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Research Articles

Václav Vlček	7
How Many at the Table? Size Variation of National Delegations to Plenary Meetings of International Organizations	
Jana Stehlíková	35
The corona crisis, data protection and tracking apps in the EU: a case study of Czech and Austrian COVID-19 mobile phone apps in the battle against the virus	
Michaela Grančayová	69
Plagues of Egypt – the COVID-19 crisis and the role of securitization dilemmas in the authoritarian regime survival strategies in Egypt and Turkey	

Book Reviews

Catherine E. de Vries: <i>Euroscepticism and the Future of European Integration</i> . Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018, 249 pages, ISBN 978-0-19-879338-0 (IIR library code 62 847). (Jan Kovář)	101
Lisa Hultman, Jacob D. Kathman and Megan Shannon: <i>Peacekeeping in the Midst of War</i> . 1st edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019, 256 pages, ISBN 9780198845577. (Barbora Valíková)	109
Klaus Dingwerth, Antonia Witt, Ina Lehmann, Ellen Reichel and Tobias Weise: <i>International Organisations under Pressure: Legitimizing Global Governance in Challenging Times</i> . Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019, 336 pages, ISBN 9780198837893. (Ondřej Svoboda)	117
Mark Galeotti: <i>We Need to Talk about Putin: How the West Gets Him Wrong</i> . 1st edition. London: Ebury Press, 2019, 143 pages, ISBN: 978-1-52910-359-5 (IIR library signature 62 908 PK). (Jonáš Syrovátka)	125
Steven Blockmans and Sophia Russack (eds.): <i>Representative Democracy in the EU: Recovering Legitimacy</i> . 1st edition, London: Rowman & Littlefield International/Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies, 2019, 375 pages, ISBN 978-1-78661-339-4. (Vanessa Horler)	131
Library of this issue	139

Research Articles

How Many at the Table? Size Variation of National Delegations to Plenary Meetings of International Organizations

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ABSTRACT

This article provides new insights into size variation of national delegations to plenary meetings of international organizations. Plenaries are supreme decision-making bodies representing a symbol of national sovereignty as all member states of the given organization can participate in the negotiations and collective decision-making. However, this article argues that the right to participate in plenaries is utilized differently by different countries, which may have political and normative implications for international organizations and global governance as such. Drawing upon an actor-centred institutionalist approach and a newly created dataset covering seventeen plenary meetings, I suggest there is considerable variation in the delegation size caused by country-based factors. Namely, financial capacities, ideational capacities and national interests motivate states to delegate more representatives. In contrast, regional partnerships enable countries to rely on their partners and delegate fewer representatives. Finally, administrative capacities, the nature of the domestic political regime, and the institutional design of international organizations have no or only an inconclusive effect in this regard.

KEYWORDS

international organizations, international negotiations, plenary meetings, national delegations, delegation size

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Plenary meetings are the supreme authorities of international organizations (IOs), making the most crucial decisions on international norms. Moreover, plenary meetings represent the principle of national sovereignty as they treat all member states as equal, with the same right to participate, negotiate, be heard in the discussions and, most importantly, take part in the joint decision-making. In many IOs, for example in the UN General Assembly, the principle of sovereign equality is also reflected by the voting procedure, which provides every country with one vote irrespective of its size or the extent of its financial contributions to the common budget. Yet, this does not apply to the size of the national delegations. The UN Charter specifies that *“each member state shall have not more than five representatives in the General Assembly”* (UNITED NATIONS 2020A). However, the internal rules of procedure allow the member states to delegate extra delegation members, up to five alternate representatives and *“as many advisers, technical advisers, experts and persons of similar status as may be required by the delegation”* (UNITED NATIONS 2020B). As a result, each country can delegate as many national representatives as is possible and desirable. Such a situation, however, places demands on member states and creates inequalities already at the early stage of the multilateral negotiations and collective decision-making. Why?

Multilateral negotiations are often demanding, time-consuming and complex. There are several working groups dealing with very technical agendas, and multiple players pursuing their own, often contradictory, policy objectives. Not to mention that political deals and compromises are often made informally in the corridors of the conference venue or neighbouring cafés and restaurants. The amount of human resources is thus crucial for whether a national delegation can manage all the complexity and come out as a winner from the negotiations. Only sufficiently large delegations can do so, as the US Department of State reported to the Senate Committee on Appropriations (1979): *“We think further reductions[in the size of US delegations] remain possible but there will be a point where we will not be able to continue to reduce the size of many delegations without affecting adversely their ability to represent effectively the United States interests.”* Moreover, there is also a normative aspect of the issue. The primary clients of IOs are most often low-income countries (PARIZEK 2017) lacking the necessary resources to get sufficiently represented. International norms adopted under the shadow of unfairness, or even illegitimacy, may undermine low-income states’ willingness to implement the norms and, as a result, undermine the global governance as such. The aim of this article, therefore, is to map

to what extent national delegations to plenary meetings of IOs vary in terms of their size and what factors can explain such a variation.

So far, we know precious little about national delegations and their size despite the significance of this matter and its potential political implications. As Finnemore and Jurkovich (2014: 369) argue: “[d]elegates lists [...] do not excite most students of global governance.” Existing studies use delegation size mostly as an explanatory factor, usually as a proxy for national capacities, to explain the weak positions of small and developing countries in multilateral negotiations (MUMMA 2000; CHASEK 2001; RICHARDS 2001; MINANG 2009; MAKINA 2013; PANKE 2013A). Empirical evidence also shows that some countries increase the numbers of their delegates intentionally to alter the balance in international negotiations, as this is the case, for instance, with emerging powers in UNESCO (BERTACCHINI – LIUZZA – MESKELL 2017), or to put emphasis on vital national interests, as in the cases of small and island states in climate change negotiations (BETZOLD – CASTRO – WEILER 2012).

This paper, by contrast, puts delegation size in the limelight, complementing scarce existing findings, formulating a comprehensive theoretical approach and analysing a new, manually compiled, extensive dataset covering an unprecedented number of plenary meetings. The descriptive results show that there is a considerable variation in delegation size across countries and IOs and also across the individual delegations of one state to different IOs. I show that the patterns behind the variation reflect mainly country-based characteristics. First, states with higher financial capacities tend to delegate more national representatives to plenary meetings than their poorer counterparts. Second, countries with more experience with the agendas and internal procedures of the particular IOs tend to delegate larger groups to plenary meetings than less experienced and knowledgeable member states. Third, national interests play a considerable role. Countries with multiple interests at stake delegate more nationals to plenary meetings than less interested states. Fourth, regional partnerships motivate states to rely more on their like-minded partners and save some financial and human resources. Countries participating in a higher number of regional projects send smaller delegations to plenary meetings than states which regionally cooperate seldom or not at all. Contrary to expectations, the results show that national administrative capacities and institutional design of IOs do not have any impact on how many representatives national governments delegate to plenary meetings of IOs. The nature of the domestic

political regime then provides some statistically significant results which are, however, in contradiction to the hypothesis, indicating that states with a lower level of electoral democracy tend to delegate more national representatives than countries with a higher level of electoral democracy.

The article continues as follows. In the first section, I elaborate on the scarce existing literature treating delegation size as a dependent variable. The second section develops the theoretical framework, building on the actor-centred institutionalist approach. In the following section, I present the data, their operationalization and the data sources. The fifth section provides descriptive statistics, regression models and their results. Finally, in the last section, I summarize the findings and debate their practical and normative implications for IOs and global governance as such.

NATIONAL DELEGATION SIZE IN THE LIMELIGHT

Only little scholarly work treats delegation size as a dependent variable and studies which do so are usually limited in terms of IOs which they focus on, or the set of explanatory factors. In an important early statement, Keohane (1969) descriptively maps regional and ideological patterns in numbers of national delegates in the United Nations General Assembly. However, as the research comes from the Cold War era, it barely reflects today's reality. From the recent scholarly work, Schroeder, Boykoff and Spiers (2012), Neeff (2013) and Skovgaard and Gallant (2015) focus on the sizes of national delegations in the Conferences of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. All the authors identify a rapid increase in attendance. Furthermore, Schroeder, Boykoff and Spiers (2012) emphasize cross-country variation and a considerable gap between the G8+5 countries¹ and small developing states. The authors argue that less interested states and poor countries get represented by smaller delegations than the wealthy and interested ones (SCHROEDER – BOYKOFF – SPIERS 2012). Neeff (2013) finds evidence for his networking hypothesis, arguing that anticipation of a large conference lures a larger number of participants. On the contrary, however, his results do not show any correlation between the number of participants on one hand, and flight ticket prices and the attractiveness of the conference location on the other.

Additionally, Minor (2020) pays attention to institutional settings of multilateral disarmament negotiations, arguing that some forums are more inclusive than others as they offer financial support for the poorest countries

and a greater opportunity for smaller and less powerful states to pursue their own interests. Similarly, treaty review conferences get substantially more attention than ordinary annual meetings. In line with the previous findings, Minor (2020) also argues that national preferences as well as national income matter too. Referring to interviews with practitioners, the author adds that groupings and alliances, which are able to represent a collective position on behalf of their members, have an impact on states' decisions as to how many nationals they should delegate. Finally, Onderco (2019) presents a more in-depth statistical analysis focused on national delegations in the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference. Drawing upon the liberal theory of international regimes, the author provides evidence for his argument that national interests and wealth determine the numbers of representatives which national governments delegate to multilateral negotiations. In the following section, I will attempt to outline a comprehensive theoretical framework covering more IOs than the authors mentioned above and incorporating (not only) existing findings in one model.

CAPACITIES, ORIENTATIONS, CONSTELLATIONS AND THE INSTITUTIONAL SETTING

Plenary meetings (usually called general assemblies, general conferences or ministerial meetings) are plenary bodies representing all member states of the given IO (RITTBERGER ET AL. 2019: 60–64). As any other platform for multilateral negotiations, plenary meetings are characterized by considerable complexity resulting from the multiplicity of actors having multiple interests in multiple policy issues, and playing multiple roles (ZARTMAN 1994). Active and effective participation in such negotiations is thus very costly *“as it requires staff (diplomats, experts, lawyers) at the negotiation table”* (PANKE 2017A: 128). Small delegations can hardly manage all the complexity, participate in all the (often simultaneous) meetings and be active in last-minute overnight marathon sessions seeking a final deal. Negotiation by exhaustion impacts primarily on smaller and less wealthy delegations while larger delegations can establish a rota system and cover all or most of the meetings by well-rested representatives (YAMIN – DEPLEDGE 2004; DEPLEDGE 2005). As Lohman (2006: 50) nicely illustrates it: *“In the 2000 UNFCCC climate negotiations in The Hague, to take one example, the US fielded 150 well-equipped delegates, housing them in a luxury hotel and sending well-rested and well-briefed representatives to every working group meeting, while Mozambique had to put up its three harried delegates in a noisy youth hostel occupied largely by Chinese tourists.”*

This paper will draw upon actor-centred institutionalism (SCHARPF 1997) to explain why different countries delegate different numbers of national representatives to plenary meetings. This theoretical framework assumes that political behaviour results from the interaction between self-interested actors (characterized by their capacities and preferences) operating in an institutional context (rules and norms, be they formal or informal) which does not constrain (POLLACK 2006; SHEPSLE 2010), or constitute (CHECKEL 2001; WENDT 2001), but structures the set of actions which the actors may choose (SCHARPF 1997). In line with this reasoning, member states, as the crucial political actors in IOs, are assumed to decide on the sizes of their delegations based on their national capacities and preferences with respect to the membership and institutional design of the particular IO.

As illustrated above, the transactions costs in the complex environment of plenary meetings are very high and states which lack capacities lag behind their wealthier counterparts. To take one example, Panke (2014) demonstrates that countries with fewer financial, political, ideational and staff capacities often do not make use of their right to vote in the final stage of the decision-making process in IOs. Similarly, I expect national capacities to be a crucial factor for delegation size. First, financial capacities are of key importance, as they are necessary to build a functional ministry of foreign affairs with a well-paid, qualified staff and a robust diplomatic corps. Countries with a high GDP, for example, speak up more often and more proactively in international negotiations than states with lower financial capacities (PANKE 2017A). Similarly, rich countries place disproportionately more of their nationals in international bureaucracies to increase their ability to control IOs (PARIZEK 2017). Therefore, I hypothesize that *states with higher financial capacities delegate more national representatives to plenary meetings of IOs than less wealthy countries* (H1). Second, to be successful in negotiations, national delegations need to have clear, well formulated and timely instructions from the capital and skilfully transform them into the collective policy outcomes. Recent studies show that effective administrative and diplomatic personnel are more active (PANKE 2017A) and deliver better results in international negotiations (PANKE 2013A, 2013B). Furthermore, states with an effective administrative apparatus implement adopted policies more successfully (TOSUN 2014; SURUBARU 2017). Hence, well prepared countries with skilful representatives can utilize their advantage at the expense of less effectively working states and reach more favourable policy outcomes. As a result, it is expected that *states with more effective administrative capacities delegate more national representatives*

to plenary meetings of IOs than less effective countries (H2). Third, a low level of financial and administrative capacities can be compensated by a high level of knowledge of the agenda, the shared norms among the participants and the policy procedures of the particular IO. More experienced delegations can benefit from their ideational capacities, as they do, for instance, when voting in the UN General Assembly (PANKE 2014). Accordingly, I hypothesize that *countries with higher ideational capacities delegate more national representatives to plenary meetings of IOs than less experienced and knowledgeable countries* (H3).

Capacities, however, are not the only motivation for political action. Political actors also have relatively stable, yet still changeable, “orientations” (perceptions and preferences) which can be activated by a political stimulus (SCHARPF 1997: 43) – for example, the agenda of the particular IO. As the existing evidence indicates, states with national interests at stake tend to increase the sizes of their national delegations (SCHROEDER – BOYKOFF – SPIERS 2012; ONDERCO 2019; MINOR 2020). The reverse is also true; as Schroeder, Boykoff and Spiers (2012) illustrate, even the United States gets represented by an obviously smaller delegation if it feels less interested, as it did in the Conferences of Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change after the Kyoto Protocol had been adopted. Therefore, it is expected that *states with a higher interest in the agenda of the particular IO delegate more national representatives to its plenary meetings than less interested countries* (H4). Similarly, domestic institutions may encourage the government to pursue political action. From this perspective, political regimes accountable to their people and interest groups are more interested in international cooperation than less inclusive and accountable states because they are more accustomed to democratic norms of negotiation and compromise (RUSSET 1993) and their democratically elected leaders can be rewarded for their behaviour and the benefits which international cooperation brings (MANSFIELD – MILNER – ROSENDORFF 2002). The next hypothesis is, therefore, as follows: *more democratic states delegate more national representatives to plenary meetings of IOs than less accountable and inclusive regimes* (H5).

However, no political actor is able to act based only on its capacities and orientations. Policy outcomes result from specific “constellations” (SCHARPF 1997) involving multiple interacting actors. In plenary meetings, countries have different capacities and orientations, which makes the international negotiation even more complicated and the final decision

even more difficult to reach. As Zartman ⁽¹⁹⁹⁴⁾ argues, coalitions are one of the mechanisms which can reduce complexity. Like-minded states can cooperate to make the negotiations more manageable, and increase their collective power but also to save their financial and human resources. Such cooperation is possible, for instance, on a regional basis. As Chasek ^(2001: 170) notes: *“It is not surprising to see only one Central American State at a meeting, speaking on behalf of all of the Central American States.”* Regionalization allows states to share financial and personnel burdens ^(PANKE – LANG – WIEDEMANN 2015, 2017, 2019; PANKE 2020) and simplifies complex multilateral negotiations, even in very sensitive policy areas such as security ^(PANKE 2017B). Moreover, states use their regional partners and collective positions to their advantage and thus pursue their own interests ^(PANKE 2013B, 2020). Therefore, I hypothesize that *countries with more regional partnerships rely more on collective representation and delegate fewer national representatives to plenary meetings than states with few or no regional partners* (H6).

Finally, all actors operate and interact within the institutional setting of the particular IO. Actor-centred institutionalism defines institutions as *“systems of rules that structure the courses of actions that a set of actors may choose”* ^(SCHARPF 1997: 38). The institutions may be formal legal rules but also informal social norms. These, however, do not determine the actors’ behaviour. Instead, they just influence the actors and even permit alternative behaviour that is more or less acceptable within the institutional setting, including changes of the institutions themselves ^(SCHARPF 1997). The political environment of IOs is usually highly institutionalized, building on a formal structure, political processes and internal rules ^(BATORA – HOCKING 2009). As such, it may influence states’ motivation to delegate more or fewer national representatives to plenary meetings. First, IOs may be relatively powerful with respect to the authority delegated to them by the member states ^(HOOGHE ET AL. 2017; HOOGHE – LENZ – MARKS 2019). Based on the degree of “delegation”, i.e. the degree of competencies in agenda setting, everyday decision-making, compliance monitoring, dispute settlement or non-compliance sanctioning, the member states may decide whether to reduce or increase the sizes of their national delegations. Therefore, I hypothesize that *IOs with a higher level of delegation motivate member states to send more national representatives to the plenary meetings than IOs with lower levels of delegated competencies* (H7) so that states can keep the given IOs and their competencies under control. Secondly, the plenary meetings, as

the highest decision-making bodies of IOs, are institutionalized as well. The decision-making rules, ratification procedures and (non-) binding character of the decisions constitute another level of authority – “pooling” (HOOGHE ET AL. 2017; HOOGHE – LENZ – MARKS 2019). Similarly as in the case of delegation, I hypothesize that *IOs with a higher level of pooling motivate member states to send more national representatives to the plenary meetings than IOs with lower levels of pooled decision-making procedures* (H8). Finally, to deal with the complexity emphasized at the beginning of this section, an effective delegation needs to deal with multiple actors at the table and multiple policy issues on the table. The final two hypotheses are, therefore, as follows: *the more member states IOs have, the more national representatives states are motivated to send to the plenary meetings* (H9) and, accordingly, *the more policy issues IOs deal with, the more national representatives states are motivated to send to the plenary meetings* (H10).

To summarize the theoretical model, actor-centred institutionalism believes that observable behaviour of political actors is characterized by their capacities, orientations and interactions, which are structured by the institutional context. In Section 5, I will therefore test the impact of national financial (H1), administrative (H2) and ideational (H3) capacities, national interests (H4), domestic institutions (H5) and regional partnerships (H6) within a specific institutional design (H7–H10) on states’ decisions as to how many national representatives they should send to plenary meetings of IOs.

THE DELEGATES LIST AS A DATA SOURCE

In this section, I elaborate on individual variables, their operationalization and data sources. The data on the dependent variable has been manually compiled from the lists of participants published by the individual IOs after their regular plenary meetings which took place between the years 2014 and 2018. Plenary meetings take place regularly but not always annually. Some IOs organize the sessions only once per two or three years, which makes it impossible to map the participation every year. Based on Hooghe, Lenz and Marks’ (2019) definition of IOs,² which emphasizes their intergovernmental nature and permanent formal structure, including an assembly-like body, twenty-five international (UN and other global) organizations and their plenary meetings have been identified. Regional organizations have been omitted as their memberships are considerably

smaller and region-based so their internal dynamics, e.g. the distribution of power or preferences, among the member states could differ from those of IOs with a truly international scope. Furthermore, out of the selected IOs, eight were omitted due to data unavailability.³ The final dataset thus consists of 2,933 observations covering all 193 UN member states and two non-member states receiving invitations to UN meetings (the Vatican and Palestine) across 17 IOs and their plenary meetings as presented in Table 1.

The data enable us to compare assemblies of different sizes, from small ones with an average of two delegates per member state (e.g. ISA) to much larger ones with an average delegation consisting of 14 delegates (e.g. UNESCO). Furthermore, the dataset encompasses IOs focusing on various agendas, for instance, social issues, justice, agriculture, energy, communications, culture and health. However, there are no IOs focused exclusively on security issues (e.g. NATO) or global economic governance (e.g. the IMF or the WTO). Therefore, the results should not be generalized across the whole universe of IOs. Nevertheless, this novel research is still a good starting point with a relatively high level of generalizability across IOs dealing at least with low politics issues. Moreover, some mechanisms hypothesized here have been already tested on other, less formalized international summits and conferences as mentioned in Section 2.

For analytical purposes, the data are used at the country-IO level, i.e. as the sizes of the individual national delegations to the particular plenary meetings. The dependent variable is operationalized as the total number of registered government delegates who are listed in the official reports published by the individual IOs, including everyone from the heads of delegations to delegates, alternates and advisors, be they national politicians, diplomats, permanent representatives, bureaucrats and other supporting staff. To take one example, South Korea was represented by 221 delegates in total in the Plenipotentiary Conference of the International Telecommunication Union in 2014, which makes it the largest delegation in the dataset. Member states without a single delegate were assigned the value of zero while non-member states were assigned no value and thus are not involved in the analysis.

To test the hypotheses, the data on financial resources (H1) are operationalized as GDP in US dollars ([WORLD BANK 2020A](#)) and then logarithmically transformed since they are very positively skewed. Then the

administrative capacities (H2) are captured by the government effectiveness estimate, which measures *“the quality of public services, the quality of the civil service and the degree of its independence from political pressures, the quality of policy formulation and implementation, and the credibility of the government’s commitment to such policies”* (KAUFMANN – KRAAY – MASTRUZZI 2011: 4; WORLD BANK 2020B).⁴ Finally, the data on the ideational capacities (H3) reflect the length of membership operationalized as the number of years from the year a country joined an IO to the year 2014. The information is derived from the Correlates of War Project (PEVEHOUSE ET AL. 2020).

Besides the national capacities, the theoretical model hypothesizes the impact of national orientations and cross-country constellations, namely the national interests, degree of democracy and number of regional partnerships. Starting with the first variable (H4), it is very challenging to operationalize the national interests of many countries across several IOs. Therefore, it was necessary to use at least a proxy variable. This research employs a measure reflecting the media visibility of each IO in relation to its member states. Higher visibility is believed to indicate a higher relevance of the IO agenda for the particular country and thus a larger national interest in being sufficiently represented in the plenary meeting. To operationalize the proxy, the Factiva⁵ (2020) media monitoring service and search engine were used to look for all articles in which the individual IOs (their full official name in English) have been mentioned in combination with each country (its name in English) during the last five years.⁶ The data thus represent the number of media hits for 3315 IO-country combinations (dyads). Such an operationalization suffers from being monolingual, as it uses English names only. I discuss this methodological constraint in the Appendix and provide additional arguments which support the operationalization. For the analysis, the data were logarithmically transformed due to their strong, positive skew.⁷ The nature of the political regime (H5) is measured by Vanhanan’s (2019) “Index of Democratization (2017)”, which combines the electoral success of small political parties and voters’ turnout as the measured variables. The higher the value of the index, the higher the level of electoral democracy in the country. Finally, the number of regional partnerships (H6) is counted as the number of such institutions a state has joined up till 2012. The data used for this variable were compiled by Panke (2017A).

At the institutional level, measures of international authority, i.e. delegation (H7) and pooling (H8), have been operationalized by Hooghe,

Lenz and Marks (2019) and this paper builds on their data. The same dataset is also used for the policy scope (H10) of the individual IOs, which combines the original variables of “core” policies and “flanking” policies (HOOGHE – LENZ – MARKS 2019). Finally, the sizes of the IO memberships (H9) are derived from the websites of the individual organizations. Summary statistics for the independent variables and a correlation matrix are available in Tables A1 and A2 in the Appendix.

HOW MANY DELEGATES AND WHY?

The descriptive results for the individual IOs are summarized in Table 1, including the information on 1) the name of the IO and the particular plenary meeting, 2) the IO name abbreviation, 3) the year when the particular plenary meeting took place, 4) the total number of participants of the plenary, 5) the size of the largest delegation, and 6) the average delegation size and its standard deviation. Table 1 also shows that the total number of national delegates to all seventeen plenary meetings in the dataset was 22,704. The average size of one national delegation in the dataset is close to 8, the standard deviation equals 12 and the median 4, which indicates a strong positive skew in the data. As Table 1, moreover, shows, there is a considerable delegation size variation across different IOs. Checking the individual countries, the largest national delegations, on average, come from the major global powers – the United States (1st in the ranking), Russia (4th) and China (5th). Further, there are also South Korea (2nd), Indonesia (3rd), Nigeria (6th), Japan (7th), France (8th), Kenya (9th) and Thailand (10th) among the top scorers. On the other hand, the smallest delegations come mostly from small island states. The average delegation sizes for each country are available in Table A3 in the Appendix. Finally, the descriptive results also suggest that there is a variation among the national delegations of one country to different IOs. The differences between the smallest and the largest delegation (i.e. the range) of the individual states to different IOs in the dataset range from 1 (Micronesia) to 218 (South Korea) with more than 70% of the states reporting a range larger than 10. The within-state variation in delegation size is available in Table A4 in the Appendix.

TABLE 1 – THE NUMBERS OF DELEGATES IN THE PLENARY MEETINGS OF THE SELECTED IOS

International organization (plenary meeting)	IO abbr.	Meeting date	Total number of participants	Largest delegation	Mean (sd)
Food and Agriculture Organization (Conference)	FAO	2017	975	38	5.08 (4.98)
International Atomic Energy Agency (General Conference)	IAEA	2017	2,092	104	12.45 (16.26)
International Civil Aviation Organization (Assembly)	ICAO	2016	1,812	85	9.44 (12.03)
International Criminal Court (Assembly of States Parties)	ICC	2016	679	25	5.61 (4.19)
International Labour Organization (International Labour Conference)	ILO	2018	2,274	92	12.29 (11.82)
International Maritime Organization (Assembly)	IMO	2017	1,283	70	7.46 (8.36)
International Organization for Migration (Council)	IOM	2018	430	11	2.50 (2.13)
International Seabed Authority (Assembly)	ISA	2016	300	37	1.82 (3.82)
International Telecommunication Union (Plenipotentiary Conference)	ITU	2014	2,363	221	12.24 (22.39)
International Whaling Commission (Commission)	IWC	2016	213	32	2.34 (4.08)
UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (General Conference)	UNESCO	2017	2,761	96	14.38 (13.75)
United Nations (General Assembly)	UN	2017	2,420	139	12.54 (20.36)
UN Industrial Development Organization (General Conference)	UNIDO	2017	588	24	3.44 (3.68)
UN World Tourism Organization (General Assembly)	UNWTO	2017	610	30	3.84 (4.67)
World Health Organization (World Health Assembly)	WHO	2017	2,290	82	11.93 (11.40)
World Intellectual Property Organization (General Assembly)	WIPO	2016	873	26	4.57 (3.85)
World Meteorological Organization (World Meteorological Congress)	WMO	2015	741	27	4.03 (4.31)
Overall data			22,704	221	7.74 (12.01)

The descriptive results already provide some basic evidence for hypothesis H1 as almost all the top scorers are wealthy countries. However, there are also two states among the top scorers which are characterized as “low-income developing countries”⁸ by the International Monetary Fund, namely Nigeria and Kenya. Thus, not just financial capacities, but also other factors seem to be behind states’ motivation to send national delegates to plenary meetings of IOs. Table 2 offers the results of five regression models testing the hypothesized explanations.⁹ In Models 1–3, the standard errors have been clustered at the country level, in Model 4 at the IO level and in the most comprehensive model, Model 5, at both the country and IO level. The clustering was performed in order to avoid false conclusions based on correlations among the observation units.¹⁰ The various numbers of observations in the individual models are caused by missing data on some of the country-based variables, especially on the countries’ democracy index scores and memberships in regional organizations. Therefore, Model 4, building only on institutional features, is the only one that is complete. The coefficients of the individual variables (in Table 2) represent a change in log expected counts. When exponentiated, they offer a count ratio which enables one to deduce the percentage change in the expected count for a change in an independent variable (MONOGAN 2015: 118). Since these interpretations might be quite confusing, predicted probabilities have been calculated and graphically depicted in Figure 1. Finally, standard regression diagnostics have been run for all the models reported in the article and none of them violate any regression assumptions.¹¹

Turning to the regression results, Table 2 shows that financial capacities undoubtedly have a statistically significant and positive impact on the delegation size. Models 1, 3 and 5 consistently support hypothesis H1. Similarly, hypothesis H3 is confirmed across all the models involving the variable of ideational capacities. The results thus imply that countries with more financial resources and more experience with an IO delegate more national representatives to the particular plenary meeting than less wealthy and less experienced member states. In contrast, administrative capacities provide quite ambiguous (both positive and negative) and insignificant results, and it is impossible to credibly support hypothesis H2 based on these capacities.

Moving to national orientations and constellations among the member states, the results indicate that national interests and regional

cooperation matter. First, the variable taking the national interests into account provides strong evidence for hypothesis H4, which argues that more interested states delegate more national representatives to plenary meetings than countries with fewer national interests at stake. Models 3 and 5 provide evidence also for hypothesis H6, indicating that states calculate the resources invested in their delegations and save some if they can rely on cooperation with like-minded states. Hence, countries with more regional partners delegate fewer national representatives than states forced to act only on their own. This result is not confirmed by Model 2, which builds on the orientations- and constellations-based variables only, but it is supported by the most comprehensive model, Model 5, and also by the control models in Table A5 in the Appendix. Therefore, hypothesis H6 can be corroborated. Similarly, Models 3 and 5 provide statistically significant results for the variable reflecting the nature of the member states' political regimes. However, the coefficient is negative, which implies, in contradiction with hypothesis H5, that countries with a lower level of electoral democracy delegate more national representatives to plenary meetings than member states with a higher level of electoral democracy. To verify these results, an alternative measure of democracy¹² was tested. The coefficient turned out to be positive yet statistically insignificant while the other results remained stable, as presented in Model 1 in Table A5 in the Appendix. The findings about the impact of domestic political institutions thus remain ambiguous and inconclusive.

TABLE 2 – THE REGRESSION ANALYSES' RESULTS

	Model:				
	1	2	3	4	5
Financial capacities	0.235***		0.178***		0.179***
- GDP (log)	(0.019)		(0.020)		(0.035)
Administrative capacities	-0.065*		0.035		0.033
- government effectiveness index	(0.038)		(0.039)		(0.046)
Ideational capacities	0.013***		0.011***		0.009**
- membership length	(0.001)		(0.001)		(0.003)
National interests		0.342***	0.184***		0.198**
- media hits (log)		(0.013)	(0.011)		(0.064)
Democracy		-0.001	-0.012***		-0.010**
- Vanhanen's index		(0.004)	(0.003)		(0.003)
Regional partnerships		-0.001	-0.047*		-0.044*
- number of regional organizations		(0.029)	(0.021)		(0.019)
Delegation					0.542
- delegation index					(0.861)
Pooling					0.860
- pooling index				(1.328)	(1.103)
Plenary size				0.010	0.006
- number of member states				(0.006)	(0.004)
Policy scope				0.065	-0.051
- number of policy areas				(0.051)	(0.061)
Constant	-4.470***	0.102	-3.601***	-0.671	-5.138***
	(0.456)	(0.147)	(0.467)	(0.613)	(1.124)
Observations	2,814	2,757	2,689	2,933	2,689
Log Likelihood	-8,222.569	-8,098.795	-7,662.172	-8,962.457	-7,614.905
theta	1.294*** (0.043)	1.163*** (0.038)	1.588*** (0.056)	0.847*** (0.025)	1.662*** (0.060)
Akaike Inf. Crit.	16,453.140	16,205.590	15,338.340	17,934.910	15,251.810
Note:	*p<0.1 **p<0.05 ***p<0.01 ****p<0.001				

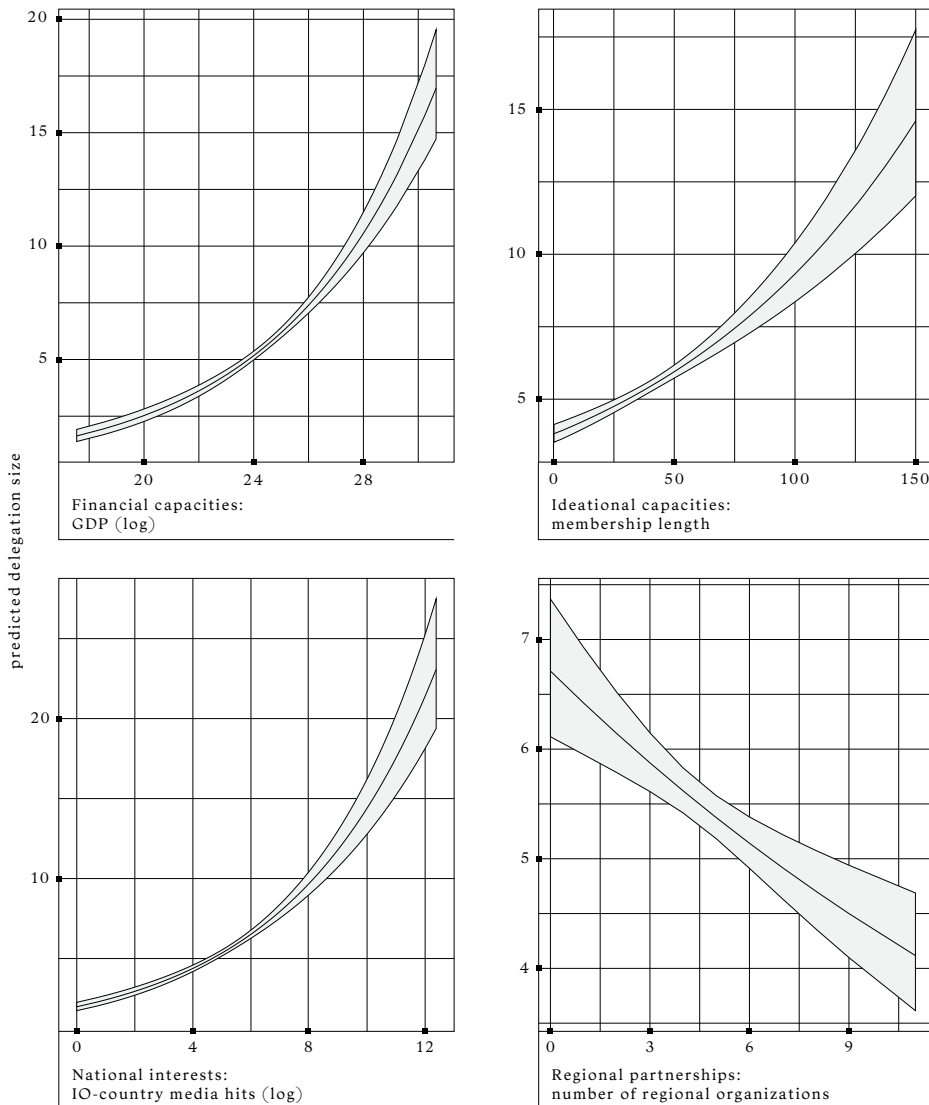
Finally, the institutional factors do not report any significant results. Delegation (H7), pooling (H8), IO size (H9) and IO policy scope (H10) seem to have no impact on the sizes of national delegations – neither by themselves (Model 4 in Table 2), nor jointly with the country-based variables (Model 5). Neither does Model 2 in Table A5 in the Appendix, using the simplified variables “international authority”¹³ and “plenary complexity”,¹⁴ find evidence for any institutional effects. However, the conclusion about the institutional factors should remain open as the variation at the IO level is relatively low, as there are only seventeen IOs in the dataset. More IOs should be involved in any future research on national delegations’ sizes in order to verify the results presented here.

Additionally, alternative analyses have been run to test whether the results are robust. First, an index measuring national levels of corruption has been involved (in Models 3 and 4 in Table A5 in the Appendix) as a proxy for possible “conference tourism” caused by other than professional reasons.¹⁵ For the purpose of the test, the variable of national administrative capacities is omitted as it is highly correlated with the corruption index. Similarly to Neeff’s ⁽²⁰¹³⁾ results, there seems to be no tourist motivation in this case, while the effects of the core variables do not change. Second, the number of IOs which states are members of, does not provide significant results either.¹⁶ As plenary meetings do not take place so often, two or more overlapping sessions, which would make states split their personnel, are rather unlikely. Third, the geographical distance from the member states to the conference venue is tested based on the expectation that states situated closer to the plenary meeting venue use the opportunity to send more national delegates as the travel costs are lower.¹⁷ Yet, Model 3 in Table A5 in the Appendix shows that geographical distance has no significant impact in this regard. On the contrary, a dummy for the host countries (in Model 4 in Table A5 in the Appendix) seems to have a significantly positive effect on the delegation size, implying that hosting countries use their advantage and delegate more representatives. To illustrate this, the above-mentioned largest delegation in the dataset is the South Korean delegation to the ITU conference, which took place in Busan, South Korea. The results for the hosting country, however, suffer from the same issue as the institutional variables. Since there are only seventeen plenary meetings included, the variation is low and the results should be verified by future research building on more data. In both Model 3 and 4 in Table A5, the effects of the core variables remain stable. Finally, Model 5 in Table A5 in the Appendix involves

the individual IOs as dummies referring to the UN General Assembly. While some of the plenary meetings differ significantly from the reference assembly, the effect of the core variables, except for one, does not change. Only the ideational capacities (the length of the membership) stop being significant.

Most of the control models thus do not change the core results reflecting the hypotheses of this paper. Financial capacities, ideational capacities, national interests and regional partnerships consistently report significant results in the hypothesized way. The standardized coefficients (available in Table A6 in the Appendix), moreover, show that it is the financial capacities and national interests which have the largest effect on the delegation size compared to the relatively smaller effects of ideational capacities and regional partnerships. To interpret the effect of the coefficients, predicted probabilities have been calculated (based on Model 5 in Table 2) as they can be more easily interpreted. First, the countries with the weakest financial capacities, which correspond to small island states, e.g. Tuvalu, Nauru, or Kiribati, are predicted to delegate approximately two national representatives to plenary meetings while holding all the other variables at their averages.¹⁸ By contrast, the states with the highest financial capacities like the United States are predicted to delegate around 17 nationals while holding the other variables at their average values. Second, Model 5 in Table 2 indicates that the countries with the highest ideational capacities (corresponding to the founding states of ITU) are predicted to delegate approximately 15 delegates while the states with the shortest memberships in an IO are predicted to delegate just around four nationals to the particular IO, with all other variables being constant. Third, the number of predicted national delegates gets to almost 23 for the most interested states (corresponding, for example, to China in the UN General Assembly) while other factors are held equal. In contrast, the prediction for the least interested countries is around two delegates while keeping the other independent variables at their mean. Finally, regional partnership, compared to the previous input variables, tends to decrease the sizes of national delegations. The predicted probabilities indicate that states with a membership in 11 regional organizations (corresponding to Russia, Tajikistan, Colombia or Venezuela) tend to delegate around four nationals to plenary meetings. In contrast, countries with no regional partnerships (like Israel and North Korea) are predicted to send around seven representatives to plenary meetings, with all other factors being constant. The predicted probabilities of the significant variables are graphically depicted in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1 – PREDICTED NUMBERS OF NATIONAL DELEGATES TO PLENARY MEETINGS GIVEN THE SIGNIFICANT FACTORS WHILE HOLDING ALL THE OTHER FACTORS AT THEIR AVERAGES. BASED ON MODEL 5 IN TABLE 2



CONCLUSION

Compared to the previously existing research on delegates lists, this paper employs a comprehensive set of explanatory factors at different levels, compiles them in one coherent approach and applies the final theoretical model to an unprecedented number of IOs. The findings indicate that there is a considerable variation in delegation sizes across different countries and

IOs and also across delegations of one state to different IOs. The empirical research shows that some countries under some conditions delegate tens, sometimes even hundreds, of delegates. In contrast, other states delegate only a few national representatives, sometimes even none or just a single person. Based on the actor-centred institutionalist theoretical model, ten explanatory factors at different levels were tested and four of them provide strong evidence for their impact on the delegation size. First, financial capacities seem to play a substantial role when national governments decide on how many representatives to delegate to plenary meetings. The more financial resources a country possesses, the larger its delegation gets. Second, ideational capacities in the form of previous experience with the agenda and internal rules and procedures of the IO motivate countries to delegate larger groups. The longer a country is an IO member, the more representatives it delegates in order to utilize its experience in negotiations and decision-making. Third, national interests are of high importance. Countries that are intensively interested in the agenda of an IO tend to delegate more nationals to its plenary meetings. Fourth, member states act rationally and save some resources if they have like-minded partners which they can cooperate with in a plenary meeting. Countries involved in multiple regional projects tend to delegate fewer representatives than those which have no or very few regional partnerships.

In contrast, administrative capacities of the individual countries and the institutional design of the particular IOs seem to play no role in states' decisions on how many delegates to send to plenary meetings. However, the low variation on the institutional variables may provide no evidence for the IO-related explanations. Any future research on a similar topic that would be based on more data, should reassess the IO-related findings presented here. Finally, the nature of the domestic political regime provides significant, yet negative, results which, contrary to the corresponding hypothesis, indicate that states with a lower level of electoral democracy delegate more national delegates to plenary meetings. Such counterintuitive findings also leave room for future research on the role of domestic institutions in international negotiations.

Further, the research suggests that financial capacities and national interests are the main reasons why some states tend to send larger delegations to plenary meetings. The mutual relationship between these factors is a theoretical challenge worth further investigation. An intuitive

explanation would be that domestic preferences have an impact on states' behaviour in the international arena but only under specific conditions, most likely when the agenda is highly salient. Then even low-income countries get motivated and invest their scarce resources into their national delegations. By contrast, when less vital policy issues are at stake, the wealthy states dominate the negotiations at the expense of those which cannot afford to delegate a large group of national representatives. Such a hypothesis, however, needs further investigation.

Finally, the results have major political and normative implications. Decision-making procedures in plenary meetings of IOs are often at the edge of efficiency and legitimacy. Voting rules are often designed to enable at least some agreement in a reasonable amount of time, for instance through majority voting, and thus contribute to decision-making effectiveness. Adequate representation in the preceding negotiations is, however, necessarily linked to the legitimacy of IOs and the global norms adopted. A country which cannot sufficiently cover all the meetings, express its national position on a particular agenda or have a chance to influence the final policy outcome, may consider the whole decision-making procedure and its outcomes as illegitimate and, as a result, such a country may even refuse to implement the adopted international norms at home.

As the research shows, financial capacities seem to be one of the crucial factors behind the delegation size variation. Poor countries are at a massive disadvantage when trying to catch up with the pace of multiple, often overnight, negotiations about a complex agenda with a small group of representatives. In contrast, rich countries have enough financial resources to introduce a rota system and cover all the sessions with professional diplomats, officials and experts. This situation makes the legitimacy issues even more serious as the weakest developing and low-income states are usually the primary clients of IOs (PARIZEK 2017). Some IOs try to counter the under-representation of low-income states by providing them with funding to defray the costs of participation, cover administrative expenses and meet the costs of adaptation (MUMMA 2000; UNITED NATIONS 2001; BARNETT – CAMPBELL 2010: 95). However, as I have already presented, such provisions, if present, do not help to balance the numbers and most of the low-income countries still lag behind. In line with previous evidence (PANKE 2017C), the results indicate that any equalizing mechanisms in IOs are weakest in the negotiation stage of the policy cycle. Hence, any financial support still has a long way to go before it leads to equalizing of multilateral negotiations.

The results also show that low-income countries are able to counter the disadvantage, especially when they have national interests at stake or regional partners to cooperate with. To keep (at least) a sense of equal treatment, legitimacy and, as a result, compliance with international norms, IOs should implement more equalizing mechanisms related to member states' representation. Of course, a major power will most likely always delegate more representatives than a tiny island state. However, all national delegations should be able to manage all sessions related to the particular plenary meeting. The above-mentioned financial support is one way to help low-income countries to get sufficiently represented. Yet, more money needs to be provided so that such states can pay the costs for more than one extra delegate, as the funding for this is usually not enough. Also, multilateral negotiations need to be less demanding in terms of human resources. The number of committees, working groups and other meetings should be well considered in order not to burden smaller delegations. Fewer meetings may lead to more legitimacy in this respect. Finally, the schedule of the negotiations should be less demanding and always fixed, and prevent the meetings from turning into overnight negotiation marathons so that delegates from all states can always participate and get at least some rest. A sense of being just a makeweight does not contribute to the legitimacy of international negotiations, the adopted international norms and, as a result, global governance as such.

ENDNOTES

- 1 "C8" stands for Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States whereas "+5" represents Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa (Schroeder – Boykoff – Spiers 2012: 835).
- 2 The authors define an IO as an intergovernmental organization with *"a distinct physical location or website, a formal structure (i.e. a legislative body, executive and bureaucracy), at least thirty permanent staff, a written constitution or convention and a decision body that meets at least once a year"* (Hooghe – Lenz – Marks 2019: 30).
- 3 The Global Environment Facility, the International Criminal Police Organization, the International Monetary Fund, the Permanent Court of Arbitration, the Universal Postal Union, the World Bank, the World Customs Organization, and the World Trade Organization.
- 4 The government effectiveness estimate (World Bank 2020b) ranges from -2.5 to 2.5.
- 5 Factiva (2020) is a global news database of more than 33,000 sources from 200 countries in 28 languages offering thus a high level of data representativeness. As a data source, Factiva is used in a similar kind of research, for instance, by Parizek and Stephen (2019).
- 6 The query was always as follows: "Name of the IO" AND "Name of the country".

- 7 To transform 23 IO-country combinations with zero media hits, the value of one was added to all 3315 dyads.
- 8 Low-income developing countries (LIDCs) "are a group of 59 IMF member countries primarily defined by income per capita level below a certain threshold (set at \$2,700 in 2016)" (International Monetary Fund 2019: 1).
- 9 As the dependent variable is a count variable which can never be negative and which usually has a strong right skew, either Poisson or negative binomial regressions are the most suitable method (Monogan 2015). When applying Poisson regression to the most comprehensive model, Model 5, in Table 2, a dispersion test, whose result should be as close to 1 as possible, equals: 8.09 ($p < 0.001$). Therefore, negative binomial regression (which is more suitable for overdispersed data) is further used instead. To compare the methods, when applying the negative binomial regression to Model 5 in Table 2, the dispersion test result is 1.34 ($p < 0.001$), which indicates that the method used for this model fits the nature of the original data better than Poisson regression.
- 10 Another possible method to tackle autocorrelation would be a multi-level model using IOs as level 2 variables and member states as level 1 variables. This method, however, is not very useful in this particular analysis as there are only seventeen IOs, which reduces level 2 to very few observations.
- 11 Variance inflation factors are lower than 2.2 in all the reported models in Table 2.
- 12 Polity IV data (Marshall 2018) range from +10 (full democracy) to -10 (full autocracy).
- 13 Delegation multiplied by pooling.
- 14 IO size multiplied by IO policy scope.
- 15 The data come from the World Bank databank (World Bank 2020c), range from approximately -2.5 to 2.5.
- 16 The data on the variable come from the Correlates of War database (Pevehouse et al. 2020).
- 17 The variable is measured in kilometres and comes from the GeoDist database (Mayer – Zignago 2011).
- 18 The examples are used for illustrative purposes. To make credible statements about the individual countries based on the value of one variable, the countries would have to report average values on the remaining independent variables, which is unlikely.

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The corona crisis, data protection and tracking apps in the EU: the Czech and Austrian COVID-19 mobile phone apps in the battle against the virus

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ABSTRACT

The sudden outbreak of COVID-19 put governments under pressure to swiftly introduce measures to protect citizens and react appropriately to the emerging threat. This paper focuses on geo-location tracking mobile phone applications developed in the Czech Republic and Austria to monitor personal movement of those positively tested for COVID-19 to prevent the further spread of the disease. The aim of the analysis is to answer the question of whether the apps' functionalities complied with the EU data protection standards and to what extent the citizens' right to control the collection, evaluation and preservation of their personal data has been violated. Both countries belonged to the pioneers in COVID-19 apps. While they differed in several areas such as the legal and political circumstances under which the apps were developed and public communication, similarities between them were identified in the area of public trust in the apps and their utilisation. In both countries, certain illiberal issues were recognised as well.

KEYWORDS

geo-location tracking apps, COVID-19, data protection, data surveillance, liberal standards, Czech Republic, Austria

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The COVID-19 outbreak turning into a global pandemic surprised the world at the beginning of 2020. Even though it is not the first time a virus with a high level of transmissibility through respiratory droplets has threatened humankind, never in history have we had the chance to make full use of digital technologies to fight it. Not to use the opportunity to utilise people's digital devices to stop or at least slow down the COVID-19 transmission would be absurd. Nevertheless, where a new opportunity emerges, potential negative side effects should also be examined. In this case, the individual's personal data and privacy are at stake (MALGIERI 2020; ZWITTER – GSTREIN 2020). Without an aim to disparage the benefits of digital technologies in combatting the disease, a global fight against a microscopic enemy should never serve as an excuse to undermine higher liberal values such as individuals' freedoms, human rights and privacy (MALGIERI 2020; MAATI – ŠVEDKAUSKAS 2020; GONZÁLEZ FUSTER – HILDEBRANDT 2020; LIPPERT – WALBY 2013; ZWITTER – GSTREIN 2020).

This paper focuses on the utilisation of digital technologies, namely geo-location tracking mobile phone applications, in two European Union (EU) countries, the Czech Republic and Austria, during the first months after the pandemic outbreak. The aim is to analyse whether the apps' functionalities complied with the EU data protection and liberal standards. Several reasons led to choosing these two countries for the analysis. Firstly, they represent two neighbouring states with comparable numbers of confirmed COVID-19 infections in their populations during the first wave of the pandemic.¹ Secondly, both countries were the European pioneers in introducing national geo-localisation apps, each putting the first version of its respective app in operation only a few weeks after the outbreak. Still, there are differences between the countries in other relevant aspects, such as the declaration of the state of emergency, the presence or absence of a long-term data protection public discourse, and communication of the app functionalities and standards to the public. The first wave also defines the time frame relevant to the case study, which is from March until August 2020.² This period was extraordinary due to the unforeseen challenge for the political authorities and the lack of experience and guidelines within Europe. The pressure to react to the crisis was high, while the guidelines were mostly missing and the control mechanism might have been failing. Thus, an opportunity for introducing some illiberal practices appeared (MAATI – ŠVEDKAUSKAS 2020; MALGIERI 2020).

Presenting two case studies, the article aims to answer the question of how the Czech Republic and Austria reacted to the spread of COVID-19 infection from the perspective of parallel respect for the privacy and personal data protection of their citizens. To fulfil this aim, each study is structured in four sections that provide answers to the following sub-questions: (1) Under which circumstances in the country were the measures undertaken and the national geo-localisation apps developed and introduced? (2) Do the national COVID-19 apps meet the requirements defined by the European *General Data Protection Regulation*? (3) How was the data protection concerning the COVID-19 app communicated to the public, and subsequently what was the citizens' reaction to the launching of the national app? (4) To what extent did the national authorities follow or reflect on the pan-European approach in their national response to COVID-19 in the area of personal data protection?

Methodologically, while being in the form of two case studies, the paper is based on an analysis of the digital tools introduced to slow down the COVID-19 spread and their compliance with the EU data protection framework and an evaluation of its liberal standards in regard to individual privacy. Besides reflecting on the current academic literature on (i) liberal practices, data surveillance and personal data protection in its first section, the paper mainly uses primary sources. These consist of data protection rules and regulations currently in force, governmental documents regarding measures undertaken during the pandemic in both countries and online sources dedicated to the developed geo-localisation applications.

The first section focuses on the (i)liberal practices regarding individual rights, privacy and data protection from the liberal perspective, and the perspective of security and critical surveillance studies. Furthermore, the section builds an evaluation framework of (i)liberal practices in a democratic system towards individual privacy and personal data protection to be used in the empirical part. The second section focuses on the personal data protection and privacy standards currently in force in the EU, which is followed by an overview of the guidelines provided by the European Commission and the European Data Protection Board in response to the pandemic outbreak. Finally, the last two sections are dedicated to an analysis of the data collection-related measures and the geo-localisation apps developed to slow down the spread of COVID-19 in the Czech Republic and Austria. Each of these two sections is divided into four parts according to the above-mentioned research questions.

(IL-)LIBERAL STANDARDS OF DATA PROTECTION AND GOVERNANCE OF PRIVACY

The digital age starting at the end of the 20th century has significantly transformed the world, not only from the perspective of international politics. Digitalisation has introduced scholars to a new dimension of thoughts, insights and understandings of security, privacy and freedom. Cyberspace is now considered the fifth domain of warfare, complementing the ‘traditional ones’ represented by land, sea, air, and space (CRAIG – VALERIANO 2018). With humans’ unpreventable digital footprint, discussions over the role of governments in (non)regulation of cyberspace, monitoring of one’s activities, personal data protection, and the state and other stakeholders’ responsibility to protect their citizens’ digital alter-egos have emerged and are represented in all authoritarian, post-authoritarian and democratic societies (ANDREW – BAKER 2019; BALL ET AL. 2019; BELLANOVA – GONZÁLEZ FUSTER 2018; COOKE 2015; HALLINAN ET AL. 2012; LIPPERT – WALBY 2013; UNVER 2017).

Opinions on a fundamental question – *whether to (not) regulate and to what extent?* – vary among authors. The liberal proponents’ answers oscillate around the promotion of democratic principles, individual freedoms and human rights, equality, privacy, and protection of civil society instead of extensive state control and intervention (FLOK ET AL. 2020; HALLINAN ET AL. 2012; REIDENBERG 2000). Liberal authors thus advocate for the internet as a self-regulated sphere based on voluntary participation, albeit recognising the role of the state as an authority providing security and enforcing hard rules when needed (FLOK ET AL. 2020: 366). However, to define the line where one’s privacy ends and the responsibility of the state to protect starts is not easy, regardless of the enemy represented by hybrid threats, surveillance, private companies or a biological threat.

The comfort that an online lifestyle provides to individuals, represented by the ease of finding a piece of needed information, contacting people from all around the world easily and free of charge, letting apps count the calories burned during a workout, etc., has left many people unaware of the data footprint they are leaving behind (BERG 2018; BUDAK ET AL. 2012; HALLINAN ET AL. 2012; FRIEDEWALD ET AL. 2017; ZAIA 2019). Despite the fact that the first warnings about data surveillance and its potential risk of interference in one’s privacy appeared decades ago,³ it has been the recent relevant cases, such as Edward Snowden’s surveillance revelation,⁵ the Cambridge Analytica affair⁶ or the

US security concerns about the Strava app⁷ followed by strengthening of data protection legislation in several countries, which have brought a well-deserved level of attention to this area. Once users are exposed to information on the data processing functionalities of the mobile location apps they use, their initial surprise is frequently replaced by a feeling of betrayal, indignation or resignation (FRIEDEWALD ET AL. 2017; SHKLOVSKI ET AL. 2014). *“The lack of understanding of the data environment [...] significantly reduces the ability for the individual to ‘rationally’ balance each action,”* explain Hallinan, Friedewald and McCarthy (HALLINAN ET AL. 2012: 12). Maybe surprisingly, when it comes to data surveillance in the European context, governments are considered to be more trustworthy than private companies by citizens (HALLINAN ET AL. 2012).

Data are not a given substance. They must be produced and captured (BELLANOVA – GONZÁLEZ FUSTER 2019) and as such they are rather neutral. At the same time, they represent a very valuable substance which can serve both public welfare and civilian oppression. As a positive example, data collected and analysed can be used for traffic and public transport utilisation to increase the efficiency of future urban planning or to reduce the energy intensity of buildings and lifestyles. The smart cities projects based on citizens’ preferences, which are figured out according to their behaviour mapping, can provide inhabitants with various benefits (CHANDLER – FUCHS 2019). All these concepts are based on Big Data analysis – studying and evaluating of anonymised data packages of thousands of people in which an individual does not play any role. On the other hand, at the point of entry into the database system, the data are personal and represent one’s usual behaviour, preferences, even private contacts. A single data set being misused can cause harm either to the individual him-/herself, or to the whole society if used to legitimise clustering and double standards, analysed by a specifically defined algorithm, etc.⁷ (BALL ET AL. 2019; BELLANOVA – GONZÁLEZ FUSTER 2019; BIGO – TSOUKALA 2008; CAVELTY – LEESE 2018; CHAN – BENNETT 2015; HOSEIN – ALTSHULLER 2017).

The current debate about the liberal practices related to data protection can be framed by arguments made by scholars representing critical surveillance studies and data studies schools, though not exclusively. Indisputably, illiberal characteristics of privacy invasion can be present in democratic regimes, just as liberal standards are not exclusive and can be enforced by authoritarian regimes (BIGO – TSOUKALA 2008; FLONK ET AL. 2020; UNVER 2017).

Scholars and legal experts have introduced various concepts of personal data protection to prevent misuse and breach of personal information. Approaches focusing on liberal requirements emphasise democratic principles and individual freedoms, rights and privacy. Chris Berg (2018) describes the evolution of data protection regulation as a natural response to a rapidly changing technological environment. His arguments for the creation and enforcement of effective personal data protection standards are (1) the growing risk of violations of individuals' data privacy by both private and state entities, (2) the low level of digital literacy and (3) the need to support a multilateral institutional response to data surveillance as *"privacy violations in the twenty-first century require collective rather than individual responses"* (IBID.: 164). According to Rubinstein, *"[p]rivacy by design is an amorphous concept: there is no unique understanding or stabilized definition. A minimalistic view is that privacy by design happens when the attentive implementation of data protection principles is embedded in the design of a new technology"* (RUBINSTEIN 2011, QUOTED IN BELLANOVA 2017: 337).

The debate around data protection and state surveillance also demonstrates the attempts to disprove the "you have nothing to fear if you have nothing to hide" argument. This argument falsely reduces privacy to a form of secrecy aiming at hiding things (HALLINAN ET AL. 2012; SOVOLE 2011; ZAIA 2019). The right of every person to privacy should belong to the inviolable rights in all liberal societies, as is argued by liberal scholars against those advocating for more control to increase cyber- as well as human security (BALL ET AL. 2019; HALLINAN ET AL. 2012; RONA – GABOR 2016; SOLOVE 2011). Surveillance also potentially invades a variety of activities that are essential in a democratic society such as freedom of thought, expression or association. For that reason, high concerns were expressed about misuse of personal information, such as collecting too much information which can be potentially used against individuals either by the collector itself or by being shared without the permission of the concerned individuals (ANDREW – BAKER 2019; FRIEDEWALD ET AL. 2017). The individuals, despite having nothing to hide in the first place, are simply concerned about extensive information gathering by public as well as private entities (HALLINAN ET AL. 2012; FRIEDEWALD ET AL. 2017). Körner (2019) defined authoritarian regimes' surveillance and illiberal practices as systems under which *"elected governments and political groups might be tempted to use data to maintain their control, manipulate the electorate, and suppress dissent and opposition"* (KÖRNER 2019: 9). Illiberal regimes enjoy a level of access to the data of their citizens

that is not compatible with the norms of democratic societies, and which may allow them to bolster their position in a renewed competition of political systems for global supremacy (IBID.: 12).

Furthermore, Bellanova and González Fuster (2019) pointed out the contrast between the easiness of collecting and computer-processing enormous sets of data on one hand, and the difficulty and complexity of making relevant and meaningful use of them on the other, which complicates the surveillance control. The complexity of normative processes in cyberspace requires a high level of flexibility to accommodate to a constantly developing subject. Each situation is specific, and defined by its context and the identities of the actors involved, which might lead to prioritising contrary solutions in various contexts (FINNEMORE – HOLLIS 2016: 456–459). While online anonymity enhances the promotion of liberal values and democracy in authoritarian regimes, on the other hand, it also protects the perpetrators of malicious activity.

According to Lippert and Walby (2013), no dichotomy between technologies and security exists anymore, as IT tools have become an inseparable part of liberal governmentality. Surveillance, in the meaning of usage of personal details for purposes of management and protection, although containing definite authoritarian attributes, does not automatically refer to an illiberal order. The term digital authoritarianism refers to states' responding to losing control over the digital world by investing into surveillance technologies with a direct aim to regulate communication, monitor large segments of the population and collect an unprecedented amount of citizen information (UNVER 2017). The illiberal practices with dangerous implications emerge when the population is sorted, classified and subsequently inherently prevented from enjoying certain rights, opportunities and life chances as a consequence of the surveillance-related distributive justice (BALL ET AL. 2019; BIGO – TSOUKALA 2008). Furthermore, Bigo warns about the tendency to normalise exceptional measures on the part of the public.

Where does the regulator's authority end and one's private sphere begin? The primary responsibility of the state remains to ensure security and prevent future threats. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, the threat is represented by further spread of virus by infected individuals. Their personal data collection helps to isolate them from the rest of society, and hence serves as a preventive measure. Not using modern

technologies for this purpose would be absurd (ALI ET AL. 2016; HALLINAN ET AL. 2012; MALGIERI 2020), but this cannot serve as an excuse for any kind of unjustified ostracism or social exclusion. Furthermore, one's digital privacy should never be violated in the name of predicting and pre-empting threats to national security if unnecessary (AMOORE 2014, QUOTED IN COOKE 2015; DE GOEDE 2014; MALGIERI 2020).

The challenge of balancing personal data protection in the time of pandemic is obvious. The Austrian data privacy activist Max Schrems has warned citizens to remain careful of the rights they are giving away at a time of global panic: *"I am worried that we will accept state surveillance during the health crisis but that it will then take years in court to get rid of it"* (SCHREMS, QUOTED IN FINDES – ESPINOZA 2020). His words markedly remind one of warnings about surveillance practices implemented by governments worldwide in the context of the anti-terrorism measures after the 9/11 attacks (BIGO – TSOUKALA 2008).

So, how to define liberal practices in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic while combining the maximal utilisation of digital technologies with a simultaneous respect for privacy, citizens' personal data protection and surveillance prevention? First, the existing legal framework in liberal democracies should be obeyed to ensure that the pandemic does not serve as an excuse for surveillance by any stakeholder, whether it be a state or a private one. Theoretically, the EU citizens are protected from personal data surveillance by the most ambitious and comprehensive normative framework yet existing in the developed world (BERG 2018: 161), based on decades of political and legal negotiations (BIGNAMI 2005; VAN ALSENOY 2019). Maintaining the rules while formulating the response to the COVID-19 pandemic should guarantee the appropriate liberal standards and liberal attitude promoted by the EU should have embraced aspects of international interdependence and called for heightened international cooperation (MAATI – ŠVEDKAUSKAS 2020). Yet with lacking clear guidelines, especially during the first wave of the pandemic, a temptation to abandon liberal values might have occurred.

THE REACTION TO THE PANDEMIC OUTBREAK AT THE EU LEVEL REGARDING THE PERSONAL DATA PROTECTION

The EU privacy and personal data protection framework not only regulates the private data created within the EU borders but poses the same limits on all private companies that are operating with the EU citizens' data all over the world. In the context of analysing the reaction to the pandemic,

the *General Data Protection Regulation* (GDPR) and the *ePrivacy Directive* play the main role. Whilst the *ePrivacy Directive* protects individual data located on mobile devices from being accessed via mobile communication networks, the GDPR regulates the collection, utilisation, preservation and transmission and of personal data. Despite the GDPR not being in effect for a long time yet, its core standards highlight the liberal principles incorporated in the *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union* and Article 16 of the *Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union*, in which everyone's right to the protection of personal data is already incorporated and the EU institutions, as well as the Member States, are obliged to respect that and act accordingly (TFEU 2012).

To assess the compliance of the geo-localisation and tracking applications launched in EU countries to fight the spread of COVID-19, especially the Articles 4, 7, 8, 9, 11, 17 and 20 of GDPR need to be looked at. The personal data of EU citizens can be collected only upon their freely given, specific and informed consent (ARTICLE 4, GDPR), which can be withdrawn in an easy manner (ARTICLE 7, GDPR). All the data needs to be pseudonymised and after that, it can no longer be attributed to a specific data subject without the use of additional information (ARTICLE 4, GDPR). The data controller shall not be obliged to maintain, acquire or process additional information in order to identify the data subject (ARTICLE 11, GDPR). The data subject has the right to receive information about the personal data collected and processed concerning him or her at any time (ARTICLE 20). Furthermore, the data subject possesses the right to erasure if their personal data are no longer necessary in relation to the purposes for which they were collected or otherwise processed or if he or she withdraws their consent on which the processing is based (ARTICLE 17, GDPR).

However, because of the unforeseen dynamic outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, during its first days and weeks, specific guidelines for an adequate response to it within the EU borders that would comply with EU legal standards were missing. On March 19, 2020, the European Data Protection Board (EDPB)⁸ adopted a statement on the processing of personal data in the context of the COVID-19 outbreak (EDBP 2020) to provide the Member States with the first guidelines on this in the liberal standards framework. The EDPB reminded the Member States that the GDPR foresees derogations to the prohibition of processing certain special categories of personal data, such as health data, where it is necessary for

reasons of substantial public interest in the area of public health (ARTICLE 9). Nevertheless, they also emphasized that: *“even in these exceptional times, the data controller must ensure the protection of the personal data of the data subjects. [...] Emergency is a legal condition which may legitimise restrictions of freedoms provided these restrictions are proportionate and limited to the emergency period”* (IBID.). In a democratic society, such an interference must be necessary, in the interest of national security and public safety, for the protection of health, and proportional (BIGNAMI 2005).

Moreover, for the processing of electronic communication data, such as mobile phone location data, the *ePrivacy Directive* must also be respected. Location data can only be used when made anonymous by the operator or with the consent of individuals. The *ePrivacy Directive* enables Member States to introduce legislative measures related to such data to safeguard public security (ARTICLE 15, EPRIVACY DIRECTIVE), and such exceptional legislation is only possible if it constitutes a necessary, appropriate and proportionate measure within a democratic society (IBID.).

The European Commission (EC) urged the national authorities not to misuse the exceptional situation by not respecting the legal standards and individuals' privacy when putting into force restrictive measures and developing geo-location tracking tools. That would possibly lead to an unwelcome abandonment of liberal values and, if further maintained, an unwelcome shift towards legitimisation of illiberal practices among the EU Member States. To prevent such a shift towards COVID-19-related data surveillance in the EU, the EC adopted the *Recommendation*⁹ on April 8, 2020, followed by the *EC Guidance*¹⁰ on April 17, 2020. Firstly, the EC's *Recommendation* recognises that the mobile phone applications might interfere with the exercise of certain fundamental rights related to privacy; thus, ensuring compliance with the data protection principles is a must. Secondly, in the document, three types of mobile application functions representing different levels of risk to people's privacy are differentiated. Whilst informative apps that provide users with erudite information about the virus only do not represent a threat to data surveillance, the warning and monitoring app functions, on the other hand, require various data inputs and collect information about users and their activity. Thus, particularly in the case of geo-location and tracking-based app, the principles of justification, proportionality and voluntariness are unbreakable. Citizens, as the EC emphasised, cannot be obliged to use movement tracking apps, all

the data collected by them must be encrypted, anonymised and aggregated, and their use is strictly limited to the purpose of fighting COVID-19. The principle of voluntariness also indirectly responds to the potential problem of discrimination as not every EU citizen owns a device that would enable them to use the application. Finally, the interoperability of the national applications is expected to not hamper combatting the virus by fragmentation as a restoration of freedom of movement is anticipated (EC 2020A).

To fulfil the *EC Recommendation*, specified rules for the tracing applications were introduced by the *EDPB Guidelines 04/2020*¹¹ on April 21, 2020. The *Guidelines* differentiate between two models. Under the centralised one, the anonymised data are uploaded to a remote server. Should a person become COVID-19 positive, contact matches with other users are processed. The decentralised model, on the other hand, gives users more control over the collected information. In this model all the data are stored in the mobile phone only. Each user is given a unique code, and the matches are made with people who may have been in contact with the virus (CRIDDLE – KELION 2020). According to the EDPB, preference should be given to the decentralised model by national authorities. The controller of any contact tracing application, preferably national health authorities, should use the data for purposes related only to the management of the COVID-19 crisis. Finally, the application should not under any circumstances collect information not related to COVID-19, such as one's civil status, communication identifiers, equipment directory items, messages, call logs, location data, device identifiers, etc. (IBID.). As the *Guidelines* are not legally binding, it is therefore up to app developers and national governments to decide how to proceed in this regard. Still, if any European approach to this is to be established, an opt-in represents a logical step forward.

In line with the liberal standard of international cooperation, in June 2020 EU Member States agreed on interoperability elements being adjusted to their national applications to strengthen the pan-European approach against COVID-19 (EHEALTH NETWORK 2020B, C, D). The implementing *Decision (EU) 2020/1023* in regard to the cross-border exchange of data between national contact tracing and warning mobile applications was adopted by the EC on July 15, 2020 (EC 2020C). The central data controller, which collects the personal data from all EU COVID-19 apps in operation, should become a newly established European Federation Gateway Service (EHEALTH NETWORK 2020B) with national bodies as joint controllers. Once the

system is in operation, the personal data transmitted to the federation gateway are to be stored in a pseudonymised format and should include key identifiers no older than 14 days (IBID.). To prevent a personal data breach, the deletion of personal data in the database should take place once all the participating Member States' servers have downloaded them or 14 days after their reception (IBID.: ANEX III).

In this regard, since the early stages of the pandemic, the attempts to introduce a joint approach among all the EU Member States based on common high standards of privacy and data protection have failed. As of the end of August 2020, 15¹² out of the 27 EU countries have national contact-tracing apps in operation, and four¹³ more are working on their development. From among these countries, Austria and the Czech Republic were the first to introduce their national apps in the EU, both using the decentralised system (EC 2020B: 5).

THE DATA COLLECTION-RELATED MEASURES TAKEN IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC TO FIGHT COVID-19

Evaluation of the (il)liberal standards in the country during the first wave of the pandemic

In the Czech Republic, the first patient with COVID-19 was diagnosed on March 1, 2020. The government of the Czech Republic declared the state of emergency 12 days later (VLÁDA ČR 2020A). This step signalled the creation of an environment in which illiberal standards such as data surveillance could be potentially authorized more easily and quickly. Back then, the Czech Republic had evidence of 412 confirmed cases (AKTUÁLNĚ.CZ 2020) and belonged to the first EU countries to implement restrictive measures on travelling abroad (VLÁDA ČR 2020B).

In a form of a *Resolution*, the Government approved the use of geo-location tools to track persons with a demonstrably confirmed COVID-19 infection under Article 9 of the GDPR on March 18, 2020 (VLÁDA ČR 2020C). Under the *Resolution*, the geo-location tracking was originally supposed to be temporally limited by the duration of the state of emergency, which ended on May 17, 2020 (VLÁDA ČR 2020C), while the geo-location apps stayed in use and became a part of the new COVID-19 tracking regime (the “smart quarantine”). The authority responsible for ensuring

the technical as well as legal aspects of the geo-tracking and personal data protection was the Ministry of Health (MoH) (VLÁDA ČR 2020D), as recommended in the *EDPB Guidelines*, and it was supported by the Czech army until May 25, 2020.

Reflection on the privacy and data protection standards in the national covid-19 apps

As an aspect possibly positively contributing to the prevention of illiberal actions, the immediately established public-private partnership needs to be pointed out. Several Czech entrepreneurs, IT specialists and members of academia united to build the COVID19CZ initiative, an informal platform offering the Czech government pro-bono services. Among its other activities, specialists coordinated by 20 companies¹⁴ programmed a custom-tailored technology based on the geo-location principle to control the spread of the virus in the population. Using a decentralised system of data collection, the software also meets the European data protection requirements (COVID19CZ 2020B). In the official manifesto of the COVID19CZ initiative, the members stated that they identify themselves with democratic values and people's privacy, and committed themselves to respect the GDPR. Furthermore, the creators guaranteed that they would transfer all intellectual rights to the developed technology under the MIT licence to the Czech government in 1–3 months to obey the GDPR requirement of one national data controller (IBID.). As the study of Hallinan, Friedewald, and McCarthy (2012) showed, in the EU, private companies are, in general, perceived as less trustworthy than governments concerning data surveillance. Therefore, the COVID19CZ initiative's contribution to the credibility of the app is rather negligible. The outcome of this public-private partnership was the creation of the application "eRouška" (which means "e-FaceMask" in Czech), which then became a fundamental part of the smart quarantine system of the Czech Republic.

The "smart quarantine" (also known as the "intelligent quarantine") is a project created by the Czech Government that was inspired by South Korea and Singapore. The system is based on tracking positively tested people by memory mapping of their recent activities. To help the patient create a memory map, data from a geo-localisation tracking app, such as eRouška, together with data provided by a mobile operator or bank services can be used (ČTK 2020A; MVČR 2020A). The smart quarantine was officially

activated on May 1, 2020, combining the use of personal data with a personal approach. In this system, the person with a confirmed COVID-19 infection is contacted by the responsible authority, namely the MoH, which is represented by the regional hygienic stations (RHS). During the call, the administrative staff of the RHS asks the COVID-19 patient whether he or she agrees with providing the authority with the personal data gathered by the application eRouška, the mobile operator and the bank. Only after being provided with the consent, the RHS receives the personal data, which are then used to create the memory map of the person's recent movement to detect other potentially infected people (IBID.). This procedure is a documented aspect of the liberal approach towards personal data protection of COVID-19-infected people in the Czech Republic.

The eRouška app was designed as a decentralised model of a geo-location contact tracing application. Every user is pseudonymised in the system by an automatically generated unique personal code. Using the Bluetooth technology, the database remembers the location data of other eRouška users the person was in contact with. All the data are stored in the users' mobile phones. Upon giving consent, the user provides the data so far stored in his or her mobile to the RHS. Using this data, the RHS receives the unique personal codes of people who were potentially exposed to the virus while being in close contact (less than 2 metres) for a longer period of time (15+ minutes within 24 hours) with a positively tested patient. These people are then notified by the RHS (EROUŠKA 2020A; EROUŠKA 2020B) and according to the information received, the RHS's personnel evaluates the risk of infection transfer and propose the next steps to take such as testing, quarantine, etc. (IBID.).

To meet the GDPR standards, the information about the data collected and the withdrawal option is available on the website dedicated to the coronavirus run by the MoH (MV ČR 2020A). According to the eRouška application's authors, after the consent is given, the related personal data are available to the respective RHS for 6 hours (IBID., INVESTIGACE.CZ 2020). As was pre-arranged in March 2020, all the intellectual rights were transferred to the official data controller, the MoH, at the end of May 2020 (VESELOVSKÝ 2020), by which another of the *EDPB Guidelines*' recommendations was met.

Interestingly, eRouška is not the only COVID-19 tracking app in the Czech Republic. During the state of emergency, another tracking

software besides eRouška was developed. This software was created by company Seznam.cz introducing a new function to its long-existing maps software “Mapy.cz”. To utilise the new function, Mapy.cz users first need to express their consent to the data collection and its storage after the application instalment. For geo-localisation tracking, GMS triangulation is used by this COVID-19 app, which is less accurate than the Bluetooth technology (KUBIÁNOVÁ 2020). The algorithm assesses the data collected and notifies its users if they were in close contact (less than 2 metres for 15+ minutes) with a positively tested person. After being positively tested for COVID-19, the user must provide a second consent in order to provide the data to the RHS. The given consent can be withdrawn directly in the application. Meanwhile, the collected data are stored in the owners’ (the private company Seznam a.s.) databank for one month before being deleted (SEZNAM.CZ 2020).

Liberal elements and data protection standards in the communication with the public related to the covid-19 national mobile phone apps

Concerns which appeared about the smart quarantine and both apps’ liberal and data protection standards among the public can be divided into two areas. Firstly, there had been only one data controller, the Czech MoH (VLÁDA ČR 2020E), until the government surprisingly decided to create a new governmental body, the Council for Health Risks (CHR), on July 27, 2020. Since July 28, the smart quarantine is run by the CHR, which is represented by the Prime Minister, the Minister of the Interior, the Minister of Health, the Minister of Defence, government proxies for digitisation, science and research, the chairman of the Association of Regions and a representative of the biggest health insurance company. In the inner structures of the CHR, a specialised unit represented by the chief hygienist, representatives of the army and representatives of the MoH (ČTK 2020B; VLÁDA ČR 2020G) was established to control and manage the smart quarantine. In Article 17 of the GDPR, a request to a specified data controller is made, thus the establishment of the CHR is not directly in conflict with the GDPR. Nonetheless the currently disintegrated system in the Czech Republic instigates severe concerns. The more disintegrated the system is, the higher is the probability of data surveillance or cyberattack exposure. Appropriate reasoning for the decision to change the data controller was not provided.

Secondly, the smart quarantine has been criticised for its low utilisation, and thus its low effectivity. According to an Oxford University study, to ensure the proper functionality of the smart quarantine, approximately 60% of the population (which means over 6,000,000 people in the case of the Czech Republic) needs to be active users of the geo-tracking applications ^(UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD 2020). In August 2020, only approximately 250,000 people have downloaded the eRouška app ^(MARTINEK 2020) and almost 1,700,000 people allowed the Mapy.cz app to collect their geo-localisation data ^(SEZNAM.CZ 2020). The Oxford researchers said that when 15% of the population uses the given app, the first positive effects can be observed ^(UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD 2020), but at least eRouška is very far from meeting this goal.

Furthermore, as the representatives of the government confirmed, in the first three months since their activation, the data collected via the COVID-19 apps, mobile operators and banks have been requested by the RHS's personnel in 615 cases only¹⁵ ^(MARTINEK 2020), although the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases exceeded 15,000 by that time ^(MV ČR 2020B). As the smart quarantine's design is dependent on both the total number of users and its utilisation by RHSs, the real numbers indicate that the system has failed so far.

No survey has been conducted among citizens to find out which factors caused the low utilisation. Possibly all the reasons one would normally think of, such as a fear of data breach and surveillance, a lack of awareness, user-unfriendly settings and the apps' prolonged unavailability for iOS users, play a role. One of the characteristics present in illiberal regimes is that people do not trust public authorities enough to provide data to them. Although the data about the Czech population's possible distrust of the COVID-19 apps due to potential data surveillance are not available yet, a warning sign to the Czech government regarding its trustworthiness was made by the electorate.

To respond to the obvious inefficiency, the government announced the launching of the "smart quarantine vol. 2" at the end of summer 2020. Whilst the CHR had high expectations for the improved system, and the Czech MoH started an eRouška promotion campaign to increase the number its users ^(MARTINEK 2020), the Head of the Czech National Data Protection Authority (NDPA), Ivana Janů, expressed her serious

concerns about the system in the Czech Senate: *“Not only was the smart quarantine project consulted with the official Czech data protection authority only in a limited scope, after its activation and upon request, but all the identified risks of personal data breach have not been eliminated yet [at the end of June 2020], while the preparation for the smart quarantine vol. 2 started. The eRouška app stores personal data and when it receives the user’s consent, one but not the only condition for handling the user’s personal data is met”* (UOOU 2020). The proposed solution by the Czech NDPA lies in the involvement of the legislative power and a closer cooperation of the government with the NDPA to legitimise further steps (IBID.). If this is not done, serious concerns about the potential governmental intentions regarding the data surveillance might occur.

Summary of the czech response to covid-19 and a reflection on the pan-european approach

To summarise the findings for the Czech Republic in the context of the research questions, first, the Czech geo-localisation apps were both developed under the extraordinary measures of Article 9 of the GDPR during the state of emergency which lasted until May 17, 2020. The apps have remained in operation after that and according to the statement of the Head of the Czech NDPA, their functionality requires improvement to ensure the full protection of personal data guaranteed by the GDPR. The lack of cooperation with the NDPA during the initial phase of the smart quarantine also leaves certain doubts about whether there was a full compliance with the liberal standards as defined. The main difference between Mapy.cz and eRouška lies in the used technology (GMS and Bluetooth) and data storage (the Seznam.cz database and users’ mobile phones respectively). The public reaction to their introduction was rather vigilant and distrustful. Only a fragment of the Czech society showed an interest in downloading the apps, which led to a lower utilisation level than that which was needed to start bringing some real benefits. Besides the claimed lack of cooperation between the Czech NDPA and the COVID-19 apps’ designers, a deflection from the *EDPB Guidelines* can be also observed in the decision to remove the exclusive responsibility for the smart quarantine’s management from the MoH to the CHR at the end of July 2020. The final remark is to be made on the pan-European proposal in the context of the measures implemented in the Czech Republic during the first wave of the pandemic. Despite of the

decentralised model of eRouška, its interoperability with other EU apps for the cross-border exchange of data has not been secured yet.

THE DATA COLLECTION-RELATED MEASURES TAKEN IN AUSTRIA TO FIGHT COVID-19

Evaluation of the (il)liberal standards in the country during the first wave of the pandemic

With 27,000+ cases at the end of August 2020, Austria belonged to the mid-level affected countries in the EU (CORONA TRACKER 2020) during the first wave of the pandemic. Unlike many other states, Austria did not declare a state of emergency during the corona crisis. This supposedly should signify fewer opportunities for the implementation of illiberal standards as authorities had to fully comply with the Austrian constitutional framework (LACHMAYER 2020). The first restrictive measures in Austria were framed as a state of exception based on the historical *Epidemic Diseases Act* from 1950 (IBID.), and two new bills, the first and the second *Covid-19 Law* from March 15, 2020, and March 21, 2020, respectively (ATANASSOV ET AL. 2020: 2–3; EUROPEAN TRAINING AND RESEARCH CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY 2020: 2).

As the Austrian *Epidemic Diseases Act* was formulated decades before the digital age's arrival, an additional document extending its authority was released on February 28, 2020. With the *Enforcement of the Epidemic Law*, a document prepared by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection (known as the *Sozialministerium*), the regional health departments received permission to collect personal data of people positively tested for COVID-19. The data include their address, occupation, social contacts, etc. and are to be used to track individuals potentially exposed to infection. Under this act, the data controller was the national epidemiology unit operating under the *Sozialministerium* (SOZIALMINISTERIUM AT 2020). Direct references to the data protection regulation can be found in the second *Covid-19 Law*. In its Article 1, the *Telecommunications Act* from 2003 has been changed to allow the Austrian Government to be provided upon request with the customers' data to be used for free warning purposes. The data should be in a form fulfilling the data protection requirements currently in force, which means the GDPR inclusively (PARLIAMENT AT 2020A).

Interestingly, a controversial data transfer with certain characteristics of data surveillance took place in Austria already before the Act was enacted. On March 17, 2020, the biggest Austrian telecom operator, A1, confirmed that it had provided the Austrian Government and the Austrian Red Cross (ARC) with analyses of the aggregate movement of people from March 7, 2020 until March 15, 2020 out of its own initiative. The data of mobile phone owners were analysed to provide the officials with an insight into whether the then recently implemented regulatory measures reducing social contact starting from March 10, 2020, have made a difference or not (DUBMRAVA 2020: 5; IBID.: 10). Supposedly, no customers were informed about A1's intentions in advance (SULZBACHER – AL-YOUSSEF 2020), which represents a deviation, albeit an exceptional one, from the liberal standards. A1 argues that all the data were provided in fully anonymised manner (using a 20-digit code which was changed every 24 hours), and thus the activity represented a Big Data analysis and was in full compliance with the GDPR (IBID.) as well as with the *ePrivacy Directive*. According to Rainer Knyrim, an Austrian lawyer specialised in data protection, as the data were anonymised, no additional consent of users was necessary from the legal perspective (RAINER KNYRIM, QUOTED IN BECHTOLD ET AL. 2020). On the other hand, an Austrian expert on data protection, Christof Tschohl, stated that the case represents an interference into citizens' privacy, despite being understandable in the times of pandemic (SULZBACHER – AL-YOUSSEF 2020). The unveiled affair naturally provoked distrust among the Austrian population (ORF 2020). In a survey conducted by the Vienna Centre for Electoral Research (VCER) at the end of March 2020, over 80% out of 1,541 respondents rejected the idea of people's personal data being collected and further analysed without their knowledge (PARTHEYMÜLLER ET AL. 2020A).

Reflection on the privacy and data protection standards in the national covid-19 app

Like in the Czech Republic, a geo-localisation mobile phone application based on a decentralised model of data collection was developed in Austria. It was Stopp Corona, a contact tracing app run by the ARC on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Health. On March 25, 2020, it became the very first national COVID-19 geo-tracking app in operation to be released in the EU (EC 2020B: 5). The app was developed in cooperation with the private sector as well, namely with the consulting company

Accenture Austria and the Uniq private foundation, the main shareholder of the private Austrian insurance company of the same name

(DAUM – GASSER 2020).

In terms of how it functions, Stopp Corona can be easily described as a combination of both of the Czech apps and ensures a high standard of personal data protection in compliance with the EU legislation. Once users install the app, their consent to the data collection is required. The data are stored in the user's mobile phone for 14 days and protected from potential misuse by two codes, a temporary exposure key (TEK) and a rolling proximity identifier (RPI) (STOPP CORONA 2020A). The application uses Bluetooth technology to collect all RPIs that were present within a short distance (less than 2 metres) from the given mobile phone for a longer period of time (15+ minutes). To ensure an even higher data protection, the RPI code changes every 10 minutes automatically. Should an app user be positively tested for COVID-19, the collected data from the user's mobile phone are with his/her consent provided to the ARC. Other users who came into contact with the infected person within the past 54 hours are notified via the app. For the notification purposes, the personalised TEK data of the infected users together with their RPIs are used. To register in the Stopp Corona app, users are not obliged to provide their mobile phone number. The notification is processed in the application system only. Although further contact details such as the user's phone number can smoothen the notification process and communication, providing them at the time of registration is voluntary (IBID.).

Interestingly, the Austrian application provides users also with a possibility to report a "suspicion of COVID-19 infection". In this case, all users who were in close contact with the person who suspects that he/she is infected are notified as well. Should the person's actual test turn out negative, the user can use the false alarm notification and cancel the original warning notifications. For the false alarm notification, the user needs to provide his/her mobile phone number to the relevant authority to prevent misuse. The consent to store the phone number details can be withdrawn anytime, in which case the body has 30 days to delete the stored data (IBID.). This supports the previous statement of the high data protection standards guaranteed to the Stopp Corona app users.

Liberal elements and data protection standards in the communication with the public related to the covid-19 national mobile phone app

In regard to the communication of data protection standards to the public, the official Stopp Corona app website deserves special attention, as it provides very detailed information on the app's functionality, its operation system, the data collected and the methods of data analysis (STOPP CORONA 2020B). Next to that, the data protection section of the Stopp Corona app website explicitly refers to articles of the GDPR that the app is in compliance with (IBID.). In this regard, the Austrian procedure can serve as a good practice for other countries promoting liberal standards.

However, despite all these efforts, a reluctance to install the app accompanied the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in Austria. With approximately 15% of the population being users of the app, the utilisation remains low, although reaching the minimum level to observe positive effects that was defined by the Oxford researchers (HUBER 2020; JELENKO – BENEDIKT 2020; UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD 2020). In July, the Austrian data protection expert Max Schrems officially confirmed that the ARC's Stopp Corona app meets all the GDPR and *ePrivacy* requirements. Based on his expertise, the concerns about the app among Austrian citizens might have arisen due to its swift introduction in March 2020, shortly after the pandemic outbreak, while in other EU countries COVID-19 apps have not been developed until recently (VIENNA ONLINE 2020).

According to the ARC, what stands behind the low utilisation is perhaps the political debate about people potentially being forced to download the app through illiberal law enforcement, which has negatively resonated within the public society. In another VCER public opinion survey from April 2020, the majority of respondents rejected the idea of obligatory use of the Stopp Corona app (PARTHEYMÜLLER ET AL. 2020B) which would be also in contradiction with the EC *Recommendation* from April 2020. The political debates in Austria about the potential obligation to use the COVID-19 tracking app started in April 2020, as Wolfgang Sobotka, Austria's President of the National Council and former Federal Minister of the Interior, expressed his support for this option (MÜNCH – MUTH 2020). The Austrian Administrative Court reacted to the statement immediately. By declaring the potential obligation to be a disproportionate interference in the fundamental and

data protection rights as well as the freedom of individuals, the Court appealed to the government not to “*override the principles of the rule of law*”

(DER STANDARD 2020; SALZBURGER NACHRICHTEN 2020).

Still, especially during the negotiations about the *Amendment of the Epidemic Act 1950*, the opposition parties SPÖ (Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs) and FPÖ (Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs) made use of the negative mood in society and repeatedly reopened the discussions to express their concerns about potential app-use enforcement (MARCHART – SCHMID 2020). In the finally approved *Amendment*, unsurprisingly, no illiberal obligations to install the COVID-19 app were enacted (LACHMAYER 2020; PARLIAMENT AT 2020B). A statement confirming that no one can be forced to install a COVID-19 tracking app was also published on the Austrian NDPA’s website dedicated to COVID-19 (DATENSCHUTZBEHÖRDE 2020).

Despite the fact that the Austrian government has repeatedly denied all accusations of its having future plans to make the use of the COVID-19 app an obligation, the political debates continued. They especially intensified after the Slovenian parliament approved the obligatory use of a tracking app for those who are verifiably infected or ordered to quarantine, which has set up a potentially dangerous illiberal precedent for other EU states (NOVAK 2020). On July 18, 2020, Susanne Fürst, a member of the Austrian Parliament from FPÖ, addressed a query to the Austrian chancellor Sebastian Kurz. In the text, the answers to eleven questions on the governmental cooperation with US companies on the Stopp-Corona app’s development and citizens’ monitoring via the app were requested (PARLIAMENT AT 2020C). In his reaction, Sebastian Kurz repeated that the Austrian government does not strive for any kind of monitoring of people, or a nationalisation of collected personal data (PARLIAMENT AT 2020D).

Summary of the Austrian response to covid-19 and a reflection on the pan-European approach

To sum up the findings related to the Austrian measures briefly, as there was no state of emergency declared during the first wave of the pandemic, all the actions undertaken had to strictly comply with the current data protection standards. The exceptional case of the country was further framed by its outdated *Epidemic Diseases Act* from 1950, which required a prompt legislative update to meet the requirements of the contemporary digital

world. Besides the questionable data transfer of the telecommunication operator A1 in March 2020, no data surveillance has been yet observed in the country. The Stopp Corona app, although being the first COVID-19 app in operation among all the EU Member States, seems to provide other countries with a good practice example of a geo-localisation tracking app with high standards of personal data protection, especially due to its double coding (TEK and RPI).

Especially Wolfgang Sobotka's expressed support for making the installation of the COVID-19 app obligatory, and the following prolonged negotiations of the new *Amendment of the Epidemic Act* and intense political debates, contributed to Austria's negative attitude towards the Stopp Corona app, which was not changed even by the high informative standards of its website and the published expert opinions on its data security. Finally, although the app represents a decentralised model of architecture as well and meets other EDPB recommended standards, the interoperability goal has not been achieved yet. The official plan is to incorporate the Stopp Corona app into the pan-European tracking-app architecture by the end of October 2020 (WIESE 2020).

CONCLUSION

the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic surprised Europe in March 2020, putting political leaders under pressure to swiftly introduce adequate measures to prevent the infection from the spreading, whilst guidelines on how to do so in compliance with, among other things, personal data protection rules and a high respect for privacy, were not then available yet. Situations like this might lead the decision-makers in one of two directions: either choosing the way of strict compliance with liberal and democratic standards or opting for a more authoritarian and oppressive alternative.

Through the two case studies, the article answered the following questions one by one: (1) how and under which circumstances the Czech and Austrian governmental representatives reacted to the spread of COVID-19 infection from the perspective of utilising digital technologies, (2) whether the liberal standards lying in respect for privacy and personal data protection of citizens were maintained and (3) how the data protection standards were communicated to the public and what the level of the app's acceptance and perceived trustworthiness was. The findings show

that in both countries, during the first wave of the pandemic the liberal approach was chosen and mostly maintained, albeit imperfectly. From the perspective of the actions analysed in the given time frame, the rights of citizens were to a wide extent respected.

Regarding the circumstances, in the Czech Republic, both apps were developed and introduced during the state of emergency while the smart quarantine system was activated afterwards. The eRouška app functions represent higher personal data protection standards than those of Mapy.cz, although its utilisation remained lower. This might be caused by its novelty. In contrast to eRouška, the application Mapy.cz had already existed before the pandemic, and its portfolio was only extended by software collecting data and notifying users about possible COVID-19 exposure. Serious concerns about data protection and privacy standards were caused by the lack of cooperation between the government and the Czech DPA during the preparation and initial phase of the smart quarantine, as well as the unprecedented change of the data controller authority in July 2020. Regarding the *EDPB Guidelines* from April 2020 and the agreed interoperability standards from June 2020, the Czech smart quarantine system is built on a decentralised model, which sends a positive message towards Brussels, although the interoperability has not yet been arranged.

The Austrian government did not declare a state of emergency during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, the country faced some unusual issues at the beginning of March 2020 due to its outdated *Epidemic Diseases Act* from 1950. Still, one of the country's major achievements was that it became the first EU Member State to put a COVID-19 app into operation. Furthermore, the Stopp Corona app, especially thanks to its double coding (TEK and RPI), was found to ensure high data protection standards. Nevertheless, as the questionable data transfer by A1 was given a lot of publicity, citizens probably became rather sceptical toward the tracking app. Furthermore, the ill-considered statement of a potential obligation to instal the Stopp Corona app supported the Austrians' reluctance to download and use it. The utilisation thus remained low, hardly reaching the minimum of 15% of the population that is required for the app to start bringing some benefits. As the Austrian Stopp Corona app is designed on a decentralised architecture model, hopes for its future interoperability with other EU COVID-19 apps are present, despite this not having been achieved by the end of August 2020.

The last research question reflected on the national implementation of the pan-European approach. Despite the fact that the interoperability standards elements were agreed among EU Member States in June 2020, only a tight majority of the EU countries (15 out of 27 as of the end of August) have national tracing and warning mobile applications in use. Both the Czech and the Austrian apps met the requirements for future interoperability thanks to their decentralised model of data storage, despite the it has not been achieved yet.

One comparative remark can be made in the reflection on different citizens' reactions to the political development around the COVID-19 and national apps' implementation. While in the Czech Republic the establishment of the CHR or the lack of cooperation between the government and the Czech NDPA did not provoke much negativity in the society, in Austria, the debate about potential app-use enforcement resonated significantly among the politicians as well as the public. The long-term cultural and public discourse about data protection and privacy in Austria which has been missing in the Czech Republic could serve as a potential explanation. Data protection and privacy have echoed in the discourse for several years already, as is proven by the quoted and well-known Austrian privacy experts Max Schrems and Christof Tschohl. However, as this assumption is still lacking any scientifically approved evidence, this can be a subject for further research.

ENDNOTES

- 1 At the end of August 2020, the Czech Republic had evidence of 24,000+ confirmed cases while the corresponding figure for Austria was 27,000+.
- 2 The World Health Organisation declared the global pandemic of COVID-19 in March 2020. In the Czech Republic and Austria, the governmental representatives started to officially refer to a second wave of the pandemic in September 2020.
- 3 A reference to such a risk could be found in the famous Warren and Brandeis article published in 1890. Of the many recent authors dealing with this issue, see, for example: Allmer 2011; Bellanova 2006; Bigo – Tsoukala 2008; Cavelti – Leese 2018; Hallinan et al. 2012; Hosein – Altshuller 2017.
- 4 Snowden's disclosures in 2013 revealed several surveillance programmes operating globally (Zaia 2019).
- 5 The Cambridge Analytica consultancy company faces accusation of using Facebook users' data to influence the Brexit campaign without the knowledge of the people whose Facebook profile data were data-mined (Naik 2018; Sherr 2018).
- 6 Users of the fitness application Strava among U.S. active military personnel revealed their deployment through its use in 2018 (Hern 2018).

- 7 Discriminatory ill-treatment based on predictive policing algorithms and analysis of asylum seekers based on automatic language recognition can be named as two examples of this.
- 8 The EDPB is an independent body responsible for contributing to the consistent application of data protection rules throughout the EU.
- 9 A common Union toolbox for the use of technology and data to combat and exit from the COVID-19 crisis, in particular concerning mobile applications and the use of anonymised mobility data.
- 10 Guidance on Apps supporting the fight against COVID 19 pandemic in relation to data protection (2020/C 124 I/01).
- 11 The EDPB Guidelines on the use of location data and contact tracing tools in the context of the COVID-19 outbreak.
- 12 Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Norway, Poland and Spain.
- 13 Belgium, Malta, Portugal and Slovakia.
- 14 Seznam.cz, Alza.cz, Keboola, Pale Fire Capital, O2, mluvi, Clevermaps, Česko. Digital, Liftago, Stories.bi, DataSantics, Dateio, Expertkom, Actum, WMC/Grey, Rockaway, Invia.cz, Daktela, Prusa Research, Reservio (COVID19CZ 2020a).
- 15 As of July 27, 2020 (Martinek 2020).

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Plagues of Egypt – the COVID-19 crisis and the role of securitization dilemmas in the authoritarian regime survival strategies in Egypt and Turkey

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ABSTRACT

The research looks into the authoritarian regime survival strategies in Egypt and Turkey during the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, it examines how the autocratic rulers in both countries dealt with the securitization dilemma caused by the coronavirus outbreak. It applies securitization theory and the concept of selective securitization to argue that although both Abdel Fattah el-Sisi's and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's rule were at some point expected to be shaken by the pandemic, the COVID-19 securitization dilemmas had an important role in helping to prolong the autocratic directions of their respective countries. Additionally, the article demonstrates that the securitization of the COVID-19 pandemic in Egypt and Turkey follows a certain political pattern where every crisis constitutes an opportunity for expanding the regimes' powers at the expense of citizens' rights.

KEYWORDS

authoritarianism, COVID-19, discursive hegemony, Egypt, monopolization, regime survival strategies, securitization, securitization dilemma, selective securitization, Turkey

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In this research, I look into the survival strategies of the authoritarian regimes in Egypt and Turkey during the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, I examine how both the Egyptian president Abdel Fattah el-Sisi and his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdoğan handled the securitization dilemma caused by the 2020 coronavirus crisis. The article interprets the securitization dilemma in the context of the vulnerability defined by the political economy of the regimes, which includes their dependence on cronies and economic structures. Additionally, it uses securitization theory and the concept of selective securitization to demonstrate how both presidents made use of the securitization dilemma to prolong their rules, which could possibly be shaken by the COVID-19 pandemic. They used two principal strategies to solve the dilemma and ensure the survival of their regimes. Firstly, they attempted to establish their discursive hegemony with respect to the COVID-19 agenda, which involved using repressive tactics against dissident voices. Secondly they monopolized the crisis management measures aimed at fighting the COVID-19 outbreak. As a consequence, the crisis management monopolization and the disciplining of the pandemic discourse allowed them to pursue a selective securitization, which in turn was crucial for further prolonging their authoritarian rule. Therefore, I argue that although both Sisi's and Erdoğan's rule were at some point expected to be possibly undermined by the pandemic (E.G. ARDOVINI 2020; SCHENKKAN 2020), the current securitization dilemma, the consequent crisis management monopolization and attempts at a discursive hegemony as well as selective securitization in fact resulted in the survival of authoritarianism in their respective countries. Additionally, the article demonstrates that the securitization of the COVID-19 pandemic in Egypt and Turkey follows a broader political pattern, whereby every crisis constitutes an opportunity for expanding the regimes' powers at the expense of citizens' rights.

In the case of Egypt, this pattern is deeply rooted in the country's political history, with Gamal Abdel Nasser (1956–1970) serving as an example of autocracy for the rest of Egypt's authoritarian presidents (for specific examples of Nasser's authoritarianism, see for instance Shehata 2018). On the other hand, Turkey started its new era of authoritarianism with Erdoğan's rise to power (2000–2014: THE PRIME MINISTER OF TURKEY IN 2003–2014, AND THE TURKISH PRESIDENT FROM 2014 UNTIL THE PRESENT). Although initially seen as a hope for the country's democratic transition, especially in the later years of his rule, Erdoğan succeeded in moving Turkey *"in a profoundly illiberal, authoritarian direction"* (KARAVELI 2016).

Existing research has not yet dealt with the impact that the COVID-19 securitization dilemma had on the regimes' dynamics in Egypt and Turkey. These two countries were selected for this study due to their leaders being among the most prominent Middle East and North Africa (MENA) autocrats, whose regimes were expected to be possibly undermined as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (ARDOVINI 2020; SCHENKKAN 2020) but who in reality translated the crisis into an opportunity that enabled their autocratic regimes to survive. Moreover, I chose them because of their similar handling of the crisis. By their comparison, the study aims to demonstrate that although both Sisi and Erdoğan faced the initial COVID-19 securitization dilemma caused by a number of factors (economic considerations, cronyism) that could possibly enfeeble their rule, thanks to the implementation of regime survival strategies, they have nevertheless managed to overcome the crisis and ensured the maintenance of autocracy in their respective countries. Additionally, they used similar methods (attempts to hegemonize the discourse as well as the monopolization of the crisis management measures and the consequent selective securitization) to achieve this. The contribution of the study lies in its demonstration of how autocrats use selective securitization as the best possible tactic to prolong their rule and authoritarian powers. Moreover, the article makes a clear connection between the implementation of selective securitization tactics and the ability of autocrats to overcome the pandemic's challenge to their status and capacities. Finally, the article offers a more nuanced understanding of authoritarian regime dynamics, which debunks the earlier arguments about Sisi's and Erdoğan's rule being possibly undermined by the pandemic (ARDOVINI 2020; SCHENKKAN 2020).

The article is structured as follows. I start the article with theoretical and methodological considerations, explaining the theories used and the process of collecting the data needed for the research. I then proceed by giving a brief account of how in the past, both Egypt's Sisi and Turkey's Erdoğan actively used the securitization of crises and how these securitizations translated into the sustenance of authoritarianism in the countries. Then, I examine the COVID-19 securitization dilemma and regime survival strategies in both Egypt and Turkey and, using specific examples and utterances, demonstrate how Sisi and Erdoğan approached these and how these were crucial for the further prolongation of authoritarianism in their countries. I conducted the research between January 2020 and June 2020.

THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

In my analysis, I mainly rely on the concept of securitization, as developed by the Copenhagen School. Its members define securitization as “a speech act that has to fulfill three rhetorical criteria. It is a discursive process by means of which an actor (1) claims that a referent object is existentially threatened, (2) demands the right to take extraordinary countermeasures to deal with the threat, and (3) convinces an audience that rule-breaking behavior to counter the threat is justified” (BUZAN – WAEVER – DE WILDE 1998). Additionally, building upon their analysis, João Nunes further claims that “what distinguishes a process of securitization is the defense of extraordinary measures – including the suspension of normal processes of (or exceptions to) democratic deliberation – as necessary responses to this existential threat” (NUNES 2020). Furthermore, securitization is not only limited to speech acts, but also includes securitizing practices such as those employed by authoritarian regimes. These practices include controlling the discourse by non-discursive means (e.g. introducing punishments for those independent civil society actors which put forth rival interpretations of the pandemic) and other practices – such as, for instance, establishing government control over/regulating quarantining practices.

Moreover, almost every agenda, whether it relates to economy, values or culture, might become an object of securitization. Infectious diseases are no exception. As Stefan Elbe (2010) states: “The ongoing securitization of the infectious disease can be traced back at least as far as 1992.” Over the past years, diseases such as Zika, HIV/AIDS, SARS or Ebola were presented as threats and carefully securitized (DAVIES 2008; ELBE 2010). The COVID-19 pandemic was not any different. Many world leaders undertook extraordinary measures to stop the spread of the disease, limiting civic freedoms in the process. As Stephane Baele (2020) claims, “[g]overnments and scientists (the securitizing actors) have invested the virus (the referent subject) with the ‘aura of unprecedented threatening complexion’ against a series of different referent objects – people’s lives, the Nation/State, health services, society, etc. – to justify the unprecedented measures [such as drastic confinement or the deployment of the army in the streets].”

Additionally, the article uses the concept of the securitization dilemma to demonstrate Sisi’s and Erdoğan’s initial reluctance to acknowledge and securitize the COVID-19. Building upon Scott Watson’s analysis (2013), Van Rythoven (2019) claims that, “a securitization dilemma occurs when

attempts to protect one referent object endangers another.” Likewise, following Ronnie Olesker’s analysis (2018) Lewis Eves and James Thedham (2020: 1–2) argue that *“securitizing an issue in one sector, negatively impacts upon another sector. This creates a dilemma for the securitizer as to whether they should securitize the issue or not.”* The present study builds upon these definitions and argues that Sisi and Erdoğan’s solutions to their respective securitization dilemmas are means to protect their countries’ economies from suffering substantial harm caused by the COVID-19 precautionary measures and ensure the prolongation of their rule. Finally, the article makes use of the concept of selective securitization, understood as prioritization of certain referent objects over other ones. Thus, in the case of Egypt and Turkey, measures contributing to the survival of authoritarianism were often undertaken at the expense of more crucial topics that could, however, undermine the regimes’ stability.

The 2020 COVID-19 crisis posed a dilemma for a number of political leaders as to what should be securitized, to what extent and, most importantly, by whom. Especially in authoritarian countries, the securitization dilemma was approached with a high degree of carefulness, as unpremeditated steps could threaten the regimes’ stability and legitimacy. As Egypt and Turkey were no exceptions to this, their leaders had to undertake such measures that would, on one hand, contribute to fighting the pandemic, but, on the other, would not threaten the stability of the regimes. The necessity of undertaking optimal (from the point of view of regime survival) measures was well accounted for by the later outbreak of protests in a number of both democratic and authoritarian countries, where people took to the streets to demonstrate their dissatisfaction with their governments’ handling of the crisis. In Lebanon, people blocked major roads and threw rocks at the central bank building to show that there was not enough done to protect the country’s economy and those who suffer from the crisis’ consequences the most (GELDI 2020). In Iraq, massive protests were held to oppose the government’s COVID-19 measures and the lockdown (SLY 2020). Similarly, Thailand witnessed the greatest anti-government protests since the 2014 *coup d’état*. These were triggered by the failed economy, which was hit hard by the pandemic and the strict measures imposed on the people (REGAN – OLARN 2020). Finally, in Belarus, President Lukashenka’s mismanagement of the pandemic contributed to *“the erosion of his legitimacy”* and the later outbreak of protests there (KAZHARSKI 2021). Given the possible scenarios, it was vital especially for the autocratic regimes to choose the

optimal strategy to prolong their rule. In the opposite case, they could end up facing similar protests that would potentially threaten to undermine the stability of their regimes. To prevent these, both Sisi and Erdoğan made use of selective securitization, which aimed at pointing to the gravity of the COVID-19 issue, but at the same time enabled them to prolong the authoritarian rule in their countries. This was done by attempting to establish a discursive hegemony with respect to the COVID-19 agenda and by monopolizing crisis management measures aimed at fighting the disease. Consequently, these allowed them to pursue selective securitization, which in turn was instrumental to the further survival of the authoritarian regimes. As mentioned previously, this authoritarian framing of the pandemic crisis stemmed from the vulnerability defined by the political economy of the regimes, including their dependence on cronies and economic structures. One has to bear in mind that Erdoğan's rule in particular was built on somewhat shaky grounds even before the outbreak of the crisis, with the levels of his popularity slowly decreasing (as demonstrated, for instance, by AKP's loss of major cities such as Istanbul or Ankara to his political opponents in the 2019 municipal election). Under these circumstances, a clumsy handling of the pandemic could prove fatal. Moreover, although there is certainly a key difference between the two regimes, as the Egyptian president Sisi enjoys greater levels of trust than his Turkish counterpart, in his case unpremeditated steps could equally cause trouble for his authoritarian rule. Taking into account that *"a renewed wave of popular uprisings in the fall of 2019 revealed that the country's deep-seated issues, such as widespread corruption, social inequalities and systemic poverty remain a key driver of popular discontent"* (ARDOVINI 2020), hypothetical protests caused by the government's mishandling of the COVID-19 crisis would in all probability mean further trouble for the regime. Consequently, selective securitization was a vital strategy for ensuring the further survival of the authoritarian regimes in both countries.

As per the methodology, the article makes use of qualitative discourse analysis and media analysis. The major bulk of the data comes from the official Facebook pages of Sisi and Erdoğan as well as from online newspapers and reports written in English and Arabic. Around 150 primary sources were analyzed. To conduct the research in as unbiased a manner as possible, I worked with both state-controlled and independent media in Egypt and Turkey. Among the selected sources were Egypt's independent online newspaper *Mada Masr*, the most widely-read Egyptian newspaper

Yout7 and the state controlled media *Ahram Online*, *Egypt Today* and *El Gumhuria*. Regarding Turkey, mainly sources written in English were used for further analysis. These were the independent media *Duvar English* and *Bianet* and the pro-government media *Hurriyet* and *Daily Sabah*. These newspapers were selected due to their high numbers of daily readers and thus their ability to considerably influence public opinion in one way or another. The analysis concentrated on their depiction of the COVID-19 pandemic in their respective countries, on their portrayals of measures undertaken by the governments as well as on both Sisi's and Erdoğan's responses to the pandemic.

Additionally, I analyzed selected videos showing Erdoğan and Sisi addressing COVID-19 in their public speeches. These came mainly from their official Facebook pages and the Egyptian pro-government TV channel DMC. To find relevant materials, the Google search engine was used to look for combinations of the following keywords – Sisi, Erdoğan, COVID-19, COVID pandemic, Egypt, Turkey, authoritarianism, virus, COVID-19 denial and COVID-19 measures. For the purpose of the research, the same combination of keywords in the Arabic language was also entered into the search engine. In the analysis, I covered the period from January 2020 till June 2020.

SECURITIZATION AND REGIME BOOSTING IN EGYPT AND TURKEY

Egypt and Turkey have rather a rich history of using securitization as a tool for their leaders' political purposes (FOR SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF SECURITIZATION, SEE FOR INSTANCE GERI 2016; MCMANUS 2018). Generally speaking, in these countries, every crisis, whether it is the COVID-19 pandemic or a revolution, is presented as a threat to the survival of the nation and afterwards carefully securitized. Normally, the securitization then translates into emergency laws that grant the countries' leaders additional powers at the expense of civic rights and freedoms. Consequently, these lead to the tightening of their grip on the country and a prolongation of their authoritarianism. I interpret this process as a reoccurring political pattern that both Egypt's and Turkey's ruling elites take advantage of every time that their leaders face a challenge that is potentially threatening to their rule. This means that whenever the presidents face a possible threat to their positions, they have to come up with certain strategies that would ensure the survival of

their regimes, while further curbing civic freedoms. Additionally, it can be argued that rather than risking an enfeeblement of their position, the leaders frame the issue as a problem of national security, skilfully translating it to their advantage.

According to Furio Cerutti, authoritarianism is a form of government characterized “*by a strong central power*” and limited political freedoms (2017: 17). Furthermore, Linz (1967: 297) described an authoritarian regime as “*a political system with limited, not responsible political pluralism: without elaborate and guiding ideology, but with distinctive mentalities, without intensive nor extensive political mobilization, except at some points in their development, and in which a leader or occasionally small group exercises powers within formally ill-defined limits, but actually quite predictable ones.*” I build upon these definitions in explaining how the initial securitization dilemma in the name of fighting the COVID-19 pandemic influences the regimes’ dynamics and further translates into the stabilization of authoritarianism in the two countries.

Moreover, herein, it is also necessary to differentiate between the types of authoritarianism that can be found in Egypt and Turkey. While the current Egyptian regime is often described as a military electoral authoritarianism, political scientist researchers frequently label its Turkish counterpart as a competitive authoritarianism or hegemonic party regime. Following Bruce Bueno de Mesquita’s analysis (2014) Sahar F. Aziz (2016) claimed that, “*military electoral authoritarianism constitutes a type of hybrid regime where the military upholds the façade of elections but places current and former military officials at the helm of the elite selectorate.*” In contrast, a hegemonic party regime is described as “*a non-democratic regime that (1) rules with the aid of a dominant political party and (2) holds multi-party elections*” (REUTER – GANDHI 2011). The difference between the types of authoritarianism that are at work in Egypt and Turkey is rather significant, since (as will be mentioned later in the text) it results also in the leaders’ pacts with different types of elites and considerably influences the regimes’ approaches in fighting COVID-19 and ensuring the prolongation of their authoritarian rule.

In the past, both Sisi and Erdoğan effectively used domestic challenges such as the 2016 Turkish *coup d’état* attempt or the 2011–2014 popular protests in Egypt to strengthen their position in the respective country and prosecute their critics and political opponents. Similarly, they took advantage of the initial COVID-19 securitization dilemma to maintain their

powers and ensure the survival of their authoritarian regimes. This was done by their attempts to control the public discourse about the pandemic and by their monopolizing the crisis management measures, which in turn allowed them to pursue selective securitization, which was instrumental to the further prolongation of their authoritarian powers.

Historically, the Egyptian republic has experienced constant securitization waves since its establishment in 1953. Thus, for example the Free Officers Movement (*Ḥarakat aḍ-ḍubbaṭ al-aḥḥar*), a group of Egyptian nationalist officers responsible for the 1952 *coup d'état* and the overthrow of the Muhammad Ali dynasty (1805–1953), introduced a ban on multi-party politics and a crackdown on political opposition (METZ CHAPIN 1990), which they justified by a prospective risk of a counter-revolution financed by the West and a possible religious extremism. Additionally, in 1958, the country first enacted its Emergency Law No.162. This emergency law, an integral part of Egyptian securitization politics, including amid the COVID-19 crisis, was consecutively in effect since President Anwar Sadat's assassination in October 1981 (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH 2008; REZA 2007) until the 1st of June, 2012. In April 2017, the current president, Sisi, declared the current state of emergency in the name of fighting terrorism and extremism in the country (BBC 2017). Although initially declared for three months, the law has been continuously reintroduced until today.

Based on that, I argue that the emergency law functions as a reoccurring part of Egyptian securitization politics that is effective for maintaining the president's position, including amid the COVID-19 pandemic. What is more, as the law grants him more competencies, it ensures the authoritarian regime's survival. Thus, for example it enables the president to monitor all forms of communication and correspondence. Additionally, it authorizes him to impose curfews, and censor books and press articles prior to their publication (SINGERMAN 2002; ALZUBEIDI 2018). Moreover, what I see as the most problematic part is that it also gives him the power to delegate the courts' competencies and investigations of crimes to the military. As Egypt is long perceived as a violator of human rights, this is yet another step in the decline in civic freedoms and the further prolongation of autocratic rule there.

Similarly, threats have historically played a central role in Turkish politics. Throughout most of his rule, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1923–1938),

“the father of the modern Turkey”, relied on an authoritarian one-party government with limited room for political opposition (ZÜRCHER 2017). Furthermore, the securitization of the “Kurdish issue” has been largely in effect since 1984, with a strong re-intensification in mid-2015 (Geri 2016). Nowadays, Erdoğan made securitization an effective tool for the implementation of his policies. Following the 2016 *coup d’état* attempt, he declared the state of emergency, which enabled him to suspend the civic rights and freedoms and bypass the parliament when drafting new laws (AL JAZEERA 2016). The state of emergency was lifted in 2018, but the unofficial securitization continued with Erdoğan transforming Turkey from a parliamentary system into a presidential one. As Ayan Musil (2018) sharply predicted, the constitutional referendum of 17th April 2017, which changed Turkey to a presidential republic, enabled Erdoğan as the winner of the 2019 elections “to undertake full control of the government.” Consequently, this resulted in the president’s centralization of power and a further decline in civic freedoms.

As explained in the preceding paragraphs, claims about the national security and the survival of the nation are an integral part of the securitization processes in both Egypt and Turkey. According to Walter Lippmann (1943): “[a] nation has security when it does not have to sacrifice its legitimate interests to avoid war, and is able if challenged, to maintain them by war.” Furthermore, Charles Maier (1990) claims that: “[n]ational security... is best described as a capacity to control those domestic and foreign conditions that the public opinion of a given community believes necessary to enjoy its own self-determination, or autonomy, prosperity and well-being.” Given the variety of definitions, it is relatively easy for Egypt’s and Turkey’s authoritarian leaders to translate any potentially threatening issue into a matter of national security. Additionally, given that the concept of national security itself is rather vague and ambiguous, it provides the leaders with a capacity to frame almost any securitization measure under the category of sustaining the nation’s future, while ensuring the stabilization of their rule.

Concerning their initial treatment of COVID-19 both Sisi and Erdoğan were at first reluctant to come up with the measures allegedly needed for stopping the spread of the virus. I put this on the account of the securitization dilemma caused by the threat to the prolongation of their rule. Hence, certain COVID-19 measures were seen as potentially threatening to economic performance and regime stability – the latter being heavily dependent on the former.

A SHAPE-SHIFTING NARRATIVE

Thus, although both Sisi and Erdoğan repeatedly used securitization as a power maintaining tool, their initial approach towards the COVID-19 crisis was quite different. Instead of admitting its serious nature and undertaking epidemiologic measures, they downplayed the gravity of the issue. I put this initial securitization dilemma predominantly on the account of Egypt and Turkey's fragile economies and the threat that their underperformance could possibly pose for the survival of the regimes and their stability.

In Egypt, the government confirmed the first COVID-19 case on 14th February 2020 (FRANCE24 2020). However, instead of preparing for the spread of the disease in the country, Egyptian elites were largely playing possum. Additionally, it took President Sisi more than a month to publicly address his people about the issue. When he finally did so, in one of his first speeches, he said: *"I urge state institutions to continue the construction of national projects" and "I do not support a total lockdown in the country. That is dangerous. Millions of working people would be harmed. The shutdown of schools, colleges and universities protects around 22 million students"* (DMC 2020; EL TAWIL 2020).

Based on similar statements, the present study interprets Sisi's initial securitization dilemma in the context of protecting the country's fragile economy. As *"Egypt's economy has had a current account deficit since it was a monarchy" and the country's "reform programs were used to shore up the regimes and reward their allies"* (KALDAS 2020), Sisi could not initially afford to further harm them as it could result in demonstrations against his rule. Moreover, with the revolutionary uprisings following the year 2011 and the related internal political conflicts, the Egyptian economy suffered another major blow. This was largely visible in the decline in tourists' visits and also in the increased poverty in the country (SAEID – ARIFIN – HASIM 2012). Although the country's financial stagnation came to an end between the years 2016 and 2017, this did not mean an improvement for the majority of Egyptians. As Sisi's mismanagement of the public finance caused the external debt to rise nearly fivefold and the public one almost twice, the living standard of a number of Egyptians declined (HAMED 2019). With almost all the money being used for paying off the debts and building megalomaniacal projects such as the new capital, and almost no investments being made to support the country's long-suffering health and public sectors, it is estimated that

currently sixty percent of Egypt's population lives in poverty (WORLD BANK GROUP 2019). Under these circumstances, Sisi's initial dilemma of whether to securitize COVID-19 is no wonder, as it could have led to protests that would eventually pose a threat to his one-man rule over Egypt.

Additionally, acknowledging the presence of the virus would mean harming Egypt's tourist industry. As this industry seemed to finally recover from the impacts caused by the 2011 revolution and the terrorist attacks (according to CEIC, in 2019 Egyptian tourism revenues hit a record 13 bln USD), Sisi could not initially risk securitizing the issue. Instead, he presented Egypt as a virus-free country, while in the meantime the disease freely spread on its cruise ships. According to Amna Puri-Mirza (2020), *"The travel and tourism industry in Egypt is one of the country's leading economic sectors, generating about 389 billion Egyptian pounds for the GDP in 2018. About 88 percent of the direct travel and tourism contribution to Egypt derives from leisure spending compared to 12 percent of business spending."* Additionally, the tourism industry is also a major employer in the country. Currently, around 1.25 million of Egyptians are employed in this sector (PURI-MIRZA 2020). Given that tourism revenues constitute a major part of Egypt's national income, a decline in the number of tourists would further deteriorate the country's economic situation. Consequently, as poor economic performance would in turn affect the living conditions of the majority of the people, this could threaten the regime's stability.

For maintaining its power, Sisi's regime mainly focuses on sustaining the support of the military and the state institutions, particularly the police and the judiciary. It was these "players" that first brought him to power in 2014 and helped him to maintain his grip over Egypt ever since. Unlike other candidates, Sisi did not need a massive campaign to persuade the masses that he was the right choice. As a military man and a former leader of the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF), which enjoyed an enormous popularity due to its role in overthrowing the Muslim Brotherhood-nominated president Mohamed Morsi (2012–2013), he just needed to place his cause in the hands of the country's military and state institutions and let them popularize his goal and treat him as the *de facto* president long before the elections. This mutual relationship was beneficial (and remained so until today) for all the parties concerned. Sisi was able to cement his position to a degree that no other Egyptian president ever achieved in exchange for fulfilling the financial interests of military and

state elites. Moreover, according to Gunter Meyer – an Arab politics expert, Sisi's "*position is stronger than [that of] any other [Egyptian] leader since the 1952 revolution*" (DEUTSCHE WELLE 2019). In contrast to his predecessors, Sisi did not build his power around a dominant political party, but rather around a group of faithful loyalists coming from different political spectrum that share a background in military or state services and an unconditional allegiance to Sisi. For instance, the current Egyptian parliament consists of 75 former army officers (the highest proportion in the country's history), which means that around 10% of the country's current MPs are former police, military and special investigations officers (DARWISHEH 2019). Additionally, around 140 parliamentarians come from the private sector (DARWISHEH 2019) and are ready to support the president in order to get lucrative business deals as well. With a weak and fragmented opposition and the rest of the parliament willing to do as Sisi pleases, it is crucial for the president to preserve this equilibrium in order to ensure the prolongation of his authoritarian regime. Thus, it was equally necessary for him to implement such anti-COVID-19 measures that would allegedly stop the spread of the virus, but not displease the elites. In a circle where the police and the judiciary support the military in order to preserve their autonomy and interests (DARWISHEH 2019) and the military supports Sisi to maintain their standing as almost the sole economic beneficiaries of the state's business agenda, it is crucial for the president to keep this balance and fulfil everybody's expectations. Moreover, as nowadays, according to the Egyptian Constitution, the military's authority is "*beyond the control of the executive branch*" (DARWISHEH 2019) and the mutual relationship and reliance between the armed forces and the current president are stronger than ever before, it is even less surprising that Sisi is not willing to risk losing their support. Moreover, "*Egypt's military has dominated the government and economy since a coup against the pro-British King Farouk in 1952, and every ruler since has been a military general, to the exception of Morsi*" (FENTON-HARVEY 2020).

Additionally, keeping military business interests satisfied is crucial for the sustenance of the regime's legitimacy (for specific examples of the Egyptian military's influence on the economic sector and the political life in the country, see for instance Marshall 2015; Roll 2015). As the Egyptian military controls almost every economic sector in the country from consumption goods production and infrastructure management to the tourism industry (ABDELHADI 2012; REUTERS 2018; SAYIGH 2019), its potential economic losses caused by COVID-19 would be enormous.

In Turkey the events unfolded according to a very similar scenario. Even after confirming the country's first official COVID-19 case on 11th March 2020 (PASLEY 2020), Erdoğan remained largely in denial and unwilling to securitize almost anything. In his first speeches related to the virus, he claimed that *"no virus is stronger than Turkey"* (CUPOLO 2020) and that *"Turkey must carry on producing and 'keep wheels turning' through the coronavirus outbreak to support exports and sustain the supply of basic goods"* (REUTERS 2020). As the Turkish economy has been largely suffering due to Erdoğan's fiscal policies (FINANCIAL TIMES 2019) and the construction of giant infrastructure project (HAKURA 2018), including prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, its total shutdown would mean even greater problems for the country. Also, with the Turkish tourism industry constituting a huge portion of the national income, the country could not allow itself to experience a similar course of events as in 2016. The bomb attacks in Istanbul and Ankara and the failed *coup d'état* attempt resulted in one of the worst years for the Turkish tourism sector (VON KESSEL 2017). An unconditional securitization of COVID-19 four years later would pose further economic problems for the country and a consequent threat to the regime's survival.

The reasons for Erdoğan's initial securitization dilemma were very much similar to those in Egypt. As tourism is an integral part of Turkey's economy, it was more suitable for the government to deny the existence of the disease in the country altogether. With its 34.5 billion dollar record revenues for last year (2019), (BUYUK 2020A) it is beyond doubt that the tourism industry constitutes a major player in the country's economy. Moreover, as according to the 2020 Economic Impact Record (EIR), *"[t]ravel and Tourism supported more than 2.6 million jobs or nearly a tenth (9,4%) of the country's total workforce"* and generated around 30% of its annual income (FRAKES 2020), the country could not afford to present itself as the center of the pandemic.

Additionally, taking into account Turkey's long-term negative economic situation, the country's elites could not allow its further deterioration. Therefore, even after the confirmation of the first cases of the virus in the country, Erdoğan insisted on taking small steps, *"keeping the wheels turning."* Similarly as in Sisi's case, this approach had also to do with Erdoğan's need to prevent possible uprisings and maintain the support of his cronies. As previously mentioned, the situation is very different to that in Egypt. In terms of regime survival, the Turkish president does not depend on the military or the police, but rather on a carefully selected

class of royal-like businessmen. In order to satisfy their financial interests and maintain their support, Erdoğan typically assigns to his cronies lucrative business contracts that enable them to use the state as a cash cow. One such example is the building of the “Kanal Istanbul” (the Istanbul Channel) – a megalomaniacal project aimed at connecting Istanbul’s European part with Marmara and the Black Sea. Although it is seen as a prospective ecological disaster by a number of Turkish activists, Erdoğan began the preparations and some of the companies close to his government already started the bidding in the official tender. As Turkey’s crony capitalists rely heavily on mega projects to survive (SOYDAN 2020), it is crucial for the regime to keep their business interests satisfied and maintain their support. One such supporter is, for instance, Ferit Sahenk – the CEO of the Dogus Holding conglomerate – a company active in the automotive industry, the financial sector and the media, which, due to its functioning as a government contractor, made a fortune and significantly rose in size. Among similar examples are the Turkish businessmen Sitki Ayan, Ethem Sancak and Ahmet Calik. Such mutual relationships usually work through a scheme in which the loyal businessmen get lucrative contracts, and the Turkish treasury backs high loans from European banks in exchange for their political support of Erdoğan as well as the mainstream media outlets, which they turn into “*pro-government mouthpieces*” (BILICI 2020).

Given that Erdoğan and his loyal business class of royal-like businessmen have been economically mismanaging Turkey for some years now (SOYDAN 2020), the economic restrictions would destabilize the country even further. Thus, given the circumstances, similarly to the case of Egypt, Turkey’s poor economic performance would possibly lead to popular protests and a possible threat for the already weakened regime.

As demonstrated in the previous paragraphs, both Sisi and Erdoğan faced initial COVID-19 securitization dilemmas caused by their reluctance to threaten their respective countries’ economies. Given that especially the tourism industry constitutes a significant part of their annual revenues, a COVID-19 securitization would in both cases contribute to the economic underperformance. Moreover, as both presidents experienced popular protests driven by increasing levels of poverty and/or decreasing civic freedoms even prior to the pandemic (SAMAAN – MACKINTOSH 2019; BBC 2019) the crisis’ negative impact on the economies could threaten the regimes’ stability. Thus, considering that the two regimes faced similar securitization

dilemmas, to which they reacted in similar ways, a clear parallel can be seen between Sisi's and Erdoğan's initial treatment of the COVID-19 crisis. In what follows, I will look more closely at the regimes' resemblances in applying selective securitization and regime survival strategies, and how these influenced the dynamics in both countries.

THE SECURITIZATION DILEMMA, SELECTIVE SECURITIZATION AND THE AUTHORITARIAN REGIME SURVIVAL STRATEGIES

When facing the initial COVID-19 securitization dilemma, both Sisi and Erdoğan decided to implement similar strategies that ensured the further survival of their authoritarian regimes. Firstly, they attempted to establish a discursive hegemony with respect to the COVID-19 agenda and secondly, they monopolized the crisis management measures needed for stopping the spread of the disease. In both cases, the official regimes aimed to control what was securitized, to what extent and by whom. This was enabled by their efforts to control the national media and permitted speech acts as well as via selective economic and religious measures allegedly targeted at defeating COVID-19.

First of all, by making use of selective securitization they attempted to achieve a discursive hegemony aimed at controlling the information about the virus. The official regimes achieved this through their strict control of the media and permitted speech acts. As it was necessary to inform the public about potential risks of the new disease, but at the same time prevent prospective critics from addressing the issue as this could result in a questioning of the regimes' capabilities to fight the disease and a decrease in their support, the COVID-19 securitization constituted a significant dilemma for both leaders. Sisi and Erdoğan decided to solve this dilemma by attempting to establish a discursive hegemony with respect to the COVID-19 agenda, which consequently translated into a selective securitization. Thus, the media and individuals promoting the regimes' official COVID-19 doctrines (which were largely doubted all over the world) were left in peace, whereas those opposing the doctrines were persecuted. In relation to this, both Egypt and Turkey administered harsher punishments (including steep fines and prison terms) to anybody challenging the official COVID-19 narratives and spreading what the government classified as fake news (AHRAMONLINE 2020; MADA MAŞR 2020; AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL 2020). Additionally, they aimed to silence

the critical voices by portraying their owners as traitors to the nation or as (in Egypt) “*ahl el-sharr*” (evil people).

Thus, earlier, in April 2020, during his speech to the nation, Sisi said: *“I want to tackle the issue of doubting the state. Doubts targeted the New Suez Canal and energy projects, among others, but we accomplished them. The evil segment leading the doubting campaign aims to penetrate the state institutions. They would treat you well for around five years and then rule unilaterally”* (DMC 2020; EL TAWIL 2020). Furthermore, he addressed the issue of the government allegedly hiding the real numbers of the COVID-19 victims as well, saying: *“Why would we want to hide anything? If we do not want bad people in Egypt, we must shun the rumours these evil ones are spreading”* (DMC 2020; ABDELHALIM 2020).

Putting the president’s words into effect, in March of this year, the Egyptian government forced the British-German journalist Ruth Michaelson to leave the country after she indicated that the number of COVID-19 cases in Egypt could be higher than the officially reported figure (MADA MASR 2020). Similarly, since the outbreak of the COVID-19 crisis, the Egyptian Supreme Council for Media Regulation (SCMR) blocked several news websites and social media accounts on the grounds of combatting fake news. On the other hand, the government did not sanction loyal media spreading conspiracy theories, such as those where the virus was said to be a new form of biological warfare or those which hosted a person dressed up as the Coronavirus who complained that he was now blamed for everything (ALHAYAH TV NETWORK 2020). This double standard approach towards national media and individuals was a vital strategy in helping to legitimize the government’s anti-COVID-19 measures, while at the same time enabling a further crackdown on opposition voices.

Turkey adopted a similar approach, in which its attempts at discursive hegemony enabled a selective securitization. At this point, it is necessary to acknowledge that despite all the legal changes and political pressures, it is far more difficult to achieve discursive hegemony in Turkey, where there is a far stronger anti-government discourse that cannot easily be monopolized, than in Egypt. Nevertheless, it is still possible for Erdoğan to pursue this strategy in a manner similar to Sisi’s. The Turkish president largely vilified the opposition, stating that *“instead of contributing to the fight against the pandemic, journalists [are] ‘throwing up’ false information and untruths and [are] thus more dangerous than the virus itself,”* accusing the

opposition media of “waging a war against their own country [and] working night and day to break the nation’s morale”, and warning them that they will “drown in their own pools of hatred and intrigues along with terrorist organizations.” On another occasion, he stated that the country has to be rescued not only from the coronavirus but from “all media and political viruses, too”

(DEUTSCHE WELLE 2020).

Erdoğan also made active use of Turkey’s judicial system and he himself filed a criminal complaint against the Fox TV station host Fatih Portakal over his ironic post on Twitter, and accused him of spreading fake news. Portakal’s tweet questioned the measures undertaken by the government to fight the COVID-19 disease (DEUTSCHE WELLE 2020). Furthermore, Turkish authorities questioned and arrested hundreds of journalists and ordinary people who challenged the official coronavirus narrative. Among the most visible victims of the fight against free speech was a medical doctor who was forced to publicly apologize to the nation for questioning the government’s official COVID-19 numbers and therefore allegedly contributing to the spread of the panic (BIANET 2020). Unsurprisingly, on the other hand the pro-government media and individuals who blamed the virus on the State of Israel or on the Gulen movement (BOZKURT 2020) were not bothered. Thus, relying on conspiracy theories, the Turkish loyalist media, similarly as those in Egypt, were able to legitimize the government’s anti-COVID-19 measures, while at the same time downplaying the seriousness of the issue. Thus, we see that although Erdoğan certainly does not enjoy a monopoly on political discourse in Turkey, he actively tried to hegemonize the pandemic debate. In his attempts, he relied on both discursive and non-discursive means, with the latter including open intimidation and repressive measures against journalists, experts, and other public figures, as well as ordinary people whose stance on COVID-19 differed from his.

Secondly, the selective securitization was enabled via monopolizing crisis management measures. Similarly to the previous case, by taking control over who could securitize, and where and to what extent it could be done, both presidents ensured the stability of their regimes, while at the same time giving the impression of undertaking steps necessary for defeating the virus. Thus, for example Erdoğan’s regime strictly sanctioned every unauthorized anti-COVID-19 measure. Fearing that his political opponents would use these as an opportunity to improve their own

standing, Erdoğan chose to monopolize anti-pandemic steps even at the expense of helping the population. Herein, the monopolization served as a precondition for selective securitization to be performed. By its application, the president sought to secure his position as a principal power in fighting COVID-19. Additionally, thanks to his granting the right to help solely to himself and his political allies as well as the implementation of harsh punishments against its violators (including criminal prosecution), Erdoğan succeeded in depriving his opponents of the possibility to use official channels/instruments of crisis management.

Hence, for instance, the Turkish president recently ordered the opening of a criminal case against the mayor of Istanbul Ekrem İmamoğlu (ZAMAN 2020). İmamoğlu, a member of the Republican People's Party (CHP) and a prospective candidate for the 2023 presidential elections, launched a campaign in Istanbul aimed at collecting money for those affected by the COVID-19 outbreak. Additionally, together with the opposition mayors from the İzmir and Ankara municipalities, he started an initiative to deliver free meals and bread to those in need. Erdoğan was swift to respond. He declared the opposition campaigns illegal, ordered the opening of a criminal prosecution against their actors and turned people's attention to his own "National Solidarity Campaign", a cause to which he promised to give his seven months' salary. In a similar way, he prevented the opposition from distributing the mandatory face masks, pledging that they would be distributed for free by his government (DUVAR ENGLISH 2020A).

As mentioned before, by monopolizing the crisis management measures and the following selective securitization, Erdoğan sought to undermine the opposition mayors' ability to increase their popularity and ensure the prolongation of his autocratic rule in the country. The former is especially true in İmamoğlu's case. As he is viewed as a prospective candidate for the 2023 presidential elections in Turkey (DUVAR ENGLISH 2020B) he constitutes a serious threat for the current president. The best way to diminish this threat and turn the initial securitization dilemma to the president's own advantage was to make use of the COVID crisis in a way that limited İmamoğlu's powers and presented Erdoğan as the nation's saviour.¹

Furthermore, the monopolization of the crisis management measures permitted the leaders to undertake a number of selective economic and religious steps. Resulting from another securitization dilemma, these were needed

for helping to limit social interactions and mitigate the spread of the virus, while at the same time keeping the countries' economies alive and thus ensuring the prolongation of the presidents' rules over their respective countries.

In Egypt, this was done via new amendments to the emergency law that granted Sisi additional powers in his fight against the pandemic. Thus, for example, the extended law authorized the president to ban or limit any public or private gathering and shut down schools and businesses (YOUM7 2020). Although this also meant banning Ramadan gatherings and school events, as well as shutting down restaurants and cafes, the new law did not stop public transport, or the construction of infrastructure and national projects (REUTERS 2020; SAYED 2020). On top of everything, in one of his speeches, Sisi said: *"I do not support a total lockdown of the country. That is dangerous. [...] I urge state institutions to continue the construction of national projects. We are building 100,000 new fully-furnished social housing units. Each costs around LE 200,000"* (DMC 2020; EL TAWIL 2020).

In a similar fashion, the monopolization of crisis management measures helped Erdoğan with performing selective securitization. Thus, for example, he ordered the closing of cafes, gyms and restaurants, but refused to shut down factories and big businesses. He stated that *"continuing production and exports was Turkey's top priority"* and that *"Turkey must keep its wheels turning"* (GOKAY 2020). Moreover, the president's urge to protect the country's economy at all costs also translated into his government's approach towards national curfews. These were only imposed on people older than 65 and those younger than 20. Additionally, within the latter group, they excluded those between 18 and 20 years of age who regularly went to work (GURSEL 2020). The whole-nation lockdown was only in effect during weekends and bank holidays. By performing a selective securitization aimed at supporting the economy, Erdogan also sought to stabilize his already somewhat precarious position in Turkey and prevent possible uprisings. As Turkey's poor economic performance could lead to a similar scenario as that in Egypt, where one of the reasons for ousting the former president Hosni Mubarak was the country's poor economic conditions (JERMANOVÁ 2019), a total financial shutdown would in all likelihood result in demonstrations and people's efforts to get rid of their authoritarian leader.

Considering that both Sisi and Erdoğan decided to shut down primarily small businesses such as restaurants or barber shops, but not

big companies and manufacturers with a high concentration of people (or if they did so, then only for a week or two), these measures could not be viewed as serious efforts to stop the spread of the virus. On the contrary, the monopolization of the anti-pandemic measures and the consequent selective securitization served as strategies to keep the countries' economies alive, satisfy the financial interests of the regimes and their kleptocratic allies and prevent possible mass uprisings. Furthermore, similarly as in the previous cases, the implementation of these measures contributed to the prolongation of the presidents' authoritarian rules.

Moreover, in Turkey, a similar course of action could be observed in the implementation of selective religious steps aimed at mitigating the spread of the disease. Although ordering a suspension of new registrations for Umrahs, Erdogan initially hesitated with the quarantining of pilgrims returning from Mecca even after Saudi Arabia officially confirmed its first COVID-19 cases. What is more, he only appealed to people to self-quarantine (BALTA 2020; DUVAR ENGLISH 2020C), thus delegating all responsibility to those possibly infected. Given the fact that one of Erdogan's closest allies is Ali Erbas, the head of Turkey's Directorate of Religious Affairs, also known as Dyianet, it is no wonder that the president was initially reluctant to quarantine the returning hajjis. As in the last years before the COVID-19 crisis, Dyianet became one of key tools for the implementation of Erdogan's foreign and domestic policies (ÖZTURK – SOZERI 2018; BUYUK 2020B), President's good relations with its representatives are crucial for the survival of his regime, especially when it comes to its support among more conservative parts of the society. Thus, although eventually agreeing to suspend new Umrah pilgrimages, the president was in no particular hurry to quarantine the returning hajjis.

By undertaking a number of selective measures aimed at fighting the disease, but which in reality served as strategies for the regimes' survival, both Sisi and Erdoğan succeeded in ensuring the durability of their autocratic rules at least for the time being. Dan Slater (2010) argues that durable authoritarianism can be achieved via an effective state where the economic elites pay higher taxes to finance the ruling machine in exchange for order and security. Similarly, Brownlee (2007) and Magaloni (2006) claim that authoritarian regimes become more durable when they limit intra-elite conflicts and regulate loyalists' access to the spoils of public office. Sisi and Erdoğan's ties to their cronies and the range of the above-mentioned

authoritative regime survival strategies served as tools which succeeded in prolonging the autocratic directions of both countries, even if just for a short time. Recent popularity polls conducted in both Egypt and Turkey are a clear sign of this.

According to a nation-wide representative survey made in October 2018, President Sisi and his government enjoy a considerable amount of trust among the country's inhabitants. Around 70% of Egyptians said they had *"a great deal of trust"* or *"quite a lot of trust"* in the current leader and his cabinet. Similarly, 90% of Egypt's citizens trust the country's military and its decisions (SINGH – WILLIAMSON 2020). Moreover, *"given these high levels of trust and the controlled information environment, the public is likely to accept restrictive policies to combat COVID-19, even if they create hardships in the short term. If anything, the crisis may generate an increase in support for the authorities"* (SINGH – WILLIAMSON 2020).

The situation for the regime in Turkey looks somewhat less optimistic, but by no means tragic. Although according to recent polls, the approval rating of Erdoğan's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) fell to 30%, Erdoğan himself enjoys the trust of around 50% of the society (SOYLU 2020). With his recent conversion of Hagia Sophia into a mosque and strong anti-LGBTI statements, it is possible that in the next months, the numbers in his favour will increase, especially among his more conservative voters. Moreover, this possibility is further confirmed by the results of a recent study (conducted by Durham University's Business School) on disaster authoritarianism, which examined the impact of natural disasters such as hurricanes and tornadoes on small island nations. These suggest that in such conditions, disasters tend to lead to a rise in authoritarianism and even its support among the masses (MCKAIN 2019). Similarly, a team of researchers found a link between exposure to natural disasters (in this case, earthquakes) and an increase in support for right-wing authoritarianism among Italian adults with previously low authoritarian tendencies (RUSSO ET AL. 2020). Additionally, following Murray, Schaller and Suedfeld's work, Thomson and Ip (2013), argue that: *"There is evidence that a link exists between the prevalence of infectious diseases in the local ecology and an authoritarian system of governance."* Moreover, as they further claim, *"It may be that viral outbreaks may be an overlooked but significant factor in accentuating authoritarian tendencies in democracies and consolidating authoritarian rule in the so-called hybrid, semi-authoritarian regimes and closed autocracies"* (THOMSON – IP 2013).

On the other hand, although for now, both leaders apparently succeeded in ensuring the survival of the regimes in their respective countries, it is highly debatable whether it will last only temporarily or for a longer time period. Even nowadays, some experts suggest that given the possible serious economic impacts of COVID-19, in the future, both Sisi and Erdogan may expect more popular dissent, threatening the stability of their rules (SINGH – WILLIAMSON 2020; SCHENKKAN 2020).

CONCLUSION

The article looked into the authoritarian regime survival strategies in Egypt and Turkey during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, it examined how the authoritarian regimes in Egypt and Turkey dealt with the securitization dilemma caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and how it influenced the regimes' dynamics in both countries. The study's findings suggest that although both Sisi's and Erdogan's rule were at some point expected to be threatened by the pandemic (ARDOVINI 2020, SCHENKKAN 2020), the strategies that the regimes implemented in reality contributed to the survival of authoritarianism in both countries at least for the time being. Additionally, the present study developed the concept of the securitization dilemma and interpreted it in the context of the countries' economic stagnations and related possible uprisings. According to the article's findings, the two countries' dilemmas were solved by pursuing two major strategies. Firstly, the regimes attempted to achieve a discursive hegemony regarding the pandemic by using repressive measures to control the spread of information about COVID-19. Secondly, they monopolized the anti-pandemic crisis management measures. Consequently, these attempts at discursive hegemony and crisis management monopolization allowed both Sisi and Erdogan to pursue selective securitization, which in turn was instrumental in furthering the survival of their authoritarian powers. Given that in both cases, the official regimes aspired to control what was securitized, by whom and to what extent, contrary to some expectations, the pandemic did not undermine the two authoritarian regimes, but, helped them to survive at least for the time being. This was enabled by the leaders' strict control of the media and permitted speech acts as well as via selective economic and religious measures allegedly targeted at defeating the disease. Moreover, as further demonstrated in the study, in both Egypt and Turkey, securitization follows a certain pattern that is deeply rooted in the given country's political history, where every crisis constitutes an opportunity for expanding the regime's powers at the expense of civic rights.

ENDNOTE

- 1 Herein, it is important to note that in this case, Erdoğan's tactics partially backfired. Although, he was able to prevent opposition mayors from the usage of official channels/instruments of crisis management and thus he firstly succeeded in presenting himself as the principal power in fighting COVID-19, he failed to foresee his opponents' creativity. Thus, even though banned from the implementation of the official instruments of help, "both Istanbul and Ankara's mayors have developed creative solutions[which seemed to help them increase their popularity] and asked citizens to directly pay the utility bills of struggling families or donate money to people who have lost their jobs" (Aksoy 2020).

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NOTE

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Book Reviews

Catherine E. de Vries: Euroscepticism and the Future of European Integration

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The first book by Catherine de Vries, *Euroscepticism and the Future of European Integration*, will unambiguously become a must-read for anyone interested in the increasingly more important issues of Euroscepticism and the relationship between public opinion and the future of European integration. Professor de Vries, currently based at Bocconi University, is well positioned to produce a quality contribution to the debate on Euroscepticism given her long-term publication track-record in comparative European politics and European Studies, including in the field of public opinion towards the EU. The main aim of the book is to provide a more advanced and far-reaching chapter in the conversation regarding the role of public opinion in the European integration process than those that were published previously.

At the beginning of Chapter 1, de Vries neatly and lucidly reviews the existing approaches to public opinion towards European integration, in particular the utilitarian and identity explanations (SEE ALSO HOBOLT – VRIES 2016). Nevertheless, she maintains that these approaches are insufficient to explain the multidimensional and multi-level nature of public opinion towards the EU. In other words, de Vries argues that there is a need for an approach that would correct (some of) the failures of the existing rich body of research. The following chapter, therefore, presents the main theoretical and conceptual contribution of the book: a benchmark theory of EU public opinion. The idea of the benchmark theory is simple, yet powerful at the same time. It claims that citizens' opinion towards the EU is inseparably linked to the national economic and political circumstances in which they find themselves. In other words, EU public opinion is not formed in a vacuum and, instead, represents a kind of *"kaleidoscope that closely reflects the national conditions in which people find themselves"* (P. 205).

In yardsticking public opinion towards the EU against the domestic conditions of individual EU inhabitants, de Vries builds on the now rather bearded contributions of Ignacio Sánchez-Cuenca (2002) and Robert Rohrschneider (2002), who explicitly linked public opinion towards European integration with national political developments already decades ago. The benchmark theory argues that the way people see the EU is based on their conscious assessment of national political and economic conditions. If their national economic and political conditions are good, people who generally attribute the responsibility for those conditions to the national government may feel they have an alternative option to EU membership:

an exit from the EU. It is, therefore, in those contexts with good domestic conditions and people's related perceptions that they have an alternative to EU membership, where Euroscepticism is most likely to develop. At the same time, when people compare the benefits of the membership status quo and the alternative state of being outside the EU, they consider two types of benefits: regime and policy ones. While the term "regime benefits" refers to the evaluations of the rules and procedures of national and EU political systems, policy benefits are based on a comparison of public policies provided by the EU and the national level.

De Vries's benchmark theory of EU public opinion also overcomes aspects of the previously deep-seated understanding of Euroscepticism and support for the EU as a one-dimensional concept stretching from support to scepticism towards the EU. She shows how the concept is (a) relational and multi-level since it rests on the bi-directional comparison between EU and national levels, and (b) multidimensional for it relates to people's evaluations of both the rules and procedures of the system as well as to the policies it delivers. This alone is an important contribution to the existing literature, which so far focused more on studying the determinants of public opinion rather than on its conceptualisation. Based on this conceptual and theoretical lens, the following chapter presents a new typology of support for and scepticism towards the EU. De Vries suggests and empirically underlines that public opinion towards the EU can be categorised into four groups based on the individual's comparative assessment of the performance of the national and EU levels in both the policy and regime dimensions.

As ideal types, there are thus four types of people when it comes to opinions towards the EU: exit sceptics, regime sceptics, policy sceptics, and loyal supporters. Loyal supporters are those who favour the EU over their nation state based on both policies and the regime and hence can be understood as EU-enthusiasts. Exit sceptics, in contrast, favour their nation state over the EU in terms of both policies and the regime and hence can be seen as unified Eurosceptics who oppose all aspects of their country's EU membership. Policy and regime sceptics are in between these two poles. They favour their nation state over the EU either in terms of policies or the regime, respectively. In other words, they are not unified, but ambivalent Eurosceptics who dislike certain aspects of the EU, but do not reject the EU as a whole. In the rest of Chapter 4, de Vries empirically documents

how these four categories of people are distributed across as well as within member states in a predictable way using unemployment as a benchmark for the national economic situation, and political data from the Quality of Governance Institute of the University of Gothenburg as a benchmark for national political conditions.

The following several chapters provide a deeper empirical underpinning for the theoretical and conceptual framework of EU public opinion developed thus far. These chapters, for instance, show how within individual EU member states the four categories of people based on public opinion towards the EU differ in terms of issue priorities and socio-economic characteristics, in particular, age, gender, and education. In doing so, de Vries challenges the received wisdom that it is those economically left behind who are the most likely to be the exit sceptics. Based on her benchmark theory, an explanation of this phenomenon stems from the fact that people reward their national governments for their economic well-being and if they are well off they feel they can do without the EU. In Chapter 6, the link between different types of support and scepticism towards the EU and the likelihood of voting for a Eurosceptic party is examined. Indeed, exit sceptics were more likely to cast a vote for hard Eurosceptic parties in the 2014 EP elections compared to the other types.

De Vries then examines one of the defining points in time when it comes to the relationship between public opinion and the development of European integration, the voting choices in the Brexit referendum and, by extension, the voting intentions in a hypothetical EU membership referendum in a number of selected member states. Following the presented typology, support for remaining in the EU is the most pronounced among loyal supporters, while the opposite is true for exit sceptics. As predicted by the benchmark theory, national political and economic conditions matter for the preference to remain in or leave the EU. Exit sceptics residing in countries with good economic conditions and a stable political situation are less likely to support Remain compared to exit sceptics residing in countries with the opposite economic and political circumstances.

The final empirical chapter looks into how public opinion towards the EU may affect the future of European integration by investigating support for different proposals for EU reform across member states and types of sceptics/supporters. Once again, different types of sceptics and

supporters prefer different types of reforms. While exit sceptics want to see more national government- and referendum-based decision-making in the EU, policy sceptics favour European Parliament-based decision-making as much as referendums. Moreover, people from countries with a good economic and political situation are more likely to prefer “intergovernmental” reform proposals that strengthen the role of national governments in the EU. In contrast, respondents whose countries’ economic and political context is not so good do not support such reforms. In any case, de Vries compellingly shows how future reform of the EU, unlike the previous round of treaty reform, will have to map public opinion to be successful and not to stir fierce opposition among as well as within member states.

At times, one would like to see more persuasive argumentation or analytical strategies in the book. When de Vries gives examples of how the Brexit vote was not so much driven by the left-behind thesis, she argues that the rich areas in South England voted to leave while the poor regions in Scotland and Northern Ireland voted to remain. What I miss is a reference to a potential partial alternative explanation based on the relationship between Euroscepticism and English nationalism, from which Northern Ireland and Scotland are exempted (SEE DADDOW – GIFFORD – WELLINGS 2019; WELLINGS 2020, 2012, 2010). Similarly, when refuting the thesis that high levels of scepticism towards the EU are related to the debtor-creditor cleavage that emerged after the Eurozone crisis, de Vries argues that Euroscepticism is particularly high in countries like Sweden and Denmark, which are not members of the Eurozone and, therefore, did not serve as creditors via the European Stability Mechanism, a rescue package adopted in response to the crisis. While they did not contribute to the package, people in these countries still could *perceive* themselves as belonging to the creditor camp, not least because these countries contributed to the IMF-based rescue mechanisms, and as such could become more sceptical towards the EU because the common currency that co-created the EU-wide problems was an EU invention. And in the remainder of the book, *perceptions* are as important as real-world developments for de Vries and her benchmark theory of EU public opinion.

While the chapter investigating the relationship between belonging to one of the four ideal types of support and scepticism and the likelihood of voting for a Eurosceptic party provides rich and rigorous evidence in favour of her theory, one wishes that she went beyond the 2014 EP elections

in the analysis. EP elections are chronically known as second-order national elections in which national political concerns play as strong a role as EU-level ones (KOVÁŘ 2016). While in the past, EU-level issues did not play any important role in national parliamentary elections, the author herself has shown that this is no longer the case to the extent it once was (DE VRIES 2010, 2007). In the light of this, one would be happy to see an investigation of how different kinds of supporters and sceptics voted for Eurosceptic parties in national parliamentary elections in several countries for which data would be available, though of course the author would have to control for other potential co-determinants. Lastly, the benchmark theory of EU public opinion stems from the impact of national political and economic conditions. In the book good or bad economic conditions are operationalised as unemployment that is higher or lower than the EU average, respectively. One sometimes wonders how robust these results are. Would anything significantly change if a different operationalisation of good and bad economic situations was used?

These shortfalls notwithstanding, the first book by Catherine de Vries provides not only a timely examination of the nature of public opinion towards the EU and its relevance for the future development of European integration. In presenting her benchmark theory of EU public opinion, she also manages to provide a breath of fresh air to the slightly static literature on public opinion towards the EU by persuasively linking it to a national political and economic context. The book thus makes an invaluable, insightful and creative theoretical as well as empirical contribution to the literature as it shows that there is indeed “*no such thing as Euroscepticism*” (P. 184). The findings and conclusions of the book are, in any case, relevant far beyond academia and expert circles. Politicians, policy-makers in EU institutions, journalists and pretty much anybody interested in how public opinion interacts with European integration are provided with food for thought by this excellent book. The book presents a benchmark theory of EU public opinion, but one may say it will become a benchmark in itself for the scholarly fields it speaks to.

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Lisa Hultman, Jacob D. Kathman and Megan Shannon: Peacekeeping in the Midst of War

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Whenever peacekeeping becomes the subject of conversation, it is hard not to think of the tragic failures of the United Nations' (UN) peacekeeping efforts, such as the notoriously known ones in Srebrenica or Rwanda. The vivid images of innocent civilians being massacred have inevitably become part of our collective memory as citizens of the world. Time and time again, the international community proclaimed "never again", and yet new incidents with devastating consequences occurred on the UN's watch. The widespread post-election violence in Côte d'Ivoire in 2010, the attack on Goma in 2012, and the withdrawal of UNSMIS from Syria in the same year serve as only a handful of examples of this. Can we thus conclude that the UN peacekeeping is utterly ineffective in helping countries ravaged by civil wars? Or would such a sweeping generalisation be largely misguided, given that the UN's successes in this regard are likely to be mere non-events, as no one can remember the war that never happened?

The three authors behind the 2019 book *Peacekeeping in the Midst of War* strive to find answers to these very questions. Lisa Hultman, an Associate Professor and Deputy Head of the Department of Peace and Conflict Research at Uppsala University, Jacob Kathman, a professor in Comparative Politics and International Relations at the University at Buffalo, and Megan Shannon, an associate professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Colorado, jointly published an impressive piece comprehensively examining the role of UN peacekeeping in active civil war contexts. The authors are renowned scholars in the field of peace and conflict studies, with frequent publications in the field's leading journals, such as the *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, the *Journal of Peace Research*, or the *American Journal of Political Science*. The book itself has been well-received in the academic community and beyond, even winning the American Political Science Association Conflict Processes Best Book Award. The book is structured into 7 chapters.

Using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, the authors reveal that peacekeeping indeed has a significant and desirable¹ impact on violence mitigation. Although previous research already found a positive link between peacekeeping and lasting conflict resolution a long time ago (DOYLE – SAMBANIS 2000; FORTNA 2004), the authors make a convincing argument regarding the need to move beyond absolutist conceptions of peacekeeping success – where a mission either fulfils certain criteria or is considered a failure – and propose a relative and continuous measure of

peacekeeping effectiveness. In Chapter 2,² the authors identify the shortcomings of the current scholarly endeavours in this area, operationalise the key concepts, and outline their innovative approach with such continuous measures at its core. One of the main contributions of the book is the shift in focus away from peacekeeping's ability to maintain peace in a post-conflict setting to its ability to reduce violence when tasked with halting active hostilities, as those are the circumstances under which peacekeeping missions are increasingly deployed. The focal point of the authors' interest therefore lies not with the survival of peace, but with the reduction of wartime violence. The authors argue that even though the peacekeeping missions might fall short of establishing stable peace, they may (and as their analysis shows, indeed do) significantly reduce both battlefield and one-sided violence and thus save many lives that would otherwise be lost.

Furthermore, the authors account for the fact that not all missions were created equal, and include the differences in missions' capacity³ and constitution⁴ in the analysis, indeed finding that the number and type of peacekeepers make a crucial difference to a mission's ability to *pursue* negative peace.⁵ The authors rely on rationalist literature that views armed conflict as a bargaining process between the rebels and the government to show how common bargaining problems, namely the lack of information and commitment issues, influence violence⁶ in civil wars. They view violence as instrumental; it serves as a means to improve one's bargaining position. In this account, the UN is capable of mitigating violence by alleviating the bargaining problems. A further explanation of the mechanisms of peacekeeping effectiveness is the subject of Chapter 3, which thoroughly describes the causal mechanisms underlying peacekeeping and violence reduction, focusing separately on battlefield and one-sided violence. The chapter also elaborates on the importance of missions' capacity and constitution.

Chapters 4 and 5 constitute the bedrock of the authors' analysis, presenting quantitative models that show the impact of peacekeeping on the reduction of battlefield violence (CHAPTER 4) and violence against civilians (CHAPTER 5). The authors investigate armed conflicts in the post-Cold War era (1992–2014), comparing the intensity of violence in civil wars with UN peacekeeping and without it, using observations for every month to adequately account for the fluctuation in missions' capacity and constitution. The findings in Chapter 4 suggest that as the number of peacekeeping

troops increases, battlefield violence decreases. However, the authors do not find a similar effect for the number of UN police officers or unarmed observers deployed. According to the authors, these findings can be best explained by the fact that military troops are the only type of peacekeeping personnel that is effectively capable of performing activities that can potentially mitigate battlefield violence, namely separating the belligerents, disarming and demobilising the combatants, and verifying compliance with the terms of peace processes. Neither police, who operate behind frontlines, nor observers are fit for such tasks. Moreover, and rather surprisingly, the authors find that growing numbers of observers actually exacerbate battlefield violence as their presence signals a lack of commitment of the international community or, if a more robust mission is in the offing, belligerents may perceive the temporary deployment of observers as the last opportunity to improve their negotiating positions before the arrival of military troops, and therefore engage in violence.

Chapter 5, on the other hand, focuses on civilian victimisation. In this case, the authors find that increases in both military troops and police personnel lead to a decrease of anti-civilian violence. While the mechanisms by which military troops help mitigate victimisation of civilians *close to* the frontlines are akin to those postulated for reducing battlefield violence itself, UN police forces engage in miscellaneous activities *behind* the frontlines, from patrolling civilian communities to law enforcement and training of new officers. All these tools help alleviate violence against civilians by increasing the costs⁷ of victimising the population and by impeding access to vulnerable groups. Chapter 5 also finds that unarmed observers are not an appropriate type of personnel when the goal is reduction of anti-civilian violence. For reasons analogous to those given in Chapter 4, the presence of unarmed observers actually increases the numbers of civilian casualties. In summary, the authors find convincing support for the claim that peacekeeping does make a difference to the level of violence in civil wars, and if missions have appropriate constitution and capacity, many lives can be saved.

The authors also perform several robustness checks that increase the reader's confidence in the results. Nevertheless, one aspect would surely warrant more attention: the background into which the peacekeeping operations are deployed. While the authors accounted for factors such as population size, democracy score or the overall deadliness of the conflict,

it would definitely be interesting to see also other variables pertaining to the conflict environment included as controls. For instance, previous research has found links between the size of the government army (QUINN – MASON – GURSES 2007), ethnic cleavages (HARTZELL – HODDIE 2003), or the dependency on natural resources (DOYLE – SAMBANIS 2000) and the likelihood of recurrent violence. Including these control variables could indeed be informative. The quantitative analysis presented in Chapters 4 and 5 is then supplemented with two qualitative case studies (in Chapter 6) of Côte d'Ivoire and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), where the authors demonstrate how the peaks in violence on the one hand and the periods when violence plummeted on the other coincided with the relative weakness or strength in terms of a mission's constitution and capacity. The qualitative analysis supports the quantitative findings.

Furthermore, there are a few directions in which the analysis could have been expanded. First, the book strictly focuses on UN peacekeeping. While the authors make a good argument in favour of excluding state-led interventions, which are often biased, a comparison of UN peacekeeping with missions undertaken by regional organisations would be a welcome addition, as the reader often wonders whether the same conclusions would hold for peacekeeping more broadly or whether they are endemic to the UN.⁸ Second, while the authors' investigation of peacekeeping missions on two dimensions⁹ – capacity and constitution – is definitely a step in the right direction, it could be argued that the measure of capacity should be a relative one. As became apparent in the case of the DRC towards the end of Chapter 6, it is not only the absolute number of troops or UN personnel that matters, but also the size of the area they must engage in or the population they should protect. Therefore, a variable measuring the capacity as a proportion of the UN personnel to the country population or the area of deployment could further advance the analysis.

Finally, the authors state in Chapter 7 that they “*sought to understand the conditions under which peacekeeping achieves or fails to achieve its goals*” (P. 170). Including a set-theoretic perspective (conducting the Qualitative Comparative Analysis) could add another dimension to the research and help account for the causal complexity inherent in processes pertaining to such complex phenomena as civil wars. Gromes (2019) conducted an intriguing analysis seeking to explain why peacekeeping succeeds in preventing war recurrence in some cases but fails in others. Expanding the analysis

of violence mitigation in civil wars by employing Qualitative Comparative Analysis to reveal the conditions under which violence decreases in all their complexity (discovering pathways consisting of configurations of conditions) could generate further useful findings with potentially vast policy implications, as the necessary and sufficient conditions for alleviating wartime violence would be identified.

Overall, the book is a tremendously valuable contribution to the current academic peacekeeping research as well as the policy-making world. It offers a new perspective on peacekeeping as a tool not only for peace stabilisation, but also for violence mitigation in contexts where war is still raging. With its focus on fluctuation in violence as well as the changes in the capacity and constitution of missions, the book brings a nuanced assessment of wartime peacekeeping and a critical evaluation of its impact. The authors ultimately conclude that peacekeeping works, and their main recommendation that policymakers should acknowledge and take into consideration when planning peacekeeping missions is the importance of an appropriate mission design. In other words, the constitution and capacity matter. Deploying larger numbers of military troops helps reduce battlefield violence, while a deployment of more troops and police personnel helps to significantly reduce violence directed against civilians. These are important findings for academics, policymakers, as well as the public, which generally tends to hold rather sceptical views of peacekeeping effectiveness. The authors presented a remarkable analysis which clearly shows the benefits of wartime peacekeeping and the difference the international community can make if it does not further undercut the UN peacekeeping budget and plans missions in line with recommendations that are likely to be lifesaving. To paraphrase Kofi Annan (UN 1998), although peacekeeping might not have been the answer to every conflict, it can help humanity make its future less scarred by war than its past.

ENDNOTES

- 1 In statistical terms, this relationship is negative, meaning that as the robustness of a mission increases, violence decreases.
- 2 Chapter 1 merely provides an introduction to the subject of peacekeeping and civil war and outlines the structure and content of the book.
- 3 Capacity denotes the number of peacekeeping personnel deployed in a mission.

- 4 Constitution is conceptualised as “the types of personnel that are routinely deployed to peacekeeping operations” (p. 68). Such personnel can fall into one of the following categories: military troops, armed police, or unarmed observers.
- 5 Galtung (1964: 2) defined negative peace simply as “the absence of violence.” For Hultman, Kathman, and Shannon, the focus is on the *pursuit* of negative peace, rather than the result itself.
- 6 The authors focus on the number of fatalities in a conflict when assessing violence reduction, i.e., “lethal armed conflict violence” (p. 44).
- 7 According to the authors, these costs are mostly reputational and legal. The combatants who attack civilians face condemnation from the international community and also lose credibility amongst their domestic constituents.
- 8 This concern was actually addressed in Bara and Hultman’s (2020) recent article, in which data on non-UN peacekeeping were included.
- 9 Rather than merely stating whether a mission was present.

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Klaus Dingwerth, Antonia Witt,
Ina Lehmann, Ellen Reichel
and Tobias Weise:
International Organisations under
Pressure: Legitimizing Global
Governance in Challenging Times

OXFORD: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2019, 336 PAGES, ISBN 9780198837893

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In April 2020, the Supreme Audit Office of the Czech Republic published an audit conclusion on the Czech Republic's funds provided to international organisations and other related expenditures. The aim of the audit was to verify the effectiveness of state funds provided to international organisations. According to the SAO's audit, the Czech Republic cooperates with almost 500 international governmental organisations. The amount of mandatory contributions for such cooperation is around CZK 3 billion per year. The Czech Republic also provides other related contributions, which cost approximately CZK 1.5 billion in 2018. Based on its review and information provided by relevant state agencies, the SAO's assessment is uncomplimentary. The SAO concluded that regarding the prerequisites for an effective provision of funds for international organisations, neither the monitoring nor the evaluation of the benefits of the cooperation and coordination were fulfilled (SUPREME AUDIT OFFICE 2020: 2–3). This illustrates how international organisations and their functioning attract more public scrutiny. In the age of austerity, the *raison d'être* of international organisations as well as states' participation in them is put under the spotlight. Together with a pressure emerging from other contemporary trends such as democratisation, economic and political globalisation and technological change, international organisations are increasingly subjected to a longer and more demanding list of normative expectations than they were in the past. Consequently, the preservation and continuity of their legitimacy have become more challenging than ever.

In this context, a group of German and Swiss political scientists, namely Klaus Dingwerth, Antonia Witt, Ina Lehmann, Ellen Reichel and Tobias Weise, began working on their research for the book under review eight years ago. Their goal was to investigate how the quality of the political discourse in which international organisations gain, maintain, and restore their legitimacy has changed since the end of the Cold War. In their own words, the book “*is about the crisis of international organisations, understood as a situation in which key constituencies no longer take the need for international organisations for granted*” (p. 3). Indeed, the legitimacy of international organisations is not a new topic for research in international relations and the authors even already published several studies on this issue in the past.¹ However, the book under review brings a new comprehensive coverage of this topic in the context of changing norms of global governance against the backdrop of the legitimisation contest.

To demonstrate the narrative, the authors employ a strong theoretical framework introduced in chapter two of the book. The chapter provides the conceptual and methodological backbone for the case studies covered in chapters three to seven, which analyse the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and its successor, the World Trade Organisation (WTO); the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and its successor, the African Union (AU); the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA); the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and the Office of the UN High Commissioner of Refugees (UNHCR). Together, the studied organisations form a diverse group of international organisations in terms of their membership, historical records, internal governance, powers, and policy areas. The authors do not elaborate on the choice of the international organisations. They do, however, make clear that “[the] ultimate objective was to write a book about international organizations, and not five organizational histories” (P. 26). Therefore, from their perspective, this book is not about the WTO or the IAEA. Each case study is only a piece of a mosaic in the complex universe of international organisations that they aspire to depict.

Each of the analysed cases follows the same pattern as they all include five substantive sections respectively concerning: (1) a reconstruction of relevant parts of the organisational history; (2) a description of the normative baseline; (3) major normative shifts; (4) effects of the changes on the functioning of the organisation today; and (5) a concluding discussion on “how internal as well as external development have contributed to shap[ing] the organisation’s changing terms of legitimation” (P. 59). In the last part of each chapter, there is a description of the two most relevant normative changes in the legitimisation of the given international organisation. Finally, the last chapter summarises the main findings and discusses their practical implications.

Considering each case study, the authors describe legitimisation contests in which a variety of actors seek to define what distinguishes a “good” international organisation from a “bad” international organisation (P. 30). For this purpose, the authors introduce a set of normative frames to analyse the selected international organisations and their activities. The book persuasively depicts how international organisations have expanded the range of subjects from which they actively aspire for legitimisation in the recent past. However, the effort is now more difficult than ever and the audiences are becoming more heterogeneous as well, particularly

dramatically since the 1970s. One of the key considerations to take from the book is that despite the different circumstances of the studied international organisations, in all the cases, stakeholders' conflicting interests usually cause the given international organisation to struggle to maintain its value for the overall audience.

The other important finding is that despite the variation in the international organisations as well as the sources of their legitimacy, the consequences of the normative shift are similar in all the cases. To be considered legitimate, international organisations need to focus on their procedural rules in order to be transparent and accountable in their decision-making. Moreover, the ways to take into account civil society and non-governmental organisations should be explored more vigorously in order to deflect some criticism from national capitals routinely blaming "Brussels" or "Geneva" for their policy failures. For instance, an example related to the AU illustrates how the organisation has sought to build its legitimacy on working not only for and with African states, but also for and with the African people. In practice, its bureaucracy's effort increasingly focused on the principles of democracy, human security, and human development, values relevant for AU citizens more than for many of AU governments, and an active engagement in collaboration with non-state actors such as human rights NGOs.

In proving their case, the authors present an ample amount of empirical evidence – both quantitative and qualitative – to evaluate each factor. In conducting research for this study, they analysed over 150 annual reports, member states' statements made in eighty sessions of international organisations' bodies, and almost two thousand media articles as well as a couple hundred other documents. From the perspective of the included sources, there is a particularly interesting approach in the investigation of the public relations and the building of public images of the scrutinised international organisations, as the analysed materials range from the popularisation of the WTO in newspapers and even cartoons to social media, public statements, annual reports, and even the Twitter account of the IAEA Department of Technical Cooperation, which is examined in order to illustrate how the IAEA's public relations management has shifted.

In order to assess the main value of the book under review, it is necessary to take the broader context into account. As we are entering

“a global landscape of increased great-power rivalry, nuclear proliferation, weak states, surging refugee flows, and growing nationalism, along with a reduced U.S. role in the world” (HAAS 2020), the role and legitimacy of international organisations become even more contested than the authors could have anticipated at the beginning of their research. The recent months provide an ample amount of evidence of such changes and their implications for the legitimacy of international organisations. For instance, in April 2020, US President Donald Trump announced that he was halting the funding to the World Health Organisation (WHO), delivering a major blow to an organisation that depends on the United States for nearly 10 percent of its budget. In late May 2020, Trump announced that the United States would withdraw from the WHO altogether, accusing the agency of becoming a puppet for China during the coronavirus pandemic (NICHOLS 2000). Meanwhile, the UN Security Council has been silent, as it was paralysed by the rising tensions between China and the United States. In this regard, the authors may underestimate the emerging rivalry and its ramifications for global governance and international organisations in particular. This is so despite their own view that the contested multilateralism *“presents international organisations that have been focal points for international cooperation [with] not only a new situation, but also a new legitimisation challenge”* (P. 53). One of the institutions that were newly established and promoted by China, such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), would have deserved to be another case study to complement the already rich analytical framework.

It is clear that international organisations get into murky waters. But the old truth about them stays same: they are created and sustained by member states, and they can only fulfil their function if they are allowed to do so. From this perspective, international organisations should also better reflect power shifts as their membership is the primary source of their legitimacy (LIPSCY 2017). Accordingly, the book should have perhaps devoted more attention and methodological robustness² to this specific issue, which seems rather neglected in comparison with other criteria. Under the current development in world politics, as described above, international organisations are becoming central arenas for international contestation as rising powers increasingly seek to reshape the world order. Such development adversely affects their perception and *ipso facto* their legitimacy. Finally, this may lead an international organisation’s members to reconsider their membership in it and, eventually, result in its death

(EILSTRUP-SANGIOVANNI 2020: 339–370).

In sum, the book is an excellent study of global governance based on a thoughtful account of the searches for legitimacy of a diverse group of five international organisations. In this way, it engages with a very topical and controversial issue and provides an important contribution to the broad literature on international organisations and democratising global governance. As such, this study will be particularly useful for scholars of global governance and international relations.

ENDNOTES

- 1 E.g. Dingwerth, Klaus (2005): The Democratic Legitimacy of Public-Private Rule Making: What Can We Learn from the World Commission on Dams? *Global Governance: A Review of Multilateralism and International Organizations*, Vol. 11, No. 1, pp. 65–83; Dingwerth, Klaus – Schmidtke, Henning – Weise, Tobias (2020): The Rise of Democratic Legitimation: Why International Organizations Speak the Language of Democracy. *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 26, No. 3, pp. 714–741.
- 2 For instance, Susan Block-Lieb and Terence C. Halliday recently employed institutional theory to study the role of actors shaping global institution-building and institutional change in the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) in their recent book *Global Lawmakers: International Organizations in the Crafting of World Markets*.

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Mark Galeotti: We Need to Talk about Putin: How the West Gets Him Wrong

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The Russian president Vladimir Putin is one of the most well-known politicians in the world. The fact that he has held power for already two decades, his distinctive personal presentation and his antagonism towards Western states have contributed to the attention to and interest in him of a multitude of scholars and public commentators. The need to understand Putin's personality became even more urgent after the Ukraine crisis in 2014, when Russia started to openly clash with Western democracies. This event led to a significant increase in the production of books, articles and commentaries aiming to explain the Russian president and the system he created. Unfortunately, quantity does not equal quality, and some academics grew ever more frustrated by the fact that the debate about the Russian president is filled with clichés, rumours and stereotypes. The feeling that Putin has become a "Rorschach inkblot test" (P. 3) into which it is possible to project our own fears, expectations and frustrations led the author Mark Galeotti to decide to write this book, which explains who the Russian president really is.

For those familiar with the author, who is a Senior Associate Fellow at the Royal United Services Institute and a Senior Non-Resident Fellow of the Institute of International Relations Prague, it is hardly surprising that he decided to write this book. Not only has Galeotti dedicated nearly all of his academic career to studying and understanding modern Russia, but he has also acquired a remarkable network of contacts on the ground due to frequent visits there. Therefore, although his primary interest is in organized crime (which he described in *The Vory: Russia's Super Mafia*) and security policy (which is discussed in his book *Russian Political War: Moving beyond the Hybrid*) he is capable of providing insightful comments on all kinds of political developments in this country. Moreover, he does not limit himself to the academic debate, but via various means (including the podcast *In Moscow's Shadows*), aims to reach out and educate a broader audience. Galeotti's commentaries are usually not only readable and comprehensible, but also concrete, since their author is not afraid to put himself up against the myths and misconceptions present in the public debate. Probably the most noteworthy example of this is his criticism of the so-called Gerasimov doctrine, which was summarized in the article "I'm Sorry for Creating the 'Gerasimov Doctrine'". In this article, Galeotti questions the existence of the overarching strategic document guiding Russian influence operations. At the same time, he shows significant self-reflection and contemplates his role in creating this myth since he was probably the first to use the term "Gerasimov doctrine".

The aforementioned characteristics of the author are also significantly visible in his book about Putin. The publication is insightful, readable and bold in its challenge of various misconceptions. In fact, as the author states in his introduction, the unsatisfactory state of the public debate about the Russian president (and Russia in general) was one of the important motivating factors for his writing this publication. Galeotti's goal is to address this problem and provide a more nuanced and complex view on Vladimir Putin's personality and how the current Russian state functions. His book is thus not dedicated – as the author himself acknowledges – to an academic audience, but instead aims to reach out to the broader public. It is likely for this reason that the publication is not only relatively short, but also further separated into eleven chapters that are dedicated to various features of Putin's personality and the regime he builds. These individual sections of the book do not strongly relate to each other and, in fact, could stand alone as short commentaries on particular topics. Even though the chapters are different in their lengths and topics, their styles are quite similar. They all start from misconceptions – such as Putin's alleged desire to restore the USSR, or the notion that the most important feature of Putin's personality is that he was a KGB agent – and then proceed to debunk them and present the author's point of view on the given matter. The author heavily utilizes his personal experience from Russia as well as his detailed knowledge of local events and the Russian environment in his argumentation. Their interpretation tends to be much more important for him than general theories or concepts aiming to explain the Russian political system. Some might dismiss this style of argumentation as too subjective and prone to bias, but it makes the book significantly more engaging. Furthermore, it deserves respect that the author is not afraid to take a clear stance and state his perspective on Putin's personality, motivations and role in the Russian political system.

So how does Galeotti see Putin? First and foremost, his view is complex and nuanced. It is quite remarkable that a book which is so accessible, short and readable does not give the reader easy answers, but rather forces him to think harder and to not fall into the trap of simplifications. For the author, Putin is not that important as a person, but rather as a product of various influences of the context within which he found himself. A Soviet citizen, a KGB operative, an intermediary between the official and unofficial power structures in Saint Petersburg in the wild 1990s, the ruler of a hardly governable state or a man seeking to make his mark in history. All

these roles and contexts are considered while the author contemplates Putin's views, attitudes and actions. This careful analysis prevents the author from normative judgments, and instead draws a picture of a person whose actions are in some way comprehensible and logical given the personal history and context which formed the man. From a structural perspective, the book is not necessarily about Putin as a person, but rather about the Russian political system and its recent history. This bird's eye view which appears in most of the chapters makes the book even more relevant and enriching.

For instance, the chapter about Putin's career in the KGB can then serve as a bridge to the author's comment on the situation of the Russian secret services, and their role within the political regime. Galeotti starts with several examples illustrating that the Russian president considers the secret services an essential part of the state apparatus. He tries to explain this worldview by looking back at Putin's youth in the Soviet Union, where spies were celebrated and mythologized. The chapter continues by deconstructing the myth of Putin as a spymaster by pointing to his mediocre career in the KGB and considering the influences of the other positions he held in the 1990s on his personality and political style. After describing Putin's personal features, the author applies a broader perspective and considers what the inclination of the president to secret services means for Russian politics. The author concludes that it gives them significant leverage over the man in the chief position and they can navigate his decisions by providing him with just the "right" information. The book repeats this approach in other chapters, and so it can give unexpected remarks on areas such as Putin's geopolitical strategy, or his approach to the management of the state, ideology or relations with his associates or Russian society.

Of course, this ambition to comment on a wide variety of subjects has its flaws. The argumentation in the chapters is indeed well-thought out, supported by various examples and ultimately avoidant of definitive conclusions. However, since basically, each paragraph might serve as a topic for a research project in its own right, a more knowledgeable reader (who is truly not a member of the primary audience for the book) might feel that some arguments are too rushed and should be discussed in more detail. This is especially the case with the highlighted "*most common and most problematic myths*" (p. 5), which serve as an entry point for the development

of the author's counterarguments and analysis. Unfortunately, their origin and development and the reasons as to why these myths resonate are not really discussed.

Similarly, these misconceptions are still only vaguely defined and not attributed to any specific person or institution. The sole exception is Galeotti's discussion of Timothy Snyder's characterization of the philosopher Ivan Ilyin as a fascist in the book *The Road to Unfreedom* (pp. 70–71). Otherwise, Galeotti simply claims that these are the most resonant myths and starts his argumentation without further analysis of their creation and dissemination in the public debate. However, by (acknowledgedly) fighting "*straw man arguments and oversimplifications*" (p. 5) the author misses the opportunity to educate the reader about the mechanisms and ethics of academic research. This would provide him with a toolkit allowing him to spot myths that are yet to come. Indeed, doing so might make the book less readable and would require significant additional research. Nonetheless, it would be worth undertaking, since it would help to address another problem that Galeotti briefly highlights in the introduction: the simplification and vulgarization of the public debate surrounding complex socio-political challenges.

Galeotti is known for providing not only insightful comments on the Russian situation, but also for his ability to formulate specific policy recommendations. Unfortunately, the book is quite minimalistic in this regard, and except for a few final pages, there is not that much said about the implications of Putin's personality for the strategy that Western states and leaders should apply in their dealings with Russia. Similarly, not much attention is paid to possible developments after the departure of the current Russian president and the impact of his legacy. This is unfortunate since adding an extra chapter on this issue would be entirely in line with the emphasis of the book on the context that formed Putin. A conclusion covering this topic might help bring the book to a proper closure, which is needed since the ending of the book arrives quite abruptly with a chapter about Putin's possible departure from power.

Despite these unused possibilities, the book remains an excellent piece of literature that could be recommended to anyone interested in Russia or modern geopolitics. To those who are unfamiliar with these topics, it can provide a captivating and accessible, but still nuanced and

complex, insight into the ways in which Russian politics operate. For academics and other experts, the book provides a handful of interesting points that they can challenge or use as the starting point in their own research or analysis. For the latter, the book might (and should) also serve as an example to follow. This is so mainly since the rise of myths about Putin and Russia has been (up to a certain extent) caused by the inability of academics to (in)form the public debate by their comments and insights. Without a doubt, this task is getting more challenging in the current era of information overload, social media and political polarization. However, these hardships do not absolve experts of the responsibility for shaping the public debate and, consequently, policy. Galeotti's book should also be seen within this context, as another attempt to cultivate the debate we are having and the way in which we think about the world around us. Hopefully, his example will motivate more academics to find ways to contribute to the public debate. This is very much needed since in the complicated world of today, there are many other topics we need to discuss than simply Putin.

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Steven Blockmans and Sophia Russack (eds.): Representative Democracy in the EU: Recovering Legitimacy

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The European Union (EU) is in a crisis. Democratic freedoms in Europe have not been faced with such a level of strain since the end of the Cold War. Authoritarian forces have been gaining a significant amount of support and political power in the last ten years, both globally and in the Union's member states. The number of attacks on freedom of press and media, and the silencing and murders of journalists in Europe are shockingly unprecedented. At the same time, the European debt crisis and the refugee crisis have drawn new lines of division across the continent; the concrete impact of these shifts was first felt in the Brexit referendum in 2016 and continues to see expanding legislative repercussions, most recently in Poland and Hungary. Given the post-national character of the recent crises, *Representative Democracy in the EU: Recovering Legitimacy* (2019) seeks to analyse "how representative [...] national parliaments [are] in their decision-making on EU matters" (p. 5). In the following review I first present all the obligatory information surrounding the book. Because the book is quite broad, I then present its main arguments and content only in an abstract manner. I offer a summary critique of the book from a sociological perspective on EU studies and discuss its contribution to the larger academic debate.

The volume was edited by Steven Blockmans and Sophia Russack, both researchers at the *Centre for European Policy Studies* (CEPS), a think tank specializing in European Union affairs. Published in 2019, it is a collaboration with 20 other think tanks from the *European Policy Institutes Network* (EPIN) and co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union. The 36 contributors are all experts on EU affairs and the countries they focus on, with the majority of them conducting research in their respective countries. This localisation of analysis represents one of the book's main strengths in terms of factual information, but also contributes to its synthetical limitations (which I discuss in more detail later).

As part of the *Towards a Citizens' Union* (2CU) project, it constitutes the second book in a three-book series. The first volume concluded that citizens' interest in direct democracy has increased as a result of past crises. The book under review focuses on the state of political structures in the EU, specifically on the national parliaments of the member states and their degree of 'Europeanization', the relationship between them and EU-level bodies, and the state of democracy at the EU level. Drawing on the findings of the first two books, the third volume proposes how to counter populism and

enhance democracy with the underlying assumption that democracy can be improved by balancing direct and representative democratic processes.

The point of departure for the book is the notion that the European Union cannot react in a fast and efficient manner to recent crises (such as the Euro Crisis and the migration crisis); citizens feel inadequately represented and have low trust in EU institutions, enabling the rise of populism in wide parts of the Union. Steven Blockmans thus argues that representative democracy currently faces “*a crisis of both efficiency and legitimacy*” (P. 2). Framed by an introductory and a concluding chapter by Stephen Blockmans, the book consists of three thematic parts. Part I is dedicated to “Transversal Aspects and Thematic Issues”, starting with Dídac Gutiérrez-Peris and Héctor Sánchez Margalef, who identify challenges, limitations and opportunities for representative democracy today (CHAPTER 2). They conclude that national governments are currently struggling to address local consequences (such as the rise of illiberalism and loss of faith in democracy) of global processes (e.g. geopolitical struggles or post-national issues). In Chapter 3 Daniel Smilov and Antoinette Primatarova challenge how effectively Voting Aid Applications (VAAs) manage to address low voter turnout in EU elections. They find that VAAs are unable to mobilise non-voters and thus fail to address the low voter turnout in EU elections, but rather make information about European politics more accessible to citizens – albeit, they note, the information provided tends to be somewhat abstract and misleading.

In Part II of the book, Sophia Russack brings the analysis to the “EU level.” While the European Parliament (EP) has expanded its influence, responsibilities and scope of action, this development has not been reciprocated in the EP elections, which experienced unprecedentedly low voter turnouts in 2014. She argues that the reason many EU citizens feel confused by EU institutions and consequently don’t vote is that the European Parliament and national parliaments are built from “*different constitutional DNA*” (P. 52). Russack sees especially the Spitzenkandidaten (lead candidate) system, “*a national institutional practice that has been applied to the EU level in the expectation of similar positive effects, while ignoring the different setting of the EU*” (P. 57), as exemplary for her argument.

The chapter provides the transition into Part III of the book, the 14 individual Country Reports representing 13 out of the 27 EU member states and the United Kingdom. One of the book’s strengths is the variety

of the country reports, as they deal with countries from all European regions, and provide a concise overview of the regional differences in the EU. The authors point out how beneath the surface not everything works as well as generally perceived, like Denmark's parliamentary EU scrutiny or Italy's 'perfect bicameral system'. They also shed light on focal points of past and contemporary crises, like Greece and Poland, and epicentres of both Euroscepticism (Czech Republic) and further Europeanisation (Latvia).

This part of the book argues that the Europeanisation of national debates is an uneven process, both EU-wide and within the parliaments themselves (as the upper houses are generally more active in EU matters); EU matters are politicised only to a low degree and the relationship between the national level, the EU and the voter is often unclear and in some cases even non-transparent for citizens. Instruments of the parliaments to influence EU policies largely exist but are either not used to their full potential or misused entirely. Furthermore, the structure of the EU itself favours the European Council and governmental positions over the parliaments and thus often undermines parliamentary efforts. To exemplify, I would like to just point to two of these reports, which represent both 'the new' and 'the old' EU, namely the Czech Republic and Denmark.

In their chapter on the Czech Republic, Jan Kovář, Petr Kratochvíl and Zdeněk Sychra analyse the disconnect of Czech parliamentary democracy and the EU level. The authors give a concise overview of the two chambers of the Czech parliament, the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, both of which have a committee dedicated to EU affairs. However, the Chamber's committee does not discuss its decisions with the entire plenary, and what is more problematic, membership in the committee is seen as a 'last resort' for parliamentarians as the Czech public is so Eurosceptic that dedication to EU matters does not bring electoral benefits. In the Senate, on the other hand, EU affairs are discussed more in depth and resolutions require a plenary vote to be adopted, but the Senate holds less power than the Chamber and is generally perceived as unnecessary. The authors conclude that this institutional setting undermines any efforts from politicians to get more involved in EU matters and as a result there is a clear divide and hierarchy between the national and the EU in Czech politics. They note that the disconnect between the national and the EU level *"not only causes problems in promoting Czech interests in the EU,*

it also has significant impact on the perception of European issues in the Czech Parliament, especially in the Chamber" (P. 125), essentially reinforcing the already prevalent Euroscepticism.

Maja Kluger Dionigi takes on the convention of Danish parliamentary practice as a "*textbook example of parliamentary control*" (P. 129) over EU matters. She argues that while it is true that Denmark's tradition of minority governments and its specific mandate-based system have given the parliament a strong hold over the government's EU stance, the Danish model is far from perfect. For one, the mandate system limits Danish EU politics to its specific committee in the parliament, possibly leading to a lack of expertise on specific matters. Moreover, the debates on EU issues are largely depoliticised as the government makes sure to gain support from the pro-EU parts of the parliament, thereby constituting a lack of plural opinions. The author concludes that in practice the national and the EU structures are not as compatible as in theory and this incompatibility undermines the parliament's chances to influence EU policies, resulting in a lot of early agreements and mandates given on incomplete information.

In the limited space of this review it is unfortunately not possible to engage with more of the country reports. Nonetheless, all of them are important and timely reads, whether one as a reader reads only selected chapters according to one's own interest or the book as a whole. While the chapters are similar enough to contain a common thread, the book escapes the tendency to become repetitive with some chapters breaking up the strict polity focus. Worth mentioning here is especially the country report on Poland, but also Chapter 2 on the current challenges of democracy and Chapter 3 on Voting Aid Applications. The wide range of authors offers quality insight and analysis, especially considering that they are not only experts on EU matters but can also draw on their own experience of living and researching in the selected countries. This serves especially to give countries in the 'peripheral' regions of Europe a voice and circumvents a common shortfalling seen in similar works that offer predominantly Western views on the rest of Europe. However, it should be said that the width of the book is a double-edged sword: because it so ambitiously presents half of the EU's members, the book cannot go into as much detail as desired, at times leaving the reader with a number of follow-up questions, and at other times making the reports somewhat indistinguishable from each other.

In the end Steven Blockmans concludes that there is a divide in Europe running not between the Northern and Southern, or the Eastern and Western countries, but rather “*between those systems in which citizens feel represented and those in which they do not*” (P. 359). Unfortunately, this is where the book falls short. It would need a more interpretive, overarching conclusion to tie all three parts, but especially the individual country reports together – what exactly are the recurring issues that national parliaments face when they have to make decisions on EU matters? One point, for example, would be the problem of time that some of the authors picked up on: decisions on EU-wide policies often have to be made on relatively short notice and thus cannot be discussed in detail in the parliaments, providing an obstacle in the democratic process. Another point would be how national discussions of EU matters are often framed in domestic terms, and it would have been interesting and beneficial if the authors had elaborated more on this argument, since it is a collective, but at the same time individual issue. ‘Framing in domestic terms’ inherently applies to a different context in the Czech Republic than it does in the UK or Austria.

The editors claim to “*focus[...] on polity rather than policy or populism*” (P. 6); however, they do not actually cover polity in its entirety. Instead they only discuss the technical aspects of polity, limiting the discussion to the question of political structures of the EU and electoral law. Approaching this topic from a sociological background, I do not agree that the current crisis is predominantly a crisis of the legitimacy and efficiency of representative democracy. I rather believe that it is a “*multi-level legitimacy crisis*” (VAN APELDOORN 2009). I think it could be rather misleading to isolate political structures from the political process as a whole as is done here, and I do not agree that the EU’s crisis can be resolved simply through the implementation of more elements of direct democracy. Direct democracy is not an end unto itself but is accompanied by its own risks. These make it necessary to analyse its relationship with populism in the age of media democracy in greater depth.

By taking such an approach the book reflects the problems it fails to address. Namely it focusses on technical matters while disregarding substantial concerns (be they economic inequalities across the Union, or issues of national and collective identities or values, to name just a few such concerns), and the reactions to these shortcomings (populism). In that way it runs the risk of reproducing those problems. Structure and content go

hand in hand; they both constitute each other and at the same time determine politics as a process. With this in mind, it is questionable whether the problems identified in the country reports – namely the inefficiency of national governments in standing up to global forces, the discrepancy of national and EU structures, and the framing of EU debates in domestic terms – would be fixed by implementing more elements of direct democracy. In any case, I would say that this book is a valuable contribution to a larger interdisciplinary debate on the future of the EU and should be recognised as such by a professional audience.

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