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KNOWLEDGE-ECONOMY AS A UTOPIA. THE CASE OF POLAND

Miłosz Miszczyński¹

Abstract

This paper's aim is to show the influence of the notion of 'knowledge economy' on Polish politics and political discourse. Knowledge economy, a concept developed by social scientists, was brought forward by institutions such as the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development, the World Bank or the European Union and is currently followed and replicated by documents, theories, strategies and opinions. The text considers knowledge economy to be an actively employed utopia and ideology among politicians and professionals. In the paper I illustrate my thoughts with two examples: legislative and public education reforms. In those two spheres, I stress how the utopia of 'knowledge economy' is employed and outline its role in the state reform process.

Keywords: knowledge economy, Poland, Central and Eastern Europe

Introduction

'Knowledge economy', 'new economy'², 'knowledge-based economy', 'knowledge-driven economy'³, 'innovation-based economy'⁴, 'learning economy'⁵, 'digital economy'⁶, 'network economy'⁷ and

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² Jeremy L. Hall, "Informing State Economic Development Policy in the New Economy: A Theoretical Foundation and Empirical Examination of State Innovation in the United States" in *Public Administration Review*, 67(4), 2007, pp. 630-645.

³ B. H. Hall, J. Mairesse, "Empirical Studies of Innovation in the Knowledge-driven Economy" in *Economics of Innovation & New Technology*, 15(4/5), 2006, pp. 289-299.

⁴ See: A. Kelli, H. Pisuke "Intellectual Property in an Innovation-based Economy" in *Review of Central & East European Law*, 33(2), 2008, pp. 223-238.

⁵ See D. Archibugi, L. Bengt-Ake (eds.), *The Globalizing Learning Economy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

⁶ See: E.J. Malecki, B. Moriset (eds.), *The Digital Economy: Business Organization, Production Processes and Regional Developments*, London: Routledge, 2007.

'information economy'⁸ are all related notions. They emphasize different aspects of the same stream of discussion about contemporary society, roughly connected to globalization and technological development. The greatest popularity of those concepts was at the beginning of the 21st century. Overconfident long-term prognoses claiming new economic change showed new elements of reality but at the same time turned out to be overoptimistic and unreachable. Although lately popularity of those notions has slightly subsided in the scientific world, the political world still operates with and re-creates the concept, especially having faced an economic crisis.

The paper focuses on the dominant stream of reaction to the economic changes stemming from globalization. It concentrates on the systemic responses founded on the ideology and utopia of the knowledge economy. In the paper knowledge economy is identified as a responsive pattern, impacting other levels of social reality and directing the actions undertaken by nation-states, ranging from local to supranational scales. In the paper, I argue that knowledge economy can be understood as ideology and utopia. This paper focuses on the nation-state level, particularly on the policies and social engineering in the Polish context and identifies some of the actions as attempts of 'realisation' of the knowledge economy in Poland.

The analysis presented in the text is illustrated by examples and data acquired from empirical research. This part outlines the final element of this paper's argumentation, verifying the theoretical assumptions with the practice and the ideas of advocates of the knowledge economy. It focuses on the less political aspects; it is, however, deeply present in political debate. It is visible in discussions about quality of education; ideas for improving creativity via public policy; projects of creating e-infrastructure; or the attempts of building innovation centres that, as it is proven in this work, are combined with and deeply embedded in the ideology of the knowledge economy.

⁷ See P. Ribbers, K. Milis, "The Role of IT Strategies, Architectures, and Services in the Development of Network Economies" in *Information Technology for Development*, 14(3), 2008, pp. 179-189.

⁸ See W. Wei-Ching, "Information Economy and Inequality: Wage Polarization, Unemployment, and Occupation Transition in Taiwan since 1980" in *Journal of Asian Economics*, 20(2), 2009, pp. 120-136.

The core of the paper is based on a study of policy papers and state documents as well as 21 interviews. The respondents⁹ were chosen using the method of purposive sampling. Their publications topics, activities and affiliations were identified as connected to the 'knowledge economy' and this was the criterion through which the purposive selection was made. Most of the respondents (17) came from an academic background and have worked at the biggest and most respected universities in Poland. This group was identified as Polish experts in the field and as main proponents of implementation of knowledge economy. A majority of them (13) put the theory into action and have participated in knowledge-economy undertakings, such as working on regional strategies or consulting policies. In all of the spheres of activity, knowledge-economy was explicitly expressed. The standard time of the interviews ranged between 30 minutes and one hour 30 minutes. At the end of the research, five respondents from professional background were added to the sample. The main aim of such a decision was to verify how practical experience influences the perception of the processes depicted in this paper.

Knowledge Economy: Theoretical Foundations

The idea of the knowledge economy comes from changes in contemporary society. Since the 1970s, theoreticians have been developing concepts in order to grasp how the global scale emerges and have argued about its leading role. For a development of the knowledge economy, Manuel Castells' 'Network Society'¹⁰, and other works elaborating on information age, had a significant influence. A basic component of knowledge economy is an idea that knowledge becomes a resource which does not have diminishing returns. Adding one end user can generate further knowledge but the cost of its diffusion due to technological development is minor. Knowledge generates a competitive advantage, both for a business organization and a nation state. People generating knowledge and ideas are the biggest assets for growth. Compared to the production era, in the knowledge-economy, *status quo* of economic environment cannot last for long because innovation is permanently

⁹ Identity of some respondents was changed upon a request.

¹⁰ Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, London: Macmillan, 2000.

pursued. Extreme competition with accelerating supply-side trends and increased exposition of the dominant economic actors is combined with globalisation. In particular, integration of large, cheap production economies, technological development and economic liberalisation without a doubt shapes the new, global knowledge-based economy, or knowledge-economy. As Clarke puts it, its main drivers are :

1. *'geographical dispersion associated with the globalisation of open goods, capital and technology markets*
2. *new information technology that speed information and knowledge flows*
3. *new distributed organisational structures including the growth of networked organisations*
4. *the growing knowledge intensity of goods and services'*¹¹

The change in the way of thinking opens questions, which are a challenge for various disciplines. For instance, for management science a knowledge worker¹² and his or her capabilities such as innovativeness, responsibility or creativity become key areas of interest. Developing those features is seen as a way of achieving success for the business organization. Similar processes occur in economics, urban planning or human resources management, but also in the most traditional branches such as furniture production or shoe manufacturing, which became global sectors, and where research and development departments play a crucial role. The market segments become more specialized, the rules of competition change: life cycles of innovations and new products are shortening, and intangible products such as computer software note paradoxical increasing returns.

Knowledge-economy and global competition

This paper concentrates on political applications aimed at adjusting the nation state to participation in the global economy. As I will show below, law and education, but also other spheres, on both national and

¹¹ T. Clarke, "The Knowledge Economy" in *Education + Training*, 43 (4/5), 2001, p. 190.

¹² In this paper 'knowledge worker' is understood after Switzer (2006) as a *'team member who has the knowledge and motivation to create and apply new insights to carry out their work to improve organisation's [or individual – author] competitive advantage'*.

regional levels are linked with the notion of knowledge economy, which is used in order to formulate development strategies. The EU's Lisbon Strategy, the OECD's 'Knowledge-Based Economy' report and Poland's National Strategy of Development have one thing in common: they use the same notion, although it is employed for particular purposes. A common aim is creating social development by, for instance, increasing national competitiveness, creating intellectual capital or changing the society in a positive direction.

The idea of knowledge economy and its application and understanding in the political context has evolved over the last 20 years. At each stage, the notion was more capacious and able to contain more processes in order to be convincing and prove its usefulness. Currently, knowledge economy is a part of political discourse, although it originates from the social sciences. Its history as a doctrine of political economics began in the United States of America in the late 1990s. In the first stadium of developing the assumptions of a new approach, the conceptualizations were strictly based on and limited to the information and communication technologies (ICT). The 'new economy' referred to the factors of growth of new digital technologies that generated income. Accordingly, in a speech by Donald J. Johnston, Secretary-General of the OECD, the internet was identified as the most crucial transforming force in the economy¹³. An important observation was the promise of economic development via previously underestimated, underrated or excluded digital technologies.

The second stage of knowledge economy evolved when the European institutions started a quest for an economic boost linked to the observations of the economic development of the United States of America in the 1990s. The diffusion of the idea took some years to finally transform into a form observable in the World Bank's reports and the Lisbon Strategy. The paradigm, or at that time rather the approach, was enriched by numerous research and additional postulates. Quantitative scholars developed indicators assessing advances towards a theoretical 'knowledge-based' model¹⁴. The World Bank projected four pillars of the knowledge economy and ICT was identified as such. As it was noted, the

¹³ Donald J. Johnston, *The New Economy*, 2000
[www.oecd.org/subject/growth.pdf], 6 December 2011.

¹⁴ For instance: K. Mayhew and E. Keep "The assessment: knowledge, skills, and competitiveness" in *Oxford Review of Economic Policy*, 15(1), 1999, pp. 1-15.

concept of the knowledge economy additionally consisted of education and training, economic incentive and institutional transparency or innovation systems. The scope of the notion covered an increasing number of social spheres. The international organisations became highly aware of the idea of the knowledge economy and started to promote the notion. During the discussions on the Lisbon Strategy, the issue of 'network education' or 'e-economy' was raised increasingly and a promise of a changed, rich and modern society emerged in the press and media.

Thirdly, the latest approach of knowledge consisted of innovativeness, freedom and easy access to information. The political bodies have started to debate on issues such as innovation life cycles, creativity networks or creative cities. Recently, less is being said and written about e-matters and ICT, as they have become an integrated part of the political paradigm of the knowledge economy. The new aspects and application of the elements of the concept are constantly pursued and explored. UNESCO's 'Creative Cities' and ACRE (Accommodating Creative Knowledge) aim to change and promote the idea of environmentally boosted creativity. Both initiatives indirectly relate to the knowledge economy and are embedded in its concept.

Ideology and Utopia of Knowledge Economy

In the paper, basing on my research, I claim that knowledge functions in Polish politics as an utopia and becomes an ideology. I claim that knowledge economy is affecting the project and course of actions formulated to cause social change.

*"Knowledge economy is an utopia, it's a figure of speech, a buzzword. People think that to fly with the parrots you have to at least sing like a one. (...) The problem is that by repeating 'knowledge economy' every day we might not increase GDP."*¹⁵

Utopia and ideology were characterised by Karl Mannheim. Mannheim unveils utopian ideas as the element that subordinated classes have a tendency to create. He contrasts it with ideology, which is a

¹⁵Majserek, W. (expert interview).

product of the ruling class serving for maintaining and justifying the status quo. In contrast to Marx, Mannheim looked for the social sources of ideology rather than exclusively focusing on the political sphere. According to Mannheim, the most important source of ideology comes from class stratification. Mannheim claims that all ideologies are impossible to be realized as they are '*situationally transcendent ideas which never succeed de facto in the realisation of their projected contents*'.¹⁶ All social groups produce ideologies and they vary in time.

'(...) every age allows to arise the ideas and values in which are contained and condensed from the unrealised and unfulfilled tendencies which represent the needs of each age. These intellectual elements then become the explosive material for bursting the bound of the existing order'.¹⁷

How can we trace the relationship between them? Utopias challenge reality but, while being put in practice, become ideological by not being fulfilled. This linkage also has a causal relationship: ideas become utopian, transform into ideologies and disappear. *Only those orientations transcending reality will be referred to by us as utopian which, when they pass into conduct tend to shatter, either partially or wholly the order of things prevailing at the time*'.¹⁸ Moreover, utopia implies a 'utopian mentality' that occurs '*when the collective unconscious guided by wishful representation and the will to action, hides certain aspects of reality. It turns its back on everything which would shake its belief or paralyse its desire to change things*'¹⁹. Thus, the aim of reaching utopia becomes a primary goal and puts aside any other aspects of reality.

I claim that an idea of knowledge economy, followed by scientific reports and political projects, strongly impacts various spheres of social life. Basing on Mannheim's theoretical assumptions and putting aside the Marxist discourse, I identify knowledge economy both as an ideology and utopia, depending on the context and justification. I stress that a highly important issue is the relation of knowledge economy and the public

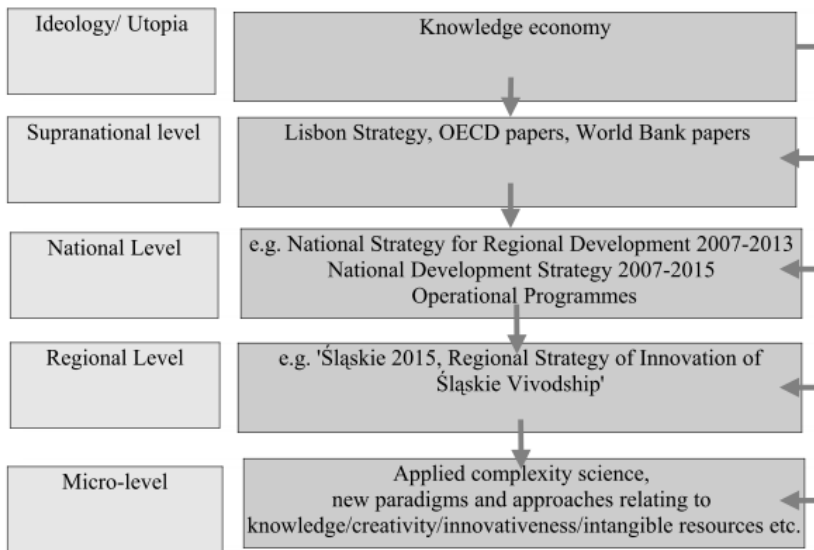
¹⁶ Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia. An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*, London: Routledge, 1991, p. 194.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 179.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 173.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 36.

sphere. Beginning from the supranational scale and the offices where global projects are formulated, especially in the Lisbon Strategy, the idea of knowledge economy gained significance and wide acceptance as a social engineering postulate. The ongoing debates and initiatives of the World Bank and OECD were then replicated on national, regional and micro- levels and the utopia was particularized. This work focuses on the relation between the ideological/utopian dimension and the national scale (see graph below).



Graph 1. The relations between the levels of the knowledge economy

Knowledge-economy in Poland

The concept of knowledge economy is present in a high number of official documents issued by the Polish political bodies. While analyzing these documents, I discovered that the core concept is based on the resonated approach of the Lisbon Strategy, so the second stage of the evolution of the notion. For instance, the Operational Programme for an

Innovative Economy (OPIE) 2007-2013²⁰ and the Polish National Development Strategy mention knowledge-based economy over 25 times. Under the paragraph labelled 'the knowledge economy' the OPIE claims:

'The state will promote development of intellectual capital, both in relation to persons as well as to organisations.

The state should at the same time create condition conducive to the professional and financial promotion form more talented, creative and enterprising persons.

We want the social and professional activity and mobility of the population to grow, so that the society has a high level of education and the workers constantly raise their qualifications .

*The Polish economy in 2015 must be strong and competitive on the European and world scene, characterized by a high and stable economic growth, a high innovativeness, effective industry, developed services and modernized agricultural sector.'*²¹

Polish authorities have formed at least three core-strategies of such development on the national level: (1) the National Strategy for Regional Development 2007-2013, (2) the National Development Strategy 2007-2015 and (3) Operational Programmes (OP) 2007-2013 (including OP Human Capital and OP Innovative Economy). All of them highly prioritise fulfilling the postulates of knowledge economy. For instance, OP Innovative Economy selects core activities realised in it:

- 1) *Employment and social integration support*
- 2) *Development of human resources, adaptation potential of enterprises and healthcare of workers*
- 3) *Increasing the quality of education system*
- 4) *Increasing the higher education system and number of graduates in the professions vital for knowledge economy*
- 5) *Increasing the potential of government administration and regional bodies*

²⁰ Ministry of Regional Development, *Innovative Economy 2007-2013. National Strategic Reference Framework 2007-2013*, Warsaw: Ministry of Regional Development, 2007, p. 23.

²¹ Ministry of Regional Development, *National Development Strategy 2007-2015*, Warsaw: Ministry of Regional Development, 2006, pp. 25-26.

6) *Opening labour market for everyone*²²

The approach presented in these strategies represents a high level of awareness about the potential benefits of a knowledge economy. The explicit statements are evidence of its presence in their authors' consciousness. As I will show later, noticeably, it is not enough as far as the actions taken by authorities are concerned. Quite often in official documents it is claimed that knowledge economy needs to be popularised among common people, who still are not aware of its importance.

Programmes based on similar assumptions are often formulated both by numerous commentators and the institutions themselves faced with the need of re-prioritization. Such accusations are clearly visible in the context of the Lisbon Strategy and the documents following it. For instance the High Level Group's report outlined the impossibility of its realization and led to significant adjustments²³. As a result, *'today we see that the combination of economic conditions, international uncertainty, slow progress in the Member States and a gradual loss of focus has allowed Lisbon to be blown off course'*²⁴. Contrived optimism about the realisation of the strategy was not restrained by any of the member states. Indeed, in the Polish case the adoption of ideas and promises went fast as the hyper-optimism diffused across the governmental resorts and resulted in the formulation (and continuing development) of the national strategies mentioned above.

Due to the actions taken both by international organisations and governments, politicians and states are becoming aware of dawning of an informational age and the discourse of it. In Poland, especially among experts using the notion, 'knowledge economy' is often understood as a political idea connected with the need for adjustment to the new economic reality. As my research showed, quite often different experts within

²² Based on: Ministry of Regional Development, *Szczegółowy opis priorytetów programu operacyjnego kapitał ludzki 2007-2013*, Warsaw: Ministry of Regional Development, 2006, [http://www.efs.gov.pl/Dokumenty/Lists/Dokumenty20programowe/Attachments/89/SzOP_PO_KL_20_luty_2009.pdf], 22.12.2011.

²³ European Communities, *Facing the Challenge. The Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Employment. Report from the High Level Group chaired by Wim Kok*, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2004.

²⁴ European Commission, *Working Together for Growth and Jobs: A New Start for the Lisbon Strategy Communication to the Spring European Council*, Brussels: COM (2005) 24, p. 16.

different disciplines address the challenge of knowledge economy by talking about their vision of an optimal solution for a problem or just modernization reforms. Moreover, among politicians, knowledge economy clearly works as a slogan. It is a part of political jargon and expresses the overall success. Thus, as it will be shown in the last sections, the utopia and ideology of the knowledge economy works as an unrealistic vision of the most successful stage of transition, with wealthy economy and modern society.

It is worth stressing that some of institutional foundations of modern economies were created without mentioning 'the knowledge economy' while providing a basis for it (in a non-utopian sense). In a similar way, states currently labelled as 'knowledge economies' and given as examples were built while the concept was still unknown and unpopular. In recent years knowledge economy has gained its power and is present in the discourse of politics and economics. The next part looks at the aspects of functioning of the institutions in the post-socialist Central Eastern Europe and outlines the application and understanding of the notion in chosen spheres.

An Illustration: Knowledge-Economy and Legislative Reform

Beginning with the Lisbon Strategy, knowledge economy became a strong political program. Among the goals of the strategy are: creation of a legislative climate supporting entrepreneurship and investment, development of the bankruptcy law, assistance for small and medium enterprises, improving the legal functioning of the 'new industries'²⁵. Such an assemblage of postulates set a direction parallel to the development of transiting countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Especially reshaping and re-regulating is worth an analysis. Some of my respondents said that law reform provokes 'an extreme disruption' of a system. This disruption aims to bring about societal development²⁶. An approach underlying this idea is that, as it was expressed by a founding director of a knowledge-promoting NGO: '*we need a second transition – a transition to the knowledge economy that has to begin with legislative change.*'²⁷ The idea behind this

²⁵ European Communities, *op. cit.*

²⁶ Krzysztof Śmiech, Expert interview.

²⁷ Krzysztof Śmiech, quoting Sadowski, Expert interview.

statement raises the question to what degree the legislature can support the realisation of the proposition of knowledge-based order.

*'In Poland we do not have many business angels, although I think that financial matters are not a case, I rather assume that it is not regulated institutionally and that nobody wants to gratify the entrepreneurship. The law rather aims to punish those who enjoy the success than helps them and that is a big issue [...].'*²⁸

To respond to the matter suggested by this person, it is important to note that actions of institutions in Central and Eastern Europe quite often do not serve and protect creativity and innovativeness. The frequently emphasized issues such as research funding, innovations protection and support, business friendly law or government regulations undoubtedly have a fundamental role in the development of the system and are seen as a mean of reaching the utopia. A question is the root of these problems. Quite often the answer lies in the maladjusted legislature irrelevant to the conditions that the system is to face or is already facing. Thus, in the context of this paper, advocates of the change in law, can be divided into two groups: one proposing the radical change of the system, including changing the constitution; the other trying to look for possible adjustments without extreme reforms. This is widely discussed by Karl Popper and his division between 'piecemeal social engineering' and 'utopian social engineering' and echoes of Popper's thought can be quite thoroughly seen in the process²⁹.

Accordingly, the first group looks for a legislative revolution, an approach in which solely the formulation of law and their execution are to cause social change. The legislative and institutional system is seen as the definite barrier, which is emphasized as urging to found the new society. Moreover, due to the defective system that influences the society, it cannot move towards the knowledge economy as the affected spheres of social life; for instance culture, economy or politics are unable to realise the utopia.

²⁸ Marcin Sawicki, Expert interview.

²⁹ Karl Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1971.

Such legislative interventionism presumes that basing on the top-down relationship it is possible to bring the new spirit into the social system, change perceptions and cause reactions. At the same time, especially in transition economies, such an approach often refers to the pre-transitional past of the system and the impacts that it has on today's functioning of it.

*'Before, the respect for law was very low as it was not profitable. It was presumed that only a stupid person respects the law. [...] With the transition many things have changed, the stronger fines partially eliminated corruption... [...] and it all went below. In the States the word 'ściąganie'³⁰ does not exist - there is cheating, obeying the law. [...] It will evolve. And with the improving situation and perception of law in the society it will even go to schools and people. The law is the place it is necessary to start from.'*³¹

It is questionable how much of the postulate of the knowledge economy utopia can be realised using the described measures. The change in law might generate many other outcomes, and knowledge economy in the context of the change might have only an ideological meaning. One of my respondents stressed that the change of law might only be based on promises and 'knowledge economy promises the most: wealth, equality and progress'.³²

On the other hand, a contrasting postulate, which Popper labelled as 'utopian social engineering', is seen as the alternative way leading to the knowledge economy. Small-scale, incremental, and continuously amended adjustments, altered in the light of experience, are to lead to step-by-step shortening of the distance to the ideal of the utopia. The beginning of such change, according to commentators, must flow from an awareness that current law does not support or stimulate development towards the utopia. Questioning the relevance of this statement is less important than plans for change, which often start from the issue of communicating the problem.

³⁰ A Polish word for cheating during the exams; it has no negative connotation, literally it means to „take off”.

³¹ Krzysztof Śmiech, Expert Interview.

³² Beata Baron, Expert Interview.

*'The spheres that require an intervention are visible. For me the barrier for the change is the institutional law [...]. I see it among opinions in the regional level, because I had a lot of meetings connected with the information society. It requires a lot of support. To be honest, law as an institution should not disturb if not help. [...] I have mentioned the issue – the popularisation of this idea among people with decisive power. [...] We need to convince a group of politicians that it is worth to become interested in the concept of knowledge economy, [...] we need to inform what advantage can the average citizen gain from it.'*³³

The lack of awareness of the issue remains a problem, as was previously signalled, which can be acted against under an assumption that bottom-up communication can enforce legislative change if the proposed programmes are realised. What legislative change postulates do the advocates of knowledge economy propose? They vary, but a common understanding of development plan is the earlier mentioned liberalisation and improvement of law quality. The renewed legislation promises to be a factor opening the way to creativity and innovativeness as it does not limit the citizen³⁴. *Alternatively, it offers a vision of decreased budgetary and bureaucratic spending, which for instance can be more efficiently invested into the development of the infrastructure or any other elements of knowledge economy*³⁵. On the other hand, the liberal countries are accused of being very interventionist.³⁶

*'This is the most difficult. It is not just a single mechanism. One single government does something useful and it is difficult. It is necessary to start from the beginning: changes in the constitution, change of law and then everything else. Lack of interest in the long-term country development is also a result of proper entries in the constitution. We have a political institutional system deeply contaminated with the lack of impulses to develop. Domination of politics and politicians' beliefs, who have the illusion that if society voted for them they can a lot. Now their role should be limited so that they can rule cleverly, not only rule.'*³⁷

³³ Rafał Bielecki, Expert Interview.

³⁴ Krzysztof Śmiech, Expert Interview.

³⁵ Beata Baron, Expert Interview .

³⁶ Aleksandra Kaleta, Expert Interview.

³⁷ Krzysztof Śmiech, Expert Interview.

Touching the legislative sphere, an important aspect of the new 'modern' times is the issue of protection of intellectual property. As many commentators point out, law can be an important factor securing the interests of the economic systems' participants, especially in the new knowledge age³⁸. The strategic role of non-physical resources in the knowledge economy need to be both produced but also protected by certain legislative postulates. Because the role of intellectual property is crucial in the process, it is necessary to develop new laws in order to facilitate the creation of a climate in which the knowledge economy can survive. At the same time they cause alienation, the distinction between what one knows from who one is³⁹. Patents, copyrights, trademarks and designs are protected but the law needs to be tailored to particular needs and problems. Supranational alliances and bodies, as well as research cooperations between academics and commercial ventures, cause new issues which do not have clear law procedures and have to be addressed by law. As Polster points out: '*the development and extension of IPRs provide other, more direct options for knowledge industries to use their knowledge to enhance their market position*'⁴⁰. Such direct options offer protection of interests with eventual compensation as well as an option of litigation in order to weaken the competitive position of rivals. The second measure in particular, often used as a corporate strategy against small ventures or promising start-ups, acts as an unfair way of competing which aims to waste the opponent's resources⁴¹.

Protecting and enforcing intellectual property rights can be identified as setting borders, as they firstly protect the system's content, and secondly, regulate the internal movements of knowledge possession.

³⁸ C. Polster, "How the Law Works: Exploring the Implications of Emerging Intellectual Property Regimes for Knowledge, Economy and Society" in *Current Sociology*, 49(4), 2001, pp. 85-100.

³⁹ S. Fuller, "A Critical Guide to Knowledge Society Newspeak: Or, How Not to Take the Great Leap Backward" in *Current Sociology*, 49(4), 2001, pp. 177-201.

⁴⁰ Polster, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

⁴¹ Jams Boyle, *Shamans, Software and Spleens: Law and the Construction of the Information Society*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997.

An Illustration: Knowledge Economy and Education

Education is affecting the intellectual, moral and economic potential of the social system. It is constantly changed, influenced by the environment, and performs the following functions. Firstly, it translates moral, cultural and scientific values between the generations. Secondly, it stimulates individuals to develop new knowledge, thus enriching humanity's heritage. Thirdly, it changes and transforms value systems and processes⁴². This is why the development and agility of the education system is a priority task for systems in transition, especially those oriented on innovation. The assumptions of the knowledge economy require a high level of education, in both practical and theoretical disciplines. The formulation of such statements and the challenge of globalisation led to knowledge-related trends, such as the domination of a doctrine of human resources in education and the workplace⁴³.

The way of approaching the issue once again begins with the proposal of change, as the educational *status quo* of the Polish system does not match the environmental needs. The criticism and an urge for changes in the system are visible and observable in political, academic and professional opinions. Where does the systemic failure lie?

To answer this question it is necessary to relate to the historicism by Sztompka⁴⁴. A claim that the system faces its archaic pre-disruption problems and heritage moves the discussion about education towards an enumeration of what the previous system's organisation caused and how it harms the functioning of today's system. Before the systemic transition of 1989, investment in education not only brought low returns, but also failed to bring advantage in terms of easier access to jobs⁴⁵. Such an approach, confronted with the utopia of the knowledge economy, presents a contrasting dichotomy. Using this bipolar argumentation gives

⁴² O. Saginova, W. Belyansky, "Facilitating Innovations in Higher Education in Transition Economies" in *International Journal of Education Management*, 22(4), 2008, pp. 341-381

⁴³ A. D. Jankowicz, "Issues in Human Resource Management in Central Europe" in *Personnel Review*, 27(3), 2008, pp. 169-176.

⁴⁴ Piotr Sztompka, *The Sociology of Social Change*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1993.

⁴⁵ M. Vodopivec, "Worker Reallocation during Estonia's Transition to Market Economy" in *International Journal of Manpower*, 23(1), 2002, pp. 77-97.

a choice of either selecting the good and obvious, the knowledge economy, or selecting the current system with the relics of the past.

Such a clash of bipolar argumentation becomes typical in the basic discussion about the nature and fitness of the educational system. It is accompanied by the observations that the Polish system faces a change, and the quality and level of education increases⁴⁶. But still, most experts in the field strongly criticize the system.

The rigorous bureaucracy and hierarchy of the continental European educational system, and the tremendous size of its Polish version, is being compared with the American or British models, which are considered to stimulate rather than block innovativeness.⁴⁷ The structure of the educational system, due to recent developments is under strong criticism.

*'... we need to mature for the knowledge economy [...]. Otherwise it won't make any sense, it is not about imposing. It must be in order, has to have the foundation in order to perform well. [...] We have 300 private universities and it is absurd. I would say that it is based on the pathology in this sphere [...]. For me it is using a certain niche in the market, a trend that everyone has to have a degree. [...]. There are good universities where the staff teaches in a proper way [...]. It should not be done only for the material reasons. I am aware that we all sign under this environment by giving students grades or being on their websites.'*⁴⁸

The criticism both affects and comes from the participants of the educational system working at universities or in scientific organisations. The response from the academic background, focuses on low research and education financing and on the number of students in both private and public universities.

'There are people who used it, established centres of different kind, and own connections. I do not want to use names [laughs] because I am being recorded.'

⁴⁶ Krzysztof Śmiech., Expert Interview.

⁴⁷ Adam Lipski, Expert Interview.

⁴⁸ Dagmara Tyska-Cisek, Expert Interview.

[...] *A school with the processing force of a factory is created, where medicine [as a future faculty - author] is projected, please do not force me to finish [...]*'.⁴⁹

Such a trajectory of educational development poses a question about the direction of the process. Commentators usually depict a scenario in which good graduates of public universities are contrasted with the graduates from less prestigious private schools. Such a state of affairs also questions the measurement-based understanding of the knowledge economy. According to the indicators, Poland might be quite advanced: education indicators place it among the highest developed countries in the region. The quality and relevance of the programmes offered in the schools remain a secondary measure.

Going back to the triple division of the educational impacts, the national level mainly requires a creation of the economic growth. For instance, free primary and secondary schools or vocational training and other initiatives can be identified as undertakings aiming to create economic development via education of the population. This, however, does not come from the assumption that education becomes an industry, and a skilled employee becomes a product and an atom of future development. It rather comes from other backgrounds, such as for instance the 'tradition' of free education in the Communist Block, peer pressure to go to university or just from of fulfilment. Also the scale of the availability of free vocational training is not comparable to that of Western countries due to low financing, mainly from the structural and regional governments funds. 'The universities especially seem to have left this field almost entirely to private enterprise, which mushroomed in this field since 1990'.⁵⁰

Looking at the same problem from below, the problem is quite comparable. Moreover, according to the interviewees, the reforms should be launched on the personal level, so each person should begin his or her own transition to the knowledge economy. The decreases in library customers or the results of high-school tests suggest that certain results or activities participation fall, probably giving place to the others. For instance, a hypothesis that fiction books are being replaced by video

⁴⁹ Adam Lipski, Expert Interview.

⁵⁰ H. Matlay, "Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education and Training in Central and Eastern Europe" in *Education + Training*, 42 (8/9), 2001, p. 397.

games and films is not controversial and matches reality of the digitalising world. Thus, each actor has a more or less urgent need to be educated in order to survive in the competitive economy and nothing can change it as long as one is not particularly interested in launching these processes. And as researchers⁵¹ and independent reports⁵² prove, actors meeting their career opportunities are more willing to invest in their own and their children's education. Such an issue strongly corresponds with the national wealth, but as knowledge functions in a utopia as an economic booster rather than an effect, such considerations invert the perspective.

Going back to the macro level of considerations, many countries use a diversity of models of economic and social development in order to influence the educational system. For this paper an important issue is if construction of the curricula is successful and adjusted to the economic system, giving graduates the possibility and place to use and implement the knowledge they have acquired. The paper raises a question of the relevance of the programmes to the design of the system. Irrelevance of programmes is manifested as alternative employment or unemployment. Some of my respondents identified the post-2004 Polish emigration wave as a failure of the state-sponsored educational system. Graduates working in low-skilled jobs sectors outside the country raises the question of the causes of such a situation. Most of the experts concluded that either the system could not provide the jobs or the graduates' skills were low and did not meet the demand. This conclusion is utopian, as knowledge economy does not promise highly skilled jobs for everyone.

The issue of professionalisation of the academic curricula is both criticised and complimented. Depending on the chosen priorities of a university program taken into consideration, one can assume university education is only an intellectual discipline developing: knowledge, not necessary professional; and certain mechanisms consisting the tacit dimension⁵³ such as time management, persistence or other elements such as social networks. In this case the practical knowledge necessary for the advances in the workplace might be acquired from the employer via in-

⁵¹ See J. Arkes, "What do educational credentials signal and why do employers value credentials?" in *Economics of Education Review*, 18(1), 1999, pp. 133-141.

⁵² See CBOS, *Wydatki Rodziców na Edukację Dzieci* [Parents' spending on children education], Warszawa: BS/170/2004, 2004.

⁵³ Konrad Borowiec, Expert Interview.

house courses or corporate universities that quite often are identified as the future of professional education⁵⁴.

*'[...] people that graduated from good universities, such as the Warsaw School of Economics, have a lot to offer. They have an acceptable education, and are ready to offer some things. [...] To be honest, we are aware of the fact that after accepting someone to work with us he will not bring us profits in a year [...]. We have to send such people to courses, they have to look how we work, they have to go on tours – this is what it is about. The state cannot teach them these things, at least it should not bother. [...] The good graduates know languages well but do not have operational knowledge. The truth is that the world is facing a crisis and [name of a company] is looking for employees. At the moment we are creating a new operational group and are unable to complete the team [...].'*⁵⁵

Such a question connects the idea of knowledge economy with Polish economic transition. It is worth emphasizing that some industries, especially knowledge-intensive ones, were created in a vacuum or very rudimentary forms. Thus, some of the industries, as for instance law, management or marketing, with the hyper-demand of the early 1990s caused by understaffing, were under very strong pressure and offered a range of positions for the graduates educated in these fields. However, as the market capacity has extended, it has reached its limits. Due to such limits, the competition in such sectors has become very strong. In practice, the labour market hardly provides any workplace for the less educated or educated in different reality (for instance communist reality), whose skills are losing importance due to technological development. In this case the employment system, facing the restructuring, needs to be ready for re-qualifying and retraining the employees. It should do this by responding with an offer of professional courses, life-long learning and other opportunities of personal development. As many cases show, without such opportunities, growth is being replaced by long-term unemployment leading to poverty and problems of a pathological nature.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ R. Dealtry, "Case Research into Corporate University Developments" in *Journal of Workplace Learning*, 12(6), 2000, pp. 252-257.

⁵⁵ Konrad Adamowicz, Expert Interview.

⁵⁶ A. Kumssa, J.F. Jones, "The Social Consequences of Reform in Transitional Economies" in *International Journal of Social Economics*, 26(1/2/3), 1999, pp. 194-210.

The other perspective on education emphasizes the need of influencing the system via educational policy. It is the state or any other type of organisation, including business and political, that is seen as responsible for change. The ideas of state-funded scholarships for technical and engineering schools, sponsorships and other evolving forms of financial cooperation are influencing the system and put in practice some fundamental ideas of knowledge economy. On the other hand, private sponsorships are a strong pillar of this idea. For the money invested into human capital, the sponsor-employer receives a long-term contract and loyalty of an employee, who benefits by gaining practical experience.

Conclusions

It is worth asking what would happen if there was no concept of the knowledge economy. Would the world have looked the same? Many indicators suggest that to a certain degree we are too often tempted with belief that the knowledge economy is going to happen some day, especially while looking at the economic indicators and political reports. On the other hand, the knowledge economy offers safety and security. Its main thought is that although we are facing the systemic change, we might change the structure of the system, bringing economic wealth and human capital. Therefore, by building creative cities, educating the society and forcing scholars to cooperate with business we might achieve international competitiveness. Ideology and utopia of knowledge economy is definitely beneficial for the society. Although its postulates will never be reached as they are ideological and surrealistic, the implication is clear and positive, especially in post-communist states. Moreover, the idea of knowledge economy unifies national and international political thought, obviously in the ideal spheres, which are selectively put into practice. In effect, it creates, or conceptualises, the shape of the borders of the ideal system.

Lastly, looking for the reason why those systemic borders are vague, when compared to other, better-developed systems called knowledge economies, a final remark has to be given. As it was emphasised in this paper, the spheres in which the knowledge economy can be realised such as business, politics, economy, education etc., are

either not ready or not operational enough to generate the conditions in which it can be realised. Both of these statements do not exclude the idea that the knowledge economy is another, alternative economic utopia and the attempts of its measurements could be replaced or complemented with such an understanding.

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A QUALITATIVE APPROACH TO THE QUALITY OF GOVERNMENT: THE CASE OF SLOVAKIA FROM 1994 TO 2010

Luca Tomini¹

Abstract

What is the quality of government (QoG) and how it can be empirically measured? After the early years when research on governance has largely been dominated by economic studies analysing the relationship between economic growth and institutions, in recent years this subject has begun to attract the attention of many other scholars interested in studying the “input-side” of democracy. This paper will provide an original definition of QoG focused on the role of the executive power in the overall quality of democracy to be used in a small-N research design using qualitative data. This approach will be used to assess the QoG in Slovakia, comparing the results with the Worldwide Governance Indicators of the World Bank. The results show that this qualitative approach to the quality of government is more suitable to highlight change in a short-time period, and stress the importance to use both approaches to have a more general picture of the QoG.

Keywords: Quality of Government, Slovakia, Democracy, Qualitative methods

Introduction

How to assess the quality of government of a democratic country? The topic is strictly related to the general attempt to theorise and empirically assess the democratic performance of a country. The existence of several indexes of good governance (or good government) highlights the great interest towards this subject². However, even if the concept of quality

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² Rafael La Porta, Florencio Lopez-de-Silanes, Andrei Shleifer, Robert Vishny, “The quality of government” in *Journal of Law, Economics, and organization* no. 15, 1, 1999, p. 222; Joe Foweraker, Roman Krznaric, “Measuring liberal democratic performance: An empirical and conceptual critique” in *Political studies* no. 48, 4, 2000, pp. 759-787; Jan Teorell, Marcus

of government enjoys great popularity there is still a semantic confusion due to the multiplicity of approaches in different disciplines. This fact could be observed easily reviewing the most important international indexes of good governance.

There are basically two main shortcomings in these indexes: the first one concerns directly the object of study that could be the quality of the bureaucracy, the stability and effectiveness of governments, the accountability of the executive power, the effectiveness of public policies or even more³. Moreover, most of these indexes adopt a “utilitarian” approach focusing mainly on the “output-side” of the quality of governance, rather than on the issues more related to democracy, that is the “input-side”. Second, the use of quantitative data to produce general aggregate indexes of good governance has two problems: in most of the cases the unfeasibility to realize cross-country and cross-time comparison, and the inability to assess short-term radical change, focusing more on the long-term trend.

Consequently, the aim of this paper is twofold: to show the limitations of the existing approach to the quality of government by providing an alternative qualitative assessment, and to offer an original definition of quality of government based on the scholarship of quality of democracy. In a context dominated by indexes that 1. consider the term “government” in the widest possible sense 2. are based mainly on quantitative data 3. give priority to the economic factors about the effectiveness of government 4. are both cross-time and cross-country, based on large-N database, this paper proposes an approach based on an assessment that 1. considers the term “government” in a meso perspective, essentially as the executive branch 2. is mainly based on qualitative data 3. focuses on the intrinsic values of liberal governments, excluding non-democratic and hybrid regimes 4. uses case-studies or comparative method (small-N).

To this end, the paper uses the case study of Slovakian governments from 1994 to 2010. Why is Slovakia chosen for this case study? There are

Samanni, Sören Holmberg, Bo Rothstein, *The Quality of Government Dataset*, University of Gothenburg, The Quality of Government Institute, 2010.

³ Christiane Arndt, Charles Oman, *Uses and abuses of governance indicators*, OECD, 2006; Rafael La Porta, Florencio Lopez-de-Silanes, Andrei Shleifer, Robert Vishny, “The quality of government” in *Journal of Law, Economics, and organization* no. 15, 1, 1999, p. 222

basically two main reasons: Central and Eastern Europe is an interesting region where the issue of the quality of government is particularly important: even after the adhesion to the EU in 2004 and 2007 there have been corruption issues, attempt to concentrate executive power, abuses and misuses of power, etc. not to mention the extreme case of the Orbán government in Hungary since 2010. The second reason concerns more directly Slovakia and is a methodological one: Slovakia provides strong variability observed in the democratic performances of its government from 1994 (first democratic election of the independent Republic of Slovakia) to 2010. From Mečiar to Dzurinda and then Fico one may find all of dimensions of the quality of government involved (see below) and moreover, strong differences and changes in the very short term.

To provide an alternative assessment of the quality of government in Slovakia the paper will use a triangulation between different primary and secondary qualitative sources, including data from interviews with Slovakian and international NGOs, EU Commission's official in Bratislava, EU official documents and reports, NGO reports, national legislation and newspaper. The first section of the paper briefly deals with the theoretical debate on the quality of government and proposes an original empirical definition, while the second section uses this approach to analyse the case of the governments of the Slovak Republic since 1994 and compares the results with the index of governance produced by the World Bank.

Theorising the quality of government: an empirical definition

The interest of scholars to the concept of quality of government is probably due to a very simple reason: "malfunctioning governments remain widespread phenomena across the globe"⁴. However, even if the study of government and the executive branch is a fundamental scholarship in political science, with contributions dealing with definition's

⁴ Alicia Adsera, Carlos Boix, Mark Payne, "Are you being served? Political accountability and quality of government" in *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization* no. 19, 2, 2003, p. 445.

problems⁵ process of government's formation and study of coalitions⁶, the analysis of the different forms of government and the role of the executive in the institutional system⁷, this large body of work for a long time ignored a concept which became more and more popular within the discipline: the evaluation of government performance. Although the concept of quality of government enjoys great popularity in academic circles and in many international economic institutions or NGOs, there are two main reasons why the use of the term "quality of government" has become problematic.

The first problem concerns the utilitarian meaning of the concept. The debate was often based on the characteristics of government best suited to promote economic development and well-being. In this way the government's performance has become a dependent variable of economic development: good governance means essentially a government that creates the conditions for economic growth. For this reason, the government's performance regarding the overall development and stability of democratic has been subordinated compared to the performance with respect to economic development, which remained the only criterion for evaluation. However, the approach has shown some limits that are difficult to overcome: the need to take into account a great number of variables (political, economic, social and cultural) in the definition of the quality of government has at first allowed the overcoming of the limitations of

⁵ Samuel Finer, *The History of Government from the Earliest Times: The Intermediate Ages*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997; Robert Dahl, *Who governs?: democracy and power in an American city*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005.

⁶ William Riker, *The theory of political coalitions*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962; Norman Schofield, "Political competition and multiparty coalition governments" in *European Journal of Political Research* no. 23, 1, 1993, pp. 1-33; Michael Laver, Kenneth Shepsle, *Making and breaking governments: Cabinets and legislatures in parliamentary democracies*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996; Michael Laver, Norman Schofield, *Multiparty government: The politics of coalition in Europe*, University of Michigan Press, 1998.

⁷ Maurice Duverger, "A new political system model: semi-presidential government" in *European Journal of Political Research* no. 8, 2, 1980, pp. 165-187; Jean Blondel, Jean-Louis Thièbault, *The profession of government minister in Western Europe*, London: Macmillan, 1991; Arendt, Lijphart, *Parliamentary versus presidential government*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992; Giovanni Sartori, *Comparative constitutional engineering: an inquiry into structures, incentives, and outcomes*, NYU Press, 1997; Gianfranco Pasquino, *Sistemi politici comparati: Francia, Germania, Gran Bretagna, Italia, Stati Uniti*, Bononia University press, 2003; Klaus Goetz, "Power at the Centre: the Organization of Democratic Systems" in Heywood, Paul (ed.), *Development in European Politics*, Basingstoke, 2006, pp. 73-96.

political studies about formal institutions only, but the extension of the concept has caused confusion between terms such as a government, democracy, or political system and consequently producing inadequate indexes⁸.

The scholarships on democratic stability, the role of institutions in the transition process towards democracy and the democratic quality contributed especially to the evolution of the literature on quality of government⁹. The third wave of democratization¹⁰ has produced a series of empirical studies that have analyzed the transitions to democracy and democratic consolidation. The experience of this literature led to reconsider the very theories of democracy, at that time inadequate to the needs of a reality that had seen the exponential growth of political regimes labeled as "democracies". Focus has therefore shifted to the characteristics that distinguish democratic regimes, and then to the democratic "qualities" of these regimes. In this perspective the government and then the "quality" of government is one of the various dimensions composing the quality of democracy, and therefore it should not be assessed only on the basis of the criterion "good-for-economic-development", but also on the basis on the criterion "good-for-democratic-development".

The second problem concerns the dominant methodological approach for studying the quality of government, that is to say, the quantitative approach. The international indexes of good governance made by scholars as well as by private and public organizations are increasingly used in scientific research and public policy choices. Among all the criticism, perhaps the two fundamental shortcomings are primarily their lack of significance due to the need to aggregate different variables to produce a numerical value, and therefore the impossibility to use it as a comparative way. Second, the inability to use these tools to understand the

⁸ Christiane Arndt, Charles Oman, *op. cit.*

⁹ Richard Rose, Doh Shin, "Democratization backwards: The problem of third-wave democracies" in *British Journal of Political Science* no. 31, 2, 2001, pp. 331-354; Larry Diamond, Leonardo Morlino, *Assessing the quality of democracy*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005; Alina Mungiu-Pippidi, "Corruption: Diagnosis and treatment" in *Journal of Democracy* no. 17, 3, 2006, pp. 86-99; Faared Zakaria, *The future of freedom: Illiberal democracy at home and abroad*, WW Norton & Co Inc., 2007.

¹⁰ Samuel Huntington, *The third wave: democratization in the late twenty century*, University of Oklahoma Press, 1993.

internal dynamics between actors and institutions, and the claim to be generally applicable in all contexts, in liberal democracies as well as in undemocratic regimes. If these are the main shortcomings, the paper looks at the scholarship of quality of democracy with the purpose to address it.

Nowadays, it is possible to identify some common characteristics highlighted by scholars of democracy in their assessment of the democratic performance of the executive power or government: the effectiveness of the executive's action¹¹, the relationship between executive and legislative power¹², the importance of accountability¹³ and responsiveness¹⁴, the lack of corruption and conflict of interest¹⁵.

The very relationship between democracy and quality of government was analysed in several studies¹⁶ highlighting its ambiguous nature. Democracy is a necessary condition for the quality of government, but it is nevertheless sufficient. In reality, different democracies have different levels of quality of government. In the same way Zakaria¹⁷ stressed that "governments produced by elections may be inefficient, corrupt, short-sighted, irresponsible, dominated by special interests, and incapable of

¹¹ Harry Eckstein, "The evaluation of political performance: problems and dimensions", Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1971; Robert Putnam, Robert Leonardi, Raffaella Nanetti, *Making democracy work: Civic traditions in modern Italy*, New Haven: Princeton University Press, 1994.

¹² Arendt Lijphart, *op.cit.*

¹³ Joe Foweraker, Roman Krznaric, *op.cit.*; Larry Diamond, Leonardo Morlino, *op. cit.*; Philippe Schmitter, "The ambiguous Virtues of Accountability", in Larry Diamond, Leonardo Morlino (eds.), *op. cit.*; Mark Bühlmann, Wolfgang Merkel, Bernhard Wessels, *The quality of democracy: democracy barometer for established democracies*, National Centre of Competence in Research (NCCR) of the Swiss National Science Foundation, Working Paper, 2008.

¹⁴ Bingham Powell, "The Chain of Responsiveness", in Larry Diamond, Leonardo Morlino *op. cit.*

¹⁵ Alicia Adsera, Carlos Boix, Mark Payne, *op. cit.*; Leonardo Morlino, "Qualities of Democracy: How to Analyze Them", *Studies in Public Policy*, 2009, p. 465.

¹⁶ Federico Bonaglia, Jorge Braga De Macedo, Maurizio Bussolo, "How globalization improves governance", *OECD Technical Papers*, OECD, 2001; Gabriella Montinola, Robert Jackman, "Sources of corruption: A cross-country study" in *British Journal of Political Science*, no. 32, 1, 2002, pp. 147-170; Hung Sung, "Democracy and political corruption: A cross-national comparison" in *Crime, Law and Social Change* no. 41, 2, 2004, pp. 179-193; Nicholas Charron, Victor Lapuente, "Does democracy produce quality of government?" in *European Journal of Political Research* no. 49,4, 2010, pp. 443-470.

¹⁷ Faared Zakaria, *op. cit.*, 2007.

adopting policies demanded by the public good. These qualities make such governments undesirable but they do not make them undemocratic". This means that even if all conditions for the existence of a democracy are fulfilled¹⁸ governments can be more or less democratic. For this reason, what it is needed is a definition allowing to highlight these differences among democratic governments. In conclusion, based mainly on the scholarship on the quality of democracy, the following definition of quality of government is proposed:

"A good government is a government which acts with transparency on the principles of the Rule of Law and impartiality to effectively perform its program, respecting the balance of state powers and preferences of the majority of its citizens"

There are four dimensions that contribute to create the system of the quality of government. The first one is *Accountability*. Basically accountability concerns the checks and balances of the executive power. Since the definition proposed by O'Donnell¹⁹, "the existence of state agencies that are legally enabled and empowered, and factually willing and able to take action that span from routine oversight to criminal sanctions or impeachment in relation to actions or omissions by other agents or agencies of the state that may be qualified as unlawful", accountability has been formulated in different ways²⁰. Accountability of government is one of the most important elements ensuring the persistence of the democratic regime. Scholarship on transition from democracy to authoritarianism showed the central role of the executive through concentration and abuse of power in determining the deterioration of the quality of democracy. This

¹⁸ Robert Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and opposition*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971.

¹⁹ Guillermo O'Donnell, "Horizontal Accountability in New Democracies", in Andreas Schedler, Larry Diamond, Mark Plattner (eds.), *The Self-Restraining State: power and Accountability in New Democracies*, Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner, 1998, p. 38.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 38; Philippe Schmitter, "The ambiguous Virtues of Accountability", in Larry Diamond, Leonardo Morlino, *op. cit.*; Mark Bühlmann, Wolfgang Merkel, Bernhard Wessels, *op. cit.*; Leonardo Morlino, "Democracy and changes: how research tails reality", *West European Politics* no. 31; 1, 2008, pp. 40-59.

idea is well summed up by Zakaria²¹: “the tendency for a democratic government to believe it has absolute sovereignty (that is, power), can result in the centralisation of authority, often by extra-constitutional means and with grim results”, more recently by Diamond²²: “executive abuse of power has been the key factor in the demise of democracy” and, in another perspective, by Kapstein and Converse²³: “effective constraints on executive power substantially increase the chances that democracy will survive”.

Since this paper is about *democratic* government, some aspects of accountability should be excluded from the analysis, to focus only on the “inter-institutional” dimension of accountability²⁴: the existence of a minimal democracy²⁵ must be considered as granted, and consequently the dimensions concerning free and fair elections (electoral accountability) and the existence of political pluralism have to be excluded from the analysis. Three indicators have to be used to assess this dimension: 1. The inter-institutional accountability to the legislative power 2. The inter-institutional accountability to the other democratic institutions, referring to the concept of “checks and balances”, i.e. “the mutual control (...) to balance power and thereby stabilise the political system”²⁶ 3. The importance of government transparency and the existence of legislation that ensures the right for citizens to access information of public interest.

The second dimension is *Impartiality*. Impartiality in the exercise of government is a concept introduced by Rothstein and Teorell²⁷ in relation to the behaviour of government's officials. Instead, the paper stresses that the concept has to be applied not only to officials but also to the government (executive branch) itself. For the government, to act impartially means “to be unmoved by certain sorts of considerations - such

²¹ Faared Zakaria, *op. cit.* 2007, p. 6.

²² Larry Diamond, “Why Democracies survive?” in *Journal of Democracy* no. 22, 1, 2011, p. 22.

²³ Ethan Kapstein, Nathan Converse, *The Fate of Young Democracies*, Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 45.

²⁴ Leonardo Morlino, *op. cit.*, 2008, pp. 40-59.

²⁵ Robert Dahl, *op. cit.*, 1971.

²⁶ Mark Bühlmann, Wolfgang Merkel, Bernhard Wessels, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

²⁷ Bo Rothstein, Jan Teorell, “What is quality of government? A theory of impartial government institutions” in *Governance* no. 21, 2, 2008, pp. 165-190.

a special relationships and personal preferences”²⁸. This means that the government should act only according to the public interest rather than a “self interest”²⁹.

The concept of impartiality allows integrating and at the same time overcoming the notion of corruption: “although impartiality implies the absence of corruption, the opposite is not necessarily true. Non-existent corruption in a society does not exclude all forms of partial exercise of governmental power”³⁰. Impartiality concerns only the procedural aspects of government’s activities and not the content of public policies³¹, and this mainly for two reasons: the first is about democratic legitimacy, since the political debate cannot be replaced by assessment developed by experts for the best public policy to be adopted, these choices depending on the specific national and temporal context. Second, because the empirical evidence shows there are not causal links between specific public policies and the quality of government³². Therefore, three indicators have to be used to assess this dimension: 1. Corruption in the government and the government’s commitment in fighting corruption 2. The existence of conflicts of interest within the executive 3. The level of impartiality of the governments with respect to ethnicity, religion and gender.

The third one is Effectiveness. This dimension relates to the output-side of government activities. In the literature on government performance there is often a reference to the government’s effectiveness in relation to public policies³³. However, in this paper approach is quite opposite for the two following reasons: first, there is a recurrent error of “conceptual

²⁸ Geoffrey Cupit, *When Does Justice Require Impartiality*, Political Studies Association-UK 50th Annual Conference, London, 2000.

²⁹ Guillermo O’Donnell, “Illusions about consolidation”, in *Journal of Democracy* no. 7, 2, 1996, pp. 34-51.

³⁰ Bo Rothstein, Jan Teorell, *op. cit.*, p. 170; Jonas Linde, “Why Feed The Hand that Bites You?”, *QoG Working Paper Series*, University of Gothenburg: The Quality of Government Institute, 2009, p. 3.

³¹ Bo Rothstein, Jan Teorell, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

³² Rafael La Porta, Florencio Lopez-de-Silanes, Andrei Shleifer, Robert Vishny, *op. cit.*, p. 222; Alberto Alesina, George-Marios Angeletos, “Corruption, inequality, and fairness” in *Journal of Monetary Economics* no. 52, 7, 2005, pp. 1227-1244.

³³ Robert Putnam, Robert Leonardi, Raffaella Nanetti, *op. cit.*

stretching”³⁴, generating confusion between the effectiveness of a government (in the narrow sense of the executive branch) and the effectiveness of a model of government or a democratic system in general. The second reason lies in another conceptual error, which is the idea that policies can be good or bad regardless of the political, cultural and economic context.

The debate on the relationship between size of government, different public policies, levels of corruption and economic performance is very uncertain and generalisations about the general validity of certain public policy cannot be made³⁵. For these reasons the paper stresses that, in this perspective, the evaluation of the government’s effectiveness is neither the evaluation of the effectiveness of public policies nor the effectiveness of the bureaucracy. On the contrary, government’s effectiveness must be evaluated regarding the ability to adopt and implement its own policy and legislative agenda. This paper proposes one basic indicator for the empirical analysis: 1. The government’s ability to adopt its own legislation in the legislative process³⁶.

The fourth one is Responsiveness. This dimension symbolises the final outcome of the quality of government and is central to determine whether the activities of the executive reflect the preferences of citizens and whether the government is perceived as legitimate. Robert Dahl³⁷ clearly emphasises this point: “the key characteristic of a democracy is the continuing responsiveness of the government to the preferences of its citizens”. Moreover, the importance of responsiveness is increasing because of the phenomena of alienation and disaffection regarding democracy and criticism of political institutions’ ineffectiveness. However, methodologically this dimension poses several problems for its empirical assessment because of the difficulty to accurately identify “expectations, interests, needs, and demands of citizens”³⁸. Different approaches have

³⁴ Giovanni Sartori, “Concept misformation in comparative politics” in *The American Political Science Review* no. 64, 4, 1970, pp. 1033-1053.

³⁵ Rafael La Porta, Florencio Lopez-de-Silanes, Andrei Shleifer, Robert Vishny, *op. cit.*, p. 222; Alberto Alesina, George-Marios Angeletos, *op. cit.*

³⁶ Leonardo Morlino, Wojciech Sadurski, *Democratization and the European Union*. London: Routledge, 2010.

³⁷ Robert Dahl, *op. cit.*, 1971, p. 1.

³⁸ Leonardo Morlino, *op. cit.*, 2008, pp. 40-59.

been proposed in the literature: on the one hand a comprehensive approach dealing with all the “chains” of responsiveness³⁹. On the other hand, a limited analysis on the perceived legitimacy of institutions and public policies. Therefore, this paper stresses that in this context the most suitable indicator to assess responsiveness is: 1. The perceived legitimacy of the executive and the government approval based on data from public opinion pools.

Government accountability and impartiality in Slovakia: different assessments

To this purpose the paper will consider only two of the four dimensions of the quality of government: accountability and impartiality, in order to be able to compare the results with those of the World Bank.

Tab 1. List of Slovakian governments since 1994.

1. Government *Mečiar* 1994-1998, supported by a right-left nationalist coalition composed by HZDS (Movement for a Democratic Slovakia), SNS (Slovak National Party) e ZRS (Union of the Workers of Slovakia)
2. Government *Dzurinda* 1998-2002, supported by a centre-right liberal and Christian-conservative coalition composed by SDK (Slovak Democratic Coalition), SDL' (Party of the Democratic Left), SOP (Party of Civic Understanding) e SMK (Party of the Hungarian Coalition).
3. Government *Dzurinda* 2002-2006, supported by a centre-right liberal and Christian-conservative coalition composed by SDKÚ (Slovak Democratic and Christian Union), MKP (Party of the Hungarian Coalition), KDH (Christian Democratic Movement) e ANO (Alliance of the New Citizen).
4. Government *Fico* 2006-2010, supported by left-right social-democratic and nationalist coalition composed by SMER-SD (Direction – Social Democracy), HZDS (Movement for a Democratic Slovakia) e SNS (Slovak National Party)

³⁹ Bingham Powell, *op. cit.*

Slovakia is a parliamentary democracy independent since January 1, 1993 following the consensual division of the Republic of Czechoslovakia. Slovakia has a dual executive but, as stated in the Constitution (Article 108), the cabinet (collegial body composed by Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Ministers and Ministers) is the supreme executive body while the President of the Republic is the head of the State and represents the Slovak Republic inside and abroad. The functions of a member of the government are incompatible with the exercise of any parliamentary mandate. The President of the Republic has the power to appoint or dismiss the Prime Minister. Similarly, on the recommendation of the Prime Minister, the President of the Republic appoints and removes the other members of the government. According to Article 113 of the Constitution, within thirty days before the election the government has to present its program and get the parliament's vote of confidence. The confidence can be revoked at any time by the parliament on the initiative of at least one fifth of the deputies and with the vote of the absolute majority. In addition, parliament can revoke the confidence also to individual members of the government. Among the major powers of government under the Constitution there is the legislative initiative, decisions on economic and social policy, domestic and foreign affairs, state budget, international treaties, amnesty, state of war or emergency, military missions abroad, it can appeal to the Constitutional Court about laws or international treaties approved by parliament. The power of Parliament (*Národná rada Slovenskej republiky*) is not limited to the vote of confidence. The Parliament has the power to address an interpellation to the government or individual members of the government, with the obligation to reply within 30 days. At the request of Parliament a member of the government must participate in its meetings. In addition the Parliament discusses and monitors the activities of the government according to Article 86 of the Constitution.

At least three considerations can be given regarding the overall institutional framework of the Slovak Republic: 1. Although the Constitution foresees a subordination of the executive to the legislative actually the governments have often dominated the parliaments. The institutional framework combined with a strong party discipline, a strong coalition of government and a parliamentary majority in fact prevents the effective control on the activities of the executive and "promotes majority

rule and a winner-takes-all approach”⁴⁰. Over the years, the executive-legislative relationship radically changed depending on the type of coalition and the size of the parliamentary majority. In summary, the institutional system does not guarantee an adequate control over the executive and leaves a marge of flexibility that can be exploited by governments interested in a process of centralisation of power. 2. The political instability of Slovakian politics also depends on the presence of these ambiguities in the 1992 Constitution. All institutions have been involved in this instability and this problem was one of the reasons of the several constitutional reforms started in 1999. 3. Political instability had two main reasons: the ambiguity of the constitutional and the political context. The main attempts to solve the constitutional ambiguity took place during the first Dzurinda government in a favourable environment characterised by a strong reforming will, the presence of a coalition united on some specific goals and the presence of the strong incentive of the accession to the EU. The most important amendments took place in 1999 and 2001. In the first case, the reform concerned the role of the President of the republic and his election. In the second case the amendment was even more extensive regarding almost all institutions in the perspective of the adhesion to the EU, with the strengthening of the Constitutional Court and the judiciary and an increased scrutiny power on executive by the Parliament.

To assess the validity of the approach proposed in this paper a qualitative assessment will be compared with the assessment provided by the World Bank through its Governance Indicators. It is perhaps the best-known indicator of the quality of governance and is published annually by the World Bank since 1996. It was originally developed by Kaufmann, Kraay and Zoido-Lobaton⁴¹ on the following definition: “the traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised. This includes (1) the process by which governments, are selected, monitored and replaced, (2) the capacity of the government to effectively formulate and implement

⁴⁰ Darina Malová, “Slovakia: From the Ambiguous Constitution to the Dominance of Informal Rules”, in Jan Zielonka, Alex Pravda (eds.), *Democratic Consolidation in Eastern Europe Volume 1: Institutional Engineering*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

⁴¹ Daniel Kaufmann, Aart Kraay, Pablo Zoido-Lobaton, “Governance Matters” in *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper*, World Bank, 1999.

sound policies, and (3) the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them”⁴².

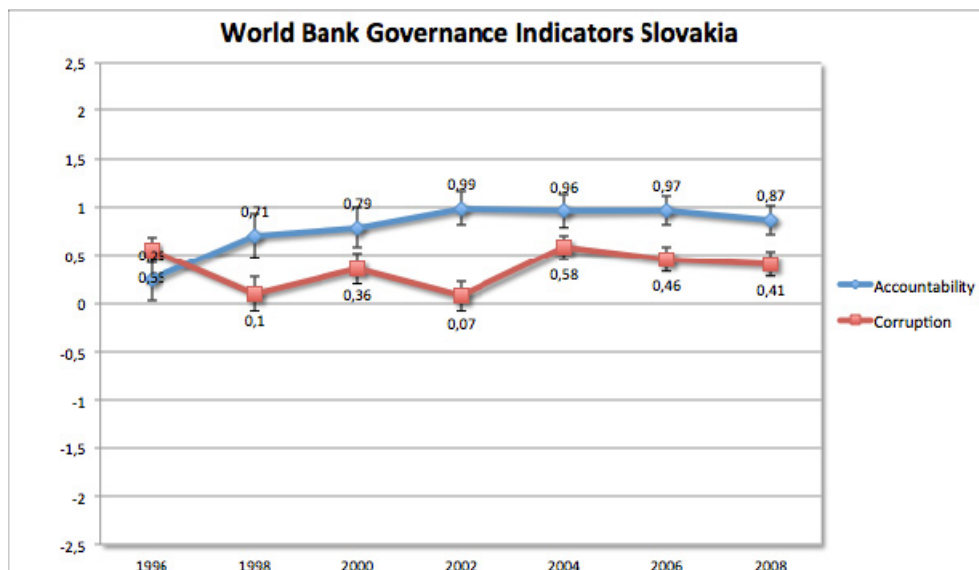
The index is composed of six dimensions: Voice and Accountability, Political Stability and Absence of Violence, Government Effectiveness, Regulatory Quality, Rule of Law e Control of Corruption. It is a composite indicator to the extent that each dimension is composed of hundreds of surveys aggregated by statistical methods. The “Worldwide Governance Indicators” is widely used to compare the quality of governance across countries and over time, for decisions on development aid and in journalism and scientific research. However, despite the usefulness of this instrument there are many problems that the index of Kaufmann has not been able to solve. In particular, the problem of transparency and comparability between countries and over time, although in most cases users of this index “seem to ignore thesis limitations”⁴³. Indicators selected for our purpose are *accountability*, that “captures perceptions of the extent to which a country's citizens are able to participate in selecting their government, as well as freedom of expression, freedom of association, and a free media” and *corruption*, that “captures perceptions of the extent to which public power is exercised for private gain, including both petty and grand forms of corruption, as well as “capture” of the state by elites and private interests”⁴⁴.

⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 1.

⁴³ Christiane Arndt, Charles Oman, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

⁴⁴ Daniel Kaufmann, Aart Kraay, Pablo Zoido-Lobaton, *op. cit.*

Tab 2. Accountability and Corruption in Slovakia, World Bank Governance Indicators 1996-2010.



Regarding *accountability*, data shows an improvement from 0.25 to 0.71 (+0.46) from 1996 to 1998, in the last two years of the Mečiar government, even if this is not statistically significant taking into account the standard error (0.23). In the period 1998-2002, during the first Dzurinda government, the data show a further, although minor, improvement (+0.28). However, the statistical validity of this finding remains questionable, because taking into account the standard error (0.23 for 1998 and 0.17 for 2002) the two confidence intervals overlap. During the second Dzurinda government 2002-2006 there is a substantial stability (0.99 in 2002 and 0.97 in 2006). Finally, in the period 2006-2008, the first two years of the Fico government, the index suffers a slight decrease (-0.10), falling from 0.97 to 0.87. However, in this case if we consider the standard error (0.15) the two confidence intervals overlap and the validity of this decrease is not statistically significant.

Concerning *corruption*, data shows a decline of the index from 0.55 to 0.10 (-0.45) over the period 1996-1998 that is statistically significant even taking into consideration the standard error (0.13 for 1996 and 0.18 for 1998). In the period 1998-2002 data show an improvement in the first two

years of government (+0.26) from 0.1 in 1998 to 0.36 in 2000, although the statistical validity is not very meaningful taking into account the standard errors (0.18 in 1998 and 0.16 in 2000). In the last two years of government, however, there is a decrease in the index (-0.26), statistically significant considering the standard errors (0.16 for 2000 and 0, 15 for 2002). During the second Dzurinda government 2002-2006 there is a new statistically significant improvement (+0.51, with standard errors of 0.15 and 0.16 for 2002 to 2004) in the first two years of government from 0.07 in 2002 to 0.57 in 2004. During the last two years, the situation remains constant with a minor negative change (-0.12) that is not statistically significant. Finally, in the period 2006-2008 the index suffers a slight decrease (-0.05) falling from 0.46 to 0.41. Even in this case, considering the standard error (0.13) the two confidence intervals overlap and the validity of this decrease is not statistically significant.

To sum up, according to the World Bank, the *accountability* index of the Slovak Government improves significantly during the last two years of the Mečiar government, continues to improve even in a less significant way during the first Dzurinda government, and then remains constant during the second Dzurinda government and the first two years of the Fico government. The index of *corruption* decreases significantly over the last years of the Mečiar government, remains constant during the first Dzurinda government, improves significantly with the second Dzurinda government then remains constant during the first two years of the Fico government. In the next section, another assessment will be proposed and the findings will be compared in the final part.

1) *Government Mečiar 1994-1998*

Accountability. Considering all post-1989 Slovak governments the Mečiar government was the most evident case of lack of democratic accountability. During four years the government's tendency to concentrate power in its hands to a degree "unacceptable in a pluralist society"⁴⁵ not only did not decrease, despite the internal opposition and the international

⁴⁵ Karen Henderson, "Slovakia and the democratic criteria for EU accession", in Karen Henderson, *Back to Europe: Central and Eastern Europe and the European Union*, London: UCL Press, 1999, p. 230.

pressure (especially by the EU in view of the accession), but on the contrary it increased up to the 1998 elections. The political history of this government was characterised by a continuous confrontation with the institutions in charge of controlling and balancing the powers of government and by continuous attempts to reduce the role of the parliamentary opposition⁴⁶. Leading scholars of Slovak politics⁴⁷, independent sources (Freedom House, Transparency International), international organisation and the European Union⁴⁸ all confirmed that the Mečiar government, as Deegan-Krause points out, "marks the most serious post-communist threat to Slovakia's democratic development"⁴⁹. The institutional clash was a clear "accountability violation"⁵⁰ and this trend, summarised by Pridham with "creeping authoritarianism"⁵¹, was a clear threat to the persistence of democracy in Slovakia.

Regarding the *relationship between the executive and legislative*, the most significant violations included the government's attempts to oust some MPs by Parliament (the member of the Democratic Union of Slovakia Party⁵²), the removal of the opposition's MP Gaulieder⁵³ from its position⁵⁴

⁴⁶ This was one of the main issues that delayed the start of the negotiation with the EU, Interview with EU Commission official, Commission Representation in Slovakia, Bratislava, July 2011.

⁴⁷ Martin Butora, Grigorij Meseznikov, Zora Butorova, "Overcoming Illiberalism: Slovakia's 1998 Elections", in Martin Butora, Grigorij Meseznikov, Sharon Fisher (eds.), *The 1998 Parliamentary Elections and Democratic Rebirth in Slovakia*, Bratislava: Institute for Public Affairs, 1998, pp. 9-23; Erika Harris, *Nationalism and democratisation*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002; Karen Henderson, *op. cit.*; Tim Houghton, "Facilitator and Impeder: The Institutional Framework of Slovak Politics during the Premiership of Vladimir Mečiar" in *The Slavonic and East European Review* no. 81, 2, 2003, pp. 267-290.

⁴⁸ Interview with EU Commission official, Commission Representation in Slovakia, Bratislava, July 2011.

⁴⁹ Kevin Deegan-Krause, "Slovakia", in Sten Berglund, Joakim Ekman, Frank Aarebrot (eds.), *The handbook of political change in Eastern Europe*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2004, p. 264.

⁵⁰ Kevin Deegan-Krause, "The ambivalent influence of the European Union on democratization in Slovakia" in *The European Union and Democratization*, London: Routledge, 2003.

⁵¹ Geoffrey Pridham, "Complying with the European Union's Democratic Conditionality: Transnational Party Linkages and Regime Change in Slovakia, 1993-1998" in *Europe-Asia Studies* no. 51, 7, 1999, pp. 1226.

⁵² The Slovak Spectator, *DU could face ejection from parliament*, 8 November 1995

and the occupation and the exclusion of the opposition from the parliamentary monitoring committees. Because of the majority in parliament and the behaviour of the executive the parliament failed to exercise its supervisory role over the executive for four years⁵⁵.

Regarding the *relationship between the executive and the other institutions* the most significant violations of the Mečiar government included the failure to comply with rulings of the Constitutional Court (in the case of the attempted ouster from parliament of the deputies of the Democratic Union of Slovakia⁵⁶, the occupation of the Slovak Security Services, the attempts to discredit and undermine presidential powers, “using methods widely regarded as unconstitutional”⁵⁷ through laws that reduced funding for the Presidency of the Republic and transferred powers and competences to the Prime Minister, with a call for the resignation through a referendum⁵⁸, the suspected involvement of the intelligence and the government in the kidnapping of the President’s son⁵⁹, the boycott of referendum on direct election of the President of the Republic⁶⁰, the government’s abuse of presidential *interim* powers in 1998 to declare an amnesty for those involved in the kidnapping of the President’s son.

Finally, regarding *transparency* the government tended to operate in an opaque way avoiding to count on the parliament: “drafts of some important bills such as amendments to the election law and the Law on Municipalities were prepared almost in secrecy by the government. Some ministries and other state administrative bodies have also refused to provide information on their activities to opposition deputies conducting parliamentary oversight. In the spring of 1997, the government cancelled regular press conferences, which reduced the level of information provided

⁵³ The Slovak Spectator, *Former HZDS deputy booted out of Parliament*, 18 December 1996; EU Parliament, *Resolution on the case of Frantisek Gaulieder, Member of the Slovak Parliament*, 12 December 1996.

⁵⁴ The Slovak Spectator, *HZDS deputy walks out on his own party*, 24 November 1996.

⁵⁵ Freedom House, *Nations in Transit*, 1998.

⁵⁶ Karen Henderson, *op. cit.*, p. 226.

⁵⁷ Freedom House, *Nations in Transit*, 1994; The Slovak Spectator, *Time for final battle is up*, 13 octobre 1995.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁹ The Slovak Spectator, *Kováč Jr. released on bail; waits for his fate*, 13 October 1995.

⁶⁰ The Slovak Spectator, *Europe, US react with concern to failed referenda*, 5 juin 1997

to the public”⁶¹. Slovakian NGOs stressed the total inactivity of the government in this field, so that no new legislation was introduced during the four years because, quite simply “transparency for them was out of question (...) and we are not sure whether he (Mečiar) actually ever mentioned the word “transparency”⁶².

Impartiality. With regard to *corruption and conflicts of interest*, although corruption in Slovakia in 1994-1998 was not on the same level as the other of other Eastern European countries, the situation was much more serious if compared with that of the other Visegrad countries. In four years the executive did not pursue a serious policy to limit the problem of corruption. Indeed, after the defeat in the 1998 elections, Mečiar was formally accused of corruption and fraud and several ministers were under investigation or suspected of corruption⁶³. The main problem was the privatisation process: “the Slovak privatisation practices that have become the focus and hot bed of corruption”⁶⁴. Privatisation, “frequently to those with close government link, became a characteristic of government policy”⁶⁵. The management and implementation of privatisation by the Mečiar government were criticised by the Constitutional Court and, according to the European Commission, “did not meet the requirements of transparency and fairness”⁶⁶. To tackle the problem, the government established in March 1995 a program called “Clean Hands” with the aim of fighting corruption in government agencies. However, the results were not satisfactory also because the legislation did not apply to the National Property Fund. This institution was responsible for privatizations and gave to the government, through a number of political appointments, an

⁶¹ Freedom House, *Nations in Transit*, 1998, 1999, 2000.

⁶² Interview with Transparency International Slovakia, Bratislava, July 2011.

⁶³ Freedom House, *Nations in Transit*, 2001.

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, 1998.

⁶⁵ Karen Henderson, *Slovakia. The Escape from Invisibility*, London and New York: Routledge, 2002, p. 44.

⁶⁶ EU Commission, *Agenda 2000 - Commission Opinion on Slovakia's Application for Membership of the European Union*, 1997; Interview with EU Commission official, Commission Representation in Slovakia, Bratislava, July 2011.

“unambiguous control over the privatisation process”⁶⁷. The entire program proved to be a failure, a some kind of effort “just to provide him (Mečiar) the argument that he was doing something (..) but as a matter of fact it did not deliver anything”⁶⁸. On the contrary, in some cases the government introduced laws which made more complex to prosecute cases of corruption and conflict of interest⁶⁹.

With regard to *discrimination*, the Slovak Constitution guaranteed “basic rights and liberties (...) regardless of sex, race, colour of skin, language, creed and religion, political or other beliefs, national or social origin, affiliation to a nation or ethnic group, property, descent, or another status” (art. 11), and it prohibited any kind of discrimination against the citizens of the Slovak Republic. In addition, part 4 of the Constitution (Art. 33-34) guaranteed the respect for minority rights. The case of the Hungarian minority (12% of the population) and the Roma community (between 5 and 10% of the population) were a clear example of how, beyond the presence of constitutional and legislative protection, respect for minority rights may change significantly depending on the government. The government led by Prime Minister Mečiar caused a deterioration of the situation of Roma and the Hungarian minority with its discriminatory behaviour and its ambiguous legislative activity. Among the acts charged to be discriminatory there were the introduction of bilingualism in the schools of the Hungarian minority, the substitution of various school leaders of the Hungarian minority despite the protests of the EU⁷⁰, the cutting of public funding for education and cultural activities of minorities, the statements of government on banning the recognition of collective rights for minorities and prohibiting the creation of autonomous administrative structures based on ethnicity, the adoption of the Language Law (stating that the Slovakian language was the only official language of the Slovak Republic and vaguely defining the right to use minority

⁶⁷ John Gould, “Winners, losers and the institutional effects of privatization in the Czech and Slovak Republics” in *RSC Working Paper*, European University Institute, 1999; Kevin Deegan-Krause, *op. cit.*, 2003.

⁶⁸ Interview with Transparency International Slovakia, Bratislava, July 2011.

⁶⁹ Freedom House, *Nations in Transit*, 1998.

⁷⁰ EU Council, *Démarche to the Government of the Slovak Republic*, 23 November, 1994; Interview with EU Commission official, Commission Representation in Slovakia, Bratislava, July 2011.

languages)⁷¹, the failure to approve a law on the protection of minorities despite domestic and external EU pressures⁷². Moreover, the government largely used an anti-Hungarian and anti-Roma rhetoric in public statement, spread by the majority parties and the public media controlled by the government. Therefore, the problem did not concern the legislative or constitutional dimension, but rather the “attitude of hostility generated by the government”⁷³.

5. Government Dzurinda 1998-2002

Accountability. Dzurinda's government represented a radical change confirming the importance of the “political will” for the level of accountability of the executive⁷⁴. The will to maintain correct relations with other institutions and the opposition emerged since the first public discourses and acts of the government.

Regarding the *relationship between the executive and legislative* the government immediately granted the opposition's representation in parliamentary committees. Two positions of Vice Chairs and the Chairs of 6 out of 18 committees were assigned to the opposition. In addition, the government offered the chair of two delicate organisms to the opposition: the Supervisory Board of the National Property Fund, responsible for the control of privatisation and the Councils for TV Broadcasting and Radio Broadcasting, in charge of monitoring the information.

Regarding the *relationship between the executive and other institutions*, the government effectively cooperated with the President of the Republic, the Constitutional Court and the judiciary. The executive adopted the amendment to the Constitution allowing the direct election of the President of the Republic and strengthening its institutional role. Through the constitutional changes proposed by the government in 1999 the

⁷¹ *The Slovak Spectator*, Eighteen months after deputies passed state language law, government leaders say minority language rights are protected, 22 May 1997.

⁷² EU Commission, *Agenda 2000 - Commission Opinion on Slovakia's Application for Membership of the European Union*, Bruxelles, 1997.

⁷³ Karen Henderson, *op. cit.*, 1999, p. 231..

⁷⁴ Geoffrey Pridham, “The European Union's Democratic Conditionality and Domestic Politics in Slovakia: the Mečiar and Dzurinda Governments Compared” in *Europe-Asia Studies* no. 54, 2, 2002, p. 215.

independence of the judiciary and the control over the activities of the National Property Fund were strengthened. The government respected the ruling and cooperated with the Constitutional Court⁷⁵.

Finally, regarding *transparency* the government had a proper relationship with the media, as noticed by Freedom House: “the government issues press releases and members of the government attend press conferences at the end of every session. The media had more opportunities to receive information about prepared legislation”⁷⁶. In addition, the main transparency tools⁷⁷, that is the Act on Free Access to Information, was approved in 2000 making easier for citizens to obtain information about the performance and activities of the government⁷⁸.

In short, the accountability of the first Dzurinda government was strengthened by a series of legislative acts and political behaviours: the opposition got its role in the parliamentary committees⁷⁹, the powers of parliament were respected and the “parliament efficiently performed its control functions with regard to the executive branch”⁸⁰. The government respected the President of the Republic and the Constitutional Court, amending the Constitution to ensure the direct election of the President, strengthening the role of the Constitutional Court and increasing the control of parliament over the executive. Finally, the government strengthened the right to be informed on the activities of the executive.

Impartiality. With regard to *corruption and conflicts of interest*, the government began its mandate explicitly stating the priorities in the fight against corruption and cronyism. However, first of all the government had to deal with the legacy of Mečiar’s era: “rather than really looking at creating a very specific anti-corruption law they were really cleaning out the mess which Mečiar left over”⁸¹. The executive approved the

⁷⁵ Freedom House, *Nations in Transit*, 1999, 2000.

⁷⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁷ Interview with EU Commission official, Commission Representation in Slovakia, Bratislava, July 2011.

⁷⁸ Interview with Transparency International Slovakia, Bratislava, July 2011.

⁷⁹ EU Commission, *Regular Report on Slovakia's Application for Membership of the European Union*, Bruxelles, 1999

⁸⁰ Freedom House, *Nations in Transit*, 1999, 2000.

⁸¹ Interview with Transparency International Slovakia, Bratislava, July 2011.

participation of Slovakia in GRECO (Group of States against corruption), and signed the “Convention on Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of the Proceeds from Crime” and the “Criminal Law Convention on Corruption” of the Council of Europe⁸². This commitment was also expressed through the establishment of a police force specialising in fighting corruption and the approval of several amendments to the legislation to ensure more control and transparency with regard to conflicts of interest. However, several Ministers were forced to resign being involved in scandals and investigations on corruption charges⁸³. There were also problems and delays in the adoption of an action plan against corruption presented by the government in February 2000, but approved only in November 2002⁸⁴. The government made progress in the transparency of the privatisation process, as it is confirmed by international sources: “the privatisation process is now more transparent, and privatisation decisions are adopted on the basis of official public tenders”⁸⁵.

Also with regard to *discrimination*, both in terms of behaviour (rhetoric, style of government) and legislation, the government showed special attention to the problem of discrimination. It immediately established a Vice Premier for Human rights and Minority issues⁸⁶ and converted the Governing Council on Ethnic and Religious Minorities was converted into a government advisory body. Other governmental units dedicated to minorities were created within the Ministries of Culture and Education. In 1999 the government adopted a new law guaranteeing the right to official use of minority languages after the EU’s pressures through the EU-Slovakia Joint Parliamentary Committee⁸⁷. In 2000 the government adopted a new plan of action against all types of discrimination, which provided information and awareness campaigns. The government took

⁸² EU Commission, *Regular Report on Slovakia’s Application for Membership of the European Union*, Bruxelles, 2000.

⁸³ *Ibidem* 1999; The Slovak Spectator, *Public “scarred” by privatisation*, 13 September 1999.

⁸⁴ EU Commission, *Regular Report on Slovakia’s Application for Membership of the European Union*, Bruxelles, 2000, 2003.

⁸⁵ Freedom House, *Nations in Transit*, 1999, 2001.

⁸⁶ The Slovak Spectator, *Pál Csáky: “I bring more empathy” to Romany problems*”, 16 November 1998.

⁸⁷ Interview with EU Commission official, Commission Representation in Slovakia, Bratislava, July 2011.

also actions concerning the problems of Roma minority, which had been ignored by the previous government. In February 1999 the government appointed a Commissioner for the Roma issue and promoted several programs and policies to support education and fight racism, and in September 1999 it adopted a comprehensive strategy for the solution of the problems of Roma. Finally in 2000 the government introduced an amendment to the Penal Code recognising the crimes with racial motivations.

In summary in the dimension of impartiality the executive implemented different legislative and administrative measures reducing the space for corruption and conflicts of interest. However, despite the reforms some problems persisted: the persistence of some long-term factors hampering further progresses: “traditional patterns of behaviour, public perceptions that corruption is inseparable from certain spheres of public affairs, and a general acceptance of corrupt practices by a significant part of the population”⁸⁸. In addition, the ambiguous behaviour of several members of the executive involved in investigations of corruption and cronyism gave an impression of continuity with the Mečiar government (although in the Dzurinda’s government all the Ministers involved decided to resign, unlike the Mečiar’s period). Regarding anti-discrimination there was a change in political style and public policy, despite of the gap between the laws adopted and their effective implementation. The main problem of the previous government, namely the relationship with the Hungarian minority, was addressed on several levels. Thanks to the presence within the executive of the party of the Hungarian minority SMK, relations with the government improved quickly⁸⁹. Later, the government adopted a law to protect minorities’ languages that guaranteed the respect of the Hungarian language. Even with the Roma community, the government engaged with actions to improve the social condition both through action plans and the banning of racist rhetoric that had long characterised Slovak politics.

⁸⁸ Freedom House, *Nations in Transit*, 2001.

⁸⁹ Erika Harris, *Nationalism and democratisation*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002, p. 122.

7) *Government Dzurinda 2002-2006.*

Accountability. The situation remained essentially unchanged during the second Dzurinda government, whose policy was actually a continuation of the previous government with some minor changes in the governing coalition.

Regarding the *relationship between the executive and legislative*, the government exercised its powers respecting the parliament's role and the opposition. During the inaugural address the Prime Minister stated that the parliamentary committees would be distributed proportionally between majority and opposition parties⁹⁰. In the four years of government executive-legislative relations remained stable within the normal democratic process.

Regarding the *relationship between the executive and other institutions* the government exercised its powers in accordance with its competences and responsibilities. Despite some political criticism, the relationship between executive and President of the Republic remained "largely cooperative"⁹¹. Concerning the relations with the Constitutional Court, the government respected its independence and judgments "typically without reservations"⁹².

Finally, regarding *transparency*, there were no new legislative actions. The government maintained good relations with the media and transparency was guaranteed by the compliance with the Act on Free Access to Information passed by the previous government.

In short, in relation to the previous government, the situation of accountability of the second Dzurinda government remains the same for political (the government was composed essentially by the same parties and it was even more ideological coherent because of the exclusion of the leftist SDL') and institutional reasons (legislative and constitutional changes to a strengthening of the government's accountability have been adopted by the previous Dzurinda government).

⁹⁰ The Slovak Spectator, *Spoils please coalition parties*", 7 October 2002.

⁹¹ Freedom House, *Nations in Transit*, 2003.

⁹² *Ibidem*, 2004.

Impartiality. With regard to *corruption and conflicts of interest* the government implemented the previous anti-corruption plan. At the end of 2002 it established a Department of Anti-corruption, and the Ministry of Justice introduced new anti-corruption rules. Moreover, the government created a plenipotentiary “in charge for the fight against corruption, as part of the National Programme for the fight against corruption”⁹³. At the same time, the government launched a campaign against corruption in the country financed by the EU Phare program. In 2003 it approved a new constitutional law against conflicts of interests, an “Anti-Corruption Charter of Slovak Business” and the “Report on Concrete Measures to Fulfil the Program Manifesto of the Slovak Government in the Field of Combating Corruption”, containing several proposals by Transparency International Slovakia. In 2005 the government and the parliament adopted new rules including an amendment to the Law on Public Procurement which introduced greater transparency in the process, a law on Free Access to information, and a Law on Political Parties with tighter rules on public financing. However, government’s activism clashed with the resistance and the slowness of the public administration⁹⁴. Transparency International Slovakia noted that on one hand the government respected most of the commitments made in the 2002 program, but on the other hand measures have proved to be ineffective in many cases⁹⁵. Another problem concerned corruption scandals involving members of the executive⁹⁶. In 2003 the NGO Fair Play Alliance reported a case of conflict of interest involving the Ministry of Finance. Above all, in 2005 the Minister of Economy Rusko was removed from office because of charges against him on an opaque financial transaction. A month later, the Ministry of Social Affairs also resigned under the pressure of public opinion because of another conflict of interest scandal.

With regard to *discrimination*, the government presented its program in continuity with the previous government. The adoption of an anti-discrimination law, required by the EU before the accession of Slovakia in

⁹³ Interview with EU Commission official, Commission Representation in Slovakia, Bratislava, July 2011.

⁹⁴ The Slovak Spectator, *EC: Slovakia must fight corruption*, 7 April 2003.

⁹⁵ Freedom House, *Nations in Transit*, 2006.

⁹⁶ The Slovak Spectator, *Complaint of conflict of interests*, 16 June 2003.

2004⁹⁷ and strongly supported by several national associations and NGOs, animated the executive's activities and in many cases caused the clash between the liberal parties and the Catholic conservative party (KDH). After two years of parliamentary debate in February 2004 the government approved the Law on Fair Treatment and Protection against Discrimination. The new law introduced a number of protections and guaranteed against all forms of discrimination. Even the issue of language minorities and the Roma community remained on the political agenda. In 2003 the government updated its strategy for the integration of Roma and the improvement of living conditions through the use of additional funds to be used in social projects. However, the results were not satisfactory. Criticism of government's actions came mainly from the European Union⁹⁸ and the Roma community itself, especially in relation to the effectiveness of the measures undertaken. Patkoló Alexander, President of the Roma Initiative of Slovakia, criticised the "mindless spending of money" of the European funds and the state budget for the organisation of seminars, conferences and training or other "worthless activities"⁹⁹. Consequently, although the government commitment in the adoption and implementation of norms to improve the situation of the Roma community, the results were not positive.

The government's activity in the dimension of impartiality can be summed up with two new laws¹⁰⁰ and two action plans: the law on conflicts of interest, the anti-discrimination law, the anti-corruption plan and the plan for the integration of Roma communities. The problem of the second Dzurinda government was mainly the imbalance between the government's activism in the adoption of these norms, especially at the request of the EU, and the lack of attention to the implementation and

⁹⁷ Interview with EU Commission official, Commission Representation in Slovakia, Bratislava, July 2011.

⁹⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁹⁹ Alexander Patkoló, Roma Initiative of Slovakia, in *The Slovak Spectator*, *Roma politicians blame cabinet*, 10 November 2003.

¹⁰⁰ These are the most important political actions. However, the second Dzurinda government acts also through other initiatives such as the strengthening of the power of the NKU, the improvement of the transparency in public procurement, some initiatives aimed at strengthening the capacity and the independence of judiciary, the strengthening of the control on local and regional administration.

effectiveness of the norms adopted. In addition, other negative elements were the corruption and conflicts of interest scandals involving members of the executive and causing the resignation of several Ministers.

4. *Government Fico 2006-2010*

Accountability. The Fico government was a considerable change compared to the previous two governments. Immediately after the elections of June 2006 the coalition began a process of concentration of powers led by the main governing party Smer-SD.

Regarding the *relationship between the legislative and executive* this latter used its majority in Parliament to make political nominations in the central administration¹⁰¹ and to reject and prevent all bills and amendments proposed by the opposition. In particular, the government used the “indirect amending law” strategy by proposing amendments to existing laws in order to alter other laws, for example a change to the Public procurement law through amendments to the Commercial advertising law¹⁰². During its mandate the government used its parliamentary majority to prevent the legislative initiative of the opposition deputies. This trend continues during all four years, leading to the progressive deterioration of the capacity of parliament to control the executive power.

Regarding the *relationship between the executive and other institutions*, although the government maintained good relations with the President of the Republic (close to the ruling coalition) and the Constitutional Court, at the same time it pursued a radical turnover of administrative staff within ministries and other central administrative bodies that is criticised by non-governmental organisations¹⁰³ for its political nature and the lack of attention to competences¹⁰⁴. In May 2007 the government approved an

¹⁰¹ The Slovak Spectator, *New cabinet to fire hundreds of officials*, 10 July 2006; The Slovak Spectator, *Government under fire for political nominations*, 2 April 2007.

¹⁰² Other example in the Freedom House report in 2008: “the altered law on the Social Insurance Company through the amended pension system law, the altered competence and collective negotiations laws through the amended tripartite law, the altered communities law through the amended trade and emission quotas law”, *Nations in Transit: Slovakia*, Freedom House, 2008.

¹⁰³ Freedom House, *Nations in Transit*, 2007.

¹⁰⁴ The Slovak Spectator, *New cabinet to fire hundreds of officials*”, 10 July 2006.

amendment to the Law on Civil Service, making it easier to justify political appointments of senior positions in public administration.

Regarding *transparency*, the government Fico reversed the previous trend¹⁰⁵. More than once, the government attempted to change the Free Access to Information Act of the Dzurinda government and to restrict citizen's right to be informed about government activities. In January 2007 the government proposed to prevent the publication of audio recordings of the meeting of the Council of Ministry¹⁰⁶, and in February 2007 the parliament approved this amendment. In the same period of time an amendment of the parliamentary majority backed by the government allowed civil servants to refuse providing information to citizens if they find the inquiry "clearly unreasonable". However, the amendment was immediately criticised by opposition and NGOs stating that it was incompatible with the right to information by Transparency International Slovakia¹⁰⁷. For these reasons the amendment was immediately withdrawn.

In short, the situation of the accountability of Fico government was critical, largely because of the attempts to concentrate power, the lack of recognition of the role of the opposition in parliament, and the attempts to restrain the access to information on the activities of the government through changes to the Free Access to Information Act.

Impartiality. With regard to *corruption and conflicts of interest* the commitment was significantly lower compared to the previous government. Fico, "rather than continuing the previous anti-corruption programme, he stopped it"¹⁰⁸. In the program the purpose to fight corruption was stated only in general terms and it was not mentioned among the priorities¹⁰⁹. During the first year the executive introduced only an amendment to the Law on the Supreme Bureau of Supervision, which extended its powers in relation to regional and local governments. However, in 2007 the parliament did not adopt any new anti-corruption

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Transparency International Slovakia, Bratislava, July 2011; The Slovak Spectator, *Cabinet wants sessions to be secret*, 8 January 2007.

¹⁰⁶ The Slovak Spectator, *Cabinet wants sessions to be secret*", 8 January 2007.

¹⁰⁷ The Slovak Spectator, *Coalition wanted to restrict free access to information*, 12 February 2007.

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Transparency International Slovakia, Bratislava, July 2011.

¹⁰⁹ Freedom House, *Nations in Transit*, 2007.

measures and in the following years the situation worsened to such a point that the “Nations in Transit” report in 2009 stated that the government abandoned the fight against corruption¹¹⁰. In 2009 the government took other measures such as an amendment to the Public Procurement Act, which was considered inadequate by Transparency International. The relationship with the Slovak NGOs in the field of corruption became difficult, so that in September 2008 Transparency International Slovakia decided to stop its cooperation with the government because of the lack of government commitment in the fight against corruption and the public statement of Prime Minister Fico in defence of cronyism and against NGOs¹¹¹. Since 2006, in several cases the Minister of Justice proposed the abolition of the Special Court and the Office of the Special Attorney created by the previous Dzurinda government to follow more effectively the cases of corruption and organised crime. The issue was solved in 2009 when the government was finally able to abolish the Court. However, due to a strong public pressure, the government and opposition reached an agreement for the establishing of a Specialised Penal Court, which replaced the previous Court with the same functions and powers. The cases of conflict of interest, corruption and cronyism within the government increased during Fico government¹¹². On the one hand, this was the result of a change in the economic policy with a greater role of the State in the economy without effective checks. On the other hand, the attention of the government towards the problem of corruption and conflict of interest decreased significantly according to the media and NGOs¹¹³. Over the years several Ministers or Deputy Ministers were forced to resign on charges of corruption, nepotism and conflicts of interest.

With regard to *discrimination*, the government behaved in an ambiguous way. On the one hand, the government’s program directly addressed the issue of discrimination. In 2007 the executive quickly adopted some amendments that strengthen the Anti-Discrimination Act of

¹¹⁰ *Ibidem*, 2009.

¹¹¹ The Slovak Spectator, *PM, interior minister slam latest corruption report*, 16 July 2007.

¹¹² The Slovak Spectator, *Defence Minister Kašický resigns*, 28 January 2008; The Slovak Spectator, *Minister stays in post*”, 16 February 2009; The Slovak Spectator, *Another SNS minister bites the dust*, 11 May 2009

¹¹³ Interview with Transparency International Slovakia, 12 July 2011.

2004, and in 2008, the Act was further amended in order to facilitate the integration of disadvantaged people in work, education, culture and health. However, a problem arose with the approval of an amendment to the Language Law in June 2009, which reinforced the role of the Slovak language by adding penalties for its “incorrect” use and making more difficult the use of minority languages¹¹⁴. The amendment caused the negative reaction of the Hungarian Government and the Hungarian minority in Slovakia. Following a number of controversies at the end of 2009 the government approved the guidelines for the implementation of the new language rules based on recommendations made by the OSCE High Commissioner Vollebaek, and incorporating the amendments of the Hungarian organisations in Slovakia¹¹⁵. On the other hand, the main problem of the government was the role played by the nationalist party SNS¹¹⁶. The presence of SNS in the government was the main factor determining the deterioration of the relations between government and minorities. SNS, and especially its leader Jan Slota, never missed an opportunity to provoke with racist statements Hungary, the Hungarian minority in Slovakia, the SMK party and the Roma minority.

The overall performance of the government in the dimension of impartiality was therefore strongly problematic”, especially if compared to the two previous governments. Fico's government showed a lack of sensitivity towards the fight against corruption in terms of programmatic and legislative activity from one hand and behaviour from the other because of the many scandals affecting members of the executive. The government's behaviour in relation to the indicators of discrimination was less negative, because the government adopted a number of positive amendments to laws (excluding the problems with the Language Law). On the other hand, due to the presence of SNS, rhetoric and public behaviour of members of the executive were often highly discriminatory against ethnic and linguistic minorities.

In conclusion, according to the analysis the level of *accountability* of Slovakian Government deteriorates dramatically during all years of the

¹¹⁴ The Slovak Spectator, *Slovak government approves implementation measures for Language Act*”, 17 December 2009.

¹¹⁵ Ibidem.

¹¹⁶ Interview with Transparency International Slovakia, Bratislava, July 2011.

Mečiar government, improves during the first Dzurinda government, remains stable during the second Dzurinda government and deteriorated considerably, although not to the levels of Mečiar government, during the Fico government. The level of *impartiality* worsens considerably during the Mečiar government, improves with the first Dzurinda government, worsens considerably with the second Dzurinda government and deteriorated further during the years of Fico. This table summarises the two assessments, highlighting negative or positive variations between four different governments.

Tab 3. Variation in Quality of Government: different assessment

	1994-1998 Mečiar	1998-2002 Dzurinda I	2002-2006 Dzurinda II	2006-2010 Fico
Accountability (World Bank)	2	1	0	0
Accountability (QoG)	-2	2	0	-1
Corruption (World Bank)	-2	0	2	0
Impartiality (QoG)	-2	2	-1	-1

-2 = significant worsening, -1= slight worsening, 0= stable, 1= slight improvement, 2 = significant improvement

Conclusions

The aim of this paper was to show the limitations of quantitative indexes of good governance to explain change in the short period, and at the same time to provide an original definition of quality of government based on the scholarship of the quality of democracy and focused on the

“input-side” dimension of democracy. The case study of Slovakia provided a good example of the usefulness of this approach. The proposed definition: “*A government that acts with transparency on the principles of the Rule of Law and impartiality to effectively perform its program, respecting the balance of state powers and preferences of the majority of citizens*”, was based on four dimensions: accountability, impartiality, effectiveness and responsiveness. Before concluding the paper two final considerations are required.

1. Complementary approaches. With reference to the Slovakian case, very different pictures emerge when using the World Bank index or the proposed approach. First, the difference may depend on the temporal analysis, such as the case of the accountability of the Mečiar government, which is evaluated in two completely opposite ways. The problem may relate to the fact that the World Bank considers, in its 1998 assessment, already the government’s change at the end of the year. Yet it would be difficult to justify such a change compared to 1996 based only on the first month of the Dzurinda government. Secondly, the change in the index over the years is much more pronounced in the approach proposed in the paper versus the World Bank. This depends on the large number of quantitative and qualitative sources used to produce the composite WB index of governance and the sub-indexes. Consequently, the World Bank itself confirms that in most cases the annual variation of the index is not statistically significant, while the change can be significant if a few decades are taken into account. Even the qualitative approach has its limitations: it can provide strong inferences for a specific case study or for a particular universe using comparative method. However, it is less suitable for generalization and to provide Large-N comparison. Consequently, the World Bank governance indicators can be useful to indicate a trend in the long term (and indeed in the case of accountability the trend shown by the World Bank is confirmed by the empirical analysis of this paper) and probably for this purpose a quantitative approach is more suitable and feasible than a qualitative analysis. However, this paper shows that the change of government matters, and the WB index is basically useless to detect variations (even large or small) in the quality of government in the short term, as evidenced by the significant variation in the accountability

and impartiality between Mečiar and Dzurinda government and between the second Dzurinda government and Fico government. Therefore, the complementary use of both approaches is highly recommended to obtain a complete picture of the object investigated.

2. Multidimensionality of the quality of government. In the description of the theoretical framework it is clear that between the dimensions of analysis there is a mutual influence. However, only the empirical analysis makes it possible to deepen this relationship and the existence of possible trade-offs, such as between efficiency and accountability. In addition, the brief analysis of the case of Slovakia shows that there is another aspect of the quality of government to be highlighted, which is the existence of two distinct but complementary levels of quality of government. On the one hand, a legislative and constitutional dimension, a stable element that constitutes the framework in which governments act. On the other hand a political dimension which concerns the behaviour of the executive power in the day-to-day political life. If the constitutional dimension hardly varies over time and can only be changed by not always easy interventions, because of the rigidity of Constitutions and the difficulties in modifying the law, on the contrary the political dimension is extremely variable and may be the main factor of variation. In summary, the two dimensions influence each other since the constitutional and legislative dimension is the framework and determines the limits of the government's action, while the political dimension may potentially change the legislative and also the constitutional framework.

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FROM THE ATLANTIC ORDER TO THE PACIFIC PRE-EMINENCE: A HISTORICAL SHIFT?*

Valentin Naumescu**

Abstract

The post-1945 world was shaped, regulated and led by the transatlantic order, based on a set of values, interests, arrangements and institutions emerging from the strategic alliance between the United States and Western Europe. The West won the Cold War and eventually extended its umbrella over the Central and Eastern European countries, after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The ideological core of the liberal democracy has been the corner-stone of the Western system and the engine for a long era of success and hegemony. More than a simple review of the current theories focusing on the end of the Atlantic order but definitely less than a comprehensive answer to the major interrogations of a changing world, this article assumes the modest purpose of emphasizing some questions, real arguments as well as a few dilemmas (and sometimes illusions!) related to the nowadays large perception of a definitive transfer of the "gravity centre" from Atlantic to Asia-Pacific co-ordinates.

Key words: West, United States, Europe, Atlantic, Asia-Pacific

The approach of this paper is not necessarily lining up with the current thesis naming the *decline of the North-Atlantic order* but it takes into consideration multiple evidences of a changing world. A number of scholars, political scientists and economists but also high-ranking politicians claim in more or less recent analyses/statements that the

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postwar political and economic system, based mainly on the strategic alliance between the United States and the Western European democracies is coming to an end. Basically they say the “centre of gravity” is moving from the North Atlantic area to the Asia-Pacific region. To give just an example, minister mentor of Singapore Lee Kuan Yew quoted by *Forbes* said in October 2010 in (maybe too) clear words: “...the center of economic and geopolitical gravity is shifting from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Trade, investment and economic ties across the Pacific will make this the world’s most important and dynamic region during the 21st century”¹.

On January 3rd, 2012, President Obama released the *Defense Strategic Review* in which it is stated that “U.S. economic and security interests are inextricably linked to developments in the area extending from the Western Pacific and East Asia into the Indian Ocean region and South Asia, creating a mix of evolving challenges and opportunities. Accordingly, while the U.S. military will continue to contribute to security globally, we will of necessity rebalance toward the Asia-Pacific region”². This kind of remarks focusing on the rise of Asia is definitely not new in the modern history: we can surprisingly find out that the U.S. Secretary of State John Hay was announcing in 1899 (!) the *Open Doors* policy, saying that “the storm centre of the world has shifted to China...Whoever understands that mighty Empire...has a key to world politics for the next five hundred years”³. Such a prediction at that time came maybe too early, since the 20th century was undoubtedly if not an American one, then at least a long period of Western success and hegemony.

What about the 21st century? The current Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton gives us an updated definition of this “reorient-to-rising-Asia” doctrine in her article “*America’s Pacific Century*” in *Foreign Policy*, “declaring that America is going to refocus its efforts on this area-of-the-future”⁴. Despite of the fact that this is already an ongoing process which started in various ways during the previous decade, such public statements and policy papers generate some criticism or cautious remarks both from China

¹ Lee Kuan Yew, *Battle for Preeminence*, *Forbes*, [www.forbes.com], October 11, 2010.

² *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense*, p. 2, Department of Defense, January 2012.

³ Giovanni Arrighi, *Adam Smith in Beijing. Lineages of the Twenty-First Century*, p. 277, Verso, New York, 2007.

⁴ Ira Straus, “Toward a Pacific-Oriented America?” (part I), *The Globalist*, [www.theglobalist.com], Monday, November 07, 2011.

and the West. On March 6th, 2012, the Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi urged the United States to respect China's interests in Asia-Pacific, reiterating Beijing's concern over the U.S.' ambitions to boost its influence in this fast growing but complicated part of the world. Basically China's regional interests refer to some old territorial disputes with Japan, South Korea as well as those related to South China Sea, including Vietnam and the Philippines, not to mention the sensitive issue of Taiwan⁵. For the first time ever in the modern history, one might say as a strategic response to the increasing global interest for the region, China's defence spending rises in 2012 over the total European military budget, reaching 11.2% of the GDP or 100 billion dollars⁶, 5 bn. more than in 2011. China's military spending is therefore the *second largest in the world*, while the Pentagon expenses last year were almost *eight times higher* than the ones of Beijing.

Regarding Washington's new priority, Ira Straus believes that "*the idea of an Asia-Pacific identity for the United States as an alternative to the Euro-Atlantic one is an illusion, no matter how popular it is these days. (...) America can never lose its Atlantic roots*"⁷. The same author adds an interesting approach of including *de facto* the traditional America's Pacific partnerships, like the ones with Japan, South Korea, certainly Australia and New Zealand as part of the consecrated Atlantic system or Western order. "*The Pacific wing of the Atlantic community has taken wider and deeper shape. (...) The United States is reinforcing its old Atlantic alliance by building up its Pacific wing.*"⁸ We might admit a certain integration of some Pacific allies of the U.S. in the Atlantic order's institutions such as OECD or the former G7, but to say that Asia-Pacific or at least the U.S. friends in the region "*constitute an extension wing of Atlanticism*" is maybe too risky. The region has in fact its own, multiple cultures, values, histories, influence, potential of growth as well as a population that is already large enough to make questionable any "inclusion" in a smaller West.

⁵ AFP, "China wants 'respect' from US", March 06, 2012, *The Courier Mail*, [www.couriermail.com]

⁶ *Asia defence spending overtakes Europe*, *The Financial Times*, March 07, 2012, [www.ft.com/intl/world]

⁷ Ira Straus, *op. cit.*

⁸ *Ibidem.*

Nobody can deny that the last two decades had actually defined a new economic situation and restructured international relations. Starting from the mid 1990s, the U.S. administrations put more political focus on regional or multilateral structures such as NAFTA⁹, APEC¹⁰, FTAA¹¹ and of course WTO¹² (which China joined in 2001) than on traditional bilateral economic cooperation with the European institutions and markets.

Canada also is reorienting to Asia Pacific and it gave some political and economic “messages” of a slightly decreased interest of investing in or developing the European ties. In the past three years, to give just an example, the Prime Minister Stephen Harper paid a number of official visits in Asia Pacific, each time accompanied by massive delegations of ministers and businessmen while having only a few short appearances to symbolic or multilateral events in Europe. Most visited were China, India and South Korea but recently Myanmar became an interesting country to be visited, after the liberation of iconic pro-democratic leader Aung San Suu Kyi. Not long after Hillary Clinton’s halt to Rangoon for a symbolic appreciation gesture, the Canadian Foreign Minister John Baird offered the honorary citizenship to San Suu Kyi, a political move that is destined to show Ottawa’s interest for this *new-entry* in terms of potential business. The good news to be mentioned is that Ottawa-Brussels hard talks for the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the European Union will be most probably finalized by the end of 2012, opening the gate for sealing CETA¹³ after 8 rounds and 4 years of intense negotiations. The bad news related to this long debated free trade agreement is that Canadian politicians are already criticising Ottawa for threatening the local companies and provincial economic interests in favour of European goods and services¹⁴. However CETA needs the all 10 Canadian provinces’ approval for a full implementation and the whole story doesn’t seem to be done yet.

⁹ North American Free Trade Agreement.

¹⁰ Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation.

¹¹ Free Trade Area of the Americas.

¹² World Trade Organization.

¹³ Canadian European Trade Agreement.

¹⁴ John Size, *Canada – EU Free Trade Deal Could be Signed Later this Year*, CTV News, March 11, 2012, [<http://edmonton.ctv.ca/servlet/an/local/CTVNews/20120311/EU-free-trade-campbell-20120311/20120311/?hub=EdmontonHome>]

Back in the 1990s but taking a look to the old continent, some European initiatives for boosting transatlantic economic trade failed in the Council of Ministers or simply had pale outcomes: TAFTA¹⁵ (1995), NTA¹⁶ (1995), NTMA¹⁷ (1998), TEP¹⁸ (1998) etc. On both sides of the Atlantic, everybody has seen a tremendous ascension of China, India, Southern Asia and the Pacific region but also an (apparently mutual) weakened interest in maintaining the traditional U.S.-European ties as the top priority. The ties were still strong and the trade massive but it was not the same “love and enthusiasm” from the past decades. Nevertheless all debates with respect to the fissure between America and Europe are way more consistent and sophisticated in the West than in any other part of the world. “*From the standpoint of Africa, Latin America, or Asia, what potentially divides America and Europe may seem trivial compared with what unites them. Both are rich and powerful compared to other continents. The bulk of world trade flows back and forth across the Atlantic between Europe and North America*”¹⁹, believes Jeffrey Kopstein. Indeed for large parts of the world stricken by wars, deep poverty, disasters or famine this kind of discussion could appear as an intellectual caprice. But the fissures are real for the moment and both America and Europe are looking to Asia-Pacific to find solutions for their inner problems such as huge public debts, economic stagnation, ageing population, rising social costs, unstable financial markets etc.

These facts are nowadays almost self-evident. On the other hand, when it comes to a new world order, we should always look first if pretended emerging arrangements are sustained (or not) by *viable, stable and effective institutions*. We should also inquire cautiously about a common cultural background, shared values and eventually a *dream* in which individuals from different nations could believe or act as a magnet. If none of these binders do exist in real life it is hard to believe that a new world order is to emerge soon. To some extent, the *American dream* used to have in the 20th century a radiant, influential, cohesive effect for all Western liberal

¹⁵ Transatlantic Free Trade Area.

¹⁶ New Transatlantic Agenda.

¹⁷ New Transatlantic Marketplace Agreement.

¹⁸ Transatlantic Economic Partnership.

¹⁹ Jeffrey Kopstein and Sven Steinmo (eds.), *Growing Apart? America and Europe in the Twenty-First Century*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 8.

democracies. It has also acted as a magnet for several generations of Europeans in different countries devastated by war, poverty, crises or authoritarian regimes as well as for millions of people from other nations, cultures or religions around the world. We should inquire today how attractive are the new economic giants of the 21st century in terms of a *life ideal*, first for their own residents, second for others, as long as this region (or at least parts of it) is still an important source of migration. Is there any *Indian* or *Chinese dream* for people living in other countries? Who wants to be Chinese?

Radical or moderate theories see the disruption of the Western community in different ways and offer various explanations for that. Some authors are definitely pessimistic when it comes to the future of the U.S.-European relations as we know them since 1945, due to the growing disparities between the transatlantic allies (such as Robert Kagan²⁰), while others are deeply interrogative with respect to the post-“Cold War world” (such as G. John Ikenberry²¹ or Jeffrey Kopstein²²). Academia, journalists and of course politicians all over the world speak about “new realities” but either the premises or the analytical perspectives lead them to different outcomes and conclusions.

To go first to the reason(s) of this reshaping, the main question would be what changed the postwar political and economic order so dramatically? Jeffrey Kopstein from the University of Toronto summarizes several categories of differences between the United States and Europe that pre-existed well before the splitting events of the post Cold War era. “*The different place of religion and immigration in the United States and Europe, the different level of trust in the market as the primary means of distributing resources, and the varying degree of commitment to multilateralism all reflect long-term institutional, creedal, and power differentials across the Atlantic*”²³. These economic, ideological, social and cultural differences were real but dormant before the demise of the Soviet Union.

²⁰ See Robert Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order*, Knopf, New York, 2003.

²¹ See G. John Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major War*, Princeton University Press, 2001.

²² See Jeffrey Kopstein and Sven Steinmo (eds.), *op. cit.*, 2008.

²³ *Ibidem*, p. 3.

After the communist system was defeated, people began to see more emphasised the things that were separating America and Europe than the ones that were keeping them together. A mix of causes eroded the foundation of the Atlantic system²⁴. Briefly, among political grounds are *the end of the Cold War* and the collapse of the NATO's rival bloc, *the 9/11 attack* and its sequel, *the 2003 invasion of Iraq* without the consent of the European traditional allies. These three fundamental events are definitely "major" ingredients of a chain splitting reaction but there were also other "minor" (so to say) reasons of discord like trade regulations, the Protocol of Kyoto or delicate issues related to the International Criminal Court. All of them acted more or less against the idea of alliance and strategic partnership. On the other hand, *spectacular rates of economic growth and high competitiveness of the Asia-Pacific countries* combined with the recent *financial difficulties within the American and Western European economies* are two basic explanations for the lower political, economic and commercial interest of maintaining the old partnership as a top priority. John Ikenberry noticed that "*in the eyes of many Americans, Europe and Western alliance were no longer central to the pursuit of U.S. global security. In the eyes of many Europeans, the United States had become a superpower that now must be resisted and contained.*"²⁵

Ideologically the Europeans felt in the 1990s that the American model of economy and politics was the great winner of the Cold War. And they were right. In the eyes of the French, the Germans or the Italians not to mention the newly liberated East European nations it was the American liberalism which broke down the Berlin Wall. It was the American dream sustained by an overwhelming advance in technology and military power, not the European social-democracy or the Christian-democracy which defeated the Soviet Union. The supremacy and the spectre of the U.S. hegemony had suddenly become a concern for many Europeans, making the French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine to call the United States a *hyperpuissance*. That's why many European public intellectuals, politicians, bureaucrats or media saw the necessity of a strengthened European Union rather as an economic, political and sometimes even military *counterpoise to*

²⁴ G. John Ikenberry, "Explaining Crisis and Change in Transatlantic Relations: An Introduction" in Jeffrey Anderson, G. John Ikenberry and Thomas Risse (ed.), *The End of the West? Crisis and Change in the Atlantic Order*, Cornell University Press, 2008.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 1.

the United States²⁶ (maybe not admitting it publically) than as an extended market in itself.

The shift from the Atlantic order to the Pacific pre-eminence occurred also in terms of popular beliefs, not only for strategists. We learn that "a current survey finds that Americans, by a 51% to 38% margin, think Asia is more important for the United States than Europe. Evidently, the narrative about the West's decline and Asia's rise has had a major impact. In 2004, Americans had put Europe first, by a whopping 54% to 29% margin."²⁷ Both the U.S. and the European Union struggle with huge public debts, even they do it in different ways, thus making the financial perspectives of the traditional *Western welfare state* less optimistic than they were a few decades ago.

It is to inquire in a distinct research the way in which NATO, the essential institution of the postwar Atlantic order is still able to keep the (old and new) allies fully engaged in an effective regional security arrangement but also to provide a sense of global security for the whole world. After years of debate and negotiation, an emerging *New Strategic Concept*²⁸ tries to rejuvenate the Alliance and to offer a reasonable perspective of being "together". Amid complicated situation in the Middle East, confusing results in Afghanistan and Libya, rising tensions between Israel and Iran, on-going crisis in Syria, lack of agreement with Russia regarding the American anti-missile shield in Europe, new and hopefully consistent developments and clarifications are expected at the NATO Summit in Chicago this coming May, 2012.

The enormous economic and human potential of Asia-Pacific, an increasing, young population, less social costs, a fast growing market and a paradise for foreign direct investments seem to be for some scholars enough powerful arguments for a new world order, based on Asian nations' interests. But Asia has not only potential, it has also deep structural *vulnerabilities*. Paradoxically, some of them will be probably increasing amid inevitable modernization process in the region, when

²⁶ Jurgen Habermas, "Why Europe needs a Constitution", *New Left Review*, September-October 2001.

²⁷ Ira Straus, *op. cit.*

²⁸ Christopher R. Davis, "NATO's New Strategic Concept: How the Alliance's New Strategy will Reshape Global Security", *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, Winter 2010.

people will begin to be more and more reluctant to live with so little hope, resources, individual liberties and freedom of choice.

A meaningful and surprising statement has been recently made by the Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao, in which he urged for more *“economic and political structural reform”*²⁹ in the years to come, for more power of decision transferred to the people in order to avoid the risk of stagnation or even a step-back to the era of the Cultural Revolution. Connected or not with the competition for power and the change of generations within the Communist Party in Beijing (expected to happen in October 2012), this is in fact the kind of political attitude that shows exactly how fragile the whole system is.

In line with this rather skeptical vision related to long term perspectives of the *“Asian miracle”*, not all American consecrated authors see China as future global superpower. For instance, we learn from Thomas Barnett that: *“as for recent fears that China will soon rule the world, go slow on that one. The World Bank recently recalculated the purchasing power of China’s economy and found it to be near 40 percent smaller than we imagined. China won’t be overtaking the U.S. economy anytime soon, if ever. Moreover, while we may fret over Beijing’s dollar reserves, you have to remember that China’s rapid industrialization has been built on a very shaky environmental and demographic foundation, meaning most of the economy’s vast liabilities have been pushed into the future on a scale that makes our Social Security overhang look modest by comparison. China will grow older before it gets rich, and it’ll become increasingly unhealthy before it superfunds its environmental cleanup.”*³⁰ Unlike Thomas Barnett, Paul Krugman seems today much more concerned over the Chinese offensive on the American market than he was two decades ago during the Japanese economic *“invasion”* in North-America. Krugman sees *“nothing shocking”* that China is no longer *“satisfied with the passive role of financiers”* of the U.S. public deficit, obviously referring to the massive purchase of American bonds *“and demands the power that comes with*

²⁹ Malcolm Moore, *“China’s Wen Jiabao calls for ‘urgent’ political reform”*, *The Telegraph*, 14 March 2012, [<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/china/9142333/Chinas-Wen-Jiabao-calls-for-urgent-political-reform.html>].

³⁰ Thomas P. M. Barnett, *Great Powers: America and the World after Bush*, New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 2009, p. 183.

ownership"³¹. He also thinks that "China, unlike Japan, really does seem to be emerging as America's strategic rival and a competitor for scarce resources"³².

Paradoxically, on the verso of the coin of *globalization* (that was in fact so tightly related to the triumph of the American liberalism in the late 20th century) reads the end of the United States' hegemony. This is just the sequel of 'arming' the whole world with the same 'weapons'. While almost everybody assumed the American rules of the game, discovered the market, and enjoyed the taste of doing business and making profit, a process of economic *convergence* and cultural denial of any kind of global leadership led to a very competitive world. In his famous book *The World is Flat*, Thomas Friedman explains the way in which America used to be a hegemonic actor in the postwar era, promoting globalization and liberalism, and how fast other regions of the world learned after the Cold War the rule of the game for taking benefits and getting prosperous: "...while we were admiring the flat world we had created, a lot of people in India, China, and Eastern Europe were busy figuring out how to take advantage of it. Lucky for us, we were the only economy standing after World War II, and we had no serious competition for forty years"³³.

The questions of how America will look like in the new era, how it will deal with hard issues such as increasing poverty, old infrastructure or huge public deficit, how much power will have or to what extent it will remain an *inspiring model* of society for other democracies, states and nations represent the core of a massive academic literature. They are also the corner-stone of the 2012 presidential debates. Whether President Obama will gain a second term or a conservative will be sworn in at White House, the questions to be answered and issues to be solved in America are the most difficult ones in the post-World War II era.

Maybe one of the toughest interrogations in the nowadays international politics tries to find out if the world to come would be safer and bloodshed-less *with* a recovered and consolidated America (reinvented, so to say) or *without* the hegemony of a single superpower. A weakening

³¹ Paul Krugman, "The Chinese Challenge", *The New York Times*, June 27, 2005, [<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/06/27/opinion/27krugman.html>].

³² *Ibidem*.

³³ Thomas L. Friedman, *The World is Flat A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*, Vancouver/Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 2007, p. 239.

dollar, gigantic public debts³⁴ and increasing budgetary deficits threaten the perspective of the American economic recovery after the financial crisis and the severe recession that followed in 2008-2009. "The Arab spring" of 2011 and the recent shift of the American foreign policy regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could mark a dramatic turning-point in the Middle East and Northern Africa (MENA), but it is still too early to stick new labels. Israel is feeling lonelier than ever in the region and suggests it can take the destiny in its own hands. Iran is defiant. Syria is a tragedy, while Egypt and Libya don't look too good even after the formal change of power. It seems that there are no short-term solutions. The stalemate in the MENA region is threatening the global security. However the international consequences of a hesitating America are inevitably occurring during the moderate, lack of firmness and with less appetite for intervention U.S. current administration. The Canadian political economist Stephen Gill is speaking about the need of "global leadership"³⁵ in order to combat the "global crises" of the world. Combined with the possibility of a republican full come-back in November 2012 (after a partial victory has already occurred in 2010 mid-term election), amid increasing dissatisfaction and frustration of the American middle-class, the above mentioned changes generate massive political, economic, cultural as well as strategic, conceptual pressures for *reinventing America*, according to the domestic and global needs of the 21st century.

On the other side of the Atlantic, the European Union (now an extended complex structure of 27 member states, soon 28), still one the major markets and economic powers of the world is struggling with sophisticated common policies, strong persistent national interests and last minute compromises. The *Euro Zone*, otherwise a huge historical achievement seems to be on the brink. It is facing tremendous challenges due to increasing sovereign debts³⁶ and significant differences between the levels of development and competitiveness of its members.

³⁴ The U.S. public debt in 2011 reached the historical peak of 1,5 trillion dollars.

³⁵ Stephen Gill, *Global Crises and the Crisis of Global Leadership*, Toronto: York University, October 2011.

³⁶ The *crisis of sovereign debts in Europe* refers nowadays to a cumulated debt of about 1 trillion Euros.

The current debate in European politics, along with the hot issue of the sovereign debts, focuses on the strategic question of European positioning on the international stage, now balancing between the old partnership with the U.S. and the new Asian temptations. The recent visit paid to China in February 2012 by the German Chancellor Angela Merkel, amid the crisis of the Euro Zone is the clear sign that a hypothetical external solution (aid) is searched at Beijing rather than Washington. The trip to China and the talks there were seen as an attempt to refresh what was sometimes called the “*China-Europe axis of world affairs*”³⁷. The word axis may be sounding today either as wishful thinking or too strong to describe a relative closer relation between China and the European Union, prior to the financial and economic recession of 2008-2009. However the Chinese were eventually quite reluctant to open the wallet unconditionally and pay for the European crisis, while mentioning some economic and political requirements to the European chancelleries. Beyond the Atlantic, caught in the middle of a tensioned presidential campaign, top financial and political leaders in the U.S. showed the same reluctance for spending tax payers’ dollars in a flawed Euro Zone. Under these circumstances it seems that Europe has to find by itself a way out from the mess of the debts’ crisis. And probably it will.

Europe and America may be looking like they are growing apart. The Western order seems as it has lost self-confidence. In the eyes of its most virulent critics, the Atlantic system’s hegemony has lost moral legitimacy after the end of the Cold war as well as political, economic and military authority over the world, and even its *raison d’etre*. While neither Asia Pacific nor other region can so far provide a better model of organization but only a growing market, liberal democracy and the Western-inspired system of postwar institutions remain the guarantee for peace, prosperity and security. The global crisis is real today but the work of politicians, managers and scholars in the coming years is to fix the economy within the frame of good governance, preserving what the West

³⁷ David Shambaugh, “China and Europe: the Emerging Axis”, in *Current History*, September 2004, pp. 243-8.

and especially the American dream had brought to the world: "*Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness*"³⁸.

Last but not least we have to find out in the near future whether is hope for a reasonable vision and order in the post-crisis era, whether the North Atlantic one or another. Multiple scenarios appear at the horizon, making diverse historical comparisons. More and more authors believe that the world after nowadays turbulences will be significantly *different* than the one we know, let's say the post-1945 Western order. People will live in the U.S. and Western Europe a different life (many economists say not necessarily better in terms of resources and costs³⁹) than in the past four or five decades. To what extent the nations considered *emerging economic powers* (such as the BRICS⁴⁰ group of countries, but also other dynamic economies from South Asia) will manage or want to integrate in the Western political and institutional arrangements or way of life? What other (acceptable) options of *co-habitation* between old and new prosperous states can we expect? What is the *future of the liberal democracy* that shaped our understandable world? Who else than the U.S. has the universal vocation and inspiring power to lead and rebalance the global system? "*This is the preeminent challenge of our age: the sustainable harmonization of these different models of capitalism, or the integration of mature, high-trust environments (the Old Core West) with the immature, lower-trust environments (the New Core East/South and Gap)*"⁴¹ believes Thomas Barnett, while trying to find an articulate vision of the world of tomorrow. Asia Pacific is growing fast and it seems to be the rising star on the markets, while the West faces severe financial imbalances, a whole range of problems related to an ageing population as well as a lack of consensus over the international agenda. On

³⁸ Part of the famous sentence: "*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness*" from the United States' Declaration of Independence, adopted by the Congress on July 4th, 1776.

³⁹ Recent studies and reports indicate that we shall soon be witnessing or be part of the first generation born after 1945 living at lower standards than the previous one and most probably facing a crisis of the public pensions systems. See *The Origins and Severity of the Public Pension Crisis*, Dean Baker, The Center for Economic and Policy Research, Washington, February 2011.

⁴⁰ Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa (the former 'quartet' BRIC, extended).

⁴¹ Thomas P. M. Barnett, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

the other hand, the order based on the Western liberal democracy remains by far the most successful system of organization ever, fair and morally superior, that was able to ensure the largest prosperity to the most people at a time in the modern history.

As I have mentioned before, there are various answers and confronting definitions of the global crisis and disruption of the Western alliance. From the perspective of China as a global superpower to suggestions of a future implosion in the largest non-democratic economy, and from optimistic approaches of a “reinvented” America and refurbished transatlantic partnership to a pessimistic vision of chaos and war, scholars and officials call into question the extraordinary circumstances of a historical moment which seems to suspend the political and economic postwar order.

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CENTRALISM OR AUTONOMY? THE DEBATE REGARDING THE ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION IN ROMANIA BETWEEN 1918 AND 1925*

Bogdan Dumitru**

Abstract

The administrative organization of the Romanian state represented one of the most widely-debated issues in the early years of the interwar period. The administrative organization of the new state was very important for two basic reasons: it had to ensure the unitary national character of the state and, at the same time, it had a decisive influence on the balance between the social and political forces in the new state. This study does not take a juridical approach. It attempts to analyze the theme from a historical perspective, by focusing on the fundamental causes that determined the adoption of the centralized administrative system in the context of the historic phase the Romanian state had been going through: the process of building the nation-state. According to the thesis defended in this study, this element is one of the essential causes of the centralist option.

Keywords: administrative reform, centralisation, decentralisation, unitary state, nation-state building

Administrative history studies are not missing from Romanian historiography. These studies have prevalingly represented the object of study of jurists. Indispensable studies for administrative history, they

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technically analyze the laws and projects of political-administrative organization, but do not pay great attention to the historical context and to the political and social conditions in which these laws and projects were elaborated. This study will not focus on a juridical approach, but will try to place the debates regarding the political-administrative organization of the state in a historical context and to understand the essential causes that fueled the debate between the partisans of decentralization and those of centralization, thus sowing why the attempts to establish a decentralized political-administrative organization failed.

Theoretical premises

Centralization and decentralization represent two different manners of territorial organization and distribution of power within the state. They determine the extent to which the central government, through its territorial agents, imposes its control and reign over the constituent local communities of a certain political-administrative system. Both centralization and decentralization are the result of the intermingling of several historical, ideological, political, social, economic and technical factors. Frequently, centralization and decentralization are associated with the historical stages of national integration. Favoring one of the two options varies depending on the status of the national integration process.

The following general instance can be defended, with distinctive variations from case to case. On the one hand, an emergent political nation will uphold the need to foster integration, in order to overcome the local loyalties which can endanger national unity. Thus, national political leaders will support centralization.

On the other hand, in a situation when the power is geographically fragmented or local and regional elites are strong and have the capacity to bargain and impose their standpoint to the centre, this will lead to a decentralizing organization. The successful balancing of these contrary impulses, with partial indulgence of the latter being used to build consent for the former, is often the essence of nation building.

In a politically developed nation, in which national loyalties are secure and a substantial social consensus prevails, there is a greater possibility to adopt an administrative system that will include a number of

formally decentralist arrangements. In one sense, this means that formal decentralization is possible only because a fundamental social centralization already exists, in the form of the people's national identification and widely shared values.¹

I consider that these initial theoretical premises are essential in the analysis of the debates regarding the administrative organization of Romania between 1918 and 1925.

The Romanian case illustrates these theoretical premises. After the 1918 Unification, there was no consensus regarding the future political-administrative organization of the Romanian state. The political and intellectual elite of the Romanian provinces, now united with the Old Kingdom, promoted different projects of political-administrative organization, which ranged from a decentralizing administrative organization at the level of the local communities to more radical variants of regional and federal organization. In the first years after unification, the solution of the centralized organization, which was to be adopted in 1925, was far from being accepted by the all parties engaged in the debate.

After the unification, the provinces kept their provisional ruling bodies. Transylvanian politicians, in the first years after 1918, wanted to act somewhat independently from the institutions and political parties in Bucharest. The Great National Assembly from Alba-Iulia elected a Romanian National Council (with a legislative role), which was intended to represent the interests of the Romanian nation from this province. On 2 December 1918, the Great National Council established the Ruling Council of Transylvania, Banat and the Romanian lands from Hungary, as an executive body. The setting-up of the Ruling Council was made on the basis of Article II of the Alba-Iulia Resolution, which stipulated the provisional autonomy of Transylvania, Banat, Crişana and Maramureş, until the election of a Constituent Assembly based on universal suffrage².

¹ James W. Fesler, "Centralization and decentralization", in David L. Sills (ed.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, volume 2, The Macmillan Company & The Free Press, 1968, p. 372; Raffaele Romanelli, *Importare la democrazia. Sulla costituzione liberale italiana*, Rubbettino, 2009, pp. 29-33.

² „Rezoluția Marii Adunări Naționale de la Alba Iulia”, în Bogdan Murgescu (coord.), *Istoria României în texte*, București: Corint, 2001, p. 282.

It seems that the provisional autonomy option was the result of a compromise between the partisans of the conditional union, a position initially defended by Iuliu Maniu, the president of the Ruling Council and of the National Party from Transylvania, and his opponents, the supporters of the unconditional union.³

The disbanding of the Ruling Council in April 1920, by legal decree, caused great disappointment among the local elite of Transylvania and the actions of the central government were perceived there as heavy-handed measures. In a report of the French Ministry of War from May 1920, which noticed the reactions from Transylvania, it was stated that the taking-over of the powers of the Council by Bucharest “provoked the greatest dissatisfaction” among the former members, the decision being accepted only in deference to the Royal House, and that the National Party from Transylvania asked for a new assembly in Alba-Iulia, where two years earlier the Union had been proclaimed.⁴

Furthermore, with regard to the integration of Bucovina into the Romanian state, two possible options were discussed. On the one hand, according to Iancu Flondor, a leading politician from that region, and his followers, before definitive integration, a period of transition is needed, during which every province should keep a certain degree of autonomy. On the other hand, Ion Nistor and his partisans from the nationalists group asserted that in the process of national unification, the Old Kingdom should play a central role. It was seen as a liberator factor to which the provinces from the former Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy had to subordinate immediately by means of an unconditional union.

The *Program of the Romanians from Bucovina*, published on 24 April 1919 in the newspaper *Bucovina*, whose editor was Iancu Flondor, was representative of his political conception. The program emphasized the need for a comprehensive reform regarding administrative decentralization and proposed the organization of Bucovina into a separate administrative

³ Sorin Alexandrescu considers that Iuliu Maniu desired complete autonomy for Transylvania within the Romanian state and only after long insistences did he accept the provisional autonomy: Sorin Alexandrescu, *Paradoxul Român*, București: Univers, 1998, p. 55. See also Irina Livezeanu, *Cultură și naționalism în România Mare 1918 -1930*, București: Humanitas, 1998, pp. 162-163. Henceforth, Livezeanu, *Cultură și naționalism*.

⁴ Ministère de la guerre, Direction de l'armée de terre, Vincennes, 7N/3043, quoted in Livezeanu, *Cultură și naționalism*, p. 194.

unit.⁵ His demands regarding such an endeavour were not accepted and, after a conflict with the nationalists group⁶, Flondor decided to resign from the office of president of The State Secretaries' Council, which had the role of a local government for Bucovina. He was replaced by Ion Nistor, who was placed in charge of the administration of the province. In Bucovina, much like in Transylvania, in April 1920 the autonomous provisional ruling bodies were abolished and the central government took over their attributions.

These examples demonstrate the divergent opinions and tensions among the different groups of the political and intellectual elites of the historical provinces and between the latter and the liberal political elite of the Old Kingdom, regarding the future of the political-administrative organization of the state. On the one hand, as we shall see below, the National Liberal Party from the Old Kingdom upheld and promoted a centralized organization in order to integrate and to overcome the centrifugal tendencies from the provinces and, moreover, the majority of the intellectuals and of the important political leaders from the new provinces sought more tactful ways of integrating and adjusting to the political and institutional differences within the new state.

Thus, the setting-up of a homogeneous local public administration throughout the territory of the Romanian State represented one of the most important debates in the period following the First World War.

After the 1918 Union, the Romanian government and the political parties established several study committees and organized conferences in order to debate on and elaborate the law for the administrative unification of the new Romanian state. We need to clarify from the outset the following fact: every project affirmed the need to organize the local politico-administrative system on the basis of decentralization and local autonomy principles. Nevertheless, as we shall see henceforth, there were significant differences in the way these principles were understood and put to the test.

⁵ Cristina Puha, „Poziția lui Iancu Flondor față de noile realități politice ale Regatului Român (1918-1924)”, în *Analele Bucovinei*, VII, 2, București, 2000, pp. 460-461.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 462.

The administrative organization between centralism and autonomy

Only in 1925, seven years after the Unification, was the *Law for the Administrative Unification* adopted, establishing a centralized administrative system. The administrative unification of the Romanian state was a particularly difficult process, marked by hostilities and contradictions among the political elites of the Romanian provinces. This antagonism was fueled by political, social and ideological reasons, and by a different understanding of the nature and character of the new state, from the part of the political elites of the provinces.

Two main opposing approaches can be distinguished in the debates regarding the organization of the local political-administrative system. Firstly, a hostile and suspicious attitude towards local autonomies can be identified. This tendency upholds and promotes a centralizing policy. Although it proclaims the principle of administrative decentralization, in reality this is consciously abandoned to other political imperatives of the moment.

The essential elements of this system are the following: 1) the state does not renounce the instruments of direct intervention at a local level, due to its territorial agents; 2) the state appoints the executive authority of the counties, preserving the dual nature of the prefect: he represents at the same time the interests of the state and those of the counties (an ambiguous position); 3) also, the state maintains the right to appoint the communal executive authority in municipalities, namely big cities where the percentage of the Romanian population is modest; 4) they provide the state with agents, benefitting from widespread rights of administrative tutelage and suspension of the local, communal and county councils; 5) the region, as an administrative entity, is rejected⁷.

⁷ For further details see the following representative texts for this current: *Anteproiect de lege generală pentru descentralizarea administrativă. Anteproiect de lege județeană, întocmite de Cercul de Studii al Partidului Național Liberal*, cu o introducere de C. D. Dimitriu și o expunere de motive de Dimitrie I. Niculescu, București: Imprimeriile „Independența”, 1921. Henceforth, *Anteproiect de lege generală pentru descentralizarea administrativă...; Anteproiectul de Constituție întocmit de cercul de studii al Partidului Național – Liberal*, cu o expunere de principii de D. R. Ioanițescu, București: Biblioteca Cercului de studii PNL, 1921; *Noua Constituție a României*.

The projects of administrative organization promoted by the National Liberal Party are representative of this system. According to the *Ante-project of general law for administrative decentralization*, elaborated by the study circle of the Liberal Party in 1921, the administrative reform, first of all, has to “accomplish the political and spiritual unification of the Romanians and to facilitate for all the citizens a free life within the borders of a unitary and national state”.⁸ The project proposes a new administrative organization, based on the principle of decentralization, but the future decentralized administrative organization should be temperate, “without exaggerations”. This exaggeration consists of providing the counties and communes with a wrongly understood independence, which could isolate them from the central power and transform them into separate administrative units. The communes and counties will have their own life, free of excessive tutelage, but at the same time, as constitutive parts of the “nation body”, the state has the right to control and coordinate their activities.⁹

The administrative system proposed by the Liberals does not accept the setting-up of an intermediary administrative-territorial unit between the county and the state because, according to C. D. Dimitru, the intermediary level in this case - the region -, “as a permanent administrative division, [...] should not exist, if we sincerely desire the consolidation of the Romanian state”. Despite the fact that the Liberals acknowledge regional problems and interests, their solving should be done by provisional associations between communes and counties. Any other solution the legislator would adopt in this respect will encourage the centrifugal forces and will lead to the dissolution of the state¹⁰.

One of the authors of this legal project, Dimitrie I. Niculescu, also emphasizes the misunderstanding of the principle of autonomy by the Romanians from the united provinces, where centrifugal forces are manifesting themselves.¹¹ Moreover, concerning the possibility to establish

Reflexiuni și Anteproiect de Constantin Berariu, Cernăuți: Institutul de Arte Grafice și Editură „Glasul Bucovinei”, 1922.

⁸ *Anteproiect de lege generală pentru descentralizarea administrativă*, p. 5.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 9.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 10.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 20.

the region as a territorial-administrative unit, this organizational option is refuted by using the same argument: the menace this administrative organization would represent for the consolidation of the Romanian state:

The establishment of the region in our country would probably be in contradiction with the principle of the national-unitary state. This state is the principal aim of the new administrative organization. The setting-up of the region would raise in many parts of the country obstacles in the process of achieving the Union.¹²

Not even with regard to the separation in the representation of local interest from the central ones at the county level, do the Liberals respect the administrative traditions of Transylvania. According to the National Liberal Party, the prefect has to play a dual role: on the one hand, he runs the county's administration, representing local interests and, on the other hand, he is the delegate of the central government in the county, acting under the direct command of the Minister of the Interior.¹³

Although this attitude was mainly promoted by the National Liberal Party and came from the Old Kingdom, there were also some other intellectuals and politicians from the unified provinces who supported this form of administrative organization.

The second ideological trend, decentralizing and autonomous, contains a wide range of projects which try to offer local communities a real administrative autonomy in relation to the central government. This position was mainly promoted by politicians and intellectuals from the unified provinces, but also by administrative law specialists from the Old Kingdom. This attitude contains the following essential elements: 1) the state representatives cannot be in any circumstances the executive authorities of the counties or communes; 2) the elective councils of the counties and provinces, the provincial administrative courts and the State Council, in hierarchical order, will have the right of supervision over the lower-level local authorities, but not over the state's representatives; 3) the communal, municipal, county and provincial councils will be accountable for their administration according to the law, but they cannot be dissolved by the government; also, their elective executive authorities cannot be

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 25.

¹³ *Ibidem* pp. 31-32.

revoked by the central government; 4) it supports the establishment of the region as an administrative unit.¹⁴

At the basis of the projects which sustain the administrative decentralization lie several different reasons: historical, cultural, technical, economic and political. Technically, various authors blame the crisis of functioning and organisation of the centralized political-administrative system and its inadequacy to the particularities of a heterogeneous society from multiple points of view. Decentralization is seen as an appropriate way to facilitate the functioning of the central administrative apparatus, by means of reassignment of minor problems, which do not have a general importance, to the level of local authorities.

The historical reason is also very important. The representatives of the historical provinces invoke the historical element as one which justifies the preservation of the institutional and cultural distinctiveness within the new state.

The economic causes were mainly used by the authors who upheld an administrative regionalization based solely on purely administrative and economic grounds, thus refuting political regionalization or federalization.

The *Legal project for the organization of the local administration* of the Minister of the Interior Constantin Argetoianu, elaborated in 1921, upheld the institution of the region on the basis of "purely administrative reasons" and of the "different economic interests" of the Romanian provinces.¹⁵ Also, the jurist Anibal Teodorescu considers the diversity of the economic needs of the Romanian provinces as being an essential argument for the

¹⁴ For this ideological tendency see the following essential texts: *Anteproiect de Constituție întocmit de secția de studii a Partidului Țărănesc*, Cu o expunere de motive de C. Stere, București: „Viața Românească” S.A., Tipografia „Universală”, 1922; Anibal Teodorescu, „Viitoarea organizare administrativă a României”, în *Constituția din 1923 în dezbaterile contemporanilor*, București: Humanitas, 1990; M. Văraru, „Centralizare și descentralizare”, în *Arhiva pentru știință și reformă socială*, Year. II, no. 1-3, 1920; Ion V. Gruia, „Descentralizarea administrativă și organizarea regională a țării”, în *Revista de drept public*, Year I, no. 1, București, 1926. Henceforth, Gruia, „Descentralizarea administrativă și organizarea regională a țării”.

¹⁵ Project of Law for the Organization of the Local Administration, Romanian National Archives, Ministry of the Interior Fund, file 385/1922, pp. 2-3.

organization of the state on regional grounds.¹⁶ Moreover, Paul Negulescu and I. V. Gruia uphold the creation of the region in order to facilitate economic development and to solve the problems of local communities which exceed the county's borders.¹⁷ Although geography may provide various alternatives for organization, according to the configuration of the physical space, industrialisation, the repartition of economic functions, in practice, it is always politics that decides, in accordance with the necessities of a certain historical period.¹⁸

Furthermore, the political causes have a great importance in this respect because the political-administrative organisation of the State has a major influence on the balance between social and political forces. Regional political elites or emergent movements and political parties could perceive local autonomy or regionalisation as a means of maintaining power and influence at the local and regional levels, or as a basis for further conquest of power at the national level.¹⁹ I believe this aspect is one of the key elements illustrated by the projects of political-administrative organization elaborated by C. Stere and G. Grigorovici.

C. Stere, the author of the Constitutional Ante-project of the Peasants' Party, theorised an administrative organisation based on two fundamental elements: juridical recognition and the establishment of the *village* and *province* as administrative-territorial units. According to Stere, the refusal of an administrative organisation that revolves around the province, - a historical formation, with a "secular past of a special life", with particular mentalities, habits, cultural and economic conditions, which forms a well-defined unit - is the reflection of a non-democratic governing concept:

¹⁶ Paul Negulescu, Romul Boilă, Gh. Alexianu, *Codul administrativ adnotat*, București: Institutul de arte grafice „Vreamea”, 1930, p. 580.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*; Gruia, „Descentralizarea administrativă și organizarea regională a țării”, pp. 97-98.

¹⁸ Pierre Legendre, *Stato e Società in Fancia. Dallo stato paterno allo stato-providenza: storia dell'amministrazione dal 1750 ai nostri giorni*, traduzione di Marina Gigante e Marcello Romei, Milano: Edizioni di Comunità, 1978, pp. 128-129.

¹⁹ This is a strategy that can also be noticed in other political-administrative systems. See for example the Italian case in Ernesto Ragioneri, “La formazione del programma amministrativo socialista in Italia”, in Ernesto Ragioneri, *Politica e amministrazione nella storia dell'Italia unita*, Bari: Laterza, 1967, pp. 193-262 and Raffaele Romanelli, “Centralismo e autonomie”, in *Storia dello stato italiano dall'Unità a oggi*, a cura di Raffaele Romanelli, Roma: Donzelli, 1995, p. 146.

The chimera of a mechanical levelling is bound to arise in souls that are emptied by a lengthy despotism, out of contempt for public liberties and citizen life - but under the regime of a constitution, based on the principle of national sovereignty, how could this ungrateful mentality have been born, due to which for the emancipated provinces, the unification had as a primary effect the disappearance of the seeds of local autonomy they used to have under foreign oppression?

Moreover, the projects that turn to an artificial administrative organisation, creating "fictional regions", combined from several distinctive territories, with no connections among them, motivate the need for this approach, on the grounds of state unification and consolidation, but in the author's opinion, these notions are wrongly understood:

This ingenious administrative *tailoring* [underlined by author] is motivated by the interest of unification! But such a unification cannot be mistaken for a *union*. And we do not need a mechanical *levelling* [underlined by author], but an intimate union in spirit and feeling, which can only result from respect for the particularities and natural characteristics of all and from everyone's truly free activity. Real power can never spring from the monotony of an exterior mechanisation, but only from *organic diversity* [underlined by author], one that is filled with life.²⁰

The Peasants' Party, Stere believes, is opposed to "tyrannical urges" that do not recognise the character of administrative unity of the provinces, and this refusal can negatively influence the effective national unity itself.

As far as G. Grigorovici is concerned, he pleads in favour of the organization of the state on federative bases. Grigorovici, a Social-democrat from Bucovina, as a participant in the political life of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy²¹, was familiar with federalist ideas. In the Habsburg monarchy, reform projects of the Empire on federalist grounds were upheld by the heir to the throne himself, Franz Ferdinand, who found such collaborators

²⁰ *Anteproiect de Constituție întocmit de secția de studii a Partidului Țărănesc*, with a motivation by C. Stere, Bucharest: „Viața Românească” S.A., Tipografia „Universală”, 1922, pp. 44; 45-46.

²¹ Petru Rușșindilar, *George Grigorovici și social-democrația în Bucovina*, Bucharest: Edition of the Foundation „Constantin-Titel Petrescu”, 1998, pp. 11-15.

as Romanians Aurel C. Popovici and Al. Vaida-Voevod. The federalist ideas of the heir to the throne gathered support within contemporary political circles, and the Austrian Social-Democratic Party mentioned in its programme, as a fundamental point, ever since 1899, the transformation of Austria-Hungary into a federal state, relying on the respect for the ethnic identity of all nationalities. G. Grigorovici, as the representative of the Romanian Social-democrats from Bucovina in the Austrian Parliament, adopted his party's line, by asking for the federalisation of the Empire from the tribune of Parliament, through press articles or conferences.²²

In the new political context after the union of Bucovina with the Old Kingdom in 1918, the politician from Bucovina pleads in favour of accepting the birth of a new state after the Unification on 1918, profoundly different from an extended Old Kingdom. The post-war Constitution would thus have to acknowledge a state of affairs, by concluding a pact which would link the different entities, possessing, in the case of the former Austrian provinces, a certain degree of autonomy before the Unification. Grigorovici invokes the precedent of American constitutionalism, which allows for the birth of a new state structure, from the association of a series of states/provinces endowed with sovereignty.²³

The challenge the Old Kingdom is facing in the attempts to unify with the new provinces and the regional conflicts are due to a misunderstanding of the nature of the 1918 Unification:

We are not facing a conquest of provinces or of an inferior territory by a superior state, hence it is out of the question to transplant there the forms of organisation from the kingdom, as it has fallen behind in administrative issues. [...] The kingdom and politicians from the old kingdom will not understand that we are not in the case of conquered territories.²⁴

Grigorovici perceives very thoroughly the attempts to organise the administration in a centralist nature, i.e. one designed by the centre: "What

²² George Ciorănescu, *România și ideea federalistă*, București: Editura Enciclopedică, 1996, pp. 65-69.

²³ Ioan Stanomir, *Libertate, lege și drept. O istorie a constituționalismului românesc*, Iași: Polirom, 2005, p. 86. Henceforth, Stanomir, *Libertate, lege și drept...*

²⁴ Gheorghe Grigorovici, „Constituția sovietică și Constituția democratică”, in *Constituția din 1923 în dezbaterile contemporanilor*, București: Humanitas, 1990, pp. 116-117.

drives us, what makes us start the fight against any current of centralisation, is the tendency of slavery, springing from old Romania".²⁵

In the same manner, *Patria*, the newspaper of the National Party from Transylvania, published in this period many articles in which authors accused the hegemonic tendency of the Liberals to form the government and the legislature by themselves, without the cooperation of regional political parties. According to *Patria*, they used any means to achieve this goal, including the falsification of the elections. The political Transylvanian elites demand the organization of free elections and equal chances with the other political parties (the accusations regard mainly the National Liberal Party) in order to form the government and to take part in the administration and governance of the state.²⁶ Otherwise, the restoration of the provisional autonomy, on the basis of the Alba-Iulia Proclamation, may be the only option for the resolution of this situation which Transylvanians could not accept anymore.²⁷

This is a tension that will manifest itself throughout the interwar period. I believe this position of the regional political elites may be understood as an attempt to retain the power and influence at the local and regional levels, in case they should lose it at the central level, by refuting a system that could provide the central government with the instruments to influence the local balance of power. These opinions and resentments can later be found in Romul Boilă's federalization project from 1931²⁸, as in *The Memorandum of the Romanians from Transylvania*", handed out to King Charles II in 1938, by the leader of the National Peasants' Party (PNTȚ), Iuliu Maniu.²⁹ It is an attitude that reveals the frustration of a provincial elite that considers itself alienated from political and administrative power.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 120.

²⁶ See for example „Ardelenii și liberalii”, in *Patria*, 5 ianuarie 1922 and also „Noile provincii nu sunt reprezentate în noul guvern personal”, in *Ibidem*, 22 ianuarie, 1922.

²⁷ “Gânduri de ziua învierii: autonomia Transilvaniei”, in *Patria*, 16 aprilie, 1922.

²⁸ Romul Boilă, *Studiu asupra reorganizării statului român întregit*, Cluj: Tipografia Națională Soc. Anonimă, 1931.

²⁹ See Stanomir, *Libertate, lege și drept*, pp. 152-158. Other authors have also noticed the political substratum of the demands regarding the decentralization and regional organization of the State in the interwar period. Hans-Christian Maner, for example, considers that by adopting the decentralizing administrative law of 1929, the Peasants' Party aimed to remain in power and gain influence at the local level through local authorities, in

The debate regarding the most suitable means for the political-administrative organization of the new state will last for almost seven years. Both the supporters of decentralization as those of centralization considered the question of administrative organization as being of paramount importance for the future of the state, hence the compromise was not possible. Finally, the National Liberal Party imposed its view of the territorial organization of the Romanian state, therefore ignoring the opposition political parties, especially the National Party from Transylvania and the Peasants' Party. Thus, in 1925 was adopted the *Law of Administrative Unification*, which established a centralized administrative system.

The Law of Administrative Unification

The National Liberal Party's legal project for administrative unification could not overlook the principle of administrative decentralization. At first glance, according to the statements of the authors of the document, the *Law of Administrative Unification* respected the constitutional principle of administrative decentralization.

The law divided the territory of the state into communes and counties, both having legal personality, but refused the establishment of the region as an administrative unit. C. D. Dimitriu, arguing in Parliament in favour of the legal project, stated that regionalism and administrative organization on regional grounds were against the national interest. Comparing the Romanian case with the French experience, the author concludes:

If for a centralized and unitary state as France, where the spiritual link between the constituent provinces had been achieved in the course of hundreds of years, and which geographically speaking is secured from the danger to which we are exposed, if in such a state the clear-sighted people perceive regionalism as a threat, then

case they should lose it at the central level. See Hans-Christian Maner, *Parlamentarismul în România, 1930-1940*, București: Editura Enciclopedică, 2004, p. 319.

nobody could seriously support in our case an administrative organization based on the separation of Romanian provinces.³⁰

The communes and counties had deliberative bodies (communal and county councils), and executives bodies: a mayor at the communal level and a prefect at the county level. The executive authority of the commune, the mayor, was indirectly elected by the communal council, for a four-year period. But not all mayors were elected. The mayors of municipalities were appointed by the Ministry of the Interior from three candidates chosen by the local council.

With respect to the centre's representatives at the county level, the *Law of administrative unification* embraced and furthered the French tradition of the prefect as the representative of the state at a local level and as an executive authority of the county. The law ignored in this way the alternative options which upheld the separation of local interests from general ones at the county level.³¹ The accumulation of these two functions was to lead to negative consequences for the administrative autonomy of the counties. It is my view that the most important reason for maintaining the dual character of the prefect was his informal function as an electoral agent and as an instrument of the central government in charge of the supervision of the activities of local authorities.

Concerning the administrative tutelage over local administrations, the state retained large competences regarding the dissolution and suspension of the local councils and the recalling of mayors. Analyzing the functioning of local administration according to the Law of 1925, Paul Negulescu showed that the right of the state to dissolve and suspend local authorities led to a lot of abuse from the central government: almost all political parties which came to power disbanded the local councils

³⁰ Monitorul Oficial (The Official Monitor), *Dezbaterile Adunării Naționale Constituante a Camerei Deputaților* (The Debates of the Chamber of Deputies Constituent National Assembly), 25 June, 1925, p. 2929. Henceforth, MO.

³¹ I consider the arguments against the adoption of the Transylvanian system with two prefects (one political and one administrative) unconvincing. The *Rapporteur* of the Law, Leonte Moldovan, argues that the single prefect system was adopted because the administrative prefect from the former Transylvanian system was simply an inefficient bureaucrat: "the administrative prefect in Transylvania was no more than a bureaucrat and there is no need to insist on the slowness of bureaucracy", *Ibidem*, p. 2806.

dominated by the opposition, and replaced them with interim commissions, loyal to the new government.³²

The intensity of the debates and the high stakes of the administrative organization in this period of time, but also the option of the legislator, can be properly understood only if one pays adequate attention to the historical phase the Romanian state had been going through: the process of building the nation-state, an element which I consider to be one of the essential causes for the centralized option.

According to the *rapporteur* of the *Law for administrative unification* project in the Chamber of Deputies, Leonte Moldovan, this is based on two fundamental principles: “the preservation of the unitary national character of the country and, within this framework, the implementation of administrative decentralization, as much as possible”³³.

This statement, “as much as possible”, already announces the limits of decentralization. What are these limits? Those that will secure “the national and unitary character of the state”, based on the Romanian majority element of the country’s population.³⁴ National sovereignty is unique, the character of the state is unique and its action is also unique; nothing can change this unity. There is a crucial conceptual difference between the French public law that the administrative law of the Old Kingdom was based on and the Austrian public law, which had influenced the administrative institutions in Transylvania and Banat. Iulian Peter gives a pertinent explanation of this essential difference.³⁵

It is the time to clarify the difference between the ancient centralization and the modern one. Pierre Rosanvallon, discussing administrative centralization in the course of French history, makes several relevant remarks. According to the author, the French Revolution did not invent centralization, but it did change its mission. Centralization is now intimately linked to the objective of nation building and not solely to that of

³² See the critique of Paul Negulescu to the system of administrative tutelage according to the Law of administrative unification in Paul Negulescu, „Necesitatea reformei administrative”, în Paul Negulescu, *Reforma Administrativă*, Fundația Culturală București, „Regele Mihai I”, 1929, pp. 2-3; 11-14.

³³ MO, 25 iunie 1925, p. 2791.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, loc. cit.

³⁵ See Iulian Peter, “Contribuția provinciilor la formarea dreptului public românesc”, in *Enciclopedia României. Statul*, vol. I, București: Imprimeria Națională, 1938, pp. 201-202.

state building. The Revolution provided centralization with new moral and philosophical imperatives, which constitute stronger inputs than the strict logic of administration and regulation. Far from being satisfied to continue the centralization accomplished during the *Ancien Régime*, the democratic state provided it with a new function, namely the establishment of a society composed of equal citizens, meant to build a nation.³⁶

This feature of centralization may also be observed in the Romanian case. This is because in the early interwar years, the Romanian governments initiated a *Rumanization* (*românizare*) policy, whose objective was the building of the Romanian nation.³⁷ In the context of the *Rumanization* policy, the national minorities' issue represented an essential aspect, mainly in the new provinces where the percentage of the minorities from the total population was significant. Furthermore, regarding the administrative unification, the national minorities from the new provinces caught the attention of the government for two basic reasons. On the one hand, in the administrative structures of the united provinces a large number of minority public servants did not speak the Romanian language and, on the other hand, the attitude of the national minorities towards Romanian political authorities was ambiguous. As to the first aspect, there were introduced deadlines for the minority public servants to learn Romanian, otherwise they would be removed from office. In Transylvania, one of the first measures adopted by the Ruling Council was the introduction of Romanian as the official language in all the public services. The deadlines introduced for the learning of the state's language were extended several times because they were not met. For example, in October 1922, the Ministry of the Interior warned the mayor of Bistrița, Karl Sanchen, about the fact that some administrative and communal authorities had released official documents in Hungarian and German languages and had even sent such papers to the Ministry. The Ministry asked the mayor to take appropriate measures in order to use the official language of the state. It seems that the order had little effect, because in August 1923 the Ministry

³⁶ Pierre Rosanvallon, *L'Etat en France de 1789 à nos jours*, Paris, 1990, pp. 104-106.

³⁷ See Livezeanu, *Cultură și naționalism în România Mare 1918 -1930*, București: Humanitas, 1998.

of the Interior addressed the Mayor once again and asked him to dismiss the public servants who had failed to learn Romanian.³⁸

With regard to the other aspect of the problem, archived documents reveal several cases in which the national minorities from different local communities challenge the Romanian administration. In 1923, a memorandum of the Romanian community from Mediaș, addressed to the President of the Council of Ministers, relates the antinational protests of the Saxons (*sași*) authorities and intellectuals from this city.

The population of the city amounted to 11.000 inhabitants. Ethnically, it was composed of 4.000 Romanians, 2.000 Jews and Hungarians and the rest were Saxons. The mayor and the entire interim commission of the city were of Saxon descent. According to the memorandum, the authorities refused to participate in the coronation celebrations of Romanian sovereigns, waved the Saxon flag during public buildings, alongside the Romanian one, but the colors of the latter were arranged in an incorrect order and, furthermore, they attempted to pull down the triumphal arch on which it was engraved *Long Live Great Romania*. Also, they disseminated information according to which the Romanian administration was only installed on a provisional basis.³⁹

Furthermore, in other regions of the country, the Commandment of the Gendarmes sent a report to the Ministry of the Interior, in April 1924, in which they described “the hostile attitude towards the country of the public servants with foreign ethnic origins from Hotin County”.⁴⁰

Thus, I have reasons to believe that the existence of a large number of citizens with foreign ethnic origins and their ambiguous attitude towards the new Romanian authorities influenced the National Liberal Party’s option for the administrative centralist system. The unitary nation state, ethnically, culturally and linguistically homogeneous, was to remain no more than an ideal. Beyond the unity and homogeneity of the Romanian

³⁸ The General Direction of the State Archives, Bistrița-Năsăud Filial, Bistrița City Hall Fund, file 57/1923.

³⁹ Romanian National Archives, Minister of the Interior Fund, The Archive of the Secretariat and Personal Direction, file 26/1923, p. 2.

⁴⁰ Romanian National Archives, Minister of the Interior Fund, The Archive of the Secretariat and Personal Direction, file 44/1923, pp. 16-18.

nation, so often proclaimed, there remains a genuine ethnical and regional diversity.

This situation is frequently discussed in Parliament's debates and in the various administrative unification project proposals. These debates emphasize the negative consequences which an imprudent decentralization could have for national unity. According to the dominant ideas of the time, this problem was particularly significant in Romania, because in the unified provinces, the centrifugal tendencies of the citizens with Romanian ethnic origins, but also, particularly, of those who were part of ethnical minorities, could easily be noticed.

C. D. Dimitriu clearly expresses this position: "Our situation is very difficult because we have to govern and administer a country where not only scattered brothers live together, but also citizens with foreign origins, with different aspirations and traditions and who, normally, have kept in their souls certain resentments about the current situation"; this governance must have as an ultimate aim the consolidation of the nation state "grounded on the legitimate rights and prestige of the Romanian civilization".⁴¹ Moreover, the President of the Council of Ministers and of the National Liberal Party, Ion I. C. Brătianu, in a speech held before the Senate on 11 Mars 1925, under the title *The Romanian State Policy towards Minorities from Transylvania*, referring to the Legal Project for Administrative Unification, clarifies the fact that the limits of local autonomy in the future administrative organization were drawn by taking into account the need to strengthen the unitary state: "By this project we have tried to guide local autonomies so as not to endanger the consolidation of the unitary state". At that moment, from this point of view, the liberal government couldn't offer anything else: "The future will show us the possibilities to expand this autonomy."⁴² Despite the fact that the efforts which minorities could make in order to contribute to the consolidation of the state are appreciated, it is not possible to grant the autonomy they demand, because the basis and the cement of the state are represented by the Romanian people".⁴³

⁴¹ MO, 25 iunie 1925, p. 2933.

⁴² Ion. I. Brătianu, *The Romanian State Policy towards the Minorities from Transylvania*, in The Presidency of the Council of Ministers Fund, File 126/1920, p. 211.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, p. 208.

I strongly believe that the decision to refuse the electivity of the mayors in the municipalities, big cities where the local elite was dominated by minorities, was one of the responses the government gave to this state of affairs. Thus, the centralized administrative organization represents one of the main pillars and falls into the larger process of nation building in the interwar period.

The Romanian experience in this respect is not singular. Seeing the things in a *longue durée* perspective, this experience, although tardy and with particular features, came amid and followed the general European process of nation-state building.

As we have seen above, after the 1918 Union, the liberal political elites have imposed the centralist model of administration onto the new state. Centralized organization was perceived as the most appropriate means for national integration of the provinces that had become united with the Old Kingdom. This system will provide the state with the necessary instruments to intervene whenever its highest goals, as they were perceived, were menaced.

Two other countries, France⁴⁴ and Italy⁴⁵, which influenced the organization of the modern Romanian state, followed the centralized administrative model in order to integrate and to ensure the unity of the nation state. The French influence over modern Romanian civilization is

⁴⁴ For the fundamental causes that have determined the adoption of the centralized administrative system in France but also for the organization and functioning of the system, see the following essential studies: Pierre Legendre, *Stato e Società in Francia. Dallo stato paterno allo stato-providenza: storia dell'amministrazione dal 1750 ai nostri giorni*, traduzione di Marina Gigante e Marcello Romei, Milano: Edizioni di Comunità, 1978; Pierre Rosanvallon, *L'état en France de 1789 à nos jours*, Paris, 1990; Stefano Mannoni, *Une et indivisible. Storia dell'accentramento amministrativo in Francia. La formazione del sistema (1661-1815)*, vol. I, Milano: Giuffrè Editore, 1994; *Idem*, *Une et indivisible. Storia dell'accentramento amministrativo in Francia. Dalla contestazione al consolidamento*, vol. II, Milano: Giuffrè Editore, 1996; Vivien A. Schmidt, *Democratizing France. The political and administrative history of decentralization*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

⁴⁵ For the basic motives that underlie the centralist option in the Italian case see the subsequent studies: Raffaele Romanelli, "Centralismo e autonomie", in *Storia dello stato italiano dall'Unità a oggi*, a cura di Raffaele Romanelli, Roma: Donzelli, 1995; *Idem*, *Importare la democrazia. Sulla costituzione liberale italiana*, Rubbettino, 2009; Ernesto Ragioneri, *Politica e amministrazione nella storia dell'Italia unita*, Bari: Laterza, 1967; Robert C. Fried, *Il prefetto in Italia*, Milano, Giuffrè Editore, 1967; Sidney Tarow, *Tra centro e periferia. Il ruolo degli amministratori locali in Italia e in Francia*, Bologna: Il Mulino, 1979, pp. 47-52.

well-known and does not need any further arguments. With regard to Italy, it is quite interesting to note that the Italian experience in this area aroused the interest of the Romanian executive. In 1920, Averescu's government sent to Italy "two very distinguished people" in order to study the organization of the Italian state after the unification occurring in the 1860s.⁴⁶ The interest in the organization of the Italian state maintains itself in the interwar period. In 1926, the Minister of the Interior received from the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs the Italian legal project regarding the extension of the competences of prefects.⁴⁷ Furthermore, in 1924, the President of the Council of Ministers received from the same Ministry the modification of the Italian legislation regarding the admission of women into the administrative franchise.⁴⁸

In Italy, much like in Romania, after the unification of the provinces with the political centre which coordinated the process of national consolidation, there immediately arose the question of the most suitable political-administrative organization of the new state. There were possible options: the extension of the administrative legislation of the Kingdom of Sardinia (Piedmont) throughout the territory, or the elaboration of new legislation which would have to take into account the cultural, political and institutional particularities of the Italian provinces. Several study commissions proposed different projects of decentralized administrative organization on regional grounds, but these projects were not accepted. The fear that a decentralized administrative organization could endanger the political unity of the state, determined the Italian government to renounce its regional plans in favor of the prefect-based centralized administrative system.⁴⁹

This example demonstrates the interest of the Romanian government in the organization and the evolution of the political-administrative system of a state that embraced the centralized model of administration in order to facilitate the process of national integration of

⁴⁶ See „Discursul lui Iuliu Maniu, Preşedintele Consiliului de Miniştri, pronunţat în Adunarea Deputaţilor”, in Paul Negulescu, Romul Boilă, Gh. Alexianu, *Codul Administrativ Annotat*, Bucureşti: Institutul de Arte Grafice „Vreamea”, 1930, p. 148.

⁴⁷ Romanian National Archives, Minister of the Interior Fund, File 610/1926, p. 1.

⁴⁸ Romanian National Archives, Council of Ministers Fund, File 14/1924, pp. 5-11.

⁴⁹ Romanelli, *Centralismo e autonomia*, pp. 131-135; Fried, *Il prefetto in Italia*, pp. 76-77.

certain provinces with dissimilar historical, political and cultural traditions, more or less hostile to the project of the nation state. I shall note that the Italian experience provided the Romanian government with a possible solution to the unification of a state composed of different provinces, which do not share the same vision regarding the future political-administrative organization of the state as the political centre which coordinates the process of unification. In Romania, as in Italy, the provisional ruling bodies of the united provinces were abolished by decree-law, without any parliamentary debates, and the project of administrative unification abandoned the establishment of the region, considering it a threat for the political unity of the Romanian state.

All the politicians and intellectuals engaged in this debate, those who supported the decentralized administrative organization and those who promoted the centralized system, considered that political-administrative organization was crucial in order to strengthen the national and political unity of the Romanian state. It was impossible to reach a consensus regarding the most appropriate form of organization. The majority of political forces from the united provinces perceived the *Law for administrative unification* adopted in 1925, by a Parliament dominated by Liberals, as a diktat, imposed against their will. They considered that this law disregarded their historical, cultural and institutional traditions, the latter being more advanced in terms of administrative decentralization.

Apart from technical and economic causes, as mentioned above, I believe that a key role in these seemingly endless debates, which are sure not to stop here, as they represent a constant throughout the interwar period, was played by political and ideological causes. Regional political elites demanded that their place be recognized in the national parliament and, at the same time, did not accept a system which could challenge their political supremacy at the local and regional levels. The declarations of the representatives of the National Party from Transylvania are relevant in this respect. They accuse the illegal manner in which the National Liberal Party tries to make its way into Transylvania and the hegemonic tendencies of the Liberals, who wish to govern the country by themselves, refuting by the same illegal means the access of regional political parties to the national parliament. In this context, it seems that a possible explanation of this conflict consists of considering the demands for a decentralized

administrative system of regional political elites, as a means of maintaining political power at the local and regional levels, in case of it should be lost at the central level.

On the other hand, the National Liberal Party perceives the position of the regional parties as a challenge to its political supremacy. Moreover, from an ideological point of view, according to the Liberal's political views, the state had to be unitary. Any other form of political-administrative organization was deemed unacceptable. Unlike in the case of Romanian political elites from the united provinces, the federal and regional organizational perspectives were foreign to the historical experience of the Liberals. Thus, the opposition of the united provinces to the centralizing policy promoted by Bucharest and the centrifugal forces that were manifesting themselves in these provinces, from the part of both minorities and Romanians, were seen as a refusal of the unification and consolidation of the unitary nation-state. Therefore, the Liberals considered that the sole solution capable of ensuring the unity of the state was the centralist one. The National Liberal Party eventually imposed its own views on the territorial organization of the state, but the final result of this seven-year debate, *The Law for Administrative Unification*, adopted in 1925, would not last very long. In 1929, the government led by Iuliu Maniu, the leader of the National Peasants' Party, adopted another law of local political-administrative organization.

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THE SUPREMACY OF ENGLISH. A CHALLENGE FOR THE EUROPEAN UNION

Roxana Gâz*

“English is firmly entrenched nearly everywhere as the international language of business, finance, and technology. But in Europe, it’s spreading far beyond the elites. Indeed, English is becoming the binding agent of a continent, linking Finns to French and Portuguese as they move toward political and economic unification”¹

Abstract

The European Union and its language policy have been a long debated topic. Even though the E.U. and its institutions are struggling on to promote linguistic diversity on the European continent, the role of English is undeniably increasing. This article aims to explain the supremacy of English in the European Union and pinpoint how it challenges the E.U. and its institutions.

Keywords: European Union, multilingualism, linguistic imperialism, linguicism, supremacy

One cannot even start discussing multilingualism in Europe without acknowledging the current *lingua franca*. Today, English is the *lingua franca*. It is, certainly, the synonym of globalization all around the world. English has become such a powerful language and such an important tool for communication that today we are surrounded by it everywhere. From newspapers to TV channels, from movies to music, from scientific articles to specialty volumes, English is almost everywhere.

If one goes into a restaurant, they will definitely find the menu in English as well. If one reads a newspaper, they will most certainly come across English titles, English terms or English advertisements. If one goes into a pub or bar, they will surely hear songs with English lyrics, and if one

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¹ “The Great English Divide”, in *Business Week Magazine*, 13 August 2001, [http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/01_33/b3745009.htm], 02.04.2011.

turns on the TV in the evening, the lines in the movie they may watch will almost definitely be English.

When a language becomes global, as it is the case with English, the problem it raises is that no one actually owns it anymore². There may be reactions from the native speakers of the language, like the British, who may say: "Look what the Americans have done to English", and the same may be said by the Americans when they hear non-native speakers using English language. The truth is that native-speakers, irrespective of their mother tongue, will always have an advantage over non-native speakers.

"A language achieves a genuinely global status when it develops a special role that is recognized in every country"³, when it has a special role within the communities, and this status can be achieved in two ways: either by adopting the language as the official language of the country (the language is used at all levels, from the government to the education institutions) or by foreign language teaching.

A language usually becomes a global language not only due to the historical traditions it comprises or due to the culture it brings with it, which are usually the reasons why one may choose to study one foreign language over another. The main reason for the global spreading of a language is strongly connected to the power of the people speaking that language, to the economic power it brings.

Therefore, in the case of English, it is well-known the fact that, at the beginning of the 19th century, Britain was one of the most important countries in the industrial and trading sector, but by the end of the same century the leading role was taken over by the U.S.A., which, within just one century developed unprecedentedly and became the most productive economy in the world at the time. Indeed, while began the spreading of English through its colonies and political imperialism, the U.S.A. strengthened its position as a global language.

The first expedition to America took place in 1584 and was led by Walter Raleigh. Despite the fact that it was not successful, several other attempts were made, so that the year 1607 recorded the first permanent British settlement on the new land. That was just the beginning of the

² David Crystal, *English as a Global Language*, 2nd Edition, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2003, p. 2.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 3.

immigration waves that were about to come: in 1620, 1640, 1720. By then there was an estimated population of 50,000 Scots and Irish who had immigrated to America. However, it was not only large numbers of British who had moved to the new land, but so had Spanish, French, Dutch, Germans and Africans (as a result of the slave trade). They started occupying large territories, mostly along the coasts of the new continent.

The largest immigration wave occurred in the 19th century, a period when Europe was being confronted with several serious problems, as a result of the revolutions that took place and of the poverty and famine that were conquering the old continent. Therefore, due to these massive immigrations, statistics show that by 1900 America had around 75 million inhabitants, and that by 1950 their number had doubled⁴.

The result of the immigration waves was the adoption of English as a means of integration into the new community, and it is in fact the language that managed to maintain the unity of the new continent. The 1990 US census revealed that 198 million inhabitants (i.e. 86% of the population) spoke only English, while the 2000 census showed that, even though the number of inhabitants had increased, the percentage of the English speakers decreased by percentage (82%), but not as population number (215 million)⁵. Still, the British colonisation movement did not stop. They continued their expeditions and colonisation processes in Canada, the Caribbean, Australia and New Zealand, South Africa, South Asia, and the South Pacific.

In the specialty literature, the circles of Braj Kachru, a US linguist, are very famous. They describe the spreading of English in the world today. Kachru states that there are three circles and they present the spread of the language as follows⁶:

- the first circle is the *inner circle* and it is represented by the traditional bases of English, i.e. the UK, the US, Ireland, Canada, Australia and New Zealand;
- the second circle is the *outer or extended circle* and includes the early phases of the spread of the English language to non-native

⁴ David Crystal, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

⁵ See the 1990 and 2000 US censuses,

[http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?_lang=en&_ts=], 04.04.2011.

⁶ Braj Kachru, "The sacred cows of English", in *English Today*, 16, 1988, pp. 3-8.

speakers, where it was adopted at the institutional level and even as a second language; he referred to Singapore, India, Malawi, etc.;

- the third and last circle is the *expanding or extending circle* and is represented by the nations that acknowledged the importance of English as an international language.

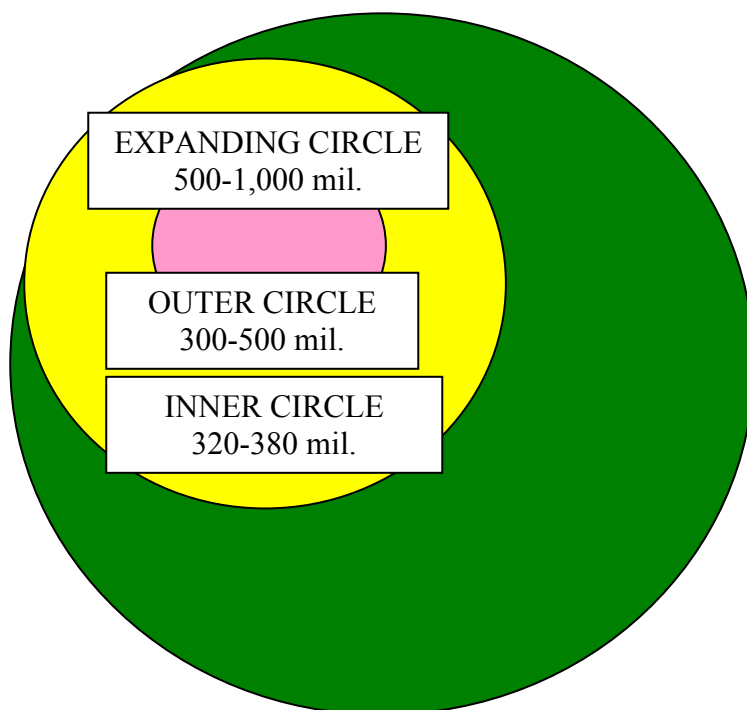


Figure 1. Kachru's Concentric Circles (1988)

There were two major factors responsible for the spread of English all around the world. The first one was, as we have already seen above, the colonial power of the British that expanded to and across different continents all around the globe. The second factor was the emergence of the U.S.A. as the greatest economic power of the 20th century; in fact, it is this latter factor that actually explains the current position and power that the English language enjoys nowadays⁷.

⁷ David Crystal, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

As a consequence, a notion well-known in the field of sociolinguistics has to be brought into discussion: *linguistic imperialism*. This notion appeared at the beginning of the '90s, more specifically, when Robert Phillipson published the book by the same title. One may argue that the supremacy of this language is still of current interest, even though its power is not as great as it used to be during the last century.

Linguistic imperialism refers to English which has been promoted as a definition of progress and prosperity⁸. The power of English resulted from both the colonial power that Britain used to have, as well as from the emergence of the U.S.A. as an economic superpower after the Second World War.

“Westernization, modernization, the spread of international youth culture, popular technology and consumerism are all ideologically encumbered and have ideological as well as behavioural and economic consequences” Joshua Fishman stated in 1987⁹. The statement made more than twenty years ago is still valid today, in 2012. We are still under the influence of English and the U.S.A. in several ways: technologically, economically, educationally, etc. And even though there are some new emerging economic powers, such as China, the influence and strength of English and the U.S.A. are still standing.

There are textbooks in English for almost all educational programmes, TV shows or movies broadcast with the original soundtracks, music and newspapers coming from the English-speaking countries, brands and products bearing English names on domestic markets. We are surrounded by English almost everywhere, not to mention the fact that English terms have been borrowed into our vocabularies, especially for the technical domains. Therefore, we may state that linguistic imperialism is part of a cultural imperialism.

In some countries, governments have adopted laws in order to limit the invasion of English terms. France provides a case in point. The Toubon Law of 1994 relative to the use of the French language is well known. Having three main objectives (the enrichment of the French language, the obligation for the citizens to use it, and the protection of the language as the official language of the country), *La Loi Toubon* was envisaged to protect the

⁸ Robert Phillipson, *Linguistic Imperialism*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1992, p. 8.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 10.

French language from the English invasion¹⁰. Thus, for instance, the French will use *ordinateur* for *computer*, *souris* for *mouse* and so on.

Linguistic imperialism, and mainly the supremacy of English, is a topic which has been long debated by specialists in the field, starting from Robert Phillipson¹¹ to Alastair Pennycook¹², David Crystal¹³, David Graddol¹⁴, Janina Brutt-Griffler¹⁵, Jacques Maurais and Michael A. Morris¹⁶, Rainer Enrique Hamel¹⁷, Thomas Ricento¹⁸ or Claude Hagège¹⁹, just to mention some.

Linguistic imperialism is a sub-type of *linguicism*, which can be defined as

“the ideologies, structures and practices, which are used to legitimate, effectuate and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources (both material and immaterial) between groups which are defined on the basis of language”²⁰.

According to Phillipson, one may speak of *linguicism* when, for instance, in teacher training or curriculum development in the educational

¹⁰ See full text, [http://www.langue-francaise.org/Loi_toubon.php], 07.04.2011.

¹¹ See Robert Phillipson, *Linguistic Imperialism*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1992.

¹² See Alastair Pennycook, *The Cultural Politics of English as an International Language*, Longman: Harlow-Essex, 1994, and Alastair Pennycook, *English and the discourses of colonialism*, Routledge: New York, 1998.

¹³ See David Crystal, *op. cit.*, 2003.

¹⁴ See David Graddol, *The Future of English? A guide to forecasting the popularity of English in the 21st century*, British Council, 1997.

¹⁵ See Janina Brutt-Griffler, *World English: A Study of Its Development*, Multilingual Matters Ltd.: UK, 2002.

¹⁶ Jacques Maurais and Michael A. Morris, *Languages in a Globalising World*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2003.

¹⁷ See Rainer Enrique Hamel, *Language Empires, Linguistic Imperialism, and the Future of Global Languages*, 2005, at [www.hamel.com.mx], 1.02.2011.

¹⁸ See Thomas Ricento, “Americanization, Language Ideologies and the Construction of European Identities”, in Clare Mar-Molinero, Patrick Stevenson (eds.), *Language Ideologies, Policies and Practices – Language and the Future of Europe*, Palgrave Macmillan: New York, 2006.

¹⁹ See Claude Hagège, *Le souffle de la langue: voies et destines des parlars d’Europe*, Odile Jacob: Paris, 1992, as well as Claude Hagège, *Combat pour le français : au nom de la diversité des langues et des cultures*, Odile Jacob: Paris, 2006.

²⁰ Robert Phillipson, *Linguistic Imperialism*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1992, p. 47.

system, priority is given to only one language, even though there might be a policy advocating for the support of several languages²¹.

He also offered the first definition regarding the *linguistic imperialism* of English: “the dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstruction of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages”²², and by structural he referred to the material properties such as institutions and financial allocations, while by cultural he meant non-material or ideological properties such as attitudes and pedagogic principles.

Therefore, we may analyse the spreading of English from four points of view: economic, scientific and technological, media-related and educational.

The economic aspect of the wide-spread of English as a global language is strongly related to the Second World War and the power and influence exercised by the US on the European recovery. I believe we are all familiar with the Marshall Plan, also known as the European Recovery Plan, promoted by the US Government at the end of the Second World War.

To some it may seem as an altruistic plan by the US to help the European nations, but it was not like that at all. The main purpose of the Americans was to make the US a European power²³. “The first grand objective [of the US], of course, is to keep America as a European power, not just for today, but for the indefinite future” the US Ambassador to NATO, Robert Hunter, stated in 1997, and was cited in the “Guardian Weekly” on 12 January 1997²⁴.

The US decided to help the European economies that had been devastated by the war through a four-year recovery plan, but their help had a powerful underlying economic motive as by helping them, the US would increase its own exports and would ensure its own prosperity.

²¹ *Ibidem*.

²² *Ibidem*.

²³ Robert Phillipson and Tove Skutnabb-Kangas, “Englishisation: one dimension of globalisation”, in David Graddol and Ulrike H. Meinhof (eds.), *English in a changing world*. *AILA Review* 13, 1999, p. 22.

²⁴ *Ibidem*.

“The injection of US capital did indeed have this effect [to kick-start the post-war European economies], but simultaneously it served to integrate European economies into patterns determined by the US global economic interests, with major consequences for agriculture, transport, industry, culture and language”²⁵.

Therefore, it seems that English is “a language which has repeatedly found itself in the right place at the right time”²⁶.

An administrator was appointed in every country that benefitted from the US “aid”, in accordance with the Economic Cooperation Act of 1948, implementing the Marshall Plan, and he/she was authorized to terminate aid whenever “because of changed conditions, assistance is no longer consistent with the national interest of the U.S.”²⁷.

Another aspect that explains the wide spreading of English is the scientific and technological development of the US in the 20th century, which was the result of the US strengthening its position on the European and global markets and of the massive emigration of the European *intelligentsia* to the United States.

We may speak here of two terms: *brain drain* and *brain gain*. The first one was initially used by the British Royal Society to describe the emigration of intellectuals, scientists, technologists from Europe to the United States in the 1950s and 1960s (OECD Observer²⁸). The latter refers to the large-scale immigration of qualified persons to another country, who thus become a gain for the host state.

During and after the Second World War, the Nazi politics of exterminating Jews caused the emigration of many intellectuals and scientists to the US. One of the most notable examples is that of the famous physicist Albert Einstein who, due to political reasons relative to the Nazi

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 23.

²⁶ David Crystal, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

²⁷ *** “The Economic Cooperation Act of 1948”, in *Science and Society*, Vol. 12, No. 3, 1948, p. 368.

²⁸ See full article

[http://www.oecdobserver.org/news/fullstory.php/aid/673/The_brain_drain:_Old_myths,_new_realities.html], 10/04/2011.

politics, immigrated to the US in 1933 and obtained the American citizenship in 1940²⁹.

Other famous physicists moving to the US during the war include Hans Bethe, James Franck, Victor Weisskopf, Werner Heisenberg and Enrico Fermi. They all left their home countries and moved to the United States as a result of the Nazis taking over Germany or of the Italian policy embracing the Nazi doctrine.

An OECD report of July 2002 revealed that

“the contribution of foreign-born scientists to science is illustrated, for instance, by the number of Nobel prizes awarded to US-based researchers of European or Asian origin, for example, 32% of US Nobel-prize winners in Chemistry between 1985 and 1999 were foreign-born. Skilled migrants are also a source of high-tech entrepreneurship. It is estimated that a quarter of Silicon Valley firms in 1998 were headed by immigrants from China and India, collectively generating almost USD 17 billion”³⁰.

Still other explanations for English becoming a global language are media- and culture-related. Ever since the mass emigration of European intelligentsia and artists, a new cultural world formed in the United States. Great artists such as the composer, pianist and conductor Igor Stravinsky moved to the US.

Furthermore, in the 1960s there appeared a new cultural trend: of *pop art*. Initiated in the UK, the trend expanded and developed in the USA, with Andy Warhol as its main exponent. The term is an abbreviation for “popular art” and reflects the post-war focus on consumerism and materialism.

It is also worthwhile noting that the US supremacy in the media-related and cultural field was sought for ever since the European Recovery Plan (i.e. the Marshall Plan). The Foreign Assistance Act of 1948 contained, according to the French linguist Claude Hagège, an explicit exigency:

²⁹ See details [http://www.einstein-website.de/z_biography/princeton-e.html], 10.04.2011.

³⁰ See full report [<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/9/20/1950028.pdf>], 10.04.2011.

“les pays qui profitaient de l’aide américaine pour se relever des destructions de la Seconde Guerre Mondiale n’étaient pas assistés gratuitement, mais devaient, parmi beaucoup d’autres compensations, accorder aux productions de Hollywood 30% de leurs écrans”³¹.

Hollywood is the biggest motion-picture company in the world. For decades no other company could compete with it. When I say Hollywood, Walk of Fame, the Oscars, you think of the US mass movie industry. When I say *Cinderella*, *Snow White* or *Rapunzel*, you will probably think of the Walt Disney Motion Pictures. When one turns on the TV at home in the evening to watch a movie, in probably 95% of the cases the movie is an American production. The US movie production has become such an important industry that its products can be found all over the world.

And it is not only American movies that reign over the current global entertainment industry, but music as well. Famous bands and singers have appeared in the last decades, great voices and great songs we all know and will remain in music history.

However, probably one of the most important reasons for the wide dissemination of English around the world is the educational one. Teaching English rather than some other language has become one of the most important activities in schools, high schools and universities all around the globe. International academic conferences are organised in English, and most speeches are delivered in the same language. Due to the role it held during the globalization process and in the European integration process as well, the English language has an important impact on each and all member-states of the European Union. On the other hand, the English domination over different international activities, the weakening of national borders and the hierarchy of languages existing in the European institutions and activities can lead to the strengthening of the position of the English language to the detriment of other languages³².

³¹ Claude Hagège, *Combat pour le français : au nom de la diversité des langues et des cultures*, Odile Jacob: Paris, 2006, p. 29.

³² Robert Phillipson, “Language Education Policy in Europe”, in Nancy H. Hornberger (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Language and Education*, 2nd Edition, Springer, 2008, p. 255.

If one takes a look at the ranking of the best universities in the world, not surprisingly the American universities prevail in top twenty.


Academic Ranking of World Universities - 2011					
World Rank	Institution	Country	National Rank	Total Score	Score on Alumni
1	Harvard University		1	100.0	100.0
2	Stanford University		2	72.6	41.2
3	Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)		3	72.0	72.8
4	University of California, Berkeley		4	71.9	68.3
5	University of Cambridge		1	70.0	87.1
6	California Institute of Technology		5	64.7	52.6
7	Princeton University		6	61.2	56.7
8	Columbia University		7	60.4	69.6
9	University of Chicago		8	57.5	65.0
10	University of Oxford		2	56.4	55.5
11	Yale University		9	54.8	49.6
12	University of California, Los Angeles		10	53.0	30.0
13	Cornell University		11	51.5	42.0
14	University of Pennsylvania		12	50.4	36.3
15	University of California, San Diego		13	49.5	15.6
16	University of Washington		14	48.8	24.3
17	University of California, San Francisco		15	46.7	0.0
18	The Johns Hopkins University		16	45.9	43.2
19	University of Wisconsin - Madison		17	45.6	35.3
20	University College London		3	44.8	32.2

Figure 2. The Academic Ranking of World Universities in 2011
(Source: <http://www.shanghairanking.com/ARWU2011.html>)

Another important note on this topic is that English has become the *lingua franca* of international scientific publications too. According to Hamel, at the beginning of the 20th century, there were three languages that dominated the sciences: German for medicine, biology and chemistry, French for law and political sciences, and English for political economy and geology. But again the USA's rise as a world economic power comes as an explanation for the shift towards English as a dominant language in the majority of science and scientific journals.

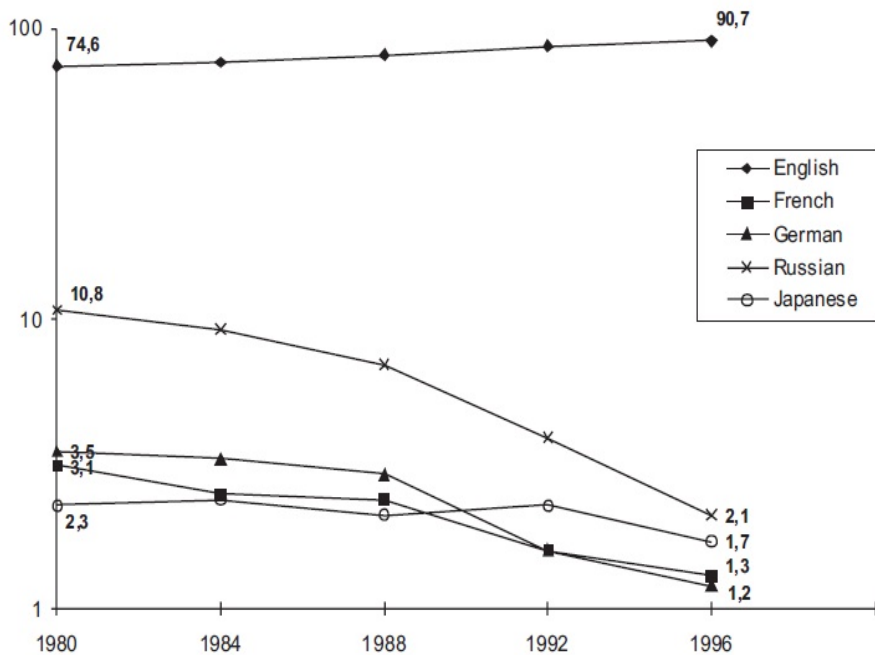


Figure 3. Share of languages in natural science publications worldwide 1880–1996.
Source: Ammon (2006)

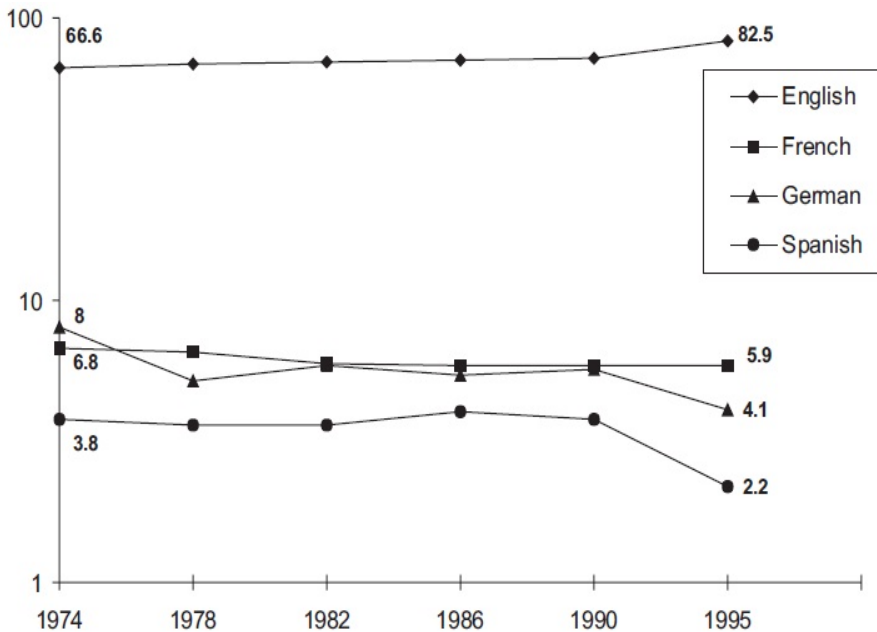


Figure 4. Share of languages in social sciences and humanities publications worldwide 1974–1995. Source: Ammon (2006)

The fact that English has become the language of science and of international scientific publications may also be the result of the *Citation Index*; its founder, Eugene Gardner, stated that the most influential solution for the promotion of his citation indexes was the publishing of as many pages as possible in English, emphasizing that “English is simply the language that scientists as a whole now *best understand*”³³. As such, in 2007, more than 75% of the articles in the social sciences and humanities and 90% in the natural sciences were written in English³⁴.

Furthermore, institutions too are responsible for the wide-spread of the English language. Thus, in 1934, the British Council was set up having

³³ Ulrich Ammon, “Language Planning for International Scientific Communication: An Overview of Questions and Potential Solutions”, in *Current Issues in Language Planning*, Routledge: New York, 7(1), 2006, p. 8.

³⁴ Hamel, Rainer Enrique, *The dominance of English in the international scientific periodical literature and the future of language use in science*, 2007, p. 53, at [www.hamel.com.mx], 1.02.2011.

as purpose the promotion of English through training and research periods, scholarships and courses, textbooks and audiovisual materials, libraries, the supply of teachers and experts in curriculum development, cultural manifestations, etc.³⁵.

*
* *

The European Union is based on the belief that people should be united in diversity. But lately, English has become an international *lingua franca* and more and more people have started learning and speaking it, considering it a real competitive advantage for their personal and professional development.

Just as Latin and Greek were the *linguae francae* in the Ancient World, English has become nowadays the most used language for communication amongst people across the globe.

From the 17th to the 19th centuries, French, also regarded as the language of the élites, was the most important language across Europe. As well, it was the “language of international diplomacy until the end of the First World War” and the “language of reason and civilisation”³⁶. Afterwards, the English language, as part of the British and American cultures, started gaining more and more power in almost all domains.

Therefore, the “unity in diversity” EU motto started being questioned by many linguists, sociologists and other specialists. “The most serious problem for the European Union is that it has so many languages, this preventing the real integration and development of the union”, stated the Ambassador of the U.S.A. to Denmark, Mr. Elton, in 1997, during an informal lunch at the University of Roskilde, Denmark³⁷.

It is indeed a very serious problem that needs to be carefully tackled. As we all very well know, the European Union has twenty-three (23) official languages, however only three (3) working languages that are employed in most communications between institutions: English, French and German.

³⁵ Robert Phillipson, *Linguistic Imperialism*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1992, p. 35.

³⁶ Robert Phillipson, *English-only Europe? Challenging Language Policy*, Routledge: London and New York, 2003, p. 47.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 1.

One may argue that the domination of English and French is due to the former processes of colonisation. And it is true, but this does not entirely explain why some working languages are preferred to others.

The problem regarding the use of languages in the EU institutions has caused many heated debates over the years and has also raised many questions regarding the costs related to the translation and interpretation services in the EU institutions.

This statement brings into discussion several events. The first one took place in 1995, when, during the French presidency of the European Union, there was a request from the French that the language system of the European Commission be changed by the reduction of the working languages, but the other member states quickly countered the proposal and no action was taken in this sense, as it was perceived as a violation of the basic treaties of the EU, which state clearly the equality of all languages.

The second event worth mentioning here regards one of the EU ministerial meetings under the Finnish presidency that took place in 1999 and provided interpretation services only for English and French and the official language of the state holding the Presidency (Finnish at the time). This was the moment when Germany took a stand and decided to boycott the meeting because German was and still is the language spoken by at least one quarter of the EU citizens; therefore it requested more linguistic rights in the meetings. Not only was, and is, German spoken by a large number of people (as their mother tongue), but it is important from the economic point of view as well, as Germany is influential in the European economy. Therefore, eventually, the Finnish presidency accepted to deliver interpretation services in German as well. However, this will not solve the problem regarding the equality of languages in the EU, as the union is founded on diversity and if languages are not treated equally in practice, then linguistic diversity is not observed either.

The third event worth mentioning took place in 2001 and received a lot of attention from the press. We are talking about a joint letter sent, in the summer of that year, by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of France (Hubert Védrine) and of Germany (Joschka Fischer) to the then President of the European Commission Italian President Romano Prodi. They accused the European Commission of trying to promote monolingualism in the European Union institutions through the almost exclusive use of English.

President Prodi reacted by stating that multilingualism was extremely important to him and to the future of the European Union, but the costs for the translation and interpretation services also had to be taken into consideration as, in his opinion, large amounts of money were spent for this only.

There is one further aspect that needs to be looked into and this is related to the fact that some languages are more used than others, they are more powerful than others, and, consequently, they are more employed than others. This is again the case of English which, even though the number of native English speakers is lower than the number of native-speakers of other European languages, it still is the most widely used language in the EU institutions and has by now won the role of *lingua franca* within the European Union.

The above-mentioned situation is strongly connected to the process of globalisation, which is spreading and conquering almost all walks of life, *id est* economy, industry, the media, education, etc., and while it may improve living standards and boost human development, it is nevertheless empowering English to the detriment of the other European languages.

Furthermore, The European Union's policy referring to multilingualism is obviously a political matter. Due to the subsidiarity principle, the E.U. institutions cannot interfere in the educational systems of the member states, therefore, the entire language policy of the EU represents a recommendation at best. As Paolo Balboni declared in an interview, idealistic multilingualism and political multilingualism are over. Just as sceptical is Abram de Swaan, who sees the E.U. multilingualism policy as an "imperial kitsch"³⁸ and this all in the background set by his idea that "the European Union is more than a confederation, but less than a federation; more than just a free trade zone, but not quite an economic whole; almost a world power, but one without an army or an effective foreign policy of its own; with a common currency, the euro, but with coins that reserve a different verso for each member state"³⁹.

³⁸ This is made as a reference to Phillipson's book "Linguistic Imperialism".

³⁹ Abram de Swaan, "The European void: the democratic deficit as a cultural deficiency", in Fossum, John Erik and Schlesinger, Philip (eds.), *The European Union and the public sphere: a communicative space in the making?*, Routledge, New York, 2007, p. 135.

We believe that both Balboni and de Swaan are right when saying they do not see a bright future for the European Union language policies. As long as they remain mere recommendations and as long as the role of English and its representative countries (the U.S.A. and the U.K.) are increasing, there is little chance for other languages to become as important as English.

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Sergiu Gherghina, Sergiu Mișcoiu, Sorina Soare (dir.),

Le populisme contemporain. Un concept controversé et ses diverses formes,

Iași, Editura Institutul European, 2012.

Monica Mureșan*

Nous saluons la parution d'un nouveau volume collectif coordonné par les chercheurs Sergiu Ghenghină, Sorina Soare et le maître des conférences Sergiu Mișcoiu, dans le cadre de la collection *Academica*, série *Sciences Politiques*, sous les auspices de l'Institut Européen de Iași. Le présent volume représente une deuxième contribution éditoriale dédiée au « populisme » dans cette série, après la publication de « *Partis et personnalités populistes dans la Roumanie postcommuniste* » paru il y a seulement deux ans et coordonné par deux mêmes de la présente livraison, Sergiu Ghenghină et Sergiu Mișcoiu.

En surpassant le cadre strict national tant par la thématique questionnée que par le choix des auteurs, le volume soumis à notre attention a le mérite d'investiguer le phénomène du populisme à un niveau mondial, réunissant dans ce but des noms prestigieux de notre pays, mais surtout de l'étranger. Ainsi, leur affiliation académique nous met devant une vraie carte du monde (L'Université de Lubumbashi – Congo, L'Université Rosario de Bogota – Colombie, Les Universités de Pavia, de Gêne et de Florence – Italie, L'Université d'Australie du Sud, L'Université Paris-Est Marne-la-Valle et Lyon – France, L'Université Dar es Salaam – Tanzanie, Les Universités „Babeș-Bolyai” et „Petre Andrei” – Roumanie, L'Université d'Oslo – Norvège, L'Université Libre de Bruxelles – Belgique).

Le point de convergence de ce volume collectif, dévoilé dès le titre, consiste dans l'analyse du populisme par des divers ongles théoriques et par des diverses hypostases concrètes des manifestations de ce phénomène politique dans le temps et dans l'espace. Ainsi, l'élan de ce vaste projet a été donné par la nature « ambiguë » et la réception souvent négative du concept, malgré son utilisation fréquente dans la littérature de spécialité la

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plus récente. Ainsi, les éditeurs du volume discuté remarquent que toutes les manifestations du populisme « ne peuvent pas être assimilées à un phénomène unitaire ayant des discours semblables ... ou à une structure organisationnelle qui reproduit de manière uniforme la prééminence d'un leader charismatique ». L'introduction, signée par deux des coordinateurs, Sergiu Ghenghină et Sorina Soare, porte le titre « *Le populisme, concept sophistiqué et réalités politiques diverses* » justement pour éclaircir la triple déclinaison – de l'idéologie, de la philosophie politique et du type de discours – contenue par la notion de populisme. Par conséquent, les éditeurs considèrent que la clarification de ce « genre à frontières perméables » requiert en premier lieu une élucidation conceptuelle, suivie d'une étude empirique détaillée qui assurerait la mise à l'épreuve de la pratique des prémisses théoriques.

En conséquence, le volume est structurellement constitué en deux parties complémentaires : une partie théorique qui réunit les perspectives intellectuelles sur le populisme, et une partie appliquée dédiée aux exemples concrets du populisme dans le monde. À côté d'une introduction épaisse d'idées, les deux parties du volume réunissent treize études, représentant autant des contributions scientifiques de valeur qui corrigent la connaissance et l'entendement de ce phénomène controversé appelé *populisme*. Dans les lignes suivantes nous mettrons à jours les idées essentielles de chaque article, selon leur enchaînement dans la table des matières.

Le volume s'ouvre par une interrogation de Sergiu Mişcoiu, *Du populisme au néopopulisme ? Quelques repères pour une délimitation conceptuelle*. Comme le titre le suggère, la contribution, utilisant les armes de la pédagogie et de l'explication conceptuelle, marque les bornes de la notion du néopopulisme par rapport aux types du populisme, ses caractères et ses manifestations spécifiques. Cette analyse comparative offre une perspective panoramique sur le passage contemporain du populisme au néopopulisme. Il s'ensuit dans le livre la fine analyse de la réputée professeure française Chantal Delson, qui dans la chapitre « *L'idiot commun du populisme* » fait remonter l'enquête savante sur ce phénomène politique jusqu'à l'idéologie de l'émancipation du temps des Lumières lorsque les intellectuels élitistes avaient pris coutume de donner le nom d'« *idiots* » (terme emprunté à la philosophie grecque) à leurs adversaires politiques, les démagogues de

l'époque. Restant dans la sphère des débats idéologiques, on doit mentionner le chapitre *Composantes idéologiques du populisme* où Daniel Şardu caractérise le populisme selon ses caractères idéologiques. S'inscrivant à la fois dans la lignée des démarches normatives et des analyses empiriques contemporaines, l'auteur plaide pour une reconsidération positive de l'idéologie et une reconsidération analytique du populisme. Dans l'article *Charisme, leadership et populisme : quelques éléments pour une théorie empirique*, l'auteur, Flavio Chiapponi se penche sur le problème de la charisme et la question des leaders pour montrer que le leadership n'est pas spécifique aux mouvements populistes. Le dernier article de cette première partie théorique, *Le populisme fondateur*, appartient à Guy Hermet, qui suit le développement chronologique des traits essentiels du populisme apportant des nombreux exemples sur ses manifestations concrètes au XIX^e siècle en Europe et sur le continent américain.

La deuxième partie du recueil, et d'ailleurs la plus consistante, commence par la contribution de Yann Basset et Stephen Launay – *Une polémique latino-américaine : le populisme*. Il s'agit du territoire de prédilection où le populisme a fait carrière sous une grande diversité de formes. Pour surpasser les évaluations morales qui définissent la majorité des analyses dédiées aux systèmes politiques sud-américaines, les auteurs de ce chapitre s'efforcent de distinguer entre le populisme classique et le populisme moderne, s'appuyant sur la diversité empirique des phénomènes politiques les plus récents. Les articles signés par Alexander B. Makulilo et par Emmanuel Banywesize (*Populisme et démocratie en Afrique*, et *Formes et dérivées du populisme dans l'Afrique Subsaharienne*) nous rendent familières les formes radicales et extrémistes du populisme sur le continent africain. Le premier de ces articles surprend l'échec des leaders africains populistes et la déchéance de l'idéologie dans la région. L'autre papier place le populisme à l'origine des crises politiques de la région, justifiant les dictatures les plus sanglantes. Les conclusions de ces articles se heurtent partiellement car le premier nous parle de la rareté des combats populistes et le second essaie de prouver la gravité de crises politique provoquées par le phénomène en question ! Nous restons toujours dans la sphère des espaces exotiques, peu accessibles aux recherches européens, avec l'article de Dylan Kissane, *Fermiers et pastèques. L'ascension et le déclin des partis*

populistes dans la politique australienne. L'article traite la trajectoire en cinq étapes des mouvements populistes australiens : l'apparition, l'explosion, l'évaluation, l'exposition, et, à la fin, la disparition. La présentation montre qu'en dépit des expériences multiples des dernières années, les partis politiques australiens n'ont pas su enregistrer des succès remarquables.

Les quatre contributions suivantes se rapportent à l'espace européen de manifestation du populisme, surpris au Nord, au Sud, au Centre et à l'Est du continent. Une première étude de cette partie - *Au nom du peuple ! Le populisme contemporain en Scandinavie*- est écrit par Anders Ravik Jupskas. Il entreprend une typologie du populisme scandinave contemporain (il a en vue les cas de Danemark, de la Norvège, et de la Suède), les modèles de populismes pratiqués présentant des variations importantes d'un pays à l'autre. La technique utilisée par l'auteur est quelque peu élémentaire, consistant dans le simple dénombrement des références au peuple dans les programmes électoraux des partis scandinaves. Dans le chapitre *Italie- terre des populismes*, Marco Tarchi résume la dynamique du système politique italien des derniers 12 ans, caractérisés par les tentatives des politiques groupés autour de Silvio Berlusconi de se créer des avantages électoraux en s'attaquant aux sujets économiques et sociaux de façon populiste. Par la suite le renommé professeur clujois Michael Shafir passe en revue la diversité des populismes de la zone de l'Europe Centrale et de l'Est dans le chapitre *Le néopopulisme sous le signe du postcommunisme*. Les transformations politiques et économiques de la région y sont expliquées en liaison avec l'ascension des certains partis politiques et des personnalités populistes analysés de manière comparative. Sans entrer en contradiction avec le système démocratique, le néopopulisme postcommuniste est « une alternative de plus en plus ascendante » dans « ces démocraties de transition ». Le dernier chapitre du livre, intitulé *Le populisme ancien et nouveau dans la politique russe* appartient à Mara Morini. En partant des traits populistes des leaders politiques russes, l'autrice nous offre une analyse profonde du système russe postsoviétique, concentré autour de la personnalité marquante de Vladimir Poutine qui a engendré même une nouvelle idéologie, le « poutinisme » qui définit la nouvelle ère de la Russie.

Au lieu des conclusions, nous considérons que le souhait initial du livre, celui de « réduire le niveau d'abstraction du concept de populisme » a

été pleinement accompli. Comme un point faible du volume, nous pourrions mentionner l'absence d'une étude sur l'Asie, absence justifiée en partie par le maintien au pouvoir des systèmes de gouvernement socialistes dans une grande partie des pays de la région qui réduisent la liberté d'expression politique. Ainsi, bien que la mise en évidence des différences entre les diverses formes du populisme n'est pas complète, elle n'est pas pour autant moins valeureuse. Pris en entier, ce volume collectif est une parution inédite dans le paysage historiographique autochtone apportant une contribution importante à l'éclaircissement théorique d'un concept controversé, effort doublé par la présentation empirique du phénomène à l'échelle nationale et mondiale, par la présentation des nombreuses formes de populisme et de néopopulisme

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