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*SERIA ȘTIINȚE POLITICE*

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**„OVIDIUS” UNIVERSITY OF CONSTANTA  
FACULTY OF HISTORY AND POLITICAL SCIENCE**

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**UNIVERSITATEA „OVIDIUS” DIN CONSTANȚA  
FACULTATEA DE ISTORIE ȘI ȘTIINȚE POLITICE**



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## MEMORY-WORDS AND MEMORIAL MUSEUMS: THE EFFICACY OF “NEVER AGAIN” IN GUATEMALA

Martha C. GALVAN MANDUJANO\*

and

JoAnn DIGEORGIO-LUTZ\*\*

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**Abstract:** This research examines visitor engagement with genocidal memorial museums expressed in visitor comments at the conclusion of the museum visit. We analyze the educative function of memorial museums in genocide prevention. Museums that advance a preventative function are gaining traction in the literature on transitional justice, especially that on non-punitive, restorative justice mechanisms. In this sense, we examine two museums in Guatemala and measure visitor engagement and the efficacy of *never again*. In Guatemala City, we examine the *Casa de la Memoria*, which presents the complete historical narrative of the Maya. In Baja Verapaz, we study the *Rabinal Museo Comunitario de la Memoria Historica*, exclusive to the historical memory of the Maya Achi and which seeks to educate about the genocide committed against them by the government between 1980 and 1984. We develop a typology of the comments we call *memory-words* left by visitors to each museum as recorded in their guest logs/visitor books and in other memorial spaces within each museum that allows for individual expression of the museum experience. Finally, we try to determine whether each museum's typology of memory-words resulted in a particular message (specific to Guatemala) or a more universal message of *never again* that mirrors current mass atrocities world-wide, and if so, in what context.

**Keywords:** Guatemalan genocide, collective memory, memorial museum, memory-words, transitional justice

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**Rezumat:** Această cercetare examinează gradul de implicare al vizitatorilor în urma vizitelor la muzeele memoriale dedicate genocidului, exprimată în comentariile acestora la încheierea vizitei. În acest sens, examinăm funcția educativă a muzeelor memoriale în prevenirea genocidului. Muzeele care promovează o funcție preventivă au câștigat teren în literatura despre justiția tranzițională, în special din prisma analizelor despre mecanismele nepunitive, bazate pe justiție restaurativă. În vederea realizării acestei cercetări, explorăm două muzee din Guatemala ce ne permit să evaluăm gradul de implicare al vizitatorilor, dar și eficacitatea practicii „niciodată din nou”. În Guatemala City, examinăm *Casa de la Memoria*, care prezintă narațiunea istorică completă a

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mayașilor. În Baja Verapaz, examinăm *Museo Comunitario de la Memoria Historica* din Rabinal, dedicat exclusiv memoriei istorice a Mayașilor Achí, muzeu care are ca scop să educe despre genocidul comis împotriva acestora de către guvern între 1980 și 1984. Pe baza acestora, elaborăm o tipologie a comentariilor pe care le-am identificat ca „cuvintele ale memoriei” lăsate de vizitatori în fiecare muzeu, așa cum sunt înregistrate în jurnalele vizitatorilor /cărțile oaspeților, respectiv în alte spații memoriale din cadrul fiecărui muzeu, care permit exprimarea individuală a experienței muzeale. În cele din urmă, evaluăm dacă tipologia „cuvintelor memoriei” asociată fiecărui muzeu, conduce către un mesaj anume (specific Guatemalei) sau, mai degrabă, către unul universal, de tipul „niciodată din nou”, mesaj care oglindește atrocitățile în masă la nivel global, și dacă da, în ce context.

**Cuvinte cheie:** genocidul din Guatemala, memorie colectivă, muzeu memorial, cuvinte ale memoriei, justiție de tranziție

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## I. Introduction

**Memorial** museums have come to perform a significant role as agents of transitional justice in post genocidal societies. Alongside their function as keepers of the historical record, memorial museums provide a space for healing and remembrance, a place to bear witness and, support truth and justice initiatives through their documentation of genocide and mass atrocity crimes. As a newer form of memorialization, the memorial museum performs a public educative function that aims to prevent future human rights abuses through raising awareness. Broadly, memorial museums serve as educational epicentres that ostensibly engage their visitors in ways that morally empower the advancement of societal change toward the protection of human rights. Memorial museums across the globe have begun to embrace these educational opportunities in numerous ways from developing local educational programs, convening annual conferences, and engaging in public commemorative activities. In the process, memorial museums through their missions have adopted an educative mantle focused on the prevention of genocide and mass atrocity crimes. Our research is interested in the efficacy of the memorial museums' educative mission to promote the value of “never again” and, if the museum experience imparts values that inspires its visitors to be better human beings that will compel them to speak truth to power when faced with future genocides and mass atrocity crimes regardless of where they occur.

As Paul Williams notes, the memorial museum characterizes a particular type of museum meant to commemorate and remember some form of mass suffering<sup>1</sup>. Heidi McKinnon asserts that by their very definition, museums of memory can operate as spaces for both “healing and advocacy”<sup>2</sup>. This new hybrid museum is intended to produce specific values that inspire its visitors to advocate for a better world. As Apsel and Sodaro observe, museums function to influence their visitors to “change their thinking and behavior” through the persuasive “use of history and memory”<sup>3</sup>. Gensburger and Lefranc contend that memory transmission through museums supports public knowledge of the facts and issues that allows one to change behaviors, presumably to promote a better world<sup>4</sup>. Moreover, can memorial museums inspire visitors to advance human rights and to make linkages between past human rights abuses and current ones? This raises several questions that inform our research – can museums dedicated to memorializing genocide function as agents of individual change? That is, can they foster a sense of moral responsibility on the part of their visitors to advocate for “never again” in the face of genocide? Moreover, how does a memorial museum fulfill both a museum and memorialization function while navigating a historical landscape in which the State denies a genocide took place in a contested political space? And more importantly, can we measure the efficacy of their efforts through the imprint they leave on their visitors? Or, as Apsel and Sodaro contemplate, “is the memorial museum’s ability to affect change ‘more rhetorical than real?’”<sup>5</sup>.

## II. Materials and Methods

In our effort to seek answers to these questions, we set out to analyze what we call “memory-words” which we define as the comments, expressions, and other reflections that in-person visitors express in guest books, visitor logs, and

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Williams, *Memorial Museums: The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities* (Oxford: Berg, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> Heidi McKinnon, “Proposing a Museum of Memory: Reparations and the Maya Achi Genocide in Guatemala”, in *Museums and Truth*, ed. Annette. B. Fromm, Viv Golding, and Per B. Rekdal (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), 57.

<sup>3</sup> Joyce Apsel and Amy Sodaro, “Introduction: Memory, politics, and human rights”, in *Museums and sites of persuasion: Politics, memory and human rights*, ed. Joyce Apsel and Amy Sodaro (New York: Routledge, 2020), 3.

<sup>4</sup> Sara Gensburger and Sandrine Lefranc, *Beyond Memory: Can We Really Learn From the Past?* (Switzerland: Palgrave Pivot, 2020), 5.

<sup>5</sup> Apsel and Sodaro, “Introduction: Memory, politics and human rights, 3.

other forms of museum engagement that allows for individual expression of the museum experience. Our study examines the memory-words imparted by visitors in two memory museums in diverse locations in Guatemala. The *Casa de la Memoria K'aji Tulum* in Guatemala City focuses on the complete historical narrative of the Maya in an educative context of never forget. The other is the *Museo Comunitario de la Memoria Histórica* located in the town of Rabinal, in the department of Baja Verapaz. This memorial museum is dedicated exclusively to the historical memory of the Maya Achí, seeking to educate its visitors about the acts of genocide committed by the State against the Maya Achí. Against this backdrop, we then set out to measure the efficacy of each museums' educative role to promote the value of “never again”, to uphold human rights and, to determine if the museum experience imparts values that inspires its visitors to be better human beings. We develop a comprehensive typology of categories measured against the key objectives of each museums mission and in keeping with the overall function of memorial museums designed for the memorialization and dignification of the victims. In the case of Guatemala both memorial museums place emphasis on the Maya, the recovery of historical memory and the necessity to never forget. Within this context we consider the importance of the functional space of the museum as an edifice to disseminate this information alongside the contents of the exhibitions. Moreover, we kept in mind Buckley-Zistel's observations that memorial museums are not neutral – that is they do not present a “balanced view;” rather, their narratives are “explicitly political” embedded in a “moral framework”<sup>6</sup>. Williams also notes the tendency for memorial museums to present horrific events within a moral context which politicizes the need to remember and the interpretation of events<sup>7</sup>.

In analysing memory-words, our typology aimed to measure the frequency and prevalence of phrasing pertaining to historical knowledge of Guatemala and Maya collective memory, recognition of the Guatemalan genocide, awareness of transitional justice initiatives, the need for truth and accountability, and human rights in general. We also took note of the styles of comments, forms of address, and other demographic information that visitors shared and remained cognizant that knowledge of the above was also dependent on the context

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<sup>6</sup> Susanne Buckley-Zistel, “Detained in the Memorial Hohenschonhausen: Heterotopias, Narratives and Transitions From the Stasi Past in Germany”, in *Memorials in Times of Transition*, ed. Susanne Buckley-Zistel and Stefanie Schäfer (Cambridge: Intersentia, 2014), 101.

<sup>7</sup> Williams, *Memorial Museums*, 2007, 8.

provided in each of the museum’s exhibits. Our interest in historical knowledge and collective memory measures visitor knowledge of the thirty-six years of internal armed conflict, the genocide, and the need to present the complete narrative of the Maya. For example, do they mention individual massacres, reference the disappeared, the internally displaced and the importance of documenting these tragic events? We also examine if visitors comments give meaning and significance to concepts such as reconciliation, remembrance, truth, and transitional justice. In Guatemala, among those visitors who identify as Maya, can we ascertain how they perceive the goals of the respective museums and how they may be linked to the respective Maya normative systems? We examine whether each museums’ typology of memory-words resulted in a particular message (specific to Guatemala) or a more universal message of “never again” that mirrors both past and current mass atrocities and human rights abuses world-wide, and if so, in what context.

Our study is not without its limitations. For instance, one limitation concerns the issue of reliability and our inability to measure the longevity of visitor sentiment. How long after one completed their memorial museum visit does the experience remain? Is the longevity of the experience necessary to promote a “never again” response in the face of encountering genocide? Or is the experience of having visited the memorial museum itself, a sufficient reminder to elicit a “never again” response? Balcells et al.’s study that focused on the Museum of Memory and Human Rights in Chile asked a similar question regarding the impact of “transitional justice museums”, their ability to affect a change in political attitudes, and, in turn, to promote post-conflict reconciliation<sup>8</sup>. Unlike the Balcells et al. study that relied on a random survey of undergraduate university students in Santiago, Chile to measure an emotive response, we had no way of gauging demographic specifics of those who were leaving memory-words behind unless the visitor specifically noted this information. Unless someone listed their place of residence and other details, we had no way of knowing if the sentiments were left by residents, or by Guatemalans from other departments, or foreign nationals / tourists. We also are aware that our translations and interpretation of comments must be placed in a cultural context – for example, expressions such as “bonito (pretty in

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<sup>8</sup> Laia Balcells, Valeria Palanza, and Elsa Voytas, “Do Museums Promote Reconciliation? A Field Experiment on Transitional Justice”, paper presentation at the International Studies Association Annual Convention, San Francisco, CA., 2018, <http://web.isanet.org/Web/Conferences/San%20Francisco%202018-s/Archive/d263dc13-0674-4cd5-8c6a-724cb3d2de69.pdf>.

Spanish)” are not necessarily indicative of a description of the aesthetics of the physical space but could also be an expression of appreciation for presenting a tragic narrative of the Guatemalan people.

The idea for our research grew out of the lack of improvement in human rights in several post-genocidal societies alongside the growing patterns of hate worldwide. After every genocide we hear the refrain “never again” articulated by political leaders and others in the international community. This sentiment is often followed by the construction of memorials, and in particular, museums to honor and remember the victims and to educate about these crimes in the spirit of “never again”. These worldwide public memorials, including museums, form part and parcel of the new initiatives that both commemorate and inform about mass atrocities and human rights abuses. Louis Bickford calls these memorialization efforts memory works whose aims are both *redress* and *prevention*<sup>9</sup>.

The universality of “never again” as a tool for the prevention of genocide was borne out of the Holocaust and the need to educate about this event that claimed the lives of more than six million Jews and five million other victims. This oft-repeated phrase sounded at the end of every genocide since the Holocaust aims to serve as a preventative and educative tool against future genocide and mass atrocity crimes. Former President Barack Obama unfailingly used the phrase repeatedly in his yearly statements to mark International Holocaust Remembrance Day in part to ensure that “never again” was not just a phrase of remembrance but also a principled cause. In 2013, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) chose “Never Again” for its Days of Remembrance theme calling for a study of the Holocaust to serve as a warning of genocides that are happening anywhere.

The memorial museum is uniquely poised to achieve an educative function and promote an ethic of “never again” as a means of confronting genocide. As Amy Sodaro explains, memorial museums facilitate the understanding of a violent past and they work to “morally educate” visitors that provide an “opposite set of values” that visitors ostensibly will employ in their day-to-day lives<sup>10</sup>. In our case, both museums advance an educative role about the violence that affected Guatemala during the thirty-six-year armed internal conflict. In

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<sup>9</sup> Louis Bickford, “MemoryWorks/memory works”, in *Transitional Justice, Culture, and Society: Beyond Outreach*, ed. Clara Ramirez-Barat (New York: Social Science Research Council, 2014).

<sup>10</sup> Amy Sodaro, *Exhibiting Atrocity: Memorial Museums and the Politics of Past Violence* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2018), 5.

Guatemala, the army and its proxies largely targeted the Maya communities as part of the State’s “scorched earth” campaign.

### III. Function of Museums

Museums exercise a valuable role in transitional justice and memorialization because they serve as social spaces for shared public memory and commemorative activities. With this shift in focus where education about genocide is the mission, museum spaces are influenced today by the public voice and their demand for knowledge. The public became the driving force for museums, and museums became stewards of the public trust. Globally, museums are understood and expected to be safe spaces, especially when confronting difficult knowledge, eliminating the elitist voice, and encouraging public engagement and participation. This perspective is evident in both museums mentioned in this study. The *Casa de la Memoria K’aj’i Tulum* is a broad-based community museum that engages with numerous local NGOs to educate and more importantly, to provide a space in lieu of a gravesite to commemorate the indigenous Maya victims. The *Museo Comunitario de la Memoria Histórica* in Rabinal is instrumental in the recovery of historical memory of the Maya Achí. Both museums engage directly with their respective public on memory, memorialization, and the public role in the museum. And, both museums are the product of local initiatives for memorializing and educating about Guatemala’s violent historical past. The idea that memorialization through museums can advance a preventative function is also gaining traction in transitional justice, especially as a non-punitive, restorative justice mechanism. Sodaro notes the growth of the memorial museum began as a response to the mass atrocities of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and carry with them a commitment to educate against future atrocities<sup>11</sup>. Moreover, the memorial museum in addition to allowing victims to mourn and commemorate a violent past, presumably instructs us to be better human beings, imparting its visitors with the moral obligation to create a better world. Consistent with Williams and others, we recognize that memorial museums embrace multiple functions beyond the presentation of eye-witness memory to mass suffering. As Sodaro explains, memorial museums are established to fulfill three primary functions:

1. The first is the “museum function” and their task “as a mechanism of

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 4.

truth telling about history and preserving the past”<sup>12</sup>. In this context both museums are committed to documenting the truth about what happened to the Maya in Guatemala.

2. The second function identified by Sodaro is the “memorial” function that provides a space for “healing and repair” as a form of symbolic reparation that acknowledges the victims and allows for remembrance<sup>13</sup>. Again, the museums in this study meet this second function through their various commemorative activities, recognition of the victims, and providing a public space that acknowledges the atrocities committed against the Maya primarily by agents of the State.
3. The third function Sodaro identifies is the moral function. Memorial museums have a normative purpose to educate their visitors with an ethic of “never again” and stand as beacons that warn against “the dangers of division, ideology, intolerance, and hatred”<sup>14</sup>. The *Casa de la Memoria Kaji Tulum* embraces this normative role to educate its youth who do not have first-hand memories of recent past atrocities to ensure that such abuses are not repeated.

During our numerous visits to both museums over the course of a three-year period prior to the Covid Pandemic and again in July 2023, we noted that each museum updated and sometimes rearranged their collections to include current events, especially as they pertained to ongoing trials and other transitional justice initiatives in Guatemala. They also repurposed museum space to accommodate commemorative events that took place in each museum’s public space marking specific anniversaries. Neither museum makes use of authentic objects or material artifacts that evidence the genocide committed against the indigenous Maya. There are no audio recordings of survivors recounting their ordeals nor photos or illustrations of the hundreds of massacres on display. In part this is primarily because the perpetrators destroyed the objects of material life of the Maya villages and those who survived fled without taking broken remnants of their cultural life. Yet each museum successfully combines its museum, memorial, and moral function in a unique way that defines each museum’s relationship to collective memory and the historical narrative as it relates to the genocide.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 162.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 163.

The memory museums in this study present the stories, lives, tragedies, and cultures of the surrounding communities. The *Museo Comunitario de la Memoria Histórica* is especially active in curating the experiences of the Maya Achí during the genocidal period. By providing their visitors with engagement opportunities to record their memory-words, visitors actively participate in the retention and perseverance of the information they encounter. Without participation in museums, visitors become passive consumers and take away messages cannot permeate past the exhibition.

In the last exhibition room at the *Casa de la Memoria Kaji Tulam*, visitors can engage with the space by leaving memory-words on the walls that are periodically refreshed to create a blank sheet for others. Both the walls and the visitors are active participants in sharing the events, as they influence one another. An element in an exhibit may spark a memory, an emotion and, so, through these engagement methods, visitors can contribute to that memory. This has an impact on interpretation because it is no longer unbiased or neutral, but, instead, it is transposed through the lens of the public in that moment. When visitors actively participate in museums through varying engagement methods, such as comments in a visitor book or writing on a graffiti wall, they leave parts of their experience behind. As such they share stories and their voice with other patrons, the museum, and the collection; hence the importance of memory-words. In his study of visitor engagement at the Ammunition Hill National Memorial Site in Israel, Chaim Noy emphasizes the importance of visitor books for their value as “cultural artifacts” and communication channel for visitors to express emotions<sup>15</sup>. Because most museums place the visitor book at the conclusion of the museum experience, visitors collect their impressions throughout their visit. Just prior to departing the museum, writing in the visitor books allows them to engage in what Noy describes as semiotic functions which includes “emotional ventilation” and the sharing of “feelings and impressions in situ”<sup>16</sup>.

As a prelude to evaluating the educative functions of both museums, it is important to understand the historical background and the respective path to post genocidal memorialization taken by each museum to understand the functionality of these museums and their significance.

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<sup>15</sup> Chaim Noy, “Mediation Materialized: The Semiotics of a Visitor Book at an Israeli Commemoration Site”, *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 25, no.2 (2008): 175-195.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 184.



## **IV. Guatemala’s Internal Conflict and Peace Accord Background**

Between 1960 and 1996, Guatemala experienced a protracted armed internal conflict. In the context of this thirty-six-year war and in a period known as *La Violencia*, government forces waged a genocide against the indigenous Maya ostensibly to thwart their alleged support for the guerrillas. At the conclusion of the conflict and as part of the peace process, the 1996 Oslo Accord for Firm and Lasting Peace established the Commission for Historical Clarification (CEH). Functioning as a truth commission, the CEH’s mandate was to explain why both the government and the guerrillas committed extreme acts of violence that ultimately claimed the lives of over 200,000 people, over 40,000 persons forcibly disappeared, up to a million displaced, and the destruction of over 600 Maya villages. The CEH authors believed that documenting these atrocities and uncovering the truth of what transpired would foster national reconciliation and promote human rights for everyone. When the commission submitted its report to the Guatemalan people, the government of Guatemala, and the United Nations in February 1999, it represented the perspective and experiences of the victims. The Lead Commissioner for the CEH, Christian Tomuschat, views this as a strength because it restored the dignity of the victims and ensured their “suffering would not be lost in the anonymous stream of history”<sup>17</sup>. The CEH report also noted the importance of the recovery of historical memory, both individually and collectively, as a means of preserving the memory of the victims in accordance with the Oslo Accord. The CEH recommended several measures to achieve this goal that included dignity for the victims and victim remembrance – defined as a designated day for the commemoration of the victims, the building of monuments and public parks, and naming public spaces after victims. However, despite the CEH recommendations, memorialization which includes the construction of memorial museums and the search for symbolic transitional justice remains exclusively a grassroots endeavor. This is driven by the fact that the State denies a genocide took place, which left the creation of memorials and memory museums to survivors and indigenous associations.

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<sup>17</sup> Christian Tomuschat, “Foreword”, in *Memory of Silence: The Guatemalan Truth Commission Report*, ed. Daniel Rothenberg (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), xvi.

## ***V. Casa de la Memoria Kaji Tulam***

Guatemala City is home to the memorial museum, *Casa de la Memoria Kaji Tulam*, which opened its doors to the public in 2014. As a public educative space, this memorial museum fulfills the three primary functions of memorial museums identified by Sodaro – museum, memorial, and moral. *Casa de la Memoria Kaji Tulam* museum’s function serves as a mechanism for recording the past and a space in which the events about what transpired are on display for the museum’s visitors. This function is evident throughout the museum’s ten exhibition rooms that present the meta-narrative of the Maya from their creation, conquest, colonization, the internal armed conflict, and concomitant genocide followed by exhibits that provoke thought on topics such as racism, peace, and healing. Created and designed by the *Centro Para la Acción Legal en Derechos Humanos* (CALDH), *Casa de la Memoria Kaji Tulam* functions as a community museum for survivors, their families, and other Guatemalan residents as well as international visitors. It is also a member of the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience (ICSC) that recognizes museums, memorials, and historic sites as places of memory working to ensure traumatic memories are remembered and not eradicated.

In terms of fulfilling its memorial function, the museum takes both an educational and commemorative approach. The museum’s atrium serves as an educational and commemorative venue for various creative and collaborative approaches to memory, including educational workshops, commemorative rituals, music festivals, fundraising, performance and visual art workshops that advance the museum’s overall narrative of human rights violations in Guatemala. The museum serves to remember and reconstruct the collective identity of the Maya, especially their recent violent past and the persistence of racism. The memorial museum provides reflective space at the conclusion of the exhibits that commemorates the many victims of the internal armed conflict whose names are embroidered on individualized quilts that often contain details of their deaths that drape the entire reflection room. It serves as a commemorative site where groups gather every February 25 to perform Maya ceremonies that commemorate the National Day of Dignity of the Victims of Guatemala’s Armed Conflict.

The museum directs its educative function primarily at Guatemala’s youth who do not have first-hand experience with the country’s recent genocide and

violent past. Furthermore, this specific history is not widely taught in public schools. As we discuss later, students' memory-words expressed appreciation for the museum's role in facilitating their learning about Guatemala's history, especially the period of the internal armed conflict. As Elizabeth Oglesby explains, even though the Peace Accords were supposed to result in government investment in education through increased government spending and launching curricular reform, this has yet to materialize<sup>18</sup>. Moreover, her study notes that the teaching of historical memory lacks any type of national oversight and the topic of the genocide remains a contested sphere, especially any instruction centered on the CEH report. For the most part, the study of history is embedded into the larger field of social studies and the textbooks that Oglesby's study examined, pedagogically addressed the CEH report by providing only basic information that tabulated the number of deaths and disappearances<sup>19</sup>. Given these educational limitations, we would assume that the *Casa de la Memoria* "Kaji Tulam" is the first encounter that many of Guatemala City's youth have with the historical record of the internal armed conflict. This might offer an explanation as to why the exhibitions are primarily visual and sparse in narrative text as they are designed to engage a targeted age group. In this context, the memorial museum is more effective in visually directing its moral message through its permanent and temporary exhibits that reconstruct Guatemala's historical memory in the hopes that its youth will work to transform society and take action against racism and patriarchy that continue to characterize society.

#### *V.1. Design of Casa de la Memoria Kaji Tulam*

Visitors enter the memory museum through heavy wooden doors of a converted Spanish colonial style home that leads to a small desk and gated entry. Beyond the gated entry, one enters a naturally lit atrium used for special exhibits, educative programs, and commemorative rituals on days of remembrance. The atrium contains a large painted blue wooden tree adorned with painted red wooden bird silhouettes engraved with the names of various NGOs such as National Union of Guatemalan Women (UNAMG), Association of Family Members of the Detained and Disappeared of Guatemala (FAMDEGUA),

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<sup>18</sup> Elizabeth Oglesby, "Historical Memory and the Limits of Peace Education: Examining Guatemala's "Memory of Silence" and the Politics of Curriculum Change", June 2004, Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs Fellows Program, History and Politics of Reconciliation, 15, [https://media-1.carnegiecouncil.org/ccc/4996/Elizabeth\\_Oglesby\\_Working\\_Paper\\_2023-09-26-032207\\_ezus.pdf/](https://media-1.carnegiecouncil.org/ccc/4996/Elizabeth_Oglesby_Working_Paper_2023-09-26-032207_ezus.pdf/).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 16-18.

Forensic Anthropology Foundation of Guatemala (FAFG), Mutual Support Group (GAM), Community Studies and Psychosocial Action Team (ECAP), along with the names of communities massacred during the armed internal conflict. The ten permanent exhibition rooms follow a chronological course that incorporates various visual objects that are both immersive and interactive. Any narrative texts that accompany the exhibits are all written in Spanish. While this could potentially alienate indigenous Maya if they are not bilingual in Spanish, many of the symbols and visuals draw on shared experiences of all groups in Guatemala that bridge the language barrier. What is notable is its attention to women and their experiences throughout Guatemala's historical past. In each exhibit room there is either a small round cloth tent or a wooden door that invites one to open and learn about women in general or a specific woman associated with the chronological period on display. The spaces dedicated to women are emblazoned with the butterfly weaving symbol associated with the weaving traditions in Tactic, Alta Verapaz.

The first exhibit is dedicated to *origin*, and it introduces the visitor to the richness of Maya culture prior to the Spanish conquest through a visual of the Maya codices that envelope the entire room. As one progresses chronologically, subsequent exhibits feature the cultural destruction of the Maya and their conquest by the Spanish. Visitors then navigate three exhibition rooms that document the thirty-six years of the armed internal conflict. These spaces are visually dark and the objects on display are designed to recreate disarray. In one room, a single lightbulb hanging from the center of the room illuminates the physical destruction of a Maya home littered with material once objects used in the function of everyday household activities that are now broken beyond repair. Faceless silhouettes of a family comprised of a man, women, three children, and a baby are representative of the thousands of indigenous who were displaced, massacred, or fled the violence as refugees. The short narrative script above the silhouettes summarizes the casualties from the extreme violence of the internal armed conflict citing the more than 200,000 deaths and at least 40,000 students, unionists, catechists, and campesinos forcibly disappeared. Visitors conclude their tour in rooms designed to create some semblance of hope and reflection. It is in the last room of the exhibit that visitors have an opportunity to engage by reading memory-words left by others and providing their own reflections on a graffiti wall.

### *V.2. Methods of Engagement with Visitors*

*Casa de la Memoria Kají Tulam* provides visitors with two methods of memory-words engagement: the visitor book and a room at the end which allows visitors to write in any available space in a graffiti like format. Their visitor book is not prominently placed in the museum, instead it resides on a stand near the entrance/exit. Even though visitors are not necessarily directed to write in the guest book by the museum staff, there are total of 826 entries that cover a four-year period beginning in February 2014 and conclude in 2017. The graffiti room is located at the end of their tour immediately following a gallery with reflective content that preemptively stimulates visitors to passionately contribute their reflection. Visitors can contribute by writing on any available surface such as the walls, ceiling, and doors. Curating contributions through these two mediums allow for different types of visitor commentary.

In the graffiti space both the museum exhibits and the visitors are active participants in sharing the events, as they influence one another. This has an impact on interpretation, because it is no longer unbiased or neutral, but instead through the lens of the public in that moment – an observation that Noy observes in his visitor book study<sup>20</sup>. When visitors actively participate in memorial museums through multiple engagement methods, such as comments in a visitor book, they leave parts of their experience behind; they share stories and their voice with other patrons, the museum, and the collection.

### *V.3. Themes of the Memory-Words in the Graffiti Room*

The memory-words left by visitors in the graffiti room we documented just prior to the pandemic reflected the following themes: references to the meta-narrative of the Maya; congratulations on the aesthetics of the museum space; the importance of history and memory; and reference to “never again”, never forget. Regarding the genocide, there were a few comments that specifically expressed the familiar refrain in defiance of the State narrative – *si hubo genocidio* (Eng.: there was a genocide) with no attribution to the authors. Additional memory-words left in this space were autobiographical – names and cities of residence alongside phrases related to injustice, hope, change, peace, and love for Guatemala. While there were expressions of the need for Guatemala’s youth to be the voices of change, there were no references to the current state of human rights in Guatemala. Absent from this space was any acknowledgment of

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<sup>20</sup> Noy, “Mediation Materialized”.

the transitional justice issues especially the ongoing CREOMPAZ case (acronym standing for Centro Regional de Entrenamiento de Operadores de Mantenimiento de Paz; Eng.: Regional Training Command for Peacekeeping Operations). In this case, former military officers have been charged with forced disappearances and crimes against humanity at the former detention and clandestine execution center in the area known as Military Zone 21, which ironically presently functions as a United Nations peacekeeper training base. Exhumations on the site uncovered 558 human remains, among these the remains of over ninety children, in four graves which remain the largest mass graves uncovered to date in Guatemala.

When we visited the museum in July 2023, the graffiti room had significantly changed in the tone of the contents of the comments. We know that the room had not been refreshed since May 2019 as several visitors had dated their comments. In contrast to our previous visit, graffiti comments centered on: the need for justice; awareness of governmental corruption; the necessity to not repeat the past; and recognition that a genocide occurred. The 2023 Presidential elections in Guatemala which focused on governmental corruption and political violence could account for the uptick in comments on ending government corruption, the need to never repeat the past, and acknowledgement of systemic violence in the country.

#### *V.4. Ledger-Bound Visitor Book*

The other method of in-person visitor engagement is the ledger-bound visitor book. In contrast to the graffiti wall that is periodically refreshed with a coat of white paint, washing away previous memory-words, the visitor book has permanency. The first entry corresponds to the opening of the museum in February 2014 and the last entry recorded was in February 2017. Most memory-words were recorded in 2014, with a total of 632 entries; fifty-six entries in 2015; 113 in 2016, and twenty-five in 2017. The museum no longer made the visitor book available to visitors after August 2017 and the museum staff did not provide any details why they no longer provide this method of engagement. Of these, eleven percent of the comments reflected on the historical and collective memory of the Maya and the acknowledgement of “our memory” in the context of the historical presentation of the museum’s exhibits; thereby fulfilling the museum function that Sodaro discusses<sup>21</sup>.

There were also corresponding memory-words with many comments grateful

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<sup>21</sup> Sodaro, *Exhibiting Atrocity*.

for the “moral education” the museum experience imparts to its visitors and the necessity to teach the truth of what transpired. While two percent of the posts acknowledge that a genocide took place, less than one percent of memory-words specifically articulate “never again”. Indirect references to transitional justice are made primarily by international visitors to the museum. Among these include Father Roy Bourgeois, founder of School of the Americas Watch (SOA Watch) who expressed “hope for the struggle” (nd) and a member of the Veterans for Peace noting the crimes against humanity committed against the people of Guatemala (nd). The museum performs a valuable memorial and museum function reflected in the majority of visitor comments that appreciate how the museum captures Maya historical and collective memory. While several of the museum exhibits focus on the genocide, the less than 1% of visitor comments that overtly express the comment *never again* could be a function of the fact that the museum positions the genocide in the 500-year collective narrative of the Maya.

## **VI. *Museo Comunitario de la Memoria Histórica,* Rabinal**

Located on a side street in the center of Rabinal, the *Museo Comunitario de la Memoria Histórica* is an unimposing one-story structure that sits within plastered white walls and a black metal gate. Save for the sign that sits above the gate with the memorial museum’s name, there is no other identifiable marker pointing to its function as a memorial museum. Inside is a long and wide outdoor courtyard with a passageway that leads to the museum’s three permanent exhibit rooms and to a large outdoor area that hosts community activities. Many of the courtyard walls host banners that contain dozens of hand-made embroidered fabrics with the names of massacre victims and the disappeared with the date they perished or were kidnapped.

The museum credits its establishment to local civil society organizations, chief among them The Association for the Integral Development of the Victims of the Violence in the Verapaces, Maya Achí (ADIVIMA), who founded the museum in 1999 with the aim at reclaiming historical memory and local

reconciliation<sup>22</sup>. The museum also holds the distinction of being the first museum of its kind to establish a space for survivors of a specific Maya culture, the Achí, for the remembrance and memorialization of the victims of the violence. As noted in the CEH, the Army and the Civil Defense Patrols (PACs) massacred twenty percent of the Maya Achí people between 1981 and 1983. This provided the momentum for the creation of the museum with the mission to “rescue, recover historical, cultural memory, and promote the Maya Achí identity” (Rabinal Achí Community Museum, n.d.).

The museum identifies itself as a community museum because it works together with the local communities on their behalf in the pursuit of its mission and objectives. The founders distinguish the museum, memorial, and moral functions along cultural, historical, and educational keystones that support its mission and overall objectives that are evident in the museum spaces. Inside the museum compound, the gravel path leads to three permanent exhibit rooms. The description of the exhibitions is important in understanding how the museum and its’ visitors engage with one another. The first room of the collection is a solemn space specifically dedicated to the dignification of the victims. The dark blue walls function to create a sense of somberness and draw attention to the illuminated glass display cases that line the walls of the room. The lighted cases contain dozens of black and white photographs mounted against a white background.

Engraved on the center post that anchors the room is an inscription in both Spanish and Achí that informs the visitor that they are encountering the memory of their brothers and sisters from the various communities in the region who were massacre victims of the genocide between 1980 and 1983. The images of the victims represent the loss of community and religious leaders, Maya priests, midwives, healers, artisans, and thousands of others among them including the elderly and pregnant women. At first glance, the black and white identification type photos seem repetitive and non-descript. Among the sea of photos, the frontal gaze of each image appears expressionless and gender distinctions seem to be the initial differentiating feature among the images. However, among closer examination the images convey much more than binary distinctions between men and women.

Each image is personal, providing us with the name of the victim and, in

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<sup>22</sup> Heidi McKinnon, “Proposing a Museum of Memory: Reparations and the Maya Achi Genocide in Guatemala”, in *Museums and Truth*, ed. A.B. Fromm et al. (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014).



many photos, we learn which community they called home and the date they perished. The more one engages with each individual photo, the more we understand we are staring back at a human being, a real person whose image represents a moment of lived time rather than a death. It also reinforces Marianne Hirsch’s notion of postmemory and the utility of photos as “images of remembrance” and the role of museums that “bridge the distance between memory and postmemory and between postmemory and oblivion”<sup>23</sup>. In this context, we recognize that the museum exists to fulfill a moral function as an educative tool for the public in addition to its memorial role for survivors.

The center pillar in the room also contains the engraved names and ages of the children massacred and listed according to their respective communities, among these include Río Negro, Pichec, Patixlan, Pancal, and Chichupac. The docent conveyed to us that the children’s engraved names occupy space on the center support pillar because they represent the heart of the Maya Achí community.

The second room in the permanent exhibit is the “processes of dignification” where eight poster-sized color photomurals line the brightly painted walls than the subdued hue in the previous room. The exhibit’s placard describes the contents of the posters as a journey – the eight-step process undertaken by the survivors to dignify both the massacred and disappeared. The progression begins with the survivors filing a public complaint denouncing the clandestine cemeteries before the Public Prosecutor’s Office (*Ministerio Público*) in Guatemala City with the legal assistance of ADIVIMA. The exhumation of the remains of the deceased from the clandestine cemeteries follows with the authorization from the *Ministerio Público* and the active participation of the families.

Steps three and four involve taking DNA samples from survivors to identify the height, age, sex, cause of death and in-depth forensic analysis. Once these steps are completed, the families are reunited with the remains of the deceased who then hold a wake to conduct their traditional ceremonies and pay their respects to the dead before they are permanently laid to rest. The final two steps include inhumation in which the remains are buried in legal cemeteries and holding commemorative festivals, which are held at different times of the year. There is also a video playing on a screen documenting the tedious exhumation process. In the year between our visits to the museum, they acquired an interactive computer kiosk that takes visitors to several websites. Among these

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<sup>23</sup> Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 248-249.

are the documentary film – *Finding Oscar* (2016), recounting the Dos Erres massacre and the story of the two children taken by the military, the REHMI (Recovery of Historical Memory) project, the Guatemalan Forensic Anthropology Foundation (FAFG), a database of the victims of the armed internal conflict, TED talks, and the 2011 documentary, *Granito*.

In room three of the permanent exhibit the museum highlights several of the cultural and ancestral practices identified with the Maya Achí through a combination of narrative text and photographic visuals. This theme emphasizes the importance and need to recover historical memory. The narrative text in Spanish that accompanies the exhibit's photographs informs us that the genocide destroyed the social fabric of the group, one of the museum's objectives being to restore that social fabric and recover cultural practices, particularly those generally associated with women's roles.

The narrative text further explains that because many of the survivors experienced forced internal displacement, the Achí became separated from the objects of their material culture including musical instruments and masks used in spiritual practices, access to medicinal plants, and community food and drinks that defined their culture. Featured is a case of archeological objects, a display of masks and musical instruments integral to spiritual ceremonies and four prominent poster sized displays that highlight the important role women have fulfilled in the community that present activities of Achí life and culture before genocide.

#### *VI.1. Memory-Words in the Museo Comunitario de la Memoria Histórica*

Within the cultural space of the museum, we come to appreciate the totality of the Achí culture and the museum's educative function in promoting the importance of cultural rights as human rights. Evaluating the Rabinal Memorial Museum's educative and moral function, we explored its visitor engagement exhibits by examining their reflections on the museum experience as recorded in the museum's guest book – the approach we replicated in the *Casa de la Memoria Kaji Tulam*. Again, our categories centered around the recovery of historical memory and collective Maya identity; the memorialization and dignification of the victims; the necessity to never forget; and the importance of the functional space of the museum as an edifice to disseminate this information. Moreover, we wanted to know if memory-words capture the questions we sought to answer regarding the functions of each museum particularly as they relate to transitional justice as well as concepts such as reconciliation, reparations,

remembrance, historical, and collective memory? And among those visitors who identify as Maya, can we ascertain how they perceive the goals of the respective museums and how they may be linked to the respective Maya normative systems? Did memory-words result in a particular message (specific to Guatemala) or a more universal message of “never again” that mirrors current mass atrocities and human rights abuses world-wide, and if so, in what context?

The majority of memory-words in the visitor log at the *Museo Comunitario de la Memoria Histórica* were left by guests primarily from the department of Baja Verapaz. Visitors emphasized appreciation for the museum’s attention to the importance of both victim and cultural remembrance and for documenting the historical memory of the Achí during the internal armed conflict. Of the 408 visitor comments recorded from April 2017 through September 2019, approximately eleven percent recognized the importance of historical and collective memory. None of the visitors expressed memory-words in any of the Mayan languages; instead, the overwhelming majority of memory-words recorded in the visitor book were written in Spanish, followed by English. Many of the memory-words were complimentary on the museum’s design and exhibits, expressing their appreciation for the museum’s memorial and museum functions. In the nearly three years of comments, only four memory-words made any specific reference to the genocide with the expression “Guatemala Never Again” and these were written by visitors who listed their domicile as Guatemala City. Words or phrases that reference “never again” we documented more often in the museum’s Facebook posts as opposed to the in-person visitor log. Furthermore, the majority of visitor book memory-words expressed the importance of the recovery of historical memory and the importance of the dignification of the victims over labelling these as genocide.

## **VII. Conclusion**

In attempting to measure the efficacy of each museum’s ability to affect a particular moral response on the part of its visitors, i.e., “never-again”, we can tentatively conclude that the memory-words left in both museums the *Casa de la Memoria*, *Kaji Tulam* and the *Museo Comunitario de la Memoria Histórica* varied according to the type of visitor we were able to identify. Keeping in mind what Apsel and Sodaro voice when they note that even though museums strive to change their visitors, “it is highly unlikely that a visitor can be ethically

transformed after just a few hours in an exhibit”<sup>24</sup>. While both museums embrace exhibition styles that appeal to an emotion-laden collective memory, visitors bring their own experiences and backgrounds to these spaces which shapes their responses.

In the *Casa de la Memoria, Kaji Tulam* the majority of visitors who recorded their memory-words were middle and high school students. By their own admission, this was their first exposure to the tragedy of the internal armed conflict and its impact on the Maya. Moreover, given their education levels, we can speculate that they lack awareness of concepts such as transitional justice and “si hubo genocidio/there was a genocide” particularly given that the State denies such an event took place. Furthermore, the *Casa de la Memoria, Kaji Tulam’s* exhibits are primarily based in visual narrative and do not include video testimonies that would give visitors an opportunity to identify with a person that could potentially elicit an emotive response. Also, neither of the museums and their exhibits are centered around themes of transitional justice or “never-again” nor are any of the current judicial proceedings against perpetrators featured. Memory-words that do express the notion of “never-again” were left by visitors with an awareness of the genocide and violence against the Maya.

In the *Museo Comunitario de la Memoria Histórica*, most of the visitors come from the local Achí community and many of them are repeat visitors. They often attend commemorative and educative events held at the museum and often use the visitor book as a check-in log of museum traffic. Moreover, they are primarily Achí Maya language speakers and aside from checking in, rarely leave memory-words in the visitor log. Of the many Spanish or English memory-words which did express solidarity with the Maya Achí, these comments are left primarily by university students that come from the United States or from Guatemala City.

While neither museum directly imparted to its visitors an ethos of “never-again”, both memorial museums fulfilled their museum, memorial, and even the moral function albeit not as a direct expression of “never-again”. Memory-words expressed by visitors to both museums did speak to the importance of learning about the recent past and the importance of collective memory and expressed gratitude for the educational role played by each museum. Lastly, the ability of each museum to adapt its exhibition space holds the promise of eliciting an ethos of “never-again”.

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<sup>24</sup> Apsel and Sodaro, *Museums and Sites of Persuasion*, 10.

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## U.S.-CHINA COMPETITION: IS A CHINESE CYCLE OF POWER POSSIBLE?

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**Abstract:** The cycle of power is a theory of international relations developed by George Modelski during the Cold War in order to identify the mechanism of power transfer from one global power to another. To become a world power, a country must fulfil four conditions: a specific geography, a democracy and an open society, a leading economy, and the development of a global strategy. The last cycle of power in modern history was the American cycle, which began at the end of the Second World War and has continued until the present day, with the USSR and China as challengers. Therefore, the US-China rivalry can be seen as a case study to examine the theory of power transition and China's potential to become a world power. China fulfils three of the four conditions proposed by George Modelski in his theory in order to become a world power, but due to the distribution of power in East Asia, China's ability to become a world power remains extremely limited. Moreover, China's incorporation into the international institutional architecture created by the United States is advantageous because it increases the likelihood of a peaceful transition of power between the two countries. However, despite China's ability to create a cycle of power, it will continue to be a second-rank power in the international system, which can lead to political, social, or economic instability. As a result, it will be difficult for the Chinese leadership to create a cycle of power in the future while maintaining its political influence.

**Keywords:** cycle of power, global war, power transition, US-China competition, world power, Belt and Road Initiative, socialism with Chinese characteristics

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**Rezumat:** Teoria ciclurilor de putere este o teorie apărută în perioada Războiului Rece, creată de către George Modelski, având rolul să prezinte mecanismul de schimbare a puterii de la o putere globală la alta. Pentru a deveni o putere globală o țară trebuie să îndeplinească câteva condiții: o geografie specifică, să fie o democrație și o societate deschisă, să fie cea mai puternică economie și să dezvolte o strategie globală. În istoria modernă, ultimul ciclu de putere este cel american, care a început la sfârșitul celui de-al Doilea Război Mondial, continuând până în prezent, având ca principali competitori - URSS și China. Din acest motiv, competiția SUA-China poate să fie văzută ca un studiu de caz pentru testarea teoriei și pentru a determina dacă China are capacitatea de a deveni o putere mondială. Astfel, pentru a deveni o putere mondială, China îndeplinește deja un număr de trei din patru condiții propuse de Modelski în acest sens, dar din

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cauza distribuției de putere din Asia de Est, capacitatea ei de a deveni o putere mondială este foarte limitată. Pe de altă parte, integrarea Chinei în arhitectura instituțională creată de SUA la nivel internațional, face posibilă existența unei tranziții pașnice între cele două puteri. Dar, în ciuda faptului că aceasta are capacitatea de a crea un ciclu de putere, este foarte probabil să rămână o putere de rang secund în interiorul sistemului internațional, iar acest lucru poate genera crize politice, economice și sociale. În consecință, conducerea chineză se va confrunta cu o provocare în încercarea de a crea un ciclu de putere și, în același timp, de a își menține influența politică.

**Cuvinte cheie:** tranziție de putere, ciclu de putere, competiția SUA-China, puterea mondială, război global, socialismul cu caracteristici chinezești, Inițiativa Belt and Road

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## I. Introduction

**D**uring the Cold War, power transition theories were developed in order to identify the mechanism by which hegemonic power shifts from one state to another. A. F. Organski developed the first power transition theory based on economic development, describing international system as a pyramidal structure, with the dominant nation at the top, controlling the entire international order and deriving the greatest benefits from the system, followed by the great powers and the other systemic powers. Due to the rapid development of industrialization, the distribution of power within the system often shifts, and war occurs when a great power is powerful enough to challenge the dominant nation and its allies. If the challenger succeeds, it becomes the next dominant power and reorganises the international system; if it fails, it assumes a secondary supporting role, as Germany did after the First and Second World Wars<sup>1</sup>.

Robert Gilpin developed the second theory, known as the theory of hegemonic war. According to this theory, the international system is dominated by a hegemonic power, which must generate sufficient resources and reduce its costs of control to maintain the status quo. However, as the costs of control rise, the hegemon's influence declines and the challenger is ready to become the new hegemon. A hegemonic conflict is initiated between the dominant power or powers and the challenger or challengers in order to facilitate a power transition. This conflict is global, and all system countries are involved. In addition, the hegemonic war is a conflict on all levels of influence – economic, ideological, and political. This struggle involves unlimited means, because there are many

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<sup>1</sup> A.F. Organski, *World Politics* (New York: Random House, 1968), 364-367, 371-372.

participants and the stakes are high. If the challenger prevails, the system will be governed by a new distribution of power, territory, and resources, as well as new norms. After each hegemonic conflict, a new cycle of growth, expansion and decline will emerge<sup>2</sup>.

George Modelski developed the third theory, known as the cycle of power, in which the dominant power in the international system attempts to define a cycle of expansion and decline for that country. Compared to the previous two theories, the cycle of power attempts to define the mechanism of growth and decline more precisely. In the case of Organski and Gilpin, neither defines the stages through which a simple power becomes a dominant power. Similarly, a dominant power declines so that it can be challenged by other powers within the system. Furthermore, the first two theories attribute a decline of a power to the economy, whereas Modelski attempts to define a more complex model that includes economic variables, technological development and political innovation created by the dominant power. In Modelski's case, decline is due more to the deterioration of the world power's ability to control the system than to economic stagnation or rising costs of government. On the other hand, in all three cases, the transition from one hegemon to another is achieved through a global conflict involving all the powers in the international system. Moreover, the challenger is a power that seeks to reshape and establish a new international order based on its international ambitions. In conclusion, George Modelski's cycle of power theory is more complex and involves more variables in the development of a world power. The economic variables can explain China's rise in recent years, but the cycle of power is more appropriate for determining whether China can transform itself from a challenger to a superpower. Because of its complex analysis of the rise and fall of a dominant power, George Modelski's theory of cycles of power is more appropriate for determining whether a Chinese cycle of power, is feasible in the near future.

According to George Modelski, world powers are always maritime or oceanic powers, such as Portugal, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States. A sea power is an island or semi-island nation with a highly developed economy and the ability to control the sea to impose its global order. All world power challengers, on the other hand, are landlocked countries that share land

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<sup>2</sup> Robert Gilpin, *War & Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 197-200, 210.

borders with other states or powers in the international system<sup>3</sup>. The United States is considered a sea power because of its quick access to the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, while China is a land power because of its limited access to the Pacific Ocean and its land borders with other Asian nations.

Because of its geographical location, China will devote its resources first to regional land or water disputes and then to international issues. In the future, the transition from one cycle of power to the next will be challenging because a conflict between the world power and the challenger could be both conventional and nuclear. In view of these circumstances, the process of transition should be carried out without the use of force. In addition, China's ability to create the next cycle of power will be determined by its ability to overcome its regional and domestic problems. China may become the leading economic power in the international system in the coming decades; but the process of creating a new cycle of power is still in its infancy. This status will not give China the ability to create a new cycle of power; it will only give it the ability to become the most important economic centre in the entire market. As a result, China will seek to seize future opportunities to become the next global leader, but this will be extremely difficult given the lack of a global network of alliances and its limited power projection outside East Asia<sup>4</sup>. In a world where the United States has already solved these two geopolitical problems since 1945, it will be difficult for China to solve them in its case. However, if China is able to overcome these challenges, it will be the first land power to create a cycle of power.

## II. Methodology

In order to determine whether or not China can establish a cycle of power in the future, it will be necessary to test George Modelski's theory using the US-China geopolitical and geoeconomic competition as a case study. Case studies can be used for the following purposes: description, hypothesis generation or theory development, hypothesis and theory evaluation, and normative theory development. In order to test a theory, it is essential to carry out the following

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<sup>3</sup> George Modelski and William R. Thompson, *Seapower in Global Politics, 1494-1993* (London: MacMillan Press, 1988), 5, 11-12, 16-18; George Modelski, *Long Cycles in the World Politics* (London: Macmillan Press, 1987), 10, 33.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Christensen, *China ca provocare. Cum pot fi modelate alegerile unei puteri în ascensiune*. (București: Comunicare.ro, 2016), 265.

four steps: develop a hypothesis or theory; gather evidence from history, interviews, etc.; identify alternative explanations for effects; and gather evidence that the alternatives did not occur or did not cause the effects. However, it is crucial to identify the necessary and sufficient cases to validate the theory. Therefore, the case study can be used to test the hypothesis for events that are in the process of occurring or are influenced by the present history<sup>5</sup>.

This case study covers the period from 2008, when the most recent economic crisis began, to the present day, with East Asia and the international system serving as the geographical boundaries. To construct this comparison, each of the conditions proposed by George Modelski in his theory are evaluated in relation to China. In addition, we describe the other cycles of power in history and then offer offensive realism as an alternative explanation for China's rise. Finally, we use offensive realism to explain China's inability to become a world power. To do so, we analyse the geopolitical characteristics of East Asia and the major regional issues that have a direct impact on China. On this basis, we can determine how many of George Modelski's cycle of power characteristics China fulfils and what advantages the United States has over China in terms of creating a Chinese cycle of power.

### **III. The Cycles of Power: An Overview**

According to George Modelski, there are three distinct categories of powers in the international system: the global power, the challengers to the global power and the other powers in the system. The global power is the only power within the system that has a military advantage over the other powers. However, this advantage does not imply that the global power has the ability to project its influence globally<sup>6</sup>. At the same time, the challenger is the power that aspires to become the next global power in order to restructure the system in accordance with its objectives. The transition from challenger to global power occurs during global conflicts, but competition can begin in peacetime<sup>7</sup>. The final category

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<sup>5</sup> Thomas A. Schwandt and Emily F. Gates, "Case Study Methodology", in *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research (Fifth Edition)*, ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2017), 604, 612-614.

<sup>6</sup> Modelski, *Long Cycles in the World Politics*, 10.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 10-11.

consists of powers with insufficient resources to become challengers or global powers, erstwhile global powers, and former challengers<sup>8</sup>.

A global power can only be a maritime power because only maritime powers can become status quo powers and have the ability to control the world's oceans. The sea power had a distinct advantage over the land powers because its geography made it less vulnerable to attacks from the continent, and the restraining power of water prevented it from waging war against any land power<sup>9</sup>. On the other hand, a land power is always considered a challenger power because of its ability to project power in multiple directions, on land and at sea, but there is a high probability that it will be balanced by a coalition led by the global power<sup>10</sup>. However, if the challenger is defeated during a war, the balancing coalition tends to disintegrate and the former allies may eventually become the new global power challengers<sup>11</sup>. During the Cold War, China was an ally of the United States against the Soviet Union after the Sino-Soviet split, but it has since become the main challenger to the US international order.

Based on the distinction between a land power and a sea power, Modelski found that only nine nations had the potential to become global powers: Spain, Portugal, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, France, Germany, Japan, the United States, and the Soviet Union. Only four of these became global powers (Portugal, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States), while the others became their rivals<sup>12</sup>.

Therefore, for a nation to become a global power, it must have the following four characteristics<sup>13</sup>:

1. *A favourable geography* – this means that countries that are insular, peninsular, or oceanic island nations have a distinct advantage over continental countries because they have rapid access to the global ocean and the ability to protect their borders more effectively than continental nations<sup>14</sup>;

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>9</sup> Modelski, *Long Cycles in the World Politics*, 10; Tunsjø, Øystein. *The Return of Bipolarity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 14-15; John, Mearsheimer. *Tragedia Politicii de Forță*. (București: Antet, 2007), 85-88.

<sup>10</sup> Modelski, *Long Cycles in the World Politics*, 33.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 220.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 221.

2. *A cohesive and open society* – indicates that the society is stable and free from unrest or internal conflict, that civil liberties are protected, and that the society is welcoming to immigrants<sup>15</sup>;
3. *A leading economy* – indicates that the global power should become the preeminent economic power in the international system. As a leading economy, the global power has sufficient resources to invest in innovation and in solving global problems. However, as innovation declines, the global power loses resources and its influence begins to decline<sup>16</sup>;
4. *A global political strategy* – indicates that a global power has a plan for organising the international order. In the past, the United Kingdom (UK) aimed to have the world’s most powerful navy. This gave the UK the ability to control trade routes and project influence in different regions of the world<sup>17</sup>. Similarly, the United States uses its naval superiority to ensure the freedom of navigation and its military innovation to maintain peace in certain regions of the globe.

Once a nation has acquired all the characteristics of a global power, its period of domination and regulation of the global system lasts at least one hundred years. Each 100-year period is known as a cycle of power, which consists of four phases lasting between 25 and 30 years: Global War, World Power, Delegitimization, and Deconcentration<sup>18</sup>.

*The Global War* is the phase during which a new global power begins to establish a new international order within the system. A cycle of power is the interval between two global conflicts, characterised by a period of stability during which the global power creates a new political order<sup>19</sup>. Global wars differ from regional, national, and local conflicts in the following ways<sup>20</sup>:

- Each global war lasts between 25 and 30 years;
- The global war has a global purpose and a global participation, so that all the powers of the system are involved;
- All global wars can be explained by a structural crisis caused by the delegitimation of the global power and the erosion of its power base;
- Every global war will lead to a new structure of the global system.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 222-223.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 223-224.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 224-225.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 44, 93, 103, 119-120.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 36-37.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 37.

*The World Power* is the phase in the cycle of power in which the global power dominates the system by imposing a new political and economic order. This is the only phase in which the influence of the global power increases and the ability of the other powers to challenge it is limited<sup>21</sup>.

*Delegitimisation* is the phase in which the authority of the global power begins to erode and its ability to regulate the system begins to decline. During this phase, the other powers become increasingly nationalistic, and a new power emerges within the system<sup>22</sup>. *Deconcentration* is the final stage, in which the global authority loses influence and the system becomes multipolar. During this stage, the system is bipolarised between two global alliances, and a new global conflict begins<sup>23</sup>.

Using his theory, George Modelski identified four cycles of power in history: the Portuguese Cycle with Spain as the main challenger; the Dutch cycle with France as the main challenger; the First British Cycle with France as the main challenger, Second British Cycle with Germany as the main challenger; the American Cycle with the USSR as challenger after the Second World War until the end of the Cold War, and the current American Cycle with China as the main challenger<sup>24</sup>. To create a cycle of power, a global power must be one of the most technologically advanced nations, as Portugal was when it revolutionised the maritime industry, or it must become the most important economic power in the system, as the United Kingdom did during the second cycle of power by spearheading the Industrial Revolution and supporting international trade<sup>25</sup>. In addition, a global entity must be able to find solutions to global problems that arise after a new political order. To solve these problems, however, the global power must strike a balance between its national resources and its ability to model the system. The existence of these cycles of power can be used to gather historical evidence to test George Modelski's theory<sup>26</sup>.

In analysing the last cycle of power, the Global War phase is considered to be the Second World War and the period from 1945 to the present represents the World Power phase. During these phases, the United States became the preeminent power in the international system and established a number of international institutions to govern the system. During the same period, the

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 119-120.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 119-120.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 120.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 15, 86.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 65.

United States initiated the formation of a series of regional alliances that continue to be used to preserve the US liberal order. Identifying the Delegitimization phase of the US cycle is extremely difficult because, despite the fact that the US' economic power declined during the 2008 economic crisis and China became the second economic power in 2010, US political and military power remains intact.

The launch of BRICS and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), or the American withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021, did not diminish US political and military power because Washington was able to establish two regional alliances during the same time period: Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) and Australia-United Kingdom-United States (AUKUS). At the same time, the presidency of Xi Jinping, which began in 2013, can be seen as a form of the Delegitimization phase, as the Chinese leader seeks to challenge the liberal order by adopting a multilateral approach and win-win cooperation. In addition, the Chinese President introduced the concept of the “Chinese Dream” in order to transform China into a superpower by 2049, the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic of China (PRC)<sup>27</sup>.

The concept behind the Chinese Dream is that China can reassert itself as a superpower within the international system, similar to how imperial China did in the past, when it was considered a regional power centre. Before becoming a superpower, however, China aims to become one of the first major players in the next technological revolution by launching the Made in China 2025 programme in 2015. China is keen to develop its industry and research in a number of priority sectors, including information technology, automation, the aerospace industry, the maritime industry, the transport system, renewable energy, the power industry, agriculture and medicine, according to this programme<sup>28</sup>. If China is able to overtake the United States and become the first technological power in the international system, this programme has the potential to create a cycle of power and make China the most formidable technological rival to the United States.

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<sup>27</sup> Xi Jinping, *The Governance of China, Vol. I* (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 2014), 56-58.

<sup>28</sup> Scott Kennedy, “Made in China 2025”, *Center for Strategies & International Studies*, June 1, 2015, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/made-china-2025>, accessed on July 29, 2023.



## IV. Creating a New Cycle of Power

The US-China competition can be seen as a form of power transition, with the US as the global power and China as the challenger, but the beginning of this competition is difficult to pinpoint historically. In our opinion, the economic crisis of 2008 can be seen as a turning point, when the soft power of the United States was affected by the crisis, while the soft power of China increased due to its stable economy and high economic growth rate. The second turning point occurred between 2009 and 2010, when China initiated the formation of BRICS with other emerging economies from the international system. The third turning point occurred when the United States redefined its relationship with China, coining the term *Pivot to Asia* in order to shift its foreign policy priorities from the Middle East to East Asia<sup>29</sup>. The fourth event occurred in 2013, when Chinese President Xi Jinping announced the creation of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the first international investment initiative developed by China<sup>30</sup>. The fifth moment was when the United States criticised China for its artificial islands in the South China Sea and its use of civil-military operations to expand its economic zone in the region<sup>31</sup>.

In 2022, the People’s Republic of China launched military exercises around Taiwan in response to the visit of former Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi<sup>32</sup>. This is reminiscent of one of the Taiwan Strait crises that began in 1950, when the Nationalist forces took control of the island at the end of the Chinese Civil War. During the same period, the competition between the United States and China moved from a regional to a global level. The first phase of the global competition between the United States and China began in 2018, when former US President Donald Trump initiated a trade conflict with the PRC. The cause of the trade war was Donald Trump’s protectionist policies, which were implemented by US industries in order to strengthen US economic power.

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<sup>29</sup> Hillary Clinton, “America’s Pacific Century”, *Foreign Policy*, no. 189 (November 2011): 58-60.

<sup>30</sup> Xi Jinping, *The Governance of China*, 312-316, 317-320.

<sup>31</sup> Michael McDevitt, “The South China Sea: Assessing U.S. Policy and Options for the Future”, CNA Occasional Paper, November 2014, 9-16, 32-35, [https://www.cna.org/archive/CNA\\_Files/pdf/iop-2014-u-009109.pdf](https://www.cna.org/archive/CNA_Files/pdf/iop-2014-u-009109.pdf), accessed on July 29, 2023.

<sup>32</sup> Wayne Chang et al., “China military rehearses ‘encircling’ Taiwan after US Speaker visit”, CNN, April 8, 2023, <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/04/07/china/china-taiwan-military-exercises-hnk-intl-ml/index.html>, accessed on July 29, 2023.

The trade war consisted of a series of customs tariffs imposed on certain Chinese-made goods. In order to reduce some economic barriers, the two nations signed the first phase of a trade agreement in 2020, but despite a change of Administration in Washington that same year, the trade war continues to this day. The second phase of the competition was banning of Chinese 5G technology used to develop 5G communication networks worldwide. To achieve this, the Trump Administration sued a number of European and Asian allies to enact national legislation banning Chinese companies from participating in the development of 5G networks. This is because the United States wanted to stop the accelerated development of Chinese 5G technology around its allies, largely because the Chinese technology is perceived as a threat to the country's cybersecurity<sup>33</sup>. However, the shift from a regional to a global competition does not mean it will become a power transition competition. To determine whether the global competition will lead to a power transition, we need to apply George Modelski's theory to determine whether China will become the next global power.

Geography is the first characteristic to be analysed: China's geographical area is 9,326,410 square kilometres, and its coastline on the Pacific Ocean is 14,500 kilometres long<sup>34</sup>. It is protected in the north by the Gobi Desert, which, historically, made an invasion from Russia somewhat difficult, and in the south by the Himalayas and the jungle<sup>35</sup>. The Himalayas can prevent India from conquering Chinese territory, and the rainforest prevents China from expanding its influence in Southeast Asia<sup>36</sup>. China's most vulnerable border is in the province of Manchuria, because its geography makes a land invasion possible and China has been threatened in this region twice in history. The second was during the Cold War, when China had a border conflict with the Soviet Union along the Amur River. The Korean Peninsula is also a geographical vulnerability for China, as the Japanese invasion of China began after Japan conquered the peninsula in 1910, and again during the Korean War, when United Nations (UN) forces advanced close to the Yalu River, the natural border between China and North Korea. Because of this vulnerability, China will continue to support

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<sup>33</sup> Robin Emmott, "U.S. warns European allies not to use Chinese gear for 5G networks", *Reuters*, February 5, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-china-huawei-tech-eu-idUSKCN1PU1TG>, accessed on July 29, 2023.

<sup>34</sup> CIA, "Explore All Countries: China", *The World Factbook*, August 30, 2022, <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/china/>, accessed on May 07, 2023.

<sup>35</sup> Øystein, *The Return of Bipolarity in World Politics*, 108.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 186-187.

the communist regime in North Korea in order to use it as a buffer against the US troops stationed in South Korea.

Moreover, any attempt to unify the two states could be seen as a threat to China's interests in the region, since a unified Korea would no longer serve as a buffer state and its foreign policy would be more anti-Chinese than pro-Chinese. The same is true of Vietnam, which, despite being a communist regime, has an anti-Chinese foreign policy and sees China's growing military dominance as a threat to its independence. China, on the other hand, is trying to use geography to its advantage in terms of maritime territory. In the case of the East China Sea, China is using the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands dispute with Japan to extend its exclusive economic zone, while in the case of the South China Sea, it is creating artificial islands to claim territorial waters in a maritime area contested by Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, the Philippines, Indonesia and Taiwan.

The second characteristic is a cohesive and open society, which is highly questionable in the case of China, given that it is a communist state ruled by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Also, China is no longer a totalitarian state, but rather an authoritarian one, with nationalism, communism and Confucianism as its primary political ideologies, although Confucianism is seen more as a religion<sup>37</sup>. After Deng Xiaoping's Four Modernizations, China changed from a communist state with a command economy to a communist state with a free market economy, a model known as *socialism with Chinese characteristics*. This allowed the CCP to survive the end of the Cold War by transforming the country's economy from a planned to a free market. Unlike former European communist states, the CCP was able to offer economic growth and social stability in exchange for freedom and democracy, so China did not become a democracy as a result of its economic transformation<sup>38</sup>.

China is seen as a unique paradigm because neither the middle class nor rapid economic development have been able to produce the democratic wave that Samuel Huntington predicted would accompany the third wave of democratisation<sup>39</sup>. One possible explanation for this paradox is the notion that,

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<sup>37</sup> Paul F. Scotchmer, "Is China headed for a clash of cultures as Xi Jinping fuses Confucius and Marx?", *South China Morning Post*, July 27, 2019, <https://www.scmp.com/comment/opinion/article/3017929/china-headed-clash-cultures-xi-jinping-fuses-confucius-and-marx>, accessed on May 18, 2023.

<sup>38</sup> Helen Gao, "The Chinese Public Doesn't Know What the Rules Are Anymore", *Foreign Policy*, September 05, 2022, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/09/05/china-communist-party-ccp-economy-zero-covid-protests-mortgage-strike/>, accessed on May 7, 2023.

<sup>39</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave. Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma, 1991), 66-69.

because the size of the country, only a centralised power system can govern it without sparking civil conflict, as happened during the time of the Republic of China<sup>40</sup>. Without political, cultural and religious freedom, stabilisation could become a major obstacle to China's future development. The Uighur minority from Xinjiang and the Hong Kong population are both treated strictly for their political and cultural beliefs. Because of these actions, the former Trump administration accused China of committing genocide against the Uighur minority and ended Hong Kong's preferential treatment<sup>41</sup>.

Immigration is an additional concern for China, mainly because the nation cannot become a cultural and technological melting pot like the United States. Important characteristics of an open society are an open immigration policy and a good integration policy, but in the case of China, the nationalism of the Han ethnic group and the low integration of the other ethnic groups indicate that the country is still far from being open to immigrants. As Lee Kuan Wee, the late Prime Minister of Singapore, said in an interview with Graham Allison, this is seen as another major disadvantage for China vis-à-vis the United States, and it will affect China's future development<sup>42</sup>.

The third characteristic is that China was expected to become the dominant economic power in the near future, but the Covid-19 pandemic, high debts, and low population growth have slowed China's economic development<sup>43</sup>. In contrast, China will remain the world's second largest economy, as evidenced by the country's GDP growth from \$ 191.15 billion in 1980 to \$ 17.73 trillion in 2021<sup>44</sup>. Similarly, the United States' GDP rose from \$ 11.33 trillion in 1980 to \$

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<sup>40</sup> Graham Allison and Robert D. Backwell, *Lee Kuan Yew. The Grand Master's Insight on China, the United States, and the World* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, 2013), 35-36.

<sup>41</sup> Eduard Wong and Chris Buckley, "U.S. Says China's Repression of Uighurs Is 'Genocide'", *The New York Times*, January 19, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/19/us/politics/trump-china-xinjiang.html>, accessed on May 18, 2023; Sabrina, Rodriguez,, "Trump signs Hong Kong sanctions bill in blow for China", *Politico*, July 14, 2020, <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/07/14/trump-hong-kong-china-sanctions-361636>, accessed on May 18, 2023.

<sup>42</sup> Allison, *Lee Kuan Yew. The Grand Master's Insight*, 31, 40.

<sup>43</sup> The Economist, "When will China's GDP overtake America's?", June 7, 2023, <https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2023/06/07/when-will-chinas-gdp-overtake-americas>, accessed on July 29, 2023; Stella Yifan Xie, "China's Economy Won't Overtake the U.S., Some Now Predict", *The Wall Street Journal*, September 2, 2022, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/will-chinas-economy-surpass-the-u-s-s-some-now-doubt-it-11662123945>, accessed on July 29, 2023.

<sup>44</sup> The World Bank, "GDP (current US\$) – China", <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=CN>, accessed on May 09, 2023.

23.32 trillion in 2021<sup>45</sup>. China's annual growth increased from 7.8% in 1980 to 14.2% in 2007; but the country's growth slowed to 2.2% in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic and then returned to 8.1% in 2021<sup>46</sup>. On the other hand, US economic growth was 1.9% in 1980, -1.3% in 2008, the first year of the most recent economic crisis, and -3.3% in 2020, with a spectacular increase to 5.8% in 2021<sup>47</sup>. With the exception of 2020, the annual growth rate in US was between 2% and 4%, while China's annual growth rate was more than 6%. The Chinese economy will expand, despite a growth rate of less than 6%, because Chinese companies can relocate from the East Coast to the interior of China as the coastal market develops. Similarly, the US economy may stagnate for an extended period of time between a 2-4% annual growth rate or a negative growth rate, because US companies have lost the huge advantage they once had in the global market, mainly due to the free transfer of technology to China, but also because other markets have developed local competitors for US products<sup>48</sup>. The US' GDP per capita increased from \$ 12,574 in 1980 to \$ 70,248 in 2021, while China's GDP per capita increased from \$ 194 in 1980 to \$ 12,556 in 2021<sup>49</sup>. China's GDP based on purchasing power parity (PPP) rose from \$ 1.62 trillion in 1990 to \$ 24.86 trillion in 2021, while the US GDP (PPP) per capita rose from \$ 10.1 trillion in 1990 to \$ 21.13 trillion in 2021<sup>50</sup>.

Graham Allison, who believes that China has already overtaken the United States in terms of GDP at PPP per capita, argues that China will be the economic powerhouse of the 21<sup>st</sup> century<sup>51</sup>. Thomas Christensen, on the other hand, sees China's rise not as an alternative to the US liberal order, but as a power that is highly dependent on the global market and still invests in US

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<sup>45</sup> The World Bank, "GDP (current US\$) - United States", <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=US>, accessed on May 09, 2023.

<sup>46</sup> The World Bank, "GDP growth (annual %) – China", <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=CN>, accessed on May 09, 2023.

<sup>47</sup> The World Bank, "GDP growth (annual %) – United States", <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=US>, accessed on May 09, 2023.

<sup>48</sup> John Mearsheimer, "The Inevitable Rivalry", *Foreign Affairs*, no. 11-12 ( November/December 2021): 51-52.

<sup>49</sup> The World Bank, "GDP per capita (current US\$) – United States, China", <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?end=2021&locations=US-CN&start=1980>, accessed on May, 19, 2023.

<sup>50</sup> The World Bank, "GDP, PPP (constant 2017 international \$) – United States, China", <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.PP.KD?locations=US-CN>, accessed on May 19, 2023.

<sup>51</sup> Graham Allison, "The Thucydides Trap: Are the U.S. and China Headed for War?", *The Atlantic*, September 24, 2015, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/09/united-states-china-war-thucydides-trap/406756/>, accessed on May 20, 2023.

dollars. Furthermore, Christensen believes that using PPP as an index to compare the US and Chinese economies is not very accurate because PPP only measures a country's ability to purchase some products, but not of the same quality<sup>52</sup>. On the other hand, the index does not indicate how much money the Chinese are willing to donate to support the international ambitions of the political leader. Christensen suggests using GDP per capita as a measure to determine of how much money the Chinese population has<sup>53</sup>. In this case, however, the GDP/capita index is also inaccurate, because China and the United States do not have the same population, and the United States has a significant advantage. In addition, the distribution of GDP in both countries can vary from region to region and within social classes. It is therefore somewhat difficult to use an economic index to determine which nation leads the economic system. As a result, from an economic perspective, it will be extremely difficult to determine which nation will be the leading economic power in the next decade, but China still has more advantages than the United States.

The final feature relates to China's global strategy, in which it is able to launch international initiatives to challenge the US international order. The BRICS initiative was launched in 2009, followed by the BRI in 2013, and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) in 2016. The most significant of these three projects is the Belt and Road Initiative, a multi-country global infrastructure investment initiative. Launched by Chinese President Xi Jinping in two speeches in Kazakhstan and Indonesia, the BRI has, overtime, become China's most important international initiative<sup>54</sup>. From the outset, the BRI was seen as a means to connect China with Africa, the Middle East and Europe in order to cooperate in various fields and improve the global market distribution chain, but the initiative has many drawbacks. On the other hand, BRICS and AIIB were perceived as a form of competition to the international financial institutions established by the United States after Bretton Woods<sup>55</sup>.

The BRI infrastructure initiatives are seen as both an advantage and a disadvantage for the development of these countries. Many of the countries in

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<sup>52</sup> Christensen, *China ca provocare*, 181-184.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>54</sup> Xi Jinping, *The Governance of China*, 312-316, 317-320.

<sup>55</sup> Adrian Pop and Andreea Brînză, "Power Transition and Balance of Power: Comprehending the Power Dynamics of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century", *Public Administration & Regional Studies*, 10<sup>th</sup> Year, No. 1 (19), (2017): 67; Adrian Pop, "Rising Through the Crisis: The Impact of Emerging Countries on the Future Distribution of Power", *Knowledge Horizons – Economics* 6, no. 2, (2014): 27.

which China is investing are not particularly wealthy in terms of their GDP, and after the Chinese companies have completed their projects, many of them have fallen into a debt trap. In some African countries, this has led to popular uprising against political leaders, first because of the debt trap, and then because Chinese companies brought in their own labour instead of using local workers to build the projects<sup>56</sup>. Despite these drawbacks, the BRI managed to convince the Group of Seven (G7) nations that it posed a threat to their soft power influence in Africa and Asia. As a result, they began to develop projects with similar goals, such as the Blue Dot Network in 2019, Build Back Better World in 2021 and the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment in 2022, but none of these projects have the same international impact as the BRI.

## V. A Chinese Cycle of Power?

To become a global power, China fulfils three out of four conditions, although its geographical position is still seen as a disadvantage. This position will allow China to develop a new cycle of power, which, if successful, will be the first cycle of power created by a continental power. However, in order to become the next global power, China must find the most effective means of achieving a peaceful transition, as in the case of the UK and the US, where their democratic and cultural traditions made it possible<sup>57</sup>. This view is supported by Zhiqun Zu, who argues that a peaceful transition of power between China and the United States is only possible if both countries are satisfied with the status quo. For this to happen, there must be a favourable political and social relationship between the world power and the challenger in both countries. In addition, the establishment of economic, political, and cultural ties between the two powers can facilitate a peaceful transfer of power<sup>58</sup>.

Similarly, Pop and Brînză believe that China can make a peaceful transition to the position of global power because it is already integrated into the global system and the danger of conflict between the challenger and the global power is reduced. Comparing China to the Soviet Union in the past, the economic interdependence between the two powers and China's policy of peaceful rise

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<sup>56</sup> Batty Fodbei, "No Question Asked? Development and the Paradox of China's Africa Policy", *Insight Turkey* 21, no. 1, (Winter 2019): 155-163.

<sup>57</sup> Graham Allison, *Destined For War* (Boston: Mariner Books, 2018), 271-273.

<sup>58</sup> Zhiqun Zu, "Power Transition and U.S.-China Relations: Is War Inevitable?", *Journal of International and Area Studies* 12, no. 1 (2005): 3-6.

may indicate a preference for accommodation from Beijing. However, the development of the Chinese military in recent years poses a threat of regional conflict<sup>59</sup>.

On the other hand, Robert Gilpin argues that a power transition through a hegemonic conflict is possible even in a nuclear era, but that the risk of devastating the world in the pursuit of the global power status will be extremely high compared to a peaceful transition<sup>60</sup>. Therefore, it will be difficult for China to provoke a hegemonic conflict, and it will have to tolerate becoming the world's leading economic power, but not the world's leading military power. Unlike the United States, China lacks a global network of alliances, and its geography will make it extremely difficult for it to project influence into other regions<sup>61</sup>. To successfully construct a cycle of power, China must be able to become a regional hegemon and obstruct any regional counterbalancing alliances formed in East Asia, with or without the support of another regional hegemon. Once a country becomes a regional hegemon, it can project its authority outside the region to prevent the formation or existence of other regional hegemons<sup>62</sup>.

This condition for a world power was not considered in George Modelski's theory, mainly because only the United States has succeeded to become both a regional hegemon and a global power. Due to their ability to fulfil all of the proposed conditions, the other world powers included in his theory did not achieve regional hegemony, but instead became world powers directly. Thus, the theory of long cycles has a weakness with respect to the modern distribution of power in the international system and the ability of a country to become first a regional hegemon and then a world power. On the other hand, the distribution of power within East Asia will limit China's ability to become a regional hegemon. According to Mearsheimer, the distribution of power in East Asia is an unbalanced multipolar system with three or more powers and a potential regional hegemon, in this case China<sup>63</sup>.

To counterbalance China's growing influence, other regional powers are interested in forming coalitions and alliances with the United States, as is the

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<sup>59</sup> Pop and Brînză, "Power Transition and Balance of Power, 69.

<sup>60</sup> Robert Gilpin, "The Theory of Hegemonic Wars", *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* XVIII, no. 4 (Spring 1988): 612.

<sup>61</sup> Christensen, *China ca provocare*, 265.

<sup>62</sup> Mearsheimer, *Tragedia Politicii de Forță*, 34-35, 102-103.

<sup>63</sup> John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2014), 337-338, 356-359.



case with QUAD and AUKUS. China is interested in pushing US military forces out of the East Asian region, at least beyond the First Chain of Islands, which includes the Sunda Islands, Japan, the Philippines and Taiwan<sup>64</sup>. But even if this scenario is plausible, China remains surrounded by regional powers interested in forming alliances to counter its hegemony. The void left by the United States in East Asia will not be immediately filled by China, and the quest for regional hegemony will be prolonged, with the possibility of the rise of another regional power. Moreover, if China succeeds in becoming a regional hegemon, it will be able to form counterbalancing alliances in the Western Hemisphere to challenge the United States. This allows China to pursue becoming a global hegemon, but this will continue to be difficult due to the resistance of water, especially the Pacific Ocean<sup>65</sup>. Thus, offensive realism can be seen as an alternative explanation for China's rise as a potential world power in the international system.

It will be crucial for Beijing to become a regional hegemon, as this will allow it to project power into other regions. Without this ability, a global power will not be able to create a cycle of power, and any challenger will be able to reform the system in order to become the next global power. China has opened a military base in Djibouti, but it lacks the ability to project military power outside of East Asia. China's ability to project power will therefore depend on the future bipolarisation between democracies and authoritarian regimes. This will be to China's advantage, as it will be able to extend its international initiatives to other authoritarian regimes and force them to use the renminbi or another international currency rather than the US dollar<sup>66</sup>.

From this perspective, China's soft power relative to the United States is increasing, especially through the global initiatives of the BRI. Many African and Southeast Asian nations view China as a superior source of foreign investment and economic aid compared to the United States. This is largely due to China's option not to link foreign aid and investment projects to democracy and civil rights reforms, which is a significant advantage for countries ruled by military or authoritarian regimes. However, this advantage can be turned against China if these nations fail to pay their debts, nationalise Chinese investments, or adopt a foreign policy hostile to China.

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<sup>64</sup> John Mearsheimer, "Can China Rise Peacefully?", *The National Interest*, October 25, 2014, <https://nationalinterest.org/commentary/can-china-rise-peacefully-10204>, accessed on July 31, 2023.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Pop, "Rising Through the Crisis", 27.

China's continued use of the U.S. dollar as its international currency, poses another threat to its power projection. This will limit Beijing's economic freedom, as the United States will be able to change the interest rate or print money to finance its national debt. The result could be a decline in China's gross domestic product, which could affect annual growth and population income. In addition, the United States and the European Union (EU) could impose trade barriers on Chinese products or make future investment conditional on improvements of democracy and human rights. This may affect China's domestic policies by facilitating the emergence of numerous human rights movements, as has happened in Eastern Europe after the 1975 Helsinki Conference. Some of these movements, such as those in Xinjiang, Tibet, Inner Mongolia, Hong Kong and Manchuria, may easily turn into nationalist movements, and the danger of China's disintegration may increase.

Unlike the United States, China will remain an authoritarian regime and a closed society, and it is extremely difficult to predict how a democratic system will be implemented in the country. First, because there is a significant possibility that China will revert to civil war between different factions or regional armies, as it did after the fall of the Chinese Empire, and second, because it is extremely difficult to establish a democratic tradition in a country that has been ruled for centuries by an emperor or in recent decades, by the PCC, with a centralised power structure. Obviously, it is possible to transfer the democratic governance of Taiwan or the democratic paradigm to the mainland. In this case, it is fascinating to observe how a democratic elite established on an island devises democratic remedies for issues that will dominate mainland politics. It is also possible to convert China from an authoritarian regime to a democracy by transforming the country from a unitary republic to a federation in which political parties and minorities are represented at both regional and national levels. On this basis, the new democratic government can delegate some administrative and political matters to the regional level, where there may be an elected regional executive and regional legislature.

Furthermore, if China is able to beat the United States in the 5G and AI competitions, it will have the technological edge it needs to become the next global power. Similar to Portugal, which revolutionised maritime transport, and England, which launched the Industrial Revolution, the 5G revolution will lead to a technological revolution in human history. If China is able to become the first technological power in the next decade, it will be able to influence future international legislation on the development of artificial intelligence and 5G

technology. Gaining this advantage will also give China a military advantage in terms of its ability to use AI in the next military confrontation. In such a scenario, the United States could lose its technological advantage over China, thereby reducing its global influence. Because of this risk, the United States is attempting to erect technological and political barriers in front of China to prevent it from adopting 5G technology, as was the case in Europe.

## **VI. Conclusion**

Although China fulfils three of George Modelski's four conditions for the establishment of a power cycle, the Chinese leadership still considers a power cycle an unattainable goal. On the other hand, George Modelski's theory has some shortcomings in its ability to predict long cycles. First, it is extremely difficult for the theory to predict the end of the US cycle based on the historical patterns that have emerged during other cycles of power, because the country is still in the World Power phase, although this phase should last no longer than 25 to 30 years. In addition, it is extremely difficult to predict when the Delegitimization phase begins or will begin in order to determine when the Deconcentration should occur. Moreover, the importance of sea power will diminish in the near future due to the new technologies that will be used in warfare, such as drones, artificial intelligence, robotics and cyberwarfare. However, if China is to continue to challenge the post-Cold War order established by the United States, the development of sea power will remain crucial for China in the foreseeable future.

Finally, without a network of alliances and with an authoritarian regime, its ability to project power beyond of East Asia will remain severely constrained. Despite China's potential to become the world's leading economic power, the likelihood that it will remain a secondary power in the global system is quite high. This circumstance could lead the Chinese leadership to use border issues as a way to gain more power in East Asia and to expand the country's influence. However, an unfavourable outcome of these events is likely to lead to protests, social unrest and an economic crisis, as well as a call for a change in the CCP leadership or support for democracy as an alternative to an authoritarian regime. In order to establish a Chinese cycle of power, the Chinese rulers will need to manage these situations very well in the coming decades if they are to maintain their influence.

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## **A CONSTRUCTIVIST ANALYSIS OF EGYPT’S NORMATIVE DUALITY: BETWEEN THE SPREAD OF U.S. NORMS AND THE AFTERMATH OF THE ARAB SPRING**

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**Abstract:** This paper delves into the dynamics of democratic norms formation in the MENA region, with a particular emphasis on Egypt’s normative duality. Grounded in the norm life cycle framework advanced by Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, this research analyses the promotion, dissemination, and internalization of democratic norms. A pivotal facet of this study lies in the juxtaposition between the normative stages delineated by the United States and Egypt’s distinct normative approach. More precisely, Egypt’s role has oscillated between serving as a normative leader and a normative disruptive force. By examining normative interactions, this study unveils Egypt’s normative duality and its broader implications in the MENA region. Employing a constructivist perspective, the research is structured into two distinct phases spanning the years from 2000 to 2011 and aims to analyze the promotion of democratic norms and their consequential impact. For the research framework, the article uses a qualitative methodology, focusing on the analysis of discourses from U.S. and Egyptian officials. Additionally, this work incorporates succinct quantitative details, rooted in the number of amendments and laws adopted in Egypt between 2005 and 2007, in order to ascertain the tangible outcomes of the normative influence exerted by the United States. Consequently, the research relies on both primary and secondary sources to assess the intersubjective meanings ascribed to democratic norms. Finally, this paper contributes to an enhanced understanding of normative dynamics in the MENA region, highlighting the normative pressure applied by the U.S. and its ensuing impact on the Mubarak regime.

**Keywords:** Arab Spring, democracy promotion, Egypt, Mubarak regime, normative breaker, normative cycle, normative duality, normative leader, U.S. foreign policy

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**Rezumat:** Această lucrare analizează dinamica normelor democratice în regiunea MENA, accentul fiind pus pe dualitatea normativă a Egiptului. Bazată pe ciclul normativ propus de Martha Finnemore și Kathryn Sikkink, cercetarea explorează promovarea, răspândirea și internalizarea normelor democratice. Un aspect central al studiului este confruntarea dintre etapele normative stabilite de SUA și abordarea distinctă a Egiptului. Mai exact, rolul Egiptului a oscilat între a fi un lider normativ și un factor normativ disruptiv. Prin examinarea atentă a interacțiunilor normative, acest

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studiu dezvăluie dualitatea normativă a Egiptului și implicațiile asupra cadrului mai larg al regiunii MENA. Utilizând o perspectivă constructivistă, cercetarea este structurată în două etape distincte care acoperă perioada anilor 2000-2011 pentru a analiza promovarea normelor democratice și impactul acestora. Utilizând o metodă calitativă, cercetarea analizează discursurile unor oficiali ai administrației americane, respectiv egiptene pe marginea unui studiu de caz reprezentat de Egipt în timpul declanșării procesului de tranziție. De asemenea, lucrarea cuprinde și detalii cantitative succinte bazate pe numărul de amendamente și legi adoptate în Egipt între anii 2005-2007 pentru a determina care sunt rezultatele concrete ale influenței normative exercitate de SUA. Astfel, cercetarea se bazează pe surse primare și secundare pentru a interpreta semnificațiile intersubiective atribuite normelor democratice. În final, lucrarea contribuie la înțelegerea dinamicii normative a regiunii MENA, punând în evidență presiunea normativă exercitată de SUA și impactul acesteia asupra regimului Mubarak.

**Cuvinte cheie:** ciclul normativ, dualitate normativă, Egipt, factor disruptiv normativ, lider normativ, Primăvara Arabă, promovarea democrației, regimul Mubarak, politica externă a SUA

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## I. Introduction

**Arab** exceptionalism was a term widely debated and used especially by authors in the field of political science such as Eva Bellin, Steven Heydemann, and Stephen J. King to characterize the states in the MENA region<sup>1</sup> during the '90s. This concept generally referred to the “exceptional resistance to political liberalization, respect for human rights and formal democratic practice in the Arab Middle East”<sup>2</sup>. This particularity of the region has also been noted and analyzed by other authors, such as Larry Diamond, who stated: “every one of the world’s major cultural realms had become host to a significant democratic presence, albeit again with a single exception – the Arab world”<sup>3</sup>.

However, the situation changed significantly in the first half of the 2000s when the U.S. adopted a new position in its relations with the Arab states based

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<sup>1</sup> The MENA region includes all Arab states in the Arab League: Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

<sup>2</sup> Stephen J. King, “Authoritarian adaptability and the Arab Spring”, in *The Routledge Handbook to the Middle East and North African State and States System*, ed. Raymond Hinnebusch and Jasmine Gani, (London and New York: Routledge, 2020), 67.

<sup>3</sup> Larry Diamond, “Why are there no Arab democracies?”, *Journal of Democracy* 21, no. 1 (January 2010): 93.

on “the promotion of democracy and good government”<sup>4</sup>. This led to the emergence of a new concept in the context of normative influence exerted by the U.S. on the MENA region, known as “upgrading authoritarianism”. According to Steven Heydemann, this concept did not imply “shutting down and closing off Arab societies from globalization...”, but rather the ability of Arab regimes to “adapt[...] to pressures for political change by developing strategies to contain and manage demands to democratize”<sup>5</sup>.

Hence, a starting point for analyzing the promotion of democratic norms by the United States in the MENA region and its impact is understanding the new international context from the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, which triggered a shift in relations between the U.S. and the Arab states, especially Egypt. For this reason, the research is particularly interested in the works of authors who have addressed the issue of promoting democratic norms by examining the role assumed by the George W. Bush Administration after the September 11, 2001 attacks, his vision of democracy, the means and strategies used to achieve this goal, and their impact, as well as the reactions generated within the Arab world. Such authors include Katerina Dalacoura, Dionysius Markakis, Shadi Hamid, Amaney A. Jamal, and Thomas Carothers. Furthermore, important contributions to the analysis of the internalization of democratic norms and their effects on the domestic situation of Arab states, particularly Egypt, come from authors like Mona El-Ghobashy, Larbi Sadiki, and Tarek Osman.

This paper aims to analyze the promotion, dissemination, and internalization of democratic norms in the Arab world according to the normative cycle proposed by Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink in 1998. In this regard, the research is structured into two parts as follows: a quantitative stage that examines the origin and process of promoting and disseminating democratic norms in the Arab world by the U.S. in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, and a qualitative stage that investigates the internalization of these norms to determine their significance and the conditions of their implementation based on the measures taken by the Mubarak regime before the outbreak of the Arab Spring in 2011.

The analysis spans the period between 2000 and 2011 since this timeframe best captures the three stages of the examined normative cycle and highlights the concept of normative duality characteristic of Egypt. In other words, this

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<sup>4</sup> George Bush White House. “Fact Sheet: Advancing the Freedom Agenda”, 24.07.2008. <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2008/07/20080724-8.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Steven Heydemann, “Upgrading Authoritarianism in the Arab World”, *The Saban Center for Middle East Policy at The Brookings Institution*, Analysis Paper, no. 13, October 2007, 1, <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/10arabworld.pdf>.

paper examines Egypt’s voluntarily or involuntarily assumed role in two specific moments. The first refers to the year 2005 when a series of laws were adopted due to “growing domestic pressure from an unusually broad opposition coalition known as Kifaya..., as well as from U.S. President George W. Bush, who was also pushing for more open and competitive presidential and legislative elections”<sup>6</sup>. The second moment occurred in 2011 when the removal of President Hosni Mubarak from power as a result of popular protests represented a contradiction in terms of the typical practices in the Arab world.

The paper applies the norm life cycle model advanced by Finnemore and Sikkink to a specific case, namely, the spread of norms in the MENA region, particularly in Egypt, in order to observe the similarities and differences that may arise in this process. The primary objective of this paper is to answer the following questions: how were the norms promoted in the MENA region, and what was their impact on the Mubarak regime? Additionally, it aims to understand how the differences that may appear between the theoretical framework established by the two authors and its practical application to a specific case can be interpreted. In this way, relevant results can be obtained regarding the promotion and internalization of democratic norms in the MENA region from a constructivist perspective. This leads us to the initial limitations of this work, which must be considered, namely the application of a Western theoretical framework and concepts to understand the specific characteristics of Arab states. However, the study provides new insights into the promotion and internalization of norms in the Arab world.

Furthermore, another limitation in the analysis becomes more evident in the second part of the paper. Specifically, while the promotion of democratic norms can be tracked based on the means used or the objectives pursued, the impact remains harder to prove. Authors such as Larbi Sadiki or Katerina Dalacoura describe the reforms introduced by Arab regimes as rather cosmetic or very limited. Therefore, the paper does not seek to establish the impact of norms based on reactions or outcomes but rather through concrete references to the laws adopted and amendments introduced in the Egyptian constitution. In this sense, a constructivist approach is more suitable, as it focuses not so much on causes and effects but rather on the context in which the promotion and dissemination of democratic norms took place and how these were perceived by the actors involved in the normative cycle.

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<sup>6</sup> Diamond, “Why are there no Arab democracies?”, 100.

The first part of this paper focuses on the method of promoting democratic norms in the MENA region by the U.S., which, in this case, can be likened to what Finnemore and Sikkink termed as a *norm entrepreneur*, given “its attempt to convince a critical mass of states (norm leaders) to embrace new norms”<sup>7</sup>. The measures taken by Arab states to comply with U.S. demands are also discussed. The second part examines the impact of promoting, disseminating, and internalizing U.S. norms on political regimes in the context of the Arab Spring, but not as a direct cause of it, as argued by several authors including Marc Lynch, Jean-Pierre Filiu, and Asef Bayat. According to this perspective, the Arab Spring is more accurately characterized as a grassroots movement, at least initially, with the influence and interest of the US playing a role in the unfolding protests in Egypt, the NATO intervention in Libya, and the involvement of Saudi Arabia and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) allies in Bahrain and Yemen. However, other authors also contend that “Bush’s rhetoric on democracy and pressure on some Arab leaders such as Mubarak helped to create at least some space for mobilization”<sup>8</sup>. This assertion, coupled with the initial success in Tunisia and Egypt and the regional spread of the uprisings, constituted compelling reasons for the outbreak of a perceived existential crisis in other Arab states, especially following the fall of the Mubarak regime.

## II. Methodology

Regarding the methodology employed, the adopts a qualitative approach based in constructivism, focusing on interpretation and description. The research also includes the analysis of Egypt as a case study. This methodological approach is motivated by the fact that, as argued by several authors, including David McCourt, constructivism is “an interpretive approach centered on the reconstruction of intersubjective meanings, and analyzing texts such as speeches, official documents, academic articles, and newspapers is the only way to do constructivism”<sup>9</sup>. At the same time, it must be emphasized that the study

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<sup>7</sup> Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, “International Norm Dynamics and Political Change”, *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (September 1998): 895, DOI: 10.1162/002081898550789.

<sup>8</sup> Marc Lynch, *The Arab Uprising The Unfinished Revolutions of the New Middle East* (New York: Public Affairs, 2012), 63.

<sup>9</sup> David McCourt, *The New Constructivism in International Relations Theory* (Bristol: Bristol University Press, 2022), 97.

also has a quantitative dimension, analyzing three laws adopted and one constitutional amendment introduced in 2005. Their significance is reflected in the organization of the first multicandidate, direct presidential elections in that year. In this regard, the necessary information was collected from a variety of primary and secondary sources, including speeches by American and Egyptian heads of state, legislative and constitutional provisions, and works by specialists in the field of democratization.

Before delving into the actual analysis, it is first necessary to define the concepts used in this paper. Therefore, the definition of norms in this case refers to “a standard of appropriate behavior for actors with a given identity”<sup>10</sup>. In other words, as Nicholas Onuf also suggests, norms, like rules, are “statements that tell people (in this case, states) what we should do”<sup>11</sup>, and failure to comply may result in certain measures or sanctions imposed by states adhering to those norms. These norms can be expressed through speech acts, such as speeches by officials of the American administration, which, although not actual rules, when repeatedly promoted can be internalized as rules, resulting in normative effects. These acts, in turn, can be divided into “assertive acts that imply that the hearer should accept the underlying belief, directive acts that demand the performance of some action, and commissive acts that impose duties on the speaker”<sup>12</sup>.

Thus, it can be argued that these norms entail a series of expectations and conditions for them to not only be disseminated but also internalized to a certain extent. In this regard, while the U.S. highlighted through its delivered speeches the benefits associated with a democratic regime, such as ensuring stability, prosperity, or countering radical Islamism, Arab states exhibited more reservation in adopting democratic principles. This hesitation stems from the fact that “autocrats and the millions who support them see dictatorship as a bulwark against chaos and the dangers of mass politics”<sup>13</sup>. A conclusive example in this regard is Algeria, where the first general elections organized and won by the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) in 1991 led to the outbreak of a devastating

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<sup>10</sup> Finnemore and Sikkink, “International Norm Dynamics and Political Change”, 891.

<sup>11</sup> Nicholas Greenwood Onuf, *Making Sense, Making Worlds. Constructivism in Social Theory and International Relations* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 4.

<sup>12</sup> Maja Zehfuss, *Constructivism in International Relations. The Politics of Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 171.

<sup>13</sup> Shadi Hamid, *The Problem of Democracy America, the Middle East, and the Rise and Fall of an Idea* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), 116.

civil war. This conflict “alienated both Western strategists and westernized local elites from the idea of democracy”<sup>14</sup>.

Analyzing the mode of promotion and dissemination of democratic norms in the Arab world by the US is particularly relevant, given the strategic importance of the MENA region in the context of international relations. Understanding this process can provide a broader perspective on the exercise of normative influence by the U.S. and its impact on Arab states. Furthermore, the use of a constructivist approach provides the research with a systemic view of how Arab states perceived and reacted to pressures for democratization coming from the U.S. The choice of Egypt as a case study is well-grounded, given its dual role during the analyzed period. Analyzing this case can help understand the complexity and diversity of perceptions and reactions triggered by the promotion of democratic norms.

### **III. The Emergence of Democratic Norms in the MENA Region**

The new international context of the early 2000s confronted Arab states with a difficult choice on whether they should maintain the stability characteristic of authoritarian regimes or reform them based on U.S. norms. This was because the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, prompted a reassessment of U.S. foreign policy, with a focus on addressing the democratic deficit prevalent in the MENA region, since it was seen as a threat to regional and international security and prosperity. Thus, at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the United States made promotion of democracy “a central tenet of US policy to the Middle East”<sup>15</sup>, advancing the Freedom Agenda, as the strategy announced by George W. Bush in 2003 came to be known. The Freedom Agenda was based on “the belief that democracy was the best form of government, the assertion that authoritarian stability was no stability at all and that people wanted freedom”<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> Peter Mansfield and Nicolas Pelham, *O istorie a Orientului Mijlociu* (București: Humanitas Edition, 2015), 372.

<sup>15</sup> Dionysius Markakis, “US Democracy Promotion in the Middle East The Pursuit of Hegemony?”, PhD diss., London School of Economics and Political Science, 2012, 2, [http://etheses.lse.ac.uk/576/1/Markakis\\_US\\_Democracy\\_Promotion\\_2012.pdf](http://etheses.lse.ac.uk/576/1/Markakis_US_Democracy_Promotion_2012.pdf).

<sup>16</sup> Steven A. Cook, *Protest, Democracy, and Violence in the New Middle East False Dawn* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 24.

Consequently, the United States implemented a range of diplomatic, economic, and military measures to achieve its objectives in the MENA region, driven by the belief that “democracy promotion would by default also bring about pro-American attitudes – regardless of U.S. policies in the region”<sup>17</sup>. Among the most ambitious projects of the Bush administration was the presentation of a “new set of proposals for a Greater Middle East Initiative (GMEI) to be adopted by the eight industrialized nations”<sup>18</sup> during the G-8 summit in 2004. These efforts also extended into the realm of “informing and influencing the publics in the Middle East” by establishing “media outlets such as the Arabic-language Al-Hurra television station and the Al-Sawa radio station”<sup>19</sup>.

Additionally, it is worth mentioning initiatives like Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) in 2002, which provided support for various activities, including “supporting civil society organizations in domestic election monitoring, training youth to develop advocacy skills, and voter education”<sup>20</sup>. There was also the Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA) initiative, aimed at integrating various efforts related to “democracy assistance, free trade, investment incentives, private enterprise development, literacy and education, legal reform, civil society, and women’s empowerment”<sup>21</sup>. Simultaneously, the Bush administration considered economic and military engagements with Arab states, concluding several investment and trade agreements to strengthen relationships. This also encompassed “an extremely large new package of military sales and assistance for Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the smaller Gulf states”<sup>22</sup>.

Thus, while the primary American interests in the MENA region, such as “access to oil, the containment of Iran, support for the state of Israel, and the

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<sup>17</sup> Amaney A. Jamal, *Of Empires and Citizens Pro-American Democracy or No Democracy at All?* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2012), 5.

<sup>18</sup> Tamara Cofman Wittes, “The New U.S. Proposal for a Greater Middle East Initiative: An Evaluation”, *Brookings*, 10.05.2004, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-new-u-s-proposal-for-a-greater-middle-east-initiative-an-evaluation/>.

<sup>19</sup> Markakis, “US Democracy Promotion in the Middle East”, 97.

<sup>20</sup> U.S. Department of State Archive, “Fact Sheet: The Middle East Partnership Initiative: U.S. support for freedom and democracy in the Middle East”, 18.07.2005, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/scp/2005/49757.htm>.

<sup>21</sup> Robert B. Zoellick, “The Middle East in Transformation – The BMENA Initiative an U.S. Foreign Policy”, *U.S. Department of State Archive*, 20.05.2005, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/s/d/former/zoellick/rem/46594.htm>.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas Carothers, *U.S. Democracy Promotion During and After Bush* (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2007), 7, [https://carnegiendowment.org/files/democracy\\_promotion\\_after\\_bush\\_final.pdf](https://carnegiendowment.org/files/democracy_promotion_after_bush_final.pdf).

limiting of Islamist strength and their access to power and weapons of mass destruction”<sup>23</sup>, essentially remained the same, they acquired a democratic component manifested by the United States through its influence on Arab regimes. In this regard, Larbi Sadiki identifies a series of strategies employed by the United States, such as intimidation in the case of Lebanon and the Palestinian territories and invasion in the case of Iraq. Both of these represent undemocratic means utilized in the service of promoting democracy, in contrast to the previously mentioned strategies. Hence, there is an inconsistency regarding the manner in which the United States promotes democratic norms, which is based on its economic and security interests, and the motivations of a normative entrepreneur. According to the normative circuit established by Finnemore and Sikkink, a normative entrepreneur focuses on “empathy, altruism, and ideational commitment”<sup>24</sup>, with the last factor being the only one observable in the role assumed by the United States.

In other words, the call for democratization initially served as a justification for the initiation of the “war on terror” by the Bush Administration. In this case, it can be argued that a “pragmatic approach towards national interest prevailed over principles of democracy promotion and human rights”<sup>25</sup>. Nevertheless, the normative circuit used remains a relevant framework because, despite being rooted in the hegemon’s interests, taking into account the United States’ status as a global superpower following the end of the Cold War, the stages of the circuit were adhered to. Furthermore, as Finnemore and Sikkink emphasize, when analyzing the role of the United States in promoting democracy, one aspect to consider is that “many norm entrepreneurs do not so much act against their interests as they act in accordance with a redefined understanding of their interests”<sup>26</sup>.

Having established that democracy promoted through methods that are inherently undemocratic cannot be successful, my subsequent focus will be on scrutinizing the objectives, expectations, and commitments adopted by the Bush Administration through an analysis of the President’s political speech delivered in 2003 at the National Endowment for Democracy. At that time, President Bush declared his intention to continue promoting democracy and peace globally, with the Middle East region taking a central role in these efforts.

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<sup>23</sup> Jamal, “Of Empires and Citizens”, 4.

<sup>24</sup> Finnemore and Sikkink, “International Norm Dynamics and Political Change”, 898.

<sup>25</sup> Larbi Sadiki, “The Arab Spring: The ‘People’ in International Relations”, in *International Relations of the Middle East*, ed. Louise Fawcett (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2016), 348.

<sup>26</sup> Finnemore and Sikkink, “International Norm Dynamics and Political Change”, 898.



More specifically, in his speech, Bush highlighted the normative capacity of the U.S., stating that: “It is no accident that the rise of so many democracies took place in a time when the world’s most influential nation was itself a democracy”<sup>27</sup>. Additionally, the President mentioned the moral and military measures and commitments the U.S. had undertaken internationally to protect free nations and create the necessary conditions for new democracies to develop, likening the U.S. to a model that “provided inspiration for oppressed peoples”<sup>28</sup>.

However, the U.S.A’s commitment to promoting democracy continued to face significant challenges in a region like the Middle East where “democracy has not yet taken roots”, especially in those “countries of great strategic importance”<sup>29</sup>. Nevertheless, Bush maintained his belief that Islam was compatible with democratic values, citing examples like Turkey or Indonesia as Muslim-majority countries with democratic governance. He also noted that over half of the Muslims worldwide lived under the rule of “democratically constituted governments”<sup>30</sup>. Notwithstanding these affirmations, the President was acutely cognizant of the democratic deficit afflicting the Arab states, the negative repercussions of which reverberate not only at regional level but also on the international stage. It is precisely for this reason that President Bush issued a call to the allied Arab governments of the Middle East, warning them about the perils posed by military and theocratic dictatorships, and that they “need to confront real problems, and serve the true interests of their nations”<sup>31</sup>.

In this context, the speech distinguished between Arab allies and states hostile to American objectives, such as Syria and Iraq under Saddam Hussein, which were generally associated with negative events and actions such as the Syrian occupation of Lebanese territory and the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait<sup>32</sup>. Unlike Syria and Iraq, Egypt and Saudi Arabia held an important role in terms of their strategic relationships with the United States. In this sense, President Bush had much higher expectations for these two states as evidenced by his

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<sup>27</sup> George W. Bush White House, “President Bush Discusses Freedom in Iraq and Middle East”, 06.11.2003, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2003/11/20031106-2.html>.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> George W. Bush White House, “Fact Sheet: President Bush’s Freedom Agenda Helped Protect The American People”, 18.12.2008, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/freedomagenda/>.

statements: “Saudi government can demonstrate true leadership in the region” regarding the implementation of reforms, and “Egypt... should show the way toward democracy in the Middle East”<sup>33</sup>. The speech concluded by reaffirming the new position adopted by the U.S. regarding the promotion of democracy in the MENA region, stating that “lack of freedom in the Middle East did nothing to make us safe”<sup>34</sup>, and this required that the U.S. pursue a new strategy in the region.

Therefore, relative to the content of the discourse, all three categories of previously enumerated speech acts become apparent, with the United States assuming the role of a normative entrepreneur through its declarations, commitments, and demands addressed to the states in the MENA region. In this manner, the United States sought to persuade a critical mass of Arab states, with Saudi Arabia and Egypt as the most prominent among them, to adhere to these democratic norms. This persuasion is pursued through tailored approaches, such as the adoption of political and economic initiatives that would grant greater rights and liberties to their citizens.

In the same vein, the 2003 discourse constitutes an initial phase of a normative circuit as established by the United States through methods such as “praise (for behavior that conforms to group norms), and ridicule (for deviation)”<sup>35</sup>. Moreover, concerning Egypt’s predominant role as a norm leader, this was once again underscored during the 2005 discourse by American Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, delivered at the American University in Cairo.

More specifically, in her speech, Condoleezza Rice initially emphasized the importance the U.S. placed on its economic and strategic relations with Egypt, noting Egypt’s role as a leader in the history of the MENA region, as the “first modern nation”<sup>36</sup>. This assertion was primarily based on Egypt’s decision-making process in times of crisis, such as introducing economic reforms or making peace with Israel, leading the state to be considered an essential leader for regional progress, a role that the U.S. expected its ally to continue fulfilling in the future.

Secretary of State Rice thus continued her speech by calling on states in the region to respect the will of their citizens and the democratic ideals. She

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<sup>33</sup> George W. Bush White House, “President Bush Discusses Freedom in Iraq and Middle East”.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Finnemore and Sikkink, “International Norm Dynamics and Political Change”, 902.

<sup>36</sup> U.S. Department of State Archive, “Secretary Condoleezza Rice – Remarks at the American University in Cairo”, 20.06.2005, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/secretary/rm/2005/48328.htm>.

highlighted progress made by some Arab states in this direction, like Iraq and Jordan, while also assuring support not only from the U.S. and Egypt but from the entire world, especially regarding the Palestinian issue. Furthermore, the highest expectations expressed were still centered around Egypt's progress given "President Mubarak's decision to amend the country constitution and hold multiparty election", directly urging both the government to "fulfill the promise it has made to its people – and to the entire world – by giving its citizens the freedom to choose"<sup>37</sup>, and the opposition to accept the final results and refrain from acts of violence. These very demands were to further weaken the normative influence exerted by the U.S. over Arab states, particularly with the victory of Hamas in the Palestinian elections of 2006.

Lastly, it should be mentioned that Condoleezza Rice underscored the benefits democracy could bring not only to governments but also to their citizens, given that it "can help to build trust and settle old disputes" and "can be a path to lasting justice"<sup>38</sup>. However, for these objectives to become reality, the Secretary of State made a final appeal to the Egyptian people, who "should be at the forefront of this great journey, just as you have led this region through the great journeys of the past"<sup>39</sup>.

It can be observed from the structure of the discourse that it is very similar to the one delivered by George W. Bush in 2003, through the declarations and promises made regarding the U.S.' and its allies' support in the process of democratizing the Middle East. The only distinction that stands out is that while the American President directed his requests towards the governments of Arab states, the Secretary of State had similar expectations from the Arab people, primarily the Egyptians. In other words, the American Secretary of State's discourse was based on the belief that for the promotion of democracy to be successful, efforts had to be jointly made by both parties, emphasizing the central role of cooperation between the political and social spheres.

Before moving on to the analysis of the next speech, it can be noted that the arrival of a new president at the White House in 2009 also meant a change in the Middle East policy based on "a set of liberal internationalist principles which are part and parcel of the ideology of the mainstream of the Democratic Party"<sup>40</sup>. As Katerina Dalacoura remarks: "As the many failures of US

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Katerina Dalacoura, "US Foreign Policy and Democracy Promotion in the Middle East: Theoretical Perspectives and Policy Recommendations", *Ortadoğu Etütleri* 2, no. 3 (July 2010): 68.

democracy promotion in the Middle East became apparent by 2005-6, realist views were gradually re-asserted against neo-conservative idealism in the Bush administration”<sup>41</sup>.

To further support these claims, I will refer to the speech delivered by the American President Barack Obama in 2009, at the American University in Cairo. During the speech, Barack Obama brought to the attention of his audience a series of issues that have historically fueled tensions between the West and Islam, with the focus here being on the promotion of democracy. In this case, the American President made a direct reference to the Iraq War and the controversies it sparked, assuring the audience that “No system of government can or should be imposed by one nation by any other”<sup>42</sup>, while simultaneously stating that U.S. support for promoting democratic ideals “to governments that reflect the will of the people”<sup>43</sup> remained unwavering. Furthermore, in his speech, Obama highlighted the benefits of a democratic regime, stating that “Governments that protect these rights are ultimately more stable, successful, and secure”<sup>44</sup>.

However, unlike the previous speeches analyzed, Barack Obama did not emphasize the role of a single state or a particular people in promoting democracy; his demands were much more general. In this manner, the American president sets a unique standard for those in power, stating that “You must maintain your power through consent, not coercion; you must respect the rights of minorities and participate with a spirit of tolerance and compromise...”<sup>45</sup>. President Obama put the emphasis primarily on the idea of cooperation, without singling out any particular actor’s role in this matter. In this way, the U.S. assured other governments, their citizens, religious leaders, and business people that only together can they create a better world, “a world where extremists no longer threaten our people, and American troops have come home, where Israelis and Palestinians are each secure in a state of their own,... where governments serve their citizens...”<sup>46</sup>.

Based on the analysis of the speeches examined above, it can be asserted that the U.S., through the discourses of the American officials, established a pattern

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>42</sup> The White House – President Barack Obama, “Remarks by the President at Cairo University – Remarks By The President On A New Beginning”, 04.06.2009, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-cairo-university-6-04-09>.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

in terms of promoting democratic norms. Specifically, the external influence exerted by the United States, alongside the political initiatives implemented through the introduction of “programs on judicial reform and support and training for journalists; civic education and human rights awareness... and support for women’s empowerment”<sup>47</sup>, did indeed contribute to forming a critical mass of Arab states where democratic norms could be disseminated. When considering their impact on U.S. foreign policy, the effects of these three speeches remain more quantitatively oriented, given that the quality of their impact has consistently degraded, shifting from one U.S. administration to another.

This was due to two main reasons. Firstly, the need for the democratization of Arab states and the benefits expressed in George W. Bush’s speech were interpreted differently by these states, especially Egypt, to avoid becoming a threat to their regimes. In other words, although these acts were not outright ignored or rejected by Egypt, their effectiveness was affected by the significance attributed to the norms and how they were internalized. Secondly, the speeches also entailed the existence of a set of expectations, best exemplified in Condoleezza Rice’s speech, when addressing the Palestinian issue. Her expectations regarding the establishment of a democratic regime after the 2005 elections remained unrealized, with the victory of Hamas in 2006 causing “The Bush administration’s reaction to the Palestinian elections so qualified U.S. advocacy of democracy as to render it almost meaningless”<sup>48</sup>.

These observations demonstrate that the normative cycle established by the U.S. did not follow a gradual, progressive trajectory; quite the contrary, the entire process entered a period of stagnation or even regression due to events in the MENA region, which caused “most American policymakers... be less enthusiastic about democratization abroad if democratization doesn’t produce encouraging outcomes”<sup>49</sup>.

So far, the analysis showed Egypt’s role as a norm leader which in this context becomes evident when considering the demands and expectations of U.S. officials towards this state. The next objective of this research is to analyze the impact of democratic norms on Egypt. To achieve this, it is necessary to consider two additional secondary questions: how were democratic norms

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<sup>47</sup> Katerina Dalacoura, “US democracy promotion in the Arab Middle East since 11 September 2001: a critique”, *International Affairs* 81, no. 5 (October 2005): 965.

<sup>48</sup> Jason Brownlee, *Democracy Prevention The Politics of the U.S. – Egyptian Alliance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 101.

<sup>49</sup> Hamid, *The Problem of Democracy*, 114.

perceived, and under what conditions were they implemented? As such, the next section aims to analyze the chosen case and answer the previously mentioned questions so that, in the end, we can understand the essence of the normative duality attributed to Egypt.

#### **IV. The Impact of Democratic Norms on the Mubarak Regime**

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, democratic norms and principles seemed to be on the rise in the MENA region, at least at the level of political discourse. This was also the case with the Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. In a speech delivered in 1999, the Egyptian head of state announced the commitments that Egypt would undertake for democratization: “We will work towards consolidating our democracy gradually, steadily, and in the spirit of tolerance and cooperation that is known about the Egyptian people”<sup>50</sup>. The commitments made by the president hold significant importance for our analysis, considering that they directly referred to the political measures that needed to be implemented in the following years. After securing a new presidential term through a referendum that year, the parliamentary elections of 2000 followed, in which candidates from the Muslim Brotherhood won 17 seats, “some of whom were independent and some of whom were nominated in other parties”<sup>51</sup>.

This constituted a first blow to the regime and particularly to the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP), which only secured 38% of seats. The party was rescued “from this embarrassing situation only after 216 independent candidates joined or rejoined the party after the election”<sup>52</sup>. Consequently, the measures taken by the Egyptian authorities towards democratization were realized through the fact that “They have expended political spaces – electoral arenas in particular... They have also tempered their opposition to Islamist political participation”<sup>53</sup>. These outcomes are rooted in another discourse of President Mubarak from 1999, in which he stated “my complete confidence in

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<sup>50</sup> Brownlee, *Democracy Prevention*, 67.

<sup>51</sup> Ismail Kurun, “Democratisation in Egypt From A Historical Perspective: Problems, Pitfalls and Prospects”, *Yonetim ve Ekonomi* 22, no. 1 (2015): 186.

<sup>52</sup> Khalil Alanani, “Egyptian Parliamentary Elections in the Shadow of 2000”, *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 20.08.2008, <https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/21117>.

<sup>53</sup> Heydemann, “Upgrading Authoritarianism in the Arab World”, 1.

the fact that the opposition is part of governance!... I am not talking about a token presence for the opposition... rather... about a real presence!”<sup>54</sup>.

Given that the subject of this article focuses on the impact of democratic norms on the Egyptian regime, I will examine how these norms were perceived and implemented by the authorities in order to identify, based on promises, requirements, and expectations, the formation of a normative pattern different from that established by U.S. officials. In this regard, a starting point can be traced to the pro-democratic declarations made by President Mubarak in the early 2000s. To determine the impact of democratic norms in Egypt, I analyze the practices of the Egyptian political authorities understood as “those realizations of a particular purpose which are considered to comply with certain generally conceived principles”<sup>55</sup>.

Alongside the above-mentioned commissive statements, we find other types of acts, such as assertive ones, which are evident in the same 1999 discourse by the Egyptian president. In this respect, he expressed the following factual statement: “It (Egypt) has granted freedom of opinion and of the press in an unprecedented way... Egypt has taken important steps... that cannot be denied except by an arrogant ingrate”<sup>56</sup>. In this initial phase, Hosni Mubarak emphasized a state of affairs that seems to provide the necessary foundations to meet the expectations subsequently declared by officials of the United States administration in 2003 and later in 2005.

Interestingly enough, the Egyptian president’s discourses and those of the American officials appear to complement each other, to a certain point. This point is reached when President Mubarak switches to a declarative act where, unlike U.S. officials who emphasize the role of the regime or the idea of socio-political cooperation for democratization, he rather highlights the role of parties and individuals. He believed that “if we collectively are eager for guarantees – to guarantee free and fair elections, then it is up to the parties and individuals participating in the electoral process, to put aside undemocratic practices”<sup>57</sup>.

We can remark that just as the United States promotes and disseminates norms through a normative circuit, Egypt had built its own pattern through

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<sup>54</sup> Michele Durocher Dunne, *Democracy in Contemporary Egyptian Political Discourse*, (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2003), 75.

<sup>55</sup> Nicholas Onuf, “Rules in Practice”, in *On Rules, Politics and Knowledge: Friedrich Kratochwil, International Relations and Domestic Affairs*, ed. Oliver Kessler et al. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 117.

<sup>56</sup> Dunne, “Democracy in Contemporary Egyptian Political Discourse”, 76.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

which norms were to be internalized. Thus, the mode of implementing these norms involved the existence of different perceptions and convictions in Egypt regarding democracy compared to those of its U.S. partner. In other words, Egypt adopted a distinct approach to the practical implementation of democratic norms that were “never intended to extend into substantial political reform and a sophisticated structure of checks and balances”<sup>58</sup>. This difference arises from the existence of distinctive perceptions of democracy. Rather than focusing on the benefits announced by George W. Bush, Egypt seemed to emphasize the disadvantages of this type of regime, which could lead to political instability. This prompted Hosni Mubarak to “reinforce the image of a strongly centralized government as a desirable reality, and of democratization as a top-down process completely controlled by the government”<sup>59</sup>.

Thus, at the start of the 2000s, there were 50 legally established political parties in Egypt. However, their significance was quite limited, given that the “two real political forces in this country are the military and the Muslim Brotherhood”<sup>60</sup>, and the latter was outlawed. Additionally, press censorship persisted, albeit at a much lower level than that instituted by Mubarak’s predecessors. Notably, even though authorities took measures toward implementing political and economic reforms, the limits within which various organizations such as the press, trade unions, and political parties could operate remained strictly determined by the government. Consequently, “[t]he various players who were increasingly empowered were not supposed to evolve into viable opposition or real agents of change”<sup>61</sup>. This being said, the first half of the 2000s proved to be a considerably tense period for the Mubarak regime. He had to contend with external pressure exerted by the Bush Administration for the implementation of political reforms in Egypt, as well as deal with internal protests organized by the Egyptian Movement for Change (Kefaya), which gained momentum in 2004. This prompted the authorities to employ a mixture of containment, coercion, and confrontation strategies, allowing the regime “to claim progress and some political development, and to diffuse some of the masses’ anger”<sup>62</sup>.

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<sup>58</sup> Tarek Osman, *Egypt on the Brink From the Rise of Nasser to the Fall of Mubarak* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), 186.

<sup>59</sup> Dunne, “Democracy in Contemporary Egyptian Political Discourse”, 53.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>61</sup> Osman, *Egypt on the Brink*, 186.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.



Nevertheless, the situation worsened further after the presidential elections of 2005 when, for the first time since taking power in 1981, Hosni Mubarak “announced the intention of holding competitive presidential elections”<sup>63</sup>. However, despite this initiative leading to limited democratic reforms through constitutional amendments, the Mubarak regime ensured the elimination of all anti-regime elements from the political arena. In this manner, the Egyptian president secured a new term, while his main political opponent and founder of the Al-Ghad party received only 7.58% of the votes due to “the unfair election system and the electoral frauds”<sup>64</sup>. Under these circumstances, the event that dealt a blow to the regime’s established control came after the parliamentary elections held in 2005. In that year, the Muslim Brotherhood garnered the largest number of votes in its history, securing 88 seats in the People’s Assembly. The resulting political landscape served as a warning signal for the regime. The subsequent years were characterized by repressive measures taken by the authorities to suppress the Islamist threat and local uprisings that further eroded citizens’ trust in the regime.

For Egypt, 2005 marked a turning point in terms of promoting and internalizing norms. If during this year, the Mubarak regime introduced a series of limited political reforms that allowed for a competitor to arise in the 2005 presidential elections, after this year, authorities embarked on a wave of repression targeting members of the Muslim Brotherhood and other secular and religious political factions. This was to ensure that the outcomes achieved by these groups in 2005 would not be replicated.

To better understand the context in which these reforms were introduced, it is necessary to review the laws adopted and amendments made to the constitution in 2005, with particular significance placed on Article 76, which “called for the direct popular election of the president and established an electoral commission”<sup>65</sup>. This is the way in which Mubarak was preparing for the presidential elections to be held that year. That said, the amendment to Article 76 was heavily criticized, especially by opposition parties, with Nathan J. Brown suggesting that “As amended in 2005, Article 76 set such a stringent

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<sup>63</sup> Tamara Cofman Wittes, “The 2005 Egyptian Elections: How Free? How Important?”, *Brookings*, 24.08.2005, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-2005-egyptian-elections-how-free-how-important/>.

<sup>64</sup> Kurun, “Democratisation in Egypt”, 186.

<sup>65</sup> Michele Dunne, “Evaluating Egyptian Reform”, *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, no. 66, January 2006, 8, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2006/01/24/evaluating-egyptian-reform-pub-17940>.

standard for eligibility for presidential candidacy that the National Democratic Party would have been left without competitors in the next election”<sup>66</sup>. Despite the fact that the amendment was perceived to be rather undemocratic, it represented a unique political decision, considering that the last time a constitutional amendment was passed was in 1980, “allowing the president to run for an unlimited number of terms, rather than one term as was initially stipulated in Egypt’s 1971 constitution”<sup>67</sup>.

Among the laws worth mentioning are the Presidential Election Law 174 of 2005, which outlines rules for the electoral campaign, with Article 1 stipulating that “The president shall be elected through direct, public, secret ballot by voters enrolled on electorate rosters”<sup>68</sup>. Additionally, the procedure for the formation of political parties was altered through the adoption of Political Parties Law 177 of 2005. According to the new law, parties are required “merely to notify the Political Parties Committee (PPC) that they have started operating, putting the onus on the committee to object within 90 days” instead of requiring parties “to apply for permission to operate”<sup>69</sup>. Another law that should be mentioned is Law 173 of 2005, which deals with political rights, “establishing an electoral commission for parliamentary elections”<sup>70</sup>.

The changes on the Mubarak regime were not just effects of democracy promotion by the USA, nor were they in line with the generally negative reactions coming from both leaders and the Arab public, given that “In the post-9/11 Middle East ‘democracy’ was often perceived as a Trojan horse for Western interests at the expense of local ones”<sup>71</sup>. Instead, the impact of democratic norms can be measured through concrete measures such as the amendments or laws adopted in 2005 by the Mubarak regime to organize the presidential and parliamentary elections in that year. These reforms aimed primarily to alleviate the domestic pressure from popular movements like

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<sup>66</sup> Nathan J. Brown, Michele Dunne, and Amr Hamzawy, “Egypt’s Controversial Constitutional Amendments”, *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, March 2007, 4, [https://carnegieendowment.org/files/egypt\\_constitution\\_webcommentary01.pdf](https://carnegieendowment.org/files/egypt_constitution_webcommentary01.pdf).

<sup>67</sup> Khairi Abaza, “Egypt: Constitutional Amendment and Prospects for Change”, *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, 25.05.2005, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/egypt-constitutional-amendment-and-prospects-change>.

<sup>68</sup> Law No. 174 for the year 2005 on Regulating the Presidential Elections”, <https://aceproject.org/ero-en/regions/mideast/EG/Law%20No.%20174%20of%202005%20-%20english.pdf/view>.

<sup>69</sup> Human Rights Watch, “Monopolizing Power: Egypt’s Political Parties Law”, *RefWorld*, 04.01.2007, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/45a4e0a92.html>.

<sup>70</sup> Dunne, “Evaluating Egyptian Reform”, 8.

<sup>71</sup> Dalacoura, “US Foreign Policy and Democracy Promotion”, 64.

Kefaya, as well as the external pressure from the U.S. Consequently, they drew the attention of the American administration which stated that “We encourage a fair contest for the parliament and presidency, with impartial observers. The world will watch with great interest as the Egyptians write their new election law, establish the election commission, and create novel expectations for democratic participation”<sup>72</sup>. These expectations were continually fueled by other constitutional amendments under which “the president’s power to dissolve any houses of the legislative was removed; the parliament was given the right to discuss and vote on budgetary issues; the parliament gained the right to dismiss the cabinet with a no-confidence vote”<sup>73</sup>.

Lastly, it is worth noting that the Mubarak regime continued to implement a series of reforms in the following years, in part due to the influence exerted by the U.S. This was because the Bush Administration “exerted the greatest pressure on Egyptian President Mubarak, but even that has ended up largely toothless”<sup>74</sup>. In other words, the reforms adopted by Egypt did not threaten the stability of the regime but increasingly favored the ruling elite as the commitment made by the U.S. to promote democracy in the MENA region continued to decline, following Hamas’s victory in the 2006 Palestinian elections and the outbreak of a civil war in Iraq the same year.

As a result, “by the beginning of 2007, it was evident that the Bush push for Middle East democracy was effectively over”<sup>75</sup>. This was the year in which the Mubarak regime continued to implement amendments for its own benefit. These included amendments to Article 76 passed in 2007, which “restricted the right of any individual to run for the presidency”, and Article 88, through which “the duty of monitoring of the judiciary over the elections was removed, and this task was given to the electoral commission”<sup>76</sup>. It should be noted that there are also authors such as Michele Dunne, Amr Hamzawy, and Nathan J. Brown who place the end of the promotion of democratic norms one year earlier, in 2006 because “its (U.S.) priorities shifted from transformational back to traditional diplomacy to contain regional crises”<sup>77</sup>.

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<sup>72</sup> Zoellick, “The Middle East in Transformation”.

<sup>73</sup> Kurun, “Democratisation in Egypt From A Historical Perspective”, 186.

<sup>74</sup> Carothers, “U.S. Democracy Promotion During and After Bush”, 6.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>76</sup> Kurun, “Democratisation in Egypt From A Historical Perspective”, 186.

<sup>77</sup> Michele Dunne, Amr Hamzawy, and Nathan J. Brown, “Egypt – Don’t Give Up on Democracy Promotion”, *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, June 2007, 1, [https://carnegieendowment.org/files/pb\\_52\\_egypt\\_final.pdf](https://carnegieendowment.org/files/pb_52_egypt_final.pdf).

Though President Bush “had eased his pressure over Egyptian democratization following the success of Islamists in the 2005 elections”<sup>78</sup>, the results of the parliamentary elections in 2010 proved to be a double-edged sword for the regime. They had led to the removal of the Muslim Brothers from the parliament, and thus made the regime’s main problem go away, but, at the same time, they exacerbated another by “draining nearly all remaining credibility from the electoral system”<sup>79</sup>.

From a normative standpoint, throughout the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the U.S. objective of promoting democracy in the MENA region posed a dilemma for Arab states: should they heed the declarations and expectations of the U.S. or continue their longstanding practice of maintaining regime stability by eliminating any form of threat? A response to this dilemma was provided by President Mubarak himself who, at the Alexandria Conference in 2004, stated that “Existing political structures would be ‘strengthened’ and ‘modernized’ but there would be no strategic overhaul, such as the introduction of real competitive elections, the end to emergency regulations, or the suspension of restrictions on civil-society organizations”<sup>80</sup>.

The model promoted by Mubarak came into contradiction with President Bush’s vision expressed in the proposal of the Greater Middle East Initiative, during the G-8 summit in 2004, which, in addition to economic development projects and efforts to combat illiteracy, included “government-to-government talks intended to offer political support and technical advice to Middle Eastern leaders interested in undertaking reform”<sup>81</sup>. In practice, the American proposal only exacerbated the fears of Arab leaders, who believed that “America was attempting to impose external political models on the region”<sup>82</sup>, ultimately leading to the abandonment of the proposal.

Precisely this pattern, rooted in the belief that Arab states, including Egypt, should continue their established practices, remained the organizing principle in

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<sup>78</sup> Lynch, “The Arab Uprising”, 94.

<sup>79</sup> Michele Dunne and Amr Hamzawy, “From Too Much Egyptian Opposition to Too Little – and Legal Worries Besides”, *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 13.12.2010, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2010/12/13/from-too-much-egyptian-opposition-to-too-little-and-legal-worries-besides-pub-42128>.

<sup>80</sup> Robert Satloff, “Alexandria: The Twin Faces of Arab Reform”, *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, 19.03.2004, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/alexandria-twin-faces-arab-reform>.

<sup>81</sup> Council on Foreign Relations, “In Support of Arab Democracy: Why and How. Report of an Independent Task Force”, New York, 2005, 38, [https://cdn.cfr.org/sites/default/files/report\\_pdf/Arab\\_Democracy\\_TF.pdf](https://cdn.cfr.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/Arab_Democracy_TF.pdf).

<sup>82</sup> Cofman Wittes, “The New U.S. Proposal for a Greater Middle East Initiative”.

the region, at least until 2011 when the wave of uprisings in Tunisia jeopardized the status quo and the stability of the MENA region as a whole. In this case, Egypt's role could be likened to that of a norm breaker. It is difficult to imagine what would have happened if the consequences of the Arab Spring had only affected Tunisia, leaving other countries in the region unaffected by the ripple effects of these revolutionary movements. However, in 2011, just days after the removal of Tunisian dictator Ben Ali from power, the Cairo regime's confidence in its own stability seemed unshakable. Egyptian Interior Minister Habib al-Adli declared: "No Egyptian official trembled at what happened in Tunis. It's impossible to compare it to Egypt; the whole world acknowledges Egypt's stability"<sup>83</sup>.

The fall of the Mubarak regime just a few weeks after the Tunisian events turned Egypt into a regional norm breaker, giving protesters not only hope that dictators could be defeated but also the conviction that the outcomes achieved in Tunisia and Egypt could be successfully replicated. In other words, while "Egypt did not produce a regional 'revolutionary bandwagon', given that "protests were under way in four other Middle Eastern countries before Egyptian took to the streets"<sup>84</sup>, the removal of the dictators in the first two countries created the critical mass necessary to pave the way for the rest of the political changes that were taking place in the region. This was due to the fact that the risk of reproducing the outcomes achieved in Tunisia and Egypt posed an existential threat to other Arab leaders in the region. As such, they had to adapt to the new situation by finding fast solutions such as offering political and financial concessions in the case of states like Saudi Arabia, Morocco, and Jordan or resorting to coercive acts in countries like Syria, Libya, and Yemen.

Another argument supporting the notion that Egypt acted as a norm breaker is the manner in which subsequent waves of protests unfolded. If the uprisings in Tunisia were characterized by spontaneity, "moving from the periphery to the center... the opposite of the Egyptian occupation of Tahrir Square, which ignited disturbances all over the country"<sup>85</sup>. Thus, the protests that continued in other states of the region seemed to follow a pattern more similar to the

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<sup>83</sup> Mona El-Ghobashy, *Bread and Freedom Egypt's Revolutionary Situation* (California: Stanford University Press, 2021), 3.

<sup>84</sup> Cook, *Protest, Democracy, and Violence*, 4.

<sup>85</sup> Jean-Pierre Filiu, *The Arab Revolution Ten Lessons From the Democratic Uprising* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 64.

Egyptian case, attempting to emulate “the methods used, the language, and, of course, the success achieved”<sup>86</sup>.

A final question arises in this study. If Egypt served as an example for protesters in other Arab states, why can we still not call it a normative leader? This is because norms involve expectations and commitments, no matter how general they may be, made by one party to another. In the case of the Arab Spring, we lack this element. In Egypt, we have the collision of two different visions: of people demanding regime change and of President Hosni Mubarak, who relied on a mix of promises made to protesters through his own speeches and acts of violence that only discredited his position further.

In practice, what made this state a regional norm breaker was the replication of Tunisia’s outcomes in a country with “the largest population in the region and... with so much political, cultural, and social influence in the Middle East”<sup>87</sup>. The removal of President Hosni Mubarak was perceived as a threat that other Arab regimes had to respond to in order to reinstate the old “normative circuit”. In this sense, the most important objective for the other affected Arab states was no longer about preventing or halting change but focused rather on the manner in which it was conducted: top-down, in accordance with the old normative pattern.

## V. Conclusions

Drawing a final parallel with the normative cycle proposed by Finnemore and Sikkink, throughout this study, we can discern the main stages of a norm’s life: its emergence; widespread acceptance through the creation of a critical mass of states; and ultimately, internalization. This final point marked the stage where the circuit established by the U.S. collided with the one associated with Egypt and Arab states in general, as they preferred the adoption of limited reforms that “did not bridge the gap between state and society”<sup>88</sup>. Through its speeches, the U.S. conveyed to the Arab states what they should do, leaving the implementation of norms in the hands of the regimes. In this regard, although the U.S. declared that it does not want to impose a specific political model on

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<sup>86</sup> Lynch, “The Arab Uprising”, 102.

<sup>87</sup> Cook, *Protest, Democracy, and Violence*, 4.

<sup>88</sup> Cihat Battaloglu and Fadi Farasin, “From Democratization to Securitization: Post-Arab Spring Political Order in the Middle East”, *Digest of Middle East Studies* 26, no. 2 (2017): 312, DOI: 10.1111.

the MENA region, its interests and expectations transformed the Arab states into a monolith without taking into account the specific characteristics of each case. This context led eventually to the negative outcomes witnessed in the cases of Iraq, Hamas, and even Egypt, which, in turn, convinced the U.S. to abandon democratization in exchange for the stability of Arab regimes. Their stability would then ensure its security needs in the MENA region.

This U.S. approach, however, placed its Arab allies in a difficult position with direct consequences for the stability of their political regimes. Specifically, Arab states had to choose between complying with U.S. declarations and expectations or continuing their historical practice of ensuring regime stability through the implementation of limited political reforms. The situation placed both Egypt and the U.S. in an unwanted situation that now they had to confront directly. For the U.S., the failure to achieve its democratization objectives in the MENA region led to a reorganization of its foreign policy objectives concerning its relations with the Arab allies. In other words, the U.S. prioritized cooperation on strategic and economic issues over democracy promotion. This was due to the fact that “American leverage in the Middle East is low when it comes to democratization... This is because Arab governments doubt our commitment to those values and think our threats hollow”<sup>89</sup>. For Egypt, particularly in the case of the Mubarak regime, though the commitment gradually lost credibility among the citizens and the regime gained a false sense of stability, this false impression proved fatal not only for Mubarak but also for other leaders who faced an existential threat to their regimes.

Based on what we have analyzed so far, the study has showed that Egypt’s case meets the conditions of normative duality. Egypt alternately fulfilled two completely opposite roles, both willingly and unwillingly: that of a norm leader according to its U.S. ally’s expectations and that of a norm breaker for other Arab states facing the wave of protests that erupted in 2011. Regarding the application of Finnemore and Sikkink’s normative framework, this is more challenging to determine, as the case study depended not only on the strategies or tools used to promote democratic norms but, on their internalization as well. In this case, Egypt was more concerned with the stability of the regime than with the implementation of a genuine democratization process.

In relation to the research objectives, the study juxtaposed two entirely different circuit: 1) the American normative cycle which featured well-defined stages, clear expectations, expressed commitments, and intended beneficial

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<sup>89</sup> Hamid, *The Problem of Democracy*, 237-238.

consequences for the involved actors; and 2) in contrast, the circuit specific to Arab states was based on different perceptions of the significance of the promoted norms and of the internalization pattern. Notably, although the pattern was designed to ensure the stability of the regime, it yielded a series of unwanted consequences that the authorities had to confront during the Arab Spring outbreak.

In conclusion, we can affirm that the presented case no longer adheres to the model proposed by Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink. Instead of normative influences shaping the behavior of the participants in the process, the application of democratic norms has been predominantly shaped by internal constraints and external interests, thus resulting in the overall construction of an artificial normative circuit. Hence, the role of Egypt as a norm breaker referred both to the proliferation of the protestors' calls for regime change, and, more critically, to the reproduction of the initial success achieved in Tunisia and how other Arab states reacted in turn. In hindsight, these states became acutely aware of the existential crisis they were in, especially after Mubarak's removal from power, and took measures as to prevent or delay a similar outcome.

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## **EU ASSISTANCE MISSIONS TO FAILED STATES. AN ASSESSMENT OF THE LIBYAN AND SOMALI CASES**

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**Abstract:** Failed states are a threat to international security. This issue has been recognized and presented in all the security strategies of the European Union (EU). Since 2003, through the adoption of the European Security Strategy and continuing with the Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy of 2008, the Global Strategy of the European Union for Foreign and Security Policy of 2016, and the Strategic Compass of March 2022, failed states have been identified as threats to the EU. The policy of the EU towards failed states is being realized through a series of missions aimed at supporting the governments of states belonging this category. This support is given to various government institutions that need to be strengthened in order to provide security and prosperity to their citizens. Among the missions conducted by the EU in failed states and their near neighborhood, this article analyses those concerning Libya (EUBAM Libya and EUNAVFOR MED IRINI) and Somalia (EU NAVFOR ATALANTA, EUCAP Somalia, and EUTM Somalia). For the EU, helping these failed states has become a priority, because the EU is a global actor that aims to get more involved in the problems that could have a negative impact on it. These problems include the disruption of international maritime traffic, illegal migration, and organized crime. The purpose of the present article is to highlight how the EU is actively involved in these failed states. Starting from the hypothesis that the involvement of the EU in strengthening the governments of these states is necessary, we will analyse the specifics of the missions sent to these countries.

**Keywords:** EU policy, EU missions, failed states, Libya, security strategy, Somalia

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**Rezumat:** Statele eșuate reprezintă o amenințare pentru securitatea internațională. Acest lucru a fost conștientizat și prezentat în toate strategiile de securitate ale Uniunii Europene (UE). Încă din 2003, prin adoptarea Strategiei Europene de Securitate și continuând cu Raportul privind punerea în aplicare a Strategiei Europene de Securitate din 2008, Strategia Globală a Uniunii Europene pentru Politica Externă și de Securitate din 2016 și Busola Strategică din martie 2022, statele eșuate au fost considerate ca fiind amenințări de securitate pentru UE. Politica UE față de statele eșuate se concretizează printr-o serie de misiuni care au ca scop sprijinirea guvernelor statelor aflate în această situație. Acest sprijin este acordat diferitelor instituții guvernamentale care trebuie întărite pentru a putea oferi cetățenilor din aceste state acces la un cadru de securitate și

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prosperitate. Printre misiunile desfășurate de UE în statele eșuate și împrejurimi, articolul de față le analizează pe cele care privesc Libia (EUBAM Libia și EUNAVFOR MED IRINI) și Somalia (EU NAVFOR ATALANTA, EUCAP Somalia și EUTM Somalia). Pentru UE ajutorarea acestor state este un lucru necesar, deoarece UE a devenit un actor global care își propune să se implice mai mult în problemele care o pot afecta. Aceste probleme includ: perturbarea traficului maritim internațional, migrația ilegală și criminalitatea organizată. Scopul analizei este de a scoate în evidență modul în care se implică Uniunea în aceste state eșuate. Pornind de la ipoteza că implicarea UE este necesară în consolidarea guvernelor din respectivele state, articolul analizează specificul misiunilor din fiecare țară.

**Cuvinte cheie:** politica UE, misiuni UE, state eșuate, Libia, strategie de securitate, Somalia

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## I. Introduction

**This** article analyses the involvement of the European Union (EU) is involved in two failed states: Libya and Somalia. The policy of the EU towards failed states is realized through a series of missions aimed at supporting the governments of these states. This involvement is necessary because without it the government institutions would continue to be overcome by internal problems. The weakening of these states would renew the growth of terrorism, spur illegal migration, and become a safe haven for organized crime. Piracy is another issue the EU is monitoring, as seen in the case of Somalia-based missions. The EU uses a wide range of instruments in order to contribute to the international effort to combat this phenomenon, through political, military, economic, and diplomatic actions.

Part of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), EU's policy towards failed states is operationalized through independent EU missions<sup>1</sup>. As Vladimir Kmec argues, CSDP does not only refer to the territorial defense of the EU, but also to the “military and civil implementations [that] address crises outside the EU”<sup>2</sup>. Pașcu and Chiriac note that the policy towards failed states “worked in the past, when under the pressure of a crisis where the US no longer

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<sup>1</sup> Ioan Mircea Pașcu and Olga R. Chiriac, “On EU strategic autonomy: EU-NATO-US cooperation in an era of renewed great power competition”, *Europolity* 15, no. 1 (November 2021): 20, [https://www.snsa.ro/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Vol-15-no1-1.-Pascu\\_Chiriac.pdf](https://www.snsa.ro/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Vol-15-no1-1.-Pascu_Chiriac.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Vladimir Kmec, *EU Missions and Peacebuilding: Building Peace through the Common Security and Defense* (New York: Routledge, 2022), 3.

signaled a desire to engage as much, the EU took over with a European Union military operation in support of humanitarian assistance in response to the crisis situation in Libya (EUFOR Libya)<sup>3</sup>.

Jonathan Di John states that to describe a failed state, first, we need to understand how a state is defined<sup>4</sup>: “statehood exists only when a certain political entity possesses a permanent population, a defined territory, a government and the ability to enter into relations with other states”<sup>5</sup>. In light of this, Robert Rotberg’s explanation of a failed state is useful: “In contrast to strong states, failed states cannot control their borders. They lose authority over sections of territory. Often, the expression of official power is limited to a capital city and one or more ethnically specific zones”<sup>6</sup>.

The first authors who used the term *failed state* were Helman and Ratner in 1993, who warned that: “Failing states promise to become a familiar facet of international life”<sup>7</sup>. At that time, they argued that there were three groups of states whose survival was threatened:

“First, there are the failed states like Bosnia, Cambodia, Liberia, and Somalia, a small group whose governmental structures have been overwhelmed by circumstances. Second, there are the failing states like Ethiopia, Georgia, and Zaire, where collapse is not imminent but could occur within several years. And third, there are some newly independent states in the territories formerly known as Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, whose viability is difficult to assess. All three groups deserve close attention, and all three will require innovative policies”<sup>8</sup>.

According to them, these states could only be helped by the international community united under the authority of the UN. They proposed active involvement wherever states proved unable to govern their own territory. Similarly, Jean-Germain Gros in his taxonomy had defined failed states as being

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<sup>3</sup> Pașcu and Chiriac, “On EU strategic autonomy”, 20.

<sup>4</sup> Jonathan Di John, “Conceptualising the Causes and Consequences of Failed States: A Critical Review of the Literature”, Working Paper No. 25 (Development as State-Making), *Crisis States Research Centre*, January 2008, 3, <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/57427/wp25.2.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>6</sup> Robert I. Rotberg, “Failed States, Collapsed States, Weak States: Causes and Indicators”, in *State Failure and State Weakness in a Time of Terror*, ed. Robert I. Rotberg (Brookings Institution Press, 2003), 5, [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/statefailureandstateweaknessinatimeofterror\\_chapter.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/statefailureandstateweaknessinatimeofterror_chapter.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> Gerald B. Helman and Steven R. Ratner, “Saving Failed States”, *Foreign Policy*, no. 89 (Winter 1992-1993): 3-20, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2010/06/15/saving-failed-states/>.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*



“those in which public authorities are either unable or unwilling to carry out their end of what Hobbes long ago called the social contract, but which now includes more than maintaining the peace among society’s many factions and interests”<sup>9</sup>.

The EU can address the challenges in these states through civilian or military missions that require complex strategies and programs based on civilian and military logistics. The EU seeks to track the evolution of failed states and identify way in which these states can be restored to their full statehood. Yoo considers that: “Finding a comprehensive and effective solution to the challenges of terrorism, human rights violations, or poverty and economic development requires some understanding of how to restore failed states”<sup>10</sup>. For the EU, these states represent potential threats to its security, including those that stem from terrorism, organized crime, and illegal migration. At the same time, once these areas are stabilized, they could be places that could foster important economic relations with the EU<sup>11</sup>.

The EU is involved in these states through civilian and/or military missions, seeking to prevent the degradation of the institutions that manage the funds received for reconstruction and humanitarian aid. Among these, the mission in Libya (EUBAM, started in 2013) is of critical importance since Libya, once one of the most important actors in the region, continues to deal with the effects of a 12-year long civil war. The other state where we find three important EU missions on the ground, is Somalia. Greatly troubled by prolonged civil wars and famine, Somalia is the archetypal failed state.

## II. Methodology

The article analyses EU foreign policy and how crises are managed through CSDP missions. The purpose of this research is to highlight how the EU is actively involved in these failed states in order to assess whether the

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<sup>9</sup> Jean-Germain Gros, “Towards a taxonomy of failed states in the New World Order: decaying Somalia, Liberia, Rwanda and Haiti”, *Third World Quarterly* 17, no. 3 (September 1996): 456, <https://library.fes.de/libalt/journals/swetsfulltext/13211226.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> John Yoo, “Fixing Failed States”, *California Law Review* 99, no. 1 (February 2011): 95. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23014430>.

<sup>11</sup> Craișor-Constantin Ioniță, *A multi-criteria analysis of the strategic interests of NATO, the EU and China in Africa and the Arctic: specialist study* (Bucharest: “Carol I” National Defense University Publishing House, 2021), 46, [https://cssas.unap.ro/ro/pdf\\_studii/analiza\\_multicriteriala\\_a\\_intereselor\\_strategice\\_in\\_africa\\_si\\_zona\\_artica.pdf](https://cssas.unap.ro/ro/pdf_studii/analiza_multicriteriala_a_intereselor_strategice_in_africa_si_zona_artica.pdf).

involvement of the EU in strengthening the governments of the respective states is necessary or not. In developing the research framework, we used a qualitative analysis of official documents: the European Security Strategy adopted on December 12, 2003; the Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy (2008); the Global Strategy of the Union European Foreign and Security Policy (2016); and the Strategic Compass (March 2022). Aside from these, we also included the decisions of the Council of the European Union concerning the aid missions. In this documentation process, special attention was paid to the official websites of the five analysed missions, selecting information relating to: start dates and subsequent extensions of the missions, location, type of mission, mandate, and cooperation with other missions. The period analysed covered 15 years, between 2008 and 2023.

The two states analysed were selected because these countries have a strategic importance for the EU. Libya is important because its stabilization would secure the south of the European Union and contribute to the EU's energy security. Libya has large reserves of natural gas and oil and an increase in economic exchanges would be to the advantage of both sides. A rapprochement between the EU and Libya (through the support provided by the two EU missions) would lead to a decrease in illegal migration and would also mitigate the dangers encountered by people trying to escape the Libyan conflict in the Mediterranean region. Somalia is also important because it represents a critical region for the security of commercial maritime transport. The EU, as a global actor with interests in this region has many reasons to help Somalia, since the security issues in the region – piracy, organized crime, terrorism – have a direct impact on European security.

### **III. EU Policy Towards Failed States**

We have established already that failed states pose a threat to international security. According to the European Union External Action, “In a rapidly changing world, security challenges have become more complex, multidimensional and fluid. No EU Member State can face these threats alone”<sup>12</sup>. This concern was also communicated by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign and Security Policy / Vice-President of the Commission

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<sup>12</sup> European Union External Action, “A stronger EU on security and defence”, November 19, 2018, [https://www.ecas.europa.eu/ecas/stronger-eu-security-and-defence\\_en](https://www.ecas.europa.eu/ecas/stronger-eu-security-and-defence_en).



(HR/VP) Josep Borrell who noted that aside from being a source of illegal immigration, failed states have private armies on their territory that generate conflict:

“[...], we have seen in recent years the instrumentalisation of migrants, the privatisation of armies and the politicisation of the control of sensitive technologies. Add to this the dynamics of *state failures*, the retreat of democratic freedoms, plus the attacks on the ‘global commons’ of cyber space, the high seas and outer-space, and the conclusion is clear: the defence of Europe requires a comprehensive concept of security”<sup>13</sup>.

The EU’s foreign policy and defense interests have been conceptualized in a series of strategies that provide current and future guidance for how Member States should address security threats. The topic of failed states is addressed in the European Security Strategy adopted on December 12, 2003. The Strategy defines state failure in relation to two indications: bad governance and civil conflict. It states that:

“bad governance – corruption, abuse of power, weak institutions and lack of accountability and civil conflict weaken states from within. In some cases, this has led to the near collapse of state institutions. Somalia, Liberia and Afghanistan under the Taliban are the best known recent examples. State collapse can be associated with obvious threats such as organized crime or terrorism. The failure represents an alarming phenomenon that undermines global governance and contributes to regional instability”<sup>14</sup>.

In the Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy of 2008, failed states continued to be considered threats to the EU: “Conflicts in the Middle East and other regions of the world remain unresolved, while others have erupted right in our neighbourhood. State failures affect our security through crime, illegal immigration and, more recently, piracy”<sup>15</sup>. The increase in insecurity in maritime traffic due to piracy led Djibouti, a small country

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<sup>13</sup> Council of the European Union, *A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence - For a European Union that protects its citizens, values and interests and contributes to international peace and security*, 2022, 5-6, [https://www.ecas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/strategic\\_compass\\_en3\\_web.pdf](https://www.ecas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/strategic_compass_en3_web.pdf).

<sup>14</sup> Council of the European Union, *The European Security Strategy - A Secure Europe in a Better World* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2009), 27, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/30815/qc7809568roc.pdf>.

<sup>15</sup> Council of the European Union, *Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy - Securing security in a changing world* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2009), 7, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/30815/qc7809568roc.pdf>.

neighboring Somalia to host military bases on its territory. F.B. Suciú and Ionel Muntele describe Djibouti as a stable state due to “the presence of foreign military bases (US, China, France, Germany, UK, etc.) that capitalize on its strategic position to monitor the Iranian-Saudi competition in the Arabian Peninsula, protect maritime trade and fight piracy and terrorism”<sup>16</sup>.

In 2016, the EU introduced a new strategy – the Global Strategy of the European Union for Foreign and Security Policy – to respond to the new security challenges. These challenges came from Russia, which was becoming increasingly hostile after the occupation of Crimea. Afterwards, with the Russian Federation’s invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, the risk of instability increased on the eastern flank of the EU and implicitly of NATO. Meanwhile, failed states continued to create new challenges for the EU. On this issue, the Global Strategy stated that:

“These crises, and the unspeakable violence and human suffering to which they give rise, threaten our shared vital interests. The EU will engage in a practical and principled way in peacebuilding, concentrating our efforts in surrounding regions to the east and south, while considering engagement further afield on a case by case basis”<sup>17</sup>.

It is important for the EU that this involvement meets the required standards that lead to a comprehensive approach. This requires extensive expertise and adequate funding to change things for the better and provide hope for people living in these states:

“The EU will promote human security through an integrated approach. All these conflicts have multiple dimensions – from security to gender, from governance to economics. Implementing a multidimensional approach using all available policies and tools aimed at preventing, managing and resolving conflicts is essential. But the scope of the comprehensive approach will be expanded further. There are no quick fixes to any of these conflicts. Experience from Somalia, Mali, Afghanistan and elsewhere highlights their protracted nature. The European Union will follow a multi-stage approach, acting at all stages of the conflict cycle”<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> F.B. Suciú and Ionel Muntele, “The Horn of Africa, between collapse and hope”, *Revista Intelligence*, February 15, 2023, <https://intelligence.sri.ro/cornul-africii-intre-colaps-si-speranta/>.

<sup>17</sup> European External Action Service, “*Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe*”. *A Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign and Security Policy*, June 2016, 28, [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eugs\\_review\\_web\\_0.pdf](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eugs_review_web_0.pdf).

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

## IV. EU Missions and Failed States

### IV.1. Libya

Prior to 2011, Libya was ruled by Muammar Gaddafi, who was violently deposed in the aftermath of Arab Spring protests that broke out in 2011 and subsequent NATO-led intervention that backed the rebels. Since then, Libya has been torn by a civil war, which has had a profound impact on the country, leading it to require more involvement from various international organizations. The Center for Preventive Action stated that the international community “continued to express concern over the permanent fracture of Libya as armed militant groups have tried to divide the country along political and tribal lines”<sup>19</sup>, adding that, “in the absence of a primary governing body, migration and human trafficking have remained problematic”<sup>20</sup>. Under these circumstances, EU missions in this country are justified by the need to combat the presence of terrorist groups, organized crime groups, and groups that traffic in arms and people linked to Libya. For these purposes, the EU allocated € 88.8 million in humanitarian aid to Libya for the first two years of operations<sup>21</sup>.

During the civil war, an important turning point was the year 2019, when Marshal Khalifa Haftar tried to occupy the capital Tripoli. Notably, in terms of international participation, on the part of the Tripoli government, Turkey intervened and changed the course of the war<sup>22</sup>. As for the involvement of other states from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region in Libya, some supported the Government of National Accord (GNA) and others the Libyan National Army (LNA). Colombo and Varvelli argue that:

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<sup>19</sup> Center for Preventive Action, “Civil Conflict in Libya”, *Council on Foreign Relations – Global Conflict Tracker*, updated September 19, 2023, <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/civil-war-libya>.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, “Libya - Factsheet”, [https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/where/middle-east-and-northern-africa/libya\\_en#facts--figures](https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/where/middle-east-and-northern-africa/libya_en#facts--figures).

<sup>22</sup> Matteo Colombo and Arturo Varvelli, “Libya: A Failed State in the Middle of the Mediterranean”, *IEMed: Mediterranean Yearbook*, no. 2020 (2020): 84, <https://www.iemed.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Libya-A-Failed-State-in-the-Middle-of-the-Mediterranean-1.pdf>.

“In the Libyan context, Turkey and, to a lesser extent Qatar, back the GNA, which is also supported by militias ideologically linked to the Muslim Brotherhood<sup>23</sup>. On the other hand, Egypt, UAE and, to a lesser extent, Saudi Arabia, are among the main sponsors of the HoR-LNA”<sup>24</sup>.

Due to the chronic of the conflict, the situation remains tense. The government in Tripoli is supported by the UN and internationally recognized, but is in conflict with Marshal Khalifa Haftar, the commander of the Libyan National Army (LNA)<sup>25</sup>. According to Oliver P. Richmond, the actions of some permanent members of the UN Security Council (Russia and China) and their resistance to the “liberal peace-building consensus” further complicate the peace process in Libya<sup>26</sup>. Russia and China want to “build multipolar zones of competing interests, their own development banks and forms of military and diplomatic intervention assistance”<sup>27</sup>.

For the Libyan case-study, we present the mandates of two EU missions: EUBAM Libya and EUNAVFOR MED IRINI.

#### IV.1.1. EUBAM Libya

EUBAM Libya provides assistance to the Libyan authorities in the field of border management, as is evident from the mission’s acronym (EUBAM: EU Border Assistance Mission), covering the land, sea and air borders of the country. It is a civilian mission seeking to promote “crisis management with a capacity-building mandate”, by “assist[ing] the Libyan authorities at strategic and operational levels”<sup>28</sup>. According to the mission mandate which is still operational, EUBAM activities include:

“The work [...] carried out by advising, training and mentoring Libyan counterparts on strengthening border services in line with international standards

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<sup>23</sup> Author’s note: The Muslim Brotherhood is the oldest Islamic political organization, founded in Egypt by Hassan al-Banna in 1928. It is currently considered a terrorist organization in Egypt and other states in the region. The ideology of this organization is based on revolutionizing the Arab political system according to the founder’s vision.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>25</sup> Center for Preventive Action, “Civil Conflict in Libya”.

<sup>26</sup> Oliver P. Richmond, Sandra Pogodda, and Gëzim Visoka, “The international dynamics of counter-peace”, *European Journal of International Relations* (2023): 7, <https://doi.org/10.1177/13540661231168772>.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> EUBAM Libya, “About us”, September 15, 2021, [https://www.ecas.europa.eu/eubam-libya/about-eu-border-assistance-mission-libya-eubam\\_en?s=327&ettrans=ro](https://www.ecas.europa.eu/eubam-libya/about-eu-border-assistance-mission-libya-eubam_en?s=327&ettrans=ro).

and best practices and by advising the Libyan authorities on the development of a National Integrated Border Management (IBM) strategy”<sup>29</sup>.

The mission started on May 22, 2013 and was supposed to end on June 30, 2020, but after the Berlin Conference on January 19, 2020, the UN decided that it was appropriate to extend the civilian mission, finding that the plan presented was meeting the country’s border security needs: “On 12 February 2020, in UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2510 (2020), the UN Security Council welcomed the Berlin Conference on Libya and supported its conclusions, noting that these conclusions represent an important element of a comprehensive solution to the situation in Libya”<sup>30</sup>.

The Decision of the Council of the European Union from June 18, 2021 states that on June 29, 2020, the Council approved the extension of EUBAM Libya’s mandate until June 30, 2021. And from March 2, 2021, a two-year extension was proposed until June 30, 2023. Once again, on June 26, 2023, an additional two-year extension was approved which is set to expire on June 30, 2025. On the issue of budget allocation, the Council ordered the approval of a budget of € 84.85 million for the period July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2023<sup>31</sup>.

The mission has the following objectives:

- (1) “EUBAM Libya shall assist the Libyan authorities in building state security structures in Libya, in particular in the areas of border management, law enforcement and criminal justice, in order to contribute to efforts to disrupt organized criminal networks involved in particular in the trafficking migrant smuggling, human trafficking and terrorism in Libya and the central Mediterranean region.
- (2) EUBAM Libya supports the United Nations-led efforts for peace in Libya in the border areas management, law enforcement and criminal justice”<sup>32</sup>.

During the 2019 offensive led by to Marshal Khalifa Haftar and during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, the mission operated from its headquarters in Tunis, with only a few people dispatched to Tripoli. From September 2020 EUBAM Libya’s headquarters and most of its operational staff were relocated to Tripoli. The EU through this mission is actively supporting the authorities in stepping up efforts to stop organized criminal networks involved in migrant

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Council of the European Union, “Council Decision (CFSP) 2021/1009 of 18 June 2021 amending Decision 2013/233/CFSP on the European Union Integrated Border Management Assistance Mission in Libya (EUBAM Libya)”, *Official Journal of the European Union*, 2021, 18, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legalcontent/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021D1009&qid=1629820283768&from=EN>.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

smuggling, people-trafficking and terrorism. The mission also supports the Libyan authorities in areas such as law enforcement by strengthening the strategic planning capacities of the Ministry of Interior.

#### IV.1.2. EUNAVFOR MED IRINI

The EUNAVFOR MED IRINI mission is a military mission that began on March 31, 2020 and will continue until March 2025. Its original mandate was set to expire in 2021, but was extended from 2021 to 2023 and, again, from 2023 to 2025. Its goals is to enforce the UN arms embargo on Libya and to accomplish this, the mission operates aerial, satellite and maritime networks. Based in Rome, the mission controls suspicious vessels heading for Libya. Other tasks EUNAVFOR MED IRINI can perform, include those that:

- “monitor and collect information on illicit exports of petroleum, crude oil and refined petroleum products from Libya;
- contributes to disrupting the business model of smuggling and people-trafficking networks through intelligence gathering and aircraft patrolling;
- [...] support[...] the capacity building and training of the Libyan Coast Guard and Navy. The implementation of this activity has not started due to the political fragmentation in Libya”<sup>33</sup>.

This embargo was not respected by some international actors who supported the various sides in the conflict. States such as the Russian Federation, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan and Egypt supported Khalifa Haftar, while Turkey and Qatar supported the government in Tripoli<sup>34</sup>. In these conditions, the EU had to oversee the application of the embargo to prevent the supply of arms from reaching the parties to the conflict. When the mission was first launched, through these measures, the EU was “keen to see an end to the turmoil in Libya, as years of conflict have left areas of the country as lawless gray areas used by human traffickers to channel migrants to Europe”<sup>35</sup>. The budget allocated for its first year of operations (2020-2021) was € 9 837 800<sup>36</sup>.

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<sup>33</sup> EUNAVFOR MED IRINI, “About us”, <https://www.operationirini.eu/about-us/>.

<sup>34</sup> Silviu Nate, “Libya and the new map of geopolitical stakes in the Levant Basin”, *Hotnews*, last modified January 28, 2020, <https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-opinii-23626152-libia-noua-harta-mizelor-geopolitice-bazinul-levant.htm>.

<sup>35</sup> Euractiv, “EU to extend Libya arms embargo mission to 2023”, last modified March 18, 2021, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/eu-to-extend-libya-arms-embargo-mission-to-2023/>.

<sup>36</sup> Council of the European Union, “Council Decision (CFSP) 2020/472 of 31 March 2020 on a European Union military operation in the Mediterranean (EUNAVFOR MED IRINI)”, *Official*

#### IV.2. Somalia

Since August 1, 2012, after the adoption of the new constitution, the Somali state bears the name of the Federal Republic of Somalia. In Somalia, there is currently a civil war between the central authorities in Mogadishu and the Islamic group Al-Shabaab (affiliated to Al Qaeda). The federal government is internationally recognized and supported, as can be seen in the case of the EU missions to this country.

William T. Brooks in *Why Failed States Matter: The Case of Somalia* (2012) believes that while the conflict is longstanding, a cause that contributes to its prolongation has to do with the lack of credibility of the rulers. According to Brooks:

“As Somalia has been a failed state for more than three decades, it currently has no credible, experienced leaders to govern the country or build functioning institutions. Therefore, the international community must be willing to pursue a long-term approach to successfully rebuild the nation”<sup>37</sup>.

In Somalia due to the protracted civil war (1991-present) there is a severe humanitarian crisis<sup>38</sup> that has facilitated the emergence of armed groups that commit piracy and disrupt commercial maritime transit in this area. UN’s Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) stated that for 2023, the humanitarian situation in Somalia “continues to deteriorate”:

“The severe drought, hunger, disease and violence merge to bring Somalia to the brink of famine. An estimated 8.25 million people (1.5 million children under five, 1.8 million girls (five to 17 years), 1.8 million boys (five to 17 years), 1.3 million women, 1.4 million men and 412,000 elderly) require humanitarian assistance”<sup>39</sup>.

In Somalia, the EU participates both in terms of military involvement, but also through civilian missions where it provides over 35% of all humanitarian

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*Journal of the European Union*, 2020, 9, <https://www.operationirini.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/200401-CD-IRINI-in-OJ.pdf>.

<sup>37</sup> William T. Brooks, “Why Failed States Matter: The Case of Somalia”, *Strategy Research Project*, United States Army War College, Class of 2012, 17, <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/tr/pdf/ADA560777.pdf>.

<sup>38</sup> OCHA, “Somalia Humanitarian Needs Overview 2023”, last modified February 8, 2023, <https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/somalia-humanitarian-needs-overview-2023-february-2023>.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.



aid<sup>40</sup>. the EU offered the following financial aid to develop the resilience of the Somali state (see Table no. 1). The table shows an increase in funding for each sector in which the EU provides aid to strengthen Somalia. This cross-sector engagement provides the Somali authorities with funds to improve the lives of a large number of citizens.

Financing sectors The year	Displacement and migration	Agriculture, livestock and fisheries	Gender and social inclusion	Transportation	Nutrition	Environment and natural resource management
2018	72.1 million euros	25 million euros	15.4 million euros	6 million euros	33 million euros	14.8 million euros
2019	90 million euros	66 million euros	20.7 million euros	38 million euros	64 million euros	22.8 million euros

Table no. 1: EU funding for Somalia to build resilience

Source: European Union in Somalia, “Partners in Peace”, European Union External Action, 2022, 19, <https://www.ecas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/EU-Somalia-6-SC.pdf>.

Decades of failed state experience are largely to blame for the existence of piracy in Somalia. In Sava’s view:

“Somalia is currently the country with the highest level of piracy in the world. One cause of the development of piracy is closely related to the historical setting, because during the authoritarian regime of General Siad Barre poverty increased and the state ended up in a civil war. Under these conditions, piracy evolved from attacking relatively small fishing vessels to attacking commercial vessels such as oil tankers or cargo vessels”<sup>41</sup>.

In the future, as the situation in this state will remain tensioned, there will be an increase in the involvement of regional actors. Currently, in addition to the EU, Turkey, which provides the federal government with drones, and the United Arab Emirates, which signed an agreement with Somalia to train 10,000 soldiers and police officers, are also involved militarily in Somalia<sup>42</sup>.

<sup>40</sup> The European Union in Somalia, “Partners in Peace”, European Union External Action, 2022, 18, <https://www.ecas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/EU-Somalia-6-SC.pdf>.

<sup>41</sup> Andreea Nicoleta Sava, “Piracy and terrorism in the Horn of Africa – Federal Republic of Somalia”, *Polis* IX, no. 1 (January 2021): 9. [http://revistapolis.ro/documente/revista/2021/1\(31\)/9.%20A%20N%20Sava.pdf](http://revistapolis.ro/documente/revista/2021/1(31)/9.%20A%20N%20Sava.pdf).

<sup>42</sup> Vanda Felbab-Brown, “Somalia’s challenges in 2023”, *Brookings*, January 27, 2023, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/somalias-challenges-in-2023/>.



#### IV.2.1. The EU’s Integrated Approach to Missions in the Horn of Africa

In this key region for global maritime trade, there are two failed states that cause instability and where government authority is weak: Somalia and Yemen. The EU considers that an integrated approach is necessary to address the threat posed by piracy and maritime traffic interception. Large quantities of goods are transported through the Gulf of Aden, the Red Sea and then through the Suez Canal. The Suez Canal allows ships to pass between Europe and Asia in either direction, thereby eliminating other longer and costly routes. To put things in perspective, 12% of the world volume of goods is transported through the Canal. In 2020 alone, “[n]early 19,000 ships, or an average of 51.5 ships per day, with a net tonnage of 1.17 billion tonnes passed through the canal”<sup>43</sup>.

Given the strong ties that exist between existent piracy networks and Somalia, the EU is actively trying to address this issue through several missions in the region (EU NAVFOR Atalanta; EUCAP Somalia; and EUTM Somalia): “EU NAVFOR is part of the EU’s integrated approach, addressing both the current symptoms and root causes of the problem. To this end, other CSDP missions in the region are EUCAP Somalia and EUTM Somalia”<sup>44</sup>.

#### IV.2.2. EU NAVFOR Atalanta

The EU NAVFOR Atalanta is a military mission that started on November 10, 2008. At the end of 2022, the mission was extended for another two years, until December 2024<sup>45</sup>. The main objectives of Operation Atalanta are:

- “ - protecting World Food Program vessels and other vulnerable vessels;
- deterring, preventing and suppressing piracy and armed robbery at sea”<sup>46</sup>.

The protection of commercial ships became even more important after Russia’s blockade of Ukraine, as the number of ships carrying grain was reduced and piracy attacks would deepen the food crisis.

EU NAVFOR Atalanta contributes to deterring, preventing and stopping acts of piracy and armed robbery off the Somali coast. The area that this mission

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<sup>43</sup> DIGI 24, “Historical images: What the Suez Canal looked like at its inauguration, 152 years ago”, last modified November 17, 2021, <https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/externe/imagini-istorice-cum-arata-canalul-suez-la-inaugurare-acum-152-de-ani-1738781>.

<sup>44</sup> EU Naval Force Operation ATALANTA, “Mission”, <https://eunavfor.eu/mission>.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

oversees is cca. 4,700,000 miles square (cca. 16,121,000 km<sup>2</sup>)<sup>47</sup> and includes parts of the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden and a large portion of the Indian Ocean (including the Islands of Seychelles, Mauritius and Comoros). Also included here are the coastal regions of Somalia and its internal waters.

To patrol this area, the mission uses: “Marine ships (surface combatant ships and auxiliary ships, including with helicopters on board); Maritime patrol and reconnaissance aircraft (MPRA); Unmanned aerial systems (UAS); Teams of the Autonomous Ship Protection Detachment (AVPD), etc.”<sup>48</sup>. These missions are expensive as reflected in the financial reference value (€ 9 930 000) for the common costs approved by the Council for the period between 1 January 2021 and 31 December 2022<sup>49</sup>.

#### IV.2.3. EUTM Somalia

EUTM Somalia is based on the UN Security Council Resolution 1872 of May 2009. EU agreed on January 25, 2010 to launch a military mission to contribute to the training of Somalia’s security forces. The European Union Training Mission in Somalia (EUTM Somalia) was launched on 7 April 2010 and was initially based in Uganda. Its mandate has been extended seven times. Changes in the mission reflect the circumstances on the ground. EUTM Somalia is described as “an EU military training mission that aims to strengthen the Somali National Government (SNG) and institutions in Somalia by providing military training to members of the Somali National Armed Forces (SNAF)”<sup>50</sup>.

In its seventh mandate (2021-2023), EUTM Somalia continues to provide training to the Somali Security Forces (SSF), helping the government to maintain order in the country. Furthermore, this mission provides strategic level advice to force institutions and assists in mentoring in initial training<sup>51</sup>. Eight states contribute troops to the realization of the EUTM Somalia mandate: seven

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> EU Naval Force Operation ATALANTA, “Mission - Who contributes to Operation Atalanta?”, <https://eunavfor.eu/mission>.

<sup>49</sup> Council of the European Union, “Council Decision (CFSP) 2020/2188 of 22 December 2020 amending Joint Action 2008/851/CFSP on the military operation of the European Union with a view to contributing to deterring, preventing and repressing acts of piracy and armed robbery at sea coast of Somalia”, *Official Journal of the European Union*, 2020, 77, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/RO/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32020D2188&from=EN>.

<sup>50</sup> EUTM-Somalia, “Home”, <https://www.eutm-somalia.eu/>.

<sup>51</sup> EUTM-Somalia, “European Union Training Mission – Somalia”, 1, last updated September 2022, <https://www.eutm-somalia.eu/wp-content/uploads/bsk-pdf-manager/2022/09/EUTM-S-FACTSHEET-7th-Mandate.pdf>.

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Member States (Italy, Spain, Finland, Sweden, Romania, Portugal, Greece) and Serbia<sup>52</sup>.

#### IV.2.4. EUCAP Somalia

The EU launched the EUCAP Nestor mission in 2012 to strengthen civil maritime capabilities, with the aim of supporting host states in the development of maritime security. EUCAP Nestor was mandated to stop piracy in the Horn of Africa and the Indian Ocean. According to the *Official Journal of the European Union*, “On December 12, 2016, by Decision (CFSP) 2016/2240 (2), the Council amended mandate of the mission to focus on capacity building in Somalia and changed the name of the mission to EUCAP Somalia”<sup>53</sup>.

At the end of 2022, the Council extended the mandate for another two years, with the mission to end on December 31, 2024. The mission maintains the goal of supporting maritime security in Somalia. Activities in this mission focus on strategic-level advice, ranging from training and mentoring naval forces that are part of the coast guard to providing support for legislation and the activity of the prosecutor’s office and of the police.

The EUCAP Somalia mission focuses on the implementation of the following three pillars:

- 1.“Strengthening maritime police units in and around the four main Somali ports (Mogadishu, Berbera, Bosaso and Kismayo);
- 2.Contribut[ing] to the development of the Somali Coast Guard functions and continu[ing] to support the importance of maritime security for the development of the Blue Economy;
- 3.Support for the wider development of the police, with particular reference to the implementation of the Somali Transition Plan and the improvement and restructuring of the Somali police force, in coordination with EU-funded activities”<sup>54</sup>.

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>53</sup> Council of the European Union, “Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/2445 of the Council of 12 December 2022 amending Decision 2012/389/CFSP on the European Union capacity-building mission in Somalia (EUCAP Somalia)”, *Official Journal of the European Union*, 2022, 91, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legalcontent/RO/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022D2445&from=EN>.

<sup>54</sup> EUCAP Somalia, “About EUCAP Somalia”, last modified May 12, 2022, [https://www.ec.europa.eu/eucap-som/about-eucap-somalia\\_en?s=332](https://www.ec.europa.eu/eucap-som/about-eucap-somalia_en?s=332).

For the two-year mandate, which started in January 2023, the Council decided to approve an increase of the budget of EUCAP Somalia in order for the mission to better be able to fulfil its mandate. For the period January 1, 2023 - December 31, 2024, the financial reference value intended to cover the expenses related to EUCAP Somalia was € 83,076,673.07<sup>55</sup>.

## V. Conclusion

EU dispatches missions in failed states and critical maritime transit areas to assist with the situation on the ground and to foster the consolidation and reconstruction of these states. The missions collaborate with internationally recognized authorities, even if they do not control the entire territory of their states. The missions concerning Libya (EUBAM Libya and EUNAVFOR MED IRINI), respectively those sent to Somalia (EU NAVFOR ATALANTA, EUCAP Somalia and EUTM Somalia) are an example of good practices for how the EU acts in such situations. EU missions help strengthen the governments of these states both in their military as well as in the civilian capacity since the EU provides considerable humanitarian aid to Libya and Somalia. This aid is necessary to support growing social cohesion and to attract the population living in poverty to the government side.

If ascertaining *whether involvement of the EU in strengthening the governments of the respective states is necessary or not*, we found that this involvement is necessary because the states that need stability do not have the necessary domestic resources to combat the influence of parties that want to destabilize them. In conducting this research, we found that two elements are crucial for the success of these missions: 1) adequate funding; and 2) the presence of specialists who advise and provide instruction to the staff representing the governmental institutions in these states.

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<sup>55</sup> Council of the European Union, “Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/2445 OF THE COUNCIL of 12 December 2022 amending Decision 2012/389/CFSP on the European Union capacity-building mission in Somalia (EUCAP Somalia)”, *Official Journal of the European Union*, 2022, 91, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/RO/TEXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022D2445&from=EN>.

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## A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE MIGRATION POLICY FROM THE TRUMP TO BIDEN ADMINISTRATION (2017-2023)

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**Abstract:** The subject concerning migration has generated a lot of different opinions due to the fact that it is so vast and subjected to constant changes. Taking into account the evolution of policy over time, we must discuss the way present policies are impacting the society from a socio-economic point of view. The United States of America has been for the past centuries one of the most attractive migration destination in the world. This aspect has generated many organizational issues, in different areas of policy-making – political, legislative, socio-economic. In developing the research framework, we try to understand the context driving the harsh reality accompanying the migration crisis. In this sense, this article analyses the socio-political changes that have resulted from the creation or modification of migration laws in the United States over the past century. The comparative analysis is based on the legislative input and the social lessons drawn from the assessing the dire conditions in which migrants found themselves after the adoption of Trump administration’s radical migration policies. Focusing on the contemporary policy developments from two presidential administrations (Trump, Biden), the article considers the obstacles faced by migrants in their quest for the American Dream, given the frequent and often, contradictory changes in legislation.

**Keywords:** migration crisis, reform of migration policy, US migration policy, Trump Administration, Biden Administration, Mexico

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**Rezumat:** Subiectul migrației a generat numeroase opinii contrastante dat fiind că este atât de vast și supus unor schimbări frecvente. Ținând cont de evoluția politicii migrației în timp, trebuie să evaluăm modul în care politicile actuale influențează societatea din punct de vedere socio-economic. Statele Unite ale Americii au reprezentat în ultimele secole una dintre cele mai atractive destinații pentru migrație din lume. Acest aspect a generat multe probleme organizaționale, la diferite niveluri de elaborare a politicilor – politic, legislativ, socio-economic. În dezvoltarea cadrului de cercetare, studiul caută să înțeleagă contextul care însoțește criza migrației. În acest sens, studiul analizează schimbările socio-politice care au rezultat în urma creării sau modificării legilor migrației în Statele Unite în ultimul secol. Analiza comparativă se bazează pe aportul legislativ și pe lecțiile sociale deprinse din evaluarea condițiilor grave în care s-au aflat migrații

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după adoptarea politicilor radicale de către administrația Trump. Examinând aceste evoluții contemporane raportate la politicile administrațiilor prezidențiale Trump / Biden, articolul identifică obstacolele cu care se confruntă migrații în căutarea visului american, având în vedere schimbările frecvente și adesea contradictorii ale legislației.

**Cuvinte cheie:** criza migrației, reforma politicii migrației, politica migrației în SUA, Administrația Trump, Administrația Biden, Mexic

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## I. Introduction

This study represents an exploration of migration policy in the United States (U.S.), providing a review of the literature on this issue and conducting a content analysis of related legislation in order to assess the socio-political changes that have been brought about by the development of the everchanging migration laws in the U.S. At the same time, the study adds to the discussion on the alteration of the migratory patterns over a short period of time. Through a comparative approach of the Trump and Biden administrations' treatment of immigration, we find how particularly divisive this complex issue is on the American political scene. This is because immigration has a direct impact upon the social life, the economic life, and the political life of all parties involved, as well as on the bilateral and multilateral relations between U.S. and other countries in the region.

When thinking about the U.S., one of the first ideas that comes to people is migration, which while part of its national identity since its inception as a state, has undergone numerous changes throughout time. The United States has managed to dominate the global socio-economic policies, and has been the political center for the democratic world. While constantly building its global place, American ideas have migrated towards the world, becoming encrypted in the international collective memory. One of the strongest ideals that have been subject of this tendency is the *American Dream*, which speaks about people's ability to accomplish themselves in the land of opportunity without fearing that the state would target them for who they are.

In light of this, it is important to note that the policies underpinning the American Dream, concern directly the migration process and are constantly changing depending on the administration in charge. These policy differences can be quite significant and can have a negatively impact the lives of millions who just want a better life.

## II. Short History of Migration

In order to discuss why migration policy fluctuates depending on the administration, the focus must shift towards the neighboring country, Mexico, which acts as corridor for millions of migrants. This issue has been a point of contention in the U.S.-Mexico relation, which, in turn, has been speculated by American anti-immigration politicians, like Trump, to rouse public support for their hardline policies.

After a period of more than 300 years, the borders between the two countries were more or less delimited<sup>1</sup>. This fact could have permitted the two countries to have stronger relations, however, when discussing the period between 1810 – 1850, we can observe the opposite. In the mentioned timeframe, clashed at various points, with the Mexican-American war being a highlight in terms of U.S. territorial expansion at the cost of Mexico.

The highlight of this period was the Gadsden Purchase that took place in 1853, and represented the conclusion of the battles between Mexico and the United States for territorial expansion. The event represented the defeat of Mexico and clearly delimited the southern border from California to Texas<sup>2</sup>. Following the conclusion of the harsh negotiations, the government of the United States realized that while it had many expansion projects needed to sustain the envisioned economic growth, it did not have the necessary number of workers to bring these plans to reality<sup>3</sup>. To sustain this, U.S. allowed the entry of migrants during the first of many migratory waves.

In the following period, from 1880 until 1910, another migratory expansion took place – these migrant workers will play a key role in the economic development of the U.S. Notably, the economic relations flourished between Mexico and the U.S. due to the new employment opportunities, as well as the

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<sup>1</sup> Important to note that during this timeframe, the Amerindian population witnessed a large theft of their wealth, which accompanied the destruction of the indigenous history. (Bernard Grunberg, María del Carmen Martínez Martínez, and Esteban Mira Caballos, *Hernán Cortés, Una Vida Entre Dos Mundos* (Ciudad de México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas, 2021), 73-75.)

<sup>2</sup> Patrick Lavin, *An Illustrated History* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 2001), 145-146.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Curley, *The Complete History of Railroads: Trade, Transport, and Expansion* (New York: Britannica Educational Publishing, 2012), xiv-xvi.

recruitment of the workforce from Mexico that would work for the railroad companies<sup>4</sup>.

The next wave of migration lasted until the Great Depression in 1929, and was similar to the previous one, as it comprised mostly urban workers and household help workers. The number of immigrants was particularly high given the short timeframe: just in the first ten years alone, from 1910 up to 1920, the numbers show that around 900,000 Mexicans migrated to the United States for such employment opportunities<sup>5</sup>. As the 1920s got underway, the immigration laws started to adopt drastic anti-migratory measures, as witnessed for example, in 1921, when the Southern and Eastern Europeans were negatively impacted by the Quota Act of 1921<sup>6</sup>. At the same time, we can observe that the U.S. Government saw these policies to be of critical importance, leading in 1924, to the adoption of the Immigration Act. This law extended the restrictions towards the East and South Asians. As time went by, the Immigration Act of 1924<sup>7</sup> would suffer modifications, but after nearly a century, it still remains one of the documents which shapes the migration policies.

### **III. The Concept of Migration. Types and Causes**

To understand the phenomenon of migration, we need to analyse the underlying factors and processes that contribute to it. They are comprehensive and have social, economic, and political implications for the countries sending and receiving migrants. At the conceptual level, migration can be researched along multiple individual, societal, and structural factors. This present study views migration from the transnational perspective, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of migrants in relation to their communities of origin and destination. This perspective recognizes that migration is not a one-time event,

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<sup>4</sup> Gilbert G. Gonzalez and Raul A. Fernandez, *A Century of Chicano History: Empire, Nations and Migration* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 34-37.

<sup>5</sup> Benjamin R. Beede, *The War of 1898 and U.S. Interventions, 1898-1934: An Encyclopedia* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1994), 536-537.

<sup>6</sup> Gabriel J. Chin and Rose Cuison Villazor, *The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965: Legislating a New America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 201-202.

<sup>7</sup> Maria E. Montoya et. al, *Global Americans: A History of the United States, vol. 2* (Boston: Cengage Learning, 2018), 570-573.

but rather a process that involves ongoing social, economic, and cultural ties between migrants and their home and host communities<sup>8</sup>.

There are several types of migration, deriving mainly from two general processes. The first is a “regular” one, where the naturalization of the immigrants occurs and they lead regular lives in the U.S. The other concerns illegal migration and results from the difficultness in obtaining the legal recognition to live in the U.S. The legality is linked to obtaining the proper documentation: a visa, which can be temporary, from three months up to five years; obtaining the residence, which is valid until the individual obtains the green card; and the green card, which is the right to reside within the U.S. borders for life.

The process of the illegal migration represents an enormous risk, due to the fact that it entails a person or a group of people that are able to cross the border in a number of ways as to go undetected by the border security (tunnels, by boat, hidden in the automobiles or trucks that legally cross the border). Needless to say, each method is more dangerous than the other. If the person or group of people manage to survive this dangerous process, there is a possibility to find employment, without any kind of benefits, except for a small pay. In most cases, if they survive the journey, after they cross the border, undocumented immigrants face deportation or imprisonment.

The push factors include a lack of opportunities in their home country, poor education, the need of living a normal life, and the fear of living in terror. The last one is particularly important since the crime rates and organized crime are an important reason why people are forced to migrate.

#### **IV. Brief Analysis of U.S. Legislation on Immigration (1952-2012)**

The United States has a long history of immigration, and its immigration policy has undergone numerous changes over time. Several key pieces of legislation have shaped the modern immigration system, including the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, the Immigration and Nationality Act

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<sup>8</sup> Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch, and Cristina Blanc-Szanton, “From Immigrant to Transmigrant: Theorizing Transnational Migration”, *Anthropological Quarterly* 68, no. 1 (1995): 48-63.

of 1965, the Refugee Act of 1980, the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, and the Immigration Act of 1990.

The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, also known as the McCarran-Walter Act, marked a significant shift in U.S. immigration policy. It replaced earlier laws that had favored immigrants from Northern and Western Europe and established a new system that prioritized family reunification and skills-based immigration. The Act also established quotas for each country, limiting the number of immigrants who could come from any given nation<sup>9</sup>.

The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, also known as the Hart-Celler Act, was a major reform that abolished the quota system established by the 1952 Act. It replaced the national origin quotas with a system that prioritized family reunification and employment-based immigration. The Act also eliminated racial and ethnic restrictions on immigration, paving the way for increased diversity in the U.S.<sup>10</sup>. On the other hand, The Refugee Act of 1980 established a formal process for admitting refugees into the U.S. and defined who qualified as a refugee. The Act created the Office of Refugee Resettlement to oversee the resettlement of refugees and established funding for refugee assistance programs<sup>11</sup>.

The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 addressed the issue of illegal immigration by establishing penalties for employers who hired undocumented workers and providing a path to legalization for some undocumented immigrants who had been in the U.S. since 1982<sup>12</sup>. Afterwards, The Immigration Act of 1990 increased the number of immigrants allowed into the U.S. and expanded family-based and employment-based immigration. The Act also created the Diversity Visa Lottery, which allows individuals from countries with low rates of immigration to the U.S. to apply for visas<sup>13</sup>.

The Real ID Act is a federal law that was enacted in 2005 in response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The law established new minimum-security standards for

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<sup>9</sup> Cornell Law School, *Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952*, <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/8/1101>.

<sup>10</sup> Cornell Law School, *Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965*, <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/8/1151>.

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, *Refugee Act of 1980*, <https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/refugees-asylum/refugees/refugee-act-1980>.

<sup>12</sup> U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, *Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986*, <https://www.uscis.gov/history-and-genealogy/our-history/agency-history/immigration-reform-and-control-act-of-1986>.

<sup>13</sup> U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, *Immigration Act of 1990*, <https://www.uscis.gov/history-and-genealogy/our-history/agency-history/immigration-act-of-1990>.

state-issued driver licenses and identification cards, which included requirements for proof of identity and lawful status in the United States. The law was controversial due to concerns about privacy and the cost and logistical challenges of implementing the new standards<sup>14</sup>. The following year, The Secure Fence Act of 2006 authorized the construction of hundreds of miles of fencing along the U.S.-Mexico border in an effort to curb illegal immigration. The law was similarly controversial due to concerns about the cost and effectiveness of the fence<sup>15</sup>. A few years later, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) was a policy implemented by the Obama Administration in 2012 that provided temporary protection from deportation and work authorization for certain undocumented immigrants who were brought to the United States as children. The policy was rescinded by the Trump Administration in 2017, but has since been reinstated by the Biden Administration<sup>16</sup>.

## V. Current Migration Trends (2017-2023)

In recent years, the migratory trends for Mexican population have been in a slow, but constant decline. Statistics show that in 2019 the number of Mexican born immigrants neared almost 11,000,000, representing 24.3% of the total percentage of non-residents of the United States<sup>17</sup>. On the other hand, in 2021 the number of Mexican born immigrants was of just over 10,500,000, representing 23.6% of the total percentage of non-residents<sup>18</sup>. The data also show that around 43% of the Mexican migrants arrived and lived in the U.S. illegally. If the percentage is transposed in numbers, it would mean that around 5,000,000 individuals find themselves in this situation<sup>19</sup>. Another relevant statistic when discussing the migration trends of this period is reflected in the

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<sup>14</sup> U.S. Department of Homeland Security, *Real ID Act of 2005*, <https://www.dhs.gov/real-id-public-faqs>.

<sup>15</sup> U.S. Customs and Border Protection, *Secure Fence Act of 2006*, <https://www.cbp.gov/document/publications/secure-fence-act-2006-summary>.

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, *Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)*, <https://www.uscis.gov/archive/consideration-of-deferred-action-for-childhood-arrivals-daca>.

<sup>17</sup> Migration Policy Institute, “Mexican Born Population Over Time 1850 – present”, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/charts/mexican-born-population-over-time?width=900&height=850&iframe=true>.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ana Gonzalez-Barrera and Jens Manuel Krogstad, “What we know about illegal immigration from Mexico”, *Pew Research Center*, 28.06.2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2019/06/28/what-we-know-about-illegal-immigration-from-mexico/>.



numbers of arrested individuals who were in the process of crossing the border illegally. The figures for the year 2017 accounted for 461,540 arrests<sup>20</sup>, while for 2018, they had rose to 572,566<sup>21</sup>. This increase – of more than 24% – was the result of the strengthening of measures at the border for national safety purposes. The following year there was a significant increase with regard to the number of arrests and deportations. The number of individuals targeted almost doubled, whereby 1,013,539 people were affected.<sup>22</sup>

The effects of the measures taken by Donald Trump’s administration are reflected in the figures documented above. In 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, people were much more cautious even when migrating, and this had an immediate impact on the numbers which recorded 518,597 people being arrested and deported<sup>23</sup>. In 2021 as the pandemic crisis began to stabilize, more people resumed the migratory process and, as a result, 1,659,206 individuals were affected by the measures put in place<sup>24</sup>. In 2022, the law enforcement measures were further strengthen and this led to 2,766,582 arrests. Of these, around 85% were conducted by the border police in the south-eastern part of the U.S. border<sup>25</sup>. This means that in this border region alone, nearly 2,350,000 people were affected by these anti-immigration measures.

## **VI. Migration Policy during the Trump Administration**

To address the migration issue during the Trump Administration, it must be mentioned that the changes proposed by Trump were applicable to many migration related topics. The first topic concerns the birth-right citizenship. This form of citizenship was viewed by many immigrants as their lucky ticket towards a new life. The fundamental principle at the basis of birth-right citizenship is that if a birth takes place within the territory of the United States, the new-born automatically receives the rights of an American citizen, as well as an irrevocable citizenship. It is important to mention that in order to receive this citizenship,

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<sup>20</sup> Statista, “Número de inmigrantes ilegales detenidos en los Estados Unidos entre 1991 y 2021”, <https://es.statista.com/estadisticas/598636/inmigracion-ee-uu-inmigrantes-ilegales-detenidos-1990/>.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> DW, “Récord de migrantes detenidos en Estados Unidos”, 24.10.2022, <https://www.dw.com/es/r%C3%A9cord-de-migrantes-detenidos-en-estados-unidos/a-63542117>.

the nationality and migratory status of the newborn's parents are not relevant. Many people saw the potential benefits of this law because in time, due to the child's citizenship, the parents could also receive the right to stay in the United States, and might even obtain U.S. citizenship for themselves.

Donald Trump's plan with regards to this topic was to refuse citizenship to newborns of non-resident parents, and to remove the illegal immigrants from the country, even if their children were born there. While discussions began in 2015 during the Republican primary, by 2018, the issue became so contested that the President wanted to sign an executive order in order to continue the deportation process that had been underway for the last two years<sup>26</sup>. The issue was that the rights of American citizens are protected by a strong set of laws and cannot be changed so easily by a presidential administration. In this case, the individuals are protected by the "Citizenship Clause" of the Fourteenth Amendment in which it is stipulated that "All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States"<sup>27</sup>.

The second topic concerns the changes made by the Trump Administration to the framework of legal migration. Having as a starting point the "Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986", the Administration drew the "Reforming American Immigration for a Strong Economy Act" (RAISE) in the second part of 2017. With this law, the government intended to receive a smaller number of immigrants that arrived through legal means into the U.S. As a result, the number of incoming persons dropped around 50% in comparison with past years. The way this measure worked was quite simple, as the law enforced a reduction in the number of green cards issued per year, and, at the same time, put an end to the diversity lottery. Furthermore, the bill mandated that a maximum number of 50,000 refugees would be admitted into the United States per year<sup>28</sup>.

In 2017, Penn Wharton released a study that showed that the actions taken by the Trump Administration would not produce optimal results on the long term. The study stated that:

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<sup>26</sup> Deanna Paul, "Trump wants to end birthright citizenship. A judge he appointed says he can't" *The Washington Post*, 30.10.2018, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2018/10/30/trump-wants-end-birthright-citizenship-judge-he-appointed-says-he-cant/>.

<sup>27</sup> Constitution Annotated, "Amdt14.S1.1.1 Historical Background on Citizenship Clause", [https://constitution.congress.gov/browse/essay/amdt14-S1-1-1/ALDE\\_00000811/](https://constitution.congress.gov/browse/essay/amdt14-S1-1-1/ALDE_00000811/).

<sup>28</sup> Trump White House, "Fact Sheet – President Donald J. Trump backs RAISE Act – Immigration", 02.08.2017, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/president-donald-j-trump-backs-raise-act/>.

“By 2027, our analysis projects that RAISE will reduce GDP by 0.7 percent relative to current law, and reduce jobs by 1.3 million. By 2040, GDP will be about 2 percent lower, and jobs will fall by 4.6 million. Despite changes to population size, jobs and GDP, there is very little change to per capita GDP, increasing slightly in the short run and then eventually falling”<sup>29</sup>.

As a follow-up, in 2020 Donald Trump signed another executive order which alleged to reduce the impact of Covid-19 from immigrants by further lowering the number of green cards issued<sup>30</sup>.

The third topic of the Trump anti-immigration package concerned the issue of border security. During the Trump Administration the construction of the border wall was seen as an important part of the former president’s campaign. In order to understand Trump’s position, it is necessary to review the following part of his statement from 2015:

“When Mexico sends its people, they’re not sending their best. They’re not sending you. They’re sending people that have lots of problems, and they’re bringing those problems. ... They’re bringing drugs. They’re bringing crime. They’re rapists. And some, I assume, are good people”<sup>31</sup>.

The vision presented here was not backed by any study, rather, it was just a supposition representing his bigoted personal views on the immigrants from the south of the border. The following year, *Social Science Quarterly* published a study on this issue which showed that there was “no association between immigrant population size and increased violent crime”<sup>32</sup>.

Taking all this into account, Trump desired to build a wall that was more than 3,000 kilometers long and wished for Mexico to support the costs,

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<sup>29</sup> Penn Wharton University of Pennsylvania, “The Raise Act: Effect on Economic Growth and Jobs”, 10.08.2017, <https://budgetmodel.wharton.upenn.edu/issues/2017/8/8/the-raise-act-effect-on-economic-growth-and-jobs>.

<sup>30</sup> Trump White House, “Proclamation Suspending Entry of Immigrants Who Present Risk to the U.S. Labor Market During the Economic Recovery Following the COVID-19 Outbreak”, 22.04.2020, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/presidential-actions/proclamation-suspending-entry-immigrants-present-risk-u-s-labor-market-economic-recovery-following-covid-19-outbreak/>.

<sup>31</sup> The Washington Post, “Full Text: Donald Trump announces a presidential bid”, 16.06.2015, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2015/06/16/full-text-donald-trump-announces-a-presidential-bid/>.

<sup>32</sup> David Green, “The Trump Hypothesis: Testing Immigrant Populations as a Determinant of Violent and Drug-Related Crime in the United States”, *Social Science Quarterly* 97, no. 3 (May 2016): 506–524.

however, Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto stated in 2016 that he had “made it clear that Mexico will not pay for the wall”<sup>33</sup>. The general public opinion was against these policies. *New Yorker* editorist, John Cassidy stated that Trump represents the “the latest representative of an anti-immigrant, nativist American tradition that dates back at least to the Know-Nothings”<sup>34</sup>. Another opinion was presented by Bradford Richardson, who noted that Donald Trump had also praised the immigrants when he claimed that “it was legal immigrants who made America great”<sup>35</sup>.

The Trump administration’s “Zero Tolerance Policy” was a controversial immigration policy that was implemented in April 2018. The policy mandated that all adults who entered the United States illegally would be criminally prosecuted, even if they were seeking asylum. As a result, thousands of families were separated at the US-Mexico border, with children being detained separately from their parents. In June 2018, under pressure from the public and lawmakers, President Trump signed an executive order ending the policy of family separation. However, the administration continued to prosecute adults who crossed the border illegally. In July 2018, a federal judge ordered the government to reunite separated families within 30 days, but the process was slow and complicated, and many families were not reunited until months later<sup>36</sup>.

## VII. Migration Policy during the Biden Administration

Since 2021 the Biden Administration took concrete actions against the immigration policies enacted by the former administration. These policies included, but were not limited to refugee admissions, assistance against deportation, and reversing the law that reduced the number of Green Cards granted per year. One of the first actions taken by President Biden was to

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<sup>33</sup> Patrick Healy, “Donald Trump and Mexican Leader Clash in Accounts of Meeting”, *The New York Times*, 01.09.2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/01/us/politics/donald-trump-immigration-speech.html>.

<sup>34</sup> John Cassidy, “Donald Trump isn’t a fascist; he’s a Media-Savvy know-nothing”, *The New Yorker*, 28.12.2015, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/john-cassidy/donald-trump-isnt-a-fascist-hes-a-media-savvy-know-nothing>.

<sup>35</sup> Bradford Richardson, “Trump: It was legal immigrants that made America great”, *The Hill*, 04.02.2016, <https://thehill.com/blogs/ballot-box/presidential-races/268234-trump-illegal-immigrants-didnt-make-america-great/>.

<sup>36</sup> Amelia Cheatham and Diana Roy, “U.S. Detention of Child Migrants”, *Council on Foreign Relations*, 2021, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/us-detention-child-migrants>.

prepare a new immigration bill that would modernize the country's immigrations system. With this document, the president desired to help individuals obtain their citizenship so that they would not be undocumented anymore. By losing that statute, the people could obtain even more aid from the government, as well as have the possibility to start the naturalization process<sup>37</sup>. The same bill also focused on reversing the effects of the family separation policy. In this case, the changes were made with the intention to keep families together or reunite them in the shortest time as possible. The bill stated that it “eliminates the so-called “3 and 10-year bars,” and other provisions that keep families apart”<sup>38</sup>. At the same time, the bill promoted the integration of immigrants by offering funding to the local authorities and NGOs in order to expand the integration and inclusion programmes, as well as to provide assistance to people that intended to become citizens<sup>39</sup>.

In reaction to the former president's declarations on border control, Biden had a different approach, which was to go back to the measures that existed prior to 2016, and improve them. The plan involved a mix of carrots and sticks: it would offer aid, but also focus on acquiring new border technologies, and updating the infrastructure. The idea was that with a larger budget, issues like drug trafficking, human trafficking, theft, and any other actions or substances that could endanger people's lives would be better addressed. Another aspect that the policy focused on was to ensure a better management of border control while also ensuring the safety of the communities that resided on either side of the border.

As stated in the first part of this article, the border communities face an extra risk just virtue of their location, and they can be subject to illegalities, such as bribes, in order to facilitate various illegal activities. The government therefore sought to provide better training and education to the border control agents – who are either from the border communities, or have migrated to that area<sup>40</sup> – in order not just to ensure their professionalism, but so that they could, in turn, help the local communities in both countries. The nearly impossible goal was to create a personal plan that suited each officer's needs best and gave them the

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<sup>37</sup> The White House, “Fact Sheet – President Biden Sends Immigration Bill to Congress as Part of His Commitment to Modernize our Immigration System”, 20.01.2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/01/20/fact-sheet-president-biden-sends-immigration-bill-to-congress-as-part-of-his-commitment-to-modernize-our-immigration-system/>.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

tools to face any kind of threat. Furthermore, the Biden Administration also intended to prosecute the criminals found to be involved with trafficking and smuggling networks. Practically, the new administration sought to tackle the issue on both sides of the border, in order to ensure that the post-Trump immigration policy would be focused on maximizing its effectiveness and limit any disruptive effects as much as possible<sup>41</sup>.

Another important aspect of the Biden immigration bill was that the U.S. government would offer assistance to Latin American countries that were facing an increase in immigration numbers. The government created a plan to address issues impacting migration such as corruption, violence, poverty, and education. The goal was to create a safe and legal process to encourage development and foster a better way of life, which, in turn, would result in a reduction in immigration, both legal and illegal<sup>42</sup>.

## **VIII. Comparative Analysis of the Two Administrations**

The Trump and Biden Administrations had different views on what the migration policy should be about. On one hand, the Trump Administration embraced a nationalist vision, where the interest of the American citizens was the sole priority, and the immigrants were alienated and unadaptable, regardless of their situation. The measures taken by the Trump Administration were designed to benefit only the American side. As the Penn Wharton study showed, such measures would lead to a decrease in the number of immigrants on the short term, however, on the long term, the lack of inflow would have a negative impact for American development. This ties into the other argument cited against immigration which states that the immigrants “steal” the jobs from the hard-working American citizens, because they perform mostly physical jobs on a low salary. Therefore, Trump claimed that the harsh measures were justified since they were aimed at protecting American workers.

The Biden Administration had a distinct approach on issues related to immigration. The aim of the administration was to foster family reunification and help the immigrants in need of aid. In order to facilitate the family reunification process, the Biden Administration proposed a series of measures, which ranged anywhere from issuing more Green Cards, to a general reform of

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

the laws, including of the Immigration Act, among others. The focus here was to help people obtain their citizenship with full rights so as the process of naturalization could begin. Integration and naturalization take a lot of time and have a impact individuals and their families, which is why the Administration initiated a lot of programs to ensure the necessary assistance that people need in this transition. By facilitating integration, the policy would ensure the well-being of the individuals and mark an end to a period in their lives rife with instability.

At the same time, as a response to the previous Administration’s plans to separate the United States from Mexico by building a large wall, the Biden Administration’s plan focused on upgrading the infrastructure and updating it with the newer technology that would detect illegal contraband, for example. The technology used by the Biden Administration in order to enhance the security along the border proved incredibly effective, generating fewer illegal passes.

It is important to note that the Biden Administration’s plan was not only protect the border, but to first protect the communities around the border since these communities on the Mexican side of the border can be overrun by local or transnational criminal organizations. They are the ones that impose the law in some parts of the border, taking advantage of the vast levels of corruption to grow their “businesses”. Under this circumstances, it was imperative to provide support to the border agents and personnel which must work under difficult conditions that put their lives at risk. That is why, the Biden Administration decided to put in place a plan for the agents and their families that would ensure their protection, education, and security, and, in the process, foster the conditions that would make it possible for them to perform their tasks.

As the last step of this plan, the Biden Administration decided to address the immigration issue from its roots. This part was intended to send aid to the countries from which most immigrants originated, in order to provide them with the possibility of obtaining a better education which will lead to better opportunities at home. Fixing education would therefore be gateway to tackle corruption in those countries so to ensure a much better future for the present and future generations.

## IX. Conclusion

Immigration is a complex topic that requires comprehensive policy responses regardless of the administration in power. However, because this policy impacts millions of lives, citizens and non-citizens, it is important to avoid the pitfalls of nationalism and support a more moral-based approach. As the study has shown, the Trump Administration embraced a nationalist approach, which focused strictly on the American citizens' needs, disregarding entirely the lives of the immigrants. On the other hand, the Biden Administration's policy approach focused on the American society as a whole, in all its (im)migration complexity and sought to take steps that would foster development and that could be replicated at scale, both domestically and internationally.

In my opinion, the Biden Administration took steps to address the migration crisis, seeking to understand its causes and mitigate its effects. I consider that this approach represents a step in the right direction for future Administrations to continue building strong policies that seek to include, rather than punish the most vulnerable members in the society. I consider that it is particularly important to take into account the fact that most residents of the world are a product of immigration, and especially, those residing in the United States. The reality is that with the policies implemented by the previous administration, society was divided into two parts, residents and non-residents, with the former acting superior in relation to the latter, without taking into account that just a few generations before their forebearers were in the exact same position. L

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## BOOK REVIEW

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### OLIVER JENS SCHMITT, *BISERICA DE STAT SAU BISERICA ÎN STAT? O ISTORIE A BISERICII ORTODOXE ROMÂNE 1918-2023*

[ENG.: STATE CHURCH OR CHURCH IN THE STATE? A  
HISTORY OF THE ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH: 1918-2023]  
(BUCHAREST: HUMANITAS, 2023, 444 P.), ISBN 978-973-50-7919-2

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In recent years, Oliver Jens Schmitt has offered the Romanian audience various volumes, including *Corneliu Zelea Codreanu: Ascensiunea și căderea Căpitanului* [Eng.: *Corneliu Zelea Codreanu: The Rise and Fall of the Captain*] or *România în 100 de ani: bilanțul unui veac de istorie* [Eng.: *Romania in 100 Years: Assessment of a Century of History*], which have sparked a wide range of reactions among readers. Some reactions came from professionals and more knowledgeable individuals, while others came from mere enthusiasts of historical readings. There has been a sense of shock and even indignation among representatives of a certain historiographical tradition, just as there have been historians from the new generation who have understood the necessity of a truly critical and uninhibited approach ready to convey uncomfortable truths. On the other hand, the commercial success of these volumes has demonstrated that even those who read history out of pure passion have been intrigued, surprised, recommended the titles to others, or, conversely, vehemently contested them.

The new volume by historian Oliver Jens Schmitt, *Biserica de stat, sau Biserica în stat? O istorie a Bisericii Ortodoxe Române: 1918-2023* [Eng.: *State Church or Church in the State? A History of the Romanian Orthodox Church: 1918-2023*], is likely to generate equally diverse and polarized reactions.

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Beyond these reactions, the new volume constitutes a scientific endeavor, embraced and respected as such. Right from the preface, the author accurately and courageously identifies several reasons why a history of the modern Romanian Orthodox Church (ROC) represents a difficult and delicate undertaking. These reasons include the Church’s own attempt to control and sometimes even censor the historiographic discourse regarding its recent past, the lack of a comprehensive historical synthesis that surpasses the fractures caused by different political regimes and finds elements of continuity in the existence and activities of this institution, and evident divisions among groups of historians who have very different views on both the history of the Romanian Orthodox Church itself and the manner in which it should be written.

Oliver Jens Schmitt starts from a reality that is difficult to contest, namely that in Romania, there is a lack of historiographic or intellectual tradition to scientifically debate the history of the Orthodox church. Furthermore, according to Schmitt, the ROC itself “has never shown any interest [to conduct a] scientific and objective research of its own past throughout its history”. Furthermore, the lack of interest is not the main reason why critical scientific research regarding the Church in recent times is at an impasse, but rather the fact that the institution “has restricted and hindered free research” (Schmitt 2023, 10) This fact is compounded by another equally serious one, evident in the post-communist years of democracy, during which the Romanian Orthodox Church had multiple tools at its disposal “to control the memory of its past, that is, to largely rewrite the image of the Romanian Orthodox Church in modern Romanian history and marginalize critical voices” (Schmitt 2023, 18). Among these tools and strategies was the deliberate confusion and intermixing of criticism towards the institution with criticism towards Christianity as a whole: “This accusation of hostility towards Christianity clearly limits the possibility of open discussions about the Romanian Orthodox Church as an institution in Romania because those who criticize the Church [...] risk being stigmatized as anti-Christians” (Schmitt 2023, 21). To put things in perspective, to this day, church archives remain inaccessible to independent researchers or those who do not have at least a close relationship with the ROC. This “restrictive administration of archives” is more evident where documents from the era of Nicolae Ceaușescu are concerned, and Oliver Jens Schmitt provides an explanation that the Church hierarchy does not want to acknowledge: “too many continuities, especially of a personal nature, within the institution would have been exposed” (Schmitt 2023, 26).

Most historians who approach such a topic tend to do so in a fragmented manner, focusing on specific periods, such as the interwar period, which is well-covered in historiographic works, the early decades of communism, or the post-1989 era. However, the years of Nicolae Ceaușescu's leadership are often explored only superficially. Indeed, such fragmentation makes it difficult to examine elements of continuity that surpass the boundaries of specific regimes or governments. It also prevents the articulation of a fundamental question: “What does the Romanian Orthodox Church mean for the modern history of Romania, not just during a single period, but as a whole?” (Schmitt 2023, 22)

Regarding the categories of historians interested in the history of the ROC, the author operates with a tripartite division. The first ones are the radical defenders of the Church, those who come from within ultranationalist and neo-legionary circles, those who “consider any criticism of the institution a sacrilege and an attack on the Christian faith”. The exaggerations of the first group are rejected by a second group, composed of intellectuals with some attachment to the Orthodox faith and tradition, even towards the Church, but who are not very eager to initiate or engage in genuine debate. Finally, there is a third group, albeit heterogeneous, where we find researchers who “study the Romanian Orthodox Church as an important historical and socio-cultural phenomenon in Romania, without being driven by an ideological motivation, but purely out of scientific interest” (Schmitt 2023, 29) Indeed, the number of this third group is significantly outnumbered by radical or moderate apologists, and their space for expression is limited.

It is difficult to overlook a similar situation in which the state and the Church found themselves in 1918. After the Great Union, both the state and the Church had to face the challenges posed by the issue of diversity. The state had to grapple with ethnic diversity, while the Church had to contend with religious diversity, in addition to the organizational peculiarities of the united provinces. Therefore, the state and the Church saw themselves as allies in a process of integration and homogenization because “the joy of creating a national state for all Romanians coincided with the fear of everything that was not Romanian and Orthodox” (Schmitt 2023, 32)

A statistical observation with serious qualitative consequences is the nearly complete lack, as noted by Oliver Jens Schmitt, of serious studies dedicated to the lower clergy, the clergy in rural areas, in various periods, not just during the interwar years. We know very little about the socio-economic situation of these priests, their level of educational preparation, their political involvement, and

how all of these factors have influenced their relationship with the Church hierarchy, the state, and the believers.

In a subchapter titled „Un eretic tolerat de biserică: Alexandru Constantin Cuza și doctrina sa” [Eng.: *A heretic tolerated by the Church: Alexandru Constantin Cuza and his doctrine*] (Schmitt 2023, 99), the author highlights just one of the many situations in its history where the Romanian Orthodox Church has failed or has been unwilling to explain, assume, and repudiate them. *Cușism*, as it pertains to this doctrine, encompassed a radical form of anti-Semitism, the rejection of the Old Testament, presenting Christ as anti-Semitic, and portraying the Apostle Paul as a falsifier of Christianity. All these heterodox inventions were not decisively rejected by the Church, and their author enjoyed the constant goodwill of the hierarchy.

Cuza had demonstrated the ability and methodological inspiration to approach the interwar history of the Romanian Orthodox Church by focusing on its most characteristic aspects. He organized the material into individual domains, which together shaped one of the most intense, but problematic periods in the institution’s history. Among these areas, there are some that are still sensitive, such as the unification of different Orthodox traditions of the united provinces in 1918, the positioning of the institution and clergy towards the new Romanian democracy, the contribution of the Romanian Orthodox Church to shaping a Romanian national identity in the face of evident regional particularities, the relationship between the clergy and political parties, the management of the phenomenon of miracles, and the positioning of the Romanian Orthodox Church in relation to Orthodox, nationalist, ethnocentric, and anti-Semitic currents that took shape politically through *Cușism* and Legionarism. This dense interwar thematic episode was succinctly summarized by Oliver Jens Schmitt in a sentence that draws conclusions about the period: “This shift towards a mystically supported national orthodoxy, which left no room for dissidents, those of other faiths and ethnicities, was promoted for years by the state, the Romanian Orthodox Church, and nearly all authoritative Romanian politicians”. (Schmitt 2023, 132)

It is tempting and worthwhile to follow the author’s thesis that the Romanian Orthodox Church had little to gain from its relationship with the dictatorships of 1938-1944. Further research on this topic would be valuable in shedding light on this aspect. Indeed, it is clear that the ROC did not gain what it had hoped for, despite apparent ideological affinities. During the royal dictatorship, as argued by the author, while Miron Cristea was prime minister, the Church had

to subordinate itself to the monarch, becoming a mere instrument of the state and a means of legitimizing the regime. Under the National Legionary State, it was not the Orthodox wing of the Legionary Movement that dominated, but rather the social-revolutionary wing, which left very little room for maneuver for the clergy and certainly did not create the desired *clerical fascism* envisioned by them. Finally, under Ion Antonescu, the Romanian Orthodox Church regressed back to a state similar to the period before 1918, functioning as a mere subordinated state authority.

However, despite its subordination to the state, the Romanian Orthodox Church appears as an instigator and independent participant, having its own motivations for the mass murder of Jews. This was the result of an atmosphere cultivated by the Church throughout the interwar years, an atmosphere of authoritarian ultranationalism and xenophobia that ultimately culminated in genocide.

Chapter four, “*Biserica Ortodoxă română și dictatura comunistă, 1948-1989 [The Romanian Orthodox Church and the Communist Dictatorship, 1948-1989]*” is indeed more complex from the perspective of a historian, and Oliver Jens Schmitt begins by acknowledging this difficulty. First and foremost, it is mentioned that in the last 30 years, the Romanian Orthodox Church has managed to bring its own past under its control: “The fact that we do not know much is not a coincidence but the result of a systematic and successful strategy by the Romanian Orthodox Church to maintain silence about an era that is very close to the present and highly problematic for the Church due to its profound subordination and the alleged compromise of many hierarchs and priests”. (Schmitt 2023, 196-197). Secondly, the Church managed to offer and impose a convenient narrative regarding half a century of history.

Therefore, a first consequence, which may surprise many readers, is that we know very little about the history of the Romanian Orthodox Church’s relationship with the communist regime over the span of four decades. The years of the communist regime’s rise to power and the early years of Patriarch Justinian Marina’s tenure are relatively well-researched. However, beyond that, from a research perspective, particularly the period from 1965 to 1989 is largely unexplored terrain. A second consequence is that the Romanian Orthodox Church has attempted and succeeded in removing several highly sensitive topics from historiographic and public debates, topics that could potentially disadvantage the Church. These topics include the collaboration of hierarchs and priests with the communist regime, informants infiltrated into the



Romanian Orthodox Church by the Securitate (the secret police), the Church's silence regarding numerous crimes committed by the regime, its role in the destruction of the Greek-Catholic Church, active support for collectivization, and the lack of reaction in the case of church demolitions. Moreover, and here Oliver Jens Schmitt raises a valid alarm, there are several historians who are closely affiliated with the Church and who, in recent decades, have constructed a narrative that makes the institution more comfortable. This narrative emphasizes the ideas of resistance and suffering under communism. It encompasses the victimization of the lower clergy, the resistance of monastic and mystical circles such as “Rugul Aprins”, the issue of the imprisoned saints presented as martyrs in Pitești or Aiud, the subtle yet tenacious opposition of Patriarch Justinian, the survival of the Romanian Orthodox Church compared to the situations in the USSR or Albania, expressed through the continuous celebration of the Holy Liturgy, the performance of baptisms, weddings, and funerals, the activity of renowned spiritual leaders, and the undertaking of pilgrimages. In exchange for all of these, the Romanian Orthodox Church had to pay the price of total submission to the regime. This is the self-image that the Church promotes today.

It is always challenging to write a history of the present times, regardless of its theme, especially when it comes to the ROC. Faced with this challenge, aware that a comprehensive approach is impossible, the historian can only highlight the main lines and constructive features, as well as Oliver Jens Schmitt has identified them. One of the author's most assertive statements, fully confirmed in the past three decades, is that “The Romanian Orthodox Church has never been as powerful and independent from the state as in the period after 1989” (Schmitt 2023, 326) However, these three decades, and more, have proven to be extremely delicate and challenging for an institution that emerged with a disastrous image after years of communist rule. The re-emergence of the Greek-Catholic Church, rightfully reclaiming its properties, sparked an aggressive and confrontational reaction from the Romanian Orthodox Church, which also faced unrest from the growing success of the neo-Protestant churches in attracting disillusioned Orthodox believers. In its own backyard, the Church had to seek solutions to what Western societies had already experienced, namely a retreat of faith into the private sphere, coupled with an increasingly apparent discrepancy between the formal declaration of belonging to the Romanian Orthodox Church and a “low attachment to church dogma”. In terms of the economy, the Church has succeeded in becoming a significant

commercial player, with extensive land properties and businesses in the hospitality and religious tourism sectors. This has helped it to reduce its dependence on the state, but it has also exposed the Church to well-founded accusations of exhibiting luxury and opulence. Last but not least, in a context where Romanian society has largely expressed its support for a European and Euro-Atlantic path, manifested through its membership in the European Union and NATO, the Church has become predominantly driven by “fear of Western principles of human rights and religious freedoms”. Furthermore, “maintaining a national-autarchic model of identity” has remained the preferred response of many representatives of the Romanian Orthodox Church towards the perceived issue of openness to the West. However, as the history of this institution has never been homogeneous or linear, the election of a new patriarch in 2007, in the person of Metropolitan Daniel of Moldavia, marked the victory of a certain reformist faction within the Romanian Orthodox Church. This faction was more open to dialogue with the Protestant and Catholic world and held a more liberal stance compared to another faction consisting of traditionalists.

Oliver Jens Schmitt’s book is and will prove to be a landmark in terms of what represents a critical history of the Romanian Orthodox Church. Firstly, it provides a synthesis of a century of history, which is unusual among Romanian authors who tend to narrowly delimit their periods of analysis, thus failing to highlight the lines of continuity in the evolution of this institution. Secondly, and more importantly, the author clearly distances himself from the apologetic and benevolent style in which this subject has been written about in recent decades, a fact that, over time, will prove beneficial even for the Church.



## CONTRIBUTORS

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  - Puiu, Ștefăniță. “Criza umanitară din 2015 care a afectat Europa. Un punct de cotitură pentru Serbia în cadrul Uniunii Europene”. In *Criza Globalizării sau Criza Sistemului Internațional*, 33-46. Cluj: Presa Universitară Clujană, 2023.
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