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● **ANALYTICAL IMAGES OF POLITICAL TRUST IN TIMES OF GLOBAL CHALLENGES. THE CASE OF SLOVENIA, SPAIN AND SWITZERLAND**

Lluís COROMINA and Simona KUSTEC

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## EXPLORING THE “GREY ZONE”: THE THEORY AND REALITY OF “HYBRID REGIMES” IN POST-COMMUNISTIC COUNTRIES<sup>1,2</sup>

David PROCHÁZKA and Ladislav CABADA<sup>3</sup>

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*The new multiple-configuration of the international relations and especially the break-down of the non-democratic regimes of the Soviet-type created the need for scholars to address new classifications of emerging regimes. The contribution of the presented text to the debate on ‘hybrid regimes’ is twofold. The authors strive to wholesomely introduce the debate, genealogy and intellectual background of this line of research, exploring if it is possible to employ the concept of ‘hybrid regimes’ to define the character of selected cases and simultaneously, if it is possible to change the paradigm of classification of studied regimes in the region of Central and Eastern Europe. In this text, the authors understand various conceptualizations of “hybrid regimes” as a unit on a different level on the “ladder of abstraction”. Therefore the authors emphasize the theoretical employment of ‘hybrid regimes’ as a ‘meta-concept’, analysing the recent development in Hungary.*

**Key words:** hybrid regimes; grey zone of regimes; East-Central Europe; Hungary.

### 1 INTRODUCTION

Since the one-party non-democratic regimes of the Soviet bloc fell, and the new multipolar world configuration has started taking shape, political scientists need to address the classification of regimes that are hard to fit into traditional typologies. The necessity to re-imagine the regime classification is reinforced by the increasing number of democratic transitions and the reverberating third wave of democratisation. Due to the significant change of the research subjects –

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i.e. the political regimes – in recent decades, political scientists have suggested alternative typologies and new terminologies. Or, to be more precise, they introduced new conceptualisations of political regimes. The change of the regime's character, however, does not only concern the large group of actors of the former post-communistic bloc, Pacific Asia or Latin America. The end of the Cold War saw the emergence of new states, which frequently deviated from the ideal types of liberal democracy or slightly different types of non-democratic regimes.<sup>4</sup>

As expected, this situation has opened the door for more than two decades of debate on so-called 'hybrid regimes', which has become an inseparable part of the broader discussion on the nature of democracy, authoritarianism and the examination of the character of the regimes as such. In the present day, it seems entirely inconceivable that the topic of 'hybrid regimes' could be omitted from research. The reason for this is that the plethora of regimes on the political map can be categorised into these classifications and concepts. It is difficult, if not impossible, to categorise these political systems and states using classifications created in the past.

The exceptionally turbulent development of political regimes in the countries of the former Soviet bloc serve as the primary motivation for this study. Related to the 'westernisation' of a large group of the central European countries, which in the first decade of the 21st century became part of the vital integration-oriented organisations established exclusively, or besides other factors, on the democratic nature of its members (as the Council of Europe, European Union or NATO). Political scientists have mostly agreed on the fact that these countries have successfully undergone the transition from non-democratic regime of the Soviet type towards liberal democracy and have become a part of the group of classical, consolidated liberal democracies (see Kubát 2005, 163; Hrdličková 2011, 72–77; Bureš, Charvát, Just and Štefek 2012; Heydemann and Vodička eds., 2013). However, the seemingly firm democratic foundations in many newly established democracies quickly began to crumble as the economic crisis erupted in 2008, followed by the subsequent period of polycrisis in the European Union (see Ágh 2019). This period saw, among other aspects, the rise of populism in numerous European countries and non-liberal tendencies, which gained traction in some countries in central and eastern European (see Kubát, Mejstřík and Kocián 2016). Adding to this was the failure of the so-called Arab spring, as well as the subsequent migration crisis in the context of the civil wars in the Middle East and the North African (MENA) countries.

The primary aim of this text is to clarify and refine the debate on hybrid regimes from a theoretical perspective, as it is not firmly anchored in scholarly research. This debate was (and still is) not only dynamic but also visibly linked to the tendencies to prefer, at least partially, innovation over the effort to establish generalisations as to the crucial foundations of a theoretical framework. As J. Bílek notes in his text on hybrid regimes, the research effort often resembles a contest of who will sooner come up with an even more ground-breaking concept, rather than an effort to resolve existing research problems (Bílek 2015, 213). Hence, many diverse conceptualisations have been introduced (and are still

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<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, we do not consider the third wave of democratisation the only source of the 'hybrid' regime's debate. An important influence was without doubt the evolution of the so-called Asia model of democracy with the limited liberal elements. After all, L. Diamond, J. J. Linz and S. M. Lipset had already introduced their concept of 'semi-democracy' in 1988 (Diamond, Linz and Lipset 1988). Furthermore, the influential work of Zakaria on non-liberal democracies (Zakaria 1997) also focuses predominantly on countries other than the post-communistic bloc of Central and Eastern Europe.

being created today) which are then ungainly applied by even the most renowned scholars, leading to a vast number of methodological errors and unclarities.

This paper has two primary goals. Firstly, from the theoretical perspective, the aim is to wholesomely introduce the debate, genealogy of research and intellectual background from which the specific concepts of 'hybrid regimes' emerged, and to present the broader context of the debate over the character of political regimes. The second goal is to examine the concept of a 'grey zone of regimes' by T. Carothers (2002) which surpasses by its essence all the other concepts, and we understand it as a 'meta-concept'. We strive to answer the (twofold) research question:

RQ1a: Is it possible to reliably employ the 'meta-concept' of the 'hybrid regimes' when attempting to define the character of regimes that are being analysed?

RQ1b: And, simultaneously, is it possible to start thinking about these particular regimes in a different classification than the classical category of liberal democracy, under which they were grouped for some time after the transition from a non-democratic regime of Soviet-type?

The new state of polycrisis in the EU and the de-democratisation in Central and Eastern Europe, or to be more precise, the evident transformation of the character of these regimes, present challenges when analysing the existing concepts related to the contextually different characters and types of regimes that do not fall in the liberal democracy category. We contribute to the academic debate by answering the question if the current situation of unfinished or insufficient consolidation of political regimes in certain new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe is a sufficient impulse to change this paradigm. In other words, we aim to examine if instead of the long-standing classification, it is beneficial to start thinking about these regimes primarily in the context of 'meta-concept' of 'hybrid regimes' and to perceive them as 'non-democratic non-authoritarian regimes' (Gilbert and Mohseni 2011, 271).

The study is structured as follows. In the introductory, the theoretical part and critical concepts are examined. As we will demonstrate, these concepts form an integral part of this line of research. This section aims to familiarise the reader with the genealogy of the origin of the hybrid regime concepts in the context of the debates about many deviations from classical ideal types of democracy, authoritarianism on the other side of the continuum and to provide a critical reflection on these concepts. When the exploration of 'hybrid regimes' is considered, from the beginning we encounter a great number of unclarities, methodological errors, and, by many existing conceptualisations, what we could call 'conceptual confusion' (Gilbert and Mohseni 2011). Precisely for that reason, it is imperative to open this analysis with a discussion on the development of these concepts and our perception of its content as well as usefulness. In the second, empirical part of this article, we will then test if understanding 'hybrid regimes' as a 'meta-concept' on real-life cases from the Central and Eastern Europe (in particular, Hungary) is useful. The concept is here applied in accordance to its name, as the 'grey area of regimes' in which we believe the analysed countries can be found, albeit in different measure, form and character, and manifestations of particular features subjected to analysis.

## 2 THE PHENOMENON OF 'HYBRID REGIMES' AND ITS GENEALOGY IN ACADEMICAL RESEARCH

As pointed out by L. Diamond, before the disintegration of the bipolar constellation, there were periods when determining whether a given state was a democracy or not was relatively easy. Alternatively, at least, there was more or less a universal consensus about the appropriate answer (Diamond 2002, 21). Nevertheless, as was mentioned in the introduction of this article, with the disintegration of the bipolar world order and the fading away of the third wave of democratisation (Huntington 1991) a plethora of new regimes emerged, which are impossible to categorise under the existing classical typologies easily.

Although the term 'hybrid regimes' appeared in literature at the turn of the 80s and 90s of the 20th century, predominantly due to the study of T. L. Karl focused on El Salvador (Karl 1995), the discussion about regimes that stand somewhere 'in between' started much earlier. For instance, the concept of the 'quasi-democracy' proposed by S. Finer or the concept of the 'near polyarchy' created by classical author R. Dahl (Dahl 1971). The actual term 'hybrid regime' is preceded by the concept of so-called 'weakened authoritarianism' (*dictablanda*) and 'weakened democracy' (*democratura*) (Schmitter and O'Donnell 1986), which originated from the analysis of Latin American states. As L. Diamond points out, the existence of a multiparty configuration originating from the electoral systems in South American countries shows that evidence of authoritarianism was not foreign even in the era of the 60s and 70s (Diamond 2002, 23).

Before we launch into the effort to present the evolution of 'hybrid regime' research, it is necessary to focus on the term 'regime' itself and the question of how to perceive it within the analysis. The cornerstone here is the precise separation of this unit of analysis from the state itself which quite often presents an arduous task for political scientists. As V. Dvořáková, R. Buben and J. Němec (2012, 45) bring to attention, 'in political science we encounter moments, where the types of states are arbitrarily interchanged, and there is a lack of agreement on whether particular characteristics belong to the state or the regime'. The development in the perception of this term hampered its application and many authors brought into the discussion individually adapted concepts, which were to a certain degree in contradiction or lost their usefulness or applicability over time. It is thus necessary to examine the current situation around the term 'regime', especially when studying hybrid regimes. From all the possible definitions we selected the one created by L. Morlino, who defines a regime in a way which is applicable for this text also when it comes to the empirical part: 'as regards the term "regime", consideration will be given here to "the set of government institutions and norms that are either formalized or are informally recognized as existing in a given territory and respect to a given population"' (Morlino 2010, 29). We have to point out though, that the nature of the 'hybrid regime' lies particularly in the relationship between the formal and informal functioning of a regime and its institutions (Karl 1995).

One of the fundamental theoretical and methodological problems that the current analysis of regimes had to address was the determination of the boundaries where, so to say, 'one regime' (or concept) ends, and where it begins. Considering that the examined regimes can be located on the spectrum from 'liberal democracy' to 'authoritarianism', it is necessary to define these limit points. T. L. Karl and P. Schmitter tackled this task in their text 'What democracy

is... and is not' (1991), which not only fits the given period but can also be directly applied to the analysis of regimes. The authors lay down eleven basic conditions which must be present in order to consider this regime from the functional perspective as a democracy (Karl and Schmitter 1991, 107). We regard this text to be a contribution to the academic debate, which is more empirically bearing than the never-ending discussion on which the definition is fundamental when it comes to the future research and the debate itself.<sup>5</sup> However, as J. Bílek reminds us, pointing towards the work of G. Goertz (2006), in order to present a methodologically 'untainted' concept in social sciences, it is necessary to define both ends of the spectrum. That is, every concept should dispose of both a positive definition (democracy) and a negative one (authoritarianism) (Bílek 2015, 219).

On the foundation of the facts mentioned earlier, there are two possible approaches to grasping hybrid regimes from a theoretical standpoint. The first one is dichotomous, which perceives a hybrid regime as an 'incomplete' democracy or 'incomplete' authoritarianism. Between these concepts, we can categorise for example the text of Levitsky and Way (2010), but also as a particular predecessor the approach of P. Schmitter and G. O'Donnell (1986) mentioned above. If we want to examine hybrid regimes as a specific and independent type of regime, it is logically necessary to employ a trichotomous approach, in which we introduce the term 'hybrid regime' next to terms of 'democracy' and 'authoritarianism'. Between these seminal works that inspired this approach, we see as an initiative the contribution of T. L. Karl (1995) and (Bílek 2015, 215).

### 3 HYBRID REGIMES AS A 'META-CONCEPT'

Due to the methodological complexity that we mentioned before, and primarily due to the variability, we believe that it is prudent to regard hybrid regimes as a 'meta-concept'. This is because, despite all the doubts about its applicability, we can say that the particular subtypes can be incorporated in this concept in full length, no matter if one or the other approach is chosen. It is then only up to the researcher which of the specific approaches they will employ in the empirical research. They can understand hybrid regimes as weakened types of the outside points of the spectrum democracy, thus authoritarianism. Or they may employ the trichotomy variant and perceive a 'hybrid regime' as a distinctive category as does, for example, the inspiring text of J. Bílek (2015). In both cases, there are concepts we can see as attempts to deal with the 'grey zone' (Carothers 2002), and we can label them 'hybrid', yet with a higher degree of abstractions and a higher degree of analytical units.

At the turn of the century the approach towards terms related to 'hybrid regimes' started to change and instead the so-called 'adjective democracies' (Merkel 2004; Zakaria 1997; Collier and Levitsky 2007) and other concepts based on the adjective 'authoritarianism' started to appear (Schedler 2006; Schedler 2013; Levitsky and Way 2010). This was caused by the fact that political science research started to emphasise authoritarian aspects and tendencies rather than democratic ones, which were logically in high demand after the disintegration of the bipolar world division (Gilbert and Mohseni 2011, 273). As R. Brooker mentions (2014, 35), this approach is based on a disillusion of sorts which

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<sup>5</sup> A great explanation on possible interpretations of democracy, various definitions and their application are present in the works of Š. Drahoukoupil (2014) and J. Bílek (2015).



appeared in the relationship towards the reality of numerous unsuccessful transitions, starting with the disintegration of the eastern bloc and linked to the ablation of the third wave of democracy. To a certain degree, this approach influenced the entire subsequent discourse as well as the consideration of regimes in 'the grey zone' and it shifted the debate into its current shape, in which adjective authoritarianism prevails over adjective democracies.

The next question which needs to be addressed when analysing 'hybrid regimes' is the matter of their origin. Due to the fact that as the first decade of the 21st century drew to an end, about 30% of the world's states (containing about one third of the world's population (Morlino 2010, 28)) were categorized under the 'meta-concept' of 'hybrid regimes', it is clear that the mere assumption of cultural and geographical (or regional) fragmentation brings more trajectories and feasible points of origins of hybrid regimes. However, T. Carothers mentions that there is one facet that newly emerged regimes share, which is a general movement 'away from dictatorial rule toward more liberal and often more democratic governance' (Carothers 2002, 6). This was certainly true in the period when T. Carothers introduced his text (2002). However, that reality changed with the polycrisis, as will be delineated in the following part of this text. These foundations and suppositions then contribute to the dispersion of research and the lack of its embeddedness as E. Baracani (2010) points out in *Democratization and Hybrid Regimes: International Anchoring and Domestic Dynamics in European Post-Soviet States*. While the last four decades of the 20th century are characteristic for the number of democratic regimes rising across regions, the first decade of the 21st century is to a certain degree its reversal, which political scientists, including Carothers, could not have anticipated. The increase in democratic regimes has stopped and, on the contrary, we see certain indications of their 'erosion' (Baracani 2010, 1). This is exactly why it is necessary to focus on the situation in Central and Eastern Europe, in which this matter is a direct concern.

From the theoretical standpoint, there are several elementary variations on the emergence of a 'hybrid regime'. For Central and Eastern Europe which is studied in this paper, the most important variation appears to be those that can be labelled 'weakening' of the limit points of the continuum: democracy and authoritarianism. Specifically, the weakening of democratic institutions and (to a certain degree) the demand for this process, the character of the given regimes necessarily changes by the fact which became elected representatives. The political regimes in this instance go through the process of de-democratisation (see Nef and Reiter 2009; Szymański 2017; Bogaards 2018). The fact is that the 'wild' transformation which followed the dissolution of the Soviet bloc contributed very little to aid the establishment of a high quality 'participative political culture' in the sense of the comparative study by G. Almond and S. Verba (1989).<sup>6</sup> The shift from liberal democracy towards certain 'hybridity' is also addressed by L. Morlino (2010, 46), who points out that this can lead towards a type which he calls 'democracy without law' or 'democracy without state' and adds this category to the typology of hybrid regimes based on three criteria.

In the presented text we thus understand hybrid regimes as a 'meta-concept' of sorts, which includes many sub-conceptualisations which manifest on the continuum between democracy and authoritarianism and we, therefore, employ a dichotomous approach, albeit with a full understanding of its methodological unclarities. Simultaneously, we believe that a trichotomous approach would be too restrictive in its application on the realities of the analysed regimes,

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<sup>6</sup> The study *Civic Culture* was originally published in 1963.

especially when we consider the different intensity of the explored characteristics and their effects within the regimes.

#### 4 THE 'GREY ZONE OF REGIMES': REFLECTING ON THE CONCEPT OF T. CAROTHERS

One of the goals of this article is to introduce T. Carothers's concept of hybrid regimes. The seminal work of T. Carothers will thus be the focus of the following section. We consider this approach to be conducive especially in the context of Central and Eastern Europe and the large dynamic in the development of the character of regimes in this region. Simultaneously it overlaps with the concept which we are presenting when it comes to the application of the concept of 'hybrid regimes' on the empirical research of the transformation of regimes in Central and Eastern Europe. This concept views 'hybrid regimes' as a 'meta-concept', an analytical unit, whose subcategories are the partial conceptualisations originating from seminal authors, such as L. Diamond (2002), S. Levitsky and L. Way (2010), Gilbert and Mohseni (2011), Merkel (2004) and A. Schedler (2006, 2013). In this case, we believe that Carothers's view and conceptualisation of the 'regimes of the grey zone' is (despite many partial methodological shortcomings) the best applicable concept in explaining 'hybrid regimes' as a 'meta-concept'.

As Š. Drahokoupil writes (2014), the proliferation of different concepts at the end of the last millennium reached a state where an actual 'labyrinth of hybrid regimes' emerged. These concepts are often built on such a different foundation that they become conflicting and contradictory (Gilbert and Mohseni 2011, 272), even though the debate is still on the 'hybrid regimes'. That is part of the reason why we decided to employ the concept of T. Carothers, who surpasses these 'conceptual battles' as an analytical unit in its essence. It is not the goal to delineate the exact 'borders' or boundaries of liberal democracy or authoritarianism, and for this reason we do not try to define these ideal types on the limits of the continuum. Additionally, we do not perceive 'hybrid regime' as a 'distinctive category of political regimes' or an 'Independent Type of Political Regime' like Bílek (2015), although we consider his text to be one of the most crucial contributions to the methodological and theoretical debates on 'hybrids'.

As we mentioned before, the concept of T. Carothers is one of the most used and quoted. The so-called 'grey zone' of regimes, a term which Carothers came up with (2002) explains many things, yet it cannot tackle all the challenges that the study of 'hybrid regimes' comes with. The concept is built on a comparative-historical approach. It compares and presents the transformations of the characters of political regimes between the 70s and 90s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The author mentions the trends in seven different regions, which lead to a critical redrawing of the political landscape (ibid., 5). In this foundation, he tries to point out that the differences between individual cases are so significant that it is entirely redundant to introduce the 'transition paradigm' into the classification of 'hybrid regimes'. This paradigm is defined in five points and, Carothers states originated from the pressure from government, quasi-government and non-governmental groups in the US in the 80s when any change of regime was seen, interpreted and presented as 'democratic transition'. This paradigm became the main analytical framework. As Carothers also mentions, 'high-level officials were regularly referring to the worldwide democratic revolution' (ibid., 6).

As a part of his definition of 'transition paradigm', Carothers introduces five fundamental suppositions, from which he proceeds. The first one is crucial, as it sponsors all the others. According to Carothers, every state which is on the trajectory from dictatorship to a more liberal form of government can be seen as a regime in transition 'toward democracy'. This situation can be observed especially in the 90s (ibid., 6). Carothers also reflects on what was occurring during the research of 'hybrid regimes' themselves, namely that the demand for democratic regimes also forms the academic discourse. The second requirement which is formed by the whole 'transitional paradigm', is the reality that the process of democratisation on its own is created by certain phases, which are defined as 'opening', 'breakthrough' and 'consolidation'. The regimes then linearly go through these phases. As the third, Carothers sees the belief in the decisive power of elections (ibid., 7). The fourth is the specific environment in which the transition takes place: the level of economics, own history, form of institutions and other structures. However, to these he does not attribute too much value. The fifth prerequisite of the whole paradigm is the notion that the process of democratisation takes place only in fully institutionalised consolidated states (ibid., 8–9).

Carothers then calls for abandoning the paradigm defined in this way while defining political regimes and their research. His text functions as a criticism of these suppositions, where he mentions that only 20 out of 100 states that were at that time seen as "in transition" can today be perceived as democratic. In the group of such democratised states stands especially the region of Central Europe. On the other hand are the failures primarily in East Asia and Latin America (ibid., 9). Naturally, we must mention that the text of Carothers was published in 2002, so his assumptions about the nature of a regime in these regions, including the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, may not be current. Nevertheless, that does not hamper the usage of his concept as a 'surpassing' approach as a 'meta-concept' as we perceive it, linked to the theoretical view of hybrids as such. An interesting fact is that Carothers did not assume that a different trajectory in the development of specific regimes would take place. He does not mention in his text that a consolidated democracy can be 'weakened' to such a degree that its character would be changed and the regime would fall into the 'grey area'.

Carothers, when it comes to building his conceptualisation, is not dealing with an exact delineation of the characteristics of regimes in the 'grey zone', which lowers the intensity of this concept on the ladder of abstraction. However, he avoids many methodological problems when operationalising his terms. However, he tries to describe what he called 'broad political syndromes' (ibid., 10) which he finds specifically where regimes in the 'grey zone' are concerned.

Firstly, he mentions so-called 'feckless pluralism', which manifests within countries and regimes that have a relatively high degree of political freedom, alternation of governmental structures between subjects with different political opinions and uninfluenced elections. Simultaneously, though, we can find defects in the basic democratic system, as it is a minimal degree of civic participation outside of elections or perceiving elites as corrupt or 'rotten'. This is also based on the fact that the civil service does not function efficiently, and it is not capable of supplementing the function of primary institutions related to healthcare, education or other services (ibid., 10– 11).

The second of the 'political syndromes' is the so-called 'dominant-power politics'. The regimes in the 'grey zone' do show evidence of political competition; however, with certain limitations. Those appear in the existence of a movement,

party, family grouping or a specific leader who dominates over the system to such a degree that the probability of alternation reaches zero. Simultaneously, and distinctively to the regimes functioning with 'feckless pluralism', the governing structures to a certain degree merge with the state. Therefore, the elections cannot be labelled objective and untainted. However, governing structures are trying, especially for the eyes of the international community, to evoke this image to gain broader support, while 'bending' the whole electoral arena (ibid., 11–12). Although Carothers attributes a certain degree of 'stability' to the regimes with both 'syndromes', he points out at the same time that it is not easy to achieve a successful transition to liberal democracy. In the first case mentioned, the political structures respect some rules not in direct contradiction with the essence of liberalism. However, the power is passed from one to each other and back, and they are entirely separated from civil society. For the second time, the governing elites allow opposition only to the degree that they can resist the pressures from society (ibid., 13–14).

Carothers thus comes up with an approach that does not have the goal within the period we focus on to create clear typologies of regimes and to be categorised into a specific scheme. Instead, he notices two levels that manifest with the group of regimes in the 'grey zone' and separates them with clear functional differences which are the essence of their existence. In the very end of his text, Carothers completely rejects the 'Transition paradigm' as a product of a time restricted period and at that time points out and demands the necessity to employ different work and analytical frameworks in the context of the research of 'grey zone' regimes than as was done until then with the 'transition paradigm' (ibid., 200). In order to put all abovementioned theory into practice in the broader context, it is necessary to emphasise the particularities of democratisation in Central-Eastern Europe in the opening of the empirical part of this text.

## 5 THE SPECIFICS OF DEMOCRATISATION IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

To understand how and why the apparently increasingly consolidated democracies of Central Europe began to crumble, we first need to understand what the particularities of their democratisation were. For that reason, we summarize the discussion on the democratisation of the post-communist states.

The discussion on the democratisation of countries of the post-communist area is from its beginnings linked to several important questions. Among the most significant is the question of whether and to what degree the former communist states present specific situations incomparable to the democratisation of 'standard' non-democratic or, to be exact, authoritarian regimes. Political scientists relatively quickly agreed that communism had such specific consequences that the democratisation of these states would be completely different compared to those of other states. Noteworthy, for example, is the concept of 'triple transition' introduced by Clause Offe, which highlights the necessity of change in three dimensions: the democracy, the market and the stateness (Offe 1991). In some cases, this has been extended by a fourth dimension, the nation, and therefore formed 'the quadruple transition' (see e.g., Kuzio 2001). From the beginning, scholars have simultaneously strived to find the key to separate post-communist countries into two or more groups. This was supposed to show evidence of different prerequisites when the anticipated velocity, as well as the intensity of democratisation, is considered.

In the first analyses that focused predominantly on Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria and in some instances also on the specific case of the German Democratic Republic, or to be precise on the area of former eastern Germany, it was expected that transforming countries would face 'certain negative effects in the short term. This includes higher inflation, unemployment, social mobility, pressure on workers etc.' (Di Cortona 1991, 327). It was also expected that differences among post-socialist countries existed with regard to the prospects of transition. 'For Hungary, Czechoslovakia, East Germany and Poland it will be easier to overcome these problems: because of the role that West will assure; because certain innovative elements had already been introduced into the economic system in the past (Hungary, but also Poland); because of the tradition of an industrial capitalist economy (Czechoslovakia and Germany)' (Di Cortona 1991, 327).

Di Cortona used the economic situation as the main point of view. Samuel P. Huntington, in his seminal contribution, used another standpoint which leads to the same result. Huntington chose the countries from the third wave of democratisation based on some democratic experience before World War II. The same group of countries was formed in this case (Huntington 1991, 271). Huntington saw East Germany as extremely favourable, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland as quite favourable for the relatively quick and successful democratisation. Romania and Bulgaria were contrariwise named as indifferent or unfavourable (Huntington 1991, 273).

A very significant contribution to the elaboration on the division of the post-communist area was made by Hungarian political scientist Attila Ágh in his book *The Politics in Central Europe* (1998). Ágh argued that the development in the first decade after the Iron Curtain fell clearly shows that in the post-communistic area we can distinguish two ideal types of countries: 1) the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, in which the transition can be perceived as re-democratisation, and 2) the countries of the Balkans, which ought to undergo a 'complete' democratisation process (Ágh 1998, 7). He thus follows Huntington's idea of certain democratic experiences from the period before the emergence of the non-democratic Soviet-type regime. The extraordinarily bad performance of countries established after the disintegration of Tito's Yugoslavia lead without doubt to Ágh's relatively optimistic conclusions about the countries of the Visegrad group. The development after 2008, however, constitutes an important turning point in the sense of (de)consolidation, both in the development of post-communistic countries of Central and Eastern Europe and regarding the social science analysis. This development is very often called the backsliding of democracy interconnected with the growth of populism and de-Europeanization (Ágh 2016; Szymański 2017). After two decades of optimism, interrupted only by 'partial deviations'<sup>7</sup> political science had to return to the beginning of the debate on perspectives of democracy in post-communist area.

In connection to this, many authors returned to older sociological or interdisciplinary analyses, which in the beginning of the 1990s had already identified crucial structural differences between countries of Central and Eastern Europe and countries of Western Europe. These were in regard to either their heritage of communism, or to more long-term divergence or, to be precise, an insufficient convergence between two European macro-regions. Polish historian

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<sup>7</sup> Ethnical conflicts in post-Yugoslavia or, to be precise, the post-soviet area, Meliorism in Slovakia, issues with developing the rule of law in Bulgaria and Romania, which delayed the entrance of both states into the EU.

Piotr Wandycz (2001) points towards the century-long closing of the cultural-civilisation gap, which is discernible between Central and Eastern Europe and the Western part of the continent. The development after 1989 the author understands primarily as the 'final' act in this process (Wandycz 2001, 21). Other authors suggest that the modernisation of Central and Eastern Europe took place in the period of communism, but also in previous periods, only partially, insufficiently and in a twisted manner. Piotr Sztompka (1993) talks about false modernity, while the Slovenian sociologist Ivan Bernik saw Central and Eastern European societies as sub-modern, characterised by only partial and insufficient modernisation (Bernik 2000). Besides, this false modernisation was conducted top-down, and thus as a dictate of modernistic intellectual and partially also political elites. This goes for most of the societies in Central and Eastern Europe, perhaps with the exception of regions where modernisation according to the German model were implemented sooner, as in the case of the Czech Republic, particularly among the elites of larger cities.

Tucker (2015, 14-74), regarding the discussion in Central and Eastern Europe, stated that the CEE countries still struggle with the legacies of the previous epoch (communist, but also older), such as economic backwardness, 'rough justice' and the backstage impact of the post-totalitarian elite.<sup>8</sup> Tucker and other authors emphasise the pragmatism of late-communistic elites as one of the key motivational factors for the change of the regimes. 'Democracy in post-totalitarian Central and Eastern Europe was the unintended consequence of the adjustment of the rights of the late-totalitarian elite to its interests' (Tucker 2015, 22). In the late-totalitarian regimes 'egoism and manipulate opportunism' were encouraged. The main interest of the late totalitarian elites became to survive, i.e. to maintain the control. Thus, Tucker presents regime changes as 'spontaneous adjustments of the rights of the late totalitarian elite to its interests, its liberation, the transmutation of its naked liberties into rights, most significantly, property rights' (Tucker 2015, 22). This approach is very similar to that of the Czech sociologist Ivo Možný. As Možný (1991) demonstrated in his analysis focusing on the collapse of the Communist regime in Czechoslovakia *Why so easy?* (Proč tak snadno?), the group of unsatisfied citizens included a significant majority of the population, but that the most important and driving groups were economically motivated individuals and groups, both from the official and semi-official structures. In this sense, the *homo economicus* had already dominated over *homo sovieticus* before the transition.

Kamiński and Kurczewska (1994) recognise the volatile nature of the post-Communist political elite which overtakes the state institutions in order to realise their own goals and are not prepared to serve the whole society. The electoral changes in government then often mean only the exchange between two political or individual actors with the same goals. This characteristic of political elites in new democracies naturally raises the question of the 'rootedness' of the democratic structure or, to be precise, its changes. It seems that with the first, more distinct crisis, which came after 2008, democratic structures began to crumble. The socioeconomic crisis led to the transformation regression not only in the economy but also in politics (weakness of liberalism and growth of populism). Without welfare, essential parts of the societies in CEE do not support the liberal democracy to the degree which would be able to maintain the quality

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<sup>8</sup> Of course, it can be (and was in the scholarly debate) pointed out that the concepts of 'totalitarianism' do not present a legitimate tool for the study of regimes. It needs to be acknowledged at this point that the authors of this text do not acquiesce to the use of the term 'totalitarianism' themselves, however understand the value of the works of A. Tucker (2015). Instead, authors use more neutral term 'non-democratic regime of the Soviet type'.

of democracy and the democratically functional state. Tucker argues with Ágh, and his beliefs that Central and Eastern European countries had more potential to build democracy. According to Tucker, it is presently more than clear that the legacy of communism is stronger than the legacy of democracy.

Ágh, the prominent defender of the basic positive attitude towards the democratisation of Central and Eastern Europe, follows Tucker's somewhat sceptical approach. In his latest work(s) Ágh (2018b, 31) recognises that CEE underwent radical changes in the last decade and this matter of fact 'necessitate a radical reconceptualization'. In his opinion, three important phases or steps can offer the explanation of the divergence of CEE states from the EU mainstreams development: (1) the absolute 'civilizational' (socio-economic and cultural) deficit before the accession and the emerging relative institutional deficit after the accession (this notion brings us back to the scepticism presented in Sztompka's or Bernik's work), (2) the growing gap between the formal-legal external Europeanization and the substantive internal Europeanization, (3) the concluding de-Europeanization with de-democratization.

Ágh believes that at least some CEE countries reached the formally consolidated democracy, but in the last decade some of them underwent the interconnected processes of democratic deconstruction (backsliding) and started opposing the liberally rooted European integration process. Let us acknowledge that Fukuyama (1995) defines four areas where the consolidation of democracy must occur, namely ideology (normative beliefs), institutions, civil society, and culture. The cultural level labelled in his essay's title as primary symbolises the 'deepest level' including 'phenomena such as family structure, religion, moral values, ethnic consciousness, 'civic-ness', and particularistic historical traditions'. If we generally evaluate the development in CEE in the named categories or areas, deficiencies or paradigmatic differences might be observed in all four. Regarding ideology, liberalism has to compete with nationally and ethnically rooted populism and anti-liberalism, democratic institutions are weak, civil society is limited on small parts of society, and often we observe string 'bad civil societies' (Chambers and Kopstein 2001; Fehr 2016). According to Tucker, one of the biggest problems and failures of the transition in the given region was the establishment of liberal institutions. The 'small illiberalism' at the very beginning, the scarcity of justice that has not been remedied, led to corrupt political democracy and to the larger populist illiberalism that emerged following the economic recession. The aforementioned issues and deficits of Central-European and Eastern-European regimes which underwent the transition, would suggest that these regimes showed or are showing deficiencies which could be the reason to label them differently than consolidated democracies. For instance, in his book *Post-communism and democracy (Postkomunismus a demokracie)* Kubát labelled new democracies consolidated, semi-consolidated and not-consolidated (Kubát 2003, 27). It is possible of course that specific countries can move through these categories. Slovakia, for example, is in Kubát's book classified as a semi-consolidated democracy, while Hungary, on the contrary, is classified as consolidated.<sup>9</sup> The question, however, is if one of the Kubát's categories (most probably non-consolidated democracies) can be perceived as an equivalent of the 'grey zone of regimes' (Carothers 2002) or, to be precise, of 'hybrid regimes' as the 'meta-concept' in the sense of how authors of this text see it. Kubát's approach, while similar to the that of Heydemann and Vodička in their comparative analysis of ten years earlier, suggests more linear perception in

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<sup>9</sup> We point out that Kubát wrote his text basically in the same time (2003) as Carothers (2002), so the contemplation of a certain de-democratisation in Central Europe and Eastern Europe was not current.

which the countries can gradually move 'up'. However, it does not really count on the possibility of digressing to 'lower' qualitative types of democracy, not dissimilarly to the above-analysed text of Carothers (2002).

On the other hand, Merkel et al. (2006) base their work on the thesis that 'imperfect' or in other words 'less-than-fully democratic regimes' can very often develop from consolidated or, to be precise, liberally-democratic regimes. This approach would be fully in agreement with the concept of de-democratisation and with the dynamics and movement of a higher degree of democracy towards the worsening of the measured indicators, specifically, the weakening of (some) building blocks of liberal democracy. According to Carothers, (2002, 11–12) we would surely discover within the given region the 'syndrome' of 'dominant-power politics' which in his text he stated as one of the symptoms of non-liberality of democracy and confirmation that these regimes belong in the grey zone of regimes. Let us turn our attention now to the case of Hungary, and how such democratic digression can take place in reality and to which degree the Hungarian case can be used for the application of hybrid regimes.

## 6 HUNGARY: THE ROLE MODEL OR AN EXEMPLARY CASE?

Hungary was, together with the Czech Republic, Poland and, from the second half of the 1990s, Estonia and Slovenia considered to be one of the most significant successes of liberalisation and subsequent democratisation of the communist regime in Central and Eastern Europe. In 1997 these countries were placed in the so-called Luxembourg group, through which the EU gave them the statute of countries that within the group of new democracies belong to the most consolidated, i.e. liberal, democracies. The positive assessment of Hungary in comparison to other countries of Central and Eastern Europe was in this case apparent, even in comparison to partners from the Visegrad group. The electoral successes of the League of Polish Families in the elections for the EU parliament in 2004 or the strongly Euro-sceptic tendencies of Vaclav Klaus as the leader of the Civic Democratic Party or the president of Czech Republic (for comparison see Cabada 2016) raised in the first decade of the 21st century discussions about the rootedness of liberal democracy.

The developments after 2006, connected with the crisis of legitimacy of the ruling socialist party, and especially the long-term economic populism of both major parties led in Hungary to a state of 'chaotic democracy as labelled by Ágh (2018a, 149). Ágh also stresses the 'too high expectations from the new democratic system' mentioning that 'this over-expectation could have been higher than in other ECE countries since Hungary was a much more open country in the 1980s than the others'. Thus, the populist rhetoric and policies of both main political camps (social-liberal and national-conservative) were rooted in social populism as the general trend in the Hungarian development. 's the general picture about the Hungarian developments, the economic and political systemic changes have generated social deconsolidation, with a huge contrast between the formal democratisation and the substantive, performance democracy, as well as with the social exclusion of large masses from the achievements of democratisation' (Ágh 2018a, 143–144). It is important to mention that the inner consolidation of the Hungarian regime was only illusory. The scandal with falsifying statistical data and key economic indicators weakened the legitimacy of the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSzP) after 2006, just as the mobilisation of the insufficiently developed civil society by Fidesz, who demanded new pre-term elections, strongly disrupted the democratic character of the regime and opened the way



for questioning the qualities of liberal democracy. The question remains to what degree the quality of the democracy was real or whether it was only a façade of the regime. Here we could refer to the concept of 'hybrid regimes' of T. L. Karl (1995), who was the first scholar use the term 'hybrid regimes' in the field of political science research, and whose work strongly emphasises relationship between 'formal versus informal' functioning of the regime T. L. Karl strongly emphasises.

The super-mixed electoral system, which since 1990 was characterised by its balance of power between two strong political currents, worked in reverse in the situation of strong dissatisfaction of big social groups and the fatal weakening of one of two big political parties, as it even strengthened its effects in the majoritarian part (comp. Charvát 2008). On the other hand, based on the combination of two essential criteria (the scores of executives-parties' dimensions, and the dimension of the federal vs. the unitary state) by 2010 Hungary had already become the most majoritarian case in the group of new democracies in Central and Eastern Europe (Bernauer and Vatter 2012, 461). The absolute victory of the national-conservative formation Fidesz in the 2010 parliamentary elections thus marked an important turning point in the development, which came at the time of long-term inter- and intra- crises linked to fiscal and economic issues as well as institutional difficulties in the EU. According to Ágh, (2018a, 149) with this 'began the transition to the authoritarian rule and its political system was reduced to a defective, Potemkin or façade democracy'. Here it is important to point out why the authors understand 'hybrid regimes' as a 'meta-concept' and why it is methodologically imperative when employing other concepts to analyse the character of any studied regime, because many authors work with pre-existing terms arbitrarily without more specific conceptualisation and the understanding of the original concepts. The transformations of the character of Hungarian regimes are, however, non-debatable. For example, J. Charvát (2018, 81-82) labels the development in Hungary after the 2010 parliamentary elections 'absolute reconstruction of the political system'. It is necessary, however, to consider and acknowledge the fact that the complete change of the political system alone does not always have to include the change of the character of the political regime. Among the most important changes he lists the general centralization of power, state regulation of mass media, strengthening the competencies of the general state attorney, abolition of the citizens' competence to refer to the Constitutional Court regarding the inquiry of new legal acts, the general weakening of the Constitutional Court or the purposeful changing of the law about the election of members of parliament. Shortly written, Fidesz: 'by far the largest and the best organized Eurosceptic party in ECE that issued ambiguous declarations and "double talk" on the EU at home in order to keep also the anti-EU voters among their supporters' (Ágh 2018a, 145). Thus, they decomposed the system of checks and balances. As important tools for such decomposition the new Constitution as well as new electoral law are labelled, but also the creation of new institutions with 'tutelary' character. The new Fundamental Law of Hungary ('one-party constitution') took effect on 1 January 2012. Essentially, it was not discussed with the opposition nor within Fidesz itself, where no major debate took place. Landau (2013), in his assessment of the new Hungarian constitution, compares both the text, and the way of its application with such nations like Egypt or Venezuela as examples of 'abusive constitutionalism' and attempt to establish a 'competitive authoritarian regime' (ibid.).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> We have to mention that the compared units (the states in the Middle East and in Latin America) have completely different (non)democratic backgrounds than countries of Central Europe, such as Hungary.

From the standpoint of the transformation of the regime's character into one showing evidence of 'hybrid', we see signs in the new constitution that help the petrification of the position of Fidesz, regardless of the electoral result. Fidesz took control of key institutions with their people:

- New Media council composed of five members, four of whom were selected by the parliamentary commission exclusively composed of Fidesz, the head of the Council was directly appointed by Prime Minister Orbán. All five members are appointed for a 9-year term (Boogards 2018, 1487).
- After the adoption of the new electoral law, the new national electoral committee was established in 2013. Its seven members were appointed for nine years (Charvát 2018, 93).
- Another example is the Budget Council composed of three members. The head was appointed by the Prime Minister, two members elected by the qualified majority in the parliament; i.e. all of them are Fidesz representatives. The terms of Budget Council members are 6, 9 and 12 years, i.e. the first member should be re-elected no sooner than 6 years. Significant is above all the competence of this new institution: 'The Budget Council can veto the national annual budget adopted by the parliament can fit adds to the national debt. If parliament fails to agree on the budget by the end of March of each year, the president can dissolve parliament and call new elections' (Boogards 2018, 1489).

A crucial legislative element for building the new political regime in Hungary is also the new electoral law. Based on Charvát (2018, 88–95) there did not exist any objective reasons for the electoral reform; between 1990 and 2010 the majoritarian government/coalition was created easily after each election. We must emphasise, though, that after the 2002 elections Fidesz was not able to form a coalition, although they increased the number of mandates compared to 1998–2002. This moment then is often considered to be the reason for the radicalisation of the party (Boskor 2018, 556). Nevertheless, the electoral reform was not discussed with the opposition; as in all other cases of legislative change, Fidesz used the method of 'rolling' against the opposition. Clear and extensive use of gerrymandering may be observed in the process of reducing the number of electoral districts for the majoritarian part of the electoral system from 176 to 106. Also, the change from the two-round to first-past-the-post system rewards the dominant actor – Fidesz. Let us stress that it's not just the elections that create a 'supermajority' that is important, but much more the 'subsequent elections, in which incumbents made extensive use of their advantage. Hungary's particular super-majoritarianism (since 2010) means that Fidesz can change the constitution or appoint the people to the judiciary, electoral, or media bodies without the participation of the opposition' (Szymański 2018; Pozsár-Szentmiklósy 2017).

Again, the new electoral law was introduced by Fidesz 'without meaningful discussion in parliament, without consultation, and without the support of opposition' (Boogards 2018, 1485) and the new electoral system gave a clear competitive advantage to Fidesz (Charvát 2018). Boogards (2018, 1489) concludes that 'Fidesz might lose elections but can hold power through the counter-majoritarian institutions it created, the long-term appointments it made to key positions, and the policies it enshrined in the constitution and cardinal laws.'

As presented, with the fundamental transformation of the legal pillars, unfair electoral law and by taking over the monopoly of the public, and dominance in private, media Fidesz ensured control over the important segments of the

systemic architecture. Also, the increasing pressure on civil society organisations, NGOs, etc. has to be stressed. Furthermore, Fidesz has developed the system of pseudo- or quasi-NGOs and also built 'an extended system state corporatism through state-controlled organisations for all public employees with mandatory memberships, and also, the state-directed social movements have been organised into the fake civil society' (Ágh 2018a, 150). A quantitative analysis of Bertelsmann's transformation index following the development in Hungary in the last decade clearly showed that 'all indicators except the one for tutelary democracy register decline over time' ... Hungary today is seen as a defective democracy according to the BTI' (Bogaards 2018, 1485).

In the context of our analysis we consider Hungary to be a 'hybrid regime' in the sense of abovementioned theoretical approach; that is, in application of 'hybrid regimes' as an umbrella 'meta-concept' under which we can categorize an infinite number of conceptualisations, which in wider analysis deal with 'grey zone of regimes' (Carothers 2002). Precisely, this was the reason why the text of T. Carothers was chosen for a deeper analysis and the subsequent application on the examination of the specific region.

## 7 CONCLUSIONS

All the analysed steps of the ruling party Fidesz, which show evidence of their antiliberal and populist character, together with the monopoly position of Viktor Orbán, logically lead to considerations about the nature of Hungarian political regime that is to the question about its definition and character. Logically we can move both in the dichotomy on the continuum democracy vs. authoritarianism as well as (reflecting on the aims of our text) primarily linked to the possible 'hybrid' character of the regime and concepts, which we perceive as an analytical unit under the umbrella 'meta-concept' of 'hybrid regimes' as such.

As Bogaards (2018, 1482) emphasises 'there is no scholarly consensus on how to characterize Hungary's contemporary regime' The author also points out that the most pessimist scholars use labels such as 'onset of autocratic, crypto-dictatorial trends', 'semi-dictatorship', 'semi-authoritarianism' or 'elected democracy', with other authors using less negative terms such as 'deconsolidation of democracy', 'democratic backsliding', 'simulated democracy', 'populist democracy', 'selective democracy' or 'diminished form of democracy'; often the adjective 'illiberal' is used (Bogaards 2018; Ádám and Bozóki 2016; Batory 2016). All of these concepts are perceived by the authors of this text as a weakening of democracy to the degree where the regime can be perceived as 'hybrid'.

Bogaards himself (2018, 1482) states that 'Hungary is a deviant *and* exemplary case'. "Orbán has built a diffusely defective democracy weakening democracy across the board but being careful, so far, not to cross the line with autocracy in any of democracy's partial regimes" (Bogaards 2018, 1492). Exactly here we see the construction of a 'phased autocracy' for the 'international audience', which presents one of the prominent features of 'hybrid regimes'. According to Bogaards, thus Orbán pays careful attention so that Hungary does not become 'obvious' authoritarian but maintained in the position of a certain 'illiberal democracy'. At the same time, however, the author clearly points out to the fact that Hungary today is not a functioning democracy and he does not see a perspective in which it could become one: 'Since many of the democratic defects have been constitutionally entrenched, it is difficult to see how an alternation in power – already unlikely in itself – can restore Hungary to a functioning

democracy' (Bogaards 2018, 1491). On the other hand, Ágh (2018a, 138) clearly states that Hungary is on its way to authoritarianism: "The Hungarian case is an "ideal type" or the worst scenario of the decline of democracy and the transition to the authoritarian system in ECE".

The quite significant discord between the two experts, in similar matter as the general terminological diffusion when trying to name the current Hungarian regime thus open the space for using 'hybrid regimes' in the widest possible matter, that is, as a 'meta-concept', which in our view overlaps with the above analysed definition from the works of T. Carothers (2002), of 'grey zone of regimes'. Here Hungary is joined by several other regimes in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as outside of this macro-region (the most often mentioned is Poland). Some analysis, however, suggests that the trends described in the case of Hungary (where according to most of the scholars they reach the highest degree) we see in a larger group of Central and Eastern European countries (see e.g. Tucker 2015; Fehr 2016; Blokker 2012; Cabada 2017).

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# THE BUMPY ROAD OF THE ECE REGION IN THE EU: SUCCESSES AND FAILURES IN THE FIRST FIFTEEN YEARS

Attila ÁGH<sup>1</sup>

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*“It seems as if Europeans are almost living on different planets”  
(Emmanouilidis 2018)*

*This paper analyses the Europeanization of the East-Central Europe in the first fifteen years of the EU membership in its three periods that corresponds to the three institutional cycles of the EU: (1) 2004-2009 (Barroso I. Commission), (2) 2009-2014 (Barroso II. Commission) and (3) 2014-2019 (Juncker Commission). Its main focus is the controversial process of the EU integration with its positive and negative effects in the contrast of quantitative and qualitative catching up, based both on the official documents and research contribution. The paper deals first of all with the latest period of the New World System emerging after the global crisis and triggering negative developments as the divergence of ECE from the EU mainstream developments and its transition to the authoritarian rule. As a conclusion, in the incoming new institutional cycle (2019-2024) the EU can overcome the stage of Fragmented Europe moving to the stage of Cohesive Europe with a perspective to overcome the East-West Divide.*

**Key words:** Europeanization and Democratization; Transition to Authoritarian System; Quantitative and Qualitative Catching up; Fragmented and Cohesive Europe.

## 1 INTRODUCTION: A CRITICAL APPROACH TO THE EUROPEAN CHALLENGE

On 1 May 2019 the East-Central European (ECE) countries completed 15 years of membership in the EU and after this long period it is necessary to evaluate their successes and failures in Europeanization and Democratization. The first fifteen years of democratization between 1989 and 2004 focused on the Euro-

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Atlantic re-integration as the preparatory phase of the EU integration. It is a very difficult task to outline this second phase between 2004 and 2019 in its complexity, anyway, it will be high on the agenda of the European Studies and the public discussions in the early 2020s, since it is an important issue for the entire future of the EU. The ECE answer to the European Challenge was very contradictory and volatile in these second fifteen years. It is even more challenging, however, whether the EU with the renewed effort of the ECE region can solve the deep Core-Periphery Divide in the coming decades.<sup>2</sup>

Although in the 2010s some critical approach has been felt in the European Studies and Democracy Research about the ECE developments in general and the emerging authoritarian trend in particular, still so far the dominant view has been a sunny side presentation with victory reports and diplomatic niceties not only in the official documents of both EU and national authorities, but also by most experts analysts. In fact, the socio-economic, political and civilizational crisis in ECE is much deeper than it appears even in the increasing number of critical analyses in the last years. Therefore this paper tries to present mostly the shadowy side of the ECE contemporary history that has to be described in its complexity much beyond the political event history of governments and ruling parties. The controversial effect of the EU membership has been more emphasized in this paper because while the deviant behaviour of the ECE countries has been more elaborated on one side, the share of the EU in the deepening of the Core-Periphery Divide has much less received a proper critical treatment in the European Studies on the other.<sup>3</sup>

No wonder that the recent systematic overview of Europeanization and Democratization - with the title *Europeanization Revisited* - has concluded in the *Introduction* that “the earlier literature studied Europeanization as a process with a uniquely positive direction and outcome. (...) Negative Europeanization or ‘de-Europeanization’ appeared irrelevant.”, although “the adjustment to the EU economic model required many invisible changes that were suboptimal for transition countries”. This impressive volume calls the alternative scenario of the analysis “invisible Europeanization” and notes its negative side-effects by adding that the new member states “were willing to adopt EU policies indiscriminately – and remained relatively insensitive to the potential costs.” (Wozniakowski et al. 2018, 10, 15).

In the spirit of these recent evaluations I try to point out the EU has been moving between the two poles of Cohesive Europe and Fragmented Europe, and the global crisis has pushed for the Fragmented Europe, especially in the ECE region

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<sup>2</sup> European Studies has been a well-established research direction, in the last decade the Democracy Research has also become a sub-discipline in political science embracing many adjacent fields of other social sciences. In the special case of the ECE region, they overlap to a great extent and have four research directions: (1) the evaluation of official documents, (2) reports of ranking institutes, (3) public opinion surveys and (4) scientific research that has been covered by the references. This paper offers some further reading beyond the references of research publications to have a wider overview of ECE developments in these directions as EC (2018a-e), Bertelsmann (2018a-e), Freedom House (2018a-e), OECD (2017a-e); and V-Dem Institute (2019) in Annex.

<sup>3</sup> For the critical rethinking of the ECE developments see first of all in Epstein and Jacoby (2014), Innes (2014) and Rupnik and Zielonka (2013), and recently the edited volumes by Matlak et al. (2018), Moskalewicz and Przybylski (2018) and Bieber et al. (2019). See e.g. also the publications: Bargaoanu and Volintiru (2019), Blokker (2013), Börzel, Dimitrova and Schimmelfennig (2017), Börzel and Schimmelfennig (2017), Brusis (2016), Coman and Tomini (2014), Dawson and Hanley (2016), Dimitrova (2010; 2018), Hanley and Vachudova (2018), Herman (2015), Klipcerova-Baker and Kostál (2017), Krastev (2016), Krekó and Enyedi (2018), Linde (2012), Magone et al. (2016), Schimmelfennig and Winzen (2017), Schweiger and Visvizi (2018).



(Emmanouilidis 2018, 17). Obviously, these fifteen years of the ECE membership have been very important not only for this region, but also for the entire EU as the reunification of Europe and the evolution of the EU integration. The ECE membership has covered the three latest institutional cycles of the EU: Barroso I. Commission (2004-2009), Barroso II. Commission (2009-2014) and Juncker Commission (2014-2019), which have been very distinct periods not only in the EU history, but contained a big turning point around 2015 also in that of the world system and its globalization. Therefore, the analysis of the ECE history in Europeanization demands the elaboration of the conceptual framework of the EU history in the world system changes, too. The study of the ECE recent history gives a good starting point for this general exercise because the ECE countries have been very sensitive to these radical changes, much more than the consolidated old member states.<sup>4</sup>

## 2 THE MISSING EU CAPACITY OF EAST-CENTRAL EUROPE

The conceptual starting point of this paper is that both “history matters” and “region matters”. The historical Central Europe as a region emerged between East and West and East-Central Europe is a result of the Yalta Agreement when this historical Central Europe after the WWII was divided between its Eastern and Western parts. Austria joined Western Europe and the other Central Europe countries were given to the Soviet “external” empire. As to the historical background of Central Europe, it is important to make two strong statements for the conceptual foundation of the ECE analysis.<sup>5</sup>

*First*, in the historical Central Europe there was a controversial modernization process with the historically recurring cycles between Westernization and Easternization that has produced a dual historical legacy, with dual economy and dual society. Hence, after the WWII the East-Central European countries were half-modernized or half-“Europeanized” in the West-European meaning, and this mixed situation - with the large heterogeneity both in the entire region and in the individual countries - gives the base of “path dependency”, which - not fatefully, but to a great extent - determines the development of the ECE countries.

*Second*, the ECE countries suffered the most brutal Easternization process of their history in the bipolar world. Despite this Easternization, the ECE region preserved most of its Europeanized features, at the same time the negative side of its historical heritage was reinforced during these long decades by this quasi complete isolation from the Western developments by this quasi complete isolation from the Western developments. Since the state-socialist system embraced the entire society, the negative effects of the bipolar world system, as the missing participation in the modernization and democratization process of the West after the WWII were a big burden for the start of the Europeanization and Democratization in the systemic change.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> This discussion paper has been prepared as the introductory chapter for the book *Fifteen years of East-Central Europe in the European Union: Successes and failures of Europeanization*. The conceptual framework of this paper has been based on my recent book: *Decline of Democracy in East-Central Europe: The Core-Periphery Divide* (2019), published by Edward Elgar.

<sup>5</sup> East-Central Europe embraces Czechia (CZ), Hungary (HU), Poland (PL), Slovenia (SI) and Slovakia (SK). It deals only with ECE as a region and not with the all new Eastern member states. Croatia is a special case, since it belongs to ECE but due to the Yugoslav war and post-Yugoslav developments it became an EU member state only in 2013.

<sup>6</sup> On the full panorama of Central Europe see recently Moskalewicz and Przybylski (2018) *Understanding Central Europe* (rich in the chapters about Poland), first of all the Introduction of the editors. Otherwise see the publications of Bozóki and Hegedűs (2018; 2019), Bugarcic and

The main message of this paper is the historical and regional specificity of the ECE region, giving their common controversial historical background. Conversely, at the time of the Euro-Atlantic integration in the first 15 years as well as in the EU integration in the second 15 years the ECE countries have had a civilizational gap that has not been treated properly in the European Studies. This regional specificity has also been neglected by the EU in the accession process, although this “benevolent or benign negligence” has been one of the main reasons of controversial performance of the ECE region within the EU in the second fifteen years. Since at the start of the EU membership the ECE region had a huge civilizational gap dividing it from the old member states, accordingly, at all big historical changes – and it applies first of all to the EU accession – the ECE citizens have had a controversial feeling of “triumph and trauma”, since they have welcomed the “homecoming” to “Europe” and at the same time perceived their heavy civilizational deficit (Sztompka 2000). Indeed, the historical legacy of the dual society has continued in the ECE contemporary history, splitting the society again in two parts: winners and losers, resulting in the 2010s finally in the dual structure of political system based on the separation into rulers and subjects and in a society designed and organized politically from above. Thus, the last thirty years has been the re-emergence of the traditional structure as the dependent periphery of Western Europe with all contradictions between successes and failures. All in all, the ECE countries that has not been treated properly in the EU by neglecting its specificity and offering the same general rules for the strong and weak member states to compete economically. This treatment will be described in this paper as the Copenhagen learning process of the EU that has also been a bittersweet learning process for the ECE populations, too.<sup>7</sup>

Actually, the ECE countries began their membership with a missing “EU capacity” in ECE due to their “social deficit” (Aniol 2015) – mentioned above as civilizational deficit - not just in their relative socio-economic and political backwardness, but in the much deeper civilizational “incompetence” in the way of life, skills and political culture. It could have been compensated by a special regional development program by the EU for the catching up of the ECE countries. However, throughout these fifteen years the EU has neglected the regional specificity of ECE as this civilizational gap and it has dealt with this region in an abstract, overgeneralized-formalistic approach of membership. Moreover, it is important to distinguish between the *absolute* civilizational deficit coming from the historical heritage at the moment of the EU accession and the *relative* civilizational deficit that has been accumulated within the EU due to the East-West divergence between their socio-economic developments. This will be discussed as the contrast between the quantitative and qualitative catching up process, since the ECE states focusing on the GDP-type of economic growth have tried to catch up with the “past” of the old member states and have been unable to join the new tendencies of the knowledge-based economy as the “future” of the EU, so their distance has widened in many ways.

All in all, paradoxically, although the ECE region in the early 2000s was not prepared for the EU membership, still the reunification of Europe was a political necessity, and it offered a long term opportunity for the ECE region for the genuine Europeanization. Again, despite the benign neglect with its negative

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Kuhelj (2017), Buzogány (2017), Cabada (2013), Cabada et al. (2014), Enyedi (2016), Haček et al. (2017), Havlik and Voda (2016), Havlik and Pinková (2012), Hegedűs (2018; 2019a; 2019b), Ibenskas and Sikk (2017), Krašovec and Johannsen (2016) and Lisi (2018).

<sup>7</sup> I have described the democratic transition in the wider NMS region in two books in a rather optimistic approach (Ágh 1998a, 1998b), but I have pointed out the decline of democracy is a long series of papers in the late 2010s (Ágh 2016a, 2016b, 2017, 2018a, 2018b and 2019).

externalities, the EU membership has been advantageous for the ECE region in this controversial Europeanization and Democratization process. Similarly, despite the divergence of ECE states from the EU mainstream in the 2010s the Eastern enlargement has been advantageous for the old member states, too, since they have gained a much larger market and more political weight in the global world system. However, the successes and failures of the Eastern enlargement have shown the limits of the EU's transformative power in the "internal" Europeanization, therefore even the "external" Europeanization process in the West Balkan and East European regions was stopped and transformed in the mid-2010s. These regions have even much less EU-capacity than the ECE region and the EU has committed the same mistake in their "external" Europeanization, applying only an abstract, overgeneralized approach, neglecting also the specificity of these regions. Without overcoming the emerging deep Core-Periphery Divide in the EU27 no further deepening can be expected, and the widening has also reached its internal limits with the deep decline of democracy and rule of law in the new member states.

There is no space here to discuss the starting process of Euro-Atlantic integration in Democratization and Europeanization. It is true that it would be an interesting exercise to look back to the last thirty years and point out the negative features already in the first fifteen years leading to the serious problems later. The accession prior 2004 that has been analysed in a large literature as a positive process, and rightly so. However, this paper concentrates on the second fifteen years in three sub-chapters, since historically the fifteen years of ECE membership embraces three institutional cycles in the EU, first the Barroso I. Commission (2004-2009) with the optimistic and evolutionary developments, followed by the troubled period Barroso II Commission (2009-2014) with the global crisis, and finally the Juncker Commission (2014-2019) with its renewal efforts that needs closer assessment. During these three periods the ECE region has received only a formal and not effective membership. Actually, it has only been invited to Economic and Legal Europe, not to Social, Political and Cultural-Civilizational Europe.

### 3 THE ECE ACCESSION AND THE COPENHAGEN LEARNING PROCESS (2004-2009)

In the first period the imported neoliberalism produced a dependent economic development with strong multinationals and weak national actors. This new dependence was formed with a neoliberal hybrid, a combination of economic dependence from the Western multinationals with the chaotic democracy under a comprador national elite. There was no "recognition" of the special ECE situation leading to its "disempowerment" in the EU. On the ECE side the immune mechanism was not activated to reach a proper balance between the Western pressure of changes and the domestic demands for a fair and specific treatment in the Euro-Atlantic integration. All problems were perceived by the public as *transitory* that would disappear automatically after some years but they proved to be *final* as the main pillars of the new system connected with the deep economic, social and political polarization in ECE. Altogether, the ECE countries were weak in the early systemic change, and economically, politically and ideologically defenceless against the imported neoliberalism. Emptying democracy in fact started with the neoliberal hybrid as combination of multinationals with the native crony capitalism because the big formal legal institutions had a restricted power in their own field. European Science Foundation's Report on the Forward Look (2012) research project underlined

the necessity of shifting from political to social analysis, as the deep socio-economic polarization.

The dual character of the Europeanization in ECE was pre-programmed in the EU accession process by the Copenhagen criteria, since the Eastern enlargement project neglected the heavy historical legacy of Central Europe. The Copenhagen criteria in June 1993 were too general and not region-specific, conceived in the spirit of the “normal West” transferred to the East. It considered the accession as the return to normality, and reaching soon the point of no return in the transition to the democracy and market economy through an evolutionary development. This document has been based in its general features on the functionalist approach as an automatic “spill-over” of positive changes from one social sector to another on the one side, and the “Western fallacy” as the general image of Western society with all of its expectations for political culture and civil society. Arguing against this Western fallacy, Gellner (1996, 10) has noted that “In this manner, Civil Society is simply presupposed as some kind of inherent attribute of human condition.”

The EU has never realized that the Eastern enlargement has crossed a historical border and never elaborated a proper, tailor-made regional catching up project for ECE that would be a real “differentiated integration” and would have been vital for the success of Europeanization. Just to the contrary, the lack of a special approach to ECE has gone through the entire history of membership, not elaborating and providing a special treatment for ECE by the EU. Although there has been some kind of a Copenhagen learning process of deeper understanding the ECE regional specifics, the abstract approach to conditionalities with the general features of market economy and democracy has still dominated, that is it has remained the same despite the often changing international context. The main obstacle of deeper understanding of the recurring ECE crises has been the narrow focus on the practical-policy issues and the formal-legal issues directly regulated by the EU rules. The EU has avoided the opening towards the general conceptual horizon on the deeper issues of polity – the institutional system as a whole – and politics, including the political actors, the meso-system and the performance of governance. As Scharpf (2015) has pointed out the EU has followed the strategy of “judicial integration”, i.e. introducing and or transferring the rules of the big legal institutions without any regard of its socio-economic and cultural consequences. As the neoliberal economists have believed in the magic of trickling down of economic growth to the entire population, the “functionalist” lawyers believed in the magic of transformative power of constitutional regulations for the whole society.

In the Eastern enlargement process the Economic Europe has defeated the Political Europe. While the Political Europe has formulated the rules of the accession only in abstract legal terms, the Economic Europe has exported the tough version of neoliberal system and created a dual economy and society in ECE as a neoliberal hybrid. This neoliberal structure was not that harmful in the old member states, since it followed a period of welfare society, and the self-defence of society – to use the term of Karl Polanyi – was very strong. But the ECE societies at the time of the entry were weak, defenceless and basically they had no other alternative than accepting the Western rules of the game, dictated above all by the Economic Europe. Thus, the Euro-Atlantic integration has meant in fact the return of Western dependence, the semi-periphery situation, by the neoliberal invasion since the early nineties. The Western firms have exploited the specificity of the ECE region and has restored its dependency status by turning this territory into the low wage periphery of the Western multinationals. A neoliberal hybrid emerged as a union of multinationals with the local-national

political elite that has mainly enjoyed the benefits of the Western economic assistance systematically and the political acceptance for the emerging authoritarian rule regularly (Book 2018). This situation has produced a built-in contradiction, externally “economic” cohesion and internally “social” polarization. The neoliberal hybrid has also imported the myth of an over-generalized trickling-down effect, in which all citizens will have their share from economic growth, therefore the key issue in this special new dependence can be formulated in the social paradox: more political freedom with less social security, and consequently in the political paradox: more formal right with less actual participation in politics.<sup>8</sup>

In the first fifteen years between 1989 and 2004 the ruling narrative was based on the Western fallacy, repeating the Western way in a shorter period. The “Sleeping Beauty” scenario meant that the ECE region had been basically Europeanized and although the former aggressive Easternization diverted it from the European course, after the collapse of foreign rule this region still returned to its genuine European existence quickly and automatically. However, at the end of the first five years of the EU membership the internal limitations of the superficial Europeanization by the legal transformations came to the fore with the “Eternal East” scenario of the tough path dependence. The dream of easy and quick Europeanization of the nineties came back to some extent in the first years of membership but only for a while, and finally the Sleeping Beauty scenario evaporated by the end of the 2000s. In this period there was only a latent divergence from the mainstream development of the EU, nonetheless the foundations for the dependent development were laid at the very beginning of the EU membership. Accordingly, the increasing post-accession crisis produced a credibility crisis by the late 2000s owing to the social frustration and general disappointment, and afterwards the global crisis ruined the optimistic perspectives for a long time.

Due to the insensitiveness of the West, the benign negligence of ECE has been a fatal misunderstanding of the differentiated integration. So is also idea of the sacrosanct the national sovereignty in the rule of law violations in ECE, even on those issues that have been the concerns of all member states. Otherwise, the old member states have been reformulating the EU priorities exclusively on the permanently changing new and new problems in the Core, and avoiding at EU level even the discussions on other priorities. Therefore, to give a correct picture of the ECE developments, the differentiated integration has to be analysed at national level in polity, politics and policy dimensions as well as at the EU level in the Core-Periphery dimensions, exploring the weaknesses and failures on both EU and ECE sides as the negative externalities in the EU and the reform fatigue in ECE. The reform fatigue appeared already by the late nineties through the contrast of external and internal Europeanization as the “judicial integration” from above by the establishment of the big formal-legal institutions that have remained “Sand Palaces” without solid foundation institutionally at the meso-government and civil society levels as well as without the proper civilizational structures in the civic political culture and advanced human capital.

After many deep changes and troubles at the end of the first five years of membership the reform fatigue became dominant, just when the global crisis put a high pressure on the ECE region due to its controversial transformation and EU

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<sup>8</sup> Orenstein (2013, 379) has argued that the neoliberal approach was forced upon the ECE region and Bugarcic (2016, 1) has also emphasized that the ECE countries “were global leaders in the adoption of neoliberal ideas and policies” and added that “This was particularly true during the early transition period, when neoliberalism emerged as a virtually unchallenged ideology”.

adaptation. Finally, the reform fatigue before the global crisis in ECE producing a weak crisis resilience and the poor crisis management. On the other side, the limitation of the EU transformative power and benign negligence turned to be evident during the global crisis, still the poor performance in ECE resulted in the enlargement fatigue in the West with the accusation of East for the mismanagement of crisis and for the manifest divergence from the EU mainstream developments.

#### 4 THE ECE POLYCRISIS AND THE DEEP DECLINE OF DEMOCRACY (2009–2014)

In the second period it turned out that the catching-up process lost its direction, since the main trend was the quantitative and not the qualitative economic growth, namely in the outdated GDP terms and not in the terms of the emerging knowledge economy. Hence, the main aim of economic development was – and still is – reaching the “past” of developed countries and not joining them for them in building their “future” by the innovation driven economy with sustainable development. The constant and rather chaotic transformations produced an increasing reform fatigue and resistance against the necessary changes. The rising drastic social polarization at the end of the 2000s resulted in a credibility crisis that meant the end of permissive consent.

The global crisis produced a special ECE polycrisis as a cumulated crisis, therefore the controversial EU-ECE relationship can only be explained in its full complexity by outlining briefly the long term changes in the polity, policy and policy dimensions that indicates also the specific situation in the early 2010s. In the *polity* the decline of democracy with the transition to authoritarian rule began in the early 2010s and this process has led to the various kinds of autocratic political systems in ECE. The initial crisis of the crisis management has resulted in a marked divergence from the EU mainstream development not only in macro-political terms of “illiberal democracy” (Orbán 2014), but in the complete structure of polity, i.e. also in meso- and micro-political as well as in socio-political and cultural dimensions (Balcer 2017), generating a relative civilizational backsliding in the well-being terms.

In *politics* there was an abrupt change between the first and second generation of party systems with the emerging hard populism and extreme right parties. It has been accompanied by the dominance of the traditionalist narrative with the politics of historical memory and hard Euroscepticism. The ECE societies have been polarized between winners and losers as well as between the relative catching up in the “West of East” and the absolute impoverishment in the “East of East”. The “velvet dictatorships” have built up an effective socio-political power pyramid and through the soft power of their mediaworks they have successfully manipulated the elections (Knight 2018; Buti and Pichelmann 2017).

In *policy* the governments turned to austerity measures with the radical disinvestment into the social and human capital, and this relative backsliding of socio-economic situation has produced an increasing credibility crisis resulting in low trust societies. Basically, there has been a relative decline in the public services – first of all in education and health care – given the needs of the new innovation driven economy and society that has produced “the social disinvestment state” (Lendvai-Bainton 2018). It has also been a manifest regression compared to the Western way of life in social security for the large majority, and even more in the life perspectives for youngsters that has

unleashed a mass exodus of young and talented people and with this loss of most valuable internal resources the ECE region has drastically diminished its catching up capacity in the near future. The mass emigration of the talented young people from the less developed member states will increase the Core-Periphery Divide: "The loss of young highly educated people may create yet other challenges, such as impairment of innovative capacities needed to sustain economic growth." (Fernandes and Vandenbroucke 2018, 4–5).

In the EU there is a two level game in all respects, namely polity, politics and policy theoretically has to be treated both at the EU and membership levels. Actually, it is only the policy dimension that has been managed and discussed at the EU level, otherwise there is a false myth of national sovereignty that has not allowed for the discussions about the quality of polity and politics in the individual member states. The democratic order has been conceived automatically given at the membership level, therefore the democratic system has been exclusively discussed in the EU as the participation of the EU citizens in the EU institutional system. No doubt that the elaboration, maintenance and development of the "EU democracy" with the large citizen participation is a vital issue, nevertheless the exclusive focus on this issue produced a situation in which the EU institutions and the public opinion has realized only very belatedly the de-democratization process in ECE. The European Parliament has made several efforts to create a DFR mechanism to investigate the Democracy, Fundamental Rights and Rule of Law in the member states, but it has always failed because of the resistance of the most member states. The Economic Europe has new and again defeated the Political Europe, therefore the authoritarian challenge if ECE has come as a surprise of the old member states.<sup>9</sup>

Altogether, the global crisis especially hit hard the ECE region, therefore the divergence of the ECE from the EU mainstream in Europeanization and Democratization became manifest already in the second period. The de-democratization process began in the new ruling populist parties, which introduced the counterproductive austerity measures cutting the investment into the future. While the gap between the quantitative versus the qualitative catching up had been latent in the first period because the main task had been the transition to the market economy and its minimal consolidation, this gap was brutally widening in the second period. The contrast was the most evident in the Polish case, where the GDP grew even in the crisis years, still the disinvestment into social and human capital continued or even increased. So under the pressure of global crisis the ECE region did not turn to the innovation driven development that was the basic necessity for the global competitiveness, but it has reinforced the efforts of the controversial GDP-based economic growth. In the early 2010s due to the pernicious effects of the global crisis there was a general backsliding of middle class - especially the lower middle class - in the ECE countries, and the increasing inequality with the rise of "precariat" strata produced the authoritarian challenge. Although after the global crisis there was a tsunami, a master wave of neopopulism worldwide, this authoritarian challenge with hard populist parties appeared earlier and was stronger in ECE than elsewhere, since the global crisis hit hard the fragile ECE economies and societies, even if it was not noticed by the EU institutions and experts. All in all, the polycrisis was deeper in ECE than in the old member states because they were more vulnerable in socio-economic and political terms, being newcomers in market economy and democracy, not yet reaching the early consolidation and not finding the proper

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<sup>9</sup> There have been repeated attempts in EP from Tavares Report (EP 2013) through the DRF control mechanism (EP 2016) to the Sargentini Report (EP 2018) to condemn the de-democratization in ECE.

way of Europeanization before the outbreak of the global crisis. The socio-economic crisis in the early 2010s unleashed a vicious circle between low trust and poor governance and resulted in a deep Core-Periphery Divide by the second half of the 2010s.

## 5 THE DEEPENING CORE-PERIPHERY DIVIDE AND THE JUNCKER PARADOX (2014–2019)

In the third period there has been in fact a new systemic change as a transition from the chaotic democracy to the authoritarian rule. The global crisis has seriously hit the ECE region, and the negative socio-economic effects have been increased by the emerging New World Order in the mid-2010s. This “internal Easternization” has led to a marked divergence from the mainstream EU development inside and the new kinds of authoritarian systems in ECE have been facing the marginalization in the EU outside. Nevertheless, the new institutional cycle of the EU (2019-2024) a new perspective has been opened to elaborate the region-specific development for ECE in the EU. The main characteristic of the third period of the ECE membership is the authoritarian challenge with the drastic deepening of the Core-Periphery Divide. Basically, in the period of the Juncker Commission the EU has tried to build up a comprehensive reform program since 2014, still the special ECE crisis management has not yet been put on the long list of priorities. This benign negligence has led to the Juncker Paradox with its counterproductive effects: the more the EU has neglected the ECE special treatment the more the Core-Periphery Divide deepened.<sup>10</sup>

The lessons of the global crisis and the necessary deep reforms have been summarized in a long research paper of Eurofound with the title the *Upward convergence in the EU: Concepts, measurements and indicators* (hereafter Convergence 2018). This is a very good summary of the reform efforts during the Juncker Commission, indeed, with both a large collection of the data about the weaknesses of the EU and the excellent ideas for a new strategy. This comprehensive research document has raised the substantial issue of the EU crisis under the term of *coherence*, at the same time, this conceptual framework shows the huge contrast between these ideas and their implementation in the Juncker Commission. Although this research report has indicated that the regions and member states have suffered from the crisis in different ways, still, it has its own limitations, since it has remained critical at the general EU level and has not offered any regional remedies. Nonetheless, this excellent analysis gives us a good theoretical starting point to present the ECE problems, even if it has not overstepped the Juncker Paradox of benign negligence of ECE.

To start with, “The founding fathers of the European project were convinced that social convergence will arise spontaneously through economic convergence.” (Convergence 2018, 6). The original idea of the EU integration was based on the simplified functionalism exclusively with positive and automatic spill-overs from the economic growth to all other fields of society. Even later, realizing the increasing problems, supposedly the positive side effects were automatic and the negative effects were deemed small and transitory. The Coherence document is in fact a big effort to go beyond the Economic Europe – or the “Common Market” – by elaborating a new conceptual framework, in this way, coherence as a central

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<sup>10</sup> The contrast between the high expectations and low delivery, or between the ambitious reforms and missing implementation goes through the Juncker Commission, see Blockmans (2019), Botopoulos (2019), Ivan (2017) and Russack (2017).



term is opposed economic growth. Moreover, the simplified thinking about the economic growth with the GDP-based philosophy is presented as the main reason for the devastating effects of the global crisis for the EU. The Economic Europe captured the Social Europe and Political Europe on the thinking horizon, “while the concept of economic convergence is embedded in the European treaties and has been at the forefront of European policy discussions for some time, the importance of the upward social convergence has only recently gained traction.” As a result, a downward convergence has taken place in the EU “with an increase of disparities across the Member States” resulting in social exclusion, poor performance of governments and low life satisfaction (ibid., 1–2).

This research document has confronted the taboo of the typical EU philosophy that the economic growth based development of the previous strategy is equally advantageous for all member states, given the fact that “Some wealthier Member States or regions may benefit more than others from the progress of integration – in part due to the effects of specialisation and of centre-periphery dichotomies.”, although “If there is a feeling that the single market impedes the growth of Member States and prevents low income countries from developing, efforts will be made to undermine its functioning”. To overcome this “negative externality” or controversial effect of the EU it has outlined “how the debate around convergence developed as the focus moved from economic convergence to economic and social convergence”, and overviewed the new strategy emphasizing that sustained convergence is “a policy process towards cohesion, which is the ultimate political objective” (ibid., 5–6), putting with this strong argument Cohesive Europe at the centre of the new EU strategy.

The Eurofound research document has pointed out that the global crisis has meant a turning point in this process and concluded that “the 2008 financial crisis halted or even reversed some of these converging trends, leading to dramatic social and economic divergence between countries.”, since “The consequences of divergence between Member States are potentially grave. Economic divergence undermines the promise of shared economic prosperity, which was central to the creation of the EU in the first place. (...) Such marked differences are unlikely to be sustainable.” (ibid., 5, 7). It states that - after the crisis management exercise of the Barroso Commission - the Juncker Commission has made serious efforts to elaborate a new strategy for the EU developments: “The debate around socioeconomic convergence received further input with the election of Juncker Commission in 2014, with upward convergence forming part of President Juncker’s agenda, entitled ‘A new start for Europe.’” Indeed, the *White Paper on the future of Europe* (2017) was accompanied by the series of “reflection papers”, and the concept of economic and social convergence was central to these papers. It has become clear that “The EU cannot afford to experience another setback as drastic as that of 2008, and its leaders have recognized that it must prepare to avoid such an event. This is the ultimate goal of the European Pillar of Social Rights. (...) The Pillar extends the thinking underlying the 2013 Social Investment Package, which focused on social investment, human capital and equal opportunities.” (Convergence 2018, 7–8).

At the end of the Juncker Commission the analysis of the prestigious European Policy Center (EPC) has argued an even more critical spirit analysing the rising duality as the Core-Periphery Divide, or as the EPC analysis terms it, *Fragmented Europe*. It points out that “there are structural differences among the EU27 – divergences between North-South, East-West, older-younger member states, euro and non-euro countries (...) These divisions do not only affect political elites in national capitals, but also societies as a whole”. The *Fragmented Europe* has produced deep social polarization with “high degree of economic divergence and

rising inequalities” and “widening economic gap between and within EU countries”, *horribile dictu* “it seems as if Europeans are almost living on different planets” that has been selected as the motto of this paper. The global crisis management of the EU has deepened the Core-Periphery Divide and eroded the social solidarity by strengthening the Core and the prioritizing the “market”. In this Core-based Fragmented Europe populists “are successful when they can tap into people’s grievances and fears about the future, when the citizens are deeply frustrated with those who have been in power, and when they are dissatisfied with the existing state of representative democracy.” Consequently, it is not enough to have a theoretical discussion with the neopopulism in the EU, but it is necessary to solve the basic problems leading to the increasing fragmentation. This EPC document has suggested “cohesion” and “social justice” as the key terms for the further federalization, namely more differentiation without a preference for “core Europe” in order to “counter the sources of fragmentation and polarisation” (Emmanouilidis 2018, 17, 20).

The emerging New World Order in the 2010s with the refugee crisis and the return to geopolitics after the Russian aggression against Ukraine has changed in the international scenery for the ECE developments (see e.g. Demertzis et al. 2017). The socio-economic divergence of the ECE region was rather clear already in the troubled years of the global crisis, still the political and cultural divergence has only become shockingly visible in the second half of the 2010s with the quasi consolidation of the new authoritarian regimes in ECE. The long authoritarian transition began in Hungary in the early 2010s that was documented by the Tavares Report of the European Parliament in 2013, but the real turning point to the new authoritarian systems came in Poland when the PiS government entered in late 2015, while the other authoritarian leaders like Babis, Fico and Jansa have become central figures in the countries concerned. Although the ECE divergence and authoritarian turn was exposed by the EP and continuously put on the agenda with urgency in the second half of 2010s, the European Commission was not alerted and the ECE divergence was not put on the list of the – even longer – priorities. The benign negligence of the specific ECE development has contributed in three main ways to the divergence of the ECE region from the EU mainstream: first in the rise and maintenance of the neoliberal hybrid, second giving an opportunity in the cohesion policy for the systemic corruption, and third, tolerating the rule of law violations. Conversely, it is necessary to characterize briefly the socio-economic, political and identity issues as they form a particular system of the Eastern deviation within the EU in the late 2010s.

*First* of all, in the socio-economic dimension the divergence from the EU mainstream development began at the very start of systemic change with the creation of the neoliberal hybrid that was the stepping stone of the new development. The starting divergence from the EU mainstream can be seen in the contrast of the quantitative versus qualitative catching up process. The ECE region was lagging behind the West in the GDP terms, therefore the quantitative catching up process was a legitimate aim – above all in the first period –, but it has become a blind alley more and more. Actually, the quantitative catching-up with its internal logic in the GDP and welfare terms has meant repeating the *past* of the developed countries versus the qualitative catching-up in the knowledge economy and well-being terms in order to reach the *present* of the West in its new internal logic. While the ECE region has indeed produced a modest catching up effect in quantitative terms, there has still been an increasing gap in qualitative terms of the R&D world. West European firms have considered ECE as a huge market and a big labour reservoir of both the relatively low skilled workers and the young high skilled workers and researchers. The biggest delay between East and West has been more and more in the process of innovation driven

development or knowledge economy that has confirmed the status of ECE as the low wage – low skilled periphery of the West, above all that of Germany and Austria. This controversial development has brought a multidimensional socio-economic effect with very important progress in some fields of production, but – as the edited volume of *Europeanization Revisited: Central and Eastern Europe in the European Union* has pointed out - basically has conserved the ECE historical delay and its dual economic and social structure horizontally-territorially between the West of East and East of East as well as vertically-socially between the winners and losers.<sup>11</sup>

In the first fifteen years of the EU membership it has turned out that the negative externalities in the unfair competition between stronger and weaker member states have not balanced by the cohesion policy. This huge distance at macro-level of the member states has come to the surface vertically-socially more and more, since it has brought deep polarization between winners and losers, educated and low skilled, “civilized” or Europeanized and “backward” or marginal strata. The positions and rules of competition have been “misleadingly positive and misleadingly static”, therefore the “contradiction of economic Europeanization (...) namely that EU policies and regulatory models have been mostly created by and for advanced capitalist economies and thus might lead to suboptimal (or at least unanticipated) outcomes for transition countries.” There are both visible and invisible rules and effects in the Economic Europe and the negative externalities have been particularly hitting the ECE economies because the EU “has exercised remarkable control over the economic transformation in ECE” (Bohle and Jacoby 2018, 92, 95).

This contradiction between the positive and negative socio-economic effects of the EU may appear even deeper horizontally-regionally as the overview of the regional development underlines: “This paper shows that the implementation of the cohesion policy in the Eastern member states has benefited the relatively more developed regions thus the policy has failed to comply with its original objectives. The main reason for this lays in the fund eligibility criteria which were established according to an EU-wide benchmark. Relative to this benchmark the vast majority of the Eastern European regions are backward. As a consequence, the most prosperous and the most laggard Eastern regions were grouped together into the same eligibility category. The empirical evidence in this paper demonstrates that this ‘level playing field’ has proved advantageous for the economically more advanced regions with superior absorption capacity: they competed more effectively for the funds and secured more EU grants than their weaker counterparts.” (Medve-Bálint 2018, 109).

With the end of “the convergence dream” (Darvas 2015; Darvas 2019) these negative effects have generated a credibility crisis, in which “the victory of Western liberalism would make a swift convergence between east and west of Europe the most natural development” (Rupnik and Zielonka 2013, 19) and the social frustration has led a nostalgia for the lost world of job and life security in ECE. The trickling down myth has evaporated because the economic growth has not created a “social elevator” effect for all. Moreover – as the GDP gap has been described by Jeffrey Sachs (WHR 2012, 3–4) – economic growth or bigger GDP does not generate necessarily better public services and well-being, just to the contrary, it may also unleash opposite effects as well with a worsening way of

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<sup>11</sup> On socio-economic transformations and the recurring crisis in ECE see e.g. Ademmer (2018), Tóth and Medgyesi (2018) and Závecz (2017). In the Cohesion Monitor Janning (2018) has also documented the widening gap between the country and individual level, since the catching up process goes on much quicker at the country level than at the level of the citizens.

life. Altogether, the EU document of Copenhagen twenty years on (EC 2013) already indicated the profound rethinking the accession process in the West Balkan due to the rule of law violations and the poor performance in reform implementation in ECE.<sup>12</sup>

*Second*, turning to political issues, the cohesion policy has been supposed to be the answer of Political Europe to the disruptive effect of Economic Europe. However, the EU cohesion policy as the “Convergence Machine” has not worked properly due the missing regional development strategy based on the specificity of ECE as the World Bank experts pointed out already in the early 2010s (WB, Gill and Raiser 2011). Cohesion policy has not generated *convergence* in the proper meaning of this word by producing the same socio-economic and political system in the “quality of democracy” term. In some ways, it has turned to the opposite effect. The huge amount of EU transfers has had a controversial impact on the ECE region, in an indirect way it has supported the authoritarian system, since it has resulted in the systemic corruption. The compromise between the multinationals and the comprador national elites as the neoliberal hybrid has work in fact as political security device in both directions. The state organized politico-business networks have managed channelling the EU transfers to friendly oligarchs. The politico-business based redistribution has been a legal facade for the state mechanism of the money pump to organize the local political class in order to serve the authoritarian political elite through the EU transfers. It means the full state capture, and its completion in the 2010s provoked the reform fatigue, since the men of the street lost any interest in reform changes. Thus, the neoliberal hybrid based on the undemocratic compromise between the foreign multinational and the national authoritarian political elite has largely contributed to the decline of democracy. Democracy has been the mantra for the legitimation of the autocratic regimes as a simplified identification of democracy with “free and fair” elections. But actually this thin façade has not been kept, since the unfair voting procedures – mainly through clientelism – in their most sophisticated forms are quite widespread also in ECE (see Mares and Young 2016; Goat and Bazsofy 2019).<sup>13</sup>

Thus, instead of transition to democracy reaching its consolidation in the last decade there has been a transition to the authoritarian rule. In the first half of the 2010s the ECE countries were still seemingly democratic, although due to the continuous degeneration of political system democracy was only a thin façade provided by their big formal-legal institutions. The “winner takes all” has been taken to *ad absurdum* because the authoritarian socio-political power pyramids have embraced and colonized the entire society from the economy to civil society and ruled it also through the soft power of the toxic media. The emerging new elites can be called comprador bourgeoisie, since they have a dual, controversial position by serving the multinationals economically while confronting the EU politically. Following the worst Central European traditions of parasitic ruling elites the ugly face of the new political regimes has appeared for the large public because the new corrupt elite have presented conspicuous – or even provocative

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<sup>12</sup> Outlining the EU scenarios Emmanouilidis and Zuleeg (2016, 34) issued a warning already at the mid-time of the 2015-2019 institutional cycle that ‘[t]he distinction between euro and non-euro countries undermines political cohesion (...) the establishment of a core Europe against the will of those left behind would lead to the opposite direction and risk creating new dividing lines in Europe.’

<sup>13</sup> There has been a widening debate on the Unholy Alliance between the Western – mainly German – multinationals and the ECE comprador political elite in both the old and ECE media, which also deals with the repatriation of the EU transfers to the West by these firms. This issue would need a comprehensive analysis of political economy, therefore this paper does not deal with its whole complexity.

- consumption and luxurious way of life in order to indicate their high social status.<sup>14</sup>

*Third*, turning to the effects of the New World Order (NWO) globally and the Core-Periphery Divide in the EU as the short presentation of the two-level game. The global crisis has been at the same time the prelude of the world system change that has entered in the 2010s, most evidently around 2015. While in the first two periods the ECE governments tried to follow the EU rules, in the third period of the 2010s they have turned more and more against it in both direct and indirect ways in many policy fields. It has culminated after 2015 under the impact of refugee crisis and with the return of geopolitics in NWO that has completed the internal socio-economic and political desecuritization with the geopolitical one, very much on the ECE borders. Parallel with the divergence from the EU mainstream the EU countries have produced a regional convergence by the common policies of the emerging neopopulism and identity politics inside, leading to rule of law violations. Despite the “family quarrels” in the V4, they had more or less a common stand in the refugee crisis open conflict with the EU, based on the mutual misunderstanding or due to the lack of the *recognition* of the historical burden and specific crisis of ECE. At the same time the EU has tolerated the degeneration of the ECE political system with the rule of law violations due to some complicity of the authoritarian elites with some Western economic forces. Basically, the legal experts have described the deep tension between the “market” and “constitution”, i.e. between Economic and Political Europe as “perpetuating the Union’s inability” to restore rule of law in ECE: “The EU thus emerged as a vehicle of the negative market-based approach to the ‘values’ question. Clearly, creating a market and questioning the state is not sufficient as a basis for a mature constitutional system, potentially creating a justice nugatory at the supranational level” (Kochenov and Bárd 2018, 88).<sup>15</sup>

In general, it applies to the entire ECE region that “in recent years, however, the democratic fairy tale has been sputtering.” (Krašovec and Johannsen 2016, 1). The main lesson from the Eastern enlargement that it is not enough to argue against the neopopulism and defeat it in the theoretical discussions, but its causes has to be dismantled. Despite the reform efforts of the Juncker Commission at theoretical level there has been no basic change in the Core-Periphery relationships. There has still been no “recognition”, ECE has remained a blind spot for the West. To initiate a basic change the experts of European Studies have to change first their vocabulary. ECE has usually been compared with the past of the developed countries being hostage of the narrow horizon of GDP instead of the new, extended meaning of economic competitiveness in the unfolding knowledge economy, and that of the outdated industrial world instead of information society. The main goal is of the EU is not the simple legal transfer of institutions, but Cohesive Europe with convergence, securitization, social and human investment, social and human capital, trust and socio-political participation. Finally, in the recent situation the terminology of the transition to authoritarian rule has to be introduced instead of transition to democracy, deconsolidation instead of consolidation, neopopulist tidal wave instead of emergence of democratic political culture.

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<sup>14</sup> From the V-Dem data (V-Dem Institute, 2019, see Annex) it is clear that the ECE countries are particularly weak in the DCI component, and to some extent also in the PCI component (SI and SK have only been mobilized by the recent scandals). Otherwise the negative peaks in the more detailed indices are freedom of expression (rank 104 for PL and 128 for Hungary) and civil society participation (rank 111 for Poland and 139 for Hungary).

<sup>15</sup> There has been a large and widening literature on the rule of law violations in ECE, see Bárd et al. (2016), Bugarcic and Ginsburg (2016), Bugarcic and Kuhelj (2017), Hegedűs (2019a,b) and Kochenov and Bárd (2018).

All in all, the Juncker Commission entered with a New Start by elaborating a strategic renewal of the EU through basic reforms. This line of strategic thinking and the radical reform of the EU institutions went through the entire period of Juncker Commission, starting with the Juncker' Ten Priorities in 2014 and leading to the Sibiu Declaration in May 2019. Understandably in the global crisis management, facing the dilemma of deepening and widening, the Juncker Commission decided to stop and postpone the widening in the West Balkan region and radically changed its Wider Europe strategy in the EaP region. At the same time, however, it narrowed its deepening strategy to the Core. In fact, during its cycle, it has limited its reform efforts and action radius to the deepening of the Core, consequently the solution of the specific ECE crisis has not appeared on the thinking and programming horizon of the Juncker Commission at all. Therefore the main message of this paper is the warning about keeping Juncker paradox: the more the EU neglects the special crisis management in ECE by focusing only on the Core in its priorities, the more the ECE countries diverge from the mainstream EU development. So the benign neglect has been shockingly counterproductive, and it will be even more counterproductive if continued in the next institutional cycle in the early 2020s.

The serious tension between the cumulated and not implemented reform programs during the Juncker presidency has made the 2019 EP elections crucial for the re-organization of the EU institutional structure in the next cycle. The 2019 EP elections clearly demonstrated the danger of this authoritarian disease for the EU as a whole and the necessity to return to the course of the increasing federalization of the EU by the pushing back the nationalist-nativist tendencies across the EU that would be impossible without solving the ECE divergence from the EU mainstream development. Since the authoritarian ECE parties and their leaders were very active in the international network of the neopopulist and eurosceptic parties, and they tried to change the course of the EU developments towards the decomposition and disunion before the EP elections, therefore the proper treatment of the special ECE crisis is one of the important issues to deal with in the 2020s in order to overcome the repeated crisis wave launched by the anti-EU forces.

## 6 CONCLUSION: THE LAST DECADE AS A LOST DECADE AND THE RENEWAL OF DEMOCRACY

The 2010s years have been a lost decade for ECE with an increasing divergence from the EU mainstream in both Europeanization and Democratization. However, in the late 2010s new perspectives have been opened in both, thus this conclusion contains not only the summary of the first 30 years of Europeanization – including the 15 years of the EU membership – but also the new perspectives for the next 30 years. The first 30 years has to be described both in its “objective” and “subjective” history, i.e. in socio-economic and political transformations as well as in the mental history as the ECE populations have perceived this long period. In the objective history the monster waves of social change have swept across ECE twice, namely the transformation recession with internal disintegration of socio-economic desecuritization in the nineties and the global crisis with external political and cultural desecuritization in the 2010s. This history in a bird's eye view can be summarized that there has only been a formal instead of an effective EU membership in *polity*, an “exclusive” instead of an “inclusive” democratic order in *politics*, consequently, a passive policy taker position instead of an active policy maker in *policy* within the EU. The key word

of describing ECE here is *duality*, since the traditional dual character of the ECE developments has been reproduced in the EU at a higher level. Thus, in the-2010s the increasing Core-Periphery divide “refuted the kind of optimistic determinism that the collapse of communism and the victory of Western liberalism would make a swift convergence between the east and west of Europe the most natural development” (Rupnik and Zielonka 2013, 19).

This duality can also be pointed out in the ECE mental history where this duality has come to the surface as a contrast between the adherences to Cultural Europe versus Political Europe. It appears as a contradiction between cultural and civic identity, and/or between the diffuse and the specific support by David Easton. This contradictory situation has provoked a huge realm of cognitive dissonance between the long term and short term EU perceptions of ECE population. This cognitive dissonance can be discovered in the Eurobarometer data as well, but not completely, since this public opinion survey has also been based on Western evidences where this cognitive dissonance does not exist, or at least not so drastically than in ECE. Therefore, the regional and national public opinion surveys focusing on this cognitive dissonance have given much more correct picture about the mental history of the ECE population than Eurobarometer, although it has the advantage of the full scale EU comparison. The arch of the public opinion during the 15 years indicate the deep contrast between the data of supporting of versus benefiting from the membership, since the perception of the EU membership has in ECE multiple cognitive dissonances, in which the ECE population criticizes or refuses the EU policies on one side, but finally the large majority still supports the membership and feels as being a proud European citizen on the other. Moreover, even in the Fragmented Europe this contrast has also appeared between the EU and the given country level because the trust in the EU-level institutions has always been higher in ECE than that in the nation-level institutions. Nowadays, in the late 2010s the EU has arrived at the crossroads, indeed. The very first genuine EU elections have taken place at the 2019 EP elections, where the future of Europe has been at stake. The overwhelming majority has voted for the further integration, which has proved that the tidal wave of neopopulism is over. As Pisani-Ferry argues after the EP elections, the EU citizens “want a more political EU” (2019), and in the Bruegel Institute’s *Policy Contributions* the vital issues are *Promoting sustainable and inclusive growth and convergence in the EU* (Demertzis et al. 2019) and *How to improve European cohesion policy for the next decade* (Darvas et al. 2019).

After the victory of pro-European forces at the EP elections the EU can make a progress in all the three main fields of socio-economic, political and cultural dimensions, by taking marked steps in the transition from the Fragmented to the Cohesive Europe. There have recently been many efforts in the European Studies to design a Cohesive Europe. Fernandes and Vandenbroucke (2018, 1–5) strongly argue for a “European Social Union” (ESU) and they point out that “As heterogeneity between Member States increased dramatically with enlargement, a social dimension is now imperative.” because “A vital condition across the European Union is upward convergence in the quality of their human capital. (...) Such ‘social investment policies’ are a matter of common interest for Europe”. Finally, Economic, Social, Political and Cultural Europe are presented here as a unity in complexity, more and more also formulated in the term of Green Europe, since they have the common message of completing “the half-made institutions” like the Eurozone and Schengen, building a knowledge based economy with sustainable society and democracy, and reaching a new, active global role for the EU with the marked appearance of European identity. The EU starts a new institutional cycle in 2019 with new perspectives to lessen the Core-Periphery Divide. The ECE population at the 2019 EP elections has sent a message about its

worry because of the deepening Core-Periphery Divide due to the divergence from the EU mainstream in the qualitative catching-up process of the knowledge-based economy and society, and even more so in the democratization process turning to the autocracy. It is high time to overcome, or at least lessen, the East-West duality, and there is a high expectation for a new start on the ECE side in the spirit of Dahrendorf theory. According to his dictum (Dahrendorf 1990; see also Offe 1991), systemic change has three dimensions: legal-political transition needs six months, economic transition six years and finally social transition 60 years. The first thirty years are over, the first generation, which has been socialized after the systemic change has entered, with their new perspectives. Thus in the next thirty years social systemic change may take place completing the triple transition in democratization and Europeanization.

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## ANNEX

TABLE 1: RANKINGS LIBERAL DEMOCRACY INDEX AND ITS COMPONENT INDICES

Country	LDI	EDI	LCI	ECI	PCI	DCI
CZ	36	31	45	14	90	54
HU	75	93	59	71	54	125
PL	56	54	62	29	51	109
SI	19	29	7	17	4	27
SK	33	30	41	40	8	70

LDI – Liberal Democracy Index, EDI – Electoral Democracy Index, LCI – Liberal Component Index, ECI – Egalitarian Component Index, PCI – Participatory Component Index, DCI – Deliberative Component Index. V-Dem Institute (2019), Democracy Report 2019, [https://www.v-dem.net/media/filer\\_public/99/de/99dedd73-f8bc-484c-8b91-44ba601b6e6b/v-dem\\_democracy\\_report\\_2019.pdf](https://www.v-dem.net/media/filer_public/99/de/99dedd73-f8bc-484c-8b91-44ba601b6e6b/v-dem_democracy_report_2019.pdf)

# NATURA 2000 EXPERIENCES IN SOUTHEAST EUROPE: COMPARISONS FROM SLOVENIA, CROATIA AND BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Aleksandar ŠOBOT and Andrej LUKŠIČ<sup>1</sup>

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*The main research objective is to determine the impact of Europeanisation on the nature protection system in the countries of Southeast Europe. Europeanisation is presented in the research through legislative and institutional changes due to the adoption of the European ecological network – Natura 2000. Comparative analyses were made in Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Data collection was primarily done through participant interviews in the establishment of Natura 2000 and secondary through all available relevant literature. After that, a policy analysis was carried out through a thesis and subthesis based on the main goal. The conclusion was presented as a confirmation of the main thesis that Europeanisation led to changes in Southeastern Europe's nature protection system.*

**Key words:** The Europeanisation; Nature Protection System; Southeast Europe; Natura 2000.

## 1 INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

Natura 2000 (N2000) is a sustainable development strategy at the European Union (EU) level. It requires the introduction of sustainable goals and principles into a national legislation through the process of Europeanisation in Southeast Europe (SEE) (Fernández et al. 2010; Kapaciauskaite 2011; Gioti Papadaki 2012; Niedziałkowski et al. 2012; Cent et al. 2014; Denti 2014; Kay 2014; Krenova and Kindlmann 2015). Sustainable goals are based on the Bird Directive (BD) and Habitat Directive (HD) (Rosa and Da Silva 2005; Wurzel 2008; Ferranti et al. 2010; Louette et al. 2011; Winter et al. 2014; Winkel et al. 2015) and the principles of the Aarhus Convention (AC) (Stringer and Paavola 2013; Niedziałkowski et al. 2014). In order to implement these goals and principles in practice, it is a necessary institutional transformation at the national and local level. Institutional transformation leads to the involvement of non-governmental

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organisations (NGO) (Weber and Christophersen 2002; Newig and Fritsch 2009; Ferranti et al. 2010; Cent et al. 2013; Stringer and Paavola 2013) and EU actors (Giljum et al. 2005; Stubbs 2005; Jordan 2008; Brulle 2010) in the system of nature protection and the changing of the roles of national and local institutions. All this leads to a change of the nature protection concept at a local and national level according to the goals of sustainable development (SD) on the global level (Šobot and Lukšič 2016; 2017; 2019). Global environmental changes are influenced by the internationalisation of national and local policies in global movement for sustainable development.

The research was carried out within the framework of the individual research project *Multi-Level Governance of Natural Resources in Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina* from 2013 to 2016 and the applied methodology was used from Šobot and Lukšič (2016; 2017; 2019). Primarily, 67 interviews were conducted via snowball sampling, using over 1000 pages of secondary literature text. Secondary, all relevant and available literature (legislative acts, scientific literature etc.) was collected and a policy analysis was conducted according to the main objective of the research. The main research objective was to determine the impact of Europeanisation (legislative and institutional level) on the nature protection system in the counties of SEE.

A comparative discussion is conducted according to the research thesis divided into 5 sub-theses. The research thesis is drawn from the main objective of the research. The five sub-theses are drawn from five research questions, which are included in the research.<sup>2</sup> The discussion according to the thesis and sub-theses is presented through similarities and differences between the influences of the process of establishing the N2000 multi-level governance (MLG) system on the nature protection system of the countries included in the study.

## 2 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

**Research thesis:** The Europeanisation of SEE led to the adoption of SD objectives in the nature protection systems due to the establishment of the N2000 MLG system and the legal as well as institutional development is required in order to have the objectives of SD implemented in practice.

**The first sub-thesis:** The process of establishing the MLG system of N2000 or the integration of the objectives of SD in selected SEE countries following the process of Europeanisation.

**Confirmation:** The Republic of Slovenia (RS) and The Republic of Croatia (RC) are, according to the constitution, unique and indivisible states, while Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) is composed of two entities. In the RS and RC, the main role has the government at the country level, while the Council of Ministers has the main role in BiH. Their roles are primarily legislative. According to the constitution of all three countries, the international objectives must be

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<sup>2</sup> The first research question is to determine the process of establishing the MLG of N2000 in countries of SEE that followed during the pre-accession and accession process; The second research question is to determine the changes in the national legislation during the implementation of N2000 international agreements; The third research question is to determine the roles of the main actors in the process of establishing MLG of N2000; The fourth research question is to determine the contribution of the process of establishing MLG of N2000 in the nature protection system; The fifth research question is to identify future challenges for the nature protection system.

implemented in their national legislation during the process of the Europeanisation. In 1999, the RS submitted its application for EU membership and in 2004, became a member of the EU.<sup>3</sup> The RC submitted a formal candidacy to join the EU in 2003 and joined the EU in 2013.<sup>4</sup> BiH entered the pre-accession process to join the EU in 1999 and in 2016, BiH submitted its official candidacy to join the EU.<sup>5</sup> All three countries had an obligation to establish the N2000 MLG system in this period. In the RS and RC, this process began with the official candidacy to join the EU (the accession period) while in BiH, it began before the official candidacy to join the EU (the pre-accession period). The first steps to establishing the N2000 MLG system in all three countries were in changing the national legislation of nature protection with the implementation of international objectives. In 1999, the RS adopted a new law on nature protection, which integrated nature protection objectives according to BD and HD, and the RC along with BiH integrated these objectives into their national law in 2003. The next step was to include work on information gathering and the involvement of non-governmental actors in decision-making. In the RS, this process was guided by the competent Ministry of nature protection that included national experts in information gathering and decision-making (Šobot and Lukšič 2017). In the RC and BiH, these processes were guided through projects without a clear plan and strategy of the work on the establishment of N2000 areas. The work was such mostly due to the politics in these countries and the lack of financial resources. Having major EU funding, there had been intensive work on establishing the N2000 MLG system. As an example, in the RC, the first project "National Ecological Network – important bird areas in Croatia" was funded and led by the competent Ministry of nature protection. However, after this project there was a break of 2 years to obtain the EU funds. With obtaining the funds from the EU, the following three projects were organised, "Institutional strengthening and implementation of the NATURA 2000 network in Croatia", "The identification and establishment of the marine part of the NATURA 2000 network in Croatia", "Capacity building for the preparation of management plans and strengthening of nature protection inspection on the proposed NATURA 2000 areas", with which the process of establishing the N2000 MLG system was completed (Šobot and Lukšič 2016). The competent ministry of nature protection was included in all projects and the organisers of projects along with participants were mostly composed of international, governmental and non-governmental actors. All projects contributed to the implementation of BD and HD objectives into the national legislation. In this period a lot of experience was adopted from the RS. In BiH, the process of establishing the N2000 MLG system was performed through 5 projects: "Emerald Network", "Living Heart of Europe", "Protection of Biodiversity of the Sava River Basin floodplains", "Wise use of common natural resources", "Cooperation for NATURA 2000" (Šobot and Lukšič 2019). The EU funded the first 4 projects and the main project managers were national or international NGOs. There were no representatives of competent ministries from BiH in these projects. The EU also funded the last project, however, the project coordinator was the competent Ministry of nature protection in BiH. This project was also the final proposal of N2000 areas in BiH. In this project, a lot of the experience was adopted from the RC and RS. All projects, in the process of establishing the N2000 MLG system demanded information gathering and the involvement of stakeholders in decision-making, which make up the parts of the Aarhus Convention. Therefore, the process of establishing the N2000 MLG system in all three countries led to the implementation of the principles and

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<sup>3</sup> See more in Šobot and Lukšič (2017).

<sup>4</sup> See more in Šobot and Lukšič (2016).

<sup>5</sup> See more in Šobot and Lukšič (2019).



ratification of the Aarhus Convention. The RS ratified the AC in 2002, the RC completed it in 2006 and BiH did it in 2008.

***The Second sub-thesis:*** The objectives of BD, HD and AC are implemented into the national legislation that led to the definition of the main actors and their roles in achieving the objectives of sustainable development.

***Confirmation:*** The implementation of the BD and HD objectives and the principles of AC into the national nature protection systems, which led to the changes of national legislation.<sup>6</sup> Changes led to the inclusion of new actors in the nature protection system. The main actors in all three countries, in addition to governmental institutions (competent ministries and managers of protected areas), became international actors (such as the EU) and non-governmental actors (such as NGOs in the field of nature protection). The EU became an important actor in nature protection at the national level in all three countries. In the RS and RC, it is a platform of information transfer under the national law. In BiH, RC and RS, the EU is in charge of financing the implementation of international agreements into national legislation. In addition, the EU is responsible for coordinating the implementation of international commitments into national legislation in these countries. In the RS and RC, the EU is a controller of international agreements in order to remain unchanged under the influence of national legislation. The EU is a consultant in BiH for all the important issues on its way towards the EU. Competent ministries of nature protection are in charge of communicating with the EU at the national level in terms of implementation and enforcement of international obligations to protect nature. They have an administrative role in the transposition of BD, HD and the directives of AC into national legislation. They are the leaders of a formal process of establishing N2000. It is defined that the government with the assistance of the competent ministry submits a N2000 areas final proposal to the competent EU institution in RS.

During the process of establishing the N2000 MLG system, competent ministries of nature protection have a role in information-gathering and involvement of stakeholders in decision-making in all three countries. The governments of RS and RC have to establish new institutions that should operate within the competent ministry in order to gather information. Competent ministries are also in charge of inter-sectoral cooperation during the establishment of the N2000 MLG system. In BiH, an inter-entity cooperation and coordination mechanism are established for all-important issues towards the EU. The competent state ministry has the role of co-ordinating the competent entity ministries (in the Federation of BiH (FBiH) cantonal ministries). Furthermore, these ministries have a role in information-gathering and involving stakeholders in decision-making. In RS and RC, competent ministries keep records of N2000 areas after adopting N2000.

The cooperation with managers of protected areas is defined, which are becoming an important actor in implementing BD and HD at the local level in all three countries. The National Parks, in all three countries, have the role of managing the national eco-network and after the adoption of N2000 - of also the N2000 network. Their role in the N2000 is to gather information and involve local people in decision-making. Working with local people is defined in raising

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<sup>6</sup> A literature review on the implementation of the objectives of BD and HD and the principles of AC into national systems of nature protection countries of the EU can be found in the articles by Šobot and Lukšič (2016; 2017; 2019).

public awareness (work on opinions) to achieve the objectives of nature protection. It is defined that National Parks (NP) participate in the development of documents on the national level in RS. It is defined that NPs participate in the transfer of experience from other protected areas and cooperate with non-governmental organisations in all three countries.

The NGOs in the field of nature protection are defined as major actors in achieving the principles and objectives of sustainable development at the national level in all three countries. Their role is based on the help to governmental actors in implementing the principles of the Aarhus Convention and the objectives of BD and HD. They also have a role in collecting information, involving the public in decision-making and promoting the rights of nature protection. They are legitimate participants in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process at the national level and have a role in representing public environmental rights.

**The third sub-thesis:** The main actors of nature protection had a role in implementing the principles of AC for achieving the objectives of BD and HD in accordance with the concept of SD.

*Confirmation 1.* The role of the EU.<sup>7</sup> The EU funded and coordinated, in an advisory manner, all projects to establish the N2000 MLG system in RS, RC and BiH. These projects led to the implementation of the objectives of BD and HD, as well as the principles of AC in the national legislation, that represent the basic change in the nature protection system of these areas. The objectives of BD and HD were implemented in the law on nature protection and the objectives of AC into the law on environmental protection. Financing the implementation of international obligations by the EU enabled the implementation of the objectives of sustainable development in nature protection systems of the SEE and policy development in these areas. The EU is recognised as the guardian of the objectives of international agreements in order to remain unchanged under the influence of domestic legislation in RS and RC. In this manner, supranational rules with a transnational participant enabled the transparency and unchangeability of nature protection rules at the national level. The unchangeability of AC rules led to altering public awareness and old practices. The new practice demanded change in the concept of nature protection, a system access through planning and inter-sectoral cooperation, which was not the case before. That is why the NGO sector gained, for the first time, equality in decision-making in the field of nature protection. It is the biggest change regarding the attitude of governmental and non-governmental actors in the RS, RC and BiH nature protection system. In the RS and RC, this led to altering the practice, increasing the number of participants in nature protection, the respect for all stakeholders in decision-making, as well as a higher degree of respect for legislation. The EU is the guardian of the rights and all disputable situations that came between governmental and non-governmental actors in the process of establishing N2000, which led to the freezing of funds for the RS and the RC. This is the mechanism by which the EU does not participate directly in the relations between the stakeholders (governmental and non-governmental actors) but instead, it protects supranational interest and compels participants to work together to find a solution. In the RS, RC and BiH, the EU became a national consultant for all future plans of nature protection which must comply with the legislative of the EU, i.e. other member states. In this manner, a new practice was introduced in the

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<sup>7</sup> A literature review on the EU role in the implementation of international obligations at the national level can be found in the articles by Šobot and Lukšič (2016; 2017; 2019).

transfer of information that was recognised as important in all processes of nature protection.

*Confirmation 2:* The role of the competent Ministry of nature protection.<sup>8</sup> The competent Ministry of nature protection in the RS had a formal role of organising the whole process of establishing the N2000 MLG system. The ministry established the Management board that coordinated the entire process from the beginning to the end. The establishment of the N2000 MLG system was done through projects in the RC and BiH. A competent ministry had a major role in establishing N2000 in RC. They were the leaders of the first project of establishing N2000 and the main actors of the implementation of all other projects funded by the EU. The process of establishing N2000 in BiH was also done through projects. However, in BiH, the competent ministry at the state level did not participate in all the projects but it did participate and coordinate the last project of establishing the N2000 MLG system. Other projects were coordinated by domestic or international NGOs. The role of the competent Ministry in nature protection of BiH, in the process of establishing the N2000 MLG system, is defined quite well by a constitutional structure that differs from the RS and RC (mostly due to the entity governments). The competent state ministry established the Management Board in which all the entities and cantonal ministries were included. The Management Board had a group for the harmonisation of legislative, information gathering, to involve the public in decision-making and creating a proposal of N2000 areas. This Board was established on the practice of the RS. In the RS, the Board had a role to harmonise national legislative with the EU legislative, to gather information, to involve the public in decision-making and to prepare the final draft of N2000 areas. In the RC, there were no boards and activities were done from project to project. The competent ministry, as in the RS, had the role of transposing international obligations into national legislation, of information gathering and of involving the public in decision-making. In the RS and the RC, there was an increase in the number of employees due to the needs for the work on the establishment of N2000. Statutory legislation led to the changes of inter-sectoral organisations of the competent ministry on several occasions (the transformation of institutions) and the establishment of new institutions for the purpose of N2000 areas, such as the Republic Institute for Nature Protection (RINP). The Institute for Nature Protection included many independent researchers in the data collection process. In BiH, due to the constitutional order, there was neither the capacity building and transformation of existing institutions, nor the establishment of new institutions at the national level, however, the coordination mechanism was established. The coordination mechanism plays a role of increasing inter-entity cooperation, i.e. intersectoral cooperation. Collecting data in the Entity Republic of Srpska (ERS) went through RINP and independent experts. In EFBiH, collecting data went through independent experts and NGOs because there was no Entity Institute of Nature Protection (EINP). Inter-sectoral cooperation in RC was developed mostly during the EIA process, which has been going on since 2007. This led to the involvement of other sectors in nature protection (potential N2000 areas) on a planned basis. In RS and BiH, there was the inclusion of other sectors in the process of establishing N2000 through the board for N2000. Primarily, there were included representatives of the forestry and agriculture in all three areas since a large part of forest and agricultural land represents a potential N2000 area. The sector of forestry cooperated quite well, while the sector of agriculture had very little

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<sup>8</sup> A literature review on the roles of the ministry on implementation of international obligations can be found in published articles by Šobot and Lukšič (2016; 2017; 2019).

cooperation in all three areas. In all three countries, all other sectors were marginally involved.

*Confirmation 3: The role of the National parks.*<sup>9</sup> The role of NPs in all three areas was not defined by the organisers of the process of establishing the N2000 MLG system. The competent ministry communicated with NPs in all three areas during the establishment of the N2000 MLG system in the course of their regular activities of inter-sectoral cooperation. In all three areas, the research was done by the RINP and NGOs. In this manner, there was cooperation between governmental and non-governmental actors in all three parks. Also, all three parks are members of the Dinaric Arc parks and in such a manner, there was an international communication in the process of establishing the N2000 MLG system. The Triglav National Park (TNP) underwent legal changes after the establishment of the N2000 MLG system, whereby a new management model was established that included non-governmental actors in decision-making. There was no new management model and non-governmental actors were not involved in decision-making in Plitvice Lake National Park (PLNP) and Sutjeska National Park (SNP).

*Confirmation 4: The role of Non-governmental organisations.*<sup>10</sup> The need for information gathering according to BD and HD led to the establishment of new NGOs by the experts and the development of existing NGOs in the process of establishing the N2000 MLG system in all three countries. The work on information-gathering led to the professionalisation of the NGO sector in all three countries. The professionalised NGO sector began to control the implementation of national legislation, mostly on the examples of EIA. This led to increasing the public involvement in NGO in the field of nature protection in all three countries. Public involvement in NGOs led to increased public involvement in the national nature protection politics and policy. The increased NGO participation in politics at the national level of nature protection system led to more conflicts between governmental and non-governmental actors. The NGOs in many cases represented the rights of the public and prevented many harmful projects for potential N2000 areas. In this manner, many NGOs received media attention. In addition, in all three countries, NGOs had the role of transferring the experiences from countries, which had already adopted N2000. The NGOs that were more internationally linked (like NGOs in RC) began to participate in lobbying at the international level. In BiH, the international NGO World Wildlife Fund (WWF) was the first proponent of N2000, while in the RS, it was the national NGO DOPPS.<sup>11</sup> In the RC, the NGO sector corrected the final proposal of the government for the proposed N2000 areas. Also, in the RC, the NGO sector underwent an evolution in public involvement while in BiH, it was more "symbolic" in nature. This influenced that, in BiH, the NGO sector was less developed than the NGO sector of the RC and RS. In the RS, after the adoption of N2000, NGO DOPPS was given the role of management and monitoring of N2000 areas, while in the RC it had only the role of monitoring the proposed areas.

***The fourth sub-thesis:*** The implementation of BD, HD and AC contributed to the introduction of the concept of sustainable development in the nature protection

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<sup>9</sup> A literature review on the roles of national parks in an implementation of international obligations can be found in the articles by Šobot and Lukšič (2016; 2017; 2019).

<sup>10</sup> A literature review on the roles of NGOs in the implementation and execution of international objectives at the national level can be found in the articles by Šobot and Lukšič (2016; 2017; 2019).

<sup>11</sup> National name is Društvo za opazovanje in proučevanje ptic Slovenije (*Society for the observation and study of birds of Slovenia*).

system at the national level. The AC became a central component in achieving the objectives of BD and HD, and introducing the concept of SD.

*Confirmation 1:* The contribution of the first pillar of the AC according to BD and HD.<sup>12</sup> There was an increase of information on the number and status of species and habitats according to BD and HD in all three countries. In this manner, all three countries established the new protected areas. The RS and RC protected one third of the country according to BD and HD. In BiH, 1/5 of the areas of the state was submitted for protection according to BD and HD and new protected areas were set up, such as the Una NP, which has the role of managing species and habitats that are protected by BD and HD. The processes of information-gathering in the RS and RC led to an increase in communication and cooperation of all sectors, while in BiH, they led to an increased inter-entity cooperation. In the RS and RC, this led to an institutional transformation and capacity-building in the nature-protection sector through the establishment of new institutions, while BiH adopted the coordination mechanism. The processes of establishing N2000, for the first time in the RS and RC, enabled the public access to information on nature protection in one place, while the process in BiH contributed a greater amount of information to be publicly available in more places.

*Confirmation 2:* The contribution of the second pillar of the AC according to BD and HD. In all three countries, there was a public involvement in the NGO sector. The public was primarily involved in the NGO sector to influence decision-making because the public realised that non-governmental actors had equality in decision-making as governmental actors. In the RS and RC, this led to the first great public participation in decision-making within a nature protection system. The public found that public participation was a way of protecting nature. In BiH, there was no raising of public awareness about the need for public participation in a nature-protection system and the public were mostly involved in the process of EIA. In BiH, there was no great NGO sector development as was the case in the RS and RC. However, non-governmental actors from BiH, for the first time, began to get involved in creating nature protection politics and policy at the national level together with governmental actors.

*Confirmation 3:* The contribution of the third pillar of the AC according to BD and HD. In all three countries, the public recognised the possibility for action upon the problem in nature protection through NGOs that received a similar impact as governmental organisations and partly therefore included them in the process of EIA. That is why the NGO sector initiated many lawsuits against harmful projects in the proposed N2000 areas in all three countries. This contributed to the raising of public awareness about the importance of BD and HD in all three countries.

**The fifth sub-thesis:** Future challenges of nature protection (and SD) are based on the application of the principles of AC for achieving the objectives of BD and HD.

*Confirmation 1:* The challenge of the first pillar of the AC according to BD and HD.<sup>13</sup> All three countries are faced with the challenges of developing a system of information-gathering as a basis for nature protection. In the RS and RC, the

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<sup>12</sup> A literature review on the contributions of all pillars of the AC according to BD and HD can be found in the articles by Šobot and Lukšič (2016; 2017; 2019).

<sup>13</sup> A literature review on the challenges of all pillars of the AC according to BD and HD can be found in the articles by Šobot and Lukšič (2016; 2017; 2019).

problem is a lack of connection or incompleteness of all information according to BD and HD. This leads to a lack of transparency of information for nature protection. In BiH, the biggest challenge is creating a unified database according to BD and HD. The data have been available so far in multiple sources, which significantly causes the lack of connection of all data. In addition, all three countries experienced a lack of data on the opinions of population of protected areas for nature protection and N2000. It is necessary to collect the views of the population with the aim of improving management control of protected areas in all three countries. On a national level, it is also very important to include the whole of society in order to gather information in all three countries. It is therefore necessary to create a communication strategy of governmental and non-governmental actors in all three countries as a basic document for gathering information and nature protection in these areas. In addition, on an international level, in the future, it is necessary to gather information on the impact of climate change on species and habitats according to BD and HD, which has not been done by the managers of protected areas in all three areas. Based on the gathered information it is necessary to develop policies of adaptation and of climate change management.

*Confirmation 2:* The challenge of the second pillar of the AC according to BD and HD. All three countries have a lot of problems with public participation in decision-making. In the RS and RC, there is a problem of uneven development of the NGO sector across the country, which leads to the disengagement of public from peripheral areas in decision-making. In BiH, there is a problem of the underdeveloped NGO sector in general. In the future, it is necessary to create a clear plan for the development of the NGO sector on the territory of all three countries, which should be an integral part of a communication strategy. In addition, the RC and BiH have big problems with non-compliance in national legislation while involving the public in decision-making across the country. Following, the law is carried out on a case-by-case basis. In the future, it is necessary to raise public awareness on the respect for the legislation on the whole territory of the country. In BiH, public participation in decision-making is also at a low level, mostly due to the small development of the NGO sector. It is necessary to develop public participation in NGO of nature protection in BiH in the future. BiH and the RC expressed the problems of insufficient involvement of local people in the management of protected areas. In the future, it is necessary to organise new models of governance and management in which governmental and non-governmental actors should have equal participation in decision-making. In the RS, there is a problem of the population's uneven involvement in decision-making in the entire territory of protected areas. In addition, the problem is also the unequal powers of non-governmental actors in decision-making with governmental actors. A future challenge for the RS represents an upgrade of managers of protected areas that should contribute to the balanced involvement of non-governmental actors in the entire territory of the protected area and should distribute equal powers to non-governmental and governmental actors in decision-making.

*Confirmation 3:* The challenge of the third pillar of the AC according to BD and HD. In all three countries, the judiciary is seen as not sufficiently developed to deal with questions on nature protection. The main problem is a complete access to information in all three countries. Another problem is the non-compliance of legislation (as in RC and BiH) for public participation in all processes of nature protection. On the other hand, the major problem is the low level of public awareness in BiH, i.e. the lack of education of the population on nature protection

in all three countries. It is necessary to integrate education on nature protection and sustainable development in all regular school systems.

### 3 CONFIRMATION OF THE MAIN THESIS AS A CONCLUSION

The Europeanisation has contributed to the introduction of the concept of SD in the system of nature protection of SEE countries and it is necessary for the future legislative and institutional development to agree to the AC principles in order to achieve the objectives of BD and HD and the objectives of sustainable development in practice. Suggestions for future legislative and institutional development are shown in Table 1. The thesis was confirmed.

TABLE 1: PROPOSAL FOR LEGISLATIVE AND INSTITUTIONAL GUIDELINES TO IMPROVE THE GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT OF THE NATURA 2000 PROTECTED AREAS IN SELECTED COUNTRIES OF SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVES OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

1.	<b>Legislative guidelines</b>	
	1.1.	It is necessary to integrate the education on sustainable development based on nature protection according to the Birds Directive and Habitat Directive and principles of the Aarhus Convention in all regular school system that will contribute to the raising of public awareness.
	1.1.1.	It is necessary to raise public awareness of the need to gather information on nature protection.
	1.1.2.	It is necessary to raise public awareness of the need for public participation in decision-making in the nature protection system.
	1.1.3.	It is necessary to raise public awareness of the need for legal disputes over the rights of nature and a healthy environment.
	1.2.	It is necessary to develop communication in nature protection. This can be organised through the creation of a communication strategy for Natura 2000 areas within the national system of nature protection. These strategies should be based on the pillars of the Aarhus Convention, which underpin the implementation of the nature protection objectives (the Birds Directive and Habitat Directive) within the concept of sustainable development.
	1.2.1.	Information is the basis of nature protection and its gathering should be the primary objective of the communication strategy. The gathering of information should include the whole society.
	1.2.2.	In the future it is necessary to develop a plan for public involvement in decision-making within the communication strategy.
	1.2.3.	In the future it is necessary to involve the non-governmental sector in the whole state in the nature protection policy in order that people in the peripheral areas can also influence the decision-making.
	1.2.4.	In the future it is necessary to work in improving inter-sectoral cooperation and in particular the inclusion of all sectors which are in the process of establishing a multi-level governance system, with Natura 2000 been marginally involved.
2.	<b>Institutional guidelines</b>	
	2.1.	Managers of protected areas need to develop new models of governance.
	2.1.1.	New governance models should include all relevant information on management (environmental, social, political).
	2.1.2.	New governance models should ensure equal representation of governmental and non-governmental actors in decision-making. Also, it is necessary to establish an equal distribution of power between governmental and non-governmental actors in decision-making on the management of protected areas.

The impact of Europeanisation in SEE countries reflects in pre-accession and accession processes of joining the EU. Pre-accession and accession processes had their legal and institutional form in these countries. Such a legal and institutional form incorporated the implementation of international obligations of sustainable development into the national legislation in the course of implementation N2000 (sub-thesis 1). Apart from that, there were changes of institutional framework in the system of nature protection (sub-thesis 2) and the role of main actors in the system of nature protection (sub-thesis 3). The establishment of N2000 contributed to the development of this legal and institutional framework (sub-thesis 4), however, there are needs for further development of the legal framework (national legislations, especially according to the principles of AC and objectives of BD and HD) and institutional framework towards democratisation

(national actors in nature protection) in order to implement objectives of sustainable development in practise (sub-thesis 5).

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## VOTE ÉLECTRONIQUE IN SWITZERLAND: COMPARISON OF RELEVANT PILOT PROJECTS

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*Estonia is the trailblazer in e-voting, but Switzerland is actively pursuing the establishment of e-voting in its elections, too. The purpose of the study is to identify the factors that essentially affected the success of the “vote électronique” in the pilot projects conducted in the cantons of Geneva, Neuchâtel and Zürich. It becomes evident that state change is promoted or prevented by the concurrence of several factors. Naturally, the underlying institutional factors and constellations of actors play a substantial role and the context of the Swiss system is of importance as well. Switzerland is using two of the most progressive e-voting solutions in the cantons of Geneva and Neuchâtel and, hence, can be a role model. This would be the case simply on the grounds that the introduction process was mastered despite strong federal structures and political complexities, although such determinants are generally considered to be resistant to innovation and reforms.*

**Key words:** e-voting; vote électronique; digitalization; digitization.

### 1 RESEARCH CONTEXT AND RELEVANCE OF THE SUBJECT

In view of the fact that digitalization affects all areas of life, it suggests itself that it also is subject to increasingly strong dynamics. Against this background, the scientific relevance of the subject and the accompanying topic of e-voting are coming to the fore rapidly. Undoubtedly, Estonia is a pioneer in this respect (Drechsler 2003; Drechsler 2006; Maaten 2004, 83–90; Charles 2005; Madise and Martens 2006, 15–26; Estonian National Electoral Committee 2007; Ray 2007; Trechsel et al. 2007; Reiners 2011), but Switzerland is following close behind (Reiners 2017, 40; E-Vote-ID 2018).

E-voting is a part of e-democracy, which refers to the online services provided by e-government. It is an additional way of voting electronically, in other words

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irrespective of time and place, in public elections outside of a voting office via the Internet by using one's own private electronic devices (Swiss Federal Council 2017, 1; Buchstein 2004, 41; Buchsbaum 2004, 31–42; Palvia and Sharma 2007).

An analysis of the revolutionary change and the relevant factors supporting or blocking the Vote électronique project in Switzerland is needed because the research exhibits extensive deficits. Up until now, only very few case studies and even fewer comparative studies are available (Reiners 2011; Reiners 2017; Braun 2004, 43–52). Moreover, only rudimentary research findings regarding e-voting in the pilot cantons of Geneva, Zürich and Neuchâtel are available (Gerlach and Gasser 2009). A comparative study on the subject has been compiled but not published yet (Piwonski 2018). Therefore, some of the empirical findings concerning the three pilot cantons refer to this study. At the present time, primarily only administrative assessments and reports drawn up by the pilot cantons can be found. Thus, this gap in the research needs to be filled.

The joint project of the Confederation and cantons is intended to send a signal in support of political rights and democratic co-determination. In particular, it would accommodate society's increasing desire for mobility as well as facilitate participation in elections and votes independent of time and place. Moreover, the e-Government Strategy Roadmap Vote électronique, passed by the Swiss Federal Council in 2007, strives to simplify government services. For one, the project is the logical response to global developments in communication and processes; for another, it would prevent invalid votes and facilitate voting for Swiss citizens living abroad and persons with disabilities. Therefore, quality improvement ostensibly is the primary goal (Swiss Federal Council 2013a, 2; Swiss Federal Council 2017, 1).

The overall project Vote électronique has been driven by the efforts of the Federal Council, the parliament and the cantons since 2000. Following more than 200 successful cantonal trials, the decision to roll out the electronic channel on a wider scope was taken in 2018. The test phase lasted for about 15 years, during which the bottom-up project proved to be successful despite modest expectations. Today, eight cantons have introduced e-voting. The first pilot phase, which was successful in all three pilot cantons, marks the starting point. However, up until now only the outcomes in the cantons of Geneva and Neuchâtel have come to fruition. By contrast, the project has been suspended in the canton of Zürich until at least 2022 despite generally positive experiences. Accordingly, besides Estonia, the projects in the cantons of Geneva and Neuchâtel can be counted among the most progressive e-voting projects (Swiss Federal Chancellery 2018a; Swiss Federal Council 2017, 1; Reiners 2017, 48–50).

Following the initiation of the project in 2000, the Federal Council's first report on the feasibility as well as chances and risks was published in 2002, whereupon the pilot projects followed from 2004 to 2006. Each of the three pilot cantons used e-voting systems that they had developed themselves, and all of them received positive assessments by the Federal Council. At the beginning, e-voting was limited to Swiss nationals living in the country. In 2006, the parliament and Federal Council decided to expand the channel successively and to make it available to Swiss nationals (voters) resident abroad. As of 2008, the focus was expanded to include additional cantons, Swiss nationals living abroad and persons with disabilities. In addition, more trials were conducted in the three pilot cantons and legislative amendments were enacted (Swiss Federal Council 2013a, 2; Swiss Federal Chancellery 2004, 29; Swiss Federal Chancellery 2018b).

The establishment of the Consortium Vote électronique in 2009, a cross-cantonal association that used a copy of the e-voting system used in the canton of Zürich, and further expansion of the system used in the canton of Geneva marked the greatest advances made by the project. As a result, 13 cantons participated in new trials in 2010. In 2011, the Roadmap Vote électronique was expanded so that half of Swiss nationals (voters) resident abroad were able to vote electronically in federal elections in 2012. Accordingly, the objectives of the phase from 2008 to 2012 were achieved. Following the introduction of additional legislative amendments from 2013 to 2016, the greatest setback occurred when the largest e-voting association, the Consortium Vote électronique, fell apart because the Federal Council withdrew its authorization to offer e-voting in the parliamentary elections in 2015 due to security issues. Consequently, the pilot projects in the cantons associated with the consortium, e.g. in Zürich amongst others, were ended or suspended because of financial problems. Nonetheless, during the most recent phase from 2017 to 2018, the Swiss Federal Council announced that it would start working on the establishment of e-voting (as a recognized channel for voting) and introduced a new planning tool for this purpose. In addition, amendment of the Federal Act on Political Rights is to be reviewed (Statistical Office of the canton of Zürich 2018a, 3; Swiss Federal Chancellery 2018a; Swiss Federal Chancellery 2018b).

In 2018, the Swiss Federal Council authorized six cantons to conduct trials during national elections. Moreover, two systems comply with the federal legal requirements: the system used in the canton of Geneva and that of Swiss Post. Currently, eight cantons are offering e-voting (Swiss Federal Chancellery 2018c, 1). Furthermore, the Swiss Federal Council is planning to introduce an electronic identity card, a measure that would facilitate the process (Neue Zürcher Zeitung 2017; Reiners 2017, 48–50).

The process was defined by intensive negotiation mechanisms, whereby this is inherent in the country's system of direct representation. The seven members of the Federal Council have equal power, discuss and act on the principle of collective responsibility, negotiate their positions and take decisions jointly. In this way as wide a range of political views as possible is integrated in the Swiss Parliament. Moreover, the government cannot be overthrown by a vote of no confidence. Thus, it can pursue a relatively stable political agenda independent of parliamentary majorities; however, the government does not have a joint government program, which would provide orientation to the actors. Yet, the Road Map Vote électronique represents a standpoint. In view of the strong federalism, the political interdependency resulting from the cantons' duty to work together and the population's direct rights of participation, consensus democracy inevitably evolved, in which, as a rule, power is exercised not on the basis of majorities but through dialog and consensus among all relevant actors. In doing so, popular rights exert strong pressure to achieve concordance and, hence, minimize resistance (Vatter 2006, 41, 57, 215, 236, 264). Accordingly, the project could only be designed incrementally and bottom-up. It enjoyed the widespread support of all relevant actors and the population in the pre-parliamentary phase; a circumstance that can be attributed to continuous negotiations and the consensus found in the committees set up by the Federal Chancellery to work together with representatives of the Confederation and cantons as well as experts. More than anything else, the permanent network interaction was characterized by the expectation of mutual advantages and goals, such as enhancing the legitimacy of the democratic system.

## 2 METHOD AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The factors influencing the policy result are determined by means of a qualitative-comparative and explorative, empirical (document-based) analysis of the period from 2000 to 2018. The focus is on the national and cantonal levels. As regards the method of comparison, the following should be noted: In many places the development of online voting projects stopped at the trial stage, and only rudimentary data are available. Therefore, systematic comparison is close to impossible. For this reason, the context of the analysis is limited more or less to a description of the status. It is almost inevitable that the focus becomes explorative and only implicitly comparative. The conditions in the three cantons will be explored based on the data available, albeit more in the form of a screening. This is intended to be less of a comparison, even less one based on stringent comparative requirements, than an appraisal as to whether the correct course has been set and the efforts show promise (Hadenius 1992, 155; Reiners 2017, 43).

The study extracts the institutional context, in other words the promotive or obstructive structural and legislative factors, in the three pilot cantons. Furthermore, the focus is on the constellations of actors and the forms of their interaction as well as content-related congruence or divergence (Ostrom 2005, 819–848; Reiners 2011, 556–559). The purpose of the study, therefore, is to identify the factors that essentially affect the policy results. In the cantons of Geneva and Neuchâtel, these factors can be explained by the actor-centred institutionalism and veto-player theory; this would also be true for the factors contributing to the failure in the canton of Zürich (Mayntz and Scharpf 1995; Scharpf 2000; Tesebelis 2002; Yin 2003, 33; Sabatier and Weible 2014; Treib 2015, 277).

The starting point as regards actor-centred institutionalism is the assumption that the characteristics of actors who act strategically, their constellations and forms of interaction as well as influences arising from the institutional context, in other words the conditions under which decisions are taken, are relevant for explaining policy decisions. In this regard, the context is not limited to the exterior framework of the interaction, which defines who is involved in decisions and which rules guide a decision. Instead it can be assumed that institutions also influence the internal organization, capacity to act, preferences and perception. Consequently, policy results are not automatically the best possible solution; rather they evolve from the results achieved through the interaction of the actors involved, all of whom pursue their interests. So, although state structures acting in the capacity of institutions affect actors and the course of their interaction, they don't determine the policy result, they merely influence it indirectly. All in all, the conditions form a more or less favourable starting point for change, which, as it were, is initiated in combination with other mechanisms. The starting point impacts the objectives because of the path dependency of institutional developments (Scharpf 2000, 77, 82; Treib 2015, 279–297).

The concept can be combined with the veto player's theory, which analyses so-called veto players, i.e. actors who are set in their position based on their inner structure and behaviour. Veto players are individual or collective actors whose agreement is needed to depart from the status quo and, thus, initiate change. The fact that laws passed by the Swiss parliament can be put to a popular vote subsequently because of a defined process makes the people a veto instance. It is important to note that the policy result as such depends on whether potential

veto players block change or promote it constructively. Achieving change is even more difficult whenever a system comprises a large number of institutional veto players. However, it also depends on the congruence, i.e. the degree of agreement among the veto players, and the cohesion, i.e. the degree of internal unity among the veto players (Tsebelis 2002, 2; Benz 2003, 205–236; Reiners 2011, 565–568).

### 3 PILOT PROJECT GENEVA

The trials for e-voting in Geneva started in 2004 using a system developed by the canton itself (CHVote) and were rated positively by the Federal Council. More trials that focused on Swiss voters resident abroad and persons with disabilities were conducted from 2008 to 2012. In 2009, the central Election Council was established in the canton to enhance transparency. The Council had a control function and included political representatives from the Grand Council and experts from the canton's public administration. The first contracts between the canton of Geneva and other cantons were concluded in 2011; they allowed Swiss expats to use CHVote. In 2011, trials were conducted nationwide for the parliamentary elections; in 2012, the first trials were authorized for cantonal elections. Since 2013, all Swiss voters resident abroad can use e-voting in the canton of Geneva. The individual verifiability required by the Swiss Federal Council for reasons of security was integrated in 2015. After the Consortium Vote électronique was discontinued, new trials were initiated with the system in the cantons of Aargau and St. Gallen (République et Canton de Genève/no year; Swiss Federal Council 2013a, 2–3, 31).

The canton of Geneva has one of two trailblazing e-voting systems in Switzerland. The CHVote system was developed completely in Geneva, and it is operated and controlled there by the canton's own IT division. It should be noted that the canton already had a central electoral register before the trials were started: this is a prerequisite for ensuring the unequivocal identification of every user and preventing double votes. Swiss voters living in Switzerland have to register to be able to use the e-voting system, Swiss voters resident abroad are registered automatically (Gerlach and Gasser 2009, 6; Swiss Federal Council 2013a, 47, 109).

In order to use the CHVote platform, eligible voters need to have a voting card (sent to them by post), technical equipment and Internet access, and they need to state their date of birth. The voting card states individualized codes. The system is accessed by means of the voting card number; subsequently, the voter can fill out a ballot. Confirmation codes are generated after the ballot has been transmitted. The eligible voters need to compare the codes with the individualized codes stated on their voting card to ensure that the confidential data was transmitted correctly and securely (individual verifiability). After the confirmation code stated on the voting card is entered in the system, the electronic ballot will be transmitted. In the final step of the process, a finalization code is generated. It has to be the same as the finalization code on the voting card. All votes are collected in encrypted form and decrypted by the authorities once the election is over (République et Canton de Genève 2018a). At the present time, the focus is on developing universal verifiability so as to prevent any manipulation. During the cantonal elections on 15 April 2018, 16.4% of eligible voters (particularly Swiss voters resident abroad) chose e-voting, 76.1% chose postal voting and only 7.5% decided to vote in a polling station (Tribune de Genève 2018).

An analysis of the institutional context also proves interesting because structural and legislative factors can be subsumed under it (Reiners 2011, 556–559; Reiners 2017, 40–43). Some demographic characteristics need to be considered in connection with structural factors. The canton is the smallest of the pilot cantons: its area is 282 km<sup>2</sup>, the population is 498,000 and population density is 2,028 persons per km<sup>2</sup>, which is far above the Swiss average (204). In a comparison of the pilot cantons, it takes second place after the canton of Zürich and has the highest population density. Moreover, the number of eligible voters came to 233,000 in 2018; of these, 25,756 were Swiss voters resident abroad. Therefore, the canton has the largest percentage of Swiss residents living abroad by far, i.e. 11.1%. They are the principal target group for e-voting, but, at the same time, also the group that is most difficult to integrate because their places of residence are all around the world, they are registered in different polling communes and, furthermore, are eligible to vote in their former place of residence and commune of origin. With the option of online voting, Swiss voters resident abroad can spare themselves long-distance travel to Swiss representations abroad, and other bureaucratic problems are minimized as well. Consequently, e-voting makes participation in elections more comfortable and facilitates administrative services (République et Canton de Genève 2018b, 1–2, 19; Swiss Federal Chancellery 2018d).

A fundamental, though not unfavourable, factor is the widespread affinity to the Internet prevalent in the canton. In 2015, 92% of all households in the region of the Lake of Geneva (cantons of Vaud, Valais, Geneva) had Internet access. In these areas, 72% of the population used the Internet for e-commerce and 68% for e-banking (Swiss Federal Statistical Office 2018a; Swiss Federal Statistical Office 2018b). In addition, about 223,000 tax declarations were filed in 2016, 15,428 (6.9%) of them electronically through the GeTax portal (Piwonski 2018). The diverse utilization of online applications offered by private and public providers reflects the trust placed in new technologies. All in all, high Internet and media competence can be assumed.

The political structures, which are founded on the federal structure of Switzerland, are a third, substantial factor. Although the cantons enjoy extensive autonomy from the confederation, they also have an obligation to cooperate. Pursuant to the principles of federalism, government competence and political rights are divided between the federal, cantonal and local levels. The federal level controls and coordinates the project, whereas the cantonal level is responsible for the introduction, organization and implementation. Furthermore, the communes are not sovereign municipalities and, hence, subordinate to the cantons. Their autonomy is subject to cantonal law. There also are differences in the degree of decentralization; for example, the degree of autonomy decreases steadily from east to west, which is to say that municipalities located in cantons in the western part of Switzerland have less autonomy within their cantons (with the exception of the Valais). This is particularly true for the canton of Geneva, in which the municipalities' range of decision-making authority is very limited and they primarily are considered decentral executive bodies (Vatter 2016, 443 and 456–457).

Accordingly, the canton of Geneva grants its municipalities the least degree of autonomy and decentralization or, to put it differently, it has effected strong centralized autonomy towards the 45 municipalities. The French-speaking cantons of Neuchâtel, Vaud, Fribourg and Geneva have adopted these structures; however, Geneva takes the number one position (Vatter 2016, 458). Moreover,

the municipalities are responsible for setting up and managing the central electoral registers, amongst others those of Swiss voters resident abroad, a task that cannot be completed without stipulating requirements. In view of the centralized structures, electoral registers were in place before the trials started and facilitated the implementation (Swiss Federal Chancellery 2004, 24; Swiss Federal Council 2013a, 44).

In addition, legislative factors (amendments to laws) were important in connection with the implementation. On the one hand, the cantonal law on the exercise of political rights already was adapted in 1982 (*Loi sur l'exercice des droits politiques/LEDP*). This authorized cantonal governments, in cooperation with the municipalities, to test newly developed methods of voting and ballot counting. This reform was a prerequisite for obtaining approval of the trials. On the other hand, it must not be overlooked that postal voting was introduced at the cantonal level in 1994. Comparative statistics on voter turnout in cantonal parliamentary elections held in 26 cantons between 1972 and 2018 show that turnout before 1994 was negligible (Swiss Federal Council 2006a, 16; Swiss Federal Statistical Office 2018c). The question of legitimization always comes up in these kinds of cases. The introduction of postal voting marked a turnaround and an increase in voter turnout above and beyond the average turnout recorded in Switzerland (Geser 2004, 77). Both postal voting and e-voting accommodate Swiss voters resident abroad as well as older and disabled persons. Both cases involved similar discussions about legitimization and the danger of manipulation of democratic processes. As a matter of fact, postal voting strengthened the trust placed in the integration of new technologies, so that 95% of votes in the 2005 plebiscites were cast by postal voting. In the meantime, about 80% of the canton's residents are using this venue (*Tribune de Genève* 2018). This kind of trust is essential for introducing new technologies (Braun 2004, 43–52). Therefore, e-voting was promoted by the high acceptance of postal voting and the ensuing increase in voter turnout. The third reform concerned the adaptation of cantonal law. This was anchored in the cantonal constitution in 2009 and regulated by the establishment of a central election commission (Swiss Federal Council 2013a, 31, 91; Swiss Federal Council 2013b).

The most important actors and constellations that influence the project are the Swiss Federal Council, Swiss Federal Chancellery and the parliament at the national level, the *Conseil d'Etat* (Council of State) and *Chancellerie d'Etat* (State Chancellery) at the cantonal level as well as various political and operative bodies composed of federal and cantonal representatives. As the initiator of the project, the government, the Federal Council, plays a central part. It decided on the legislative process and put the project on the agenda. According to the system of executive departments, the Political Rights Section of the Federal Council is responsible for the strategic project management. The team is responsible for the coordination, approval and control of the trial phase. In addition, the Chancellor of Switzerland has a certain amount of influence as a member of the Federal Chancellery. The objectives of the Confederation are to develop additional venues of participation, to simplify the voting process for the competent authorities and to stabilize or increase voter turnout by attracting young, Internet savvy groups of the population. The parliament amended federal legislation and decided concordantly with the Federal Council in favour of successive expansion (Swiss Federal Council 2013a, 41).

At the cantonal level, the *Conseil d'Etat*, *Chancellerie d'Etat* and *Chancelier d'Etat* (State Chancellor) are relevant because they are responsible for introducing and



implementing the project. Pursuant to LEDP, the Conseil d'Etat was authorized to introduce new methods of voting in cooperation with the municipalities. The implementation of the trials was regulated in an agreement between the Federal Chancellery and the Conseil d'Etat. The project management was delegated to the Chancellerie d'Etat responsible for the organization and implementation (Swiss Federal Council 2006a, 8; Swiss Federal Council 2013a, 3).

Similar goals as those at the federal level become evident at the cantonal level as well. In particular, the cantons hope to stabilize or increase voter turnout by focusing on young, Internet savvy social strata and to simplify the voting procedure for Swiss voters resident abroad and persons with disabilities as well as to achieve long-term cost reductions (Hensler 2001, 14–15). Other secondary objectives are the expansion of influence and recognition. Switzerland is a modern laboratory of direct democracy, in which the cantons are considered the Confederation's field for experimentation (Vatter 2006, 35–36). In view of the success of its pioneering work, Geneva stands a good chance of gaining recognition.

#### 4 PILOT PROJECT NEUCHÂTEL

The canton started the project in 2005 with the development of its e-government portal "Guichet Unique". Electronic voting is only one of many services offered by the system. From 2003 to 2005 a central electoral register was developed and integrated at the cantonal level. However, in contrast to the canton of Geneva, it is a non-permanent decentralized solution, which means that the register is set up before every vote/election and discontinued afterwards. The first trials were carried out for the federal elections in 2005. The second phase, from 2008 to 2012, enabled Swiss voters resident abroad to take part. In 2015, individual verifiability was integrated in the e-voting solution, thereby making it viable for the process at the federal level. A productive collaboration with Swiss Post was initiated in 2016, and as of 2017 the Post's e-voting system was offered. Security aspects and flexible solutions for integrating e-voting in the e-government portal prompted the change (Swiss Federal Chancellery 2004, 5, 30; Swiss Federal Chancellery 2018b; Ne.ch 2018; Swiss Federal Council 2013a, 2; Die Post 2015; Die Post 2018).

The canton uses a system developed by their own IT department in collaboration with the Spanish firm SCYTL, a market leader in voting platforms. A prerequisite for casting a vote is that the voter is registered in the system. That is one of two security stages. In a first step, eligible voters are identified by means of a password and transaction number stated on a card they receive by post. The second step is integrated in the e-voting system; it is similar to the principle used in e-banking systems. The e-voting solution used by Swiss Post is based on the principle of Geneva's CHVote system and has fulfilled all requirements according to Confederate law up until now. Currently, the canton and Swiss Post are working on a solution for universal verifiability. Contrary to the CHVote system, development work is being carried out in collaboration with private companies. At the present time, Swiss Post has partnered with five cantons, three of which are planning to introduce the electronic voting channel by 2020 (Swiss Federal Chancellery 2004, 5; Swiss Federal Council 2013a, 33; Scytl/no year; Die Post 2017; Die Post 2018).

Structural factors and demographic characteristics are of interest as well because

they promoted the implementation. The canton covers an area of 802 km<sup>2</sup>; thus, it is the second largest pilot canton. However, its population of 178,567 is lower than that in the canton of Geneva. The population density is 249 residents per km<sup>2</sup>, which is slightly higher than the Swiss average of 204 (Ne.ch 2017, 14, 50–51). The canton's large area and the comparably small population and population density are ideal prerequisites for e-voting. If the canton does not have to ensure canton-wide availability of polling stations, costs can theoretically be saved and, moreover, voters can be spared the need of travelling long distances. Moreover, the number of eligible voters was 136,281 in 2018, of which 684 (0.5%) were eligible Swiss voters resident abroad: Neuchâtel has the lowest percentage in this respect compared to the other pilot cantons (Reiners 2011, 556; Swiss Federal Chancellery 2018d).

Here, as in other cantons, affinity to the Internet is another beneficial factor. In 2015, 90% of all households in the region Espace Mittelland (cantons of Bern, Solothurn, Fribourg, Neuchâtel, Jura) had Internet access. Seventy-eight percent of the population used the Internet for e-commerce and 72% for e-banking. In 2018, the system had 39,000 users (Swiss Federal Statistical Office 2018a; Swiss Federal Statistical Office 2018b; Ne.ch 2018). Furthermore, 22.7% used the portal in 2017 to submit their electronic tax declarations (Piwonski 2018). The significant trust placed in new technologies such as the Internet and online applications is reflected by the many different ways they are used for private and government services, even more than in the canton of Geneva.

The third argument concerns the political structure. The degree of autonomy of the municipalities is similar to that in the canton of Geneva. Consequently, the canton has a strong degree of autonomy as regards its 31 municipalities. The centralized structure of the canton actually promoted the introduction. Besides, a central electoral register was integrated in the system at the beginning of the trials in 2005 (Swiss Federal Chancellery 2004, 30). Hence, the prerequisites enabling the participation of Swiss voters resident abroad were given.

In addition, two legislative factors were of importance in connection with the implementation. As in Geneva, the first reform was the introduction of the postal vote in 1994. The canton faced low voter turnout, e.g. only 37.3% for the cantonal parliamentary elections in 1993 (Swiss Federal Statistical Office 2018c), but turnout rose after the introduction of postal voting. The introduction of the postal vote, thus, paved the way for the integration of new technologies (Swiss Federal Council 2006b).

A second factor was that cantonal law was adapted well in advance. To begin with, the regulation was adapted in 2001 in the "Décret sur l'introduction à titre expérimental des moyens électroniques facilitant l'exercice des droits politiques". This decree stipulates the experimental introduction of electronic means, in other words the possibility of e-voting for all political events (elections, votes, referenda and initiatives), and has been effective for an unlimited period up to now. The second reform was enacted with the amendment of cantonal law regarding political rights (Loi portant révision de la loi sur les droit politiques) in 2002. Accordingly, the preparation of the voting and election processes as well as the establishment of the central electoral register required for online voting were centralized at the cantonal level. A third adaptation was the launch of the platform with e-voting integrated on it. This had been prepared in 2004 by passing the relevant law and implementation regulations regarding the system (Loi sur le guichet sécurisé unique and Règlement d'exécution de la loi sur le

guichet sécurisé unique) (Swiss Federal Council 2006a, 21; Swiss Federal Council 2013a, 31; Swiss Federal Council 2013b, 5). The process was accelerated because all of the innovations were introduced prior to the first phase.

The same institutions and actors were involved at the federal and cantonal levels as those in the canton of Geneva. Private companies and Swiss Post were involved, too. The decisions were taken by the Council of State. It was responsible for the organization, introduction and execution. The implementation of the project was regulated in an agreement between the Swiss Federal Chancellery and the Council of State. The Chancellery of State was responsible for the project management. Here, too, the project was defined by dialog, cooperation and finding consensus. The interest in initiating the reform was characterized by the possibilities offered by secure e-voting solutions and the uncomplicated inclusion of Swiss voters resident abroad (Swiss Federal Council 2006a, 21).

## 5 PILOT PROJECT ZÜRICH

The first phase was conducted for elections in three municipalities between 2005 and 2007. The second phase, from 2008 to 2011, focused on expanding the system to 168 municipalities. In 2009, the e-government platform ZHservices was introduced (Canton of Zürich/no year; 2018a). In the same year, seven cantons founded the Consortium Vote électronique, which – analogously to the e-voting system of the canton of Zürich – introduced a channel for electronic voting. Therefore, two voting systems were being implemented at the same time in the canton, which – based on what was basically a competitive situation – were not developed further together. After the channel was offered successfully to Swiss voters resident abroad in 2010, it was suspended in 2011 following a decision of the canton's Government Council, and so no trials were conducted from 2011 to 2014. The step was justified by technical problems in the cantonal election and voting software as well as increasingly uncertain security requirements stipulated by the Federal Council, which led to planning uncertainty and refusal of new investments (Department of Justice and Home Affairs of the canton of Zürich 2011, 2; Statistical Office Zürich 2011, 13–14; Statistical Office Zürich 2018a, 3).

Nevertheless, the canton reviewed the introduction of a new platform and, hence, in 2014, the basis for new, more efficient trials was established by developing a central electoral register for Swiss voters resident abroad. In addition, the canton joined the Consortium Vote électronique in 2014. This had the advantage that investment costs were shared and that a security standard enabling individual verifiability was brought about in 2015. Accordingly, the first elections ran smoothly in 2015; however, the Federal Council did not authorize the Consortium for federal elections because of security concerns and technical measures that were required at short notice. Subsequently, in view of the fact that new investments would have been necessary, the Consortium was dissolved for financial reasons. The costs would not have been justifiable given the loss of confidence in the new system, which actually had been used without any incidents up to the decision of the Federal Council. The consortium of nine cantons was the largest e-voting network in Switzerland up until that time. Following the decision, it ended all trials, did not develop its system further and announced that it would not be offering e-voting for an indefinite period of time; however, the prospect of relaunching trials as of 2022 at the earliest was announced in 2018 (Department of Justice and Home Affairs of the canton of

Zürich 2013, 2, 2016, 2; Swiss Federal Council 2015; Canton of Zürich 2018b; Neue Züricher Zeitung 2015).

The e-voting system of the Consortium Vote électronique, which had been used in the canton up to 2015, was based on the same principle as CHVote and the system of Swiss Post. As in the canton of Neuchâtel, it was developed together with Unisys, a private American IT company. Furthermore, during the initial phase, the canton offered eligible voters an SMS option; this was terminated again in 2008, however. In addition, the circumstance that the canton did not have a central election commission tasked with controlling the e-voting trials had detrimental effects (Statistical Office Zürich 2011, 3, 24). Some structural and demographic factors prove quite interesting. In a comparison of the three pilot cantons, the canton is the largest in area (1,729 km<sup>2</sup>) as well as the most populous (1,482,003 people). The population density of 892 people per km<sup>2</sup> is far above the Swiss average. The total number of eligible voters was 907,623 in 2015. In one of the last trials, which was held on 8 March 2015, 22,490 Swiss voters resident abroad, i.e. 2.5%, were allowed to vote (Statistical Office Zürich 2018b, 18, 102, 190, 280; Swiss Federal Chancellery 2015). Thus, the canton trails after the canton of Geneva. It can be assumed that this factor did not promote e-voting. By contrast, the second, more advantageous, factor is the overall high affinity to the Internet. The figures are very similar to those in the canton of Neuchâtel. In 2015, 91% of households had access to the Internet, 77% used it for e-commerce and 72% for e-banking. In addition, about 100,000 users (approx. 6.8%) have registered on the e-government platform. In 2014, 95,100 of 1,193,004 tax declarations were filed electronically on the Zhprivate Tax portal, i.e. 8% (Swiss Federal Statistical Office 2018a; Swiss Federal Statistical Office 2018b; Statistical Office of the canton of Zürich 2018b, 99; Canton of Zürich 2018a; Cantonal Tax Office of Zürich 2018; Cantonal Tax Office of Zürich 2014; Piwonski 2018). All in all, many different types of private and government online services are available. The third argument concerns the political structure. The German-speaking cantons of eastern Switzerland are characterized by decentralized structures granting the municipalities medium autonomy. Matters are complicated further by the large number of municipalities (168) that have to be coordinated for the electoral register; thus, a central electoral register for Swiss voters resident abroad was introduced comparably late in 2014 (Vatter 2016, 456) It can be said that the structures are relatively unfavourable for implementation.

Furthermore, it is worthwhile to look at two legislative factors. Again, the first factor regards the introduction of the postal vote at the cantonal level in 1994. In this canton, too, voter turnout had been low since the 1990s. As discussed above, this factor tends to build confidence. A second factor is related to the adaptation of cantonal law. Starting in 2003, this was regulated primarily by the Swiss Federal Law and Ordinance on Political Rights, whose amendments provide that political rights can be exercised by e-voting, too. In addition, it was decided that voter registration date would be retrieved and coordinated with the municipalities. The legislative basis has not been changed up to now. Therefore, the e-option still exists (Swiss Federal Council 2006b; Swiss Federal Council 2013a, 31; Swiss Federal Council 2013b, 1; Swiss Federal Statistical Office 2018c).

The development process was arranged by the same institutions and actors on the federal and cantonal levels as in the other two cantons. Another potential veto actor is the Consortium Vote électronique. At the cantonal level the Governing Council and State Chancellery launched the pilot trials. The introduction

primarily was designed to develop an electronic voting and balloting system based on the electoral registers of the municipalities. Another initial objective was to develop diverse input media for the same e-voting system (Swiss Federal Council 2006a, 27). In this case too, the process evolved because of the collaboration of several actors; however, they did not always share the same perceptions or goals with regard to the problems. This is evident, for example, in connection with the founding of the Consortium Vote électronique and the fact that two e-voting systems were established at one and the same time. This seriously thwarted all efforts at constructive dialog, even if the interaction was borne by mutual objectives.

## 6 SUMMARY

The process driving the establishment of e-voting is characterized by negotiations between corporative actors with distinct autonomy. The preferences at the federal and cantonal levels are defined by the institutions' own interests, which overlap and flow into their mutual objective to increase legitimacy. The interaction assimilates similar perceptions and interpretations, which promotes the process as such.

A somewhat different situation presents itself in the canton of Zürich: the lack of a central election commission and the coexistence of two e-voting systems have had unfavourable effects here. The Consortium Vote électronique, being a collective actor, was highly dependent on the will of its members (the cantons) and dominated by institutional interests, a circumstance that facilitated blockades. The discontinuance of the cantonal e-voting network decisively affected the subsequent dynamics of the reform. As a matter of fact, the Federal Council blocked the project in 2015 and the cantonal government blocked it several times (2011/2015). A high congruence was evident among the actors until 2011; however, it declined successively and steadily. In particular, the adverse decision of the Federal Council in 2015 was followed by substantial content-related disagreement. To be sure, security concerns were merely theoretical in this case because there had never been any technical breakdowns at all.

The mutual objective and preferences of the actors are incentives for cooperation, since all parties can only achieve the best possible result by finding a collegial solution. The significance of cooperation becomes particularly evident in the cantons of Geneva and Neuchâtel in the context of negotiating solutions with low conflict structure. Moreover, whereas the process was not determined by institutional influences, it was guided by them. The positive influence of private companies in the canton of Neuchâtel should not be underestimated, because they helped fulfil the political demands regarding security aspects. Although this means that more potential veto actors were active here, the mutual constructive focus precluded any adverse consequences.

In the canton of Geneva, the federal level benefitted from the fact that the trial was limited to a certain region, the restriction of possible negative effects as well as Geneva's role as a pioneer, whose success induced other cantons to adopt e-voting. The canton itself benefitted from the financial support during the first phase and from the expertise provided by the Federal Chancellery and joint commissions during the implementation. Moreover, Geneva has distinguished itself as a pioneer. In addition, the federal and cantonal levels profit equally from

the enhanced legitimacy of the system. All in all, a cooperative game becomes evident in the network, borne by a negotiation mechanism with low conflict structures.

As a rule, the veto structure (in view of the federal character and sacrosanct structure of Switzerland) tends to hinder innovations, so that they usually proceed only incrementally and moderately. Nonetheless, the numerous potential veto points, such as the Federal Council, bicameral Federal Assembly (National Council and Council of States), Federal Supreme Court, will of the people and veto points at the cantonal level (cantonal government, parliament) etc., did not block the project in the cantons of Geneva and Neuchâtel. As a matter of fact, they promoted it constructively. Such institutional mechanisms as, for example, the establishment of commissions to promote cooperation and the integration of groups of experts, counteracted blockades. Thus, a high content-related congruence and cohesion was achieved between the actors for the (systemically induced) inevitably incremental process.

In summary it can be said that the institutional context influences reforms everywhere. The early codifications and confidence-building measures taken in the course of introducing the postal vote had a positive impact in all three cantons. Also, the widespread affinity to the Internet everywhere had positive ramifications. Furthermore, the institutional framework data promoted the plan of introducing e-voting in the canton of Geneva. The structural factors that had a particularly favourable impact, in particular, were the high percentage of Swiss voters resident abroad and the centralized political structures. In the canton of Neuchâtel, the large area together with a low population number and population density as well as the relatively centralized structures were explicitly conducive. The idea was not supported by the institutional context in the canton of Zürich. The factors that had a particularly negative effect were obstructive cooperation with the municipalities as regards the electoral register and the decentralized structure of the canton as well as the large number of municipalities that had to be coordinated. Most likely the simultaneous use of two e-voting systems and the ensuing interruption of the project by the Governing Council and Federal Council also blocked the project. One must wait and see which steps will be taken in future.

It becomes evident that multiple concurrent factors are needed to facilitate, or not facilitate, change. The fundamental institutional factors and constellations of actors play an important role that should not be underestimated (Reiners 2011, 40–43). Therefore, the findings can be generalized only to a limited extent, even if the specific context in each case always is of substantial importance, for example the strong federal system or the degree of centralization and decentralization within the individual cantons.

Switzerland has two of the most progressive e-voting solutions in the world, both of which will achieve the security level of universal verifiability in the near future and are suitable for use in cantons with centralized or decentralized structures. All cantons in Switzerland will eventually benefit from the pioneering work of the cantons examined in this analysis. This will take place in the course of political learning (for a more detailed discussion on this, e.g. Bennett and Howlett 1992; Hall 1993; Rose 2005; Bandelow 2006; Freeman 2006; Grin and Löber 2007). All in all, very positive developments in the field of digitalization can be observed in Switzerland, which make the country a forerunner and role model. Special recognition needs to be given to the fact that the process was mastered

despite strong federal structures and high political interdependence, because these determinants in particular are considered to be conservative with regard to structure, adverse to innovation and resistant to reform.

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## CHINA'S STRATEGY VIS-A-VIS TAIWAN'S DIPLOMATIC FRIENDS: IS BEIJING USING DOLLAR DIPLOMACY?<sup>1</sup>

Šárka WAISOVÁ<sup>2</sup>

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*The article responds to the argument that Beijing has been using economic incentives to cause recipient nations to switch their diplomatic allegiances, which ultimately means breaking off ties with Taiwan and recognizing the PRC. It can be concluded that the empirical data confirm China's use of dollar diplomacy. In the case of most of the analysed countries capital flows and economic benefits were provided shortly before diplomatic ties were established. For all of the countries, their diplomatic recognition of the PRC enabled rich economic, trade, and development links with China. However, the volumes of capital flows were unstable and the awarding of economic advantages was not automatic and even in states which saw the biggest input of capital and the most lucrative economic deals, China's use of dollar diplomacy leaves several questions.*

**Key words:** China; Taiwan; dollar diplomacy; Taiwan's allies.

### 1 INTRODUCTION

Taiwan (the Republic of China/Taiwan) lost its status as an internationally recognised independent country at the beginning of the 1970s when the People's Republic of China (PRC) joined the United Nations (UN). Within a few years, most UN member states had switched their diplomatic recognition to the PRC based on the 'One-China' principle.<sup>3</sup> Beijing calls Taiwan a renegade province and insists that it is inseparable from the PRC. Taiwan, on the other hand, rejects the

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<sup>3</sup> Formulated in 1979, this principle states that there is only one China that Taiwan is an inalienable part of Chinese territory, and that the Chinese Communist Party is the rightful government of both the mainland and Taiwan. This position was later reinforced in various Chinese government statements and declarations. See, in particular, the white papers 'The Taiwan Question and Reunification of China' (1993) and 'The One-China Principle and the Taiwan Issue' (2000).

social and political organisation of mainland China and the narrative about Taiwan's rebel province status. Nevertheless, world political developments have gradually marginalised Taiwan. The PRC is intent on minimising Taiwan's international presence and does not recognise activities or events that might imply Taiwanese sovereignty. From an international politics perspective, Taiwan's situation is clearly very complicated.<sup>4</sup> The country has been struggling to maintain its 'independent' position by any means possible, including diplomatic relations with other states. Even so, the number of countries that diplomatically recognise Taiwan is declining. Between 2016 and 2018 alone, Taiwan lost the support of Burkina Faso, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Panama, the Gambia, and Sao Tomé. In December 2018, Taiwan had diplomatic relations with only 17 countries.

Every time Taiwan loses a diplomatic ally, there is talk of Chinese dollar diplomacy (Reuters 2018a; The Economist 2018). The idea here is that Beijing is using economic enticements to persuade Taiwan's diplomatic friends to abandon the island. Both the behaviour and comments of several of Taipei's former allies suggest that there might be good reason to think this way. In an interview with Bloomberg in 2018, the then Burkinabe minister of foreign affairs, Alpha Barry mentioned that Beijing had offered his country 500 million USD to establish diplomatic relations with China the previous year (Bloomberg 2018). In 2018, El Salvador made no secret of its reasons for shifting its allegiance when it announced that it had established diplomatic ties with the PRC after Taiwan denied its financial demands (Renteria 2018).

Given these circumstances, it seems quite credible that China is using economic incentives to convince Taiwan's allies to 'switch teams'. A closer look at Chinese politics and the politics of former Taiwan allies however, suggests this may be too simplistic an explanation. For a time, preserving diplomatic ties with Taiwan was in these states' economic interests, but with the political and economic rise of China and the side-lining of Taiwan in world politics, it became clear that a partnership with Taipei would not suffice for countries with regional or even global ambitions. As the cases of Costa Rica and Senegal show, China also became a political sponsor of certain countries. Thanks to the support of the PRC, Costa Rica was granted a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council in 2007 and Beijing also backed its APEC membership despite a moratorium on new members (Casas-Zamora 2009). Similar motives may be ascribed to Senegal, which wished to represent Africa on the UNSC in 2005 and to join the Group of 33 in the WTO (Gehrold and Tietze 2011; Okumu 2005).

Additionally, a growing number of studies (e.g. Corkin 2011; Lee and Zou 2017) show that Chinese foreign policy is quite decentralised and that the Communist Party cannot control or manage foreign policy matters, which involve more and more agents who do not communicate adequately with one another. The situation has led to many clashes over who has the authority to set foreign policy, with coordination sometimes so poor that different representatives present opposing positions internationally. In fact, some studies (Corkin 2011; Lee and Zou 2017) suggest that trade and investment interests are the true forces driving political goals and that there is no top-down grand geopolitical strategy in many foreign policy areas. Concerning the approach to Taiwan, things are even more

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<sup>4</sup> Taiwan's vigilant approach to Beijing has been strengthened also by events in Hong Kong. The limited international reactions on Hong Kong's demonstrations and China's Hong Kong's activities indicate that there will be hardly any assistance to Taiwan if the island would be part of the PRC (more see Chan Ka-Lok 2018).

complicated. Taiwan-related issues are seen in China as part of domestic policy and several Chinese political bodies are responsible for Taiwanese relations and affairs. At the same time, none of these bodies has direct links to foreign policy or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) (Hsiao 2013; Jakobson and Knox 2010).

All this raises the issue of whether there is actually any top-down strategy or systematic policy on Chinese dollar diplomacy outside the general One-China principle – or, to put it another way, whether Beijing is systematically using economic incentives to change the recipient nations' positions and gain diplomatic recognition. The current study aims to generate new evidence to address this question (among previous older studies see for example Taylor 2002 or Rich 2007). To this end, I analyse capital flows and economic relationships, offers, and incentives between China and countries that have broken off diplomatic ties with Taiwan.

To establish that the PRC is using dollar diplomacy to poach Taiwan's diplomatic friends, the empirical data would need to show that shortly *before* and *after* a country changed diplomatic course, it received funds or other economic incentives and offers from Beijing or that the PRC had taken steps to pledge economic benefits.

The current study presents my research in three stages. The first part defines and operationalizes the dollar diplomacy concept and explains the independent variables selected as well as the methodology used to obtain data for each variable. In the second part, I collate the information and results for these independent variables in each country that severed ties with Taiwan and switched its allegiance to the PRC. The values for the independent variables were tracked over a 10-year period beginning four years before the diplomatic change and including the year of the shift and the next five years. Finally I review and evaluate all of the collected data. The sample for my study consisted of all countries that broke off diplomatic relations with Taiwan in favour of China between 2000 and 2018 (Table 1).

TABLE 1: COUNTRIES WHICH BROKE OFF RELATIONS WITH TAIWAN AND RECOGNISED THE PRC, 2000–2018

Country	Year when diplomatic ties were established with the PRC
Liberia	2003
Dominica	2004
Senegal	2005
Grenada	2005
Chad	2006
Costa Rica	2007
Malawi	2007
The Gambia	2016
Sao Tomé and Príncipe	2016
Panama	2017
El Salvador	2018
Burkina Faso	2018
Dominican Republic	2018

Source: Information obtained by the author from the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and confirmed by the foreign affairs ministries of relevant states.

Observers agree that the year 2000 marked a foreign policy milestone for China (Jakobson and Knox 2010; Jakobson and Manuel 2016; China Daily 2018; Zhang and Smith 2017). The country's economic rise and growing political self-confidence led to the redefining of its international goals and actions. Beijing approved a 'going out' strategy that combined political with economic expansion and resulted in new policies including a development policy and new bodies such as Leading Small Groups and China International Development Cooperation Agency. In 2000, the PRC also released a new white paper on its position on Taiwan. The country's new course was confirmed in 2003 when the so-called fourth generation of leaders took office.

## 2 AN OPERATING DEFINITION OF DOLLAR DIPLOMACY AND INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

The term 'dollar diplomacy' was originally connected with US foreign policy under the administration of W.H. Taft. The goal of US dollar diplomacy was to use private capital to improve the country's financial opportunities and further its interests overseas, particularly in Central America and the Caribbean (Encyclopaedia Britannica n.d.). Later, the term was used to describe a set of tactics designed to achieve political objectives by economic means. The current study uses the phrase in a similar way: dollar diplomacy is defined as the capital flows and other economic offers and incentives (payments or pledges of profits) which one state provides to another in order to win support for its own goals and visions.

Drawing on this definition and studies in the areas of political economy, international relations, foreign policy, and Chinese studies, I take the following independent variables (each variable and the reason why it was chosen is explained in detail below) to indicate the existence of Chinese dollar diplomacy vis-à-vis friends of Taiwan:

- a rise in foreign direct investment (FDI) flows from China to the recipient country;
- a rise in Chinese financial investments and participation in construction contracts in the recipient country;
- a rise in Chinese foreign aid (FA) to the recipient country;
- the conclusion of a bilateral trade or any other agreement aiming to improve the recipient country's economic situation (or the start of negotiations of such an agreement);
- the establishment of the Confucius Institute (CI) in the recipient country (or the start of relevant negotiations);
- the granting of Approved Destination Status (ADS) to the recipient country (or the start of relevant negotiations); and
- the recipient country's involvement in a multilateral institution managed and funded by China.

To support the conclusion that China has used dollar diplomacy to win over Taiwan's diplomatic friends, the results for these independent variables would need to show that shortly *before* and *after* the other country changed diplomatic course, it received capital flows or pledges or other incentives related to economic enrichment. In the sections that follow, I explain the independent variables used in this study in detail, with a focus on methodology and the techniques applied to collection and evaluation of the data. At the same time, I highlight key limits and research problems associated with each indicator.

At the outset, it must be said that the biggest limitation and problem affecting the present research is the minimal transparency of the Chinese state and its reluctance to share information and data. The Chinese authorities only communicate results and data selectively; key data for particular countries and periods are missing and this is also true of the total values of certain projects (for more details on this problem see e.g. Dreher et al. 2017; Grimm et al. 2011; Kitano 2016). A second obstacle relates to the diverging definitions of different indicators and the different methodologies used to determine results. Chinese foreign aid, for example, cannot be compared with the OECD's Official Development Assistance (ODA). Similarly, China's methodology for measuring FDI flows differs from that of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the World Bank (de Jong, Greeven and Ebbers 2017). This situation means that up to now certain topics have been ignored. Moreover, scholars have started to establish their own datasets concerning Chinese economic activities and capital flows (e.g. China-Africa Research Initiative of Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies; Dreher et al. 2017; Wolf, Wand and Warner 2013). The current study uses information and statistics from China as well as data produced by third parties. Whenever possible, data have been triangulated and cross-checked based on information from Chinese political entities and media, international media, and the political institutions and media of relevant countries as well as academic sources, and reports and interviews with political representatives. In several cases, Wikileaks documents were also used.

## 2.1 Foreign Direct Investment Flows

Foreign Direct Investment Flows record the value of cross-border transactions related to direct investment over a given period of time. For a long time, these flows were thought to have a purely economic and developmental impact but over the last decade, a number of studies have shown that FDI may be a tool for achieving political goals (see e.g. Biglaiser and Staats 2010; Raess, Ren and Wagner 2017; Strüver 2016).

FDI officially became part of China's national economic development plan in the 1990s when Beijing actively encouraged Chinese companies to go global. At the same time, the government expanded the development of already internationally competitive state-owned enterprises (SOEs) (de Jong et al. 2017). While scholars disagree about the extent to which Chinese companies are state-controlled, they agree on the existence of Chinese party-state oversight along with an extremely complex regulatory environment particularly for SOEs. SOEs dominate the list of China's biggest companies, tend to have preferential access to credit from China's policy banks, and are frequently contracted to work on aid and construction projects, and Chinese state bodies assist SOEs to enter new markets (Corkin 2011; Jones and Zou 2017; Lee and Yizheng 2017; Scissors 2016; Scissors 2018). All this suggests that in the case of China, FDI flows are a viable tool for reaching political goals.

For the purposes of this study, the total volume of FDI flows is not important but trends (changes in volume) are tracked. Data on FDIs are sourced from the *Statistical Bulletin of China's Outward Foreign Direct Investment* for the period 1999–2017 (National Bureau of Statistics in China 2017).<sup>5</sup> It must be noted that

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<sup>5</sup>At the time of writing, data on FDIs for 2018 were still not available. While UNCTAD offers another potential data source, UNCTAD data on bilateral FDI only cover the period between 2000 and 2012.



FDI data are far from perfect. Beijing transfers a huge volume of FDI through offshore financial centres such as Hong Kong, the British Virgin Islands, and the Cayman Islands (National Bureau of Statistics in China 2017) and the final recipients of this money are unknown.<sup>6</sup>

## 2.2 Chinese Investments and Participation in Construction Contracts

Investments and financial contributions to construction contracts are a second important means by which China asserts its economic presence globally. This 'Chinese financial participation' includes the state and SOEs as well as private investors. While private investors' share of investment contracts stood at about 30 per cent in 2017, construction contracts remain dominated by SOEs and the state, with massive aid from concessionary financing from state-controlled banks (Mayers and Gallagher 2018; Scissors 2018). Though there is some crossover between investment and construction contracts (ICC) and FDI, ICCs also include loans and non-investment flows such as professional services, know-how, and technology. Since my interest here is not in total amounts but in trends, some degree of overlapping should not present a problem.

Data about the volume of China's ICC contributions can be obtained from official Chinese Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) statistics, particularly the Investment Project Database (MOFCOM n.d.). These statistics do not, however, reflect flows passing through Hong Kong, i.e. an estimated one-third of all flows (Scissors 2018), and they do not extend beyond 2012. For this reason, I made use of the China Global Investment Tracker (CGIT). The CGIT tracks the movement of funds from China, including their transfer through Hong Kong to their final destinations, and is thus a vastly superior tool for measuring Chinese capital flows. The CGIT includes all verified investment and construction transactions worth 100 million USD or more between 2005 and 2018. Even so, it does not track loans, bonds or other foreign exchange applications that do not involve property or services in the host country (Scissors 2018, 2). Pre-2005 ICC data were obtained separately. The sources consulted were (i) international and local news reports, (ii) Chinese embassies, companies, and news reports, and (iii) political representatives and state institutions in the recipient country.

## 2.3 Foreign Aid

Foreign aid (FA) is probably both the most important and most problematic indicator of Chinese dollar diplomacy. The official aim of Chinese FA is to 'provide economic, technical, material, human resources and administrative support to recipient countries' (MOFCOM 2014, article 2). Scholars suggest, however, that this aid is driven by many other motives, some of which are political and ideological (Lengauer 2011; Lum et al. 2009; Zhang and Smith 2017). The Chinese FA system took off in the 1970s and since then has seen significant changes. Up to now, the system has been managed by MOFCOM, with other participating bodies including the MFA, the Ministry of Finance, and two financiers; China Export-Import Bank and China Development Bank (Zhang and Smith 2017). In 2018, Beijing also set up a special development agency. While the government (China Daily 2018) has said this agency will mediate between

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<sup>6</sup> The Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department lists only the 'major recipients' of Hong Kong's outward direct investments. A total of 10 countries are listed including mainland China, the Cayman Islands, and the British Virgin Islands. See the External Direct Investment Statistics of Hong Kong dataset, available at <https://www.censtatd.gov.hk/hkstat/sub/sp260.jsp?productCode=B1040003>.

ministries and other state bodies, its actual function is still not clear. Since the PRC favours a direct (bilateral) foreign aid system, the role of all these state institutions remains immense.

As we have seen, Beijing does not use a concept of Official Development Assistance like the one employed by the OECD (for details of the differences between the OECD's definition and the Chinese understanding of FA, see, e.g., Grimm 2011; Lum et al. 2009; Wolf, Wang, and Warner 2013). According to Chinese policy documents, FA covers three types of funding: grants (gratis aid), interest-free loans, and concessional loans. Grants support the construction of hospitals, schools, and other social welfare infrastructures, including both technical assistance and humanitarian aid. Interest-free loans are meant to help the recipient country build public facilities and relate to projects that improve living standards. Lastly, concessional loans are provided for projects, including infrastructure, which have both economic and social benefits (Information Office of the State Council the PRC 2011). In practice, Chinese FA also includes aid for the military and the construction of sports facilities, both of which are traditionally excluded from ODA. It is, however, not only the gap between Chinese FA and the OECD development assistance that presents a problem. Chinese FA is difficult to quantify. Back in 2009, some scholars lamented that the PRC did not publicly release any foreign aid statistics (Lum et al. 2009), and today the situation is no better.

Because of the lack of systematic, transparent, and representative FA data from the PRC, researchers in this area have only one option, i.e. to establish their own dataset. I used FA data from AidData and particularly from the Global Chinese Official Finance Dataset. The dataset tracks official Chinese overseas financing between 2000 and 2014 and is seen as the best resource to date in an otherwise poorly charted area. The AidData dataset relies on an open-source data collection and triangulation methodology (for more details see Dreher et al. 2017; Strange et al. 2017). This tracks Official Development Assistance-like flows, Other Official Flows (OOF) and Vague Official Finance (VOF). ODA-like flows include technical assistance, scholarships, concessional loans, debt relief, and grants for development. OOF covers non-concessional loans for development, export credits, commercial loans, grants for representatives' events, and funds for the Confucius Institutes. VOF relates to flows that cannot be classified as ODA-like or OOF-like because of a lack of information (Strange et al. 2017). AidData tracks not only actual flows but also pledges, which are significant for researchers of dollar diplomacy.

Unfortunately the AidData dataset does not cover the period 2015-2018 and so a separate dataset had to be created for these years. Working with a group of Master's students, I used Google and LexisNexis to track Chinese FA including pledges.<sup>7</sup> Information about the scope of a country's FA was retrieved from Chinese sources (media, ministries, embassies, and political representatives) along with sources in recipient countries (local media, government ministries and agencies, and political representatives). The findings were cross-checked against international media and academic publications. Details of loans to Latin American countries were retrieved from the China-Latin America Finance Database (Gallagher and Myers 2017). Where different values were identified for the same item, the lower amount was listed.

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<sup>7</sup> Given the limited scope of this article, these data are not presented here. Further details can, however, be provided on request. Please contact waisova@kap.zcu.cz.

## 2.4 Bilateral Trade Agreements and Other Treaties on Economic Profit

The idea that bilateral trade agreements (BTAs) and other economic treaties might have a positive effect on profits is well established among both international trade scholars and practitioners. BTAs are believed to open up opportunities for exporters and investors to expand their businesses. They can also improve market access, stimulate competition among domestic players, reduce or eliminate tariffs and quotas, and encourage investment, productivity, and innovation (Baggs and Brandner 2006; Goyal and Joshi 2006). Since China is a rapidly growing market, gaining privileged access to it is seen as a gateway to prosperity. My research thus, examined the existence of BTAs and other economic and trade treaties between particular countries and China. For all identified treaties, the date when Beijing or the recipient country announced the beginning of negotiations was recorded. The logic here was that the start of negotiations reflected the promise of economic profit in the relatively near future. Data on BTAs and other agreements were drawn from the UNCTAD Investment Policy Hub's dataset of bilateral and multilateral trade and economic agreements, the WTO Regional Trade Agreements Information System, and the online archives of the ministries of commerce, ministries of foreign affairs, and embassies of China and the relevant countries. All findings were triangulated using information from local and international media.

## 2.5 Confucius Institute

Like other countries, China seeks to enhance its international reputation, and it has created a special body called the Confucius Institute (CI) with this aim in mind. Though the CI began as a non-profit initiative, the Chinese government has operated these organisations since 2004, and at the end of 2018, there were 525 CIs in 142 countries (Hanban 2018). The CI is a Chinese Ministry of Education programme financed through foreign aid, whose official mission includes sharing information 'about Chinese language and culture' and providing '[a] platform for cultural exchanges between China and the world [...] and a bridge reinforcing friendship and cooperation between China and the rest of the world' (Hanban 2018). Hanban, a public institution affiliated with the Ministry of Education, administers CIs and the Chinese government provides an administrator, teachers, and funding through this agency. Although CIs are set up in partnership with the recipient country, the Hanban-appointed administrator has the final say over their operations and activities, thus ensuring that Beijing retains control over every CI.

While CIs certainly carry out educational and cultural activities, they are also as experts (Harting 2015; Stambach 2017; Starr 2009) note, an important diplomatic and financial tool for the Chinese government, which uses them to channel funds and communicate specific strategic narratives about China and its place in the world. Among the purposes for which Beijing use CIs are to attract the interest of local populations; to sway public opinion in China's favour; to recruit locals for projects; to manage debates on sensitive issues like Taiwan and Tibet; to advance foreign policy interests; to promote cooperation with local businesses; and to create market opportunities (Custer et al. 2018; Lien and Oh 2014; Lien et al. 2012). Many countries are interested in working with CIs in order to court Chinese investors.

Given this background, the presence of CIs in countries that have shifted their loyalties from Taiwan to China is highly relevant. Unfortunately, there has long

been a lack of quantitative data concerning the resources being channelled through CIs. We can however, at least access information about the emergence of CIs in particular countries. The establishment of a CI which is also used to channel funds would support the idea that Beijing is using dollar diplomacy and expanding its influence in the target country. Information about the existence of CIs was retrieved from Hanban's website and confirmed based on details on the website of the particular CI and local media reports.

## 2.6 Approved Destination Status

China introduced an Approved Destination Status (ADS) policy in the early 1990s to address the growing interest of Chinese citizens in foreign travel. While in 1993 3.74 million Chinese citizens travelled overseas, in 2014 the number exceeded 100 million (National Bureau of Statistics in China 2016). ADS is granted to partner countries under a bilateral governmental agreement which allows those countries to receive tourist groups from China. As of 2018, 156 countries had been given this status. The granting of ADS is understood to be a sign of China's support (Chen and Duggan 2016; Tse 2013). While in 1995, the average Chinese tourist spent approximately 820 USD per trip, in 2014, this figure had risen to about 1500 USD (UNWTO 2017). ADS is, thus, clearly a source of financial profit. ADS-related data were obtained from the website of the Chinese Ministry of Culture and Tourism. These findings were triangulated using data from official tourism and foreign affairs bodies in recipient countries and local media reports.

## 2.7 Participation in a Multilateral Institution Managed and Funded by China

The economic and political rise of China has led to a widening of the country's international engagement strategies. In particular, the PRC has established several cooperative frameworks that should pave the way for its economic and political progress in different regions. These cooperative frameworks are managed and funded by China, and they connect the PRC with potential cooperating countries. These projects include the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), the Forum for Economic and Trade Co-operation between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries (Forum Macau), One Belt, One Road (OBOR) and the Forum of China and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (China-CELAC Forum).

The FOCAC was established in 2000 as an institutional framework for political dialogue and economic cooperation between China and Africa. The framework works mainly through a system of ministerial conferences that should bring together Chinese and African foreign affairs and finance ministers every three years. The FOCAC secretariat is located in the Chinese MFA, which also has a coordinating role. Beijing proposes projects and funding through the FOCAC but projects are usually coordinated through separate bilateral arrangements in the implementation phase. In 2006, China pledged to route 5 billion USD through the FOCAC. In 2012, this pledge increased to 20 billion USD, and at the 2018 FOCAC summit, Beijing promised another 60 billion USD (FOCAC n.d.).

Forum Macau was launched in 2003. An initiative by China's central government, the project was established together with Portuguese-speaking countries and with the cooperation of the Macao Special Administrative Region. Forum Macao is a system of multilateral intergovernmental cooperation that promotes

economic exchange and trade and uses Macao as a connecting hub among participants. In 2010, Beijing announced an initial budget of 1 billion USD for the forum (Macauhub 2017b).

One Belt, One Road (OBOR) was established in 2013 and has an estimated value of 900 billion USD (Phillips 2017). The project has two parts: the Economic Land Belt and the Maritime Silk Road. OBOR aims to offload China's industrial overcapacity and infrastructure development capital and improve the country's connectivity with the world. Beijing is currently planning or carrying out construction and other projects in countries along these routes. At the end of 2018, OBOR included 72 countries.

The China-CELAC Forum is the cooperative framework between Beijing and countries from Latin America and the Caribbean. Launched in 2014, the forum had its first ministerial level meeting in 2015. This arrangement includes several thematic sub-forums such as the China-LAC Infrastructure Cooperation Forum and the China-LAC Business Summit. In 2014, Beijing announced a 35-billion USD financing facility package for the forum (MFA of China 2016, 39).

Information about participation in particular bodies was retrieved from the online archive of the Chinese MFA as well as the foreign affairs ministries of specific countries and the website of the given body. These sources were triangulated using information from local and international media. The usefulness of this indicator is, of course, limited because several of these institutions were only established recently.

### 3 CASE STUDIES

The following section contains 13 country case studies which each present empirical data about all of the independent variables considered in this study (for a summary see Table 2). The case studies are listed chronologically based on the date when the country established diplomatic ties with the PRC. Each study includes a short analysis of the change in diplomatic position along with findings for the independent variables; accompanying graphs depict volumes and related trends. These graphs track the ten-year period beginning four years before the diplomatic shift and extending through the year of that change and the next five years.

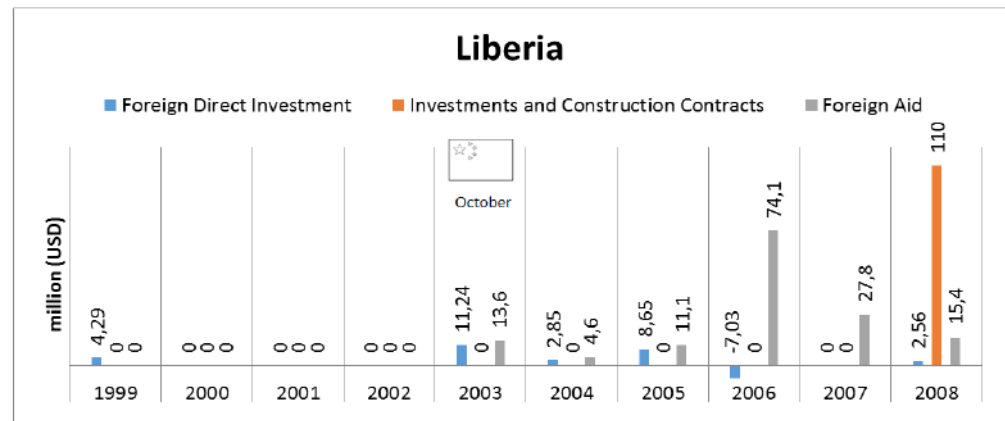
TABLE 2: SUMMARY OF INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Description	Trend/value	Source
Chinese FDI flows into the recipient country [FDI]	Growth	Chinese MOFCOM; Statistical Bulletin of China's FDI
Chinese investments and financial participation in construction contracts [ICC]	Growth	China Global Investment Tracker; author's own data for 2000-2004
Chinese foreign aid [FA]	Growth	Global Chinese Official Finance Dataset; AidData; China-Latin America Finance Database; author's own dataset for 2015-2018
Bilateral trade agreements and other economic or commercial treaties [BTI]	Date when negotiations started	Chinese MOFCOM and MFA treaty databases; foreign affairs ministries of recipient countries; UNCTAD Investment Policy Hub; WTO Regional Trade Agreements System; other government ministries of affected countries. Findings were cross-checked using information from local and international media
Confucius Institute [CI]	Date when CI was established or negotiations started	Hanban
Approved Destination Status [ADS]	Date when status was granted or negotiations started	Chinese Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Findings were cross-checked using information sourced from the World Tourism Organization and authorities and media in affected countries
Participation in a multilateral institution managed and funded by China [MIP]	Membership or other form of participation/year	Websites of FOCAC, Forum Macau, OBOR, and China-CELAC Forum; Chinese and local media; foreign affairs ministries of individual countries

*Liberia*

Relations between China and Liberia have been broken and re-established several times since 1977 when the two states first formed diplomatic ties. Liberia severed its ties with Taiwan for the last time in October 2003 and proceeded to re-establish relations with the PRC (Embassy of the PRC in Liberia n.d). China-Liberia relations reached the new peak in 2013. Since then, newly financed by China and by Chinese companies, constructed projects included the setting up of public buildings, sports stadium, health delivery and educational facilities and telecommunications sectors. During the outbreak of the Ebola virus, China responded with medical aid and cash. In 2011, Beijing sent a team to support the UN peacekeeping operation and it also undertook millions of dollars' worth of projects to support the Liberian army and security apparatus (Gray 2018). In 2018 both countries signed the new maritime deal which also means that Liberian flag bearing vessels will get a preferential rate for tonnage dues when visiting Chinese ports.

FIGURE 1: CHINESE DOLLAR DIPLOMACY: LIBERIA



Existence of bilateral trade or other economic agreements: Beijing terminated all its projects and treaties with Liberia in 1989, not long after Liberia switched allegiance to Taiwan. Current Chinese-Liberian agreements on trade, economic

cooperation, and development were all negotiated after October 2003 (MFA of Liberia n.d.). Beijing used the 2006 FOCAC summit as an opportunity to negotiate several economic cooperation and development treaties with Liberia (Moumouni 2014).

Presence of the Confucius Institute: Yes, since 2008.

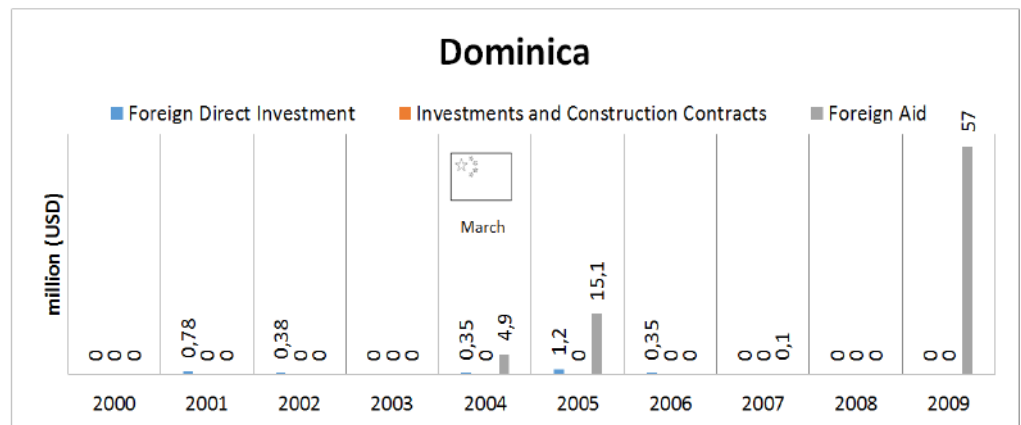
Award of ADS: None at the end of 2018.

Participation in a multilateral institution managed by China: FOCAC membership since December 2003; OBOR membership since 2018.

*Dominica*

China and the Commonwealth of Dominica have had a diplomatic relationship since March 2004. Since then China has provided to Dominica assistance in areas of infrastructure, agriculture, education and medical services In October 2018 the two countries signed economic and technical cooperation agreement worth millions of dollars. The areas in which agreements are expected to be signed in 2019 include tourism, agriculture and free zones. While Dominican-Chinese relations prosper, the US warned Dominica not to accept more financial aid from Beijing (Caribbean Council n.d.b).

FIGURE 2: CHINESE DOLLAR DIPLOMACY: DOMINICA



Existence of bilateral trade or other economic agreements: Several economic, trade, development, and military aid treaties exist between Dominica and China. All were signed after March 2004 (Dominica News Online 2017).

Presence of the Confucius Institute: Yes, since 2015. The CI located in Barbados is shared with Dominica.

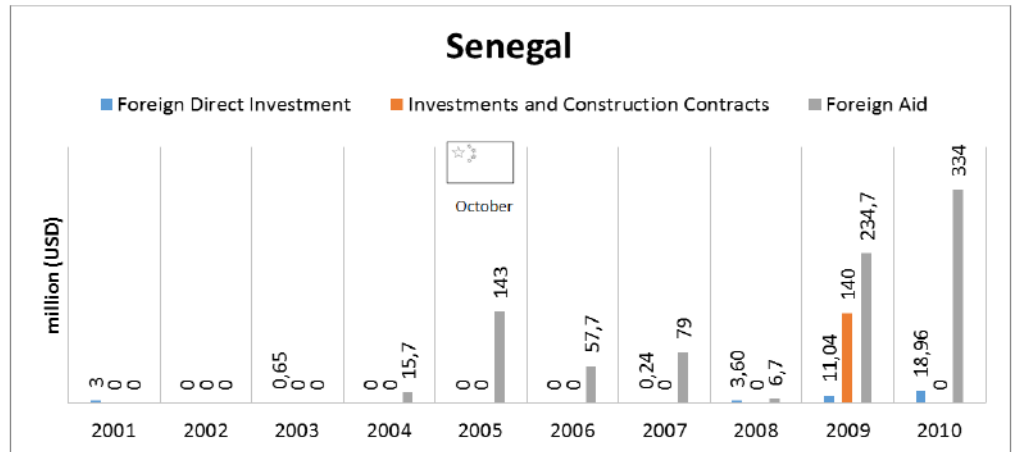
Award of ADS: Awarded in the summer of 2004.

Participation in a multilateral institution managed by China: China-CELAC Forum member since 2014; OBOR negotiations started in 2018.

*Senegal*

Senegal established diplomatic ties with the PRC in 1973. This relationship lasted until 1996 when Senegal resumed relations with Taiwan. PRC-Senegal relations were restored in October 2005 when Senegal cut ties with Taiwan. Since then Beijing invested in construction and infrastructure projects. In 2019 Senegal signed cooperation documents with China under the Belt and Road Initiative and Beijing granted Senegal a role as co-chair of FOCAC.

FIGURE 3: CHINESE DOLLAR DIPLOMACY: SENEGAL



Existence of bilateral trade or other economic agreements: Agreements suspended in 1996 were restored in October 2005 when new trade talks began between the two countries (State Council of the PRC 2005). While some Chinese companies stayed in Senegal after 1996, this was on a strictly private basis (Gehrold and Tietze 2011). New rounds of economic, trade, and development treaty negotiations opened up in 2016 and again in 2018 (Saudi Press Agency 2018).

Presence of the Confucius Institute: Yes, since 2012.

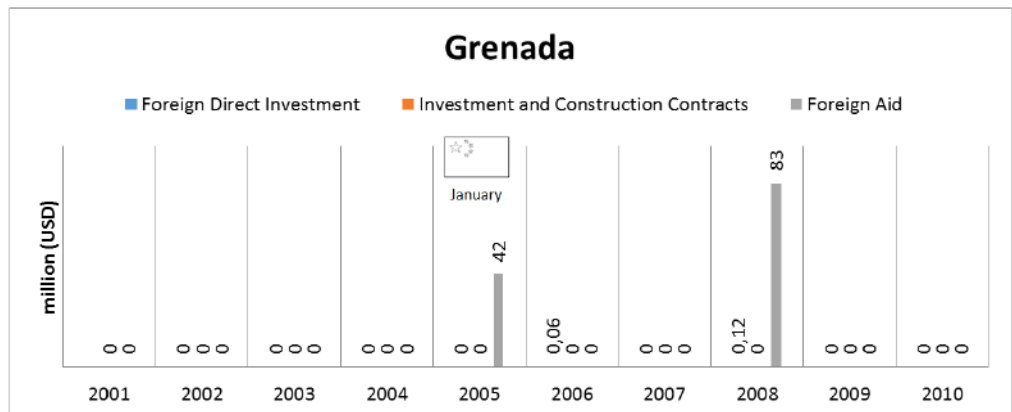
Award of ADS: Awarded in 2016.

Participation in a multilateral institution managed by China: FOCAC member since 2006; OBOR negotiations started in 2018.

*Grenada*

Grenada recognised Taiwan since 1989 but by January 2005, it had resumed diplomatic relations with Beijing. When negotiations with the PRC began, Grenada expressed its hopes of obtaining reconstruction aid to repair damage from Hurricane Ivan (BBC 2005). The Taiwanese media reported that the Chinese Red Cross had provided 50,000 USD to Grenadine political representatives (Taipei Times 2005). No other source confirmed this report.

FIGURE 4: CHINESE DOLLAR DIPLOMACY: GRENADA



Existence of bilateral trade or other economic agreements: Agreements between the PRC and Grenada were suspended in 1989. Since January 2005, new treaties have been negotiated and concluded.



Presence of the Confucius Institute: No CI has been established but a Confucius Classroom has been in place since 2015.

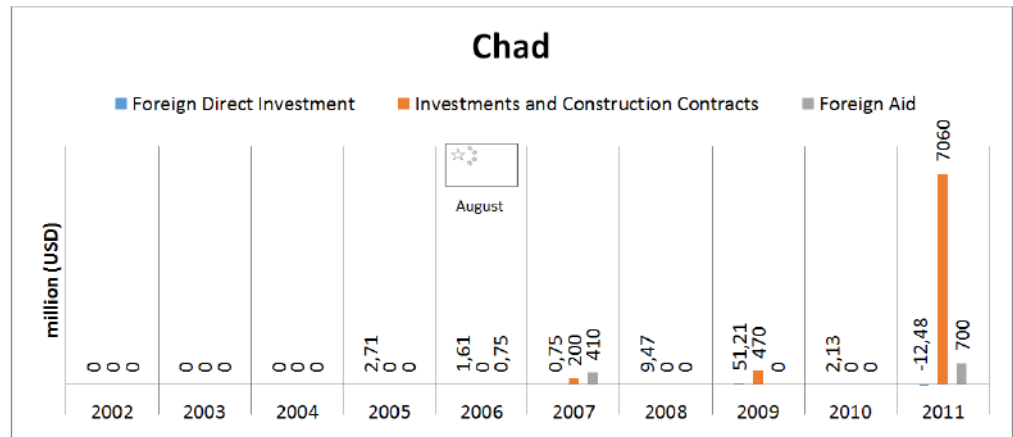
Award of ADS: Awarded in 2006.

Participation in a multilateral institution managed by China: Member of the China-CELAC Forum since 2014.

*Chad*

China suspended its diplomatic ties with Chad in 1997 when the country recognised Taiwan. In August 2006, Chad and the PRC resumed their relationship after Chad accepted Beijing’s One-China Policy. Since then oil investment looks set to play a key part in China’s continuing engagement with the country. After the World Bank in 2018 withdrew its funding for the Chadian government on the grounds that it had violated their bilateral agreement, Beijing quickly seized the opportunity to extend its engagement and offered to build roads, bridges, hospitals, schools and even airports.

FIGURE 5: CHINESE DOLLAR DIPLOMACY: CHAD



Existence of bilateral trade or other economic agreements: Negotiations of economic, trade, technical, and development cooperation have been under way since August 2006. Beijing is mainly interested in Chadian oil (Dittgen and Large 2012).

Presence of the Confucius Institute: None.

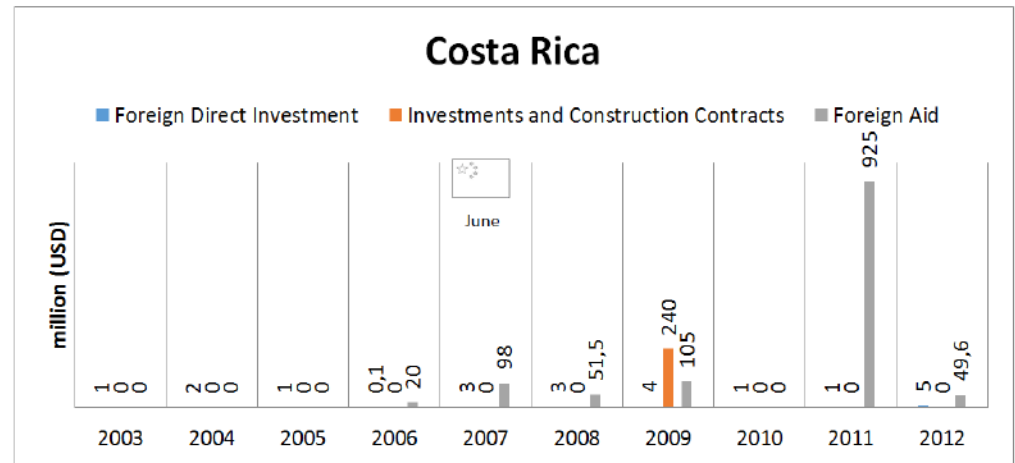
Award of ADS: None at the end of 2018.

Participation in a multilateral institution managed by China: FOCAC member since August 2006; OBOR negotiations started in 2017.

*Costa Rica*

Costa Rica and the PRC first held talks in the 1990s to explore setting up diplomatic relations. These efforts were thwarted, however (Casas-Zamora 2009), and the two states did not establish diplomatic ties until June 2007. Later, it was revealed that the PRC had pledged foreign aid to Costa Rica under a memorandum on setting up diplomatic relations. Under this deal, Beijing agreed to buy 300 million USD in bonds and give 130 million USD in aid (Bowley 2008).

FIGURE 6: CHINESE DOLLAR DIPLOMACY: COSTA RICA



Existence of bilateral trade or other economic agreements: All treaty and agreement negotiations between Costa Rica and the PRC began after June 2007. Free trade agreement talks were announced in 2008 (Casas-Zamora 2009). In 2015, the two countries announced a strategic trade and economic cooperation partnership.

Presence of the Confucius Institute: Yes. An agreement was signed in 2008.

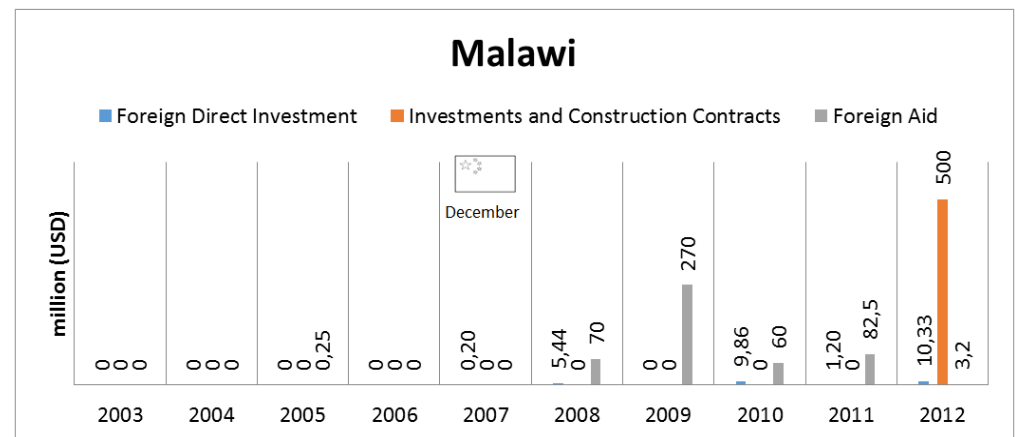
Award of ADS: Awarded in the autumn of 2007.

Participation in a multilateral institution managed by China: China-CELAC Forum member since 2014; OBOR negotiations started in 2018.

*Malawi*

Malawi and the PRC formed diplomatic ties in January 2008 though Malawi later backdated the commencement to December 2007. Taipei has claimed that the two states also signed a secret agreement about the transfer of approximately 6-billion USD in aid to Malawi once diplomatic links had been established (Wikileaks 2008). No other party has confirmed this allegation.

FIGURE 7: CHINESE DOLLAR DIPLOMACY: MALAWI



Existence of bilateral trade or other economic agreements: In March 2008, Malawi and the PRC concluded their first bilateral agreement on trade, investment, and technical cooperation. In May the same year, they signed a memorandum on future cooperation (Chirombo 2017).

Presence of the Confucius Institute: Yes. A cooperation agreement was signed in 2013.

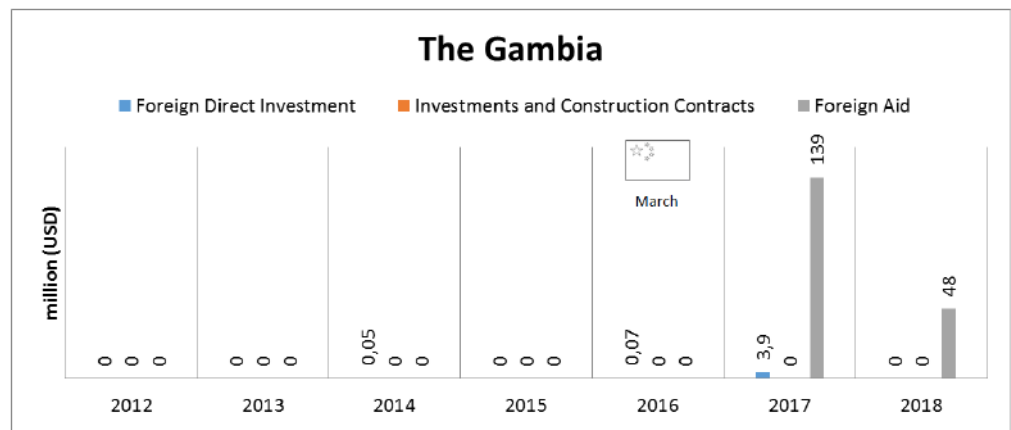
Award of ADS: None, but in 2018 the Chinese embassy in Malawi encouraged Chinese tourists to visit the country (MW Nation 2018).

Participation in a multilateral institution managed by China: FOCAC member since 2008 (invited to participate as an observer in 2006) (State Council of the PRC 2006).

*The Gambia*

The Gambia broke off ties with Taiwan in 2013. In March 2016, Beijing and the Gambia normalised their diplomatic relations. In 2017 Beijing committed to invest 75 million USD for the construction of roads and bridges in the country. In June 2019 Gambia reaffirmed its commitment to the one-China policy, consequently Beijing mentioned it would promote the Gambia as a destination for Chinese tourists (Office of the President 2019).

FIGURE 8: CHINESE DOLLAR DIPLOMACY: THE GAMBIA



Existence of bilateral trade or other economic agreements: In 2017, the PRC and the Gambia signed a memorandum on economic, trade, investment, and technical cooperation. The two states launched a joint committee on economics and trade.

Presence of the Confucius Institute: Negotiations started in 2018.

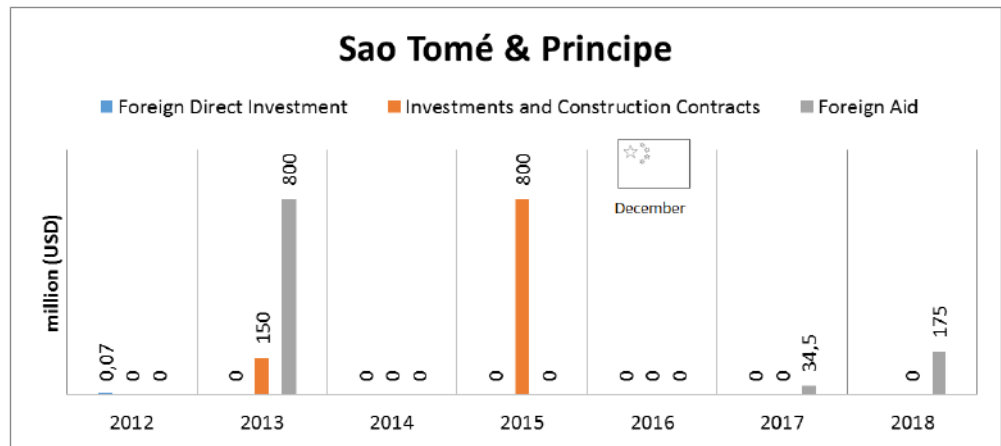
Award of ADS: None at the end of 2018.

Participation in a multilateral institution managed by China: FOCAC member since 2017 (invited to take part as an observer in 2006) (State Council of the PRC 2006); OBOR negotiations started in 2018.

*Sao Tomé e Príncipe*

In 2013, Sao Tomé announced China’s plans to open a trade office in the country. Observers noted the Chinese interest in Sao Tomé’s oil resources. In 2016, Sao Tomé revealed it had cut ties with Taiwan, and in December 2016, it established diplomatic relations with the PRC (Reuters 2016). Taipei claims that before shifting its loyalty to the PRC, Sao Tomé demanded ‘an astronomical amount of financial help’ from Taipei (BBC 2016). Information appeared that China has pledged to provide the archipelago with millions of dollars for the modernization of its international airport and the construction of a deep-sea container port (Crabtree 2018).

FIGURE 9: CHINESE DOLLAR DIPLOMACY: SAO TOME



Existence of bilateral trade or other economic agreements: The first treaties between Sao Tomé and the PRC were signed in April 2017 (Macau 2017). Earlier, in October 2015, Sao Tomé announced it had agreed to build a deep sea port in partnership with China.

Presence of the Confucius Institute: An agreement to set up a CI was signed in 2018.

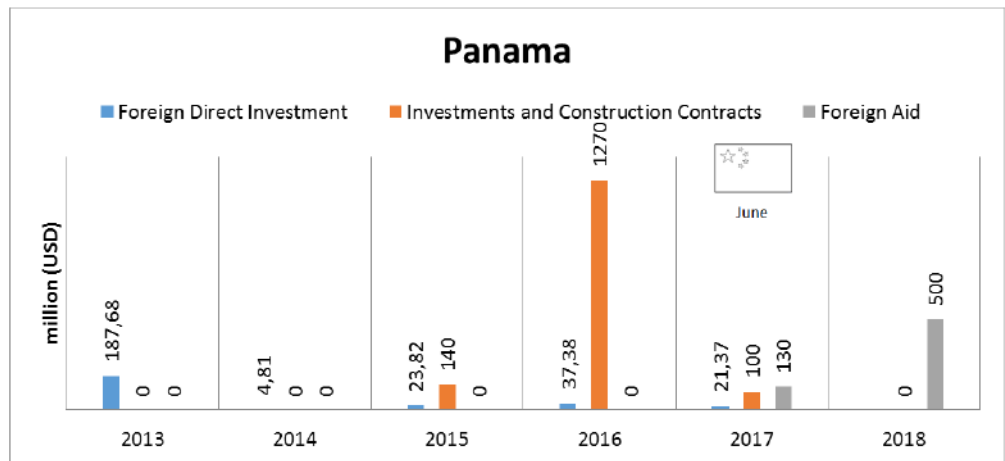
Award of ADS: In 2017, Sao Tomé’s foreign affairs ministry declared the start of ADS negotiations (Macauhub 2017a).

Participation in a multilateral institution managed by China: FOCAC member since September 2018 (invited to take part as an observer in 2006) (State Council of the PRC 2006); Forum Macao member since 2017; OBOR negotiations started in 2018.

*Panama*

Between 2009 and 2010, Panama made efforts to form diplomatic ties with the PRC. However, Beijing rejected this offer because of concerns about jeopardising its improving relationship with Taiwan (Wikileaks 2011). Instead, a Panama-China trade development office was opened in Panama. New negotiations between the two states began in 2017 leading to the establishment of diplomatic ties in June of that year.

FIGURE 10: CHINESE DOLLAR DIPLOMACY: PANAMA



Existence of bilateral trade or other economic agreements: Since the summer of 2017, Panama and the PRC have concluded more than 28 diplomatic and

investment agreements. Panama now has most favoured nation trade status, and in July 2018, negotiations of a free trade agreement began (The Guardian 2018a).

Presence of the Confucius Institute: Negotiations started in 2016, and a CI has existed since September 2017.

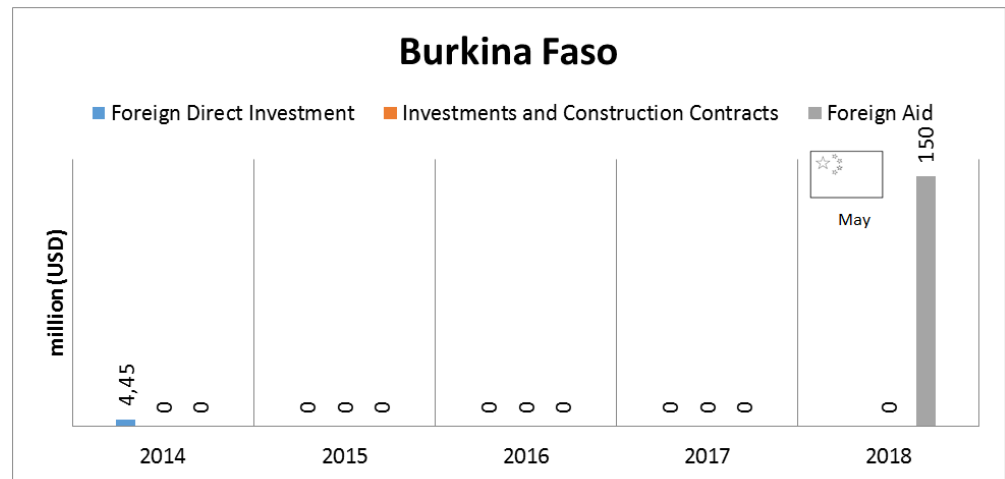
Award of ADS: Awarded in 2018.

Participation in a multilateral institution managed by China: China-CELAC Forum member since the summer of 2017; OBOR negotiations started in 2018.

*Burkina Faso*

Beijing has had unofficial contact with some Burkinabe politicians since 2005. Since 2011, Sino-Burkinabe Friendship Forum, a private organisation in Burkina Faso, has been allowed to issue Chinese visas to Burkina Faso citizens and residents (Cabestan 2017). The two countries formed diplomatic ties in May 2018. In a media interview that year, Burkinabe Foreign Minister Alpha Barry revealed that the PRC had offered Burkina Faso 50 million USD in 2017 in return for diplomatic recognition (Bloomberg 2018).

FIGURE 11: CHINESE DOLLAR DIPLOMACY: BURKINA FASO



Existence of bilateral trade or other economic agreements: Negotiations started at the end of 2018.

Presence of the Confucius Institute: Yes, since May 2018.

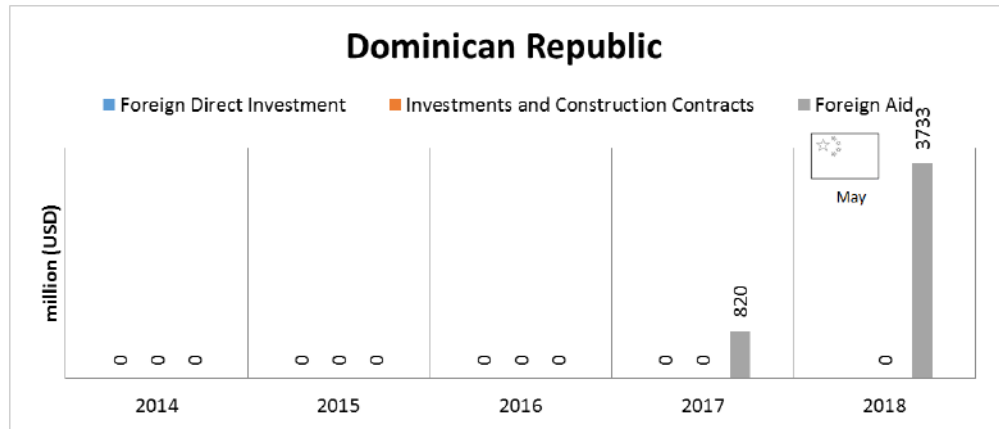
Award of ADS: None at the end of 2018.

Participation in a multilateral institution managed by China: FOCAC member since August 2018 (invited to take part as an observer in 2006) (State Council of the PRC 2006).

*The Dominican Republic*

China and the Dominican Republic first held talks on diplomatic recognition in 2004. Those negotiations resulted in the opening of Dominican trade offices in Hong Kong and Beijing (Wikileaks 2004). Commercial links developed over the next few years, with particular progress between 2012 and 2014 when China approved the import of Dominican cigars (Xinhuanet 2018b). In November 2017, talks began on establishing official relations and those relations commenced in May 2018 (Dominica Today 2017).

FIGURE 12: CHINESE DOLLAR DIPLOMACY: THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



Existence of bilateral trade or other economic agreements: BTA negotiations started in May 2018 although some commercial ties existed before 2018. As of December 2018, the PRC and the Dominican Republic had concluded 18 agreements (Caribbean Council n.d a).

Presence of the Confucius Institute: Yes, since the autumn of 2018.

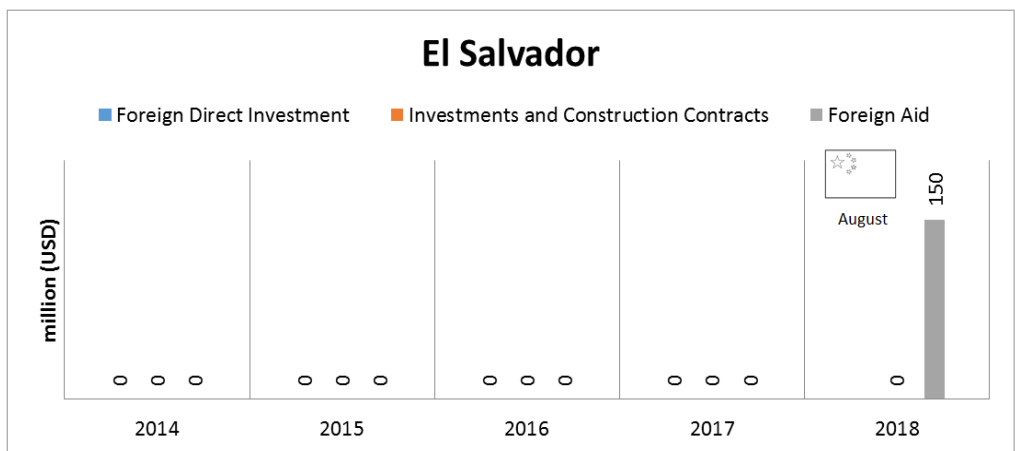
Award of ADS: Awarded in June 2018.

Participation in a multilateral institution managed by China: Participated in the China-CELAC Forum for the first time in January 2018.

*El Salvador*

El Salvador and the PRC formed diplomatic ties in August 2018. Previously, however, the leftist party Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front maintained relations with Beijing (Wikileaks 2005). Both Taiwan and the United States were outraged by this connection and have accused El Salvador of making various financial demands. In particular, Taiwan claims that El Salvador asked it to provide an ‘astronomical sum’ for a port project and that when Taipei responded coldly, El Salvador launched talks with Beijing (The Guardian 2018b). El Salvador has denied this allegation. Observers say it is unclear whether China offered any specific aid or economic incentive to El Salvador (Reuters 2018b).

FIGURE 13: CHINESE DOLLAR DIPLOMACY: EL SALVADOR



Existence of bilateral trade or other economic agreements: The first negotiations started in the autumn of 2018 (Xinhuanet 2018a).

Presence of the Confucius Institute: Yes, since May 2018.

Award of ADS: None at the end of 2018.

Participation in a multilateral institution managed by China: China-CELAC Forum member since August 2018; negotiations about OBOR membership started in 2018.

#### **4 CONCLUSION: YES, BEIJING IS USING DOLLAR DIPLOMACY, HOWEVER THE MOTIVATION OF THE RECIPIENT STATES IS NOT ALWAYS ECONOMICAL AND THE MOTIVATION OF BEIJING IS NOT ALWAYS TO ABANDON TAIWAN**

This article responds to the argument that Beijing has been using economic incentives to cause recipient nations to switch their diplomatic allegiances, that is, to break off ties with Taiwan and recognise the PRC. Based on the data collected, we can draw a number of conclusions about Chinese dollar diplomacy and the causes and effects of the links between Beijing and Taiwan's former diplomatic friends.

The empirical data shows that the PRC uses dollar diplomacy concerning Taiwan's diplomatic allies. In the case of eleven countries, capital flows or economic benefits were provided before diplomatic ties were established (Table 3). The new diplomatic ties between the PRC and individual countries further opened the door to the flow of capital and economic opportunities and relations. These countries gained foreign aid, received approved destination status, and benefited from the establishment of Confucius Institutes. Moreover through their investments, construction contracts, and membership of multilateral institutions managed by China, they were able to access Chinese loans and other financial resources.

However, the strategy has been applied to various recipient countries differently. It was clear from the same data that China offered virtually none of Taiwan's friends a systematic and permanent set of economic incentives. There were big differences among the eleven countries where capital flows and economic relations were identified before forming diplomatic ties. The data did not point to any pattern of flows, or incentives and offers across these states. The graphs in the case studies show that the volumes of capital flows like foreign direct investment and foreign aid were unstable (only in the case of Senegal did FDI rise for four successive years) and even after diplomatic ties had been established, the conferral of economic advantages was not automatic.

Several countries did not receive these benefits for almost a decade. Of the cases examined here, there were two countries, Dominica and Grenada, which did not receive any significant economic profit as a result of the diplomatic change (for more information, see graphs 2 and 4 above). While the reasons for this warrant more exploration, these inquiries exceed the scope of the current study. And in states like Panama, the Dominican Republic, and Sao Tomé, which saw the biggest input of capital and the most lucrative economic deals including the setting up of trade and economic offices and contracts China's use of dollar diplomacy leaves several unanswered questions. In the case of Panama, Beijing was interested in making use of the Panama Canal and playing a part in its reconstruction (The Guardian 2018a). Concerning Sao Tomé, Beijing was keen to access the country's newly discovered offshore oil deposits (Reuters 2013; ABC News 2016). Finally, the Dominican Republic offered tobacco, rum, minerals, and an attractive tourist destination in response to the growing demands of the Chinese market (Brito and

Jianrong 2018). In the cases of Panama and El Salvador, it may even be that, as several observers have said (Harris 2018; Reuters 2018b; Telesur 2018), China’s goal is not to suppress Taiwan but to undermine the US’s power. It appears, thus, that in the case of many of these economic alliances, the isolation of Taiwan was not the only aim.

**TABLE 3: CAPITAL FLOWS AND ECONOMIC STIMULI BEFORE THE DIPLOMATIC SHIFT**

Country	FDI*	ICC	FA	BTA	CI	ADS	MIP
Liberia							
Dominica	X						
Senegal	X		X				
Grenada							
Chad	X						
Costa Rica	X		X				
Malawi	X		X				X
The Gambia	X						X
Sao Tomé	X	X	X				X
Panama	X	X	X		X		
Burkina Faso	X						X
Dominican R.			X				X
El Salvador					X		X

\* For acronyms see chart 2. Source: Author based on empirical data from case studies.

The experiences of Panama and the Gambia also supported the view that China’s actions were not reckless or impetuous. During the administration of former Taiwanese president Ma (2008–2015) at least, cross-strait relations improved and Beijing was hesitant to form ties with Taiwan’s diplomatic allies. The fact that there was no change in the diplomatic relations with Panama and the Gambia between 2007 and 2016 (Table 1), even as both these states expressed interest in joining China’s side, suggests that the PRC adjusted its actions and policies based on the quality of its relationship with Taiwan. In the case of Panama, the lack of diplomatic relations may even be seen as detrimental to Chinese economic interests (Chinese companies were excluded from construction contract bids in the country while Beijing faced the prospect of complicated international transport routes). Even so, Beijing postponed establishing diplomatic ties.

**TABLE 4: CAPITAL FLOWS AND ECONOMIC STIMULI AFTER THE DIPLOMATIC SHIFT**

Country	FDI	ICC	FA	BTA	CI	ADS	MIP
Liberia	X	X	X	X	X		X
Dominica	X		X	X	X*	X	X*
Senegal	X	X	X	X	X*	X*	X
Grenada	X		X	X		X	X*
Chad	X	X	X	X			X
Costa Rica	X	X	X	X	X	X	X*
Malawi	X	X	X	X	X*		X
The Gambia	X		X	X	X		X
Sao Tomé			X	X	X		X
Panama	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Burkina Faso	N/A		X	X	X	X	X
Dominican R.	N/A		X		X		X
El Salvador	N/A		X	X	X		X

\* Country received the benefit more than five years after the diplomatic switch. Source: Author based on empirical data from case studies.

It was also clear that recipient countries had some reservations and doubts about accepting Chinese money and offers and that Taiwan’s former (and current) friends recognised potential risks as well as benefits arising from their ties with



the PRC. A good example is the Malawi government, which held extended debates about the risks of entering a debt trap when considering Chinese loans (Ngozo 2011). In March 2018, the Gambian parliament also rejected a framework agreement on a Chinese concessional loan after finding out that the agreement was not transparent enough and posed several risks to the country (Bah 2018). Both these critical responses suggest that Beijing may need to revise and transform the structure and tools of its economic diplomacy.

We may conclude, then, that there is sufficiently conclusive empirical data to confirm China's use of dollar diplomacy vis-à-vis Taiwan's diplomatic allies. For most of these countries, their diplomatic recognition of the PRC has enabled rich economic, trade, and development links with China and all of them profited from the diplomatic change. However, there should be further discussions, if the increase in capital flows and economic ties were only motivated by the interest of China in isolating Taiwan.

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## ANALYTICAL IMAGES OF POLITICAL TRUST IN TIMES OF GLOBAL CHALLENGES. THE CASE OF SLOVENIA, SPAIN AND SWITZERLAND

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*The main aim of this paper is to disentangle the understanding of political trust by analysing its determinants and trends in specific global crisis circumstances. Two fundamental perspectives of understandings of political trust as institutional and evaluation category in the period during the 2002 to 2012 are taken into focus, applying Switzerland, Spain and Slovenia as case study countries with different experiences of democratic development. The aim of the study is to see whether, and how, attitudes towards political trust in the three countries potentially changed during the set period and according to the set institutional and evaluation perspectives of political trust. A multiple group confirmatory factor analysis (MGCFA) and posterior structural equation model (SEM) are specified, applied on the European Social Survey (ESS) dataset. The study confirms that the perception of political trust is significantly divided within various types of political institutions. Attitudes to political trust in various democracies differ within political institutions depending on whether they exist at a national or international level, or whether they appear as individual political subject. Attitudes to political trust are also affected by time periods and global economic challenges. The findings point to the need for political institutions to perform in accordance with stable democratic patterns. Findings also point to the need for further research in order to track various prevailing characteristics of political trust in variously developed democracies.*

**Key words:** political trust; political institutions; democracy; multiple group confirmatory factor analysis; posterior structural equation model.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Trust is one of the most fundamental research areas in the social sciences. Ever popular, but at the same time, increasingly complex, ambiguous, multi-layered, and elusive, and therefore, a highly challenging topic of research, whether taken from a conceptual or an operational-measurement perspective. It is therefore unsurprising that the substantial body of 'trust literature' has a considerable number of studies from various perspectives, with findings that are frequently contradictory and mutually exclusive.

This paper focuses on the perceptions of political trust, and analyses two fundamental perspectives of its understandings - the institutional and evaluation one. The focus of the paper is set in the period during the 2002 to 2012, considering economic crisis in that time in three European countries with different rates of democratic development. The aim of the study was to see whether, and how, attitudes towards political trust in the three countries potentially changed during the set period and according to the set two political trust perspectives.

Various typologies of political trust can be identified in referred literature, addressing various perspectives. For the purposes of the paper political trust is set into its institutional and evaluative context. The institutional perspective of political trust places political entities at the heart of interest. Here, the issue of political trust refers to trust in political institutions, which are either understood as one large complex entity, or as a set of individual, political institutional constructs with their own peculiarities and '*modus of operandi*' (Zmerli et al. 2007; Hooghe 2011). The individual political entities, or the 'zipped' political institution approach to measuring political trust is taken at the core of this perspective of political trust.

The second perspective of political trust addresses its evaluative perspective. It focus either into the processes and structures of the work and performance of political institutions (political trust as a so-called specific phenomenon), or into general democratic processes and structures of a political regime and its correspondence with political trust (political trust as a so-called diffuse phenomenon) (Easton 1975; Crozier, Huntington and Watanuki 1975; Kumlin 2002; Newton 2006). In this sense, political trust can be understood as a purely political, or as a wider socio-cultural phenomenon (van Deth, Montero and Westholm 2007). It can 'serve' to be either a dependent or independent evaluation research variable. Among the so-called political factors, such characteristics as satisfaction with democracy, patterns of political culture, attitudes towards political participation, and political performance have most frequently corresponded to political trust as dependent variable, and it can be also *vice versa* (Almond and Verba 1963; Easton 1975; March and Olsen 1984; Mishler and Rose 2001; Grönlund and Ferrera 2007; Zmerli, Newton and Montero 2007; Marien and Hooghe 2011). So-called 'non-political factors' primarily focus on demographic, economic, educational and other socio-cultural attitudes towards political trust. For instance, it is predicted that the level of education or gender corresponds to the level of political trust detected by the respondents (Kaase 1999; Letki 2004; Mishler and Rose 2001; Almond and Verba 1963; Schiffman, Thelen and Sherman 2010; Zmerli et al. 2007).

In this paper, both of the exposed approaches to political trust are being tested in three European democracies with different experiences of democratic

development,<sup>2</sup> all of them having very specific political and economic circumstances before and after the 2009 global economic crisis. When considering the stated political trust perspectives, the study is expected to provide new insights into the following:

- a) the complexity of general understanding of political trust as a unique or construct-divided institutional phenomena, with a special focus given before and after critical crisis circumstances (*'institutional'* perspective).
- b) the role of political and non-political factors in relation to the institutional related perception of political trust before and after critical system-wide circumstances (*'evaluation'* perspective).

For analytical purposes, the dataset of the European Social Survey (ESS) is obtained. A multiple group confirmatory factor analysis (MGCFA) and posterior structural equation model (SEM) are specified and applied to three European countries in 2004, before the 2008 global economic and financial crisis, immediately after the crisis, in 2010 and later in 2012.

## 2 POLITICAL TRUST AND THE INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE OF POLITICAL ENTITIES

Political trust is understood first and foremost as an institutional phenomenon. It is most often approached as being either interpersonal (Almond and Verba 1963; Putnam 1993; Inglehart 1990) or system (Easton 1975; Mishler and Rose 2001; Dalton 2000; Levi and Stoker 2000); and either individual or collective (Zmerli et al. 2007).

In this sense, political trust is most often considered a dependent variable with special relevance in the relationships between citizens and political authorities or entities. These relationships can be understood on a single political institutional basis or on an individual basis, and based on either firmly, formally regulated constitutional and legislative norms or on their own 'rules of the game' (Searing 1982).<sup>3</sup>

Many authors suggest it is inappropriate to categorise political entities as single political institutions. (Rohrschneider and Whitefield 2009; Zmerli et al. 2007; Marien and Hooghe 2011), instead, various political subjects need to be treated as a set of individual entities or constructs (Levi and Stoker 2000; Pharr et al. 2000; Searing 1982; Torney-Purta, Barber and Richardson 2004). Results confirm the argument above and identified differences in the levels of political trust among the following individual groups of political subjects (Denters et al. 2007; Hooghe 2011): a) *individual actors* (e.g., political parties and politicians); b) *regulating institutions* (e.g., parliament, government, courts, police, army); c) *policy performance bodies* (e.g., economic, healthcare, education, and cultural institutions; civil service, and so on); and d) *international organisations* (the United Nations).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See Table 5 in Annex for the key descriptive characteristics of the democracies of the countries analysed: Switzerland, Spain and Slovenia.

<sup>3</sup> In real life, the 'truth' frequently fell somewhere 'in-between'. Politicians do not implement the rules of the game as reliably as is implied by traditional constitutional rulings and modern democratic theory. In practice, therefore, politicians' responses differ substantially from the normative expectations of the political institutions (ibid).

<sup>4</sup> Hooghe (2011, 271) fundamentally defends the single-definition of political institutions' trust, but adds "if there is any two-dimensionality in a political trust scale, it would be between, on the one



On the basis of the institutional-related understanding of political trust outlined above, the first leading hypothesis tests the potential division of political entities and perception of political trust, as follows:

*H<sub>1</sub>: The structure of political trust is more than a one-dimensional phenomena.*

### 3 EVALUATION PERSPECTIVES OF POLITICAL TRUST AND POLITICAL ENTITIES

Political trust can be conceptually and analytically treated as a two-fold phenomenon. It can be used as one (among many others) of the determinants for the assessment of the success of one political system or its democracy, or it can directly reflect the cognitive assessment of what political entities do with regard to regime performance (Easton 1975; Kumlin 2002, 109–111). In the former case we speak about a diffuse political trust phenomenon, while in the latter about a specific phenomenon (Easton 1975). In the diffuse phenomenon cases, it is assumed that political trust is so closely related to democracy that it either represents its constitutive minimal criteria, which is a trademark of success or failure (Zmerli et al. 2007; Kumlin 2002; Denters et al. 2007). Political institutions undertake a central role when political trust is regarded as a specific phenomenon. Political trust is being defined through the evaluation data of how they perform, how they are perceived by the people, and what results they are achieving (ibid).

By the mid 1970s, Crozier, Huntington and Watanuki (1975) had already closely connected lower levels of political trust in established Western democracies to the prevailing modes of state governability. According to the authors, lower levels of political trust are related to a broader range of economic, social and political interventions on a macro-level, showing that in the longer term, various general dysfunctions of democracy are the only evident explanation for decreasing trust in political institutions (ibid). Inglehart (1990), also on a longer-term basis, correlated decreasing levels of trust with the rise of modernisation and identity changes. Within a similar framework, a causality between general satisfaction with democracy and the performance of specific policies has also been confirmed on various case studies, stating that where there is higher welfare and economic policy performance, people have higher expectations (Putnam 1993; Vatter and Bernauer 2009). This is particularly true for economic policy performance and trust in how governments work. It is believed that national economic performance and citizens' evaluations of the economy are correlated in such a way that negative perceptions of the economy promote higher political distrust (Citrin 1974; Hetherington 1998).<sup>5</sup>

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hand, trust in representative institutions [...] and on the other hand trust in the order institutions of a society" and "if the purpose was to show political trust is not one-dimensional, it would have made more sense to focus on items that are less central to the scale, like [...] trust in United Nations".

<sup>5</sup> Although in a very recent case Klingeman (2018) stated that the 2008 financial crisis in Germany had no direct impact on the strong and stable support for democracy within the country, a number of studies focusing on political parties' stability in times of economic crisis show that people in Western democracies (especially post-socialist) are significantly more likely to shift to another party in response to an economic downturn. This leads towards the destabilization of the party systems, which is one of the building blocks of today's democratic systems, and also political trust discourse (Hernández and Kriesi 2016; Dassonneville and Hooghe 2017).

Similar general trends described above have also been detected in the cases of younger democracies. Although countries in the so called younger democracies have higher levels of mistrust in political institutions than those of older democracies (Bernhard, Reenock and Nordstrom 2003; Letki 2004; Catterberg 2006; Dalton and Welzel 2014), the patterns of relationships between democracies, politicians' responsiveness and political trust show similarities with democracies with older tradition (Zmerli et al. 2007; Denters et al. 2007).

In other words, scholars who have analysed the shorter-term impacts of contemporary political and economic experiences and the changing levels of political trust recognise mostly conclude that short-term negative experiences have a greater effect on the decreasing levels of political trust, regardless of the level of their democratic traditions (Mishler and Rose 2001; Klingemann 2014).

Hence, according to the results from literature review, it would be expected that the economic and financial crisis and the related processes shaped attitudes towards political trust during the periods under study (2004, 2010 and 2012). Based on the exposed general evaluative perspective of political trust in times of crisis, the following hypothesis is established:

*H<sub>2</sub>: The level of political trust constructs is negatively affected over time (e.g. in times of financial crisis).*

Further on, a set of the so-called diffuse political and non-political determinants of political trust in various political entities should be considered. The leading questions in these cases would be if individual satisfaction with government or with democracy (political determinants), or level of education, gender, satisfaction with life (non-political determinants) are relevant as evaluation categories of defining political trust (Almond and Verba 1963; Catterberg 2006; Crozier et al. 1975; van Deth et al. 2007; Mishler and Rose 2001; Pharr et al. 2000).

The literature that relate to the political determinants of the concept of political trust reveals that levels of political trust correspond to the performance of political institutions in relations to democracy, political system and also in a specific policy field as reflected through individuals' evaluation of their satisfaction, responsiveness, participation, and choice of the stated political factors (Zmerli et al. 2007; Denters et al. 2007). Besides the already stated influence of economic circumstances, many studies have shown that political trust in political institutions is likely to decline when material wellbeing increases. In this case, greater wealth leads to a decline in satisfaction with the performance of welfare policies, as the public begins to evaluate its leaders and institutions, demanding higher standards and with higher expectations. (Inglehart 1990; Catterberg 2006).

Further on, non-political determinants such as age, gender, education and individuals' satisfaction with life are evidenced to have an impact on the assessment of political trust, too (ibid). People's individual cultural and normative traits and beliefs, or their social backgrounds are assumed to correlate with non-political determinants for political trust (Schoon and Cheng 2011). Some studies have found that ability, education and occupational status have a positive association with political trust (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 1995), while others have found negative or non-significant associations (Döring 1992; Hooghe 2011). Research on the potential impacts of non-political determinants (e.g.,

long-life learning) on political trust in younger, post-communist democracies have not revealed any significant differences to more established democracies (Mishler and Rose 2001; Catterberg and Moreno 2006).

Although the stated approaches and especially their findings have quite frequently been marked as inconsistent (Schoon and Cheng 2011), or even conceptually overstretched (Fisher, Van Heerde and Tucker 2010; Hooghe 2011), the third and fourth hypothesis considering political and non-political determinants of political trust are (in accordance with previous studies) as follows:

*H<sub>3</sub>: Political determinants have a higher influence on political trust than non-political determinants.*

*H<sub>4</sub>: Causal effects of non-political determinants on political trust constructs are significant and lower than causal effects on political determinants.*

Table 1 shows the stated hypotheses.

**TABLE 1: OUTLINE OF THE HYPOTHESES**

Structure		
H <sub>1</sub> Political trust constructs	H <sub>2</sub>	Trend of political trust (2004, 2010, 2012)
	H <sub>3</sub>	Causal effects of political variables
	H <sub>4</sub>	Causal effects of non-political variables

## 4 DATA, METHOD AND OPERATIONALIZATION

### 4.1 Data

Data collected on a random sample of Swiss, Spanish and Slovenian citizens were provided by the European Social Survey (ESS) for the years 2004, 2010 and 2012.<sup>6</sup> The sample size for Spanish citizens was 4772 respondents (1338 in 2004, 1683 in 2010, and 1751 in 2012); 4459 were Swiss respondents (1819 in 2004, 1295 in 2010, and 1345 in 2012); and 3335 were Slovenian respondents (1091 in 2004, 1159 in 2010, and 1085 in 2012). Each country chosen has a different level of democratic maturity, and all three offer full ESS data support for testing the leading hypotheses. Switzerland was chosen for being one of the first European democracies, Spain is representative of the early third wave of European democracies in the late 1970s, and Slovenia is an example of the late third wave of post-communist democracies, from the early 1990s. Data for all three countries were analysed in 2004 (before the global financial crisis), in 2010 and 2012 (two and four years after the 2008 financial crisis).

### 4.2 Operationalization

Political trust is described as a complex concept that cannot be properly measured by answering one single question. Therefore, a combination of political trust indicators were used in order to obtain a more reliable result, as this is more appropriate for measuring complex concepts than a single indicator (Allum, Read and Sturgis 2011; Torney-Purta et al. 2004).

<sup>6</sup> The reason for using this particular sample of three countries is purely practical as all data required for the periods analysed were fully available in the ESS dataset for the three countries.

In this study, political trust was measured using seven items from the following ESS question: "... on a score of 0-10 how much do you personally trust each of the institutions? 0 means you do not trust an institution at all, and 10 means you have complete trust". The items are: '[country's] parliament', 'the legal system', 'the police', 'politicians', 'political parties', the 'European Parliament' and the 'United Nations'.<sup>7</sup> These seven institutions were analysed for Switzerland, Spain and Slovenia in the years 2004, 2010 and 2012.

First, latent constructs on trust in political institutions was analysed, then political and non-political causal relationships between the constructs. Political factors include satisfaction with the economic situation, government, democracy, health and education. The measurement for these variables is the same for all time periods, and is obtained from ESS on a scale of 0 (completely dissatisfied) to 10 (completely satisfied). Satisfaction with the economic situation is measured as follows: "On the whole, how satisfied are you with the present state of the economy in [country]?". Satisfaction with government is measured by the question "Now thinking about the government in [country], how satisfied are you with the way it is doing its job?". Satisfaction with democracy is evaluated with the question "On the whole, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in [country]?". Satisfaction with education is evaluated with the question "Please say what you think overall about the state of education in [country] nowadays?", and satisfaction with health is evaluated with the question: "Please say what you think overall about the state of health services in [country] nowadays?"

Non-political factors used are gender, age, life satisfaction (measured by "On the whole, how satisfied are you with life in general?", measured on a scale of 0, completely dissatisfied, to 10, completely satisfied), and level of education (using four categories: "below lower secondary education; lower secondary education completed; upper- and post-secondary education completed; and tertiary education completed").

### 4.3 Method

Firstly, Confirmatory Factor Analysis -CFA- (Brown 2006) was used to evaluate political trust as a latent construct. As three countries and three time points are involved, multiple group CFA -MG-CFA- is used to study Hypotheses 1 and 2. This enables us to evaluate the institutional structure and trends of political trust over different years for the three countries. Secondly, the effects of political and non-political indicators on political trust constructs are analysed using Structural Equation Modelling- SEM (Byrne 2012). This permits not only accuracy of the results, but also flexibility in estimating models, giving more accurate estimates of the relationships between the theoretically related variables (political and non-political indicators) and the latent construct of interest (political trust), while measurement error is taken into account. Hypotheses 3 and 4 were evaluated using SEM.

### 4.4 Results

The first part of this section shows the resulting institutional perspective of political trust. The focus is on measuring whether political trust is a single latent

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<sup>7</sup> The following set of institutions was selected on the basis of the classifications available and the labelling of institutions. The European Parliament was added as another potential, very specific supra-national representative political institution (see Denters et. al, 2007; Hooghe 2011, and the section *Political trust and the institutional structure of political entities* in this article).

construct formed by seven indicators, or if it is represented by several latent variables. The institutional perspective of political trust was also interpreted for each country and time period. Table 2 shows the fit indices for the political trust model structures analysed. MGCFA with Maximum Likelihood Robust (MLR) estimator was used for each country. The following goodness-of-fit measures were used for the model fit: standardised root mean square residual (SRMR), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) measures. SRMR values of 0.09 or lower and RMSEA values of 0.06 or lower indicate acceptable fit (Hu and Bentler 1999). The comparative fit index (CFI) and Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) incremental fit indices were used to calculate improvements over competing models. Values higher than 0.90 for these two indices are an indicator of acceptable model fit (Hu and Bentler 1999).

**TABLE 2: FIT MEASURES FOR MEASUREMENT OF POLITICAL TRUST**

	$\chi^2$	df	P	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR
<b>(M1) 1 construct</b>							
Switzerland	2045.130	54	.000	.816	.785	.147 (CI 90%: .141, .152)	.076
Spain	3149.407	54	.000	.748	.706	.178 (CI 90%: .173, .184)	.102
Slovenia	1996.224	54	.000	.813	.781	.163 (CI 90%: .1567, .169)	.067
	7453.488	174	.000	.783	.764	.161 (CI 90%: .157, .164)	.085
<b>(M2) 2 constructs*</b>							
Switzerland	1220.131	49	.000	.892	.861	.118 (CI 90%: .112, .124)	.057
Spain	1873.897	49	.000	.852	.809	.144 (CI 90%: .138, .149)	.094
Slovenia	970.712	49	.000	.911	.886	.118 (CI 90%: .111, .124)	.052
	4383.633	157	.000	.874	.848	.129 (CI 90%: .126, .132)	.079
<b>(M3) 3 constructs**</b>							
Switzerland	137.564	38	.000	.991	.995	.039 (CI 90%: .032, .046)	.018
Spain	143.120	38	.000	.991	.986	.039 (CI 90%: .032, .046)	.024
Slovenia	128.197	38	.000	.991	.986	.042 (CI 90%: .034, .050)	.021
	468.688	122	.000	.990	.984	.042 (CI 90%: .038, .046)	.028

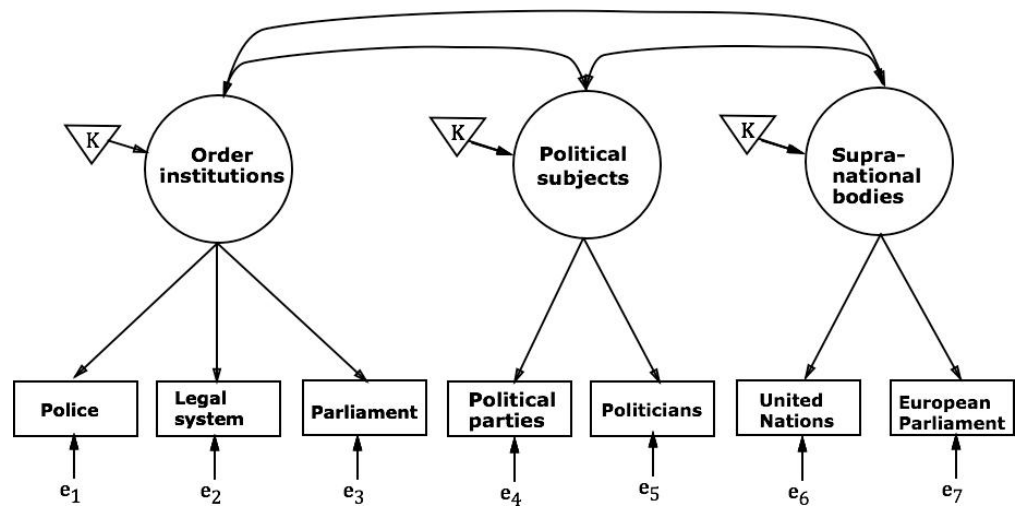
\* National institutions and political subjects (parliament, legal system, police, politicians, political parties); Political bodies at the supranational level (European Parliament, United Nations).

\*\* Order institutions at the national level (parliament, legal system, police); Political subjects (politicians, political parties); Political bodies at the supranational level (European Parliament, United Nations).

Table 2 shows the model fit for different institutional perspectives of political trust using MGCFA in the three time periods. Firstly, a single latent construct with the seven reflective indicators was evaluated. The fit for model (M1) is not acceptable, which means these seven items are not correctly specified as unique latent variables. The second model (M2) considers one latent construct represented by trust in ‘parliament’, ‘legal system’, ‘police’, ‘politicians’, ‘political parties’, namely “National institutions and political subjects”, and a construct representing ‘trust in the European Parliament’ and ‘trust in the United Nations’, namely “Political bodies at an international level”. This model fit is better than model 1, but it is still not acceptable. The third model (M3) sees political trust as three different latent constructs: 1) “Order institutions at a national level”<sup>8</sup> made up of ‘trust in parliament’, ‘legal system’ and ‘police’; 2) “Political subjects” comprising ‘trust in politicians’ and ‘political parties’; and 3) “Political bodies at an international level”, a latent construct representing trust in ‘European Parliament’ and ‘United Nations’. The fit for M3 is acceptable. The latent component structure found for M3 is invariant (Milfont and Fischer 2010) across time (2004, 2010 and 2012) and countries (Switzerland, Spain and Slovenia), thus allowing comparisons across time and countries to be interpreted correctly. The representation of model 3 (M3) can be seen in Figure 1.

<sup>8</sup> Labelled 'order institutions' on the basis of established typology used to measure political trust (Denters et al. 2007).

FIGURE 1: CONFIRMATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS WITH 3 LATENT FACTORS



In Figure 1, squares represent indicators and circles represent constructs (latent variables),  $e_i$  is a random measurement error for the responses and  $\kappa$  is the factor mean for the latent variables.

Results from Table 2 support  $H_1$  in that the institutional structure with three latent variables “Order institutions at a national level”, “Political subjects” and “Political bodies at the international level” is the same for all three countries. This structure also holds for the three time periods: 2004, 2010 and 2012. Parliament and national governmental institutions are regarded as public order institutions. This finding is important in itself, as parliament is regardless of the fact that it should represent the central arena of democracy through its regulatory powers (functions, jurisdictions).

Table 3 shows the levels of these three latent constructs, where each construct is measured with latent means ( $\kappa$ ).

TABLE 3: LATENT FACTOR MEANS FOR POLITICAL TRUST

	Order institutions at the national level			Political subjects			Political bodies at the supranational level		
	2004	2010	2012	2004	2010	2012	2004	2010	2012
Switzerland	5.481	5.793**	6.115**	4.749	5.014**	5.207**	4.573	4.572	4.638
Spain	5.048	4.293**	3.446**	3.664	2.726**	1.919**	4.966	4.487**	3.945**
Slovenia	4.131	2.991**	2.977**	3.111	2.256**	2.331**	4.525	3.763**	3.823**

\*\*p-value<0.01

Table 3 indicates that levels of trust are different for each of the three countries. Switzerland has the highest level of trust for all constructs in 2004 (except “Political bodies at the international level” in Spain in 2004). Thus, according to data from 2010 and 2012, Spain follows Switzerland. The country with the lowest level of trust for all constructs is Slovenia. This means that the maturity of democracy in these three countries (established in Switzerland in 1848, Spain in 1977, and Slovenia in 1991) is relevant to the citizens’ level of trust; Switzerland thus has the highest levels of trust for the various dimensions (order institutions at a national level, political subjects and political bodies at an international level).

Table 3 also shows the trend from 2004 to 2012 for the three latent constructs. Switzerland has a positive trend, which means that for “Order institutions at a national level” and “Political subjects”, the level was higher in 2010 and 2012 than in 2004, while for “Political bodies at an international level” there is no

difference between time periods. Spain and Slovenia were severely affected by the economic and financial crisis, and have a lower level of political trust for all the constructs after the financial crisis. Slovenia had a dramatic decrease for “Order institutions at the national level” while “Political subjects” also decreased significantly after the crisis.

Results partially support Hypothesis 2. The trend for the level of political trust over time also holds as the trend in the “Order institutions at a national level”, “Political subjects” and “Political bodies at an international level” was negative over time for Spain and Slovenia. However, the constructs “Order institutions at a national level” and “Political subjects” increased in Switzerland, which had the same level of trust for “Political bodies at the international level”.

### 5 CAUSAL RELATIONSHIPS FOR POLITICAL TRUST

The next step is to relate the three latent constructs found in the analysis (M3 in Table 2) with their political and non-political predictors. A SEM model, with Maximum Likelihood Robust (MLR) estimator, was used to identify the significant causal factors for political trust over time. The political factors used are the level of satisfaction with the following situations: country’s economy, government, democracy, education and health system. The non-political factors used are the level of satisfaction with life, gender, age and education. Tables 4a, 4b and 4c show the political and non-political effects on the latent constructs “Order institutions at a national level”, “Political subjects” and “Political bodies at an international level” in Switzerland, Spain and Slovenia, respectively. Unstandardized estimates are used (Byrne 2012) to compare the results in Tables 4a, 4b and 4c.

TABLE 4A: ESTIMATES FOR POLITICAL TRUST IN SWITZERLAND

	Switzerland								
	2004			2010			2012		
	OiN	Ps	PbS	OiN	Ps	PbS	OiN	Ps	PbS
Sat. Eco.	.005	.011	-.014	.014	-.039	-.046	-.050*	-.035	-.096**
Sat Govern	.360**	.364**	.355**	.387**	.414**	.369**	.386**	.454**	.390**
Sat Demo.	.197**	.136**	.078**	.191**	.109**	.023	.300**	.163**	.073*
Sat Edu.	.030*	.049*	.087**	.030*	.046	.086**	.067**	.052*	.103**
Sat. Health	.057**	.029	.012	.125**	.105**	.135**	.046**	.001	.087**
Sat. Life	.058**	.035	.002	.059**	.009	.040	.053**	.043	.071*
Gender	.112*	-.044	-.079	-.104	-.284**	-.881**	-.079	-.310**	-.511**
Age	-.006**	-.001	-.011**	-.003	.001	-.017**	-.006**	-.001	-.017**
Education	.040**	.006	.076**	.052**	-.030**	.039**	.050**	.009	.038**
R <sup>2</sup>	.546	.367	.329	.588	.351	.345	.589	.386	.305

\*p-value <.05; \*\* p-value <.01

OiN (Order institutions at the national level); Ps (Political subjects); PbS (Political bodies at the supranational level)

TABLE 4B: ESTIMATES FOR POLITICAL TRUST IN SPAIN

	Spain								
	2004			2010			2012		
	OiN	Ps	PbS	OiN	Ps	PbS	OiN	Ps	PbS
Sat. Eco.	.109**	.174**	.154**	.159**	.225**	.160**	.185**	.239**	.119**
Sat Govern	.174**	.200**	.149**	.183**	.269**	.154**	.132**	.177**	.096**
Sat Demo.	.267**	.167**	.237**	.287**	.178**	.251**	.318**	.158**	.334**
Sat Edu.	.085**	.111**	.107**	.120**	.096**	.116**	.093**	.065**	.095**
Sat. Health	.132**	.086**	.089**	.118**	.029	.083**	.040**	.025	.043*
Sat. Life	.047*	-.008	.040	.043*	.037	-.026	.031*	-.033*	.001
Gender	-.011	-.063	-.174*	-.112*	-.080	-.434**	-.140*	-.189*	-.079
Age	.013**	.012**	.003	.001	.009**	-.006*	.001	.006*	-.007*
Education	.043**	.037**	.029**	.041**	.030**	.015	.019**	.026**	.012
R <sup>2</sup>	.482	.252	.328	.614	.380	.368	.574	.371	.372

\*p-value <.05; \*\* p-value <.01  
 OiN (Order institutions at the national level); Ps (Political subjects); PbS (Political bodies at the supranational level)

TABLE 4C: ESTIMATES FOR POLITICAL TRUST IN SLOVENIA

	Slovenia								
	2004			2010			2012		
	OiN	Ps	PbS	OiN	Ps	PbS	OiN	Ps	PbS
Sat. Eco.	.047*	-.016	.003	.028	.030	.026	.072*	.071*	.043
Sat Govern	.274**	.223**	.211**	.366**	.365**	.160**	.217**	.309**	.173**
Sat Demo.	.321**	.282**	.272**	.288**	.214**	.357**	.343**	.286**	.321**
Sat Edu.	.038	-.005	.073*	.074**	.071**	.128**	.072**	.015	.067*
Sat. Health	.060**	.127**	.053	.034	.070**	-.016	.061**	.076**	.111**
Sat. Life	.033	.036	.087**	.008	-.006	.013	.003	-.011	.048
Gender	.078	-.124	.243*	.128	-.074	-.068	-.297**	-.305**	-.243*
Age	.001	.010**	.009**	.002	.004	.001	.002	.003	.005
Education	.071**	.033*	.116**	.078**	.009	.053**	.108**	.013	.062**
R <sup>2</sup>	.610	.384	.331	.612	.492	.331	.553	.519	.404

\*p-value <.05; \*\* p-value <.01

The results for Switzerland in Table 4a show that political variables are predictors of political trust. These variables are satisfaction with government, democracy, health, and education. “Order institutions at a national level” was particularly affected by both political and non-political variables in 2004, except for the variable 'satisfaction with the economy'. The “Political subjects construct” is affected by political variables only, while “Political bodies at an international level” is affected by satisfaction with government, democracy, education; and the non-political variables, age and education.



In 2010, the “Order institutions at a national level” construct is affected by the same variables, except gender and age, which are not statistically significant. “Political subjects” and “Political bodies at an international level” have more differences between time periods; this means that order institutions in Switzerland are more stable over time. In 2012, satisfaction with the economy was a predictive variable for “Order institutions at a national level” and “Political bodies at an international level”, the remaining political variables and most non-political variables are significant.

Table 4b shows that for Spain in 2004, all political and non-political variables are relevant for “Order institutions at the national level” except gender. For “Political subjects”, all variables are relevant, except satisfaction with life and education. The “Political bodies at an international level” is affected by all political variables, gender and education. Concerning 2010 and 2012, political variables affected the three latent constructs, except satisfaction with health on “Political subjects”, showing clear confirmation of stability in those variables. Education is the most relevant non-political variable, however it is non-significant for “Political bodies at the international level” after the economic and financial crisis.

Results for Slovenia (Table 4c) in 2004 reveal a pattern of effects of determinants on constructs that is less clear. Education and political variables affect “Order institutions at a national level”, and “Political subjects” is affected by satisfaction with democracy, government, health; and the non-political variables, age and education. “Political bodies at an international level” in Slovenia differ in structure from Spain or Switzerland, as non-political variables (except satisfaction with health) are significant. The trend in Slovenia from 2004 to 2010, and in 2012, suggests that non-political variables become non-significant. Education and gender (except in 2010) are significant for all constructs. Political variables are stable over time, and satisfaction with the economy is significant in 2012 for “Order institutions at the national level” and “Political subjects”.

Generally, political variables highly influence “Order institutions at a national level”, “Political subjects”, and “Political bodies at an international level” in all countries and all time periods. In 2004, non-political variables in Switzerland and Spain affect “Order institutions at the national level”, while for Slovenia they are more closely related to “Political bodies at an international level”. However, from 2004 to 2010 and in 2012, the trend for these variables differs in countries with different levels of democratic maturity. Results show that in the case of Switzerland, non-political variables are less important for predicting order institutions at a national level, but more important for “Political subjects” and “Political bodies at an international level”. In the case of Spain, the effect of non-political variables has not changed significantly. For Slovenia, satisfaction with government and democracy remain stable, and satisfaction with economy gains importance in the short-term (2012) after the 2008 financial crisis.

These results confirm the proposed hypotheses. In relation to political factors and the constructs “Order institutions at the national level”, “Political subjects”, and “Political bodies at the international level”, hypothesis 3 is partly supported. Political variables are significant predictors of the various constructs. For instance, satisfaction with the government is generally higher, but not satisfaction with economy or democracy.

Additionally, political determinants on political trust over time show that the effects of political determinants on “Order institutions at a national level” after

the financial crisis (2010 and 2012) are greater than, or equal to those in 2004. Satisfaction with the economy is increasingly important in 2012, at mid-term after the financial crisis, and even more relevant in Spain and Slovenia, which were most affected by the crisis. Regarding the effects of non-political determinants on the latent constructs, hypothesis 4 is also partly supported. Non-political variables influence different years for the different countries, particularly education.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

The debate surrounding political trust has a long history, and still remains popular today, particularly when new political and socio-economic challenges appear in a system, such as the 2008 global economic crisis. Previous studies, using a range of applying various normative and analytical approaches, have revealed many interesting findings, but also contradictions. The results pose a challenge for both further academic research, and also for the contemporary '*state of affairs*' in the specific countries analysed, be it from institutional or wider democratic system perspective.

The main aim of this paper was to disentangle the structure and map the trends of political trust before, during and after particular global crisis periods. This was carried out by analysing political trust as a bundle of constructs of various types of political institutions over time and according to political and non-political determinants.

Testing the proposed model revealed a convincing interrelation between the countries and a higher general level of political trust (see Table 5 in the Annex). It seems that citizens' understanding of political trust has a more complex structure than appears at first glance.

Hypotheses 1 and 2 confirm connections between an institutionally-divided understanding of political trust according to: a) order institutions at a national level (with parliaments in all countries being perceived as an order institution similar to national governmental institutions); b) individual political subjects; and c) political bodies at an international level.

The results confirm that these constructs are stable over time, and that the periods before (2004) and after (2010 and 2012) the global financial crisis play an important role. If we compare the levels of political trust before (2004) and after the financial crisis (2010 and 2012), it decreases in Spain and Slovenia, but not in Switzerland, partially confirming hypothesis 2.

Regarding hypotheses 3 and 4, which relate to the casual relationships of political and non-political determinants on political trust constructs, findings reveal that political determinants have predictive effects on the components of political trust in the different countries. For non-political determinants, education is the most important variable that influences political trust. These findings point to the need for political institutions to perform in accordance with stable democratic patterns. This is especially important for the set of representatives of the so-called individual political subject group of political entities that face the lowest levels of trust among the whole "family" of political institutions. Results show that highest political trust is placed in the regulatory (i.e. order) political institutions, followed by trust in political bodies at an international level.

All in all, the results of the analysis reflect the need to conceptually understand political trust as an important systemic (i.e. diffuse) democratic characteristic, as well as a specific construct of evaluation performance of different groups of political entities. In the latter case, a convincing difference is found between political institutions at both national and international levels, and the phenomena of political entities as individual actors' is firmly evidenced. Politically relevant determinants play an especially important role, and should therefore assist in the attempt to understand and explain the patterns of political trust in individual groups of political entities, and their further potential impact on the wider, so-called diffuse perception of variously developed democracies. Special attention should be given to issues regarding various types of satisfaction, which vary from each other surprisingly, despite their similarities 'on paper' (e.g. government, democracy, economy).

Finally, it is also important to add that the results of the study point to new insights into trends in political trust in three countries with different levels of democratic development. A limitation of the study is the size of the sample of countries selected, which restricts generalization of the findings. However, the methodology and results can contribute to further research in that other countries and/or other time periods could be chosen in relation to the political system selected.

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APPENDIX

TABLE 5: KEY CHARACTERISTICS BY COUNTRIES

Country / characteristics	Switzerland	Spain	Slovenia						
GNI per capita (in \$), Atlas method, 2012**	82,730	30,110	22,810						
Annual GDP growth, average (2004-2012) / in 2009 (%)**	2.11 / -2	1.78 / -4	1.55 / -8						
Inflation, 2012 (%)**	-0,6	2,4	2,6						
Life expectancy at birth / in 2011**	83	82	80						
Beginning of current democracy*	1848	1977	1991						
Form of government*	Federal republic	Monarchy	Republic						
Power of the head of the state*	President of the cabinet simultaneously serves as the president of the republic	Weak	Weak						
Elections of the head of the state*	Indirectly elected / nominated (see above)	Not elected (monarchy)	Directly elected (absolute majority)						
Number of parliamentary chambers*	2	2	2						
Current no. of parties in parliament / no. of parties that gained at least 5 % of the seats at the last national parliamentary elections (year)***	11/7 (2011)	6/3 (2011)	7/6 (2011-early)						
Electoral system, as relevant for the analysed period of this paper (2012)*	Party list	Party list	Party list						
Turnout at the last national parliamentary elections (last EP elections) in %***	48.5	68.9 (44.9)	65.6 (28.4)						
Membership in EU, as relevant for the analysed period of this paper (2012)*	/	1986	2004						
Membership in NATO*	/	1982	2004						
Membership in the United Nations (year of admission)****	2002	1955	1992						
Membership in the World Trade Organisation*****	1995	1995	1995						
Political trust, mean (standard deviation) 1999-2002*	0.55 (0.18)	0.47 (0.18)	0.49 (0.21)						
Satisfaction with democracy, mean (standard deviation) 1999-2002*	0.57 (0.22)	0.55 (0.22)	0.42 (0.22)						
Correlation among constructs (author's analysis).	2004	2010	2012	2004	2010	2012	2004	2010	2012
OiN with Ps	0.82	0.83	0.80	0.75	0.75	0.76	0.87	0.84	0.86
OiN with Pbs	0.67	0.66	0.65	0.81	0.80	0.81	0.79	0.76	0.78
Ps with Pbs	0.65	0.66	0.64	0.69	0.65	0.61	0.65	0.67	0.69
Political trust and political determinants (authors' analysis)	See Table 4a			See Table 4b			See Table 4c		
Political trust and non-political determinants (authors' analysis)	See Table 4a			See Table 4b			See Table 4c		

Sources:

\* van Deth et al. (2007, 20–22, 43–44);

\*\* World bank dataset (The World DataBank) (<http://databank.worldbank.org/>);

\*\*\* ECPR Political Data Yearbook (<http://www.politicaldatayearbook.com/>);

\*\*\*\* United Nations (<http://www.un.org/depts/dhl/unms/>);

\*\*\*\*\* World Trade Organisation

([http://www.wto.org/english/thewto\\_e/whatis\\_e/tif\\_e/org6\\_e.htm](http://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/whatis_e/tif_e/org6_e.htm));

Results without stars are from authors' analyses.

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