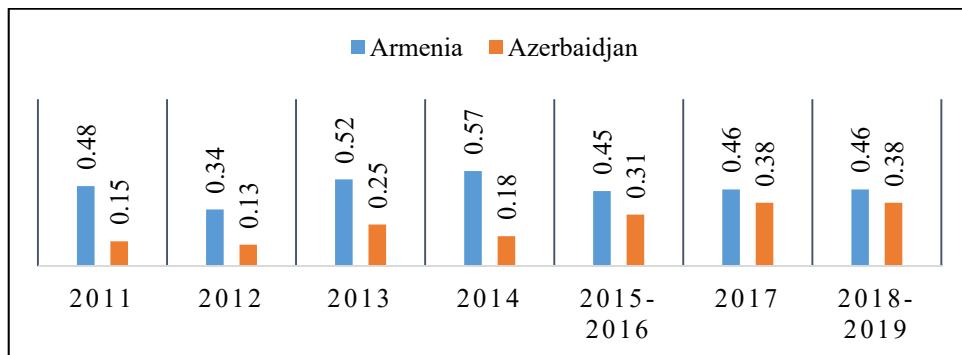
Source: made by the authors based on data collected from the reports of “European Integration Index for Eastern Partnership Countries 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014” and “Eastern Partnership Index 2015-2016, 2017, 2018-2019”, available online <https://eap-csf.eu/eastern-partnership-index/>, accessed 01.03.2021

The sixth category in the linkage dimension is that of *Assistance*, which since 2015 falls into the category “*Citizens in Europe*”. This category measures EU development aid, partnership instruments – national and regional, technical assistance and cooperation with European financial institutions.

In the assistance category, Armenia recorded a fairly good result, having the highest score in 2014 (0.57 out of 1.00), followed by a period of stagnation in 2015-2019.

Azerbaijan in the assistance category, obtains a very low score in 2011-2014, the lowest being in 2012 (0.13 out of 1.00). In the period 2015-2019, Azerbaijan's score is gradually increasing. In the field of assistance, which measures EU development aid, Armenia is an absolute leader compared to Azerbaijan.

Figure 7. **Assistance** - international security, political dialogue and co-operation, Linkage Dimension– Armenia, Azerbaijan



Source: made by the authors based on data collected from the reports of “European Integration Index for Eastern Partnership Countries 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014” and “Eastern Partnership Index 2015-2016, 2017, 2018-2019”, available online <https://eap-csf.eu/eastern-partnership-index/>, accessed 01.03.2021

### *Approximation*

The *Approximation Dimension* aims to evaluate the institutions and policies of the EaP countries and compare them with those typical of EU Member States. The sections on deep and sustainable democracy and the market economy and the DCFTA are not only basic conditions that the EU imposes on the countries concerned for closer relations with it but are also undisputed political objectives and legitimize the general principles in all EaP countries.<sup>11</sup>

This dimension includes the analysis of the following components: legislation, practices, and institutions in the EaP countries and their compliance with EU standards in line with EU requirements. We mention that, initially in 2011, the approximation dimension was divided into 8 sub-categories such as: Democracy; Rule of Law; Governance Quality; Market Economy; Freedom, security, and justice; Energy and transport; Environment; Education and People to People.

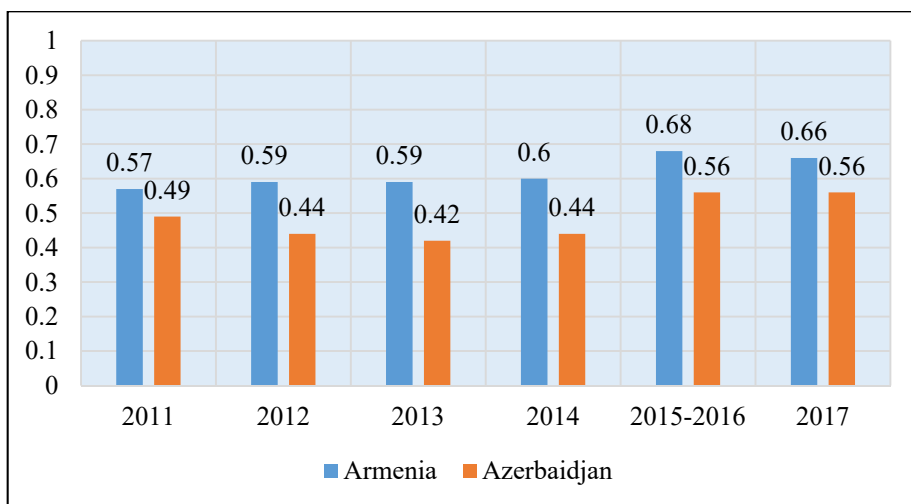
<sup>11</sup> European Integration Index for Eastern Partnership Countries 2011, International Renaissance Foundation in cooperation with the Open Society Foundations, [[https://eap-csf.eu/wp-content/uploads/European-Integration-Index\\_2011.pdf](https://eap-csf.eu/wp-content/uploads/European-Integration-Index_2011.pdf)], 25 February 2021.

In 2012, these categories were reduced to 3: Deep and Sustainable Democracy; Market Economy and DCFTA; Sectoral Approximation. At the same time, since 2015 the names of these categories have changed – Deep and Sustainable Democracy; EU Integration and Convergence; Sustainable Development. In order to research the result obtained by the Republic of Moldova in this dimension, we will analyze each category separately.

Approximation Dimension is a dimension to which Armenia gets a gradually improving score every year. Thus, Armenia's score is continuously increasing from 2011 to 2015-2016, when it registers the highest result (0.68 out of 1.00) and only in 2017 it drops a bit with a score of 0.66. We note that Armenia's upward trend was stopped in 2015, when Armenia saw a visible decline until 2017.

Azerbaijan has been steadily declining from 2011 to 2013, with an upward trend from 2014 to 2015 and a stagnation in 2016-2017, so that growth, although visible, cannot be said to make a difference at the regional level.

Figure 8. **Approximation** Dimension– Armenia, Azerbaijan



Source: made by the authors based on data collected from the reports of “European Integration Index for Eastern Partnership Countries 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014” and “Eastern Partnership Index 2015-2016, 2017”, available online <https://eap-csf.eu/eastern-partnership-index/>, accessed 01.03.2021

We can see a demarcation point in 2014, when Armenia and Azerbaijan also recorded an upward trend. At the same time, in terms of approximation, Armenia again has a better result than Azerbaijan.

The first categories in the approximation dimension that we will analyze will be – Democracy; *Rule of Law and Governance Quality*. We joined these categories because, in 2012, one year after the launch of the Eastern Partnership Indices, they were included in a single category – *Deep and Sustainable Democracy*.

The following indicators are examined in this category: Democratic Rights and Elections, including Political Pluralism; Human Rights and Protection Against Torture; Accountability; Independent Media; Freedom of Speech and Assembly; Independent Judiciary; Equal Opportunities and Non-Discrimination; Rule of Law and Fighting Corruption; Public Administration.<sup>12</sup>

In terms of democracy, the rule of law and the quality of government, Armenia recorded a fairly good and stable score, starting with 0.47 out of 1.00 in 2011 and ending with 0.60 in 2017.

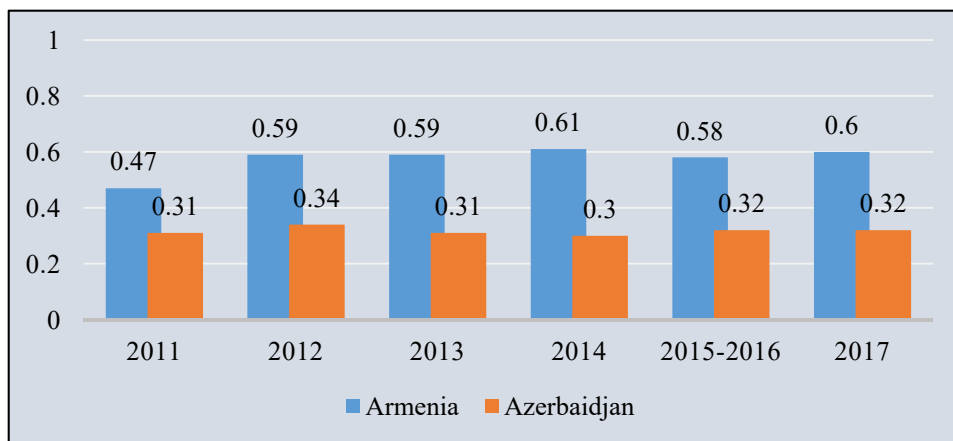
At the same time, Azerbaijan, on the other hand, recorded a very small but still stable score, averaging 0.30-0.34 out of 1.00.

Thus, Armenia has a result twice as good compared to Azerbaijan in terms of democracy, the rule of law and the quality of government.

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<sup>12</sup> Eastern Partnership Index 2017, Charting Progress in European Integration, Democratic Reforms, and Sustainable Development. [<https://eap-csf.eu/wp-content/uploads/EaP-Index-2017.pdf>], 25 February 2021.

Figure 9. **Democracy**, Rule of law, Governance quality - Deep and Sustainable Democracy, Approximation Dimension– Armenia, Azerbaijan



Source: made by the authors based on data collected from the reports of “European Integration Index for Eastern Partnership Countries 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014” and “Eastern Partnership Index 2015-2016, 2017”, available online <https://eap-csf.eu/eastern-partnership-index/>, accessed 01.03.2021

The second category in the approximation dimension includes – *Market Economy* and *Freedom, security, and justice*, which later in 2012 was included in the “*Market Economy and DCFTA*”, and since 2015 has the name – *EU Integration and Convergence*. In this category, the quality of business climate and the progress of transition were analyzed. The analysis is based on widely used indicators for international economic comparison, specific factors, and short-term shocks.<sup>13</sup>

The EU Integration and Convergence category is a measure of integration and convergence with EU rules on trade, security, migration, energy, environment, transport, infrastructure. This includes the analysis of the following components: Market Economy and DCFTA; Freedom, Security and Justice; Energy: Legislation Convergence and Energy Policy; Environment and Climate Policy; Transport: Regulatory Policy (Eastern Partnership Index, 2017).

<sup>13</sup> European Integration Index for Eastern Partnership Countries 2013, International Renaissance Foundation in cooperation with the Open Society Foundations, [[https://eap-csf.eu/wp-content/uploads/European-Integration-Index\\_2013.pdf](https://eap-csf.eu/wp-content/uploads/European-Integration-Index_2013.pdf)], 25 February 2021

Regarding Armenia, here we find an increase in the period 2011-2012, with subsequent stagnation in 2013-2014 and increase in 2015-2016-2017.

Azerbaijan, with a fairly good score in 2011, recorded a gradual decrease in 2012, 2013, 2014, followed by a sharp increase in 2015, 2016, 2017.

Thus, in terms of market economy, Armenia achieved a better result compared to Azerbaijan.

Figure 10. **Market economy** - market economy and DCFTA - EU integration and convergence, Approximation Dimension– Armenia, Azerbaijan



Source: made by the authors based on data collected from the reports of “European Integration Index for Eastern Partnership Countries 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014” and “Eastern Partnership Index 2015-2016, 2017”, available online <https://eap-csf.eu/eastern-partnership-index/>, accessed 01.03.2021

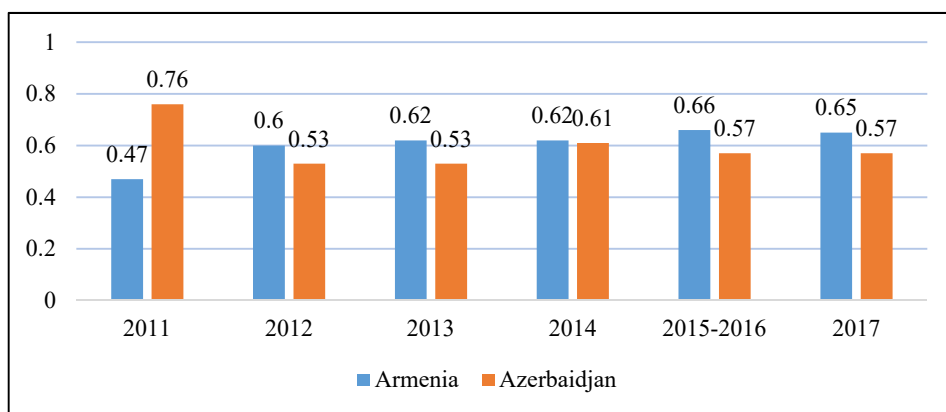
The third category in the approximation dimension includes: *Freedom, security, and justice; Energy and transport; Environment; Education and People to People*, and in 2012 they were united in a single category “*Sectoral approximation*”, and in 2015 in *EU integration and convergence*.

In this category, Armenia experienced an increase from 2011 to 2013, followed by stagnation in 2014 and growth in 2015-2017, the best result being recorded in the years 2015-2016 (0.66 out of 1.00).

Azerbaijan in this category starts with a very high score (0.76 out of 1.00), followed by a sharp decline in 2012 and stagnation in 2013. In 2014, Azerbaijan records an increase, followed by a stagnation in the next three years.

We can see that in this category, Armenia and Azerbaijan start in 2011 with very different scores (0.47 and 0.76), Azerbaijan having a better result, but in the following years (2012-2017) Armenia gets a better result than Azerbaijan.

Figure 11. **Freedom, security and justice**, Energy and transport, Environment - sectoral approximation - EU integration and convergence, Approximation Dimension- Armenia, Azerbaijan



Source: made by the authors based on data collected from the reports of “European Integration Index for Eastern Partnership Countries 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014” and “Eastern Partnership Index 2015-2016, 2017”, available online <https://eap-csf.eu/eastern-partnership-index/>, accessed 01.03.2021

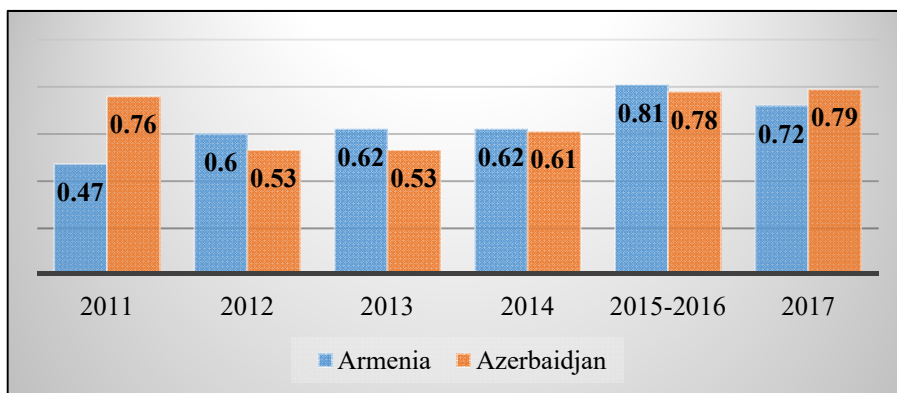
The fourth category *Education and people to people*, incorporated since 2012 in sectoral approximation and then, since 2015, in sustainable development, gives us an oscillating image of educational, cultural and youth policies.

In the field of education and mobility, Armenia achieves a good result every year, its indicator increasing from 2011 to 2016, with a slight stagnation in 2013-2014 and a decrease in 2017.

Azerbaijan, with a high score in 2011 (0.76 out of 1.00), continues with a sharp decline in 2012 and stagnation in 2013, followed by a gradual increase to the highest score in 2017 (0.79 out of 1.00).

If we compare the result of these two countries in the field of education and mobility, then we notice that in 2011, Azerbaijan has a better score than Armenia, but in the following years (2012-2016) Armenia gets a better result, until in 2017 Azerbaijan again records a higher score than Armenia.

Figure 12. **Education and people to people** - sectoral approximation - sustainable development, Approximation Dimension– Armenia, Azerbaijan



Source: made by the authors based on data collected from the reports of “European Integration Index for Eastern Partnership Countries 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014” and “Eastern Partnership Index 2015-2016, 2017”, available online <https://eap-csf.eu/eastern-partnership-index/>, accessed 01.03.2021

### *Management*

*Management Dimension* represents the evolution of management structures and policies in the Eastern Partnership countries, which aim at European integration in the EU. Management analyzes the institutional structures and coordination, management of European integration. This

dimension reflects the level of commitment to European integration and the ability to meet the growing EU agenda in each EaP country.<sup>14</sup>

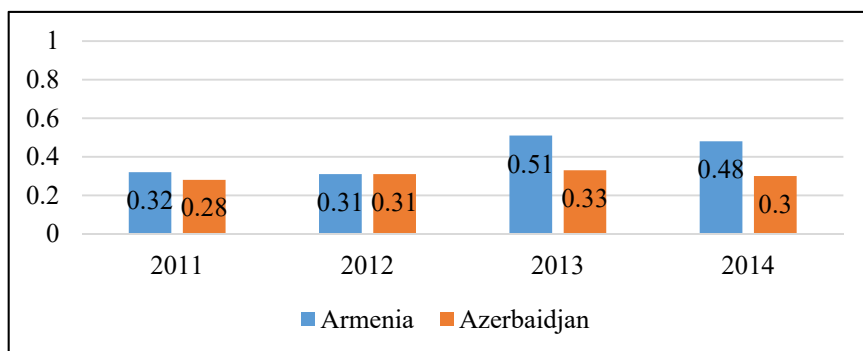
Initially, the management dimension included four categories: Coordination Mechanism; Legal Approximation Mechanism; Participation of civil society; Management of EU Assistance. Since 2012 we already have six categories: Institutional Arrangements for European Integration; Legal Approximation Mechanism; Management of EU Assistance; Training in the field of European Integration; Awareness Raising about European Integration; Participation of civil society.

The analysis of the management dimension gives us an image of only four-time intervals 2011-2014, this being subsequently analyzed as part of the other two dimensions of the EaP Index. In terms of management dimension, Armenia registers in 2011-2012 a stagnation, in 2013 an increase and in 2014 a decrease.

At the same time, Azerbaijan's result in this dimension is stable, with an insignificant increase from 2011 to 2013 and a decrease in 2014.

In the field of management, Armenia scored better than Azerbaijan in the years analyzed.

Figure 13. **Management Dimension**– Armenia, Azerbaijan



Source: made by the authors based on data collected from the reports of “European Integration Index for Eastern Partnership Countries 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014”, available online <https://eap-csf.eu/eastern-partnership-index/>, accessed 01.03.2021

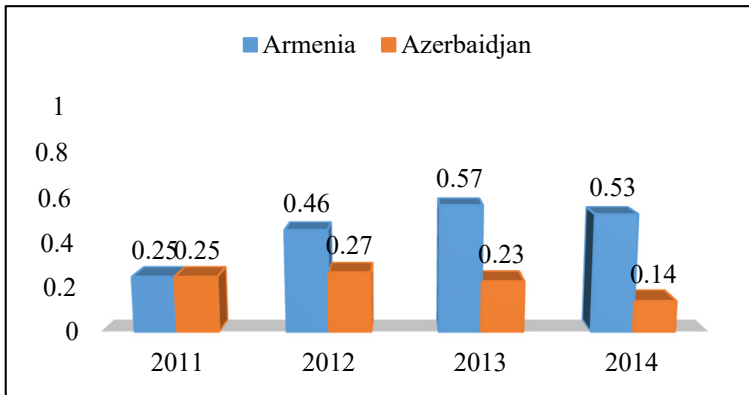
<sup>14</sup> European Integration Index for Eastern Partnership Countries 2013, International Renaissance Foundation in cooperation with the Open Society Foundations, [[https://eap-csf.eu/wp-content/uploads/European-Integration-Index\\_2013.pdf](https://eap-csf.eu/wp-content/uploads/European-Integration-Index_2013.pdf)], 25 February 2021

The first category in the management dimension is that of the *Coordination Mechanism*, which since 2012 has been modified in the “*Institutional Arrangements for European Integration*”.

Armenia’s results in this category are increasing in the period 2011-2013, having the highest score in 2013 (0.57 out of 1.00) and decreasing in 2014.

Azerbaijan’s score in this category is increasing in 2011-2012 and decreasing in 2013-2014. Starting in 2011 with the same score, in the period 2012-2014, Armenia achieves a better result in the field of coordination mechanism.

Figure 14. **Coordination Mechanism** - Institutional Arrangements for European Integration, Management Dimension– Armenia, Azerbaijan



Source: made by the authors based on data collected from the reports of “European Integration Index for Eastern Partnership Countries 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014”, available online <https://eap-csf.eu/eastern-partnership-index/>, accessed 01.03.2021

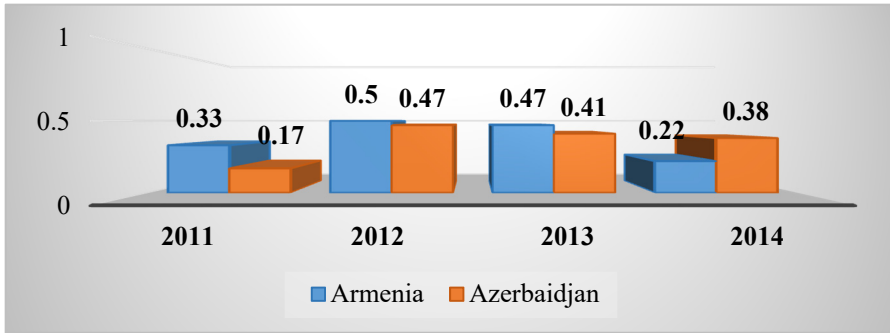
The second category in the management dimension is the *Legal Approximation Mechanism*.

In this compartment, Armenia’s result was increasing in 2011-2012 and decreasing in 2013-2014.

In the case of Azerbaijan, the situation is similar, 2011-2012 increase and 2013-2014 decrease.

If we compare the result of Armenia and Azerbaijan, then we notice that in the first three years (2011-2013) Armenia had a better score, and in 2014, Azerbaijan recorded a higher result.

Figure 15. **Legal Approximation Mechanism**, Management Dimension– Armenia, Azerbaijan

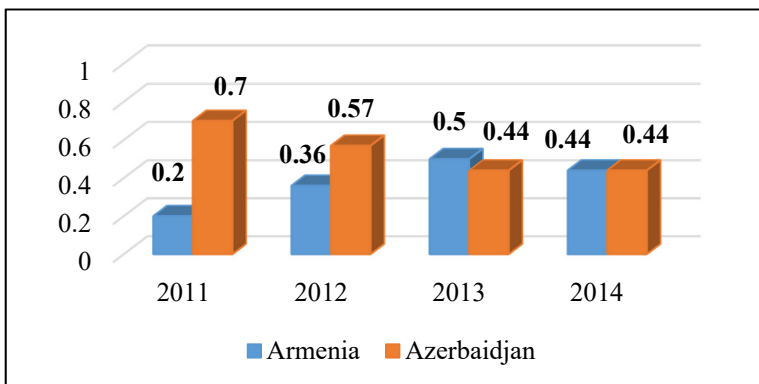


Source: made by the authors based on data collected from the reports of “European Integration Index for Eastern Partnership Countries 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014”, available online <https://eap-csf.eu/eastern-partnership-index/>, accessed 01.03.2021

The third category in the management dimension is that of *Management of EU Assistance*. In terms of management of EU assistance, Armenia had an increase in 2011-2013 and a decrease in 2014.

As for Azerbaijan, we see a decrease in 2011-2012 and stagnation in 2013-2014.

Figure 16. **Management of EU Assistance**, Management Dimension– Armenia, Azerbaijan



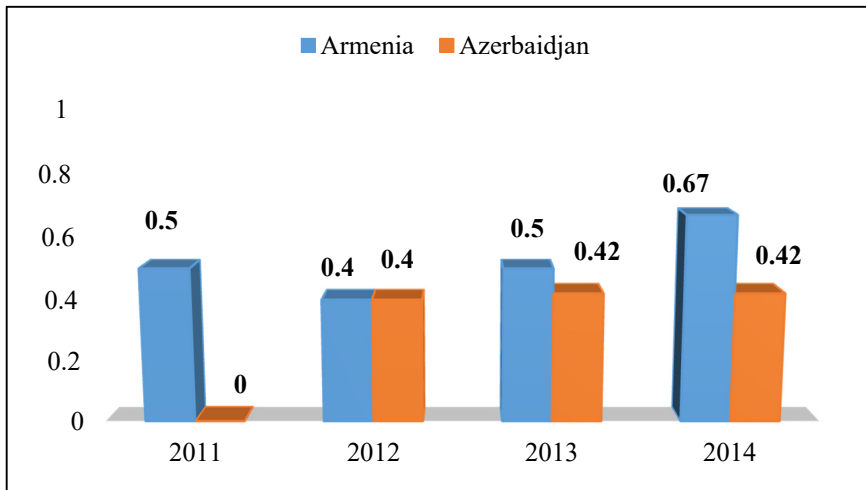
Source: made by the authors based on data collected from the reports of “European Integration Index for Eastern Partnership Countries 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014”, available online <https://eap-csf.eu/eastern-partnership-index/>, accessed 01.03.2021

The fourth category in the management dimension is that of *Participation of civil society*.

In terms of civil society participation, Armenia recorded the following evolution – 2011-2012 decrease, 2013-2014 stagnation.

Azerbaijan had a small increase in 2012-2013 and stagnation in 2014.

Figure 17. **Participation of civil society**, Management Dimension– Armenia, Azerbaijan



Source: made by the authors based on data collected from the reports of “European Integration Index for Eastern Partnership Countries 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014”, available online <https://eap-csf.eu/eastern-partnership-index/>, accessed 01.03.2021

## Conclusions

In conclusion, we can mention that from the beginning Armenia supported the “Eastern Partnership” project and wanted to get closer to the EU and sign the Association Agreement with the EU. However, due to domestic issues and the international situation that arose on the eve of Ukraine’s signing of the Association Agreement with the EU, Armenia refused to sign the Association Agreement with the EU. During this period Armenia was put in the situation when it had to choose either EU integration or cooperation with Russia. As a result, Armenia joined the Eurasian

Economic Union in 2015, but did not completely give up cooperation with the EU and began a new process of cooperation between Yerevan and Brussels.

Negotiations on a comprehensive and enhanced Partnership Agreement between the EU and the Republic of Armenia began in 2015. In 2017, the negotiations were completed, and the agreement was initialed in Yerevan. On 1 June 2018, the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement between the EU and the Republic of Armenia was provisionally implemented.<sup>15</sup> Thus, the Republic of Armenia was the first state in the Eurasian Economic Union to sign the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement with the European Union.

The Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement between the EU and the Republic of Armenia was ratified by the Republic of Armenia, all EU Member States, the European Parliament and entered into force on 1 March 2021, which is an important step for EU-Armenia relations. The main objectives of the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement between the EU and the Republic of Armenia are – to strengthen the comprehensive political and economic partnership and cooperation between the Parties; strengthening the basis for political dialogue in all areas of mutual interest; strengthening democracy and political, economic and institutional stability in Armenia; promoting, maintaining and strengthening peace and stability at both regional and international level; cooperation on freedom, security and justice; increasing mobility and interpersonal contacts; supporting Armenia's efforts to develop its economic potential through international cooperation; enhanced trade cooperation; creating the necessary conditions for closer cooperation in other areas of mutual interest.<sup>16</sup>

Today, the EU is Armenia's main reform partner. Between 2019 and 2020, the European Union has intensified aid and doubled funding for Armenia to 65 million euros. The EU supports Armenia in its government reform program, private sector development and human capital.

The EU is an important export and import market for Armenia and one of the largest sources of foreign direct investment in the country's economy.

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<sup>15</sup> The EU and Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement enters into force, [[https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP\\_21\\_782](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_21_782)], 20 March 2021.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*.

Companies in EU Member States are among the largest taxpayers, investors, and employers in Armenia. At the same time, exports increased from EUR 108 million in 2016 to EUR 197 million in 2019. Thus, the EU is the second largest trading partner after Russia, accounting for about 20% of Armenia's total trade.<sup>17</sup>

In the case of Azerbaijan, we can mention that the bilateral relations between the EU and Azerbaijan are based on the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, which entered into force in 1999. At the same time, in 2017, the EU and Azerbaijan began negotiations on a new framework agreement to give new impetus to mutually beneficial political dialogue and cooperation, given that Azerbaijan is an important energy partner of the EU and plays a key role in delivering Caspian gas to the EU market.<sup>18</sup>

In 2018, the EU and Azerbaijan approved joint partnership priorities, which, together with the four priority areas of the Eastern Partnership, will contribute to the development of political dialogue.

On 18 December 2020, representatives of the EU and Azerbaijan met in Brussels for the Partnership Council meeting. Officials discussed the implementation of the EU-Azerbaijan-agreed partnership priorities, the reform agenda in Azerbaijan and the prospects for a new bilateral agreement between the EU and Azerbaijan. The parties also discussed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the situation around Nagorno-Karabakh.

During this meeting, the High Representative of the EU, Josep Borrell, stated that "the EU wants to conclude a new comprehensive agreement with Azerbaijan, based on democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms, and that the EU is ready to play a role in supporting and shaping a lasting solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict".<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Facts and figures about EU – Armenia relations, EU Neighbours portal, [<https://www.euneighbours.eu/en/east/stay-informed/publications/facts-and-figures-about-eu-armenia-relations-0>], 15 March 2021.

<sup>18</sup> Facts and figures about EU - Azerbaijan relations. European Union External Action Service, [[https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/eap\\_factsheet\\_azerbaijan\\_eng\\_web.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/eap_factsheet_azerbaijan_eng_web.pdf)], 01 March 2021.

<sup>19</sup> EU and Azerbaijan discuss bilateral relations in Brussels, EU Neighbours portal, [<https://www.euneighbours.eu/en/east/stay-informed/news/eu-and-azerbaijan-discuss-bilateral-relations-brussels>], 20 March 2021.

Participating in the EaP Summit in June 2020, the President of Azerbaijan noted that negotiations on a new partnership agreement with the EU have entered their final phase, and the text of the document has already been agreed by 90% (Azerbaijan plans to start gas supplies to EU in the near future). The new agreement is expected to address political, trade, energy, and other specific issues, including the conditions for the possible establishment of a visa-free travel regime in the future. It will include firm provisions on democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights.<sup>20</sup>

It should be noted that the EU is Azerbaijan's main trading partner and accounts for about 37% of the country's total trade (2019), mainly oil exports to the EU (about 5% of total EU imports in the field).

Thus, the EU ranks first in the field of exports and imports from Azerbaijan. At the same time, the EU is a major investor in energy and other sectors of Azerbaijan's economy.<sup>21</sup> The EU is a major consumer of Azerbaijani oil, transported through the territory of Azerbaijan, and the Southern Gas Corridor project is a strategic initiative to transport gas from the Caspian Sea to the European market. Exports of energy resources from Azerbaijan to the EU are expected to increase further after the completion of the project on the southern gas corridor for the transport of gas from the Caspian Sea to Europe.

However, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict remains a major obstacle to stability and prosperity in the region of Armenia and Azerbaijan.

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<sup>20</sup> Three Eastern Partnership neighbours in the South Caucasus, [<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/172/three-eastern-partnership-neighbours-in-the-south-caucasus>], 20 March 2021.

<sup>21</sup> Facts and figures about EU - Azerbaijan relations. European Union External Action Service, [[https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/eap\\_factsheet\\_azerbaijan\\_eng\\_web.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/eap_factsheet_azerbaijan_eng_web.pdf)], 01 March 2021.

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## BITTER HARVEST: A COMPARATIVE LOOK AT THE BRITISH AND AMERICAN PRESENCE IN AFGHANISTAN FROM THE GREAT GAME TO THE 2021 US WITHDRAWAL

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### Abstract

*The present article is built on the premise that both the British Empire in the 19th century (during its rivalry with Russia, known as the Great Game) and the United States in the 20th century treated Afghanistan as a means to an end in their quest to fulfil their strategic interests, without much concern for the country's people, history and traditions, which ultimately contributed to their failure: Britain was forced to accept Afghanistan's independence in 1919 at the end of the third Anglo-Afghan war, while the US withdrew its troops in August 2021, putting an end to what proved to be an unwinnable war. The article's main body examines the British and American presence in Afghanistan through the lens of a historical comparison meant to highlight the similarities and differences in their approaches, while the conclusion contains a few lessons the US should learn from Afghanistan that might, ideally, inform its future interventionist strategies.*

**Keywords:** Afghanistan, Taliban, United States, Britain, Great Game.

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## 1. Introduction. Afghanistan – the Graveyard of Empires?

In August 2021, the US completed the withdrawal of its armed forces from Afghanistan, announced by President Joe Biden a few months before, in April, thus putting an end to America's longest war. Images of chaos at Kabul Airport, featuring American troops being airlifted as the Taliban advanced, and local Afghans desperately clinging to the departing planes, risking their lives to escape, were heavily featured in mass media all around the world and inevitably brought to mind a similar moment that had occurred more than four decades ago in Saigon, when American personnel were being airlifted off the roof of the American Embassy in 1975, ahead of the advancing Vietcong. Needless to say, that was not America's finest moment – and neither was 2021. Both marked the end of conflicts initially depicted as “the good war,” in which virtuous Americans were fighting evil communists or, later on, even more menacing terrorists. In both cases, the American public's support for the war waned as time wore on and there was no victory in sight; both marked defining geopolitical moments in which the US's military might was defeated by a significantly weaker enemy.<sup>1</sup> In 1975, as in 2021, probably the foremost question in everyone's mind was, “how had it come to this?” Much as President Biden and his team have rejected comparisons to Vietnam, they are unavoidable: in both instances, civil and military leaders misled the American public about a conflict with unclear aims and muddled strategies, fought on a geographic and cultural terrain in which they never quite found their footing.<sup>2</sup>

Dismissing America's fiasco in Afghanistan simply as an unwinnable war in the “graveyard of empires”, a rugged land filled with people willing to fight to the death, is overly simplistic, even though the phrase, whose origins are unknown, has been featured heavily in news programmes lately, and even President Biden used it in his August 16, 2021

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<sup>1</sup> “From Saigon to Kabul: What America's Afghan Fiasco Means for the World”, *The Economist*, August 21, 2021 [<https://www.economist.com/briefing/2021/08/21/from-saigon-to-kabul-what-americas-afghan-fiasco-means-for-the-world>], accessed Nov. 4, 2021.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*.

speech.<sup>3</sup> Even though Alexander the Great, Britain, the Soviet Union and the US all stumbled there at various moments in history, their losses in Afghanistan were not the only causes of their declining domination – and, in the case of the US, one could argue that its “imperial momentum” was actually lost in the aftermath of the 2003 Iraq invasion. Therefore, seeing Afghanistan as “the graveyard of empires” tells us little about why the US failed to “deliver a stable, unified and secure Afghanistan,” as President Biden put it in his August 2021 remarks.<sup>4</sup> In order to find out a more pertinent answer, one has to look closely at the various changes in American strategy and goals over the past two decades, which is something the present article will do in a subsequent section.

Despite claiming, back in 2001, that America’s goals in Afghanistan did not include nation-building, the US and its allies often acted as the midwives of a new state founded upon a new constitution adopted in 2004. The US was instrumental in building up a new Afghan army, one sadly and utterly unsuited for its main task (i.e., providing security guarantees to the civilian population, especially after 2014, when NATO forces ended their combat mission so as to ensure that the Taliban did not seize momentum to gain more territory),<sup>5</sup> because the chain of command often clashed with tribal and family loyalties. Pouring billions of dollars into rebuilding Afghanistan resulted in massive and endemic corruption with very few positive results to show<sup>6</sup> – and this considerably financial

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<sup>3</sup> The White House, “Remarks by President Biden on Afghanistan,” August 16, 2021, [<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/08/16/remarks-by-president-biden-on-afghanistan/>], accessed Nov. 4, 2021. See also Sebastian Junger, “‘A Vast Criminal Racket’: Sebastian Junger on How the U.S. Corrupted Afghanistan,” in *Vanity Fair*, August 31, 2021 [<https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2021/08/a-vast-criminal-racket-sebastian-junger-on-how-the-us-corrupted-afghanistan>], accessed Nov. 4, 2021, and Kevin Baker, “The Old Cliché About Afghanistan that Won’t Die,” in *Politico*, August 28, 2021 [<https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2021/08/28/afghanistan-graveyard-britain-us-russia-506990>], accessed Nov. 4, 2021.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>5</sup> “Taliban Are Back – What Next for Afghanistan?,” *BBC News*, August 30, 2021 [<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-49192495>], accessed Nov. 4, 2021.

<sup>6</sup> As Sebastian Junger argued, “On paper the U.S. paid for a 300,000-man Afghan army, but the actual number was much smaller—and the difference, of course, was pocketed by Afghan officials. American policies were so contradictory, in fact, that many ordinary

investment was one of the reasons mentioned by President Biden to explain the complete withdrawal of US troops, whose continued presence in Afghanistan would have been exploited by Russia and China to further weaken America's global position.<sup>7</sup> In fact, China, which shares a narrow border with Afghanistan, has already signalled its interest in backing up the Taliban regime by hosting a Taliban delegation in Tianjin at the end of July 2021. One of China's Communist Party-run tabloids celebrated the US's withdrawal in August 2021 as "an omen of Taiwan's future," arguing that a conflict over the island would mean unthinkable human and financial costs that America could not afford to bear.<sup>8</sup> Iran and Russia, both relishing America's humiliation, have also shown a friendlier attitude toward the Taliban.<sup>9</sup>

Regardless of how catchy the phrase "the graveyard of empires" is, it fails to capture much of Afghanistan's actual history. If anything, the country has unfortunately found itself in the position of a victim of imperial ambitions, a roadkill of empires. Despite resisting Alexander the Great in 330 BC, he succeeding in breaking local resistance, founded what would become the city of Kandahar and pushed forward to India.<sup>10</sup> In his wake came the Seleucid Empire, Genghis Khan, Tamerlane, Babur, and Nadir Shah, all of whom conquered Afghanistan until the foundation of the modern state by Ahmad Shah Durrani in 1747. So did the Parthians, the Persians, the Arabs (who needed about 200 years to Islamicise the country) and the Turks – many of whom stayed for decades, if not centuries, despite the fact that Afghanistan is notoriously difficult to conquer because of its landlocked position along the main land route between Iran, Central Asia and India, the prevalence of tribalism in the area and the physical

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Afghans concluded that the U.S. was secretly allied with the Taliban and just "pretending" to be at war." (*Art. cit.*).

<sup>7</sup> As President Biden put it in his August 2021 speech, "Our true strategic competitors—China and Russia—would love nothing more than the United States to continue to funnel billions of dollars in resources and attention into stabilising Afghanistan indefinitely."

<sup>8</sup> "From Saigon to Kabul", *The Economist*.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*. Even Britain, the US's traditional ally, has expressed discontent that the US withdrawal was presented to them as a *fait accompli*.

<sup>10</sup> Seth G. Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires. America's War in Afghanistan*, New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 2009, pp. 60, 81. See also Carter Malkasian, *The American War in Afghanistan. A History*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021, p. 51.

characteristics of its terrain.<sup>11</sup> Eventually, all the empires that reached Afghanistan found good reasons to move on and limit their costs and expectations, abandoning the country after subjecting it to delusions that suited their purpose at one point or another. Afghanistan's reputation as a sort of geopolitical quicksand for empires appears to have originated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, after the first Anglo-Afghan War, when Britain started being involved in the so-called Great Game with Russia.<sup>12</sup> It is quite possible that Afghanistan's strategic geopolitical importance, just like that of other countries lying between more powerful neighbours (the example of Poland comes to mind) might have been exaggerated after the decline of the Spice Road in the 15<sup>th</sup> century brought on by the rise in sea travel between Asia and Europe and that the 19<sup>th</sup> century British-Russian rivalry could have been based on misreading each other's intentions at a time when London's foremost priority was protecting its strategic interests in India. Afghanistan was thus reduced to a buffer state separating the territories of the two rivals in the area, a status reinforced through a combination of diplomacy and coercion.<sup>13</sup> In 1907, Russia and Britain signed an agreement demarcating Afghanistan's borders to separate the country from the two empires.

The present article is built on a comparison between the British presence in Afghanistan in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and the American one throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, in order to show that both powers were driven solely by their strategic interests in the area, with little

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<sup>11</sup> Akilesh Pillalamarri, "Why Is Afghanistan the 'Graveyard of Empires'?" in *The Diplomat*, June 30, 2017 [<https://thediplomat.com/2017/06/why-is-afghanistan-the-graveyard-of-empires/>], accessed Nov. 4, 2021.

<sup>12</sup> Baker, *art. cit.* as I will discuss further on, it was in 1842 that a retreating British-Indian army of 4700 soldiers and 12000 civilians was slaughtered almost to a man near the village of Gandamak. Far from being interred, Britain would triumph in the Second Anglo-Afghan War ended in 1880 and would go on to be, after World War I, the world's largest imperial power.

<sup>13</sup> Nasir A. Andisha, "Neutrality and Its Place in Afghanistan's Foreign Policy", in Srinjoy Bose, Nishank Motwani and William Maley (eds.), *Afghanistan – Challenges and Prospects*, London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2018, p. 241. As the author points out, "Afghanistan would be a buffer state where neither power would seek to exercise influence to the detriment of the other." (p. 245). See also Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 61 and Barnett R. Rubin, *Afghanistan. What Everyone Needs to Know*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2020, p. 1.

knowledge about the country's local conditions, history and customs. This ignorance promoted them to make decisions that sometimes misfired and had an overall negative impact on Afghanistan's development. Both Britain and the US treated Afghanistan as a means to an end by employing fairly similar strategies examined in the following sections. In addition, the paper also includes a section presenting a brief historical outline of Afghanistan's history, as well as a concluding part mainly focusing on the lessons to be learned from the US's Afghan debacle. While most of the Afghan and international actors that have contributed to the country's current troubles are gone, the problems they created are likely to endure into the foreseeable future.<sup>14</sup>

## **2. Afghanistan – brief historical outline**

As any look at a map of Central Asia will show, Afghanistan is a landlocked country bordered by China, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Iran. Its lack of direct access to sea or international air space makes it vulnerable to and dependent on its neighbours. As such, in the words of former UN negotiator Lakhdar Brahimi, "Afghanistan cannot be peaceful if its neighbours do not want it to be peaceful," a statement that has been proven true time and time again.<sup>15</sup> This translates into the fact that every neighbour's preferred option would be a stable Afghanistan ruled by its friends and its worst, a stable Afghanistan ruled by its enemies. In between lies a scenario quite closely resembling the current *de facto* situation: an unstable Afghanistan where friends and enemies keep each other at bay.

Afghanistan was stable from the 1930s through most of the 1970s because there was an international consensus to support the Afghan government more or less as the British and Russians had agreed earlier in the century. During these decades Britain and then the United States had *de facto* agreements with the Soviet Union over non-interference in Afghanistan. From 1929 the same dynastic family, the Musahiban, ruled.

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<sup>14</sup> Srinjoy Bose, William Maley, "Contextualising Afghanistan's Transitions. Influences and Challenges", in Bose, Motwani, Maley (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 1.

<sup>15</sup> Rubin, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

The government belonged to this one family, which placed limits on what was at stake in politics.<sup>16</sup>

Among Afghanistan's many ethnic groups, the Pashtuns (also spelled Pushtuns) have been the dominant political force starting with the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, but even by the most generous estimates for a country that has never completed a population census, they represent about one third of the total population.<sup>17</sup> Other numerically significant ethnic groups include the Tadjiks (a term originally used to describe the Arab Muslim invaders who were far from being members of a single tribe), the Uzbeks (forming the majority population of the northern Afghan plains) and the Hazaras, who also represent the country's Twelver Shia minority.<sup>18</sup> The rest of the population are Sunni Muslims adhering to the Hanafi school of Islamic jurisprudence and most Afghans are deeply religious. To this day, practically the entire Afghan society revolves around the idea of extended family or tribe/clan (known as *qaum*), which represents the primary political and social network.<sup>19</sup>

Afghanistan's long history of resisting invasion and devotion to Islam has a few important implications: it has defined what Afghan identity means and brought the people together, transcending rather than replacing tribe and ethnicity. But tribal identity was not always a source of cohesion, as it often led to intra-tribal conflict and warfare. For example, the Pashtun still adhere to Pashtunwali, their own code of behaviour that requires exacting vengeance against rivals, which explains why the Pashtun were often involved in conflicts with other tribes.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 47.

<sup>17</sup> Jonathan L. Lee, *Afghanistan. A History from 1260 to the Present*, London: Reaktion Books, 2018, p. 13; Rubin, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

<sup>18</sup> Rubin, *op. cit.*, p. 13. See also Malkasian, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-47.

<sup>19</sup> Malkasian, *op. cit.*, p. 41. From an early age, family members are instilled with the *qaum's* multiple identities, its histories, genealogies, its place and status in social hierarchies and ethno-cultural ties with tribal territory or a specific region, known as the *watan*. See also Rubin, *op. cit.*, pp. 19, 172.

<sup>20</sup> Malkasian, *op. cit.*, pp. 66-68; Christopher M. Wyatt, *Afghanistan and the Defence of Empire. Diplomacy and Strategy during the Great Game*, London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2011, p. 5.

Historically speaking, Afghanistan has been known as the Highway of Conquest,<sup>21</sup> as it lay in the path of various invading peoples, from Persians to Mongols and from Arabs to Chinese, but it might as well have been called the Highway of Commerce, since it is located at the intersection of many ancient trans-Asian trade routes. The country never experienced direct rule by a European colonial power. As I have mentioned earlier, Afghanistan's modern history starts in 1747,<sup>22</sup> the year when a young ruler named Ahmad Shah from the Abdali (later, Durrani) tribe founded an independent kingdom in Kandahar, modelled after the absolutist Safavid Empire. The Durrani tribe, together with the Ghilzai, would rule the country in one form or another until 1978. Few other events in Afghanistan's history have been subject to more mythologising than the crowning of Ahmad Shah as king by a *Loya Jirga* (General National Assembly) of Pashtun, Uzbek and Hazara tribes; in reality, this quasi-democratic process for selecting a ruler might not have taken place at all (it is actually not mentioned anywhere in contemporary sources), since it is known that Pashtun tribes do not elect kings for the simple reason that they do not have a monarchical system.<sup>23</sup> The very term "modern Afghanistan" applied to this political entity is something of a misnomer, since Ahmad Shah had no specific name for his kingdom which at the time consisted of only three provinces, Kandahar, Farah and Helmand; the name "Afghanistan" first appears in the notes of British official Mount Stuart Elphinstone in 1808-1809, used interchangeably with the "Kingdom of Cabool", although the kingdom's capital was Kandahar.<sup>24</sup> Ahmad Shah's

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Barfield, *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012, p. 15.

<sup>22</sup> Certainly, the land known as Afghanistan has a rich and diverse history prior to 1747, but for reasons of brevity, retracing it here falls outside the scope of the present article. As Lee points out, "One reason for Afghan historians favouring 1747 as the foundation of modern Afghanistan is that it avoids referring back to the previous two-and-a-half centuries of the Saddozai-Safavid alliance. It also avoids the uncomfortable fact that prior to 1747 Kandahar, which Afghan monarchists would later promote as the dynastic and spiritual capital of Afghanistan, was for many decades an integral part of the Persian province of Khurasan and that the Abdalis were a Persianate (*i. e.*, *Shia* – *my note*) tribe." (p. 66); Rubin, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

<sup>23</sup> Lee, *op. cit.*, pp. 110, 112.

<sup>24</sup> Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 115; Rubin, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

kingdom was fragile coalition of tribal, military and sectarian factions brought together for pragmatic necessity, which degenerated into internecine clan warfare soon after his death. His victories against various Indian rulers (most notably, at Panipat in 1761) weakened their hold on Northern India and allowed for the rise of a new and enduring entity, the British East India Company. Since the British presence in Afghanistan forms the object of the following section, I will not discuss it here and move instead to events following the moment when Afghanistan proclaimed its independence from the British Empire in 1919 during the reign of king Amanullah Khan, who also embarked on a programme of (largely failed) social and constitutional reforms modelled after the Young Turks and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Adopting this model wholesale and trying to impose it in one decade, without accounting for the sharp differences between the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish state (where these reforms occurred gradually starting with the Tanzimat era in 1839), on the one hand, and Afghanistan, on the other, led to the king's forced abdication in 1929.<sup>25</sup> After declaring its independence (recognised in the 1921 Treaty of Rawalpindi after Afghanistan agreed to observe the older colonial boundaries), the financial subsidies that Britain had paid to Afghan rulers for half a century (the so-called "money from God") ceased and the country faced a severe financial crisis. This pattern would be repeated again in 1991, when the Soviet Union terminated its financial aid to Afghanistan, which led to the fall of president Najibullah's regime in 1992.<sup>26</sup>

The early years of the young independent Afghan kingdom were marked by a tense relationship with the Soviet Union. In 1925, Stalin sent the Red Army to occupy a region on the border between Tajikistan and Afghanistan and Amanullah Khan seriously considered declaring war on

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<sup>25</sup> For more details on this issue, see Lee, *op. cit.*, pp. 496-497. The failure of the reform movement was due in part to the naivety of its advocates, combined with their lack of understanding of the processes that led to Europe and Turkey's technological, intellectual and social revolution. This pattern of unfinished reform projects set the tone for successive generations of Afghan modernisers who fell victim to their own blind spots. See Mariam Ghani and Ashraf Ghani, *Afghanistan: A Lexicon, 100 Notes – 100 Thoughts*, Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 2012, p. 13, and Rubin, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

<sup>26</sup> Rubin, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

the Soviet Union after the death of several Afghan soldiers.<sup>27</sup> The conflict was eventually settled through international arbitration, but the incident represented a stark warning of the consequences Afghanistan might face if it antagonised Moscow – a warning that would come to pass five decades later. Amanullah was succeeded by Nadir Shah, whose accession to the throne was welcomed by the Soviets.<sup>28</sup> The new ruler announced his intention to make Afghanistan a “progressive” state that would strictly adhere to Islamic doctrines, an intention formalised in the 1931 Constitution that declared Hanafi Sunnism the foundation of the state’s legal system, an unprecedented degree of Islamisation until the era of the Taliban.<sup>29</sup> In 1934, Afghanistan joined the League of Nations and the US formally established diplomatic relations with Kabul, by opening a legation in the Afghan capital in 1942. Four years earlier, the American Inland Exploration Company (AIEC) had become interested in Afghanistan’s natural resources, primarily oil, and secured a 75-year concession to exploit the country’s mineral reserves, which was never implemented because of the lack of accessibility and infrastructure. In the wake of World War II, Afghanistan moved closer to the Third Reich, although the country maintained its neutrality during the conflict, as it had done during World War I.

After the war, the country’s prime minister, Mohammad Daoud Khan, strengthened the country’s ties with the Soviet Union, especially after Stalin’s death in 1953. His premiership represents a watershed moment in Afghanistan’s 20<sup>th</sup> century history, as he played a key role during many crucial events in his almost three decades in power. His preoccupation with the creation of Pashtunistan (a region reuniting all the Pashtun tribes on both sides of the Pakistani-Afghan border under Kabul’s domination) led to a prolonged confrontation with Pakistan, as the Kabul refused to acknowledge the 1893 Durand Line as the official border between the two states. This conflict still marks the relationship between

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<sup>27</sup> Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 481.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 509.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 513.

the two countries to this day.<sup>30</sup> This conflict also explains why Afghanistan was not invited to join CENTO and SEATO (Pakistan being a member of both organisations) and why Daoud, assuming that Britain and the US were siding with Pakistan, preferred to gravitate closer to Moscow. At this point, the US refused to take up Britain's mantle and be dragged into a new Great Game with the USSR over Afghanistan.

Daoud believed that closer ties with Moscow would minimise the risk of a Soviet intervention in Northern Afghanistan. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Afghanistan and the USSR signed a number of economic agreements by which Afghanistan would receive, among others, military and financial aid for massive infrastructure projects supervised by hundreds of Soviet and Warsaw Pact advisers. This increased Soviet presence inevitably led to the spread of Marxist-Leninist ideology and to the belief of Kremlin officials that they had won the Cold War in Afghanistan, despite the fact that Daoud still insisted that Afghanistan was a non-aligned nation. This rapprochement with the Soviet Union displeased many Afghans who opposed both Soviet atheism and communist ideology.

In 1964, Afghanistan adopted a new constitution which declared the state to be a constitutional monarchy, which was not the case in practice. It also provided for the existence of multiple political parties, among them the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), a Marxist-Leninist organisation whose leaders included Muhammad Taraki and Babrak Karmal, both emblematic figures in the country's slide toward communism.<sup>31</sup> The PDPA became engaged in a bitter rivalry with various Islamist parties inspired by the ideology of Sayyid Qutb and the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>32</sup> In the late 1970s, many of the leaders of these parties

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 553-555. In 1961, Daoud closed the frontier between Pakistan and Afghanistan, stating that it would agree to reopen it only when Pashtunistan obtained self-determination. See also Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 86 and Rubin, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

<sup>31</sup> Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 564.

<sup>32</sup> For more details on this issue, see Raluca Moldovan, "The War on Terror from Reality to Idea. Why a Final Victory Will Remain Elusive", in Riku Flanagan (ed.), *Understanding the*

became leaders of the jihad against the Soviet Union. In 1973, Daoud orchestrated a coup d'état to depose his cousin, the king Zahir Shah, and proclaimed himself the president of the people's Republic of Afghanistan, suspending the constitution and the parliament.<sup>33</sup>

Afterwards, Doud embarked on an unrealistic project to nationalise all major industrial, commercial and financial assets and to eradicate the cultivation of the opium poppy. He also tried to convince the US and Western nations that Afghanistan remained a non-aligned country, hoping to gain some financial assistance from them, which would not be forthcoming. Despite the fact that Moscow was quick to recognise the new regime, the ties between the two became strained starting with the mid-1970s. despite renewing the 1931 Soviet-Afghan Neutrality and Non-Aggression Treaty, Moscow made it clear that, in its view, Afghanistan's northern provinces were included in the Soviet sphere of interest.<sup>34</sup> Daoud also antagonised the USSR through his attempts to minimise the power of the PDPA. In 1977, Daoud forced the adoption of a new constitution through a *loya jirga*, which outlawed all political parties with the exception of the National Revolutionary Party. For Brezhnev, this was the last straw and the Soviet leader decided that Daoud had to be deposed amidst growing popular demonstrations against the Afghan's president's regime. In 1978, with support from Moscow, Daoud was assassinated and the PDPA assumed power. This event marked the end of the Durrani monarchy.<sup>35</sup>

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*War on Terror. Perspectives, Challenges and Issues*, New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2019, pp. 43-98.

<sup>33</sup> Rubin, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

<sup>34</sup> Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 590.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 595. Daoud's reign as prime minister and president of Afghanistan epitomized the monarchy's persistent refusal to relinquish its stranglehold on power, its inability to allow ordinary citizens of Afghanistan more than a token voice in the affairs of state and the denial of fundamental civil liberties. It is hardly surprising that the younger and better educated generation were forced to seek alternatives in militant ideologies, for it seemed that violent revolution, whether Communist or Islamist in nature, was the only way to establish a more just and equitable society. Tragically, the governments that succeeded the monarchy only offered more of the same, albeit dressed in different ideological clothing

The new governing coalition was an uneasy alliance between two PDPA factions, the Khalq (the dominant one) and the Parcham.<sup>36</sup> The PDPA adopted a Stalinist one-party state model and Mohammad Taraki assumed the presidency of the new Revolutionary Council, with Karmal, representing the Parcham, as his deputy. It was thus clear that the new regime in Kabul was nothing more than Moscow's puppet, despite Taraki's claims to the contrary. The US and other Western nations eventually granted diplomatic recognition to the new regime. The USSR sought to bind Afghanistan to it ever more closely through a series of treaties encompassing everything from cultural activities to military assistance and exploitation of natural resources. Taraki also inaugurated a reign of terror in Afghanistan during which as many as 50,000 people were killed or disappeared without a trace.<sup>37</sup> As a result, uprisings started to break out all across the country and, in February 1979, the US became unwittingly involved in the conflict when the US ambassador Adolphe Dubs was kidnapped and killed, which led to President Carter putting an end to all humanitarian aid to Afghanistan. Taraki himself was assassinated shortly thereafter in a coup d'état orchestrated by another key PDPA figure, Hafiz Allah Amin, who assumed the presidency and promptly tried to distance his government from the USSR and repair relations with the US and Pakistan.

Amin was concerned about the prospect of an Islamist takeover of the government and requested limited Soviet military support against the mujahidin, which provided Moscow with the justification it needed to send in the Red Army in December 1979 to accomplish a double goal: keep the Islamists at bay and depose Amin (who would soon be executed), replacing him with the Soviet loyalist Babrak Karmal. Karmal became president and justified the Soviet invasion by quoting article 51 of the UN Charter and the Afghan-Soviet Mutual Defence Treaty that allowed the Soviets to intervene if Afghanistan was threatened by "foreign aggression and intervention" (in this case, from the part of Pakistan and the US).<sup>38</sup> Like the British before

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<sup>36</sup> Rubin, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

<sup>37</sup> Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 601.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 605; Rubin, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

them, the Soviets soon discovered that it was relatively easy to occupy Afghanistan and place a puppet in power, but maintaining that government in power was another matter altogether, especially since, just like the Anglo-Indian army of the first Anglo-Afghan war, the Soviet war machine was not equipped to fight a counterinsurgency. Karmal was far from having popular support and the Soviet intervention led to the outbreak of a full-scale civil war and to a proxy war between the USSR and the US. The Soviets, just like the US after 2001, found themselves forced to fight an unwinnable war on behalf of an unsustainable government. The intervention led to widespread instability and massive influx of millions of Afghan refugees, most of them living in Pakistan. The US, European and Arab countries refused to recognise Karmal's government.

Moreover, Washington saw the Soviet intervention as a major threat to Pakistan – a scenario that, if plausible, would have led to the Soviet occupation of Karachi, finally providing a warm-water port for the Soviet navy in the Indian Ocean and threatening American oil supplied flowing through the Persian Gulf.<sup>39</sup> In the end, this scenario provided a facile justification for arming the mujahidin and supporting Pakistani general Zia ul-Haq's military dictatorship, both secretly orchestrated by the CIA under the name Operation Cyclone. The CIA provided substantial support to mujahidin leaders such as Gulbuddin Hikmatyar and Jalaludin Haqqani, both of whom would end up later on the agency's terrorist lists.<sup>40</sup> Pakistan's security service, the ISI, channelled weapons and money to those mujahidin who were most sympathetic to Pakistani interests and used the conflict to expand its influence into Afghanistan's Pashtun belt by setting up training camps and bases. The US decision to support the mujahidin was a severe blow to Afghan royalists, who expected Washington to support Zahir Shah's return to the throne, something that ran contrary to Pakistani interests.

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<sup>39</sup> This Warm Water port theory was developed by Jimmy Carter's national security adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski. See Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 107. In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Britain similarly believed that Russia also wanted to have access to a warm water port, especially in the Persian Gulf. (Wyatt, *op. cit.*, p. 14).

<sup>40</sup> Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

By 1988, it was clear to Moscow that Afghanistan was a lost cause and Mikhail Gorbachev ordered the withdrawal of Soviet troops. In April 1988, the Pakistani and Afghan governments signed the Geneva accords, which formalised the phased withdrawal of Soviet forces and the principle of non-interference in each other's affairs. The mujahidin, who were not invited to the negotiations, unanimously rejected the Accords and doubled their efforts to topple president Najibullah, who had replaced Babrak Karmal. In February 1989, the mujahidin formed the Afghan Interim Government which brought together most Islamist factions. In 1992, when the Soviet financial aid dried up, president Najibullah finally agreed to resign and turn power over to the AIG. Thus, the country became the Islamic State of Afghanistan and all previous laws and the constitution were abrogated, since all judicial decisions would be based on the Hanafi code. Special religious courts were set up to uproot the last vestiges of communism, and strict censorship and segregation of the sexes, as well as the veiling of women, were imposed.<sup>41</sup>

The new regime was not unanimously accepted and the country descended into chaos and violence. Pakistan saw this as contrary to its interests and started looking for allies among the Pashtun mujahidin, a search that led them to Quetta, where a small group of Ghilzais from Kandahar had banded together under the name of Taliban (i.e., students). All of them were veterans of the anti-Soviet jihad, including their leader, Mullah Omar, who was in favour of distancing themselves from the new Afghan leaders who, in his view, had failed both the country and Islam. The roots of the Taliban go back to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century madrasas founded in the Indian town of Deoband. The Deobandi ideology is, in many respects, similar to Saudi Arabia's Wahhabism, following a Salafist egalitarian model that sought to emulate the example of the prophet Mohammed and his first companions.<sup>42</sup> Some Deobandis also believed that they had a sacred right to wage jihad to protect Muslims no matter where they are. Many of these madrasas were financially bankrolled by Saudi

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<sup>41</sup> Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 622.

<sup>42</sup> Jones, *op. cit.*, pp. 165, 169; Rubin, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

Arabia, as the kingdom had an interest in spreading Wahhabism all over the Muslim world.

Most Taliban had no secular education and were a product of isolated madrasas in Pakistan and India and were supported financially and militarily by Pakistan's ISI.<sup>43</sup> In November 1994, the Taliban occupied Kandahar and, within a matter of weeks, their ranks grew to tens of thousands of volunteers, as many tribal leaders pledged allegiance to them. In a matter of months, the Taliban secured most of southern Afghanistan from Kandahar to the outskirts of Kabul, threatening to overthrow president Rabbani's regime and install a "genuine" Islamic regime. In the spring of 1996, as the civil war raged on, Mullah Omar convened an assembly (*shura*) that proclaimed him the Emir of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and, a few months later, in September, the Taliban entered Kabul almost unopposed, imposing a strict and radical Islamic law all over the country, which, in the absence of any doctrine about how the state should be run, became the country's supreme organising principle.<sup>44</sup> At first, a large portion of the population welcomes the restoration of law and order under the Taliban, despite their appalling human rights record.<sup>45</sup> The Taliban's ties with Al-Qaeda and their refusal to hand Osama bin Laden over to the US after the 9/11 attacks would lead to the 2001 American intervention, which will be discussed in the fourth section of the present article.

The emergence of Afghanistan as a nation state is quite remarkable, given its tumultuous history and the fact that it is, ultimately, the product of some fortuitous circumstances brought about by the fall of various empires and the rise of European influence in Central Asia. It was against this background that Ahmad Shah established his kingdom under the mark of instability caused by the pursuit of conquest at the expense of stable government.<sup>46</sup> The Durrani empire lacked political coherence and functional institutions and was undermined by numerous internal feuds

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<sup>43</sup> Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 631, Rubin, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

<sup>44</sup> Rubin, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

<sup>45</sup> Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

<sup>46</sup> Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 686.

which would be perpetuated throughout the rule of future dynasties. After the defeat of Napoleon, the British became involved in the Machiavellian world of Afghan tribal and dynastic politics and saw the opportunity of having a buffer state to deter a possible Russian invasion towards India, and played various Afghan rulers against one another with little understanding of local politics. This is exactly what the Soviets would do in the 1980s and, later, the US, after its 2001 intervention. In all three occasions, Afghanistan was reduced to the status of a rentier state and proved incapable or unwilling to sustain itself financially and militarily, while its citizens found themselves unwittingly entangled in events beyond their control and condemned to endless violence.<sup>47</sup> The collapse of Ashraf Ghani's government in August 2021 and the swift Taliban takeover bear witness to this fact.

According to Barnett Rubin, "The paradox of the Afghan state, however, is that it is both centralized and weak. The extreme centralization—virtually every decision or expenditure has to be referred back to Kabul—is a manifestation of its weakness. It does not have the resources to maintain a presence in all districts and villages. It has carried out a narrow range of functions: security, justice, and very few public services. Especially when the state is weakened, as it has been by the past decades of war, local communities and power holders step in to fill the gaps."<sup>48</sup>

As Jonathan Lee points out, "The historic culture of reliance on foreign subsidies, loans and military aid meant that successive Afghan administrations have had little incentive to reform state institutions, and created a sense of dependency and entitlement. Furthermore, the subsidies indirectly supported entrenched tribal and religious self-interest, fuelled nepotism and sustained the patronage system and 'old boy' networks."<sup>49</sup> In Afghanistan, change has always been a top-down affair, imposed by a ruling elite that had little interest in garnering popular support or

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 691.

<sup>48</sup> Rubin, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

<sup>49</sup> Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 691.

governing by consensus. Thus, attempts to reform the country according to Western models sparked massive backlash, rebellion and the fall of governments, which meant a constant return to a rather backward status quo very resistant to change – something that the current Taliban regime has imposed through their radical Islamic mode of government. Undeniably, the resurgence of the Taliban has a lot to do with the strength of their religious ideology. How long this model, enforced through fear and terror, will endure this time around, remains to be seen.

### **3. The British presence in Afghanistan: overview, interests, strategies**

Britain's strategic interests in Central Asia go back three centuries, to the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when the British East India Company gradually became a notable geopolitical player in the area, paving the way for the Empire's future domination over India. In fact, London's primary interest in the region, starting with the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, was always to safeguard its presence in India and, moreover, to prevent other great powers (especially Russia) from establishing a foothold close enough to India's borders so as to become a menace. Afghanistan entered Britain's sphere of interest soon after Ahmad Shah's accession to the throne, when he started a number of forays into Northern India during his campaigns against the rulers of Indian provinces located close to his kingdom's southern borders. Britain feared that Ahmad Shah and his successors might form an anti-British Muslim coalition with other regional rulers and engage in jihad against their presence on the Indian subcontinent.<sup>50</sup> From this point forward, and especially throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Britain considered Afghanistan as part of its strategic sphere of interest and often interfered in its internal politics by supporting various candidates to the throne whom it considered favourably inclined to its objectives (regardless of whether these candidates had a legitimate claim or popular support), by providing

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<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 159. To prevent such an occurrence, in 1809 the British signed the Treaty of Amritsar by which they formally recognised Sikh sovereignty over Punjab, a territory that the Afghan Durrani claimed as their own.

financial support and by imposing various treaties that would ensure Afghanistan remained a solid anti-Russian buffer in Central Asia. All this was done with little knowledge or understanding about the country's history, tribal structure or customs.

The British diplomatic envoy to the Durrani court, on behalf of the East India Company, was Mountstuart Elphinstone, who arrived in Peshawar in February 1809, whose main mission was the persuade Shah Shuja al-Mulk not to permit French or Russian envoys to enter his kingdom.<sup>51</sup> The two parties signed a treaty by which the Shah agreed not to allow French or Russian missions to pass through Afghan territory in exchange for a vague (yet very typical) British promise of military and financial help should a French-Persian alliance attack Herat. The treaty did not lead to any tangible results, because the Shah was deposed by another pretender to the throne, Shah Mahmud, a few weeks after Elphinstone's departure.<sup>52</sup> The real gain of his mission, though, was a detailed survey of the politics, geography and trade of the region between the Indus and the Amu Darya (Oxus) rivers, the first such endeavour since the days of Marco Polo.<sup>53</sup> In his work, Elphinstone noted his astonishment at the Afghans' "extraordinary ignorance" of Britain – a sentiment no doubt reciprocated by the Afghans. This kind of attitude would remain typical of British-Afghan interactions throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the misguided assumptions and misunderstandings that the two parties held of each other would sometimes lead to bloodshed and violence, and would be replicated on a different scale during the two decades of US presence in the country.

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<sup>51</sup> Shah Shuja hoped that, by receiving the diplomatic mission, he would secure British support against other claimants to his throne.

<sup>52</sup> Misjudging the level of legitimacy and popular support that Shah Shuja enjoyed, the British would try to restore him to the throne in 1839, but their involvement only threw the country deeper into inter-tribal civil war. This proves how little the British understood about the inner workings of Afghan politics.

<sup>53</sup> In 1815, Elphinstone published a heavily edited version of his mission entitled *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, which became a standard reference work for colonial officials and travellers and remained a cornerstone of British official perceptions of Afghanistan and its inhabitants. For more details about Elphinstone's work, see Lee, *op. cit.*, pp. 173-174.

In the aftermath of Elphinstone's mission and the removal of the threat of a French invasion of India, Britain's policy towards Afghanistan was characterised, for about 2 decades, by indifference and non-interference, until 1830, when Lord Ellenborough, a firm believer in a direct Russian threat to British India (following the former's territorial gains after conflicts with Iran and the Ottoman Empire), was appointed President of the Board of Control of the committee overseeing the affairs of the East India Company.<sup>54</sup> Ellenborough, an armchair strategist with no personal experience of India or Afghanistan, was convinced that a Russian invasion of India was not only probable, but easy, and that Britain had to act preemptively in the Indus states (Kabul, Kandahar, and Herat) – an attitude shared by many of future British officials in charge of India policy, who took this assumption for granted and never question whether it had any basis in reality. Ellenborough's solution (which became known as the Ellenborough Doctrine) to this issue was to advocate for a more aggressive in promoting its interests in the region, primarily by increasing trade with the Central Asian states (to this end, a survey expedition was conducted in 1831 by three junior officers with a very superficial knowledge of Afghanistan and its region)<sup>55</sup> without taking into account the political and logistic complexities of trans-Asian commercial exchanges. His firm belief in the power of trade (including government subsidies and other incentives) to secure political influence was revisited, some 170 later, by president George W. Bush, who claimed that regime change in

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 190.

<sup>55</sup> Their reports were completed in 1831 and concluded that Russia indeed posed a military threat to India, to which their solution was to "reunify" Afghanistan and consolidate it "for Britain's own interests," which would secure the Empire "a lasting claim upon the gratitude of that people." This kind of arguments reflect how painfully naïve the British were about Afghanistan, its people and the situation on the ground. The expedition leader, Alexander Burnes, barely concealed his contempt for the Afghan ruler, whom he caricatured as an Oriental despot. (*Ibidem*, pp. 196, 199).

Afghanistan, followed by the implementation of free-market capitalism, would lead to democracy, freedom and good governance.<sup>56</sup>

The leader of the 1831 survey expedition, Alexander Burnes, provided additional detailed descriptions of the region and supported a treaty between Britain and the new Afghan ruler, Amir Dost Muhammad Khan, the founder of the Muhammadzai dynasty, without taking into account that the Amir's rule was threatened by a number of other claimants, including former king Shah Shuja. Britain would end up supporting the Shuja's restoration, despite its pledge to maintain neutrality and not become involved in Afghan dynastic struggles. This duplicitous policy would make Dost Mohammad Khan an enemy of Britain and have significant repercussions for the future of Anglo-Afghan relations.<sup>57</sup> The fractious relationship between London and Dost Muhammad Khan, as well as his attempts to seek outside allies (by making overtures to Russia) to secure his claim to the throne are among the causes leading to the first Anglo-Afghan war of 1839-1842, triggered by the signing of a Tripartite Treaty in 1838 between Britain and Ranjit Singh's Sikh kingdom, designed to leave Afghanistan (where Shah Shuja would be restored to the throne) a weak and divided kingdom politically dependent on Britain and the Sikhs. In October 1838, the British issued the Simla Declaration (essentially, a document justifying their intervention in Afghanistan with strong Orwellian Ministry of Truth undertones), stipulating, without a hint of irony, that Shah Shuja would be supported against "foreign interference" by a British army sent to secure the "independence and integrity of Afghanistan", without making any mention of Russia's presumed ambitions in Central Asia, which was the whole reason behind Britain's military presence there. The justifications for war mentioned in the Simla Declaration bear more than a passing resemblance to the similar statements meant to legitimise regime change made by the Soviets in 1979 and by the US in 2001. Then, too, the Afghan governments were deemed

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 192. The problem with Ellenborough's policy was that it bore little connection to the situation on the ground and implicitly committed Britain to military intervention if its interests were threatened by rulers who did not toe the line, even if they were treaty allies.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 204.

untrustworthy by dint of their hostile policies, which allegedly posed a threat to the invading nation's national security. Both the Soviet Union and United States mistakenly believed that their choice for head of state was more popular (i.e., pliant) than the then incumbent and claimed that their military intervention was altruistic and would bring peace, prosperity, stability, security and good governance. They too promised to withdraw their forces as soon as the new government had established law and order. As was the case in the First Anglo Afghan War, all of these assumptions and assurances would prove to be fallacious. Nevertheless, at first, British victories in Southern Afghanistan created a sense of euphoria among Britain's political and military establishment who were convinced that the country had been pacified with minimal casualties.<sup>58</sup>

The British officials in Kabul soon found themselves at odds with the Shah's administration, which led to a widespread feeling of discontent even among the tribes that had not supported the restoration of the Sadozai dynasty. It soon became clear, among widespread opposition to the British presence, that the Shah was incapable of raising and training an army competent enough to maintain him in power, so they found themselves forced to subsidise his regiments and, when these proved incapable or unwilling to fight, British and Indian troops ended up fighting the Shah's battles for him, facing a prolonged occupation. This scenario would be repeated in astonishingly similar details in the final years of the US's and NATO's presence in Afghanistan.<sup>59</sup> The British presence also had

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<sup>58</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 227-228, 244. In April 1839, Shah Shuja entered Kabul triumphantly, to a visible lack of public enthusiasm, despite British reports to the contrary. The Shah then promptly proceeded to brutally execute anyone he deemed a threat to his rule, to the horror of British officials in Kabul.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 266. The British eventually renounced the Tripartite Treaty, ceased their support for Shah Shuja, who was replaced by a regent, and signed a new treaty in January 1842, detailing the conditions for their withdrawal. It was during this retreat towards Jalalabad during extremely harsh winter conditions that almost the entire British army was massacred in the rough terrain of the Khyber Pass at the hands of rebel forces commanded by Akbar Khan, the son of Dost Muhammad Khan. As Jonathan Lee argues, "the political and military failures of the First Anglo-Afghan War had widespread repercussions in both India and Britain. First and foremost, Britain's imperial and military prestige suffered a major blow for even the most ardent imperial propagandists could not deny the campaign had been a

a detrimental effect on the Afghan economy, as they paid workers much higher wages than the market rate, which led to a labour shortage and a rise in inflation, because shopkeepers refused to sell their produce to locals who could not pay the same inflated prices as the British. More than a century later, a massive injection of US cash into the Afghan economy would lead to the same inflationary pressure and massive corruption, which only proves that, the more things change, the more they stay the same and the lessons of history are there to be ignored, not to be learned. For Britain, the lessons of the first Anglo-Afghan war would prove to be very bitter and, scrambling to find scapegoats for the failure of the military campaign, many officials in London blamed the Afghans for having the temerity to fight to defend their country, branding them as “a faithless enemy, stained by the foul crime of assassination and guilty of consummate treachery”.<sup>60</sup> Britain’s position as a great power also suffered a blow and, from then on, Russia would be much less concerned about continuing its expansion into Central Asia, assuming that Britain would not

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disaster. Britain had been humiliated and its army had suffered its worst defeat since the American War of Independence. The fact that this defeat had come at the hands of poorly armed, factionalized, ‘wild’ and ‘uncivilized’ tribesmen rubbed even more salt into the wound. The heavy loss of life and the deaths of many senior officers also caused a crisis in India, and there were concerns that there were insufficient forces left to maintain security. To add to the woes, the cost of the war had plunged the East India Company into debt and a serious budget deficit. Politically the occupation was equally disastrous, for its outcome was exactly the opposite of what British officials had intended. Sadozai power, already in terminal decline, was broken and never again would a Sadozai challenge the descendants of Payinda Khan for control of Afghanistan. Dost Muhammad Khan, who Britain had damned as an unfriendly and treacherous ruler, was allowed to return to Afghanistan where he quickly regained the throne and established a dynasty that would last for the next 85 years.” (p. 302). See also Wyatt, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

<sup>60</sup> J. A. Norris, *The First Afghan War 1838-1842*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967, pp. 387-388. Viscount Crankbook, the Secretary of State for India, during a speech given in the House of Lords on the eve of the second Anglo-Afghan War, was able to dismiss the events of the 1842 war as “unfortunate”: “the sufferings sustained by our troops in the [First Afghan] war ... did not happen because the country was too weak to maintain her rights and put down all opposition by the sword, but because we were unfortunate. We were unfortunate in our political negotiators; we were unfortunate in our generals.” (See Hansard, “Afghanistan Expenses of Military Operations) – Resolution, December 9, 1878 [<https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/lords/1878/dec/09/afghanistan-expenses-of-military>], accessed Nov. 5, 2021).

risk again a future military intervention beyond the Khyber Pass. By the late 1860s, Russia's Central Asian frontier was very close to the Amu Darya. In Afghanistan, where Dost Muhammad Khan was restored to the throne, there was a widespread feeling of distrust against the British, which meant that no British envoys were allowed to reside in the country in the aftermath of the war, while the memory of the Khyber Pass massacre facilitated the perception that the Afghans were "primitive barbarians."

Dost Muhammad Khan attempted to exploit the Crimean War of 1853-1856 to his advantage, despite the fact that the conflict had no direct impact on Afghanistan and Central Asia as a whole. The war also revived London's fear of a Russian threat to India in the wake of the fall of the Sikh Empire and the British domination of all of Punjab. In 1855, Britain and Afghanistan signed a treaty according to which the British recognised Dost Muhammad Khan as king of Afghanistan; this was renewed two years later, under terms more favourable to the amir. Following his death, Afghanistan became the theatre of a civil war that lasted from 1863 to 1868, during which Russia started to push further towards Afghanistan's northern frontier, despite assuring Britain that it regarded the country as falling within its sphere of interest even though Russia's definition of Afghanistan (as consisting in the Pashtun tribal belt along the Afghan-Indian frontier) was quite different from the British understanding of the term as it appeared in the 1855 and 1857 treaties.<sup>61</sup> Renewed fears of a possible Russian invasion of India made London consider a more interventionist approach to Afghanistan, known as the Forward Policy, which in many ways rehashed the Ellenborough doctrine of the 1830s that had led to the first Anglo-Afghan war. In essence, this doctrine advocated for binding the Afghan ruler (whoever that may be) closer to British goals through financial and military aid. In the event that the amir became too close to Russia, Britain took it upon itself to act unilaterally to protest its strategic interests through means such as annexation, invasion and even dismemberment of the country.<sup>62</sup> This shows that Britain saw Afghanistan

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<sup>61</sup> Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 332.

<sup>62</sup> This notable change in British policy was enshrined in Sir Henry Rawlinson's "Memorandum on the frontiers of Afghanistan."

as a key geopolitical kingdom, but had little interest in the Afghan people themselves.

During the 1877-1878 conflict opposing several Eastern European states and Russia to the Ottoman Empire, British prime minister Benjamin Disraeli became concerned that Russia might open a second front against India by crossing Afghanistan's northern border, and so Britain renewed its demand for a permanent mission in Kabul and, possible, Herat and Kandahar too. The Afghan ruler Sher Ali Khan refused to do so, seeking instead a new treaty by which Britain committed itself to defeat Afghanistan from outside aggression (which London refused to do) and Britain found itself once more drawn into a war with Afghanistan. Since the Afghan army was no match for the British force, the Amir hoped to draw it further deeper into Afghanistan and overstretch its supply lines, while he made overtures to the Russian tsar for assistance; the latter refused to become involved and advised the Amir to negotiate a peace with Britain. The Afghan resistance quickly collapsed and the new amir, Yaqub Khan, offered to negotiate his surrender. The British imposed harsh conditions, including the installation of a permanent British resident in Kabul, backed by a sizeable military contingent, while the Amir received a small annual subsidy and the promise that British troops would be eventually withdrawn from the Afghan territory. All these arrangements were formalised in the 1879 Treaty of Gandamak.<sup>63</sup> Following the assassination of the British representative and his escort in September 1879, London had no choice but to send more troops into Kabul to depose Yaqub Khan and replace him with a more pliable puppet ruler. The retribution exacted by the British for the murder was swift and brutal.<sup>64</sup> In July 1880, the British endorsed Abd al-Rahman Khan's claim to the throne and the British representative proclaimed him Amir in absentia, before the ruler

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<sup>63</sup> Rubin, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

<sup>64</sup> Lord Lytton, the viceroy for India, considered the entire Afghan population responsible for the envoy's death, as it is shown in his correspondence: "The whole Afghan population is particeps criminis in a great national crime; and every Afghan brought to death by the avenging arm of the British Power, I shall regard as one scoundrel the less in a den of scoundrelism." See Brian Robson (ed.), *Roberts in India: The Military Papers of Field Marshal Lord Roberts 1876-1893*, Stroud: Sutton Publishing Ltd, 1993, pp. 119-121; Wyatt, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

even arrived in Kabul. Throughout the two decades of Amir Abd al-Rahman Khan's reign, British officials always maintained it was Britain that had conferred legitimacy on the Amir since, by right of conquest, sovereignty belonged to the victors.<sup>65</sup> However, not all tribal leaders acknowledged Abd a-Rahman's accession to the throne and mounted an armed resistance against the British, who lost the famed battle of Maiwand on July 26, 1880, a victory that remains to this day one of the cornerstones of Afghan nationalism.<sup>66</sup> This was followed by the signing of the Lyall Agreement, the foundation of all Anglo-Afghan relations during the reign of Abd al-Rahman Khan.<sup>67</sup> During the following decade, Russia and Britain came several times to the brink of war, but each crisis was defused; nevertheless, London made it clear that any further Russian incursions into Afghan territory that threatened heart would be considered *casus belli*.<sup>68</sup>

Despite the Lyall Agreement, by 1888 there was notable discontent about the state of Anglo-Afghan affairs, many British voices arguing that maintaining Afghanistan as a buffer against a Russian invasion of India was a fool's errand, as the state was only held together by British financial and military aid, while the British were growing increasingly frustrated with the Iron Amir's (as he was called) erratic and tyrannical behaviour, yet they little choice but to support him, fearing that his deposition would lead to instability, civil war and a Russian intervention.<sup>69</sup> In 1893, Mortimer Durand, Foreign Secretary of India, arrived in Kabul to secure the Amir's agreement on the Afghan-India frontier. This issue was problematic because several tribes on the Indian side regarded the Amir as their ruler and paid tribute to him. In November 1893, the Amir signed the Durand Agreement, by which he accepted the Wakan-Pamir frontier and the creation of the joint commission to trace the Afghan-Indian border based

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<sup>65</sup> Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 379.

<sup>66</sup> Wyatt, *op. cit.*, p. 1; Malkasian, *op. cit.*, 48; Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

<sup>67</sup> According to the terms of the treaty, Britain renounced the claim to a permanent representative and promised military and financial aid. Britain was spared the humiliation of the first Anglo-Afghan war, but the campaign was not quite a resounding success. The intervention marked the end of the Forward Policy and cost Disraeli an election.

<sup>68</sup> Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 390.

<sup>69</sup> Malkasian, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

on a map brought by Durand.<sup>70</sup> Afghanistan knew two decades of relative stability under Abd al-Rahman Khan, which protected Britain's geopolitical interests by creating a buffer state to protect India, although at a great cost to the Afghan people because of the Amir's repressive regime, which Britain regarded as a "necessary evil." Britain financial aid turned Afghanistan into a rentier state with a very limited capacity for financial self-sufficiency.

At the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Lord Curzon, the Viceroy of India, pushed for a new Anglo-Afghan treaty, which was seen as necessary considering that, in 1904, Britain expected Russia to win the war with Japan and thus be tempted to invade India. However, Japan eventually won the war and the threat to India was minimised. Even so, Britain sent a delegation to Kabul to negotiate a new treaty with Amir Habib Allah Khan, whose terms borrowed quite a lot from the Forward Policy. Yet, with the Russian threat gone, in 1905 the draft treaty was rejected by the Amir's council, as Britain demanded many concessions and offered very little in return. The treaty was eventually signed in March 1905 and, while a defeat for British diplomacy, marked Afghanistan's first step towards independence.<sup>71</sup> At the same time, without informing the Amir, Britain started negotiations with Russia aimed at a formal recognition of Afghanistan's neutrality and status as a buffer state. This convention was signed in 1907 and formalised the Persian, Afghan and Tibetan spheres of influence of the two powers. Russia accepted that Afghanistan was in the British sphere of influence, provided Britain did not invade the country, and in return Britain conceded Russia's right to equal trade and to communicate directly with Afghan officials on matters of a non-political

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<sup>70</sup> Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 400; Wyatt, *op. cit.*, pp. 3, 17, Rubin, *op. cit.*, p. 31; Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 240. The Durand Agreement, however, would prove to be a major cause of disagreement in future Anglo-Afghan relations and, following Partition in 1947, in Afghan-Pakistan relations too. The emergence of Pashtun nationalism in the early twentieth century went hand-in-hand with a romantic vision of the unity of all Pashtun tribes and calls for a united homeland known as Pashtunistan. This led to the legality of the Durand Line being questioned by successive Afghan administrations.

<sup>71</sup> Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 425. Despite several concessions, however, Britain continued to have a major say in Afghan foreign policy.

nature. This would have been something of a victory for the Amir, but yet again Britain had not bothered to inform the Amir about the negotiations or their outcome.<sup>72</sup> Habib Allah Khan considered the terms humiliating for Afghanistan and delayed a formal response to the treaty for nearly a year, while details of the convention's content leaked out and sparked a wave of anti-British sentiments. It was only in 1908 that the Amir sent a list of objections to the treaty which he considered a prelude to his country's dismemberment, but neither party was willing to make any changes to the document, so they agreed to abide by its terms despite the Amir's objections. At the same time, one of the Amir's advisers, Mahmud Tarzi, started promoting a new national identity centred on the notion of Afghaniyya (Afghanness), which he considered synonymous with Pashtunness; the monarchy adopted this idea and used it to justify the divine right to rule of the Durrani dynasty over the "land of the Afghans".<sup>73</sup>

Following the outbreak of the World War I, the Amir was pressured by his advisers to join the Central Powers, but he preferred maintaining a policy of neutrality, which came as a relief to Britain.<sup>74</sup> Joining Germany and declaring war on India would have meant Afghanistan running the serious risk of being partitioned between Britain and Russia if they won the war. The 1917 victory of Bolshevik Revolution in Russia created unease in both Afghanistan and India, but the civil war that broke out soon afterwards removed an immediate Russian threat to Afghanistan, although fears persisted of communist propaganda spreading into Kabul.

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<sup>72</sup> Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 329; Wyatt, *op. cit.*, p. 70; Rubin, *op. cit.*, pp. 4, 31; Andisha, *art. cit.*, p. 245.

<sup>73</sup> Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 439. Tarzi defined national identity as consisting of four interrelated elements: religion (*din*), which he defined as the Hanafi school of Sunnism; patriotism (*daulat dosti*); the fatherland (*watan*); and the nation (*millat*), which combined all three of the other elements. The problem was, however, that there was no sense of national identity in Afghanistan, not in the European sense anyway, since tribal and religious leaders swore an oath of loyalty to the Amir, not to the state or the monarchy.

<sup>74</sup> Early on the war, both the Ottoman Empire and Germany sent envoys to Kabul to persuade the Amir to join their war effort, especially considering that the Ottoman sultan-caliph had declared jihad against the British. For more details about the Ottoman and German overtures, see Lee, *op. cit.*, pp. 445-447 and Andisha, *art. cit.*, p. 246.

In February 1919, the new Amir, Amanullah Khan, declared his intent to run Afghanistan as a fully independent nation and declared jihad against India, in order to punish Britain for failing to reward Afghanistan for its wartime neutrality.<sup>75</sup> Thus started the third Anglo-Afghan War, which was at the same time a war of independence and a jihad (since the Amir portrayed the war as a defence of Islam in India) – although the war could have been avoided altogether, since the Amir had already declared Afghan independence and Britain could do little about it.<sup>76</sup> The war lasted one month, with an armistice (the Treaty of Rawalpindi) being signed in August 1919, after the Afghan army was defeated twice.<sup>77</sup> For Afghanistan, the losses outweighed the gains. A second round of negotiations meant to secure a permanent settlement began in April 1920 in Mussoorie. The Afghan side adopted an uncompromising stance, demanding an unequivocal and unconditional recognition of Afghanistan's independence, the right to open embassies in London and Delhi, and Afghan sovereignty over Waziristan and other tribal territories. The British negotiating team rejected these demands outright, and Tarzi, the leader of the Afghan delegation resorted to a naive attempt at political blackmail, by implying that Kabul was already negotiating with the Russia for better terms – without knowing that London and Moscow were already engaged in negotiations to renew the 1907 Convention.<sup>78</sup>

In September 1920, Tarzi began discussing with Russia in earnest and the Amir agreed to a draft treaty that promised considerable military and financial aid to Afghanistan in exchange for opening Soviet consulates in Kandahar and Ghazni. While Moscow decided whether the benefits of a treaty with Afghanistan outweighed the costs, the Amir supported a

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<sup>75</sup> Andisha, *art. cit.*, p. 247.

<sup>76</sup> Lee, *op. cit.*, pp. 455, 500.

<sup>77</sup> Rubin, *op. cit.*, p. 34; Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

<sup>78</sup> In September 1920, Tarzi began discussing with Russia in earnest and the Amir agreed to a draft treaty that promised considerable military and financial aid to Afghanistan in exchange for opening Soviet consulates in Kandahar and Ghazni. While Moscow decided whether the benefits of a treaty with Afghanistan outweighed the costs, the Amir supported a Muslim nationalist uprising in Russian Turkistan, which strained the relations between the two.

Muslim nationalist uprising in Russian Turkistan, which strained the relations between the two. Therefore, the Soviets set up the Central Committee of Young Afghan Revolutionaries designed to overthrow the Durrani monarchy and create a Soviet-style republic in Afghanistan. Faced with this prospect, Amanullah Khan was willing to renew discussions about an Anglo-Afghan treaty; Britain's precondition was that the Amir abrogate his treaty with Russia, which he instead signed in August 1921. Eventually, the treaty with Britain was also signed in November of that year.<sup>79</sup> The treaty's most important provision was Britain's recognition of Afghan independence under the rule of now king Amanullah; the Afghan government reaffirmed its acceptance of the Durand Line as the Anglo-Indian frontier. the Amir's annual subsidy (also known as "money from God") was not reinstated and Britain's undertaking to defend Afghanistan from unprovoked external aggression was not renewed. The outcome was that Afghanistan was weakened politically, militarily and financially. Perhaps most important of all, the Amir could no longer rely on Britain to defend Afghanistan from a Soviet invasion. The 1921 treaty put a formal end to Britain's century-old presence in Afghanistan, and from then on, the country embarked on a more or less difficult independent course, discussed in more detail in the previous section.

Afghanistan's difficult relationship with Britain would continue during the reign of Amanullah's successor, Nadir Shah, who worked hard to persuade London he had abandoned the latter's aggressive anti-British politics. During the course of his reign, Britain would covertly send him weapons to suppress a series of tribal uprisings.<sup>80</sup> In the run-up to World War II, Britain sought assurances from Kabul that it would remain neutral by offering limited military aid. Afghanistan's geopolitical situation became even more tenuous after February 1947, when Britain announced it would quit India and the last viceroy, Lord Mountbatten, made his subsequent declaration of Partition and the establishment of Pakistan. The British withdrawal caused great alarm in Kabul. For despite the

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<sup>79</sup> Lee, *op. cit.*, pp. 466-468.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 520, 522.

government's anti-British rhetoric and the country twice being invaded by British forces, Britain had restrained Russian territorial ambitions for a century. Britain had also propped up the dynasty through subsidies and armaments, demarcated Afghanistan's international frontiers and provided the government with international legitimacy. British withdrawal from India would leave no adjacent regional European power capable of counteracting the threat to Afghanistan posed by the USSR. Shah Zahir's solution was to turn to the new Western superpower, the United States of America, but in so doing Afghanistan inadvertently became involved into the Cold War.<sup>81</sup>

As can be seen from this expose, Britain's interest in Afghanistan in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century started based on a presumed Russian threat to India, which never actually materialised. Its colonial policy in Afghanistan was confused and oscillated between intervention and disengagement – but despite its muddled approach, inasmuch as it succeeded in warding off the Russian threat, one could argue that this policy was a success. This policy was increasingly influenced by assumptions about Britain's inherent cultural, religious and racial superiority over the Afghan tribes. In the name of its supreme strategic interest, rather than out of any interest in the welfare of the Afghan people, the Empire often became involved in internal Afghan politics and rarely for the better, playing kingmaker, imposing conditions and treaties, using a carrot and stick approach combining warfare and financial aid, very rarely taking into account local conditions or the aspirations of the country's own people, who were never consulted about these policies.<sup>82</sup> A fairly similar attitude would be replicated respects many decades later, during the American presence in the country, which is discussed in the following section.

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<sup>81</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 539.

<sup>82</sup> Wyatt, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

#### 4. The US presence in Afghanistan – outline, interests, strategies

Until 2001, the US interests in Afghanistan had been minimal, and even its indirect involvement in the Soviet-Afghan war in the 1980s was more about damaging and weakening the USSR rather than any intrinsic American strategy concerning in the country itself.

The US first established diplomatic ties with Afghanistan soon after the end of World War I, but the country remained, for a long time, a backwater of American foreign policy.<sup>83</sup> In the 1950s, US had funded the damming of the Helmand and Arghandab rivers,<sup>84</sup> as well as the digging of irrigation canals in Kandahar in the 1960s as a means to counteract Soviet influence. President Eisenhower was the only White House leader to visit Afghanistan in 1959.<sup>85</sup> During the 1970s, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger also paid a visit to Kabul in 1974, when prime minister Daoud Khan was looking for international support to counter the influence of the PDPA.<sup>86</sup>

Afghanistan's strategic potential for US interests became evident after the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, when they saw the war as an opportunity to wear down the Soviet war machine.<sup>87</sup> President Carter authorised a covert operation (codenamed Operation Cyclone) to aid the mujahidin,<sup>88</sup> which was ramped up significantly after Ronald Reagan's election, when Afghanistan became a major policy initiative.<sup>89</sup> One of the main recipients of US aid (to the tune of \$600 million in cash and weapons)

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<sup>83</sup> The Legation in Kabul was only opened in 1942. See Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 531.

<sup>84</sup> Lee, *op. cit.*, pp. 546-547. In the same period, from the 1950s onwards, American teachers and educators taught English, rewrote the national curriculum and paid for the printing of textbooks and primers. American aid also helped construct Kabul University, Pan Am trained Afghan pilots for the national carrier, Aryana, while Boeing supplied the country's first jet airliners.

<sup>85</sup> Malkasian, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

<sup>86</sup> Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 587.

<sup>87</sup> Rubin, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

<sup>88</sup> Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

<sup>89</sup> Flamboyant Texas Congressman Charlie Wilson was instrumental in securing a gradual and constant increase in the US military and financial aid for the mujahidin during the Reagan administration, as depicted in Mike Nichols's 2007 Film, *Charlie Wilson's War*. See also Malkasian, *op. cit.*, pp. 136-137.

was Gubuldin Hikmatyar, later put on the Global Terrorist list by the State Department.<sup>90</sup> The total American spending in Afghanistan to support the mujahidin topped \$1 billion, a sum matched dollar-for-dollar by Saudi Arabia. Pakistan became the conduit through which money and weapons were delivered to the Afghan fighters and the country would go on to play a major role in Afghan politics from this point forward. The CIA demanded only minimal accountability from the ISI (Pakistan's security service) and its Afghan clients for the expenditure of hundreds of millions of dollars in order to maintain plausible deniability. The Soviet-Afghan war upended the old balance between state, tribes and religion, tearing down structures painstakingly built over centuries, leaving the country destroyed and in chaos by the time the Soviet troops withdrew in 1989.<sup>91</sup> Having secured their objective (i.e., to destabilise the Soviet Union by drawing it into a protracted Vietnam-style conflict that bled its economy dry), the US did not see any reason to become involved in the reconstruction of Afghanistan once the conflict was over. Additionally, since Afghan president Rabbani and his prime minister, Hikmatyar, both declared their support for Saddam Hussein in the 1990 First Gulf War, the US and its Western allies showed little interest in Afghanistan's fate.<sup>92</sup> Therefore, as I have already shown, the country slid further into political chaos, instability and civil war which culminated with the Taliban victory in the second half of the 1990s. Around the same time, a terrorist organisation known as Al-Qaeda, led by Osama bin Laden, a veteran of the Soviet-Afghan conflict, found refuge in Afghanistan and established there a base from where to launch its future attacks on Western targets. Al-Qaeda's ties with Afghanistan and oppressive domestic policies turned Afghanistan into an international pariah whose regime was recognised only by Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and

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<sup>90</sup> Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 611. Among the many heads of state who shook hands with Hikmatyar during the 1980s were Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, who publicly declared that Hikmatyar and the other leaders of the Peshawar Islamist parties were the "moral equivalent" of America's Founding Fathers. In 2016, Hikmatyar signed an armistice with President Ghani, being removed him from the US terrorist list, an act of rehabilitation which outrages many afghanis.

<sup>91</sup> Malkasian, *op. cit.*, p. 96. Section two of the present article discusses briefly the country's situation at the end of the war.

<sup>92</sup> Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 627.

the United Arab Emirates.<sup>93</sup> In August 1998, following Al-Qaeda attacks on the American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, the US first demanded that the Taliban leader Mullah Omar hand over bin Laden so that he could stand trial, which the former refused to do.<sup>94</sup> Therefore, the US supported a series of UN Security Council Resolutions that imposed travel and financial sanctions on the Taliban leadership, which Pakistan blatantly ignored. The Taliban regime's excesses had drawn the attention of the administration of President Bill Clinton, which never recognized the Taliban emirate as the government of Afghanistan and curtailed unofficial relations from 1997 onward.<sup>95</sup>

Following the 9/11 attacks on American soil, the US, alongside the forces of the international coalition,<sup>96</sup> invaded Afghanistan after the Taliban regime refused to hand over Osama bin Laden and, in a matter of months, brought about the fall of the Taliban regime. From the US perspective, the overthrow of the Taliban was meant to serve as a warning against other regime that might contemplate harbouring terrorists. In December 2001, a conference on Afghanistan's political future, from which the Taliban, as the defeated side, were excluded (which struck no one as odd), was convened in Bonn to decide on the country's future political organisation.<sup>97</sup> The Bonn process, as it came to be known, included a series of steps meant to endure the country's democratisation, including the convening of a *loya jirga* to decide on the composition of the transitional government (which would be

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<sup>93</sup> Malkasian, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

<sup>94</sup> Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 644.

<sup>95</sup> Malkasian, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

<sup>96</sup> After 9/11, Pakistan once more found itself as the beneficiary of US military and financial aid, as it emerged as the linchpin of Operation Enduring Freedom, opening up its airspace and ports to the international coalition forces. Pakistan's Janus policy, however, eventually backfired as the very jihadists the ISI had trained for operations in Indian-held Kashmir in the 1980s condemned Pakistani president Musharraf's support for the US military campaign, and mounted a series of terrorist attacks on government and officials inside Pakistan. See Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 651.

<sup>97</sup> Malkasian, *op. cit.*, p. 200. In hindsight, the Bush administration's decision to exclude the Taliban from the Bonn Process, which ran contrary to Churchill's advice about magnanimity in victory, would prove to be very costly.

headed by Hamid Karzai), the drafting of a new constitution and the organisation of national elections.

The US declared goal in Afghanistan, at least during the 2001-2002 period, when its military campaign was a massive success, was not nation-building (something that president George W. Bush explicitly spoke against during his campaign speeches),<sup>98</sup> but rather destroying Al-Qaeda's capacity to mount further attacks and eliminate the political regime that allowed it to operate,<sup>99</sup> capture Bin Laden and help the country transition to a democratic government,<sup>100</sup> all while using a light footprint approach advocated by then Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld.<sup>101</sup> These goals were only partially accomplished: Al-Qaeda was severely weakened, the Taliban regime was overthrown, the country embarked on a decidedly more secular direction, while Bin Laden's objective to draw America into a protracted involvement in Afghanistan (as the former had done with the Soviet Union) was accomplished.<sup>102</sup> On account of domestic pressures that showed the American public's fear of a new terrorist attack on American soil, the Bush administration, having secured a resounding victory over the

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<sup>98</sup> Rubin, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

<sup>99</sup> At this point, there was a widespread belief that the Taliban and Al-Qaeda were one and the same, a misperception that informed many of the US decisions in the early stages of the war. While it is true that the two groups shared an extremist religious ideology and a mutual support understanding, they pursued different goals and objectives. See Lee, *op. cit.*, pp. 665, 681 and Craig Whitlock, *The Afghanistan Papers. A Secret History of the War*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2021, p. 79. President Bush, in what would become known as the "doctrine of no distinction," made it clear that the US would not distinguish between terrorists and those who harboured them. (See also Sharifullah Dorani, *America in Afghanistan. Foreign Policy and Decision Making from Bush to Obama to Trump*, London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2019, p. 16).

<sup>100</sup> Malkasian, *op. cit.*, p. 230.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 234. Rumsfeld feared that a heavy footprint in Afghanistan would make its government heavily dependent on foreign money and troops and lead to an insurgency – which eventually proved to be correct. See also Rory Stewart, "The Last Days of Intervention. Afghanistan and the Delusions of Maximalism," in *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2021 [[https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/afghanistan/2021-10-0...ent=%7Bdate%28'YYYYMMdd'%29%7D&utm\\_term=promo-email-prospects](https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/afghanistan/2021-10-0...ent=%7Bdate%28'YYYYMMdd'%29%7D&utm_term=promo-email-prospects)], accessed Nov. 11, 2021.

<sup>102</sup> Malkasian, *op. cit.*, p. 226; Rubin, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

Taliban, decided to remain in the country, changing its main objective from counterterrorism to counterinsurgency and, later on, nation-building, when he announced a “freedom agenda” for the Middle East (Afghanistan included) to be the focus of US foreign policy “for decades to come”.<sup>103</sup> Therefore, in 2002, president Bush called for a “Marshall Plan” for Afghanistan, thus reaffirming the US’s intent to become involved in nation-building and the country’s reconstruction – a process that would be extremely lengthy and costly. However, unlike the original Marshall Plan, the Afghan nation-building project went astray from the start and spun out of control as the war endured. Instead of bringing stability and peace, the US inadvertently built a corrupt and dysfunctional government that was almost entirely dependent on the US presence for its survival.<sup>104</sup> Like the entire campaign, this nation-building effort suffered from a muddled vision and lack of clear benchmarks. On 1 May 2003, Donald Rumsfeld declared during a news conference in Kabul that military operations were moving from major combat activity to a period of “stability and stabilization” and declared Afghanistan to be “secure.”<sup>105</sup>

From 2002 to 2005, the US had the opportunity to support the implementation of new policies in Afghanistan and help the elected regime of Hamid Karzai, who was declared the winner of the 2004 president elections, despite widespread irregularities,<sup>106</sup> before the gradual Taliban

<sup>103</sup> Martin Indyk, “Order before Peace. Kissinger’s Middle East Democracy and Its Lessons for Today,” in *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2021 [[https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2021-10-1...e&utm\\_content=20211015&utm\\_term=FA%20This%20Week%20-%20112017](https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2021-10-1...e&utm_content=20211015&utm_term=FA%20This%20Week%20-%20112017)], accessed Nov. 8, 2021.

<sup>104</sup> Whitlock, *op. cit.*, p. 108. At the beginning, when Afghans most needed help, the Bush administration insisted on a miserly approach even as it pushed Afghanistan to build a democracy and national institutions from scratch. Later, the Obama administration overcompensated by flooding the country with more aid than it could possibly absorb, creating a new set of insolvable problems.

<sup>105</sup> Rumsfeld’s press conference can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KrVV8jLkbuk>.

<sup>106</sup> For more details on the problems of the 2004 election, see Lee, *op. cit.*, pp. 661-663. The irregularities were augmented by the fact that the post-2001 electoral system was open to manipulation and the country had never had a formal census. Hamid Karzai was declared the winner, with 55.4% of the votes (Rubin, *op. cit.*, p. 163).

resurgence that started in 2005-2006, after many former fighters started returning from Pakistan, where they had taken refuge to regroup and reorganise themselves into a hub under the name of Quetta Shura.<sup>107</sup> The 2006 Taliban offensive catalysed resistance to foreign occupation and transformed the nature of the conflict. The re-emergence of the Taliban drew the dynamic of resistance versus occupation to the fore. A religious-based call to fight infidel occupation spread. As it turned from a defeated movement into a battlefield victor, more Afghans could see the Taliban as fighting a foreign invader and deeply corrupt puppet government.<sup>108</sup> The Taliban offensive reaffirmed an ideal rooted in Afghanistan's history going back centuries to the tribal resistance against various invaders, which became a source of strength for them and a source of weakness for the government and, after 2006, US opportunities to put an end to the war narrowed. The role of Islam and resistance to occupation in motivating men to fight should not be underestimated, as both were part of Afghan identity. The Taliban's Islamic credentials and the fact that they were fighting occupiers made for a powerful recruitment device.<sup>109</sup> Islam, intertwined with Afghanistan's history of resistance to foreign intervention, enabled the Taliban to inspire their fighters better than tribalism or democracy helped a government tinged by Western sponsors to inspire its soldiers and police. Islam and Afghan identity offered the Taliban an edge, a point of sympathy, morale, and discipline that the government could not match and served as a point of friction between Westerners and the Afghan people. It would affect the ability of the Afghan government and its police and army to stand on their own after the US drawdown and in turn the very ability of the United States to extricate itself from Afghanistan.<sup>110</sup> By

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<sup>107</sup> Rubin, *op. cit.*, pp. 231, 233, 234, 240. It was at that point that the Taliban also started receiving weapons from China and Iran, both of which were transferred through Pakistan.

<sup>108</sup> Malkasian, *op. cit.*, p. 441.

<sup>109</sup> Rubin, *op. cit.*, p. 238, Whitlock, *op. cit.*, p. 694.

<sup>110</sup> Malkasian, *op. cit.*, pp. 451, 927, 976. In a series of interviews conducted on the ground, many Afghan respondents pointed out that, in confronting the Taliban, the Afghan military and police forces were not convinced that they were fighting for a just cause and that they served a puppet government. (See Robert Zaman and Abdul Hadi Khalid, "Trends of Radicalization among the Ranks of the Afghan National Police," Afghan Institute for

the time president Bush's second term ended in January 2009, his record in Afghanistan was mixed: his administration quickly overthrew the Taliban and oversaw the creation of a new regime led by Washington protégé Hamid Karzai, yet a policy of neglect after the start of the 2003 US invasion of Iraq paved the way for a Taliban resurgence that continued to gain momentum.<sup>111</sup>

In 2008, the US Congress, concerned about the lack of financial accountability for the funds destined for Afghanistan, created the Special Investigator General for Afghan Reconstruction (SIGAR) to audit the activities of USAID, the US military other government agencies operating in Afghanistan. Its reports make for grim reading, as they draw attention to the staggering level of corruption infesting the Afghan society as a whole and detail how tens of millions of dollars were frittered away on partially completed projects or ones that were never even implemented for lack of basic accountability or supervision.<sup>112</sup> The entrenched kleptocratic practices of successive Kabul regimes made it difficult for the country to become financially self-sufficient and perpetuated a system of bribery that went all the way up to members of president Karzai's family.<sup>113</sup> The resuming of opium production (which diminished under the 1990s Taliban regime) was another factor that augmented that country's problems by channelling money into funding groups that destabilised the social and political order.

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Strategic Studies, November 2015, pp. 15-17, 19-20 [https://www.acbar.org/upload/1471266047722.pdf], accessed Nov. 11, 2021.).

<sup>111</sup> Towards the end of Bush's second term, the US military operated on an unwritten conviction that the Taliban had to be completely defeated before the troops could be pulled out of Afghanistan.

<sup>112</sup> Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 670.

<sup>113</sup> For example, his half-brother Ahmad Wali Karzai and Muhammad Zia Salehi, a close advisor. For more details about the latter, see Special Inspector General for Afghan Reconstruction (SIGAR), "Corruption in Conflict: Lessons from the US Experience in Afghanistan," September 2016, pp. 43-44 [https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/lessonslearned/sigar-16-58-ll.pdf], accessed Nov. 11, 2021. The collapse of Kabul Bank, which was effectively operating a massive Ponzi scheme, is another case in point. The U.S. counterinsurgency strategy rested on building a credible Afghan government, able to protect and deliver services to its citizens. However, corruption eroded not only the state's legitimacy, but its very capacity to function. (p. 45).

The 2016 SIGAR report, entitled “Corruption in Conflict: Lessons from the US Experience in Afghanistan,” focused specifically on this issue that eventually became a massive hurdle preventing any meaningful progress in Afghanistan’s democratisation process. Afghan officials themselves were aware of the problem, as the national security advisor, dr. Rangin Dadfar Spanta, argued in 2010: “corruption is not just a problem for the system of governance in Afghanistan; it is the system of governance.”<sup>114</sup> Therefore, any significant attempt to limit or combat corruption in the country eventually failed, because the political leaders who were supposed to tackle the problems were the very same whose power relied on the structures that an anticorruption campaign should have dismantled, so they had every reason to block any and all such efforts.<sup>115</sup> Corruption was not a new phenomenon in Afghanistan, but it exploded after 2001, driven by continuing insecurity, weak systems of accountability, the drug trade, a large influx of money, and poor oversight of contracting and procurement related to the international presence.<sup>116</sup> Corruption was often cited as a key

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<sup>114</sup> U.S. Embassy Kabul, “NSA Spanta,” Kabul 5184 cable, October 2, 2010. See also Sarah Chayes, “Afghanistan’s Corruption Was Made in America. How Self-Defeating Elites Failed in Both Countries,” in *Foreign Affairs*, September 3, 2021 [<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-09-03/afghanistans-corruption-was-made-in-america>], accessed Nov. 8, 2021. According to Chayes, many US officials “contended that petty corruption was so common that Afghans simply took it for granted and that high-level corruption was too politically charged to confront. To Afghans, the explanation was simpler. ‘America must want the corruption.’” Even more worrying, corruption was blatantly manifest during all Afghan presidential elections held after 2001: for example, in 2009, Washington sent John Kerry, the chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, to investigate election fraud during the presidential elections. Instead of calling for new elections, the official result was settled in a negotiation: Karzai still won, but with fewer votes than originally announced. As Chayes concluded, “That, ultimately, was the type of democracy that Americans cultivated in Afghanistan: one where the rules are rewritten on the fly by those who amass the most money and power and where elections are settled not at the ballot box but by those who already hold office.”

<sup>115</sup> A 2007 study by the Afghan NGO Integrity Watch Afghanistan described a “bazaar economy” in which every position, favour, and service could be bought and sold. (IWA, “Afghans’ Experience of Corruption,” p. 10 [[https://iwaweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/03-afghans\\_experience\\_of\\_corruption\\_2007.pdf](https://iwaweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/03-afghans_experience_of_corruption_2007.pdf)], accessed Nov. 11, 2021).

<sup>116</sup> SIGAR, 2016, p. 6. The report identifies five main findings regarding corruption in Afghanistan and the role the US played in fuelling it: i) corruption undermined the U.S.

reason behind the popular support for the Taliban surge starting with the mid-2000s, as the people were becoming increasingly unhappy with governmental practices and processes, with corruption in the security sector having particularly tragic consequences.<sup>117</sup> The painstakingly slow work of building efficient governance and the rule of law was set aside in favour of security and immediate reconstruction needs, partly because of the Bush administration's early aversion to engaging in nation-building in Afghanistan, which explains why barely any anticorruption efforts were undertaken in the 2001-2008 period<sup>118</sup> and why priority was given to military alliances with corrupt powerbrokers who, once in government, expanded and strengthened their patronage networks.<sup>119</sup>

Obama's first term in office was marked by a self-described "realist" foreign policy, stripped of the moralistic tones with which his predecessor justified wars and destruction.<sup>120</sup> Aiming to secure a definitive victory over the Taliban, the president authorised a massive US military surge to push back against Taliban gains. The fact that Afghanistan's democratic

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mission in Afghanistan by fuelling grievances against the Afghan government and channelling material support to the insurgency; ii) the United States contributed to the growth of corruption by injecting tens of billions of dollars into the Afghan economy, using flawed oversight and contracting practices, and partnering with malign powerbrokers; iii) the U.S. government was slow to recognize the magnitude of the problem, the role of corrupt patronage networks, the ways in which corruption threatened core U.S. goals, and that certain U.S. policies and practices exacerbated the problem; iv) even when the United States acknowledged corruption as a strategic threat, security and political goals consistently trumped strong anticorruption actions; v) where the United States sought to combat corruption, its efforts saw only limited success in the absence of sustained Afghan and U.S. political commitment. (p. 2).

<sup>117</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 10-11. According to the report, three factors explain how U.S. money helped to fuel corruption in Afghanistan: the enormous influx of money relative to the size of the economy, weak oversight of contracting and procurement, and short timelines. (p. 19).

<sup>118</sup> Casey Michel, Paul Massaro, "America's Money Lost the Afghan War," in *Foreign Policy*, September 13, 2021 [<https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/09/13/americas-money-lost-the-afghan-war/>], accessed Nov. 8, 2021.

<sup>119</sup> Casey Michel, "America Enabled Afghanistan's Corruption for Years. The Taliban Knew It," NBC News, August 22, 2021 [<https://www.nbcnews.com/think/opinion/america-enabled-afghanistan-s-corruption-years-taliban-knew-it-ncna1277327>], accessed Nov. 8, 2021.

<sup>120</sup> Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 627.

credentials were very weak (a fact highlighted by the 2009 election debacle, when Hamid Karzai won a second term with 49.67% of the vote amid widespread accusations of electoral fraud) meant that the US would have to mount a significant counterinsurgency operation to counteract the Taliban's consistent gains and growing influence. Obama decided to send 30,000 additional reinforcements, stating that the US goals were to deny al-Qaeda a safe haven, reverse Taliban momentum against the government (especially in Helmand province), and strengthen the Afghan armed forces and government so they could secure Afghanistan on their own.<sup>121</sup> The US surge was, ultimately, unsuccessful in eliminating the Taliban, and Obama started considering the possibility of facilitating negotiations for an agreement between the Taliban and the Afghan government that could put an end to the violence and allow the Taliban to be a part of the governing process. To that end, the president supported a State Department plan to allow the Taliban to open a political office in Qatar in return for renouncing terrorism and resume negotiations with Karzai's regime.<sup>122</sup> In a June 2011 speech, Obama set December 31, 2014, as the deadline for ending the US and NATO combat mission in Afghanistan, after that date the mission being limited to training and counterterrorism within the framework of a bilateral agreement that the US hoped to conclude with the Karzai regime, defining what kind of operations the US military could undertake without Afghan permission and determine whether American troops who committed a crime in the country could be prosecuted under the Afghan legal system. However, Karzai refused signing the agreement, which led to

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<sup>121</sup> Malkasian, *op. cit.*, p. 670. The US plan to build up and train an Afghan National Army ultimately proved to be a resounding failure: from its inception, the ANA was plagued with large-scale desertions, absenteeism and nepotism, while many of its recruits remained loyal to their militia commanders or *qaum* rather than the state. Thousands of rifles and other major items of military equipment supplied by the US went missing or fell into the hands of insurgents, and investigations revealed that tens of thousands of individuals listed on army payrolls were either non-existent or absent without leave. See also Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 666.

<sup>122</sup> Malkasian, *op. cit.*, p. 872, Rubin, *op. cit.*, p. 281. In the final days of the Obama administration, the US State Department conducted a few rounds of negotiations with the Taliban in Doha, without any notable success. See also Whitlock, *op. cit.*, p. 704.

quite a bit of tension in the US-Afghan relationship.<sup>123</sup> Karzai feared that his domestic support would diminish if he allowed US troops to remain stationed on Afghan soil, given that, historically speaking, Afghan rulers who signed such agreements were vilified and, sometimes, assassinated.

The Taliban continued their gains in 2015 and 2016, even though the US did not completely go through with the announced troop withdrawal, given the dire situation on the ground and, for the next two years, the military tried to keep terrorism and violence at bay, with only modest success, until the end of Obama's second term. After Donald Trump was inaugurated as president in January 2017, the new administration began a review of its Afghanistan and Pakistan strategy and determined that the potential of terrorism from Afghanistan was too great to take any risks, thus the realistic choice was to invest enough forces to suppress terrorism threats. To this end, Trump announced a new strategy in August 2017, promising greater pressure on Pakistan and stressing that there would be no deadline for troop withdrawal, but rather a conditions-based approach, marking a reversal from the Obama era deadline-based strategy.<sup>124</sup> During the same speech, the US president emphasised that his instinct was to withdraw all troops from Afghanistan, something which his military advisers considered too risky, considering that, by 2018, the ranks of the Taliban had swelled to about 60,000 fighters.<sup>125</sup>

The new strategy also prioritised peace talks with the Taliban to seek a political settlement (despite Trump's initial claim that the negotiating process should be "Afghan-led and Afghan-owned"<sup>126</sup>),

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<sup>123</sup> The agreement would be signed by Karzai's successor, Ashraf Ghani, after the 2015 elections. The United States had two controversial demands. First, under very select circumstances, night raids and other missions to detain Afghans would continue. Obama saw no reason to leave troops in Afghanistan without freedom to conduct counterterrorism operations. Second, US troops would have immunity from prosecution in an Afghan court for any crimes committed on Afghan soil. (Malkasian, *op. cit.*, p. 967; Rubin, *op. cit.*, pp. 163-164).

<sup>124</sup> Malkasian, *op. cit.*, p. 1140; Rubin, *op. cit.*, p. 271.

<sup>125</sup> Whitlock, *op. cit.*, p. 632.

<sup>126</sup> Rubin, *op. cit.*, p. 288. U.S. officials had said for a decade that brokering a political settlement between the Afghan government and the insurgents was the only feasible way to

especially considering that, starting with 2017-2018, a new radical group made its violent presence known in Afghanistan: ISIS-K, the Islamic State in Khorasan province, an offshoot of the original ISIS formed in Iraq in 2013-2014.<sup>127</sup> The previous administrations had made only half-hearted attempts to find a negotiated solution: they had squandered multiple opportunities to reach out to the Taliban when the US held a much bigger leverage, deferring to the Afghan government and letting it paralyse the peace process by adopting a “divide and conquer” approach.<sup>128</sup>

In February 2018, the Taliban sent an open letter to the American people, signalling their willingness to enter peace talks with the US, as long as the Afghan government was excluded. The negotiation process would be long and marked by several changes in direction,<sup>129</sup> given Trump’s erratic and unpredictable decision-making process: for instance, in December 2018, after the Republic Party lost the mid-term elections, without any prior warning, he ordered all forces in Afghanistan, including those involved in counterterrorism operations, pulled out within weeks, which was both dangerous and unfeasible if the US still wanted to secure a settlement with the Taliban. The US chief negotiator, Zalmay Khalilzad, envisioned a US-Taliban agreement with four main components: first, a Taliban guarantee that Afghanistan would not be used by any group or individual to attack another country; second, a timeline for a complete US

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end the war. They knew a lasting military defeat of the Taliban was highly unlikely. Unlike al-Qaeda, whose shrinking membership consisted of a few Arabs and other foreign fighters, the Taliban was a Pashtun-led mass movement that represented a significant portion of the Afghan population and continued to gain strength. (Whitlock, *op. cit.*, p. 687).

<sup>127</sup> Malkasian, *op. cit.*, p. 1153; Rubin, *op. cit.*, p. 250. By early 2016, US estimates showed that ISIS-K had between 1000 and 3000 fighters, mostly former Taliban members. (Whitlock, *op. cit.*, p. 620). For a complete timeline of ISIS-K and its involvement in Afghanistan and Pakistan, see Antonio Giustozzi, *The Islamic State in Khorasan. Afghanistan, Pakistan and the New Central Asian Jihad*, London: Hurst&Company, 2018.

<sup>128</sup> Whitlock, *op. cit.*, pp. 688-689.

<sup>129</sup> In September 2019, Trump suspended the negotiations via tweet because he was facing serious backlash from both sides of the aisle over his proposal to host president Ghani and the Taliban leader at Camp David to sign the draft agreement decided upon up until that point (Rubin, *op. cit.*, p. 257; Whitlock, *op. cit.*, p. 710). During a surprise Thanksgiving visit to Bagram airbase in November 2019, Trump announced that negotiations would be resumed, based on an ambiguous claim that the Taliban had agreed to a ceasefire.

withdrawal; third, a Taliban promise to reach a political settlement with the government; fourth, a general ceasefire, to which the Taliban never formally agreed.<sup>130</sup> The agreement between the US and the Taliban, despite having various grey areas, contingencies and unresolved issues, was finally signed in Doha in February 2020 and it contained the latter's commitment to reducing violence, preventing al-Qaeda from using Afghan territory to mount terrorist attacks, training the fundraising. The US pledge to withdraw its troops according to the 14-month timeline. The agreement also included the provision of intra-Afghan negotiations including the Afghan government, which started in Doha in September 2020.

Given that Donald Trump lost his re-election bid in November 2020, it fell onto his successor, Joe Biden (who had long been viscerally opposed to the war), to implement the provisions of the accord and put an end to America's longest war by bringing all the troops home.<sup>131</sup> As soon as he became president in January 2021, Biden faced the same conundrum that had bedevilled Bush, Obama and Trump: how to end an unwinnable war?<sup>132</sup> In April 2021, the US president gave a speech in which he announced his decision to withdraw all US troops from Afghanistan by September 11, 2021. Unlike his predecessors, Biden gave a sobering assessment of two decades of warfare. He did not try to frame the outcome as a victory. Instead, he said the United States had achieved its original objective long ago by destroying al-Qaeda's stronghold in Afghanistan, suggesting that U.S. troops should have left after they killed Osama bin Laden in May 2011. He also emphasised the fact that Washington's rationale for staying in Afghanistan had become increasingly muddled, which is evident if one looks at the numerous changes in direction and objectives over the past two decades.<sup>133</sup> Since the US could no longer answer the question "what conditions must be met for us to depart?," he considered that it was time for America's longest war to come to an end, since there would never actually be an optimal moment to leave.

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<sup>130</sup> Malkasian, *op. cit.*, p. 1209.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 1258.

<sup>132</sup> Whitlock, *op. cit.*, p. 714.

<sup>133</sup> Whitstock, *op. cit.*, p. 716.

As I have shown in the present section, during the two decades of the Afghan war, the US policy towards Afghanistan was primarily guided by its own strategic and foreign policy interests, and went through a number of significant changes and turning points, from a policy of relative abandonment prior to 9/11<sup>134</sup> to a full-scale military intervention; from a counterterrorism to a counter-insurgency strategy; from rooting out terrorism to containing it; from treating the Taliban as terrorists and consequently the enemy to declaring them as non-terrorists and thus not the enemy; from the goal of defeating the Taliban to degrading them; from seeing Afghanistan as having compelling relevance to US national security interests to seeing it as having minimal importance; and from intending to spend as long as it took to secure a democratic and strong Afghanistan to the objective of establishing a good enough state so that the US could have a quick exit.<sup>135</sup>

## 5. Conclusions

There is one main red thread running through the comparative account of the British and American presence in Afghanistan: clearly, both countries were driven by their own self-interest and treated Afghanistan as a means to an end, without having any deep understanding of the country's people, history and traditions, and just tried to transform it into whatever suited their purpose at one point or another. Britain's Afghan Great Game ended at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and, ever since, the country has been a rather marginal player in the region, especially after

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<sup>134</sup> Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 154. The US Embassy in Kabul was closed down in 1989 and would only reopen in December 2001.

<sup>135</sup> Dorani, *op. cit.*, p. 7. The main turning points in this decades-long strategy are as follows: the first occurred immediately after 9/11, when president Bush launched the Global War on Terror with the Afghan invasion; the second happened in 2002 when, after the fall of the Taliban, president Bush decided to start employing a counterterrorism strategy; the third took place in 2009, when president Obama decided to deploy an additional 30,000 troops to ramp up counterinsurgency measures, while the fourth was marked by the decision to withdraw the very same troops by the end of 2014. The last two turning points were in 2016, when Obama announced some changes in the US's Afghan strategy to delay America's exit, and in 2017, when Trump presented his new South Asia strategy.

India gained its independence in 1947. The US presence in Afghanistan, however, is a different story altogether: even though much shorter than Britain's, it will continue to cast a very long shadow for the foreseeable future, and discussions of America's "Afghan fiasco" will linger in world media and academic circles for some time still. The present section will therefore focus on a few lessons that the US should learn from Afghanistan, derived from the flaws in its strategy that led to this entirely unsurprising outcome, despite its swift initial victory in 2001. As time wore on, it became increasingly clear that, as the old adage goes, the US succeeded in snatching defeat from the jaws of victory.

i) The US government's strategy for Afghanistan was never coherent. Suffering from a chronic misalignment of ends, means, and ways, and successive Washington administrations struggled to formulate firm, clear goals, the end result being a continuous state of muddling through with little effective progress. At various points, the U.S. government hoped to eliminate al-Qaeda, decimate the Taliban movement that hosted it, deny all terrorist groups a safe haven in Afghanistan, build Afghan security forces so they could deny terrorists a safe haven in the future, and help the civilian government become legitimate and capable enough to win the trust of Afghans. Each goal, once accomplished, was thought to move the U.S. government one step closer to being able to depart.<sup>136</sup> This very insistence on the existence of a "clearly defined mission" and an "exit strategy", despite much evidence to the contrary, proved very damaging in the end.<sup>137</sup> The two main agencies involved (the State Department and the Department of Defence) lacked the necessary mindset, resources and expertise to carry out the reconstruction of Afghanistan.<sup>138</sup> The US's attempt to return to a lighter footprint in Afghanistan in 2014 came too late: by that time,

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<sup>136</sup> Special Inspector General for Afghan Reconstruction (SIGAR), "What We Need to Learn: Lessons from Twenty Years of Afghanistan Reconstruction," August 2021, pp. 1, 14 [<https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/lessonslearned/SIGAR-21-46-LL.pdf>], accessed Nov. 11, 2021.

<sup>137</sup> Stewart, *art. cit.* As the author argues, in Afghanistan, "From the very beginning, the international plans were surreally detached from the local reality."

<sup>138</sup> SIGAR, 2021, p. viii. Time and time again, high-ranking officials drew attention to the lack of a coherent long-term strategy, among them Army Gen. Dan McNeill, or British Gen. David Richards, who led the US and NATO forces from 2006 to 2007. (See Whitlock, *op. cit.*, p. 20).

immense damage had been done and the Taliban resurge was gaining ground against an Afghan army entirely reliant on expensive and sophisticated US technology and populated by many corrupt gangster capitalists whose wealth was fed based on military contracts.<sup>139</sup>

ii) Washington also consistently underestimated the amount of time needed to rebuild Afghanistan and created deeply unrealistic timelines, prioritising short-term goals whose only result was quick cash spending, thinking that decisions made in the US could change the complex situation on the ground, which was often ignored. Inevitably, this led to generalised corruption and inefficient measures. In turn, the US was naïve, ignorant, unclear, lost, arrogant and parsimonious in its dealings with Afghanistan.<sup>140</sup>

iii) A large part of the institutions and infrastructure projects the US built were unsustainable, as billions of dollars were wasted since US officials were often judged by the number of projects completed and money spent, not long-term utility and sustainability, thus leading to a plethora of Potemkin villages built to please the American sponsors.<sup>141</sup> By 2010, U.S. reconstruction spending was equivalent to more than 100 percent of Afghanistan's GDP, or more than double the country's estimated maximum absorptive capacity.<sup>142</sup>

iv) One of the most evident reasons behind the US failure was its inability to find the right people for the right jobs: US personnel in Afghanistan were often unqualified and poorly trained,<sup>143</sup> while the

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<sup>139</sup> Stewart, *art. cit.*

<sup>140</sup> Dorani, *op. cit.*, p. 227.

<sup>141</sup> "Why America Keeps Building Up Corrupt Client States," *The Economist*, August 22, 2021 [<https://www.economist.com/international/2021/08/22/why-america-keeps-building-corrupt-client-states>], November 11, 2021. This situation is similar to the one in Vietnam prior to the 1975 US withdrawal, or to the one in Iraq after 2003, another state hollowed up by the corruption brought about by America's nation-building project.

<sup>142</sup> SIGAR, 2021, p. 31.

<sup>143</sup> To give but one example: when Maj. Louis Frias, an officer with the 8th PSYOP Battalion from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, deployed to Afghanistan in July 2003, he prepared by reading the paperback *Islam For Dummies* on the plane ride over. His team's biggest project was developing a comic book about the importance of voting, focused on a story about kids playing football, because, as Frias explained it, "football [soccer – my note] was such a big thing in Afghanistan." (Whitlock, *op. cit.*, pp. 204-205). Members of the military sent to

competing visions of the military and civilian staff made meaningful progress even more difficult. Staff in every agency constantly rotated out, which forced their successors to start from scratch every time.

v) Persistent insecurity and violence on the ground severely undermined the American reconstruction efforts. For example, electoral processes were constantly affected by voter intimidation, especially in remote areas under Taliban control, while US staff were unsuccessful in persuading the frightened population to support the government. Another example of contradictory goals had to do with improving governance and eliminating a culture of impunity, while at the same time empowering predatory actors, such as Abdul Rashid Dostum, the former veteran of the Soviet-Afghan war and former Afghan vice-president between 2014 and 2020, in the name of improving security.<sup>144</sup>

vi) US government agencies rarely carried out sufficient monitoring and evaluation to assess the impact of their efforts. In other words, projects were considered “successful” regardless of whether they had contributed to more important, more comprehensive goals, and the absence of periodic reality checks increased the risk of doing the wrong thing perfectly. Over time, each agency became focused on doing something, anything at all, rather than doing what needed to be done.

vii) Last, but certainly not least: the US government had only a very limited understanding of the Afghan context and failed to adapt its strategy accordingly. It persisted in forcing Western technocratic models onto Afghan economic institutions, trained armed forces in complex weapons systems they could neither grasp nor maintain and tried to impose the rule of law on a country where 80% of disputes were settled through traditional informal means.<sup>145</sup> While the U.S. and the Afghan governments focused on extending governance through the provision of services, including the formal justice system, the Taliban competed for

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Afghanistan were given cultural awareness classes using PowerPoint slides recycled from the Iraqi conflict, on the assumption that “Iraq, Afghanistan, it’s the same thing.” (p. 211).

<sup>144</sup> SIGAR, 2021, p. 6; Whitlock, *op. cit.*, p. 330.

<sup>145</sup> SIGAR, 2021, pp. viii-xi, 77. For example, by providing material support and equipment to certain units within the ANDSF without consideration for ethnic dynamics between units, the United States could be perceived as biased in favor of one ethnic group or faction at the expense of another.

popular support by providing a semblance of security and justice via their own version of traditional dispute resolution.<sup>146</sup>

There is yet another factor that helps explain the rapid collapse of the Afghan government in August 2021 and the reestablishment of a Taliban regime: as I have already mentioned in a previous section, the Taliban were able to present themselves as an inspirational element closely tied to authentic Afghan identity. They claimed to fight for Islam and against foreign invaders, both powerful values in Afghan culture, while the government, allied with the foreign invaders, could not muster similar levels of support.<sup>147</sup> This fact, coupled with the failure of the Afghan army, whose ranks were swelled by thousands of “ghost soldiers” who only existed on paper, accounts for the Taliban’s swift takeover of power as the last American troops were leaving Kabul.

Despite more than two centuries of European involvement and engagement in Afghanistan, at this point, very few lessons seem to have been learned. European, American and United Nations politicians, military strategists and specialists, as well as Afghan government officials, still appear to cling to discredited imperial models. Like all previous European interventions, the latest attempt by Western powers to put the extremism and violence genie back in the bottle has failed in terms of its original objectives. More seriously, it has let down the Afghan people they claimed to be liberating and the promised era of peace, stability and inclusiveness is as elusive as ever.<sup>148</sup> Ultimately, it is the Afghan people who are subject to the greatest tragedy: they have long been misused, sometimes with the best intentions, other times with the worst, by outsiders who saw them not as a people per se, but merely as a pawn in a Great Game that begs the question of whether it was truly necessary after all.

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<sup>146</sup> SIGAR, 2021, p. 74.

<sup>147</sup> Malkasian, *op. cit.*, pp. 25, 1276. Additionally, one should not discount the important role that Pakistan’s support for the Taliban played in their government takeover. See also Stewart, *art. cit.*

<sup>148</sup> Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 692.

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## THE POLITICAL CULTURE OF ROMANIA

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### Abstract

*In addition to Romania's economic backwardness, the experiences of repressive political culture have contributed to restricting society's ability to act by impairing the development of its own identity for centuries. The background to the emergence of totalitarian regimes can be derived from the context of the European modernization processes, which have gripped the whole of Europe through the industrialization and consequently secularization and rationalization process. By reproducing these processes, political situations and the experiences of Romanian society on which they are based, reveals the significance of their political culture. The aim is to put together the political culture of modern Romanian society in order to ultimately understand what the problems are for their current political consciousness.*

**Keywords:** Political Culture, Romania, Religion, Orthodox Church, Post-socialism, Modernity, Tradition, Democracy, Civil Society

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## Introduction

This paper sees itself as an attempt to shed light on Romania's political culture. The Orthodox Church, the orthodox religion and the Orthodox faith see themselves as the sacred center of Romania's political culture.<sup>1</sup> For the analysis of political culture it goes without saying that the political cannot be examined separately from this sacred culture, since the dimension of the "political" must include all human actions that thus shape the social community and thus also culture. Using this cultural anthropological approach, this work promises a much broader and deeper empiricism than is usual in current social science analyzes. The main focus in dealing with the question of the relationship between politics, economy and culture in Romania lies in the attempt to work out the attitude and position of the post-socialist Romanian society to politics and civic participation in democratic processes and to the economy, work ethics and economic performance. It must be examined how the Orthodox Church and the Orthodox Faith influence these attitudes. The aim is to determine what power the Romanian Orthodox Church still has on real politics and what influence the Orthodox faith exerts on the political consciousness of a post-socialist citizen in Romania and how this conflict-laden interaction affects the economic performance of the country and the social one Structure affects. Through the contribution of this paper an answer should be found, whereby the Romanian post-socialist society is "held together". The answers to such questions should create starting points for considerations about how a post-socialist society could help itself to build an intact democracy based on the rule of law, which enables citizens to actively participate as demos in the socio-political sphere of action and political, economic and to expand and consolidate the social structures of the young democratic state. For now one can say that the obvious pathological symptoms of Romania, such as the complex of backwardness, the struggle for survival and the resulting lack of values of independence or self-determination have led to a missing intact public and the corresponding liberal political culture. Consequently, this helped to bring about the dictatorships of the 20th century in Romanian society, which grew on the breeding ground of economic, political and social problems

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel Barbu, *Au cetățenii suflet? O teologie politică a societăților post-seculare*, București: Editura Vremea, 2016, see pp. 104-107, 111, 115, 126.

reaching far back into feudal society and which can all be ascribed to the consequences of a "catching up modernity".

### Common theories of modernity

At this point it makes sense to distinguish the term "modernity"<sup>2</sup> from that of modernism, modernity and the modern age<sup>3</sup>, „since the term modern<sup>4</sup>, modernity<sup>5</sup> or modernism can also be applied to other epochs and is not only indicative of the 17th and 18th centuries is. In the history of mankind, the terms "modern"<sup>6</sup> and "modernism" have always been used to distinguish them from the concept of "obsolete", "traditional" or

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<sup>2</sup> Gerhart von Graevenitz, (Konstanz), "Einleitung", first published in *Konzepte der Moderne*, Stuttgart/Weimar: J.B. Metzler, 1999, pp. 2-16, <http://www.metzlerverlag.de/>, 1, "The totalizing "modernity" terms are juxtaposed with limited meanings of "modernity", "modernity", "modernization" and "modernism."

<sup>3</sup> Markus Prutsch, "Politik, Religion und Gewalt. Zur Politiktheoretischen Bestimmung des Phänomens Fundamentalismus in der Moderne," MA, Paris-London-University Salzburg, 2006, p. 15: "Numerous theories tend to equate" modernity "with" modern times ". This institution has - as Peter V. Zima (2001, 26f.) points out - a long philosophical tradition that begins with the disintegration of the Hegelian system among the Young Hegelians. For example, the Hegel student Friedrich Theodor Fischer (1922, 175) speaks of "the great crisis [...] that separates modern times from the Middle Ages". However, not only in German, but also in Anglo-Saxon literature, the expression "modern" is often equated with "modern", but here - as in French - mainly due to the lack of alternative terminology. In the following, however, such an automatic equation is to be refrained from, since "modernity" in the contemporary understanding - as can be shown - is undoubtedly located in the modern era, although it cannot be understood as the sole designation of the epoch. Rather, with a view to modernity, a distinction must be made between a historical concept of periodization and a comprehensive social diagnosis." Compare Hennen 1990, 56.

<sup>4</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *Kleine politischen Schriften I-V*, Frankfurt a. Main: Suhrkamp, 1981, 445 „The word modern was first used in the late 5th century to delimit the Christian present, which has just become official, from the pagan-Roman past.“

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, „With changing content, modernity repeatedly expresses the consciousness of an epoch that relates to the past of antiquity in order to understand itself as a result of a transition from the old to the new. This does not apply to the Renaissance, with which the modern age begins for us.“

<sup>6</sup> Prutsch, *Politik, Religion und Gewalt*, p. 11: Derived from the Latin modernus - "new (in time)" - "modern" is used by the historical human sciences to periodise as well as to structure and evaluate in order to characterize turning points or stages of development in human development.

“classical”<sup>7</sup> and not only represent a phenomenon of the “modern society” or “Modern”.<sup>8</sup>

This dichotomous or bipolar thinking separates societies into “modern” and “unmodern” or “premodern” societies and not only imposes a turning point on them by dividing societies into “new” and “old” societies on the one hand, by evaluating these as “non-modern societies”

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, “As an antithetical concept and bipolar thinking, H. Gumbrecht crystallized the concept of modernity by associating the following pairs of words with the modern concept: “present / previous”; “new / old”; “Temporarily / forever.” Compare Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, “Modern, Modernität, Moderne,” in Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, Reinhart Kosellek (ed.), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, Stuttgart 1978, IV, 93-131, in Prutsch, *Politik, Religion und Gewalt*, pp. 11-12: “In this context, three fundamentally possible interpretations of “modern” can be named: First, those who understand “modern” as “present”, from which the complementary term “previous” results. In this meaning, the predicate “modern” is assigned to concepts, objects or people who represent an institution that has existed over a long period of time. The second possible meaning of “modern” is that of “new”, contrasting the term “old”. Here the predicate “modern” designates a present experienced as an epoch, which is set apart from epochs of the past by certain properties that are uniformly comprehensible in their complexity. The beginning of this present can largely be postponed at will, while its end remains indefinite. Finally, the third possible meaning of modern is that of “temporary”, as opposed to “eternal”. This attribution of meaning becomes possible whenever a present and its concepts can be thought of by contemporaries as the “past of a future present”. It wins its full right in the designation of a now that is felt to be so quickly temporary that one can no longer oppose it with a qualitatively different past, but only with eternity as a resting pole.”

<sup>8</sup> Prutsch, *Politik, Religion und Gewalt*, p.15: Determining the special characteristics of such modern societies in a dedicated manner or naming their break with traditional social configurations historically encounters difficulties [...] However, what is characteristic of all these processes is that they extend over long periods of time and occur in different parts of the world clearly different times are to be determined. In attempts at specification, the industrial and democratic revolutions are accordingly identified as social phenomena that constitute modernity. (Compare Ulrich Wehler, “200 Jahre amerikanische Revolution und Revolutionsforschung” in *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, Göttingen: Sonderheft 2, 1976) Even these revolutions, however, are spatially rather extensive and uneven phenomena, which - under the premise of a clear delimitation of the “modernity” - leads to the search for further ones Restrictions necessary. This can be found, provided that the political changes in England in the 17th century followed by the economic upheavals there in the second half of the 18th century are recognized as the starting point for a slow but powerful change in political thought and economic organization, culminating in the relatively close coincidence of the American (1776) and French (1789) revolutions - a sufficiently short period of time that could be described as the beginning of political modernity. Compare R. Palmer, *The age of democratic revolution*; v. 1: the challenge, Princeton, 1959.

and thereby locating them outside “modernity”. A judgment with a negative connotation resonates in the theories and above all concepts of modernity,<sup>9</sup> which through their discourses,<sup>10</sup> legitimized nothing other than violence and exclusion and thus unleashed dynamics in which people were not only denied belonging to modernity, but to humanity itself.<sup>11</sup>

*„The” figure of thought “of the” great dichotomy “not only encompasses the history of modernization, it also divides it from within. Social modernization and cultural modernity (Habermas) diverge and solidify into what Matei Calinescu calls the “two moderns”: the action system of social modernization on the one hand, the symbolic system of modern culture on the other (Schönert), the social constraints on the one hand and their “counter-institution”, the autonomous art of the avant-garde on the other hand (citizens). “<sup>12</sup>*

It should be noted that “modernity” is difficult to determine in terms of time, since it appeared at different times, in different places, in different

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<sup>9</sup> Graevenitz, “Einleitung” 10: „With an expression by Hans-Ulrich Wehler one could say that modernity is basically spelled with the help of a »dichotomy alphabet« [...] The double structure has an impact in the fashion theories, for example in the evolution theories, which, according to Wehler, »strike a skeptical or optimistic polarization “... “Great social science thinkers of the late 18th and 19th centuries clung to these symmetrical dichotomies of social development.” With the ideal type of tradition, the starting point was determined, with the ideal type of modernity, the current state or the goal of a directed evolutionary process was determined. Such pairs of opposites can be found e.g. in Herbert Spencers Homogenität und Differenzierung (Homogeneity and differentiation), Max Webers Traditionalität und Rationalisierung (Traditionality and Rationalization), Emile Durkheims mechanical and organic solidarity, Ferdinand Tönnies' Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft (Community and society), Henry S. Maines Status und Kontrakt (Status and Contract).” Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Modernisierungstheorie und Geschichte*, Göttingen, 1975 and c. footnote. 8, 14.

<sup>10</sup> Compare Michel Foucault, *Die Ordnung des Diskurses*, Frankfurt a . M.: Suhrkamp, 1991.

<sup>11</sup> Teresa Koloma Beck, “(Staats-)Gewalt und moderne Gesellschaft. Der Mythos vom Verschwinden der Gewalt”, *Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung*, published January, 2017, <https://www.bpb.de/apuz/240909/staats-gewalt-und-moderne-gesellschaft-der-mythos-vom-verschwinden-der-gewalt?p=all>, accessed on 02. September 2020.

<sup>12</sup> Graevenitz, “Einleitung”, 10, op. cit. Jörg Schönert, “Gesellschaftliche Modernisierung und Literatur der Moderne”, in Christian Wagenknecht (ed.), *Zur Terminologie der Literaturwissenschaft. Akten des 9. Germanistischen Symposions der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft 1986*, Stuttgart 1988, 393-413.

forms. Temporal caesuras are therefore difficult to pin down and to tie them to characteristic forms such as the historical premises of the Enlightenment,<sup>13</sup> the industrial and bourgeois revolutions, which have contributed to the development of capitalist societies and arise on the one hand from the development of new sciences and technologies and on the other from the liberal capitalism of civil society and its urbanization. So one can say that "the uniform, normative concept of "modernity" (can) can be equated with modern western rationality (Max Weber)".<sup>14</sup> The modern society is therefore understood as a synonym and characteristic of the social formation of the modern age, which extends to the present day, which is strictly different from the so-called "tradition",<sup>15</sup> since "modern" is a break with the "order" that was valid until then - the "old world" and thus embodies a political program.<sup>16</sup> Whether modernization is understood to be a process of rationalization, as Max Weber formulated it, or whether it is understood to mean the disappearance of the community in favor of the contract-based society through the criticism of F. Tönnies, or as G. Simmel understands hereby the individualization as the result of modernization and its increasing differentiation. In this regard, it can be criticized that what all these thinkers have in common is that they understand

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<sup>13</sup> Walter Rothholz, *Politik und Religion. Eine kurze Einführung in die Grundkategorien ihrer Beziehung*, Szczecin: Politisches und Europäisches Institut der Universität Szczecin, 2013, p. 20: „The concept of progress associated with the term modern was decisively shaped by Bernard de Fontenelle, who developed the theory of unlimited linear progress in his work "Digression sur les Ancients et les Modernes", published in 1688. This was primarily due to advances in the natural sciences of the 17th century. But this also shook the aesthetic role model. The role model effect of the "ancients" was suppressed by deeper insights into the contradictions of the historical process. In France in the 17th and 18th centuries in particular, the debate on poetic, aesthetic and historical-philosophical issues made the term "modern" a symbol of a broad conception of history. The term congealed into a cipher that symbolized the emancipation of "modernity" from Christianity. In the end it was Hegel who, in idealistic form, created the historical-philosophical expression for those ideas of "modern" that have remained alive to this day."

<sup>14</sup> Graevenitz, "Einleitung", 1: „An »evolutionary-theoretical generalized term of modernization« (Jürgen Habermas, *Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne. Zwölf Vorlesungen*, Frankfurt a. M., 1985, p.11, has largely replaced the orientation towards Weber's concept of modernity in the historical and social sciences."

<sup>15</sup> Peter Wagner, *Soziologie der Moderne*, Frankfurt a. Main: Campus, 1995, see *Theorie und Gesellschaft*, p. 33.

<sup>16</sup> Compare Rothholz, *Politik und Religion*, p. 20.

modernization as a linear, progress-driven process that is not only unstoppable, but is projected onto all societies. However, it was not so much "modernity" itself with its revolutions that brought about these upheavals, but rather the discourse of modernity<sup>17</sup>, its theories and ideas. On the one hand, as we have been able to see so far, the opinions and theories on the concept of modernity or modernism differ widely and can be summarized as the "self-reflexivity"<sup>18</sup> of modernity, in which the "discourse" of modernity (about itself) falls into this, because the discourse,<sup>19</sup> as M. Foucault defined it, has a certain knowledge of its own time within a certain culture with a certain regularity<sup>20</sup> and is linked to given power structures, whereby "knowledge and reality are the results of socio-cultural processes",<sup>21</sup> which through the discourse (communication (Habermas) or

<sup>17</sup> Graevenitz, "Einleitung", 14: "For Charles Taylor's categorical imperative of modernity, the "articulation", a kind of discursive self-presence of the modern age, the aesthetic "expressivism" is the modern idea of the individual« (Charles Taylor, *Das Unbehagen an der Moderne*, Frankfurt a.M.: Campus, 1995, 72, Model case and instrument at the same time.

<sup>18</sup> „Reflexivity“- the“ thinking about oneself“, deputy authors would be J. Habermas, Ulrich Beck, A. Giddens and Scott Lasch.; Graevenitz, "Einleitung", p.14: „Scott Lash, with Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens a member of the triumvirate of the »reflective second modernism«, Scott Lash persistently recalls the »aesthetic dimension« of this recent modernization of the modernity. In any case, in the second modernity of the communication society, the discourses as "media" of modernization (Richard Münch) are on the advance. Modernization processes and the processing of discourses are becoming increasingly identical. According to Scott Lash, this global expansion of discourse corresponds to the expansion of the aesthetic into the everyday world. The »images, sounds and stories« belong »as a commodity-shaped intellectual property of the culture industry to the characteristic, highly industrialized overall structure of power. On the other hand, they open up virtual and real spaces for the spread of aesthetic criticism of this power-knowledge complex. The basic principle of aesthetic reflexivity in the »everyday life of today's consumer capitalism« is again, as with Charles Taylor, »expressive individualism«. " op. cit. Scott Lash, "Reflexivität und ihre Doppelungen: Struktur, Ästhetik und Gemeinschaft," in Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens, Scott Lash (ed.), *Reflexive Modernisierung. Eine Kontroverse*, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1996, pp. 195-286, here 234 ff., compare also Scott Lash, "Reflexive Modernization: The Aesthetic Dimension", *Theory, Culture and Society*, no 10/1, 1993, pp.1-24.

<sup>19</sup> Foucault, *Die Ordnung des Diskurses*, Other alternate authors would be J. F. Lyotard's language games and J. Habermas with the keyword of discourse ethics (*Diskursethik*) (*Theorie des Kommunikativen Handelns*), worked out with O. J. Appelt.

<sup>20</sup> Michel Foucault, *Die Ordnung der Dinge*, Frankfurt. a. M.: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1974, p. 9 – „Introduction“.

<sup>21</sup> Achim Landwehr, *Diskurs und Diskursgeschichte* ( Potsdam: Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung, 2010), Version: 1.0, in: Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte, 11.02.2010,

the media (R.Münch)) are mediated by themselves and are ultimately a manifestation of modernity itself. The “project of modernity”<sup>22</sup> or the project of the Enlightenment thus shows an inner division, both in theory and in practice, because the gap is especially between the “ideas” of modernity and the institutions themselves, as the ideas and concepts of modernity are historically definable, but in practice they remain ideal-typical constructions, especially since they have been implemented very differently.<sup>23</sup> Of course, this also goes hand in hand with Max Weber's concept of “disenchanted the world”, whereby “modernity” is understood as a break with the past. The extent to which this “modern upheaval” is supposed to have affected all European societies economically, politically and socially remains open to dispute. It is much easier to speak of “concepts of modernity” than “modernity” as a linear and progressive epoch.<sup>24</sup>

“The variables for this are urbanization, industrialization and democratization as well as an empirical-analytical understanding of knowledge”.<sup>25</sup>

If the modern age is marked by the Reformation and the Renaissance,<sup>26</sup> the “modern age” is marked by the American Declaration of Independence

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[http://docupedia.de/zg/landwehr\\_diskursgeschichte\\_v1\\_de\\_2010](http://docupedia.de/zg/landwehr_diskursgeschichte_v1_de_2010), accessed on 04. September 2020; This debate also includes the discussion of constructivism and realism.

<sup>22</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *Die Moderne. Ein unvollendetes Projekt. Philosophisch-politische Aufsätze*, Stuttgart: Reclam Verlag, 1977-1992.

<sup>23</sup> Prutsch, *Politik, Religion und Gewalt*, p.16.

<sup>24</sup> Walter Rothholz, “Anmerkungen zur politischen Kultur in Rumänien,” *Studia Europaea*, no. 2, June 2016, pp. 33–61, pp. 38-40.

<sup>25</sup> Prutsch, *Politik, Religion und Gewalt*, p.15.

<sup>26</sup> Rothholz, *Politik und Religion*, p. 20: „As early as the Renaissance, the term appears in its current form. However, the Renaissance image of history remained cyclical, while the connection between the term “modern” and a teleological image of history can only be demonstrated from the 17th century: From then on, we can finally establish a historical image that appeared as a model of historical progress, but it to be motivated in terms of salvation history. The dispute between “old” and “modern” that began at the end of the 17th century and quickly grew beyond a mere aesthetic debate ultimately created the concept of modernity that we are familiar with today.“

(1776) and the French Revolution (1789) on the other hand.<sup>27</sup> The term “modern” means, one can say, in all current theories (scientific) progress and is therefore also understood as “emancipation from Christianity”. Secularization and technical-scientific progress were thus decisive for the changed modern consciousness of the so-called modernity, in which a “modern”, “civilized” and consequently rational view of man has developed, which was diametrically opposed to the organic view of mankind and the world that had prevailed until then together with the changed social structures and their increasingly complex interdependencies grew together to form a new “technical” worldview. This is how the modern state theories of capitalistically developed countries emerge, which were imported to Eastern Europe and Romania and which demanded the foundation for the development of a new political and economic system and which were to find their final form in the nation, in which at the same time modern man - as an individual - was born or should emerge from it. What the political culture of south-east European countries, especially Romania, looks like in the face of these modernization processes, will now be discussed below.

### **Political culture**

In order to get closer to Romania's political culture, it must be clarified that the concept of political culture based on Eric Voegelin is used in this article. Accordingly, political culture is understood to mean the cosmion - i.e. the self-interpretation - of every society and thus the source of its social order. It should be noted that politics and culture are directly connected and therefore cannot be treated separately, as in the sense of the *political culture approach* of Almond and Verba, in which the ideas of T. Parsons, M. Weber's student, were incorporated. The analysis of political culture<sup>28</sup> in this article therefore does not use the political culture approach

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<sup>27</sup> Prutsch, *Politik, Religion und Gewalt*, p.15, Compare. Robert Palmer, *The age of democratic revolution*, Princeton, 1959.

<sup>28</sup> The sociologists Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba coined the term “political culture” in their work: *The Civic Culture, Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*, N.Y.: Princeton, 1963; „The term political culture developed here describes the sum of the basic attitudes and orientations specific to a certain society with regard to the various areas of politics that are conveyed to the individual in the process of their individual socialization in family, school, circle of friends or at work and that are political Determine action. [...] Accordingly, political

by Almond and Verba, since here the political culture<sup>29</sup> is only considered under the aspect of the relationship of the citizen to the political system (subsystem fourth degree of the AGIL scheme Parsons)<sup>30</sup> and leaves out all other parts of the overall social context. The understanding of politics and the role of the political system is only viewed as a subsystem of the social system. The political system is no longer assigned a role other than that of a goal-pursuing subsystem,<sup>31</sup> which pursues a functionally differentiated process. As a result, the political system is reduced to a mediating authority between individuals who give external input into the system through interests and demands and the political institutions that take this input and transform it system-specifically and functionally into so-called outputs according to their performance.<sup>32</sup> The political system is only understood as a *functional* process, which, via the state institution (s), achieves the transition from social inputs to political outputs, whereby the political system is only assigned a functional significance and as a legislative, judicial, executive and “distributing institution” “Can be grasped by goods and resources.<sup>33</sup> The role of the political system, its power and rule, especially in the capitalistically developed societies, is thus reduced to the function of a “distribution institution” and politics is thus viewed from the overall social context. This approach neglects the fact that the individual is embedded in a society in which he creates certain models of order on the basis of certain worldviews, which include religious - from rite and myth to theoretical and thus political systems of order that are based on a symbolism, that is, the symbolic language is made understandable.<sup>34</sup>

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culture is something like a middle and mediating authority between the political institutions and the individuals, the “missing link”[...].“ Volker Pesch, *Handlungstheorie und Politische Kultur*, Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag, 2000, 11.

<sup>29</sup> Pesch, *Handlungstheorien*, 55.

<sup>30</sup> Compare Talcott Parsons, *The Social System*, London: Routledge, 1951.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*. This scheme was developed by Parsons, where AGIL stands for A - Adaptation, G - Goal - Attainment, I - Integration and L - Latency.

<sup>32</sup> Rothholz, “Anmerkungen“, pp. 35-37 and 38.

<sup>33</sup> Compare Nikolas Winkler, “Ergündung der politischen Kultur Litauens. Eine Untersuchung von Vorstellungen politischer Ordnung in ihrer historischen Gewordenheit“, PhD. diss., Universität Greifswald, 2015, p. 12.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*, compare also Walter Rothholz, “Anmerkungen zur politischen Kultur in Rumänien“, *Studia Europaea*, no. 2 (June 2016), 33–61, Peter L. Berger/Thomas Luckmann,

Politics, in the sense of the *zoon politikon*, is understood to mean an order system with an inherent worldview that regulates the coexistence of people according to a naturally ordered law and is conveyed through the symbolic language, since people are provided with language and rationality. In order to be able to maintain this system of order, the individual must take part in the maintenance of this community - through participation - i.e. communication and action in it, because only in this way does the individual take part in the community at all.<sup>35</sup> The liberal theories of modernization, however, as we have been able to observe so far, cannot express the "missing link between the individual and the institutions", since these do not consist of "the sum of individual preferences (inputs)" which then react with "corresponding outputs" but rather from common meanings of the political,<sup>36</sup> which are anchored in people and world views - that is, in the imaginary<sup>37</sup> and reflect the experiences of society "or represent the answers that have been given in the past to solve political-social problems",<sup>38</sup> whereby "action" and consequently "political" emerge at all social drafts of order.<sup>39</sup> "Politics is thus produced through action and people act, always intentionally and purposefully, that is, intentionally and teleologically, since there is no action at all without the question of the reason, the intention and the goal," however, the "condition of action" is Language and consciousness.<sup>40</sup> According to this definition, all human action would be "political".<sup>41</sup> Culture, on the other hand, always encompasses a collective, as culture encompasses phenomena such as shared ideas, beliefs, values, but also rites and practices that are passed on

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*Die gesellschaftliche Konstruktion der Wirklichkeit. Eine Theorie der Wissenssoziologie*, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2000.

<sup>34</sup> Berger/Luckmann, *Die gesellschaftliche Konstruktion*, p. 83.

<sup>35</sup> By combining these two analyzes - the political - as a dimension of overall social action and culture, which together produce a certain symbolic language, it should be made clear how the individual is connected to his society in all of his social actions. Berger/Luckmann, *Die gesellschaftliche Konstruktion*.

<sup>36</sup> Rothholz, *Politik und Religion*, p. 36.

<sup>37</sup> Cornelius Castoriadis Cornelius, *Gesellschaft als imaginäre Institution*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1990.

<sup>38</sup> Rothholz, „Anmerkungen zur politischen Kultur in Rumänien“, p. 36.

<sup>39</sup> Rothholz, *Politik und Religion*, pp. 36-38.

<sup>40</sup> Compare Pesch, *Handlungstheorien*, p. 107.

<sup>41</sup> Charles Taylor, *Negative Freiheit*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1992.

from generation to generation. Politics and religion must therefore be viewed as a connecting medium that guide action and consequently this includes customs, ethics, morals, etc. and represent “the result of people who act together”, so for example religion. Therefore, for a long time there was no “awareness of a difference between religion and politics” and “the mighty could be understood as sacred and the sacred as powerful”,<sup>42</sup> so the modern distinction was made between “a supernatural and earthly power, or between subject and *Transsubject*”,<sup>43</sup> or the immanent and the transcendent only through the “modernity”, which inevitably has to be brought into connection with secularization. Both religion and politics revolve around the concept of power, since power in Weber’s sense means “the possibility of actions and processes”, but at the same time also “the possibility of becoming effective within political-social processes”,<sup>44</sup> where power arises “if People interact”<sup>45</sup>, whereby “this potential of power is not in the hands of the individual”.<sup>46</sup> Of course, the (bourgeois) public, liberally capitalistically developed societies, play a key role here, since “public” has always been a political term, because rule is always represented publicly, which, however, up to the modern age has not yet been a public space for *debate* in the modern sense - the “public communication and common action”<sup>47</sup> of the citizens, which brought about a new form of *Vergesellschaftung* (socialization).<sup>48</sup> This public is based “horizontally on mutual recognition, that is, on the freely acting individual”.<sup>49</sup> This in turn meant that modern societies could no longer present themselves as a “unified body”, without destroying the precondition of the “transcendent legitimation of political rule”, since “an autonomously self-governing

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<sup>42</sup> Rothholz, „Anmerkungen“, p. 50 and see also *Politik und Religion*, p. 12.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 14.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 17; Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, Tübingen, 1989, p. 28.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*; Hannah Arendt, *The human condition*, Chicago Press, 1998.

<sup>46</sup> Helmut Kuhn, *Der Staat. Eine philosophische Darstellung*, München, 1967, p. 112.

<sup>47</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns*, Frankfurt a. Main: Suhrkamp, 1997.

<sup>48</sup> Rothholz, “Anmerkungen”, p. 38.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 37: This is where the concept of “civil religion” appears, since all societies that have been captured by Western modernity follow a “secular belief in progress, who took the place of unifying religious worldviews”. Compare Eric Voegelin, *Die neue Wissenschaft der Politik*, München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2004.

society” is diametrically opposed to this concept.<sup>50</sup> Since then, modern societies have found themselves in a constant state of uncertainty, since the “position of power can only be filled temporarily”.<sup>51</sup> In order to escape this uncertainty, society has to submit to a “will for unity” - such as that of rationality, as has repeatedly appeared since the French Revolution and was later enforced by the totalitarian regimes of the 20th century with far more radical means. The totalitarian regimes reacted to “the secularization of the legitimation basis of politics, which led to the separation of society and power”,<sup>52</sup> especially in the countries of Eastern Europe with the “violent original surrender of the position of power and the uncompromising submission of society to an ideologically interpreted course of history”.<sup>53</sup> This process of rationalization of societies, it can be said, emerged in the capitalistically developed societies because of the glorification of science and at the same time through the radical restructuring of working conditions through the industrialization processes as a result of political liberalism. Whereas in the former socialist countries the process of rationalization did not develop through liberal capitalism, but through Soviet communism, it’s forced industrialization and the accompanying glorification of the workers’ dictatorship. The modernization processes of Romania took place through violence and were imposed on Romania, so to speak, from the outside and from above, which endangered their own “national” and “traditional values”, which were conveyed in particular by the Orthodox Church. In principle, one can say that the Orthodox Church and its beliefs are incompatible with the concept of “modernity”, since this would not only result in the disintegration of a uniform concept of progress and thus the independent social articulation of moral norms, but it would also raise the question of the legitimation of political rule in a secularized form.<sup>54</sup> On the other hand, because in Romania the modernization processes did not take place “naturally” and gradually, but were imposed from the outside and thus did not represent the “own” processes of modernization and were experienced violently,

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<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 40.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 38.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 38-39.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 38-40.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 40.

which is why this tension is still pervasive in society today . Robert Adam adds that one of the Romanian paradoxes lies in the Proustic attempt to make up for “lost time” and an essential feature of Romanian culture is that “modernity” and its currents in Romania did not take place successively, but simultaneously.<sup>55</sup> In this context, however, the social system was not renewed, only what was taken over that served the construct of one's own nation.<sup>56</sup>

Due to inadequate and sometimes non-existent modernization structures within Romanian society, a constant lack of education and identity-creating factors in the social structure arose very early on. Due to the lack of communication and especially educational media, such as one's own writing and the dissemination of what is written, “Modernity” as the era of the Enlightenment and the cornerstone of a reformation, secularization and the beginning of the rationalization process, as well as the development of a bourgeoisie and the associated development of a modern public as a political, economic and social space of action of an intact political culture was experienced violently.<sup>57</sup> Compared to the early capitalist development of other (western) European countries, the long lack of a foundation for a common written culture has led to a low level of education within Romanian society, especially in the country's rural regions. In addition, the development of a middle class in the sense of the western bourgeoisie failed to materialize. The protagonists of a sphere of political, institutional and administrative public that laid the foundation for the political culture of later democratization in other countries were missing. The absence of the *public* has made the development of the national identity very difficult and slowed down, which also significantly delayed the establishment of a state in European comparison. Even later, the model of the modern nation state was only adopted in its structural

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<sup>55</sup> Robert Adam, *Două Veacuri de Populism Românesc*, București: Humanitas, 2018, p. 31.

<sup>56</sup> Alex Drace-Francis, *Geneza Culturii Române Moderne. Instituțiile scrisului și dezvoltarea identității naționale 1700-1900*, București: Polirom, 2016, pp. 210-211, compare also Adam, *Două Veacuri*. See also Lucian Boia, *Istorie și mit în conștiința românească*, București: Humanitas, 2011 and Lucian Boia *Miturile comunismului românesc*, București: Nemira, 1998.

<sup>57</sup> Compare Nikolai Genov, “Transformation als makrosoziale Rationalisierung, Die Tradition Max Webers und die osteuropäischen Realitäten,” in Anton Sterbling/Heinz Zipparian (ed.), *Max Weber und Osteuropa. Beiträge zur Osteuropaforschung*, Stuttgart: Krämer Verlag, 1997, pp. 229-241.

form, but without implementing the associated history of ideas of the Western tradition and its models of order,<sup>58</sup> the idea of the Enlightenment and its liberal and socialist theories in society. On the one hand, the economic potential of the nation state could not be used and, on the other hand, there was no change in values or no new value orientation at all, far removed from the rural traditions within the population. Due to the violent development of modernity, Romanian society lacked the foundation for the emergence of a bourgeois-democratically organized society and its political culture. Without the liberal-bourgeois and consequently democratic society, the principles of the capitalist market could not be anticipated, and there was no understanding of the parliamentary public by professionally trained officials of a democracy which, according to Weber, represents a heterogeneous system, in which a political leader, a representative of the victorious party was elected through direct popular elections, who appoints his "bureaucratic apparatus" and is only bound to the approval of parliament in matters of the administration of the state budget and legislation.<sup>59</sup> The modern parliamentary system of early capitalist countries emerged from a long tradition of political theory of the history of Western ideas and represents a gradual and permanent modernization. A further development in the sense of a modernization was thus largely absent in Romania.

### **The political culture of Romania**

This 'rethinking' with regard to a general social orientation towards democratic values<sup>60</sup> is prevented by the Romanian Orthodox Church and the Romanian Orthodox faith in interaction with the underdeveloped political, economic and social conditions of the post-socialist country.

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<sup>58</sup> Compare Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, *Die großen Revolutionen und die Kulturen der Moderne*, Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2006.

<sup>59</sup> Compare Max Weber, *Politik als Beruf*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 2006, p. 9: „Specialist officials and "political officials.“

<sup>60</sup> See Helmut Thome, "Wertewandel in Europa," in Hans Joas/Klaus Wiegandt (ed.), *Die kulturellen Werte Europas*, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2005, pp. 391-402 and especially Ronald Inglehart, *Modernisierung und Postmodernisierung. Kultureller, wirtschaftlicher und politischer Wandel in 43 Gesellschaften*, Frankfurt, New York: Campus, 1998, pp. 98-115.

Thus, areas of life that are related to work, production, action,<sup>61</sup> possessions and individualism are in Romania on the one hand; still characterized by the 'socialist' ideology<sup>62</sup> and on the other hand by the orthodox faith and its spirituality.<sup>63</sup> For Romania, secularization does not only mean the sacralization of inner-worldly holdings, rather the attempt to save the old Romanian culture in the transition to the modern age.

As a result, neither a "bourgeois" political nor a democratic consciousness could develop in the latitude of Romanian society. So, it can be said that due to the belated process of reformation, secularization, Enlightenment, and rationalization of Romania, cultural memory is largely determined by the experiences of feudal and/or repressive systems of power and the Orthodox Church, its spirituality and its traditions.

Therefore, it is difficult to fix the political culture of Romania to its traditional records, especially because of the political instrumentalization<sup>64</sup> of the literature and historiography developed in communism.<sup>65</sup> Scripture was not used to "delineate special areas" and to use them for "purposes and as a medium of a culture of debate in many fields, from medicine and geometry to poetry, theater, rhetoric and philosophy," but was much sooner only the "special resource of religious and political rule"<sup>66</sup> in ethnic discourses and means of national Communist propaganda.<sup>67</sup> Thus, the multitude of rites, customs, ceremonies and cults practiced in rural areas (i.e. oral cultural symbols and cultural practices of Romania) indicate that Romania's cultural development, as repressive systems of rule, seized the

<sup>61</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Vita Activa oder Vom Tätigen Leben*, München: Piper Verlag, 2002.

<sup>62</sup> Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceaușescu's Romania*, Berkley/L.A./Oxford: University of California Press, 1991.

<sup>63</sup> Daniel Barbu, *Au cetățenii suflet? O teologie politică a societăților post-seculare*, București: Editura Vremea, 2016.

<sup>64</sup> Michael Shafir, *Romania, Politics, Economics and Society. Political Stagnation and Simulated Change*, London: Frances Printer, 1985, Part 1, Cap. 5.

<sup>65</sup> Reinhart Koselleck, *Begriffsgeschichten. Studien zur Semantik und Pragmatik der politischen und sozialen Sprache*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2006, p. 29.

<sup>66</sup> Niklas Luhmann, *Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1997, p. 281.

<sup>67</sup> See Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003; see also Hans Kohn, "Die kommunistische und die faschistische Diktatur. Eine Vergleichende Studie," in Bruno Seidel and Siegfried Jenkner (eds.), *Wege der Totalitarismusforschung (Wege der Forschung)*, Darmstadt, 1974.

country, was at a medieval-feudal level of development and was not yet advanced enough<sup>68</sup> to produce political institutions of an intact political system. These cultural practices have survived the regime, however, so that today in social science linguistic usage one can speak of a “cultural overlap” or “cultural lag” - “theory of cultural phase shift”<sup>69</sup> and the lack of a cultural “transfer process” - “cultural turn”<sup>70</sup>; because feudal-rural cultural practices mingle with elements of socialist realism and (post-)modernity. The construction of the Romanian nation state, the invention of the Romanian nation<sup>71</sup> and the Romanian national identity<sup>72</sup> took place with the help of political myths,<sup>73</sup> which have their roots in the cultural myths of a country. The cultural myths of Romania have been reinterpreted by the political systems of power in political myths and revived<sup>74</sup> in order to anchor their political course in society, to gain the confidence of the people and consolidate political power. Finally, political myths helped to legitimize weak and repressive political systems<sup>75</sup> in order to initiate the nationalization of Romania and to summon and consolidate a Romanian sense of nationality through the “ritualized affirmation” of “national

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<sup>68</sup> Stefan Zeletin, *Burghezia română*, București: Cultura Națională, 1925, p. 81, 157. Compare Kenneth accessed on 10. May 2016, “Social Change in Romania 1860-1940. A Debate on Development in a European Nation”, *Research Series*, no. 36, 1978, p. 15, see also Angela Harre, “Conceptul de progres: relația conflictuală dintre liberalism și intervenția statală”, in Victor Neumann and Armin Heinen (ed.), *Istoria României prin concepte-perspective alternative asupra limbajelor social-politice*, București: Polirom, 2010.

<sup>69</sup> Compare William F. Ogburn, *Kultur und sozialer Wandel*, Neuwied am Rhein: Luchterhand Verlag, 1969, 130 f.

<sup>70</sup> Compare Doris Bachmann - Medick, *Cultural Turns, Neuorientierungen in den Kulturwissenschaften*, Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt's Enzyklopädie, 2009, 13 ff.

<sup>71</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Die Erfindung der Nation*, Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2005.

<sup>72</sup> Constantin Iordachi and Balázs Trencsényi, “In search of a usable past: The Question of National Identity in Romanian Studies 1990-2000”, in *East European Politics and Societies*, vol. 17, no. 3, 2003 and see also Seymour Lipset and Stein Rokkan, *Party systems and voter alignments: cross national perspectives*, New York: Free Press, 1967, <http://www.u.arizona.edu/~mishler/LipsetRokkan.pdf>, accessed 21 May 2016.

<sup>73</sup> Lucian Boia, *Istorie și mit în conștiința românească*, București: Humanitas, 2011.

<sup>74</sup> Cosmina Tănăsioiu, *Post-communist political symbolism: new myths – same old stories? Analysis of romanian political mythology*, <http://sar.org.ro/files/Tanasoiu.pdf>, accessed 02 May 2016, pp. 124-125.

<sup>75</sup> Compare Lucian Boia, *Miturile comunismului românesc*, pp. 175-197 (quoted after Daniel Barbu, *Destinul colectiv, servitutea involuntară, nefericirea totalitară: trei mituri ale comunismului românesc*, București: Kriterion, 1998.

identity".<sup>76</sup> Thus, only a rudimentary national political culture could emerge, because the Romanian middle class is already scarce in terms of numbers, the poor performance of Romania's economic sector and the still insufficient educational institutions continue to oppose institutional change and its failure is reflected in the reproduction of traditional, social and economic structures.<sup>77</sup> The reason for this is the faith and practice of faith in Orthodox Christianity, which continues to be strongly bound to the institution of the Church, its representatives and liturgy.<sup>78</sup> As a result, the Orthodox Church bound its followers to its institutions and thus largely halted the process of rationalization,<sup>79</sup> since the believer was given his faith for a long time only through the Church and the understanding or interpretation of the Holy Scriptures was only predetermined.

As a result, the rationalization and literacy process were slow, as the individual was made dependent on the religious community. Whereas in the capitalistically developed societies and the Roman Church, faith in the course of the Bible translation by Luther, the Reformation, secularization, the Enlightenment, and mass literacy became a private and personal thing, independent of the church as an institution. In particular, the focus here is on the analysis of Romania's political experience, which is characterized by feudal,<sup>80</sup> repressive or authoritarian rule, and elsewhere by orthodox beliefs and traditional values. Values, according to Charles Taylor, are social goods for which we are taking sides, ultimately resulting from our own radical<sup>81</sup> election. He believes that values can either lead to a moral

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<sup>76</sup> Detailed in Anneli – Ute Gabanyi, *The Ceaușescu Cult*, București: Fundația Culturală Română, 2000.

<sup>77</sup> Holm H. Sundhausen, „Wandel ohne Modernisierung. Theorien nachholender Entwicklung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Südosteuropas“, in Krista Zach and Cornelius Zach (ed.), *Modernisierung auf Raten in Rumänien*, München: IKGS Verlag, 2004, 30.

<sup>78</sup> Sergius N. Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church*, Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1988, p.22 ff.

<sup>79</sup> Wolfgang Schluchter, „Rationalität-das Spezifikum Europas?“, in Hans Joas and Klaus Wiegandt (ed.), *Die kulturellen Werte Europas*, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2005.

<sup>80</sup> See Sabina Fati, *Transilvania o provincie în căutarea unui centru*, Cluj- Napoca: Centrul de Resurse pentru Diversitate Etnoculturala, 2007.

<sup>81</sup> Lat. radix: to change from the root; in *Meyers Illustrierte Weltgeschichte Teil 1: Zweiter Weltkrieg*, Redaktion Geschichte des Bibliographischen Instituts und Leitung Werner Digel (ed.), Augsburg: Weltbild Verlag, 1987, 76.

decision, not on the individual will, but rather based on strong valuations, or that the values lead to an expression of preferences, since these are actually based on a variety of moral concepts.<sup>82</sup> This means *that strong judgments inevitably play a role in a conception of the agent and his experience because they are linked to our particular notion of the self*.<sup>83</sup> Taylor concludes that doers who make strong judgments can be described as 'deep' because the choices that matter for a choice are selected not only in terms of their own goals but also in their lifestyle and thus enter into the 'nature' of the actor and are thus closely linked to the idea of identity and must become an integral part of the self.<sup>84</sup> It can therefore be said that the Romanian political identity and the related values of Romanian society were determined by the experiences of the prevailing political systems of feudalism,<sup>85</sup> fascism, the military dictatorship,<sup>86</sup> national communism<sup>87</sup> and post-communism and their religious-traditional social structures and their spatial-temporal framework. Based on this experience of predominantly authoritarian-repressive and religious-traditional political culture, it seems likely that Romanian society has been experiencing a political identity crisis since its emergence as a nation. According to Taylor, by preventing individuals from developing their own values through violence they deny them the opportunity to develop their own (political) identity, which forms the basis of their ability to act. They would not be able to value and determine the meaning of things.<sup>88</sup> The repressive forms of rule of the military dictatorship of Antonescu and Dejs<sup>89</sup> and the paternalistic<sup>90</sup> austerity policy

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<sup>82</sup> Charles Taylor, *Negative Freiheit. Zur Kritik des Neuzeitlichen Individualismus*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1988, pp. 28-29, 34-35.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 35.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 36.

<sup>85</sup> Stelian Tănase, *Elite și societate. Guvernarea Gheorghiu-Dej 1948-1965*, București, 1998; Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Fantoma lui Gheorghiu-Dej*, București: Univers, 1995.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>87</sup> Gabanyi, *The Ceaușescu Cult*.

<sup>88</sup> Taylor, *Negative Freiheit*, 37.

<sup>89</sup> See Dennis Deletant, *Romania under Communist Rule*, Bucharest: Civil Academy Foundation, 2006; Klaus-Detlev Grothusen, *Romania*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998 and Dionisie Ghemani, *Die nationale Souveränitätspolitik der SR Rumänien 1. Teil im Rahmen des sowjetischen Bündnissystems*, München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1981, see Comisia Internațională pentru studierea Holocaustului în România. Raport Final, București: Polirom, 2004.

of Ceaușescu make it almost impossible for Romanian society to develop democratic values, since up to now everyday life has been characterized by violence or the fear of violent repression and political ideologies.<sup>91</sup> Interesting is the fact that even dictatorships like fascism and communism, which actually strongly advocated atheist, anti-religious and anti-church political ideologies and attitudes, worked well with the Orthodox Church in Romania. It is not difficult to see this in the Antonescu regime and the Archangel Michael Legion, which was founded by Corneliu Zelea Codreanu<sup>92</sup> and with the mythical-religious movement or 'political' party of the Iron Guard, as a military apparatus of repression established fascism in Romania in the form of a national legionary fascist dictatorship, in whose ranks there were even clergymen. The cooperation also worked in the royal dictatorship of King Carol II, whose prime minister was none other than the Patriarch Miron Cristea himself.

In addition, the Romanian church was not separated from the state for a long time, whereas state and church were in the so-called "symphonia",<sup>93</sup> an interplay<sup>94</sup> in which the Orthodox Church in Romania sees itself as the national church or the founder of a national religion, a state religion.<sup>95</sup> In this way the church remained legally autonomous from the state.<sup>96</sup> Due to the interdependence between church and state - religion

<sup>90</sup> Winfried Thaa, *Die Wiedergeburt des Politischen. Zivilgesellschaft und Legitimitätskonflikt in den Revolutionen von 1989*, Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien, 1996, p. 48.

<sup>91</sup> Annelie - Ute Gabanyi, "Die rumänischen Eliten in der Systemtransformation", in Hans-Joachim Veen (ed.), *Alte Eliten in jungen Demokratien: Wechsel, Wandel und Kontinuität in Mittel-Osteuropa*, Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2004, p. 315.

<sup>92</sup> Oliver Jens Schmitt, *Căpitan Codreanu. Aufstieg und Fall des rumänischen Faschistenführer*, Wien: Paul Zsolnay Verlag, 2016, compare pp. 200-207.

<sup>93</sup> Novelae 6 Justinians (535), compare "Novelle 137 from year 545," in *Corpus juris civilis*, Vol. 3 Novellae, ed. R. Schoell und G. Kroll (Berlin 1963), 695, see also „Das Verhältnis von Staat und Kirche aus konfessioneller Perspektive," in *Bibliothek der Ausbildungseinrichtung für Orthodoxe Theologie*, 26, accessed July 12, 2016, [http://www.orththeol.uni-muenchen.de/archiv/alte\\_lehrmaterialien/ss10\\_lma\\_anapliotis/staat-kirche-verh/ss10\\_kirche\\_staat\\_f1.pdf](http://www.orththeol.uni-muenchen.de/archiv/alte_lehrmaterialien/ss10_lma_anapliotis/staat-kirche-verh/ss10_kirche_staat_f1.pdf), accessed on 12. July. 2016, at 10. 13 h.

<sup>94</sup> Ibidem. Compare *Bibliothek der Ausbildungseinrichtung für Orthodoxe Theologie*, especially 26, compare Raul Rognean, „Beziehung von Kirche und Staat. Einordnungsmöglichkeiten der Orthodoxien" (MA, University Babeș-Bolyai, 2011), p.31.

<sup>95</sup> BOR (Biserica Ortodoxa Română) Law/ Art. 5 (1).

<sup>96</sup> The 1866 constitution recognizes the "autocephaly" of the Orthodox Church. See BOR, Biserica Ortodoxa Română Law Art. 4 (2) and compare Walter Rothholz, *Anmerkungen zur*

and politics - the church is still allowed to participate in draft laws and political decision-making issue, which creates difficult-to-balance power relationships in the distribution of social interests and forces, which still have a strong inhibiting effect on democratization efforts. The "incomplete" secularization<sup>97</sup> resulted in a comparatively laborious and delayed nation-building process<sup>98</sup> and favored the emergence of structural weaknesses in the legislative, judicial and executive branches as well as in the administrative apparatus. Corruption within the political and economic elite is therefore still a topical issue. Corruption increases state and institutional structural problems, so the country remains backward and the population consequently poor, dissatisfied and at a relatively low level of education. The social system is unstable, so that nationalism and populism find greater breeding ground than democratic ideas.

## Conclusions

The Orthodox Church supports national movements through the sacralization of politics, as the national state of Romania is still strongly ethnically defined. The Romanian Orthodox Church is therefore regarded as the driving force behind the identity of the Romanian nation and enjoys a high reputation. The strong revival of national identity constructions after 1989 also strengthened the position of the Orthodox Church, which represented the religious majority, in Romanian society. This creates a

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*politischen Kultur in Rumänien*, p. 33–61, Compare Rupert Klieber, *Jüdische – Christliche – Muslimische Lebenswelten der Donaumonarchie 1848 – 1918*, Wien, Köln, Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 2010, p.91.

<sup>97</sup> See Holm H. Sundhausen, "Wandel ohne Modernisierung. Theorien nachholender Entwicklung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Südosteuropas," in Krista Zach/Cornelius Zach (ed.), *Modernisierung auf Raten in Rumänien*, München: IKGS Verlag, 2004, 28. See also Reinhart Koselleck, "Fortschritt," in Otto Brunner (ed.), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, Stuttgart, 1994, pp. 351-423, especially pp.351-352 and more about modernization processes in Wolfgang Zapf, "Modernisierung und Modernisierungstheorien," in Wolfgang Zapf (ed.), *Die Modernisierung moderner Gesellschaften*, Campus:Frankfurt/N.Y., 1990, 23-39; compare Wolfgang Zapf, "Modernisierungstheorien in der Transformationsforschung," in Klaus von Beyme/Claus Offe (ed.), *Politische Theorien in der Ära der Transformation*, Westdeutscher Verlag: Opladen, 1996, 169-181.

<sup>98</sup> Walter Rothholz, "Anmerkungen" see also Keith Hitchins, *Rumania 1866 – 1947*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994 and especially Angela Harre, "Conceptul de progress".

complicit collaboration between the corrupt Romanian policies and the spiritual and religious representatives of the Orthodox faith community. This political and religious collaboration or 'simphonia' is also due to the communist period of Romania, where the Orthodox Church, unlike all other churches, was tolerated and promoted by the communist regime. It is even said to have maintained, especially under the Patriarch Teoctist (1986-2007) connections to the intelligence service of the Securitate.<sup>99</sup> The growing importance of church and religion is also witnessed by the enormous increase in Orthodox Church buildings. Since 1989, about 90 new churches were built annually, which stands in a ratio of 1: 5 for the construction of new schools. Because of this strengthening and revival of the patriarchal Orthodox Church, their influence in society and also the identification of Romanians with national and religious-traditional identity constructs are growing. The Romanian Orthodox Church is criticized above all for its rather backward religious philosophy, which refuses a modern debate, further development and reinterpretation of orthodox spirituality, beliefs and scriptures, as it is customary, for example, in Catholicism, at least in the conscience frame. For this reason, critics understand Romanian Orthodox religiosity as a 'ritual' rather than as 'religious metaphysics'.<sup>100</sup>

These experiences of a repressive and religious-traditional political culture, which can be understood as a "ritualization of politics", have contributed to a political identity crisis in addition to the economic and social backwardness of Romania, that still affect the political capacity of the Romanian post-socialist society. Another reason for this is that the religious and especially traditional society continues to be shaped by a religious understanding of unity, while the democratic political cultures in the course of secularization and the rationalization process, which Habermas

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<sup>99</sup> Compare Klara A. Csiszar, "Religion in Rumänien," in *Religionen in den Ländern der Welt*, vol. I, ed. Markus Porsche-Ludwig and Jürgen Bellers, Nordhausen, 2012, Compare Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Comisia Prezidențială pentru analiza dictaturii comuniste din România – Raport final*, București, 2006, 465, see V. A. Maté-Tóth and P. Mikluščák, *Nicht wie Milch und Honig*, Wien, 2000, p.34, [http://www.presidency.ro/static/ordine/RAPORT\\_FINAL\\_CPADCR.pdf](http://www.presidency.ro/static/ordine/RAPORT_FINAL_CPADCR.pdf), accessed on 15. May 2016.

<sup>100</sup> Andrei Marga, *Bildung und Modernisierung*, Cluj: University Press, 2005, p. 101, compare Gabriel Ibrăileanu, *Din psihologia poporului român*, București: Librăria Leon Alcalay, 1907, p. 359.

generally also understands as "Enlightenment" at their core of individual self-determination, that is, of individualism. This modern concept is at the center of the action theory of a modern and secular state with its active civil society, which embodies the modern public with its associated institutions and thus diametrically opposed to the traditionally valid political power and its legitimation. Exactly this modern concept is incompatible with the Orthodoxy of Romania, since the secularization of the Orthodox faith has not taken place and the society continues to be stuck in its religious-traditional structures, while the institutions and the entire structure of a modern and liberal nation-state have been adopted.

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## FORUM

### U.S. – CHINA RELATIONS THROUGH THE PERSPECTIVE OF SOCIAL-CONSTRUCTIVISM

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#### Abstract

*The twentieth century was marked, especially in its second part, by the rivalry of the United States and the Soviet Union, a rivalry that prompted many analysts to devise theories about this seemingly perpetual bi-polar international system. Yet after 1989 these theories crumbled under the seemingly unexpected dissolution of one of the two poles of the system, and thus new theories emerged, trying to better explain what was happening. One such theory, the Social-Constructivist one, tried to argue that identities, ideas and the way in which these are constructed also play a pivotal role in international relations. In the pages below I will try to analyze what is emerging to be a similarly century-defining rivalry, the one between the United States and the People's Republic of China, through the 'lens' of Social-Constructivism, to find out if the theory laid out by Alexander Wendt almost three decades ago can still aptly explain the world of today.*

**Keywords:** U.S. – China relations, Social-Constructivism, Discourses

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## Introduction

Ever since 1972 and the historic rapprochement between the United States and China<sup>1</sup>, the People's Republic has steadily, but decisively, grown into a major power, and the rise of the Asian nation has been closely linked with its relationship with the United States, especially in terms of their economic cooperation, which at times has seemed so close that it could be seen as symbiotic, prompting the emergence of the term "Chimerica" to highlight the growing interdependent link between the two countries.<sup>2</sup>

Still, the relationship was not always perfect, and even if, given the often disturbing and irrational behaviour and way of conducting himself of Donald Trump, we could be inclined to think that the tensions between the People's Republic of China and the United States originated with the 2016 U.S. Presidential elections and their disruptive and shocking outcome, the divergences between the two countries run much older.

The days of Kissinger, Bush or Clinton are beyond the scope of this paper, thus I will focus on more recent events, namely on the Obama presidency. Even by his first term in office and despite many other grave issues, such as the global economic crisis or the conflicts in the Middle East, the relationship with China was given top priority by the Obama administration, as the rise of China towards the status of major power was starting to be more and more difficult to ignore, and fears of what exactly a powerful China would mean for the U.S. were starting to rise as well. But the Obama administration, with Hillary Clinton as Secretary of State, wanted to avoid any unnecessary sentiments, as Clinton herself put it: "We all know that fears and misperceptions linger on both sides of the Pacific. Some in our country see China's progress as a threat to the United States; some in China worry that America seeks to constrain China's growth. We reject both those views. The fact is that a thriving America is good for China and a thriving China is good for America. We both have much more

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<sup>1</sup> Tsuneo Watanabe, "US Engagement Policy toward China: Realism, Liberalism, and Pragmatism", *Journal of Contemporary East Asia Studies*, 2(2), 2013, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Andre Browne, "The Chimera that was 'Chimerica'", in *Bloomberg*, 11 July 2020, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/newsletters/2020-07-11/bloomberg-new-economy-the-chimera-that-was-chimerica>, accessed 11<sup>th</sup> September 2021.

to gain from cooperation than from conflict”.<sup>3</sup> Though it is relevant to my argument, the importance given to *fears and misperceptions* by Clinton will be tackled below.

For now, I will focus on the ‘grand strategy’ of the Obama administration and the ‘Asian Pivot’ that it implied. To put it shortly, the view in Washington was that the importance of the Asian continent, but especially China, will greatly outweigh the importance of the Middle East or Eastern Europe in the decades to come, and thus for the U.S. this would entail a ‘geopolitical refocusing’<sup>4</sup> that would see the United States shift diplomatic, economic and military attention and resources on the Asian continent, more specifically around the Asian-Pacific region.<sup>5</sup>

One of the major sources of tensions and fears was the Chinese increasing pressure and policy concerning the East and South China Seas, that saw China trying to wrest control over what is called the ‘nine-dash line’, a series of islands in the South China Sea that, taken together with their Exclusive Economic Zones would virtually give China control over the entire South China Sea<sup>6</sup>. In response to these actions, the Obama administration pursued a policy of ‘hedging and cooperation’, that meant simultaneously deepening existing alliances and partnerships with states such as Japan, Taiwan, Vietnam, The Philippines, or Australia in the attempt to put pressure on China, and a closer cooperation with Beijing, often done by summits and meetings of the highest level between Obama and Chinese President Hu Jintao and later Xi Jinping<sup>7</sup>. The discourse constructed by the Obama administration to legitimize such a ‘pivot’ was centered around the idea that the United States is inherently a ‘Pacific’ nation and the emphasis of long-standing links between the United States

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<sup>3</sup> Hillary Clinton, “America’s Pacific Century” in *Foreign Policy*, 11 October 2011, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2011/10/11/americas-pacific-century/>, accessed 11<sup>th</sup> September 2021.

<sup>4</sup> Georg Löffman, “The Pivot between Containment, Engagement, and Restraint: President Obama’s Conflicted Grand Strategy in Asia”, *Asian Security*, 12(2), 2016, p.95.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 95-101.

<sup>6</sup> Beina Xu, “South China Sea Tensions”, in *Council on Foreign Relations*, 14 May 2014, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounders/south-china-sea-tensions>, accessed 11<sup>th</sup> September 2021.

<sup>7</sup> Jean Garrison and Marc Wall, “The Rise of Hedging and Regionalism: An Explanation and Evaluation of President Obama’s China Policy”, *Asian Affairs: An American Review*, Vol. 43(2), 2016, pp. 54-58.

and Asian countries.<sup>8</sup> In his speech in front of the Australian Parliament in 2011, Obama underscored that: “The United States has been, and always will be, a Pacific nation. Asian immigrants helped build America, and millions of American families, including my own, cherish our ties to this region. From the bombing of Darwin to the liberation of Pacific islands, from the rice paddies of Southeast Asia to a cold Korean Peninsula, generations of Americans have served here, and died here—so democracies could take root; so economic miracles could lift hundreds of millions to prosperity.”<sup>9</sup>

Yet when put under the lens of practical and substantive change, Obama’s administration did not live up to the level of actions it claimed in its discourse. “Obama endorsed the pivot in his idealistic and normative discourse and succeeded in promoting the legitimacy of the strategy to a global audience. He regularly promoted the pivot in multilateral fora and through discussions with regional leaders. But Obama’s practical policies failed to live up to his exalted discourse. Obama was unable to combine support for Asian states and their multilateral settings with his containment policies towards China. His normative legitimization alienated some regional leaders including Duterte, Prayut and Najib, and his actions in the South China Sea failed to prevent China from conducting assertive policies. Obama’s push for greater military presence in Asia did not materialize.”<sup>10</sup>

### “America First” – Trump and China Discourse

This failure of the Obama administration to act on the discourse that it created was capitalized in the 2016 U.S. Presidential elections by Donald Trump. The rhetoric that Trump was constructing on China was, clearly, from the start of the electoral campaign, an extremely fiery one, foretelling much of the difficulties between the two countries in the years of his tenure in Washington.

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<sup>8</sup> Michal Kolmaš and Šárka Kolmašová, “A ‘pivot’ that never existed: America’s Asian strategy under Obama and Trump”, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 2019, p. 6.

<sup>9</sup> *Remarks by President Obama to the Australian Parliament*, Washington DC: The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 17<sup>th</sup> November 2011, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2011/11/17/remarks-president-obama-australian-parliament.>, accessed 12<sup>th</sup> September 2021.

<sup>10</sup> Michal Kolmaš and Šárka Kolmašová, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

The fact that the Obama administration, as seen above, had taken a tougher stance on China than any previous administration after 1972, did not mean much to Trump, who took every opportunity to direct vicious attacks both towards China and towards Washington. In one of his campaign speeches, he even went as far as to say that: “We can't continue to allow China to rape our country”<sup>11</sup>. Of course, attacks were also levied against his opponent, Hillary Clinton, who was accused of being part of “a leadership class that worships globalism”<sup>12</sup>, clearly indicating the major shift towards isolationism and nationalism that he would implement once in office. Yet, a quite puzzling development also occurred in China during the 2016 U.S. elections, where Donald Trump, despite the abovementioned ferocious attacks on China, developed quite a positive image among the Chinese public, even if at the political level he was not seen equally well in China<sup>13</sup>, and despite arguments that the Trump victory was a massive victory for Beijing.<sup>14</sup>

After the major surprise in the elections results, Trump did not hesitate too much in implementing his promises, with the “America First” doctrine of isolationism in terms of foreign and security policy and protectionism in terms of economic policy being the key concepts and most important elements of the “Trump doctrine”<sup>15</sup>, a doctrine that sparked many fears, especially in traditional U.S. allies in the Asia-Pacific region,

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<sup>11</sup> “Trump accuses China of ‘raping’ US with unfair trade policy” in *BBC News*, 2 May 2016, <https://www.bbc.com/news/election-us-2016-36185012>, accessed 12<sup>th</sup> September 2021.

<sup>12</sup> Nick Corasaniti, Alexander Burns and Binyamin Appelbaum, “Donald Trump Vows to Rip Up Trade Deals and Confront China” in *The New York Times*, 28 June 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/29/us/politics/donald-trump-trade-speech.html>, accessed 12<sup>th</sup> September 2021.

<sup>13</sup> Hannah Beech, “Donald Trump Talked a Lot About China at the Debate. Here’s What China Thought About That” in *Time*, 27 September 2016, <https://time.com/4509121/china-presidential-debate-hillary-clinton-donald-trump/>, accessed 12<sup>th</sup> September 2021.

<sup>14</sup> James Palmer, “China Just Won the U.S. Election” in *Foreign Policy*, 9 November 2016, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/11/09/china-just-won-the-u-s-election-trump-victory/>, accessed 12<sup>th</sup> September 2021.

<sup>15</sup> Fumiaki Kubo, “Reading the Trump Administration’s China Policy”, *Asia-Pacific Review*, 26(1), 2019, p. 59.

such as Japan<sup>16</sup>. In reality however, the first element, an isolationist policy, was never truly implemented<sup>17</sup>, for a number of reasons, chiefly among them being the fact that the United States simply had too many partnerships and was involved in too many parts and aspects of the international system to just turn its back on the world at the push of a button. The second element of the 'America First' doctrine was actually carried out by the Trump administration, and the best evidence of this lies not only in its relationship with China and the Trade War that ensued between the two countries, but also in many other aspects of U.S. economic policy, such as the withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership negotiations.<sup>18</sup>

A major shift in the Trump administration and its policy on China occurred after, but perhaps exactly during, the bi-lateral visit of President Xi Jinping to Trump's Mar-a-Lago complex in April 2017. All of the sudden the fiery rhetoric that went as far as to outright call the relations between China and the United States as 'rape' were not as grim. "Look, China came to the United States, the President, who I really developed a very good relationship with. I think he is a terrific person. I really got to know him very well over a two-day period. we were together hours and hours and hours by ourselves. We had a 15-minute scheduled meeting and it lasted for three hours. the same thing happened the next day. We have a good chemistry together."<sup>19</sup> Clearly, President Xi must have pushed all of the right buttons with Trump, for such a change to happen and for Trump to even publicly say that "I'm dealing with China with great respect. I have great respect for him."<sup>20</sup> And the newly found friendship of Trump and Xi proved to hold some water and go a bit beyond mere words and

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<sup>16</sup> Shin Kawashima, "US-China Relations Under the Trump Administration: A View from Tokyo" in *Nippon*, 18<sup>th</sup> January 2017, <https://www.nippon.com/en/in-depth/a05302/?pnun=2>, accessed 12<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Shin Kawashima, "Japan-US-China Relations during the Trump Administration and the Outlook for East Asia" in *Asia-Pacific Review*, Vol. 24, No. 1, 2017, p. 32, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13439006.2017.1328800>, accessed 13<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

<sup>19</sup> Byron Wolf, "One reason President Donald Trump changed his rhetoric on China? He really likes the Chinese president" in *CNN News*, 18<sup>th</sup> April 2017, <https://edition.cnn.com/2017/04/18/politics/president-donald-trump-chinese-president-xi-friendly/index.html>, accessed 13<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem.*

declarations when a few months later, in September 2017, China followed the United States lead in imposing economic sanctions on North Korea, a traditional ally of Beijing, prompting Trump to praise the action as “very bold”<sup>21</sup>.

But it seemed that the honeymoon would not last long, as by 2018 the Trump administration yet again turned to a more aggressive stance towards China. The National Defense Strategy, enshrining into policy the realist and nationalist ideology, if we can call it an ideology, of Trump, marked a clear move towards “great-power competition”, a policy that has slowly gained ground for the last decade in the defense policy of the United States<sup>22</sup>. The 2018 National Defense Strategy, prepared by the Department of Defense under Jim Mattis, clearly indicates that “Inter-state strategic competition, not terrorism, is now the primary concern in U.S. national security”<sup>23</sup>. Even more, the document signals out China as, alongside Russia and North Korea, the most important adversary of the United States: “China is a strategic competitor using predatory economics to intimidate its neighbors while militarizing features in the South China Sea”<sup>24</sup>. The rise of China, especially in military terms is also seen as a clear sign that Beijing wants to replace the United States in the role of the world’s most powerful nation: “China is leveraging military modernization, influence operations, and predatory economics to coerce neighboring countries to reorder the Indo-Pacific region to their advantage. As China continues its economic and military ascendance, asserting power through an all-of-nation long-term strategy, it will continue to pursue a military modernization program that seeks Indo-Pacific regional hegemony

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<sup>21</sup> Julian Borger, “Trump issues new sanctions on North Korea and claims China is following” in *The Guardian*, 21<sup>st</sup> September 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/21/trump-north-korea-executive-order-china>, accessed 14<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

<sup>22</sup> Michele Flournoy, “America’s Military Risks Losing Its Edge” in *Foreign Affairs*, 20<sup>th</sup> May 2021, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-04-20/flournoy-americas-military-risks-losing-its-edge>, accessed 21<sup>st</sup> May 2021.

<sup>23</sup> *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America*, Washington DC: Department of Defense, 2018, <https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>, p.1, accessed 15<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*.

in the near-term and displacement of the United States to achieve global preeminence in the future”<sup>25</sup>.

This major shift in the foreign and defense policy of the United States has prompted analysts to outright call the end of the ‘liberal world’ international system that was put in place after the end of the Second World War, with the isolationist turn represented by the presidency of Donald Trump as one of, if not the most important, factors in the decline of the liberal regime.<sup>26</sup>

### **U.S. – China Trade War**

But returning to our case study, 2018 was not only ‘special’ in the relations between China and the United States because of the introduction, or rather formalization, of the U.S. defense policy that portrays China as the clear rival of the United States in the ‘race’ for the top spot in the international system. 2018 was also the year in which the ‘trade war’ between Washington and Beijing truly took off.

January 2018 marked the opening ‘shots’ of the ‘trade war’, with the first attack originating in Washington. Though it did not have a huge impact, the first wave of tariffs introduced by the Trump Administration on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2018 on solar panels and washing machines<sup>27</sup> did signal, yet again, a shift in the U.S. policy under Donald Trump, this time going back to the ‘America First’ doctrine of isolationism and especially economic protectionism.

The first truly meaningful tariffs came a few months later, in March 2018, when the U.S. announced a 25% tariff on all imports of steel and aluminum, this time the move being levied against all countries, not just China<sup>28</sup>. In the same month however, China would be hit with another round of tariffs, this time the impact being much larger, with the United

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 2

<sup>26</sup> Richard Haass, “Liberal World Order, R.I.P.” in *Council on Foreign Relations*, 21<sup>st</sup> March 2018, <https://www.cfr.org/article/liberal-world-order-rip>, accessed 15<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

<sup>27</sup> Jacob Schlesinger and Erin Ailworth, “U.S. Imposes New Tariffs, Ramping up ‘America First’ Trade Policy” in *The Wall Street Journal*, 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2018, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-imposes-trade-tariffs-signaling-tougher-line-on-china-1516658821>, accessed 16<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

<sup>28</sup> “Trump’s Tariff Folly” in *The Wall Street Journal*, 1<sup>st</sup> March 2018, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/trumps-tariff-folly-1519950205>, accessed 16<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

States imposing tariffs on Chinese imports worth around \$50 billion, Trump declaring that the reason behind these tariffs was a “tremendous intellectual property theft problem”<sup>29</sup>.

China did not sit around doing nothing, and by April 2018 it announced that it too would impose a 25% tariff on a range of U.S. products, such as cars, soybeans or whiskey, which would amount to 0.3% of the U.S. total GDP<sup>30</sup>. Still, even with only 0.3% of the GDP affected, the situation was looking more and more tense between the two countries and the outcomes were not looking very positive.

A good sign came in May 2018, when after the meeting between Trump and Chinese Vice-Premier Liu He, both parties agreed that they should be “putting the trade war on hold”.<sup>31</sup> However, this pause did not last awfully long, and soon enough the two economic giants were back at it, imposing tariff after tariff, with each wave being met with a counterattack from the opposing side as soon as possible. Thus, the rest of 2018 was marked by this continuing degradation in the economic relationship between Beijing and Washington, as each month, especially June<sup>32,33</sup>, July<sup>34</sup> and August<sup>35</sup>, saw the deepening of the trade dispute.

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<sup>29</sup> Jeremy Diamond, “Trump hits China with tariffs, heightening concerns of global trade war” in *CNN News*, <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/03/22/politics/donald-trump-china-tariffs-trade-war/>, accessed 16<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

<sup>30</sup> Berkeley Lovelace, “Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross: China tariffs amount to only 0.3% of US GDP” in *CNBC*, 4<sup>th</sup> April 2018, <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/04/04/commerce-secretary-wilbur-ross-china-tariffs-amount-to-0-point-3-percent-of-us-gdp.html>, accessed 16<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

<sup>31</sup> Martin Crutsinger and Paul Wiseman, “Us, China putting trade war on hold after progress in talks” in *AP News*, 21<sup>st</sup> May 2018, <https://apnews.com/article/north-america-ap-top-news-international-news-steven-mnuchin-politics-41443aaca704426b9f35b16607271a60>, accessed 16<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

<sup>32</sup> Pamela Brown and Julia Horowitz, “Trump announces tariffs on \$50 billion worth of Chinese goods” in *CNN News*, 15<sup>th</sup> June 2018, <https://money.cnn.com/2018/06/14/news/economy/trump-china-tariffs/index.html?adkey=bn>, accessed 16<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

<sup>33</sup> Mark Thompson, “China: ‘The US has launched a trade war’” in *CNN News*, 15<sup>th</sup> June 2018, <https://money.cnn.com/2018/06/15/news/economy/china-us-trade-war/index.html>, accessed 16<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

<sup>34</sup> “China hits back after US imposes tariffs worth \$34bn” in *BBC News*, 6<sup>th</sup> July 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-44707253>, accessed 16<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

<sup>35</sup> David Lawder, “U.S. finalizes next China tariff list targeting \$16 billion in imports” in *Reuters*, 8<sup>th</sup> August 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trade-china/u-s-finalizes->

Despite not reaching anything close to the desired results, as the U.S. trade deficit in 2018 with China did not close by any means, but in fact grew to levels reached only before the 2008 economic crisis<sup>36</sup>, the Trump Administration was not deterred and pushed on in its quest to impose tariffs, with the justification being that, according to Donald Trump: “our country can take in \$120 billion a year in tariffs, paid for mostly by China, by the way, not by us. A lot of people try and steer it in a different direction. It’s really paid — ultimately, it’s paid for by — largely, by China. And businesses will pour back into our country.”<sup>37</sup>

Thus, waves of tariffs continued to be imposed by both countries until June 2019, when at the G20 summit in Osaka Donald Trump and Xi Jinping agreed to another truce<sup>38</sup>. A pattern was forming however, and similarly to 2018, this truce would not resist the test of time, and by August 2019 the tariffs were yet again the preferred tool of choice for Trump<sup>39</sup>, with the Chinese response coming only a few weeks later.<sup>40</sup>

Despite the appearance of a pattern being formed, where the United States would impose tariffs followed by a Chinese similar response, that would go back and forth for a few months and would only temporarily be stopped by some unfruitful negotiations, the announcement on 13<sup>th</sup>

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next-china-tariff-list-targeting-16-billion-in-imports-idUSKBN1KS2CB, accessed 16<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

<sup>36</sup> Jim Zarroli, “Despite Trump’s Promises, The Trade Deficit is Only Getting Wider” in *NPR*, 6<sup>th</sup> March 2019, <https://www.npr.org/2019/03/06/700650144/despite-trumps-promises-the-trade-deficit-is-only-getting-wider>, accessed 16<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

<sup>37</sup> Louis Jacobson, “Who pays for US tariffs on Chinese goods? You do” in *Politifact*, 14<sup>th</sup> May 2019, <https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/2019/may/14/donald-trump/does-china-mostly-pay-us-tariffs-rather-us-consume/>, accessed 17<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

<sup>38</sup> Jonathan Lemire and Zeke Miller, “Truce in US-China trade war as 2 rivals seek breakthrough” in *AP News*, 29<sup>th</sup> June 2019, <https://apnews.com/article/ap-top-news-donald-trump-global-trade-osaka-japan-e65bb15053cb437794a464a597ee565f>, accessed 17<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

<sup>39</sup> Yun Li, “Trump says US will impose 10% tariffs on another \$300 billion of Chinese goods starting Sept.1” in *CNBC*, 1<sup>st</sup> August 2019, <https://www.cnn.com/2019/08/01/trump-says-us-will-impose-10percent-tariffs-on-300-billion-of-chinese-goods-starting-september-1.html>, accessed 17<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

<sup>40</sup> Yong Xiong and Victoria Cavaliere, “China and the US ratchet up trade war in a day of retaliation” in *CNN News*, 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2019, <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/08/23/business/china-tariffs-trade-war/index.html>, accessed 17<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

December 2019 that a comprehensive trade deal was being negotiated between Beijing and Washington<sup>41</sup> showed a glimmer of hope that a more meaningful and long-lasting solution would be eventually found by the two parties. And hope materialized into reality when Donald Trump and Liu He signed the “Phase One” trade deal between China and the United States on January 15<sup>th</sup> 2020.<sup>42</sup>

The agreement was, however, criticized by expert for a number of issues, chiefly among them being the fact that deal did not have any real enforcing mechanisms, meaning that in the case of a dispute, which given the previous relationship and the predisposition of Trump to act on impulses could happen at any moment, both parties could simply back out of the agreement and start re-imposing tariffs again.<sup>43</sup> The lack of a third-party arbitration mechanism in the deal was also seen as a deep blow to the international system of the World Trade Organization, the institution that usually settles such disputes. The declaration of Robert Lighthizer, U.S. Trade Representative under Donald Trump, was particularly symbolic for the unilateralism that defined the Trump Presidency: “The only arbitrator I trust is myself”.<sup>44</sup> Such a clear rejection of the liberal international institutions that the United States has created is perhaps the most clear and important sign that the construction by the United States of a return to great-power rivalry, as stated above, is materializing.

With the deal signed, the trade war seemed to come to an end, which would be a good respite for Beijing, who saw in 2019 the worst economic year in the last three decades, though the Chinese economy still grew by

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<sup>41</sup> Lily Kuo and Dominic Rushe, “China confirms ‘phase one’ trade deal with US” in *The Guardian*, 13<sup>th</sup> December 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2019/dec/13/china-confirms-phase-one-trade-deal-us-tariffs>, accessed 17<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

<sup>42</sup> Shawn Donnan, Josh Wingrove and Saleha Mohsin, “U.S. and China sign Phase One of the Trade Deal” in *Bloomberg*, 15<sup>th</sup> January 2020, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-01-15/u-s-china-sign-phase-one-of-trade-deal-trump-calls-remarkable>, accessed 17<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

<sup>43</sup> David Lawder, “In U.S. – China Phase 1 trade deal, enforcement may end in ‘We quit’” in *Reuters*, 15<sup>th</sup> January 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trade-china-enforcement/in-u-s-china-phase-1-trade-deal-enforcement-may-end-in-we-quit-idUSKBN1ZE2T1>, accessed 17<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

<sup>44</sup> Bob Davis, “U.S. – China Deal Could Upend the Way Nations Settle Disputes” in *The Wall Street Journal*, 16<sup>th</sup> January 2020, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-china-deal-could-upend-the-way-nations-settle-disputes-11579211598>, accessed 17<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

6,1%<sup>45</sup>, but as we all know it, 2020 was by far a good year for anything, with the global pandemic devastating economies around the globe and claiming more lives than any other factor. The rhetoric of Donald Trump on the coronavirus was also a great blow to the relationship between China and the U.S., with Trump continuously building and defending his argument that the virus is a 'Chinese virus'<sup>46</sup>, a discourse that did not help in any shape or form the growing Anti-Asian sentiments in the United States<sup>47</sup>. The insistence of Trump on blaming China for the coronavirus<sup>48</sup>, along many other factors, especially economic ones, lead to the failure of the 'Phase One' deal between the two countries, as studies showed that targets set by the deal for U.S. export to China were never met, and the figures indicate a 40% shortcoming.<sup>49</sup>

The election of Joe Biden in late 2020 was seen by many as a positive sign for the relationship between China and the United States, and generally speaking a return of the United States to the liberal international system it had created, a system that is not based around policies such as tariffs and trade wars. But, quite surprisingly, the Biden Administration does not seem to plan any reduction of the tariffs introduced under Donald Trump<sup>50</sup>, so it seems that at least for now the trade war is still going on.

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<sup>45</sup> "China's economic growth hits 30-year low" in *BBC News*, 17<sup>th</sup> January 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-51144892>, accessed 17<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

<sup>46</sup> Dan Mangan, "Trump defends calling coronavirus 'Chinese virus' – 'it's not racist at all'" in *CNBC*, 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020, <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/03/18/coronavirus-criticism-trump-defends-saying-chinese-virus.html>, accessed 18<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

<sup>47</sup> Mishal Reja, "Trump's 'Chinese Virus' Tweet helped lead to rise in racist anti-Asian Twitter Content: Study" in *ABC News*, 18<sup>th</sup> March 2021, <https://abcnews.go.com/Health/trumps-chinese-virus-tweet-helped-lead-rise-racist/story?id=76530148>, accessed 18<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

<sup>48</sup> "In U.N. Speech, Trump Blasts China And WHO, Blaming Them for Spread of Covid-19" in *NPR*, 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2020, <https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2020/09/22/915630892/in-u-n-speech-trump-blasts-china-and-who-blaming-them-for-spread-of-covid-19?t=1623877160682>, accessed 18<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

<sup>49</sup> Andrew Mullen, "US-China trade war: phase one trade deal largely a 'failure', as purchases fall well short of targets" in *South China Morning Post*, 8<sup>th</sup> February 2021, <https://www.scmp.com/economy/china-economy/article/3120986/us-china-trade-war-phase-one-trade-deal-largely-failure>, accessed 18<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

<sup>50</sup> Jonathan Ponciano, "Trade War: Biden Administration Not Ready To 'Yank' China Tariffs, But Open To Talks" in *Forbes*, 28<sup>th</sup> March 2021, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jonathanponciano/2021/03/28/trade-war-biden->

A first question that arises is why exactly is the Biden Administration continuing the Trump Policy of tariffs, beyond the easy answer that economically it would be tough to remove them so easily. One possible answer would be the concept of securitization, a concept developed by the Copenhagen School of International Relations, where political actors, through their discourses or speech-acts, transform elements that relate to economic, cultural or generally speaking civilian matters into matters of state security, thus invoking the need for a greater control or simply justifying certain measures<sup>51</sup>, such as in our case the need of the United States to impose tariffs on China.

Analysts point out the fact that under Trump, many aspects of economic policy have undergone a process of ‘securitization’, such as the analysis of Evan Medeiros, that points to the fact that “perhaps the most worrisome new driver of US-China economic competition is a phenomenon which can be called the “securitization” of bilateral economic relations. This refers to economic challenges—some new and some old—that have now assumed a national security identity”.<sup>52</sup> Similarly, T.J. Pempel argues that a “major mistake in the Trump Administration’s approach is that it has transformed problems endemic to China’s economic practices into an existential threat against the United States”.<sup>53</sup>

### **China and ‘the declining west’**

Aside from the explanation provided by the concept of securitization, another perspective could perhaps be offered by the way in which China, especially under Xi Jinping, has been portraying the international scene in recent years, and the role Xi envisioned for China. Thus, after 2011, the Chinese government has been increasingly moving towards a narrative of China as a superpower, with, or especially as, the

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administration-not-ready-to-yank-china-tariffs-but-open-to-talks/?sh=2b5f09f05e8b, accessed 18<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

<sup>51</sup> Michael Williams, “Words, Images, Enemies: Securitization and International Politics” in *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 47, No. 4, 2003, pp. 511-515, DOI:10.1046/j.0020-8833.2003.00277.x.

<sup>52</sup> Evan Medeiros, “The Changing Fundamentals of US-China Relations” in *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 42, No. 3, 2019, p. 99, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660X.2019.1666355>.

<sup>53</sup> T.J. Pempel, “Right target; wrong tactics: the Trump administration upends East Asian order” in *The Pacific Review*, 2019, p. 13, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09512748.2019.1617769>.

West being described as a waning power. “The East is rising and the West is declining”<sup>54</sup> declared Xi earlier this year, as he seeks to move China from a vision of a growing nation to that of a global hegemon.

This move from Xi Jinping is not something out of the blue either, as the top-level members of the Chinese Government have been steadily pushing this narrative in recent years. Former Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs He Yafei has also took a jab at the United States and its position and power relative to China, saying that the United States “will find that its strength increasingly falls short of its ambitions, both domestically and internationally....This is the grand trend of history....The global balance of power and world order will continue to tilt in favor of China, and China’s development will become unstoppable.”<sup>55</sup>

The Chinese narrative also seeks to question the degree to which the West, and especially the United States, has been monopolizing the international public opinion, as the Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said in a recent meeting with his U.S. counterpart: “The United States itself does not represent international public opinion, and neither does the Western world. Whether judged by population scale or the trend of the world, the Western world does not represent the global public opinion”<sup>56</sup>.

Chinese ambitions are also channeled into, or perhaps it would be better understood as originating from, technological innovations. To that extent, Chinese ambitions to develop a strong, 21<sup>st</sup> century military capability also rely heavily on its quest to become a ‘Wǎngluò Qiángguó’<sup>57</sup>, or a cyber great power or superpower.

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<sup>54</sup> Chun Han Wong, “China Plays Up Ascendancy Over West as It Sets Economic Path” in *The Wall Street Journal*, 4<sup>th</sup> March 2021, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-plays-up-ascendancy-over-west-as-it-sets-economic-path-11614854159>, accessed 19<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

<sup>55</sup> He Yafei, “Ushering in A New Chapter” in *China US Focus*, 26<sup>th</sup> February 2021, <https://www.chinausfocus.com/foreign-policy/ushering-in-a-new-chapter>, accessed 18<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

<sup>56</sup> “How it happened: Transcript of the US-China opening remarks in Alaska” in *Nikkei Asia*, 19<sup>th</sup> March 2021, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/US-China-tensions/How-it-happened-Transcript-of-the-US-China-opening-remarks-in-Alaska>, accessed 19<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

<sup>57</sup> Rogier Creemers *et. al.*, “Lexicon: 网络强国 Wǎngluò Qiángguó” in *New America*, 31<sup>st</sup> May 2018, <https://www.newamerica.org/cybersecurity-initiative/digichina/blog/lexicon-wangluo-qiangguo/>, accessed 19<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

This discourse of a powerful China, constructed on the basis of its incredible economic growth over the last decades also has its internal shortcomings. Poverty is still an issue for China, and despite the recent boasting of President Xi Jinping that China has eliminated absolute poverty (where absolute poverty is defined as living on \$28 per month or less)<sup>58</sup>, China is far from being a completely developed country, as Premier Li Keqiang recently announced that over 600 million Chinese citizens live on monthly wages lower than \$140<sup>59</sup>. Thus, the degree to which the Chinese economy could actually sustain its grandiose rhetoric remains an open question.

### Looking through the Social-Constructivist lens

In the pages above I have tried to summarize the events that I found relevant in the development of the U.S. – China relationship, especially during the Trump Administration, as well as the constructed discourse about each other that Washington and Beijing, or Trump and Xi, have put together recently. I will now go back to the original purpose of this paper, that is to see if the social-constructivist theory proposed by Alexander Wendt can properly explain these developments.

In the shortest way I can summarize it, the ‘wendian’ theory rests on three pillars: positivism<sup>60</sup>, idealism<sup>61</sup> and holism<sup>62</sup>. These three main elements, taken together with the idea that in the international system (and not only) roles, identities and structures are not pre-given but rather appear as a result of interactions between states and are continuously shaped by those interactions, can be understood as the core idea of Social-Constructivism.

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<sup>58</sup> Elizabeth Economy, “China’s Inconvenient Truth” in *Foreign Affairs*, 28<sup>th</sup> May 2021, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2021-05-28/chinas-inconvenient-truth>, accessed 29<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

<sup>59</sup> Zhou Xi, “Is China rich or poor? Nation’s wealth debate muddied by conflicting government data” in *South China Morning Post*, 29<sup>th</sup> May 2020, <https://www.scmp.com/economy/china-economy/article/3086678/china-rich-or-poor-nations-wealth-debate-muddied-conflicting>, accessed 29<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

<sup>60</sup> Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 39-40

<sup>61</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 90-137

<sup>62</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 185-190.

Firstly, positivism, the idea that there is a reality outside of our perceptions, can be easily seen through the way in which both countries have had to constantly adjust their policies, which originally were based on their perceptions about the other side, to better match the reality, as exemplified by the mismatched perception of Donald Trump that imposing tariffs on China would dramatically reduce the trade deficit between the two countries.

Idealism, or the role of ideas in the formation of interests and the importance they have over 'pure' power, can be identified in the way in which the United States have developed their agenda in the attempts of reaching a trade deal with China. The dismissal of the international institutions, based on the idea and perception that the United States cannot trust any third-party arbitration because it might go against its national interest, in the arbitration mechanism of the 'Chapter One' deal signed in early 2020, has led to the appearance, perhaps the first time in 70 years, of an international treaty between two major countries that is purely bilateral in nature.

The holistic, or structural, aspect of the argument can be identified most easily in the discourse created by China, in which the pre-eminent role of the United States as the sole superpower is being called into question, and the rise of China towards that position is seen as imminent and impossible to avoid. Another way in which the international structure can be analyzed in light of recent developments in the relationship between China and the United States is the way in which the structure, which I think can be best described as, especially after 1990 and the end of the Cold War, a structure marked by the international liberalism culture of multilateralism governed by international institutions, has been changed dramatically in the span of just 4 years of the Trump Presidency towards a culture of bilateralism in which the international institutions play a much more reduced role. On the last idea, that states that roles, identities and structures are not pre-given, both in international relations and generally speaking in any social system, but are rather the results of interactions between actors, I will dwell a bit more, for it underpins perhaps the most important question: why? Why did the U.S. under Donald Trump change the course of the relationship with China so violently?

A possible answer would be what some researchers called the “60% rule”, an apparent unwritten rule of U.S. foreign policy that indicates that whenever any country reaches 60% of the United States economic size, the U.S. will immediately start to view it as a rival and do everything in its power to stop its advance, just how it did with Japan back in the 1980-1990’s<sup>63</sup>, which does not mean only deploying economic tools such as tariffs, but rather a whole-of-government approach, or as Jeffrey Sachs puts it: “The Trump administration’s conflict with China has little to do with US external imbalances, closed Chinese markets, or even China’s alleged theft of intellectual property. It has everything to do with containing China by limiting its access to foreign markets, advanced technologies, global banking services, and perhaps even US universities”<sup>64</sup>. Without subtracting from this argument, I would opt for another explanation, one based much more on ideas and how they shape identities and interests.

One of the core ideas of realists in International Relations, a camp that we can easily place Donald Trump in, based not only on the people that he chose for his staff, but also on his actions and isolationist, nationalistic rationale behind them, has been exactly what the Department of Defense officialized in 2018 under Jim Mattis, the idea that great-power rivalry is again the most defining element of the international system.

In the words of John Mearsheimer, one of the leading figures of Realism in International Relations: “To put it bluntly: China cannot rise peacefully. It is important to emphasize, however, that I am not arguing that Chinese behavior alone will drive the security competition that lies ahead. The United States is also likely to behave in aggressive ways, thus further increasing the prospects for trouble”<sup>65</sup>. This idea, that China cannot rise peacefully has been the underlying motivation of the actions that the

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<sup>63</sup> Chi Hung Kwan, “The China-US Trade War: Deep-Rooted Causes, Shifting Focus and Uncertain Prospects” in *Asian Economic Policy Review*, Vol. 1, No. 18, 2019, p. 4, DOI: 10.1111/aepr.12284.

<sup>64</sup> Jeffrey Sachs, “The War on Huawei”, in *Project Syndicate*, 11<sup>th</sup> December 2018, <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/trump-war-on-huawei-meng-wanzhou-arrest-by-jeffrey-d-sachs-2018-12>, accessed 19<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

<sup>65</sup> John Mearsheimer, “The Gathering Storm: China’s Challenge to U.S. Power in East Asia”, in *Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 3, No. 4, 2010, p. 382, DOI:10.1093/cjip/poq016.

Trump Administration took in terms of its relationship with China, for when you believe that a country with the potential of China, a country that is rising faster and more decisive than any other country in recent history, and you believe that that country will not shy away from attacking you, not only in terms of rhetoric but also in an economic as well as physical, kinetic way, your interests and subsequently policies will of course focus on how to stop it.

The role of perceptions must also be highlighted, as they play a crucial role in the shaping of the relationship between the two countries, and has played a great role in the securitization of various elements, mainly economic and technological, that especially the United States has undergone recently. As Medeiros puts it: “the US-China security relationship is now a complex mix of an expanding set of diverging interests combined with an intensifying security dilemma. This is in part due to China’s expanding capabilities and in part due to its increased willingness to use them. The resulting security competition is a function of both US and Chinese behaviors and perceptions”<sup>66</sup>. Of course, it is not only the United States that has changed its behaviour and policy based on changing perceptions about the other, for China is ‘guilty’ of the same pattern of decisions, as “beginning in 2010, due to changing Chinese perceptions about its claims as well as the US role and enhanced Chinese capabilities to protect them, maritime territorial disputes became a new focus of US-China security competition”<sup>67</sup>.

Yet another argument that showcases the power of ideas and how discourses can influence, and to a large extent, shape the views and interests of a society, can be seen in the changing perceptions of U.S. citizens of China after the 2016 elections of Donald Trump, but especially after 2018 and the start of the ‘trade war’.

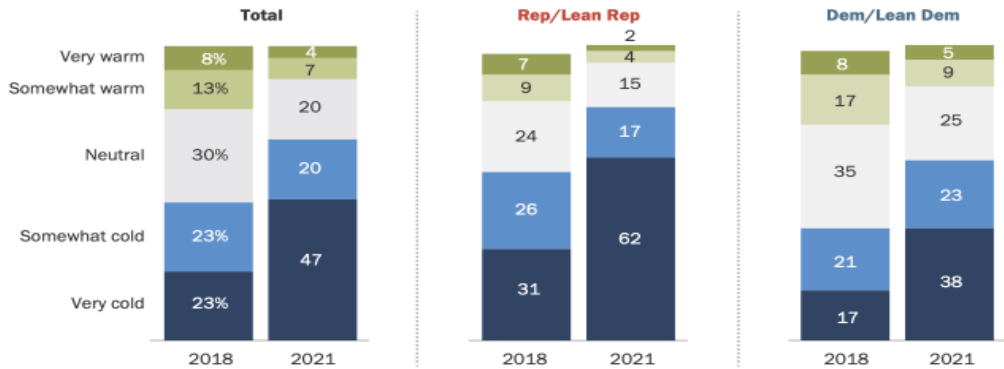
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<sup>66</sup> Evan Medeiros, *op. cit.*, pp. 95-96.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 96-97.

**Negative views of China up substantially since 2018**

% who rate China as \_\_\_ on a feeling thermometer from 0 (coldest rating) to 100 (warmest rating)



Note: Those who did not answer not shown. "Very cold" refers to ratings of 0-24 out of 100. "Somewhat cold" refers to ratings of 25-49. "Neutral" refers to ratings of exactly 50, and "somewhat warm" and "very warm" refer to ratings of 51-75 and 76-100, respectively. Thermometer was asked as: "We'd like to get your feelings toward some different countries in the world on a 'feeling thermometer.' A rating of zero degrees means you feel as cold and negative as possible. A rating of 100 degrees means you feel as warm and positive as possible. You would rate the country at 50 degrees if you don't feel particularly positive or negative toward the country. How do you feel toward China?" Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 1-7, 2021. Thermchina. "Most Americans Support Tough Stance Toward China on Human Rights, Economic Issues"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

**Figure 2: U.S. Citizens view of China in 2018 and 2021.**

Source: Pew Research Center



**Figure 3: U.S. - China trade deficit between 2016 - 2020.**

Source: Graph created by author based on figures of the United States Census Bureau.

As Figure 1 shows, U.S. citizens, on both sides of the political spectrum, have drastically more negative views of China now in 2021 than they did back in 2018 when the trade war started. This could be, just as Donald Trump time and time again put it, because of the negative trade balance between China and the United States. But Figure 2 shows us that in fact the trade deficit between the two countries has been reduced by almost \$100 billion between 2018 and 2020, from \$418 billion to \$310 billion<sup>68</sup>, and that would logically imply a reduction in negative views, or at the very least a stagnation, but it cannot justify a doubling of such views.

Thus, the only logical explanation for such a change in the views of the U.S. citizens is that despite the fact that no significant and substantive changes occurred in the trade balance between the two countries, the stated reason behind the policy of waging a trade war, the attitudes of the citizens changed because of the social construction of China as a strategic rival to the position of the United States as sole superpower in the world. The fact that the public perception changed so drastically in the span of only 2 years, and under the administration of one of the most controversial political figures of modern times, can only stand as testament to the fact that social constructions indeed shape the way in which states view their interests and subsequently devise their policies and behaviour, as the fact that the Biden Administration is not reverting the tariffs imposed by Donald Trump exemplifies.

## Conclusion

I have firstly tried to present the facts and key developments of the conflict, such as the Obama's administration "Asian Pivot" that laid the ground for a U.S. economic, diplomatic and military shift away from the Middle East and towards the Asian-Pacific region, even if during his tenure, Barack Obama only managed to do so on a rhetoric level. The 2016 elections and victory of Donald Trump marked a decisive shift in the relationship between the two countries, as Trump started even from his campaign a discourse in which China was portrayed as a rival nation that

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<sup>68</sup> *Trade in Goods with China*, Foreign Trade, Washington D.C.: United States Census Bureau. <https://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/balance/c5700.html#2016>, accessed 20<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

tries to replace the United States as the world leader and is using illicit economic ways to achieve such a goal, of course put in much simpler and resonant words by the 45<sup>th</sup> President of the U.S.

The pre-eminent importance given by the United States in its Defense Policy to the 'great-power competition' between itself and China clearly and officially marked the departure, temporarily or not, from the world of liberalism and global liberal institutions, towards a bilateral world in which third-parties are no longer relevant, a fact underlined yet again by the fact that the 2020 economic deal between China and the United States outright rejected a third-party arbitration mechanism.

Further on, I have tried to analyze the equally important ways in which the Chinese state has developed its discourse over the last years, a discourses marked by a move away from the old ideas that saw China as a developing nation and towards the concept of China as an economic, technologic and even military superpower that stands on equal footing with the United States, if not even above it.

Finally, in the last pages of this paper I have tried to show that indeed, Social-Constructivism can aptly explain this conflict. The core of this argument is the fact that ideas stand at the root of identities, and through interactions between states, these identities form the interests of the state and thus their policies and actions. In our case, I have identified the origins of the Trump administration's policy on China in the Realist ideas, such as those of John Mearsheimer, that promote the impending rise of China, and the assumption that such a meteoric rise will not come peacefully. Thus, as Trump and his administration have been sharply defined by the assumption and implementation of realist postulates, the White House, under Donald Trump, has seen China as a dangerous rival to the position of the United States. Given the identity assumed by the Trump administration of the United States as 'Great' and powerful, their interest was to stop, or at least slow down, the rise of China, and the easiest and harmless way to do so was through the waging of an economic trade war with Beijing.

The fact that U.S. citizens perceptions on China have drastically turned negative since 2018 and the start of the trade war, despite the lack of a significant change in the actual, real economic relations between the two countries, only strengthens the argument that interests and identities are

continuously shaped and re-shaped by both the internal discourses and interaction inside states as well as the interactions between states.

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## BOOK REVIEW

**ACHILLE MBEMBE, *OUT OF THE DARK NIGHT.*  
ESSAYS ON DECOLONIZATION, NEW YORK: COLUMBIA  
UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2021, 254 P.**

**Andreea Bianca Urs\***

Famous, appreciated and read on all continents, Achille Mbembe is one of the principal pillar of postcolonial studies, constantly providing content and guidance for social scientists and critical theorists. Eleven years after the launch of *Sortir de la grande nuit*<sup>1</sup>, the intensely updated English version of the masterpiece appears in 2021 at Columbia University Press publishing house. The book's title suggests the progress of the African community on a global scale. Moreover, the Cameroonian author clearly indicates that this project has dealt with "decolonization as a praxis of self-defense and as an experience of emergence and uprising" and it is "an inquiry into the decolonized community".<sup>2</sup>

*Out of the Dark Night* is divided into six dense chapters, outlined by an *Introduction* and an *Epilogue* meant to lead us directly into the *Politics of the Future World*, the main point being the localization of the postcolonial at the present moment, because "our era is far from being one of repentance, and is rather an era of clear conscience" (p. 133) and all chapters are completing and supporting this statement. In his new book, Achille

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<sup>1</sup> Achille Mbembe, *Sortir de la grande nuit*, Paris : Éditions La Découverte, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Achille Mbembe, *Out of the dark night. Essays on decolonization*, New York: Columbia University Press: 2021, p. 219. From now on, page in parentheses (p. ...).

Mbembe identifies two dominant modes of argumentation in the study of Africa: descriptivism and the tradition of detailed ethnography and historiography later explaining why they need to be crushed. The first is a way of defining and reading African life forms that is simply based on a series of anecdotes and negative statements, or that simply turns to statistical indices to measure the gap between what is Africa and what we are told it should be. This way of reading always ends up constructing Africa as a pathological case, as a figure of lack. The second is a tradition of detailed, living, and richly textured ethnography and historiography of life forms. Deeply rooted in a tradition of regional studies, dense ethnography, interpretive history, and symbolic analysis have become powerful examples of how we should think and write about human action, as well as analytical strategies that we should deploy to describe and interpret specific forms of social life in particular contexts (p. 33).

Chapter I – *Planetary entanglement* – starts with Hegel’s verdict written in 1830-1831 and continues with the chronological summary of western perception on the black continent but also the change of episteme with the advance of China in Africa, in 2021 we can refer to Africa as a specifically Chinese question. Achille links his arguments to those of the Comaroff brothers presented in *Theory from the South*<sup>3</sup>. It is the global South that affords privileged insight into the workings of the world at large. From the very first pages, in a futuristic note, the Cameroonian intellectual notes that the perception of the new world on the theory has changed, arguing that it was dominated by the melancholy of the fact that there is no supreme universal truth (p. 20). A decisive factor in this direction was the partial degradation of the Christian world, presented itself as a religion of truth (p. 138).

*Disenclosure*, or simply chapter II, and *Proximity without reciprocity*, respectively chapter III, highlights the transition process of the concept decolonization, this process having a slightly negative nuance, because it is closely connected with the directions of the world (like technologically infusion for instance). “Nor should we be surprised that the principal stake of decolonial thought was the disenclosure of the world” (p. 68). Specifically, the philosophical aim of decolonization and of the anticolonial movement that made it possible can be summed up in one phrase: the

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<sup>3</sup> Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, *Theory from the South*, New York: Routledge, 2016.

*disenclosure of the world* [*la décloison du monde*]. Moreover, Mbembe insists on the global collective idea the project of decolonization can have appeal only if “it refers to a set of continuous topological folds of the whole” (p. 96) The chapter entitled *Disenclosure* is the most complex as the reader goes through all that decolonization means for Frantz Fanon<sup>4</sup>, in order to arrive to what disenclosure means for Jean-Luc Nancy<sup>5</sup>.

Chapter IV – *The long French imperial winter* – continues the shaping ideas launched in the previous chapters but with a particular focus on French universalism. According to Mbembe, France has long remained at the margins of these new, planetary voyages of thought (p. 99) because until recently, postcolonial thought has been little known in France.

Through the V<sup>th</sup> chapter – *The house without keys* – the author brings into discussion the images, elements, art objects, black bodies and their impact on the white world, and how the white world wasn't prepared to receive and integrate them.

That Africa did not invent thermobaric bombs does not mean that it created neither technical objects nor works of art, or that it was closed to borrowings or to innovation. It privileged other modes of existence, within which technology in the strict sense constituted neither a force of rupture and diffraction, nor a force of divergence and separation, but rather a force of splitting and multiplication. At the heart of this dynamic, each concrete and distinct reality was always and by definition a symbol of something else, of another figure and structure. (p. 149)

Indirectly, it is indicated that African objects and art have shown Europe that it is no longer the center of the world. Obviously, the issue of their return and what they mean for the European consciousness is also evoked.

Chapter VI – *Afropolitanism* – addresses a wider range of sensitive topics, including war, private actors and resources. Mbembe insists on the idea that we don't have enough consistent, real material for the topic of decolonization. Also, he explains that whether it is a matter of literature, philosophy, music, or the arts in general, for almost a century African

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<sup>4</sup> Franz Fanon, *Ecrits sur l'aliénation et la liberté*, Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure: The Deconstruction of Christianity*, New York: Fordham University Press, 2008.

discourse has been dominated by three political-intellectual paradigms, which are not mutually exclusive: (1) variants of anticolonial nationalism (lasting influence on the spheres of culture, politics, economics, and religion), (2) various rereadings of Marxism, (figures of “African socialism”) and a (3) Pan-African movement, which has given a special place to two types of solidarity: a racial and transnational solidarity, and an internationalist, anti-imperialist solidarity (p. 194).

Each chapter has as its main element Europe and criticism of it and foremost, how can she contribute at the disenclousure of the world. For instance, “Europe is undoubtedly not a dying world. But, weary, it now represents the world of declining life and crimson sunsets. Here, the spirit has faded, eaten away by extreme forms of pessimism, nihilism, and frivolity” (p. 215).

Finally, with an urge to overcome the practice of textualism, ideology, and activist or “compassionate” denunciation, the author recommends that we need to “make the distinction between what is true and what is held to be true” (p.115). From this book we learn that decolonization is a fluctuating and interdependent process much more complex than what has been plotted so far. No idea is placed at random, everything is embedded in history and in the “criticism” existing until this present moment. Along with the launch of this book, Mbembe is launching a deep challenge: to understand the direction of the new world that is taking shape in front of our eyes: when we leave the book, we’re required to be able to perceive the dimensions of the new world and learn how to deal with it from a theoretical perspective.

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**SIMONA JIȘA, SERGIU MIȘCOIU ET MODIBO DIARRA (DIR.),**  
***RACONTER LES POLITIQUES CONFLICTUELLES EN AFRIQUE.***  
***REGARDS CROISÉS, PARIS: EDITIONS DU CERF, COLL.***  
***PATRIMOINES* », 2021, 360 P.**

**Georgiana Roman\***

The political turmoil of postcolonial Africa has ignited the imagination of many authors who tried to capture, through their writing, the essence of the various conflicts and crises that have ensued following the dissolution of the colonial empires. The volume *Raconter les Politiques Conflictuelles en Afrique*<sup>1</sup> untangles the narrative representation of conflict and is bears testament to the complexity of its role in shaping the understanding of the past and present, demonstrating the intertwined relation between politics and literary creation in Africa.

The opening section of the volume introduces us to the political landscape of post-independence sub-Saharan Africa and explores the thorny social issues at the core of the never-ending cycle of violence. The Cameroonian conflict is the first to be analysed in the book. Wilfride Gilbert Nzokou Fotsing's contribution focuses on the ideological dissection of the conflict in Cameroon familiarises us with the broader issues that have plagued African states in their post-colonial history. This first sub-chapter explores the ideological justification of violence as a course of action and unpacks the bellicose logic of Amilcar Cabral's national liberation doctrine. The author notes the centrality of the military offensive in this rhetoric and reveals a revolutionary conception of the political struggle marked by the

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<sup>1</sup> Simona Jișa, Sergiu Mișcoiu et Modibo Diarra (dir.), *Raconter les politiques conflictuelles en Afrique. Regards croisés*, Paris, Editions du Cerf, coll. « Patrimoines », 2021, 360 p.

conflation of politics and violence that advances violence as the sole method through which autonomy and emancipation can be reached.

In the following contribution, Roxana Mateş elaborates on the narrative binary of the anglophone and francophone discourses on the secessionist crisis as reflected through literature. Her analysis highlights a dichotomous perspective of the crisis and reveals the political underpinning of the literary description of events. Mateş contends that, while the anglophone literature depicts the radicalisation of the conflict as a result of discrimination, marginalization and the feeling of being recolonized, the francophone literature focuses less on the root causes of the crisis and instead emphasises its unfortunate outcomes, labelling the supporters of the secessionist cause as enemies, terrorists and agitators whose only purpose is the destabilisation of the country.

Violence, a central theme of the volume, is presented as the result of an accumulation of factors, most notably the lack of rights beyond mere constitutional declaration, the clientelism and arbitrary distribution of state funds, the frustration with declining living standards, the lack of opportunity, of future perspective and generalised poverty. These issues are going to be a leitmotif for all the conflicts presented in this chapter.

The conflicts documented are take place in the context of the disillusionment with the promise of independence and freedom and the demythification of autonomy, caused by the corruption of its revolutionary principles and the untimely abandonment of its ideals. Against this backdrop and accentuated by the failure of the state to provide solutions for its younger population, Ciprian Gabriel Oros unveils the readaptation of radical Islam in Senegal and the incorporation of an anti-colonial discourse, manifested by the rejection of the occidental cultural model and its symbols as a form of resistance against an oppressive "other". Identity construction through alterity emerges as a central theme in this analysis, together with the rejection of Occidental culture and its consumerism as an attempt to craft an alternative cultural model that is, in effect, an ideological refuge that offers the disheartened youth a sense of dignity and control over their destiny.

Kombila Milunda's work on the representation of post-independence conflicts in the *Peuples Noirs, Peuples Africains* periodical uncovers an anti-colonial discourse according to which conflicts and violence are the outcomes of destructive colonial policies, and African politicians in power are nothing more than the puppets of the former colonial powers who enforce, through their faulty leadership, the preservation and extension of colonialism, albeit in a less direct form. He contends that this discourse and representation of postcolonial conflicts is a call to fight for emancipation.

The contributions of Simona Jiša and Diana Nechit remind us that cultural products, be it novels, magazines or comics and theatrical performances, can serve as devices that allow us to measure the political reality. Simona Jiša documents, in her assessment of the comic book series *Carnets d'Orient*, the plight of postcolonial Algeria and its struggles. The series is defined as a recollection exercise meant to document and recreate the past, in a critical perspective meant to encourage reconciliation and question the socio-political issues portrayed, most notably the rivalry between nationalities and religions, the tragedy of war, the racism of the colonial system and its compulsion to "civilize" at all costs, the violence and the condition of women.

Diana Nechit explores the theatrical world of Sony Labou Tansi, Koffi Kwahulé, Édouard Elvis Bvouma and Aristide Tarnagda in an effort to understand the engaging and militant character of the new forms of artistic expression. Here, art is not only a way of preserving memory and conferring sense to history, but also an invitation to reflect on the political *status quo* through the lens of the personal and intimate human experience of the characters. The new African theatre offers not only a relevant critique of the political crisis but provides us with a personalized account of events we can relate to. This, according to Diana Nechit, contributes to a relevant political reflection.

If the first part of the book encompasses a collection of radiographic reviews of works that offer insights into wide-reaching social and political issues, the second chapter is dedicated to the exploration of volumes offering a more personalized perspective. The works analysed in this

chapter illustrate the impact of the genocide in Rwanda on an individual level, through the lens of highly personified characters and techniques such as allegory and metaphor which sensitize the reader to the atrocities of war.

Buata B. Malela examines the narrative violence in the francophone account of the genocide in Rwanda. In this work, the francophone fiction is the expression of an anthropological view of the conflict and the familiarity of violence, reflected by the dehumanization and normalization of violence against victims, in its physical and symbolical form. F. Z. Odome Angone talks about a “survivor’s syndrome” in the “post-traumatic” storytelling of Scholastique Mukasonga and the therapeutic role of writing. In this perspective, the writing of Mukasonga is seen as a tribute to those who have died, a way of making peace with reality, of forgiving oneself for having survived where others have perished, relieving oneself from the perceived guilt of being alive and the survivor syndrome. Jalad Berthelot Obali’s analysis of the novel *Petit pays* by Gaël Faye unveils the possibility of reinventing the post-traumatic identity and space through symbolic reconstruction. Obali asserts that the knowledge deriving from such literary endeavours can serve as a source of critical reflection and provide the symbolic resources needed for the reconstruction and *reinvention* of the African identity, complementing the cultural, social, and human aspects that need to be mobilised in this regard.

Violence is the dominant aspect of the atmosphere, and the second group of contributions highlight the ubiquity of violence in the real and the fictional world, in discourse and action, in the political and personal sphere. Our attention is directed towards the familiarity of violence and its trivialization in the genocidal discourse contrasted by the literary reconstitution of personal tragedies. The contribution of these writings is analysed as an anthropological work through which personal experience can be better understood and immortalized.

The last cluster of contributions focuses on the representation of reality in works of fiction, the interconnected aspects of war and the condition of the postcolonial state, with injustice and corruption as main areas of interest. Andreea Bianca Urs offers an insight into Jean Bofane’s *Congo Inc* and emphasises the domino effect of the conflicts in post-

independence African states, the consequences of war on everyday life, the lack of freedom, the ethnic polarization, the injustice and the suffering brought by the overflow of the Rwandan conflict into Congo. She argues that Bofane's writing is a form of symbolic justice that restore the dignity of the Congolese people by raising awareness on the atrocities of war and encouraging them to study the history of the conflict.

The interdependent character of conflicts and crises is further illustrated in Patrice Nganang's novel *Temps de chien*, analysed by Murielle Sandra Tiako Djomatchoua. The general tone of the volume is described as pessimistic and critical, the central theme identified being a double critique: the critique of the post-independent state, plagued by the lack of fundamental rights, the inefficiency and the corruption, the lack of real independence, the manipulation and the oppression of the citizens, the repression of critical voices, the lack of political legitimacy and the contested political legitimacy, and the critique of the people, who are represented as passive and fatalistic, who seem to have accepted the oppression. Contrasting to this perspective, the following contribution reveals a different vocation ascribed to literature: that of a rehabilitation and self-discovery tool for marginalized groups. Ioana Marcu delves into the literary universe of the descendants of Harkis living in France. Longing for a sense of identity and belonging, these children of immigrants, found at the periphery of the French society, craft an *identity refuge* through writing and by doing so they create their own story and establish their visibility in the literary and the political realm.

Any discussion related to marginalization will naturally lead us to reflect on the condition of women. In this regard, Daniela Chipirliu's radiography of Assia Djébar's writing is particularly insightful. In this context, women emerge as observers of war and gain an important voice through their oral testimonies which contribute to the collective repository of knowledge related to the past. An alternative recollection of the facts is thus drawn. Intimate and personal, this version of events is presented through the filter of the female experiences and recorded through literature. For Daniela Chipirliu, this feminine reconceptualizing of history give women a voice previously silenced.

*Destination Biafra* by Buchi Emecheta is another novel that reframes reality through a female perspective and Jean Pierre Atouga's assessment reveals the reality behind the fiction by following the quest for social justice and the evolution of the heroine. If we agree that fiction is "a lie that helps us see the truth",<sup>2</sup> then Emecheta's novel helps us see the misery of war, the flaws and vices of men and the hardships of women more clearly, as we can conclude based on Atouga's interpretation.

By analysing *La Saison des pièges* by Seydou Badian, Modibo Diarra identifies three major themes of the African francophone novel: the fight against colonialism through the condemnation of its abuses, the rehabilitation and history of the continent and the critique of its post-independence leaders. Here, too, the frustration of the people towards the injustice and the corruption of the new regimes is emphasised, through the representation of an imaginary state that resembles Mali. These aspects of the political crisis are followed by a critique of democracy, weak and vulnerable to all kinds of impunity, which only adds to the magnitude of the calamity.

Bridging the gap between reality and fiction, the African novel is described by Analyse Kimpolo as a "mirror of social reality" in the last contribution of this volume. The author focuses on the metaphorical realism of Sony Labou Tansi's *La Vie et demie*, arguing that the symbolic representation of reality through *allegorization* can help us tackle issues in a way that normal language cannot fully encompass, inviting us to question the reality. This concluding work provides us with concepts we can use to sieve through fiction and see the critique of reality that surfaces through the realism of the stories and their unmistakable references to existing events and actors. Under this conception, fiction can be a political refuge, a form of protest and resistance, denouncing the excess and incompetence of postcolonial political leaders.

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<sup>2</sup> See Gary Rolfe, "A Lie that Helps Us See the Truth': Research, truth and fiction in the helping professions" in *Reflective Practice*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 2002, pp. 89-102.

Storytelling is, according to cognitive scientist Mark Turner, a “the fundamental instrument of thought”<sup>3</sup>, essential in shaping our understanding of reality, our perspective and attitudes, including those related to social and political issues. This volume offers a variety of interpretations on the narrative depiction of conflict, illustrating the multifaceted role of storytelling. From the ideological justification of violence to the critique of politics and politicians, the self-discovery, the healing, the identity-building and resistance in the face of adversity and whether it is chronicling the past, reimagining the present or advocating for collective action in hopes of a better future, the narrative portrayal of the conflictual politics in Africa is an invitation to reflection.

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<sup>3</sup> Mark Turner, *The Literary Mind*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 4-5.



**LJILJANA RADONIĆ, HEIDEMARIE UHL (HG.) *GEDÄCHTNIS IM  
21. JAHRHUNDERT. ZUR NEUVERHANDLUNG EINES  
KULTURWISSENSCHAFTLICHEN LEITBEGRIFFS*, BIELEFELD:  
TRANSCRIPT VERLAG, 2016, 286P.**

**Antonela Gyöngy\***

Das kollektive Gedächtnis weist nicht nur auf die in einer Gesellschaft bestehenden Geschichtsbilder hin, sondern setzt auch einen immer wiederkehrenden, meist öffentlich ausgetragenen Aushandlungsprozess über Erinnerungsinhalte und Erinnerungsformen voraus. Die gesellschaftlich konstruierten Deutungen und Praktiken der Erinnerung verändern sich nach den gegenwärtigen sozialen und politischen Verhältnissen. Kollektives Gedächtnis wird insofern vielmehr zu einem Spiegelbild der Gegenwart.

Die Gegenwart des 21. Jahrhunderts wie auch der gesellschaftliche und politische Wandel in Europa bilden den Anlass für eine neue Auseinandersetzung mit dem kulturwissenschaftlichen Gedächtnisbegriff, die sich die Publikation *Gedächtnis im 21. Jahrhundert. Zur Neuverhandlung eines kulturwissenschaftlichen Leitbegriffs* zum Ziel gesetzt hat. Der Sammelband wurde im Jahr 2016 von Heidemarie Uhl und Ljiljana Radonić im Rahmen der Buchreihe „Erinnerungskulturen/ Memory Cultures“ herausgegeben, bleibt jedoch für Expert\*innen der kulturwissenschaftlichen Gedächtnisforschung und für Leser\*innen, die

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sich für europäische Erinnerungspolitik und Erinnerungskulturen interessieren, nach wie vor aufschlussreich.

Warum eine Neuverhandlung des Gedächtnisbegriffs vor dem Hintergrund der Jahrhundertwende sinnvoll ist, wird von den Herausgeberinnen in dem einführenden Kapitel damit begründet, dass das Gedächtnis-Paradigma sich in einer Übergangsphase befinde, die nun aus der Perspektive des „Postmémoire“ wissenschaftlich erfasst werden sollte.<sup>1</sup> Heroische Deutungsmuster der Vergangenheit, die zur Schaffung einer nationalen Identität eingesetzt wurden, sind ebenso wie die in der sozial- und kulturwissenschaftlichen Gedächtnisforschung gängige Einschränkung des Gedächtnisbegriffs auf nationalstaatlich definierte Gemeinschaften hinfällig geworden. Darüber hinaus hat der besonders für westliche Staaten diagnostizierte „memory boom“ allmählich nachgelassen und die Auseinandersetzung mit der Vergangenheit befindet sich derzeit in einer Phase der „Routinisierung“.<sup>2</sup> In dem „neuen“ Kontext des 21. Jahrhunderts sind vielmehr transnationale, selbst globale Gedächtniskonstruktionen und Erinnerungskonkurrenzen zu verzeichnen, die andere Formen der Identitätsbildung ermöglichen und somit neue Wege in der Erforschung des Gedächtnisbegriffs eröffnen.

Der Sammelband hat es sich folglich zur Aufgabe gemacht, durch wichtige Ansätze, Fallstudien und Problemfelder der Erinnerungskultur, einen Beitrag zur gegenwärtigen Gedächtnisforschung zu leisten. Er bietet jedoch einen Überblick insbesondere auf die Neuverhandlung dominanter Themen des öffentlichen Erinnerns wie der Holocaust und die Verbrechen der kommunistischen Regime. Die Autoren sind namhafte Historiker, Kultur- und Literaturwissenschaftler, deren überwiegende Anbindung an das Institut für Kulturwissenschaften und Theatergeschichte der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften sich auch in der inhaltlichen Ausrichtung des Bandes niederschlägt. Die Publikation selbst ist aus einer früheren Konferenz des Instituts zum Thema „Gedächtnis im

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<sup>1</sup> Vgl. Ljiljana Radonić, Heidemarie Uhl, „Zwischen Pathosformel und neuen Erinnerungskonkurrenzen. Das Gedächtnis-Paradigma zu Beginn des 21. Jahrhunderts“, in Ljiljana Radonić, Heidemarie Uhl (Hrsg.), *Gedächtnis im 21. Jahrhundert. Zur Neuverhandlung eines Kulturwissenschaftlichen Leitbegriffs*, Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2016, S. 17f.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, S. 17f.

Übergang. Transformationen – Übersetzungen – Ausblicke“ hervorgegangen.<sup>3</sup>

Die insgesamt 13 Beiträge des Bandes, sind – bis auf die Einleitung der Herausgeberinnen – vier Hauptkapiteln zugeordnet.

Mit den „Neuverhandlungen des Gedächtnis-Paradigmas“ befassen sich zwei Beiträge. Aleida Assmann diagnostiziert eine ethische Wende in der gegenwärtigen Erinnerungskultur, die sich auf Menschenrechte stützt und durch die Anerkennung nicht nur der eigenen, sondern auch der selbst verursachten Opfer der anderen, ein inklusives Erinnern in den Vordergrund rückt. Oliver Marchart behandelt den Gedächtnisbegriff aus theoretischer Perspektive und schlägt in dem zweiten Beitrag einen diskursanalytischen, hegemonietheoretischen und an den Cultural Studies anknüpfenden Ansatz vor.

„Holocaust und Genozid. Geschichtsmoral und Erinnerungspolitik“ ist der nächste Themenschwerpunkt des Sammelbandes. Heidemarie Uhl untersucht hierzu die Problematik des gespaltenen europäischen Gedächtnisses zwischen Holocaust und Gulag und die infolge gedächtnispolitischer Schlüsselereignisse (wie etwa die *Stockholm Declaration* 2000 und *Prague Declaration* 2008) entstehenden Erinnerungskonkurrenzen in Europa. Die Beiträge von Dieter Pohl und Norman M. Naimark wenden sich dem Thema Genozid zu. Während Dieter Pohl den Entstehungshintergrund des Genozidbegriffs und dessen Stellenwert im globalen Gewaltgedächtnis beleuchtet, konzentriert sich der Beitrag von Norman M. Naimark auf Srebrenica und geht dabei auf die Herausforderungen in der einschließlich völkerrechtlichen Auseinandersetzung mit dem Genozid ein.

In dem dritten Abschnitt „Postsozialistische Erinnerungskonkurrenzen“ weist Ljiljana Radonić auf das anhaltende Spannungsverhältnis zwischen Europäisierungsdruck und nationalen Vergangenheitsnarrativen in den postsozialistischen Staaten hin und zeigt dabei wie der Kampf um das Gedächtnis in dem Museum des slowakischen Aufstandes, im Jasenovac-Gedenkmuseum in Kroatien und im Holocaust-Gedenkzentrum in Ungarn ausgetragen wird. Marketa Spiritova befasst sich mit der populären Erinnerungskultur und untersucht die Erinnerungspraktiken und Vergangenheitsdeutungen

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, S. 18.

zivilgesellschaftlicher Organisationen in Zusammenhang mit den Gedenkfeierlichkeiten der „Samtenen Revolution“ in Tschechien. Robert Traba geht von einer kritischen Betrachtung des „postkommunistischen“ Gedächtnisses aus und untersucht in seinem Beitrag die Erinnerungskultur Polens. Dabei zeigt er, wie die einseitige aber intensive Gedächtnispolitik der polnischen Regierung von den kritischen, jedoch marginalisierten Vergangenheitsdeutungen der Generation nach den Zeitzeugen konterkariert wird und wie schließlich polnische und deutsche Vergangenheitsdeutungen des zweiten Weltkrieges sich nicht dialogisch aufeinander beziehen, sondern vielmehr parallel laufen.

„Jenseits des Nationalen – Multiperspektivität - Translation“ ist der letzte Teil des Sammelbandes, der sich überwiegend auf die Untersuchung literarischer Texte fokussiert. Michael Rössner geht von der Literatur als Medium des Gedächtnisses und der „Erinnerung durch die Literatur“<sup>4</sup> aus und verdeutlicht die gedächtnisformierende Dimension der kulturellen Übersetzung in Epen der Renaissance, historische Romane und aktuelle literarische Texte. Christoph Leitgeb befasst sich mit den „Un-Orten“ der Erinnerung in der österreichischen Literatur, die – dem Autor zufolge - auf das Unheimliche bzw. auf die „Schwierigkeiten mit der Erinnerung von Verdrängtem“<sup>5</sup> hinweisen. Elisabeth Grossegger geht der Darstellung von Prinz Eugen von Savoyen in unterschiedlichen Medien des Gedächtnisses, insbesondere in Theateraufführungen nach und behauptet, dass mit seiner Funktionalisierung seit dem 18. Jahrhundert sich zwei miteinander in Einklang stehende Identitätsentwürfe etabliert haben, die auf eine „habsburgisch-zentraleuropäische“ und eine „deutschnationale“ Deutung hinauslaufen.<sup>6</sup> In dem letzten Beitrag des Sammelbandes untersuchen Simon Hadler und Johannes Feichtinger zwei zentraleuropäische Feindbildkonstruktionen – das Osmanische Reich und Schweden – und betonen dabei ihre Gedächtnis stabilisierende Funktion.

Trotz des weit gefassten Titels, der vielmehr eine theoretische Abhandlung des Gedächtnisbegriffs erwarten lässt, gelingt es dem

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<sup>4</sup> Michael Rössner, „Literatur im Wechselspiel des Nationalen/ Transnationalen/ Translatorischen“, in *ibidem*, S. 206.

<sup>5</sup> Christoph Leitgeb, „Der Un-Ort der Erinnerung: ein literarischer Topos bei Lebert, Bernhard, Jelinek – und seine Geschichte“, in *ibidem*, S. 240.

<sup>6</sup> Elisabeth Grossegger, „Das Gedächtnis Prinz Eugens“, in *ibidem*, S. 255.

Sammelband wichtige Entwicklungen staatsübergreifender Erinnerungskulturen seit Beginn des 21. Jahrhunderts nachzuzeichnen und weitere Anregungen zur Erforschung der Theorie zu liefern. Die Ausweitung des Untersuchungsgegenstands jenseits der dominanten Themen des öffentlichen Erinnerns sowie die Untersuchung weiterer Medien des Gedächtnisses wie etwa der sozialen Medien hätten das „Bild des Gedächtnisses“ im 21. Jahrhundert ergänzen können. Bemerkenswert ist jedoch das Aufspüren der transnationalen, europäischen und globalen Dimension der Vergangenheitsdeutungen und Erinnerungspraktiken, die der gegenwärtigen sozialen Wirklichkeit vielmehr entspricht.

Schließlich ist die Frage nach der Neuverhandlung des Gedächtnisses weiterhin offen. Das 21. Jahrhundert bringt weitere (globale) Herausforderungen mit sich. Es bleibt zu erforschen, wie sie die Gedenkpraktiken und Erinnerungsdiskurse in Europa und weltweit verändern. Der vorliegende Sammelband und die nachfolgenden Publikationen der von Aleida Assmann herausgegebenen Buchreihe „Erinnerungskulturen/ Memory Studies“<sup>7</sup> haben dieses Unterfangen eingeleitet und dadurch den Weg zur weiteren Erforschung des kollektiven Gedächtnisses im 21. Jahrhundert nicht nur für Kulturwissenschaftler geebnet.

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<sup>7</sup> wie etwa Heidemarie Uhl, Ljiljana Radonić (Hrsg.) *Das umkämpfte Museum. Zeitgeschichte ausstellen zwischen Dekonstruktion und Sinnstiftung*, Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2020.



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