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CONTENTS:

PREFACE

5

EDITORIAL NOTE

7

BRIDGING THE GAP: YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL DECISION-MAKING

Ivan Ivanov

10

WE ARE NOT ASKING FOR PRIVILEGE – ONLY A PLACE TO GROW: A PORTRAIT OF YOUTH IN MACEDONIA

Anastasija Ilievska

27

(NON)ETHICAL ASPECTS OF WRITING SCIENTIFIC PAPERS WITH THE HELP OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

David Saltamarski

45

THE CHANGING FACE OF SOVEREIGNTY: DE-SOVEREIGNIZATION, RE-SOVEREIGNIZATION, AND THE NATION STATE

Ivan Ivanov
Aleksandra Ilieska

61

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE RULE OF LAW AND RECHTSSTAAT: THE ORIGINS OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

Danilo Krstovski
Kire Jovanov

88

GEOPOLITICAL FORECAST: ANTICIPATION FOR NEW GLOBAL GOVERNANCE UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF BRICS

Aleksandra Ilieska

103

PREFACE

These conference proceedings begin from a conviction that has guided the work of the International Center Alliance of Civilizations since its founding: that the encounter between political traditions, legal cultures and generations is not a problem to be managed but the ordinary condition in which serious thinking has to be done. The Balkans is a good place from which to hold that conviction. It is a region where questions of sovereignty, belonging and institutional trust are not abstractions imported from the seminar room, but matters settled and unsettled within living memory, and often within a single electoral cycle.

The School for Young Leaders, established in 2010 by President Gjorge Ivanov, was built on a related premise — that leadership is a capacity to be cultivated rather than a position to be waited for, and that young people prepared to think carefully about governance should be given the training, the mentorship and the company of others doing the same. Over fifteen years the School has assembled a network whose members now work in universities, ministries, civil society organisations and international institutions. The Ivanov School for Leaders Alumni Association was formed to keep that network active. These proceedings are one expression of that continuing commitment.

This volume brings together contributions arising from the scientific conference *The Youth Perspectives: Reimagining the Future*, organized in 2014 by the Ivanov School for Leaders Alumni Association in partnership with the International Center Alliance of Civilizations. The conference brought together young leaders, researchers and professionals around questions of governance, international relations, sustainability, education, technology and intercultural dialogue, with the intention that the exchange should continue beyond the conference itself. These proceedings are one result of that intention: an effort to give some of the arguments developed through that process a more permanent scholarly form.

Conference proceedings serve a particular purpose. They carry the exchange beyond the event and ask something of both author and reader that a spoken presentation alone cannot secure: that a claim be set down in a form durable enough to be disagreed with later. For young researchers in particular, a volume of this kind serves a practical purpose. The distance between having a defensible argument and having a place to publish it is, for early-career scholars in small academic systems, one of the more discouraging gaps in professional life. Narrowing that gap is among the concrete aims of these proceedings.

The contributors gathered here work across political science, law, international relations and higher education research. Several are doctoral candidates or recent graduates; several are established scholars; two present original survey data collected for the purpose. They write about youth participation and its structural obstacles, about the fate of sovereignty in a multipolar order, about the European institutions that have carried the rule of law through the post-war decades, about the geopolitical trajectory of BRICS, and about the ethical difficulties artificial intelligence now poses to academic authorship. The range is deliberate. These are not separate conversations conducted in adjacent rooms; they are aspects of a single question about where authority resides and who may exercise it.

We are grateful to the members of the Scientific Committee, whose readings improved these texts, and to the authors, who accepted criticism in the spirit in which it was offered. As stated in the colophon, the views expressed here belong to their authors and not to the publishing institutions. That distinction matters to us. A publication that printed only what its publishers already believed would have little reason to exist.

We offer these proceedings to readers in the hope that they will be argued with.

Ivan Ivanov

Chairman of the Executive Board
International Center Alliance of Civilizations

EDITORIAL NOTE

The six studies collected in this issue were not commissioned around a theme. They arrived separately, from authors working in different disciplines on problems they had chosen for themselves. Reading them together, however, a common preoccupation becomes difficult to ignore. Each asks where authority actually sits, as distinct from where the formal rules say it sits — and each finds that the two have come apart.

The issue opens with two studies of that gap as it affects the young. Ivan Ivanov's *Bridging the Gap: Youth Involvement in Political and Institutional Decision-Making* begins from a figure worth repeating: fewer than three per cent of the world's parliamentarians are under thirty. The paper traces this to a convergence of institutionalised age bias, candidacy thresholds set well above the voting age, and campaign finance structures that reward established networks. Its comparative section is the more instructive half, surveying arrangements in Finland, Scotland, New Zealand, Canada, Tunisia, Nigeria, Chile, Taiwan and Estonia that have produced something more than symbolic inclusion. The distinction the paper insists upon — between youth participation that is structured and youth participation that is decorative — recurs throughout the issue in other forms.

Anastasija Ilievska's *We Are Not Asking for Privilege — Only a Place to Grow* supplies the local counterpart, and does so with original survey material gathered from young respondents across the statistical regions of Macedonia. The paper sets the findings against the political sequence that shaped this generation: the Prespa Agreement, a referendum that failed to reach its threshold and was implemented regardless, NATO accession, and an EU accession process that has not advanced. Its central claim deserves attention precisely because it cuts against the standard diagnosis. What the responses describe is not apathy. It is a generation that continues to vote, to organise and to answer surveys while

reporting that the institutions receiving those signals do not act on them. The barriers the respondents identify, as the paper puts it, are architectural rather than personal.

David Saltamarski's *(Non)Ethical Aspects of Writing Scientific Papers with the Help of Artificial Intelligence* shifts the question from political authority to the epistemic kind. Drawing on survey responses from doctoral candidates at three state universities, the study finds a discipline in the middle of working out its own rules: a large majority hold that the ethics of AI use depend on how the tool is used rather than on whether it is used, and a comparable majority want formal standards that do not yet exist. That combination — a settled intuition without an institutional expression — is the same structural situation the other papers describe, encountered here in the university rather than the parliament. We include the study partly because its object is moving faster than the literature about it, and a documented snapshot of professional opinion at this moment will retain value even as the technology changes.

The second half of the issue takes up authority at the level of the state. Ivan Ivanov and Aleksandra Ilieska's *The Changing Face of Sovereignty* argues that the long literature announcing sovereignty's disappearance mistook a displacement for a death. Working with the distinction between authority and control, the paper holds that formal authority largely survived the period in which it was expected to dissolve; what was lost was the capacity to make that authority effective against flows and institutions organised at a scale the state does not command. The argument then turns to the counter-movement, reading contemporary migration, trade and technology policy as evidence that a multipolar distribution of power has lowered the cost of autonomous action and made sovereignty useful again. The paper's conclusion — that de-sovereignization and re-sovereignization are two moments of one renegotiation rather than rival diagnoses — is the sharpest formulation of the issue's underlying theme.

Danilo Krstovski and Kire Jovanov approach the same terrain from the law. *The Development of the Rule of Law and Rechtsstaat* reconstructs the parallel histories of the Council of Europe, for which the rule of law was constitutive from 1949, and the European Union, which arrived at the commitment considerably

later and formalised it chiefly through the accession process. The paper treats the two bodies as a tandem and is candid about where the tandem underperforms: mechanisms including the Rule of Law Framework and Article 7 exist, but operate on timescales that can render them ineffective against the conduct they were designed to address. For readers in candidate countries this is not a remote observation.

Aleksandra Ilieska's *Geopolitical Forecast: Anticipation for New Global Governance under the Influence of BRICS* closes the issue by asking what follows from the enlargement of 2024 and after. Rather than predicting a single outcome, the paper sets out three scenarios — escalating hostility between blocs, an interdependent multipolar accommodation, and a genuine transfer of leadership — and assesses the conditions under which each becomes likely. Forecasting of this kind is a legitimate scholarly exercise so long as its assumptions are visible, and readers are invited to test the assumptions here against their own.

Two editorial observations remain. The first is that these papers disagree with one another, and we have not smoothed the disagreements. A reader who accepts Ilievski's account of institutions that receive youth input without acting on it will find Ivanov's comparative cases more demanding than they first appear, since several of them rest on exactly the institutional good faith her respondents report as absent. That tension is productive and belongs in the issue.

The second concerns method. Two of the six papers rest on original survey data gathered from modest samples, and both are explicit about it. We regard such work as valuable in a research environment where systematic data on youth attitudes and on academic practice is scarce, while noting that findings from samples of this size indicate direction rather than magnitude. Readers should treat them accordingly, and we would welcome replication at larger scale.

As the colophon states, the views expressed are those of the authors alone.

The Editors

Skopje, 2025

BRIDGING THE GAP: YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL DECISION-MAKING

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INTRODUCTION

The role of youth in shaping governance and institutional decision-making is an increasingly relevant topic in contemporary political discourse. While young people constitute a significant portion of the global population, their representation in political and institutional structures remains disproportionately low. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (2021), only 2.6% of the world's parliamentarians are under the age of 30, highlighting a critical gap in youth participation in governance. This paper examines the extent of youth involvement in institutional decision-making worldwide, exploring both the barriers that hinder their engagement and the initiatives that aim to promote their inclusion.

In recent years, various global organizations, including the United Nations, have emphasized the importance of integrating youth perspectives into policymaking. The UN Youth Strategy 2030 outlines a comprehensive framework for increasing youth engagement in governance, recognizing that their active participation is essential for sustainable development and democratic legitimacy. Despite these efforts, data indicate that young people continue to face systemic challenges in accessing decision-making roles. These challenges range from financial constraints and political marginalization to structural barriers within institutions that favor older, more established political figures.

Youth participation is also closely linked to electoral engagement, yet voter turnout among young populations remains lower than that of older demographics. Studies show that in many democracies, the gap in voter turnout between young and older citizens can be as high as 20%. This disengagement can be attributed to multiple factors, including disillusionment with political

institutions, lack of civic education, and limited avenues for meaningful participation. Addressing these barriers is crucial in fostering a more inclusive and representative governance system that reflects the voices and needs of younger generations.

Despite these challenges, there are positive trends in youth engagement in institutions worldwide. Countries such as Finland, Canada, and New Zealand have implemented policies aimed at encouraging youth representation in political and institutional decision-making. For example, Finland has established youth councils that work in tandem with government bodies, while Canada has launched initiatives to support young candidates in elections. These cases serve as models for enhancing youth participation and demonstrate that institutional reforms can effectively bridge the generational gap in governance.

The following sections of this paper will explore the structural and systemic challenges that hinder youth involvement in institutions, analyze comparative case studies of successful youth engagement initiatives, and offer policy recommendations for fostering greater inclusion of young people in decision-making processes. By understanding both the obstacles and opportunities, this research aims to contribute to a broader discussion on how to empower youth as active participants in shaping the future of global governance.

STRUCTURAL AND SYSTEMIC CHALLENGES HINDERING YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN INSTITUTIONS

Barriers to Youth Participation in Governance

One of the primary barriers to youth involvement in political and institutional decision-making is the institutionalized age bias present in many governance structures. Political parties and bureaucratic institutions often prioritize experience and seniority, making it difficult for young individuals to gain leadership positions (Henn and Foard 2014). This preference for older, more experienced candidates is often justified by the belief that political competence is acquired through years of service, leaving little room for the inclusion of younger voices. As a result, even when youth engage in political movements or grassroots activism, they frequently find themselves excluded from actual decision-making roles. Many political institutions fail to create structured pathways for young

leaders to rise within their ranks, further discouraging sustained youth engagement.

Moreover, strict age requirements for candidacy in elections further limit opportunities for youth representation in legislatures and executive positions (Stockemer and Sundström 2018). In many countries, minimum age requirements for parliamentary or presidential elections are set significantly higher than the legal voting age, preventing politically engaged youth from directly participating in governance. This exclusion not only limits the diversity of perspectives within political institutions but also reinforces the perception that governance is reserved for older generations. Even in cases where youth quotas or reserved seats exist, they are often tokenistic rather than genuinely empowering, as young representatives may lack the political influence or resources necessary to effect meaningful change.

Economic barriers also play a crucial role in restricting youth participation. Running for office or engaging in political activities requires financial resources that many young individuals lack. Studies indicate that high campaign costs and limited access to funding networks disproportionately affect younger candidates, reducing their ability to compete in electoral processes (Norris and Lovenduski 1995). Political campaigns often rely on extensive fundraising efforts, personal wealth, or established financial backers—resources that younger individuals typically struggle to access. This financial disadvantage is further exacerbated by the dominance of older, wealthier candidates who have long-standing connections to influential donors and political networks. Without sufficient funding, young candidates face difficulties in building visibility, organizing campaign activities, and effectively communicating their political messages to the electorate.

Furthermore, the precarious job market and student debt contribute to political disengagement, as many young people prioritize economic stability over civic participation (Grasso 2018). Youth unemployment and underemployment are significant global concerns, forcing many young individuals to focus on securing financial independence rather than engaging in political activism or running for office. The burden of student loans and job insecurity discourages long-term political investment, as young people often view politics as an

additional risk rather than a viable career path. Even those who are politically engaged may struggle to balance activism with economic survival, leading to fluctuating participation levels. Additionally, the gig economy and contractual employment structures leave many young workers with little job security, making it harder for them to take time off for political activities or advocacy efforts.

The combination of institutional age bias, economic barriers, and financial insecurity creates a systemic disadvantage for youth in governance. Addressing these issues requires targeted reforms, including lowering age requirements for candidacy, providing financial support for young political aspirants, and implementing policies that ensure economic stability for youth. Without such measures, the political exclusion of young people will persist, undermining the potential for generationally diverse and representative governance structures.

Political Disenchantment and Voter Apathy

Another major challenge is political disenchantment among youth populations. Research suggests that young people are less likely to engage in traditional forms of political participation, such as voting or joining political parties, due to a perceived lack of responsiveness from political institutions (Dalton 2014). This sense of disillusionment is exacerbated by corruption, partisanship, and governance failures, which diminish trust in political actors and discourage youth engagement (Norris 2011). Furthermore, many young people feel that their voices are ignored or manipulated by political elites, reinforcing a cycle of disengagement. As a result, even when youth do participate, it is often through non-traditional means such as protests, social media activism, or grassroots organizing, rather than institutionalized political processes (Dalton 2014).

The rapid rise of digital communication has reshaped the way young people interact with politics. While social media platforms provide a space for youth to express opinions, mobilize movements, and share information, they also contribute to political polarization and misinformation (Norris 2011). Digital activism has been effective in amplifying youth voices, yet it does

not always translate into tangible political change, further reinforcing skepticism about formal political engagement. Additionally, governments in some regions have responded to online activism with censorship, surveillance, or repression, making young people wary of the risks involved in political participation (Ekman and Amnå 2012).

Social and cultural factors also contribute to the underrepresentation of youth in governance. In many societies, young individuals are not taken seriously in political discussions and are often marginalized in decision-making processes (Ekman and Amnå 2012). Political systems tend to be dominated by older generations who have greater access to resources, networks, and institutional power. This generational divide creates a barrier for young people who wish to enter politics but lack the necessary support and mentorship. Additionally, youth quotas and other mechanisms designed to increase political representation are often symbolic rather than substantive, limiting their actual impact on governance structures (Dalton 2014).

Gender dynamics further compound this issue, as young women face additional obstacles in accessing leadership roles due to patriarchal norms and systemic biases (Krook and Childs 2010). In many societies, women are underrepresented in political decision-making due to deeply ingrained stereotypes that associate leadership with masculinity. Young women who aspire to political roles often encounter discrimination, harassment, and a lack of institutional support, which discourages their participation (Krook and Childs 2010). Moreover, political parties and electoral systems frequently fail to implement policies that promote gender equity, making it difficult for young women to advance in their political careers. Addressing these barriers requires targeted efforts, such as mentorship programs, gender-sensitive policy reforms, and greater institutional commitment to inclusive governance.

Ultimately, overcoming youth disenchantment and underrepresentation in politics necessitates structural reforms that make

political institutions more accessible, transparent, and responsive. Strengthening civic education, promoting intergenerational dialogue, and ensuring that youth have meaningful roles in decision-making are critical steps in fostering long-term political engagement (Norris 2011). Without such changes, political systems risk alienating an entire generation, thereby undermining the legitimacy and effectiveness of democratic governance.

SUCCESSFUL YOUTH ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVES: COMPARATIVE CASE STUDIES

Despite these barriers, several countries have implemented innovative policies to foster youth participation in governance. These initiatives vary in approach, from institutionalized youth councils to grassroots activism and digital engagement strategies, demonstrating diverse methods to amplify young voices in political decision-making.

Finland has established municipal youth councils that enable young people to engage directly with policymakers and contribute to local decision-making processes (Wallace and Bendit 2009). These councils provide a structured platform for youth voices, ensuring their concerns are considered in policy formation. The Finnish model has been widely regarded as an effective means of integrating young citizens into governance, as it fosters an early interest in political participation and allows young individuals to gain first-hand experience in civic engagement. Similar initiatives have been adopted in Sweden, where municipalities have institutionalized youth councils that provide advisory opinions on policy matters, thereby bridging the gap between youth and formal political institutions (Persson and Sundström 2019).

In Scotland, the Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP) functions as a democratically elected body that represents the interests of young people across the country. Unlike traditional youth councils, the SYP operates independently and has successfully influenced national policies on education, mental health, and climate change (Eichhorn 2018). By giving youth representatives a structured legislative role, Scotland has empowered young voices in formal decision-making, ensuring their contributions extend beyond symbolic participation.

In New Zealand, the government has introduced initiatives aimed at reducing economic barriers to political participation. The “Youth Parliament” program allows young citizens to simulate parliamentary processes, offering them hands-on experience in governance and political decision-making (Vowles 2018). This initiative has been praised for increasing political literacy and encouraging long-term civic engagement among youth. By providing financial support for participants, the program ensures that economic constraints do not hinder young individuals from gaining exposure to legislative processes.

Similarly, Canada has implemented the Prime Minister’s Youth Council, a non-partisan advisory body that enables young people to provide direct recommendations to the federal government on issues affecting youth, including employment, mental health, and environmental sustainability (Harrison 2017). The council members are selected from diverse backgrounds, ensuring inclusive representation of marginalized communities and indigenous youth. This model has been particularly effective in influencing national policy discussions, demonstrating how institutionalized youth participation can lead to substantive policy shifts.

In Tunisia, the post-Arab Spring era has seen a surge in youth-driven political activism. Following the 2011 revolution, Tunisian youth played a pivotal role in shaping the country’s democratic transition, advocating for constitutional reforms and increased political accountability (Marks 2014). The success of youth movements in Tunisia highlights the potential of grassroots mobilization in driving political change and expanding youth representation in governance. Youth-led civil society organizations have continued to push for government transparency and electoral reforms, demonstrating sustained political engagement beyond the revolution.

In Nigeria, the Not Too Young to Run campaign successfully lobbied for constitutional amendments that lowered the age requirements for political candidates. The movement, which began as a grassroots initiative, gained international recognition and ultimately influenced legislative reforms that expanded youth access to electoral participation (Fagbamigbe and Ajayi 2020). This success story underscores the power of sustained advocacy and digital

mobilization in breaking down systemic barriers to youth inclusion in governance.

A similar trend is evident in Chile, where youth-led protests have driven major political transformations. The Chilean student movement, which gained momentum in the early 2010s, has been instrumental in shaping policies on education reform and social equity (Somma 2017). Many of the movement's leaders have since transitioned into formal politics, highlighting the capacity of youth activism to translate into lasting political influence.

In Taiwan, the government has leveraged digital platforms to engage young people in policymaking through initiatives like the vTaiwan platform. This online platform allows citizens, particularly youth, to participate in policy discussions and propose legislative changes (Hsiao 2021). The initiative has been successful in fostering transparency and civic engagement, demonstrating how technology can be used to bridge the gap between youth and governance institutions.

Similarly, Estonia has pioneered e-Governance solutions that enable young people to participate in online voting and digital deliberation forums (Madise and Martens 2006). By integrating technology into political processes, Estonia has effectively reduced barriers to youth participation and enhanced democratic accessibility.

Leadership Development: The School for Young Leaders of President Ivanov

A significant example of youth engagement and leadership development is the School for Young Leaders, founded in 2010 by former Macedonian President Gjorge Ivanov. This initiative aims to equip young individuals with leadership skills, strategic decision-making abilities, and a deep understanding of governance and democracy. Each year, the program selects promising young leaders from Macedonia and beyond, providing them with training in areas such as political communication, policy development, and international relations.

The program has successfully cultivated a network of youth leaders who have gone on to hold influential positions in politics, business, and civil society. By connecting young individuals with experienced mentors, policymakers, and

international experts, the school provides a platform for political and civic engagement beyond traditional electoral participation. The initiative has been recognized for its role in fostering youth leadership, encouraging active citizenship, and bridging the gap between young people and political institutions in the Western Balkans.

The success of the School for Young Leaders highlights the importance of investing in leadership development programs that empower young individuals with the necessary skills to contribute to governance. Unlike many symbolic youth initiatives, this program provides concrete resources and mentorship to young individuals, ensuring that they are not only aware of political processes but also actively prepared to engage in them.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENHANCING YOUTH INVOLVEMENT

To bridge the gap in youth participation, policymakers must adopt targeted strategies that address structural barriers and create inclusive opportunities for young individuals in governance. A comprehensive approach should focus on legislative reforms, financial assistance, institutional support, and education initiatives that empower youth and foster long-term political engagement. Below are key policy recommendations that can significantly enhance youth involvement in governance:

One of the fundamental barriers to youth representation in governance is the restrictive age requirements for political candidacy. Many countries set minimum age limits for parliamentary and executive positions that exclude young individuals from running for office, even though they are eligible to vote.

Lowering age requirements allows politically active and capable young individuals to compete for elected positions, ensuring that the perspectives of younger generations are represented in policymaking (Stockemer and Sundström 2018). Countries like France and Germany have successfully lowered the age requirement for parliamentary positions, increasing youth participation in national legislatures. The "Not Too Young to Run" campaign in Nigeria led to a constitutional amendment in 2018, reducing the age limit for presidential and gubernatorial candidates from 40 to 35 years and for House of Representatives and State Assembly candidates from 30 to 25 years (Fagbamigbe and Ajayi 2020).

Governments should conduct age-limit assessments and consider constitutional reforms that align candidacy requirements with voting age to foster inclusivity in democratic participation.

Economic barriers remain one of the greatest deterrents to youth political participation. Running a political campaign requires significant financial resources, which younger candidates often lack due to limited access to funding networks. Establishing public financing programs, such as grants, subsidies, or state-sponsored campaign funding, can help young candidates compete more fairly in elections and reduce reliance on wealthy donors (Norris and Lovenduski 1995). Countries like Norway and Sweden have introduced state-funded election support programs that provide financial assistance to candidates from underrepresented groups, including youth. Similarly, Canada has electoral expense reimbursement policies, ensuring that young and independent candidates can afford to participate in elections. Governments should introduce youth-focused election funds, provide tax incentives for donors supporting young candidates, and establish mentorship programs that connect young leaders with political financiers and donors.

Young people often feel disconnected from decision-making structures due to the lack of formal channels for participation. Governments should institutionalize youth councils, advisory boards, and participatory mechanisms that allow youth to directly influence policy discussions. Establishing youth councils ensures that young people are actively involved in governance beyond voting cycles, fostering a culture of political engagement from an early age (Wallace and Bendit 2009). Finland and Sweden have municipal youth councils that engage directly with policymakers, allowing young people to propose legislation and contribute to governance. Scotland's Youth Parliament provides a structured platform for youth to influence national policies on education, mental health, and climate change. The Prime Minister's Youth Council in Canada acts as an advisory body, offering recommendations on employment, education, and social justice issues. Governments should mandate the inclusion of youth representatives in local councils, parliaments, and executive committees. This can be achieved by passing legislation that formalizes youth advisory roles and providing funding for youth engagement initiatives.

A lack of political literacy prevents many young people from engaging in governance. Schools and universities must incorporate comprehensive civic education programs that equip students with the necessary knowledge and skills to participate effectively in democracy. Strengthening civic education ensures that young individuals understand electoral processes, government structures, and their civic responsibilities, which can lead to higher voter turnout and engagement in policymaking (Dalton 2014). Germany's political education curriculum includes mandatory civic engagement programs that encourage students to participate in simulated elections and debate clubs. New Zealand's "Youth Parliament" program provides hands-on experience in governance, increasing political literacy among young citizens (Vowles 2018). Taiwan's vTaiwan platform integrates digital civic education, allowing youth to deliberate policies online and engage with legislators. Governments should mandate civic education courses in secondary schools and higher education institutions, integrate youth democracy workshops, and promote internships in government institutions to encourage early political exposure.

Given that young people are more active in digital spaces, governments should leverage technology to engage youth through online consultations, virtual voting platforms, and social media-driven policy discussions. Digital engagement reduces barriers to political participation, particularly for marginalized youth who may not have access to traditional political spaces (Hsiao 2021). Estonia's e-Governance model allows citizens, including youth, to vote online and participate in policy forums (Madise and Martens 2006). Taiwan's vTaiwan platform enables young citizens to deliberate legislation and propose policy reforms online, promoting direct engagement with government officials. Implementation Strategies: Governments should develop youth-friendly online participation platforms, integrate AI-driven policy feedback mechanisms, and create mobile apps for voter registration and issue-based political education.

To ensure that young individuals gain real representation in governance, governments should introduce youth quotas in legislative bodies and encourage political parties to nominate young candidates. Youth quotas help counteract age bias in politics and create a pipeline for young leaders to enter governance structures (Stockemer and Sundström 2018). Tunisia introduced a youth quota

in party lists, increasing youth representation in parliament. Rwanda's legislative framework includes reserved seats for young representatives, leading to one of the highest youth representation rates globally. Governments should introduce mandatory youth representation thresholds in party lists, ensure funding incentives for parties that promote youth candidates, and develop leadership training programs for aspiring young politicians.

Beyond institutional reforms, young individuals need mentorship and leadership training to build their political acumen and increase their capacity to govern effectively. Leadership programs empower youth with strategic decision-making skills, governance expertise, and political communication abilities (Marks 2014). The School for Young Leaders of President Ivanov (Macedonia) provides specialized training in policy development, governance, and international relations, helping young individuals transition into leadership roles. The Obama Foundation's Leadership Programs focus on mentoring young leaders globally, preparing them for public service and activism. Governments and NGOs should invest in youth leadership academies, mentorship networks, and cross-generational knowledge-sharing initiatives to cultivate future political leaders.

CONCLUSION

The participation of youth in governance is not a privilege but a fundamental necessity for the sustainability and progress of democratic societies. Young people bring fresh perspectives, innovative ideas, and the capacity to challenge outdated policies, yet they continue to face structural and institutional barriers that limit their role in decision-making. These barriers—ranging from institutionalized age restrictions and economic constraints to political exclusion and societal perceptions—have contributed to a growing sense of disenchantment and disengagement among youth. If these challenges are not addressed, societies risk creating political systems that are unrepresentative, stagnant, and disconnected from the needs of future generations.

Ensuring youth involvement in governance is not just about symbolic inclusion—it is about strengthening democracy, fostering social cohesion, and enhancing policymaking. A democracy that does not actively engage its youth is a democracy that is incomplete, lacking the dynamism and adaptability needed to

address modern challenges such as climate change, digital transformation, economic inequality, and global security. Young people, with their technological fluency, progressive outlook, and commitment to social change, have demonstrated their ability to shape movements, influence policies, and drive innovation. However, unless political institutions evolve to accommodate and empower young voices, these efforts will remain on the margins, rather than at the heart of governance.

Governance structures must evolve and adapt to accommodate the aspirations, energy, and leadership potential of young people. This transformation requires more than just acknowledging the contributions of youth—it demands substantive policy reforms, institutional support, and the removal of systemic barriers that prevent youth from fully participating in governance. Political institutions must shift away from exclusionary practices and foster an environment where young individuals are not just observers but active participants in shaping policies, influencing decisions, and leading initiatives.

Creating accessible pathways to leadership and governance is key to ensuring youth engagement. Lowering age restrictions for political candidacy, providing financial and institutional support for young leaders, and implementing youth quotas in decision-making bodies are necessary steps to bridge the existing gap in representation. Additionally, governments must invest in civic education, leadership development, and mentorship programs to equip young people with the knowledge, skills, and networks needed to navigate political landscapes successfully. Without these structural changes, youth engagement will remain tokenistic and superficial, failing to drive meaningful and long-term participation in governance.

Political institutions, including governments, political parties, and legislative bodies, play a critical role in facilitating and institutionalizing youth participation. It is not enough to simply encourage young people to vote—there must be deliberate efforts to integrate youth perspectives into policy discussions, advisory committees, and leadership structures. Ensuring that young individuals have a seat at the table requires a cultural shift within political institutions, where youth voices are valued and taken seriously, rather than dismissed as inexperienced or naïve.

Similarly, civil society organizations, advocacy groups, and grassroots movements have a responsibility to amplify youth voices, provide platforms for engagement, and hold governments accountable for their commitments to youth inclusion. By fostering youth-driven initiatives, leadership training programs, and political mentorship networks, civil society can play a crucial role in bridging the gap between young individuals and political institutions. Governments must collaborate with these organizations, ensuring that youth participation is not confined to isolated initiatives but is deeply embedded within governance frameworks.

The time to act is now. Youth engagement in governance is not an optional endeavor—it is a critical step toward ensuring democratic resilience, social progress, and long-term political stability. The world is undergoing unprecedented transformations, from technological revolutions to environmental crises, and the ability of political systems to adapt and respond effectively depends largely on how well they incorporate diverse perspectives, particularly those of younger generations. If young people continue to be excluded from governance, democracies will face a growing crisis of legitimacy, trust, and participation, threatening the very foundations upon which they are built.

Governments, policymakers, and civil society must move beyond symbolic gestures and commit to implementing substantive reforms that remove barriers to youth participation. The voices of young people must not be sidelined or treated as secondary—they must be recognized as essential drivers of political and social progress. This requires investment in youth leadership development, proactive policies that promote inclusion, and a commitment to breaking down institutionalized obstacles that have historically marginalized younger generations in decision-making processes.

By making space for youth in governance, societies will not only strengthen their democratic foundations but also ensure that the policies of today reflect the needs of the future. A political landscape that values, respects, and prioritizes youth perspectives is one that is dynamic, innovative, and capable of meeting the challenges of the coming decades. The engagement of young leaders

will breathe new life into governance structures, fostering accountability, transparency, and responsiveness in decision-making processes.

True democracy is built on representation and participation, and only by fully embracing the potential of young leaders can we create governance systems that serve all generations equitably. It is time to recognize youth not just as the future, but as the present, and to act decisively in ensuring their full inclusion in the governance of our societies. By doing so, we can shape a political system that is not only fairer and more representative but also more capable of navigating the complex challenges of an evolving world.

The path forward is clear: Invest in youth, remove barriers, and create a governance system that reflects the voices, aspirations, and leadership potential of all citizens, young and old alike.

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WE ARE NOT ASKING FOR PRIVILEGE – ONLY A PLACE TO GROW: A PORTRAIT OF YOUTH IN MACEDONIA

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, Macedonia has stood at the intersection of identity and uncertainty. From a historic name change and prolonged political crises to international negotiations and institutional reforms, the country has endured turbulence that tested both its sovereignty and social cohesion. The price of instability has often been paid by the youth, through disillusionment, disconnection, and departure. An entire generation has watched opportunity erode in real-time. Tens of thousands have emigrated, not out of adventure, but out of exhaustion (World Bank, n.d.). And yet, within those who remain, something persists: a desire not just to belong, but to build. Today, a new government has assumed office, elected on promises of fighting corruption, restoring dignity to public life, and keeping young people at home. But will words become action? This study amplifies the voices of young people across the country, their critiques, their courage, their blueprints for reform. It is not a nostalgic call to stay; it is a sober map for how staying might become a viable future.

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CONTEXT

From 2018 onward, the Republic of Macedonia - now constitutionally North Macedonia, has navigated one of the most delicate identity transitions in its modern history. At the heart of this political and cultural tremor was the Prespa Agreement, signed in June 2018 with Greece. It promised a new chapter: entry into NATO, and, more aspirationally, a clear path toward European Union membership. But the agreement came at a cost - one that many citizens, particularly the youth, still feel in their bones.

The constitutional name change, from "Republic of Macedonia" to "Republic of North Macedonia," was presented as a necessary step for unlocking international doors. To validate it, a **referendum** was held in September 2018. Only **36.86% of registered voters** participated -far short of the 50% required for the vote to be binding. The low turnout rendered the referendum **unsuccessful**. (State Election Commission of North Macedonia, 2018). Still, the government proceeded.

Through constitutional amendments passed in Parliament, the name change was finalized in early 2019, against a backdrop of protests, public fatigue, and political maneuvering. The outcome fractured public trust. For many citizens, especially the younger generation, it crystallized a painful lesson: that democracy can be performed without truly being practiced.

"We were told our voice mattered. Then they changed the name anyway."
—Survey respondent. (ISLAA & ICAC, 2025)

The subsequent years brought a mix of global diplomacy and local disappointment. The country officially joined NATO in 2020, a tangible milestone. But the more coveted prize, European Union accession, remained elusive. First, Bulgaria raised objections. Then, the EU's own enlargement fatigue stalled negotiations. As of 2025, Macedonia is still not an EU member state.

For many young Macedonians, this isn't just geopolitics. It's personal. EU integration was more than a foreign policy goal — it was a symbol of belonging, fairness, and hope. The continued delays, paired with ongoing domestic issues like corruption and nepotism, have generated a sense of abandonment. Why, they ask, did we sacrifice so much, only to remain at the door? Internally, the picture hasn't been brighter. Transparency International ranked Macedonia **85th out of 180 countries** in its 2022 Corruption Perceptions Index. (Transparency International, 2022).

"Corruption must be eradicated from this state, and greed must be silenced—because it is the people who built you up and gave you your title and status." —Survey respondent. (ISLAA & ICAC, 2025)

„They should stop stealing and keep politics and personal connections out of the courts.“ —Survey respondent (ISLAA & ICAC, 2025)

In this atmosphere of disillusionment, the 2025 parliamentary elections arrived not as a celebration, but as a plea. Young voters turned out in higher numbers than in the previous three election cycles, many casting ballots not out of excitement, but out of necessity. The newly elected government promised sweeping reform: anti-corruption initiatives, youth participation in decision-making, investment in education, and a new chapter of transparency.

But promises alone cannot reverse years of skepticism. Youth - weary but watchful are waiting.

“They should make an effort to think about young people, because youth are the future of our country. A strategy must be established that supports the simultaneous development of all smaller towns—not just the city of Skopje. The consequences of Skopje’s overpopulation, caused by the lack of alternatives, are already clearly visible.“ —Survey respondent (ISLAA & ICAC, 2025)

„ Young people need quality education, a healthy environment, a wide range of employment opportunities, and trust in the legal system and the rule of law. If those in power improve these areas, they will create a better life for the youth. “ —Survey respondent (ISLAA & ICAC, 2025)

This report was conceived within that fragile moment - after the applause fades, and before the next disillusionment sets in. It aims not only to document what young people feel, but to ensure they are heard before another decision is made without them. Because if this country is truly to move forward, toward Europe, toward justice, toward belonging, it cannot do so without the generation who will inherit its future.

METHODOLOGY

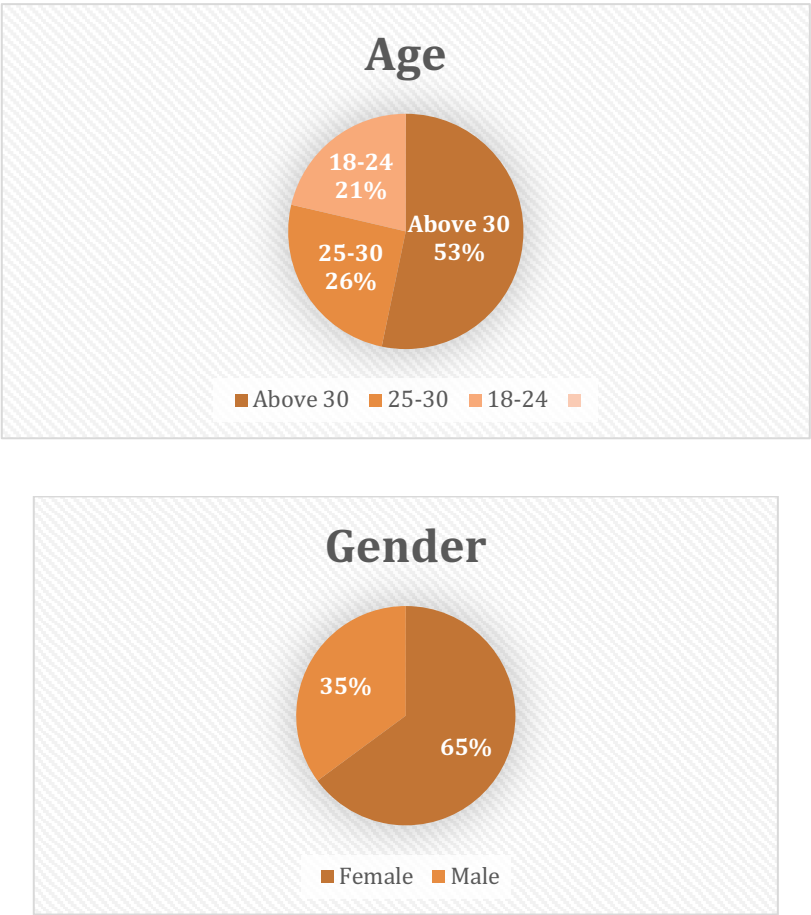
At the heart of this report lies a question rarely asked with sincerity in public policy: *What do young people actually experience?* Not what do we assume they need, not what do we design on their behalf -but what do they live, see, struggle

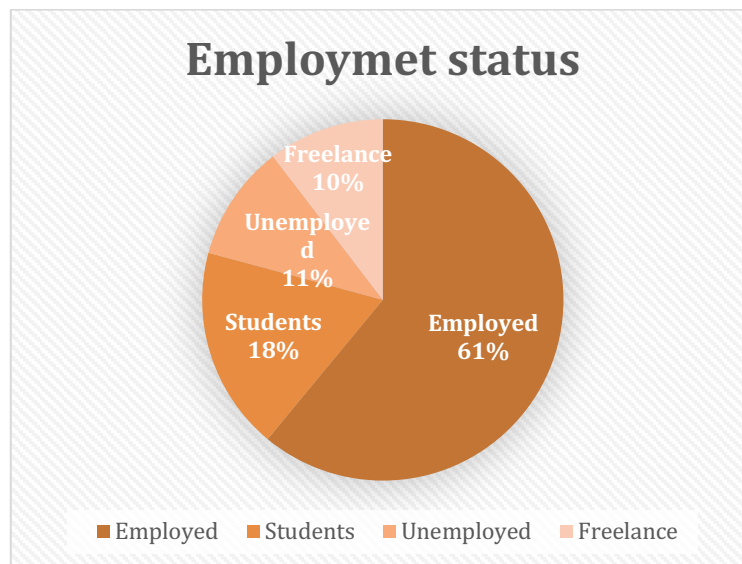
with, and hope for? This section outlines the design, process, and analytical lens of the national youth survey that sought to answer that question. Conducted in March of 2025, this survey was not just an academic exercise. It was a civic intervention. A moment to pause and turn toward a generation with more answers than they are given credit for.

DESIGN AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The methodology followed a structured, cross-sectional survey format, developed collaboratively by ISLAA and ICAC. The instrument was designed to ensure both breadth and depth, to gather measurable trends, while also giving space for personal reflection and critique. A total of 78 participants, primarily aged 18 to 35, were reached through targeted distribution across social media and youth networks. Respondents came from both urban and rural environments, spanning all major statistical regions of Macedonia.

Demographic Reach:





Living area: 61% from Skopje; remaining from Southeast, Vardar, Pelagonia, Polog, Eastern, and rural communities

Marital status: 44.2% single, 33.8% married, 16.9% in a relationship, 5.2% divorced

This demographic diversity was not incidental — it was essential. It ensured the data would reflect a composite of lived realities, not just the metropolitan, elite, or politically engaged few.

Core thematic areas:

The survey was organized around six thematic pillars, selected to align with the most persistent structural and emotional challenges facing youth in Macedonia today:

1. **Demographic Profile** – Age, gender, region, employment, marital and educational status
2. **Education** – Access, quality, relevance to labor market needs, and perceived preparedness
3. **Employment** – Opportunities, obstacles, skill gaps, and views on fair hiring practices

4. **Entrepreneurship** – Aspirations, barriers, financial and mentorship access
5. **Civic Participation** – Institutional trust, political voice, youth engagement
6. **Rural Development** – Migration trends, living standards, and rural revitalization potential

Each thematic area included a mix of closed-ended questions (for quantifiable trends) and open-ended prompts (for rich narrative insights).

For example:

- *What are the greatest challenges facing youth today?*
- *Do you think young people have enough of a voice in policymaking?*
- *Does the education system in Macedonia adequately prepare us for the labor market?*
- *If you had the chance to speak directly to the decision-makers in Macedonia, what message would you give them regarding the needs of young people?*

Analytical Approach

The methodology combined **descriptive statistical analysis** with **qualitative thematic coding**.

- Quantitative data were processed using basic frequency analysis to identify trends and dominant categories.
- Open-ended responses — comprising of written reflections — were reviewed line by line and categorized through **inductive thematic analysis**.

Five dominant thematic fields emerged across the data:

1. **Structural exclusion** – barriers in education, employment, and housing
2. **Political alienation** – mistrust in institutions, lack of youth representation
3. **Desire for practical reform** – from internship systems to youth entrepreneurship support

4. **Emigration fatigue** – emotional toll of watching friends leave, and being expected to follow
5. **Conditional hope** – a longing to stay, rooted in clarity about what must change

Rather than being "quoted for effect," youth were quoted for truth. Their words serve as both data and testimony. They are woven throughout this report not to illustrate points, but to make them.

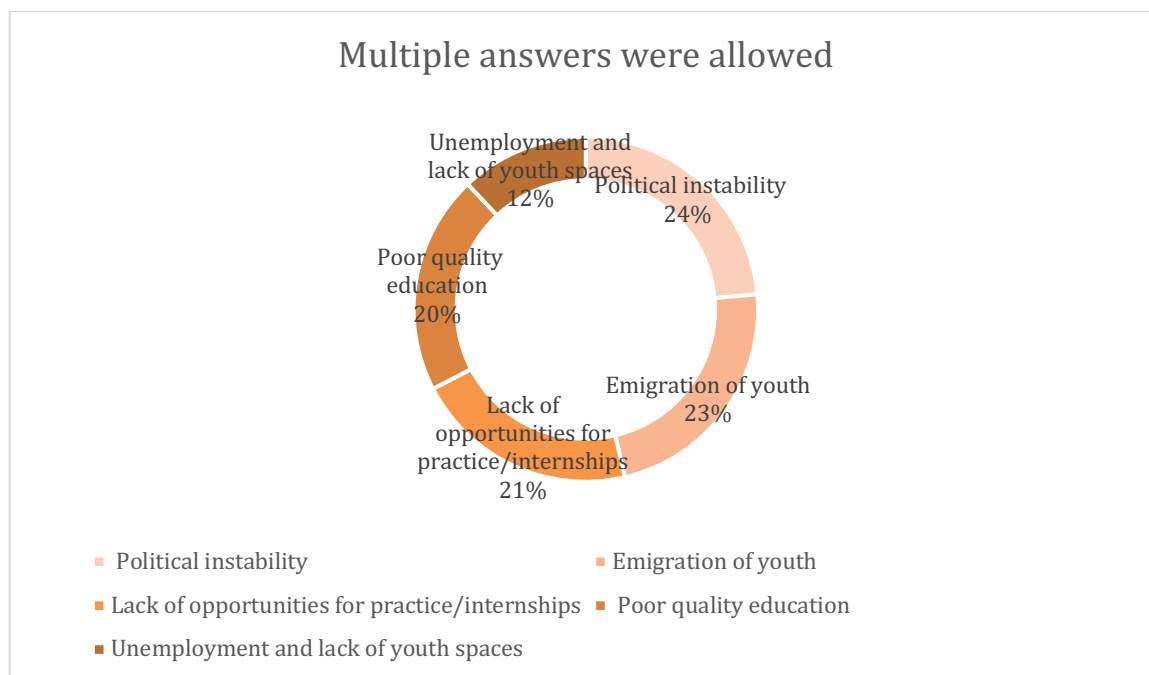
Ethical and Participatory Commitments

Participation in the study was voluntary, anonymous, and non-incentivized. Informed consent was obtained digitally, with all participants notified that their responses would be used for research, advocacy, and policy development — not commercial or partisan ends. Importantly, every youth voice included was left intact. Their grammar was not corrected. Their tone was not polished. Their frustrations were not filtered. We honored the rawness of what they gave us. They give us a map.

FINDINGS

In a country often described as being in transition, young people feel as though they are permanently *waiting at the threshold* - equipped with ambition, but denied entry. When asked What do you think are the biggest challenges young people in Macedonia are facing? (You may select more than one answer), their answers were not scattered or abstract. They were precise. Sharp. Recurrent.

The Most Commonly Cited Barriers Were:



.Political Instability (71.4%)

For youth, political instability is not just about changing governments, it's about a lack of long-term vision. It's about policies that shift with the winds of populism. It's about seeing ministers come and go before any program touches the classroom, the job center, or the village they grew up in.

„Young people are apathetic, and to change that, concrete changes and measures are needed. There must be motivation for them to stay and to know that what they do, learn, and strive for is not in vain. A merit-based system is essential.
“ —Survey respondent (ISLAA & ICAC, 2025)

Emigration of Youth (68.8%)

The second most-cited challenge is not just about leaving, it's about *watching others leave*. The emotional toll of emigration runs deep: friendships scattered, communities hollowed out, dreams exported. For many, the decision to stay in Macedonia feels like a moral and psychological weight.

“Listen to the youth and give them what they’re asking for. They need it—and the country needs them too. Otherwise, we will disappear.” —Survey respondent (ISLAA & ICAC, 2025)

“They should motivate young people to stay and work in the country, and this can be achieved by regulating employment practices and enabling youth to gain relevant work experience through practical training.” —Survey respondent (ISLAA & ICAC, 2025)

The brain drain is no longer anecdotal, it’s systemic. The youth who remain describe themselves as *stayers-by-default*, not because they lack talent, but because they believe in what their country *could be*. Yet belief, like opportunity, has limits.

Lack of Practice/Internship Opportunities (63.6%)

In an era where soft skills, experience, and networking are the currency of employment, Macedonian youth report having few structured ways to gain any of them. Internships, especially those that are paid, supervised, or lead to hiring remain rare or reserved for the connected.

“I would like to see opportunities for young people to be recruited by the corporate sector and larger companies and organizations starting from high school age initially through internships, and later through guidance for further education and employment.” —Survey respondent (ISLAA & ICAC, 2025)

„Paid internships in every field, so that young people can gain the work experience required in job advertisements-experience they currently have no way of acquiring.” —Survey respondent (ISLAA & ICAC, 2025)

„More practical knowledge. Establishing a connection between the private sector and universities through internship opportunities for the best students and/or for the most needed professions and fields on the labor market.” —Survey respondent (ISLAA & ICAC, 2025)

For many, the concept of “gaining experience” feels like a paradox. They are told to gain it before being hired, yet given no pathway to acquire it. What they seek is not privilege, it’s structure. Clarity. A national internship framework that offers merit-based access and mentorship.

Poor Quality Education (62.3%)

The education system was named repeatedly not just as outdated, but *disconnected*. Youth describe their academic experience as passive and theoretical: heavy on memorization, light on real-world application. They graduate with diplomas, not direction.

„For young people to remain in this country, they need to be supported as early as their student days, and it must be proven to them that knowledge, effort, courage, and skills prevail over corruption and personal connections. Financial support for students should also be increased—such as raising the amount of the student meal subsidy and providing specific vouchers, as well as increasing the involvement of youth in various processes and institutions, as this contributes to their experience and the expansion of their knowledge. Additionally, I would recommend funding specific educational projects related to the United Nations and the European Union for students at relevant faculties. “ —Survey respondent (ISLAA & ICAC, 2025)

“Opening new attractive and high-demand study programs at existing universities, including scholarships for those with strong academic performance and high grade point averages.” —Survey respondent (ISLAA & ICAC, 2025)

“Improving the quality of education, especially in rural areas—primarily through qualified teaching staff and programs focused on soft skills development, such as critical thinking and public speaking (debate and oratory clubs, and similar initiatives).” —Survey respondent (ISLAA & ICAC, 2025)

The lack of alignment between school curricula and market needs is no longer tolerable to students. They want entrepreneurship modules, digital skills,

internships, public speaking, not as extras, but as essentials. The classroom must evolve from a lecture hall to a launchpad.

Unemployment and Lack of Youth Spaces (36.4%)

Though cited less often than other barriers, unemployment and the lack of dedicated youth spaces remain deeply demoralizing. The problem is not just that jobs are scarce, it's that *the search itself feels futile*. Even those with degrees, certificates, and language skills describe encountering endless dead ends. This concern was echoed in the latest World Bank report on Macedonia: "Though the overall unemployment rate has fallen to 12.4 percent, the decline is largely among those with only primary and secondary education. Meanwhile, the rate of unemployment among university graduates has risen by 1.7 percentage points. Most troubling of all, youth unemployment (ages 15–24) continues to cast a long shadow, standing at a staggering 28.9 percent." (World Bank, 2025). We need greater opportunities for employment after completing studies, as well as support in the process of starting one's own business, answered one respondent.

"A regulated process for contracts and salary increases for young professionals, incentives in the form of tax benefits and financial support for youth working in their professional fields, regulation and penalties for capable young workers who are not part of the labor force, higher taxes and costs for young people working for foreign legal entities in order to stimulate local economic development, and sustainable financial incentives for youth with higher education obtained abroad and/or young professionals who have moved abroad."
—Survey respondent (ISLAA & ICAC, 2025)

„Job opportunities without requiring a minimum of 10 years of experience when you're only 25—that's a serious issue. It's unfair that experience is demanded everywhere. That way, young people aren't given a chance to learn and become excellent at what they do “ —Survey respondent (ISLAA & ICAC, 2025)

The physical absence of youth-oriented spaces, places where they can gather, learn, build, and express deepens their sense of marginalization. What

they need is more than employment. They need belonging. Infrastructure that says: *You matter here.*

Intersections of disillusionment and desire

When taken together, these five barriers reveal a coherent narrative: youth feel excluded from the systems that shape their lives. They are educated but unemployable by local standards. They are hopeful but surrounded by departures. They are politically conscious but institutionally invisible. This section is not just about obstacles. It's about the design flaws in a society that wants its youth to stay, but has not yet built a country they can grow within. The message is clear: they are ready to contribute. But the system must make space for their entry.

Eager to build, waiting for tools

Young people in Macedonia do not lack ambition — they lack a fair runway. When asked if they would like to start their own business, 67.5% said yes. This is not merely entrepreneurial spirit - it is systemic response to a labor market that excludes and underpays.

But here is what they're up against:

- 55% cite lack of financial support as the primary barrier
- 18.3% lack access to mentorship
- 15% report a lack of networks or connections

“Bringing back youth-focused projects (for starting a business, purchasing housing, funding part of tuition fees, financing academies and courses). All of this will ultimately benefit the country—thanks to its young people.”
—Survey respondent (ISLAA & ICAC, 2025)

At the same time, they want support systems for startups that are not just slogans. They dream of incubators, local grants, business mentoring, co-working hubs—particularly in smaller cities, where the spirit exists but the scaffolding does not.

“One specific measure I would propose to improve the position of young people in Macedonia is the creation of a state-supported fund for young entrepreneurs.

-Interest-free or low-interest loans/grants for startups and small businesses owned by individuals under the age of 30,

-Mentorship and training in entrepreneurship, marketing, digital skills, and business management,

-Priority access to workspaces and coworking zones in larger cities and rural municipalities,

-And connection with investors and companies for potential partnerships.

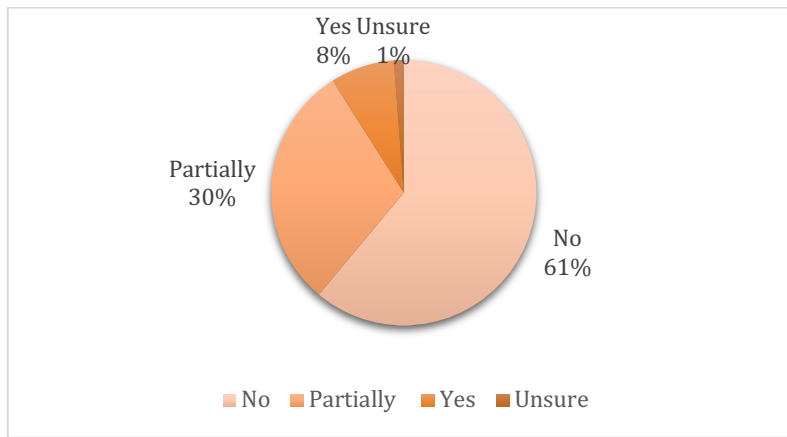
Such a measure would not only encourage young people to stay and invest in the country, but also stimulate innovation, self-employment, and economic growth.”

—Survey respondent (ISLAA & ICAC, 2025)

RAISING VOICES, REBUILDING TRUST: YOUTH AT THE HEART OF CHANGE

For young people in Macedonia, the challenge is not that they lack opinions, ideas, or energy—it is that they rarely see those ideas turned into action. Their frustration is not rooted in disinterest, but in experience: the experience of being consulted without consequence, engaged without influence, and present in the room without power. In public discussions, youth are often referenced, praised, even celebrated. But when it comes to actual policy-making—to the processes that shape law, budget, reform, and opportunity, they remain on the margins.

When asked directly whether they feel they have a voice in policymaking, the majority offered a sobering response:



This is not political apathy. It is the fatigue of being invited to participate, but never empowered to decide.

“Mandatory inclusion of young people in decision-making processes that directly affect them.” —Survey respondent (ISLAA & ICAC, 2025)

„Greater opportunities for young people to participate in the law-making process, because youth are the future of every nation—and their voices must always be heard!“ —Survey respondent (ISLAA & ICAC, 2025)

“The placement of at least 3 individuals under the age of 30 among the top 10 candidates on parliamentary lists, with a minimum of 1 person among the top 2, in order to increase the representation of young people in the legislative body.” — Survey respondent (ISLAA & ICAC, 2025)

This pattern of symbolic engagement without real inclusion extends to the broader relationship between youth and institutions. This is not just about youth representation. It’s about democratic credibility. If institutions continue to overlook their most engaged citizens, they risk not only losing them — but losing the future altogether.

Rural rebalancing: Not escape, but equity

In a nation where the majority of opportunity is concentrated most notably in Skopje, the rural parts of Macedonia often feel like afterthoughts. And yet, the youth who participated in this survey offered a surprisingly hopeful

message: they are not opposed to rural life. In fact, many would welcome it-if conditions allowed them to thrive.

When asked whether they would consider relocating to a rural area:

39% said *Yes, definitely*

33.8% said *Maybe, if there are enough opportunities*

19.5% said *No*

7.8% already live in rural environments

That means **nearly three-quarters (72.8%)** of respondents are *open to rural living*, but only under the right conditions.

“They should try to create opportunities that will encourage young people to stay in smaller communities, ensuring that every aspect of life is equally improved—not just in Skopje, but also in smaller towns and villages. One thing is certain: improvements are needed in many areas, and it’s time we start somewhere.”
—Survey respondent (ISLAA & ICAC, 2025)

„They should make an effort to prioritize young people, because youth are the future of our country. A clear strategy must be established to ensure the simultaneous development of all smaller towns—not just the city of Skopje. The consequences of Skopje’s overpopulation, caused by the lack of alternatives, are already visible. “ —
Survey respondent (ISLAA & ICAC, 2025)

The Most Important Motivators Were:

- **Cleaner environment and better quality of life** – 68.8%
- **Improved infrastructure** – 64.9%
- **More affordable housing and lower cost of living** – 44.2%
- **Better employment opportunities** – 42.9%
- **Access to quality education for their children** – 41.6%
- **Support for rural entrepreneurship and agriculture** – 32.5%

These are not romantic dreams of a simpler life. They are pragmatic visions of rebalancing. Young people are not fleeing cities, they are seeking dignity outside of them. They want a country that does not force a choice between career and community, between ambition and belonging. Their desire to live rurally is not a retreat. It is a request for national balance. A plea for equity not just in policy, but in geography. If opportunity remains locked in the capital, the rural heart of Macedonia will continue to empty not because people want to leave, but because they are given no reason to stay.

CONCLUSION

What this report confirms with data, with testimony, with quiet urgency, is what the recent elections only hinted at: the status quo no longer satisfies. The generation that came of age during the Prespa Agreement, who watched friends emigrate, who learned to study in outdated systems and job-hunt in rigged ones, is done waiting. Not because they are disillusioned, but because they are disrespected. Macedonian youth are not apathetic. They are active, aware, and capable and exhausted by being treated as anything less. They do not lack ambition. They lack access. They do not lack discipline. They lack systems that reward merit. They do not lack ideas. They lack an invitation to implement them. This is not a generation of dreamers it is a generation of doers who have been denied the tools to build. The barriers they describe are not internal. They are architectural. Built into the structure of policy, politics, and public life. They are not asking for easy lives. They are asking for fair starting lines. For paid internships that don't require connections. For degrees that mean something in the job market. For public institutions that work for everyone- not just for those with family in the ministry. This is not a call for charity. It's a call for justice. And yet, perhaps most powerfully, this generation has not given up. Despite the disappointments, the broken promises, the missed opportunities, they have stayed. They have voted. They have filled out this survey. They are still speaking. Not because they are naïve, but because they believe this country can change and they want to help change it. They are not asking to be saved. They are asking to be partnered with. If institutions fail to act on what youth have said here, not just what they measured, but what they meant, the consequences will not be abstract.

They will be measurable: in another wave of emigration, in another cycle of disengagement, in another generation who sees politics not as possibility, but as theatre.

But if the findings of this report are taken seriously, if this becomes the beginning of dialogue, of shared responsibility- then something powerful becomes possible. Because youth are not just Macedonia's future. They are its clearest mirror. Its loudest conscience. And its best chance at renewal.

„Young people aren't asking for privileges—we're asking for a chance. We need access to quality education, affordable public transport, and spaces where we can express ourselves, learn, and work. We need opportunities within our own communities so we don't have to leave just to survive or grow.

Invest in youth centers, digital infrastructure, training programs, and local businesses. We are ready to work, to create, to stay—but first, you must see us and include us in the decision-making process. Without youth, there is no future.“ — Survey respondent (ISLAA & ICAC, 2025)

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(NON)ETHICAL ASPECTS OF WRITING SCIENTIFIC PAPERS WITH THE HELP OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

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INTRODUCTION

The educational process is dynamic, evolving in response to changing study needs and the surrounding circumstances. Over time, education has constantly transformed, and we are now witnessing changes in the educational process. Artificial intelligence is fundamentally altering the ways we learn, solve problems, and help in the teaching process in higher education. Since the term "artificial intelligence" was first used in the mid-20th century, it has undergone significant changes. Today, artificial intelligence is increasingly present in universities, assisting with various processes such as facilitating education, solving problems, providing 24/7 support, and offering vast amounts of information. Besides its role in scientific disciplines, it also greatly benefits the arts, creative industries, and medicine. One of the tools of artificial intelligence, ChatGPT, directly engages with all stakeholders in the educational process. This tool can significantly and accurately assist students in their educational journey. According to some researchers, the platform also yields good results in learning foreign languages, which can be highly beneficial. My survey indicated that many doctoral students occasionally use the ChatGPT platform for writing scientific papers, learning, and problem-solving. In terms of ethics, a significant number of students believe that there is a need for regulatory ethical norms regarding the use of artificial intelligence.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Artificial intelligence plays a major role in the process of higher education and changes the way and process of learning. Computer scientist John McCarthy

and colleagues first coined the term artificial intelligence in 1956 at a conference in Dortmund. (McCarthy J, et.al, 1956) According to Mannury 2023, the potential of artificial intelligence is huge and plays a big role in the educational process of the current generations, and with a high probability that it will remain so in the future. AI has the capacity to enhance interpersonal communication and the availability of information and this could represent a positive impact on individuals in higher education. In his 2020 research, Houde also claims that artificial intelligence contributes a lot to creative industries in addition to standard sciences. One of the tools that has revolutionized AI is the ChatGPT platform. According to Encyclopedia Britannica "GPT (Generative Pre-training Transformer), which is a type of neural network designed for natural language processing tasks, ChatGPT says its primary goal "is to generate human-like text that can be used for a variety of applications, such as chatbots, automated content creation, and language translation." ChatGPT as an AI tool can help with academic writing and research. It has the ability to generate paper summaries, extract key points, and even provide citations. Additionally, ChatGPT-3 has the ability to understand and respond to complex instructions, making it an effective teaching and learning tool. (Konstantis, 2023) It can be used as a tool to aid academic writing, rather than replace it. In addition, the output generated by ChatGPT-3 should be fact-checked and reviewed by the user, as it is not always 100% accurate. (Aljanabi, 2023) However, with the development of artificial intelligence, it is necessary to pay attention to ethics in the work with its application. According to Resnik 2019, in every domain of work ethical principles such as honesty, objectivity, integrity, vigilance, openness, respect for intellectual property, confidentiality, and responsible publication must be respected.

WHAT IS ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE?

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is playing a huge role in the development level in this decade and is used in a very wide variety of fields, such as financial markets, the banking sector, supply chains, education, manufacturing, commerce, and healthcare. Artificial intelligence is also a major enabler of many business innovations and is becoming commonplace in business, academia, and people's

lives. In the simplest explanation, it is used in Google's web searches, recommendations for various content by Netflix, ads on Instagram and Facebook, and so on. Artificial intelligence is the branch of computer science that deals with building smart machines capable of performing tasks that normally require human intelligence. In addition to these capabilities, some applications of artificial intelligence include automated interfaces for visual perception, speech recognition, decision-making, and translation between languages. Artificial intelligence belongs to the group of interdisciplinary sciences. (Geron A, 2017)

The term artificial intelligence was first used by computer scientist John McCarthy and colleagues in 1956. (McCarthy J, et.al, 1956) Prior to this, work in the field of artificial intelligence included the Turing Test proposed by Alan Turing as a measure of machine intelligence and a chess-playing program written by Dietrich Prinz. (Computer History Museum. Mountain View, California) Artificial intelligence is a broad field of study that includes many theories, methods, and technologies, as well as the following major subfields: Machine learning, Neural Networks, Deep Learning, Computer vision, and Natural language processing. (Valavanidis, 2023) Many researchers argue about the potential for job replacement opportunities and how the change itself will affect the labor market. Artificial intelligence has great potential to revolutionize employment opportunities by tackling language barriers, improving digital literacy, and automating tasks (Lund BD, 2023). On the other hand, some downsides may be caused by artificial intelligence such as job automation and targeted demand for certain skilled positions. Understanding these dynamics is essential in harnessing the benefits of generative artificial intelligence while mitigating potential employment challenges in developing countries (Manuru et.al 2023).

The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education

Since the beginning of the 21st century, Artificial Intelligence has begun to penetrate higher education through learning management systems. (Lin& Chen, 2024)

With the passage of time and technological progress, its use has changed and improved. To a large extent, AI has helped both students and lecturers. In the late 2010s, higher education institutions began using analytics to identify

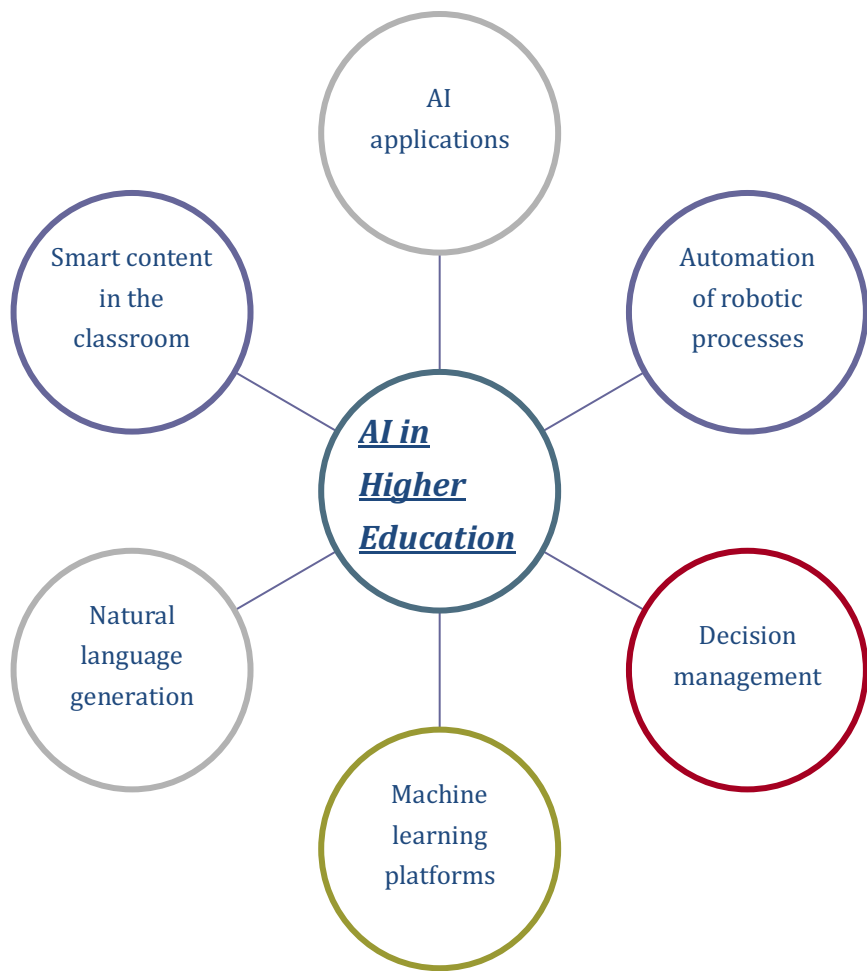
students at risk of dropping out or falling behind (Seidel & Kutieleh, 2017). AI models analyze data such as attendance, grades, and engagement to support early interventions, allowing professors and technical staff to provide support to students who are struggling in their studies. (Shilbayeh & Abonamah, 2021). During the pandemic years at the beginning of 2020, Artificial Intelligence has increased its influence and importance in the work of higher education institutions and the higher education process even more. During this period, a large part of the teaching processes also changed, so online lectures and exercises became a reality at all Universities. The potential of artificial intelligence is huge and plays a big role in the educational process of the current generations, and with a high probability it will remain so in the future. AI can enhance interpersonal communication and can improve the availability of information. This process has a positive impact on individuals in higher education.

Artificial intelligence can help with a variety of tasks in higher education such as communication, curriculum, writing, and administrative work. It can also contribute to writing, facilitating personal learning experiences, enhancing research capabilities, improving available learning opportunities, and optimizing assessment, scheduling, and enrollment processes. One of the examples is the application Wordtune as well as Grammarly, which helps authors when writing in English. (Manury, 2023)

Artificial intelligence has the potential to enhance writing by providing automated suggestions to improve word choice, sentence structure, flow, and overall text coherence. Additionally, AI is increasingly utilized in the corporate sector, particularly in customer service and support. By analyzing large datasets of text, AI can identify patterns and relationships between words and phrases, allowing it to offer informed suggestions to improve writing quality. AI is also valuable in the fine arts, including art academies and design, and plays a significant role in the creative industry, such as architectural design. One of its powerful capabilities is generating images from the past and providing high-quality speech solutions for individuals with severe communication disabilities. (Houde et al., 2020; Qadir, 2022) (Houde S, 2020) Artificial intelligence has a wide application in the educational process and certainly plays a big role in several

stages in higher education. Figure 1 shows the segments in which artificial intelligence is used.

Figure 1



Author: Netragainkar, 2024

According to Netragainker, Artificial Intelligence in higher education is mostly used in several segments namely AI Applications, Robotic Process Automation, Decision Management, Machine Learning Platforms, Natural Language Generation, Smart Content in a classroom, as presented in the scetch. Many authors agree that artificial intelligence in higher education plays a positive role. According to a study by Chaika 2023, the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in education can be seen as a powerful driver and great potential from various aspects, both in the teaching and learning areas. It is also possible to

notice a great influence of AI on the strengthening of student engagement, data collection and analysis of teaching and administrative purposes. In the study of the role of AI in higher education, it is also stated that the students have a great benefit in the process of their education. AI systems adapt to individual learning styles, and tools can be used to advance their work and understanding of tasks, and facilitating their learning process. It should also be taken into consideration that AI-based virtual teaching, as well as chatbots, can greatly assist students in obtaining information and assistance with their assignments. (Chaika,2023) AI-powered chatbots offer accurate and precise answers to student questions and shorten administrative procedures. (Chaika, 2023)

ChatGPT as part of artificial intelligence and its application in higher education

If we consult the ChatGPT platform about what ChatGPT is, we will get the following answer: ChatGPT is a natural language processing model that is trained to generate text responses based on input text messages. This technology is used to create conversational agents, automatic text generators, chat assistants, and other applications that involve human interaction through natural language. As part of AI, ChatGPT can analyze and generate text, making it part of the general field of natural language processing in artificial intelligence. (ChatGPT 3.5) ChatGPT, is software that allows the user to ask questions using conversational or natural language. It was released on November 30, 2022 by the American company OpenAI and almost immediately caused concern among the public, journalists and others over concerns that it was impossible to distinguish human-generated text from ChatGPT. Language models produce text based on the probability that a word will appear based on the previous words in the sequence. By being trained on about 45 terabytes of text from the Internet, the GPT-3 language model used by ChatGPT calculates that some sequences of words are more likely to occur than others. ChatGPT calls itself a "language model developed by OpenAI, a leading artificial intelligence research lab." The model is based on the GPT (Generative Pre-training Transformer) architecture, which is a type of neural network designed for natural language processing tasks. ChatGPT says its primary goal "is to generate human-like text that can be used for a variety of

applications, such as chatbots, automated content creation, and language translation." (Britannica, 2023) ChatGPT as an AI tool can help with academic writing and research. It has the ability to generate paper summaries, extract key points and even provide citations. These things can be an advantage and save considerable time and effort to the researchers themselves. ChatGPT-3.5 is capable of generating text for a variety of academic documents, including research papers, essays, and dissertations. It can also provide feedback on grammar, style, and coherence, assisting writers in improving their work. Additionally, ChatGPT-3 is adept at understanding and responding to complex instructions, making it a valuable tool for teaching and learning. For instance, it can help students comprehend and summarize challenging texts, as well as generate prompts for writing assignments. However, it is important to recognize that ChatGPT-3.5 is not a replacement for human intelligence and creativity. It should be utilized as an aid in academic writing, not as a substitute. Moreover, the content generated by ChatGPT-3 should be fact-checked and reviewed by the user, as it may not always be entirely 100% accurate. (Aljanabi, 2023)

THE ETHICS IN SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH WORK

The primary intention in ethical research, when discussing the definition of the term "ethics," is to be guided by the general belief that it pertains to ethos/ēthos, that is, what relates to ethos/ēthos. This raises the question of what exactly these two terms signify and what their place and role are in the process of constructing the term "ethics." (Donev, 2019) (Ethics Handbook, UKIM) Just as in everyday aspects of ethics, in science and scientific research, it plays a significant role. In the context of research, the importance of ethics cannot be overstated, which is why many professional associations, government bodies, and academic institutions have established detailed codes, rules, and policies to ensure ethical conduct. Government agencies like the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the National Science Foundation (NSF), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) have implemented ethical guidelines that funded researchers must follow. Additionally, other critical ethical frameworks have been developed by influential organizations, including the International Committee of Medical

Journal Editors, the American Chemical Society, the American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science, the American Psychological Association, the American Anthropological Association, and the American Association of University Professors. Foundational documents such as the Nuremberg Code and the Declaration of Helsinki also guide ethical practices in research (Resnik, 2007).

Resnik identifies key principles that should govern scientific research: honesty, objectivity, integrity, carefulness, openness, respect for intellectual property, confidentiality, responsible publication, responsible mentoring, respect for colleagues, social responsibility, non-discrimination, competence, legality, care for animals, and the protection of human subjects.

Ethics is essential in all work environments, particularly in academia and scientific research. For any profession aiming to maintain its professional status, five key dimensions are crucial (Hodzic, 2005):

- The development of core theories and techniques that form a cohesive, systematic whole.
- The monopoly on specialized expertise within the field.
- The profession's recognition and reputation in the public sphere.
- The level of organization within the profession.
- The development of professional ethics.

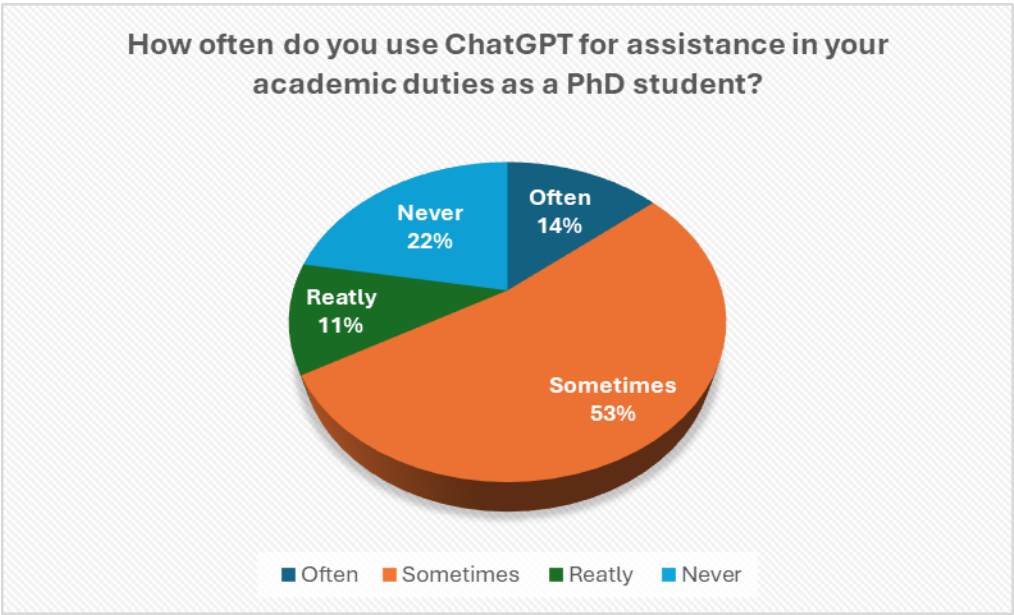
Professional ethics is vital to a profession as it addresses the moral aspects of work, explaining the importance of the relevant activities and advocating for the general norms of work ethics. It highlights the ethical significance of specific tasks, their benefit to society, and the integration of these tasks into broader human actions. Professional ethics also emphasizes the professional's responsibility to perform their duties well, addresses the ethical challenges inherent in the work, and underlines the need for quality and ethical conduct in professional activities (Temkov, 2007).

ANALYSIS OF THE SURVEYS FROM THE SURVEY RESEARCH

This survey questionnaire was sent to doctoral students at public universities in the Republic of Macedonia pursuing doctorates in the field of economic sciences. The questionnaire was distributed to the universities and provided to the students. The questionnaire consists of closed, combined, and open-ended questions. The purpose of this research is to analyze, through a survey, the impact of artificial intelligence via the ChatGPT application on ethics in scientific research, to explain the risks, advantages, and disadvantages of its use. The most commonly used methods for data collection in qualitative research include document analysis, conducting interviews, and focus groups with respondents (Burnard et al., 2008), and some of these techniques were also employed in this specific case study. The research was conducted with full assurance of the respondents' anonymity and the confidentiality of their data. The research consisted of 12 questions, of which one was open-ended, one was combined, and 10 were closed-ended with predefined answers. The 12th question offered a Likert scale for ranking five possible options, ranging from least to most. In the analysis below, we will examine the responses and provide information question by question. Although the questionnaire was sent to all of the public Universities only three Universities participated in the research and two of them did not respond to the questionnaire. The largest part of the respondents are from the University of St. Cyril and Methodius from Skopje, i.e. 41.7% of the respondents. Second in terms of the number of responses are the students from the University of St. Kliment Ohridski (38,9%), while in third place are the students from the Goce Delchev University in Shtip (19,4%). No participants from the State University of Tetova or the University of Mother Teresa took part in the survey. Of the active PhD students from the universities that participated in the survey, 88 in total, 51 took part in the survey. In terms of the year, first-year students made up the smallest group, accounting for 30.6% of the responses. 36,1% of students were in their second year, while 33,3% were in their third year. The third question was regarding the number of papers published by PhD students. Regarding the number of papers indicated by the respondents, most of them or 57% have published only one paper, 35% of students have none, three papers have been published by 2%, six papers have

been published by 4%, and ten papers by 2%. In response to the question of whether they have used the ChatGPT application so far, 77.8% of PhD students indicated that they have used the application, while 22.2% stated that they have not used it. However, the majority of PhD students work with the help of this application. The fifth question referred to the students' frequent usage of ChatGPT.

Figure 2



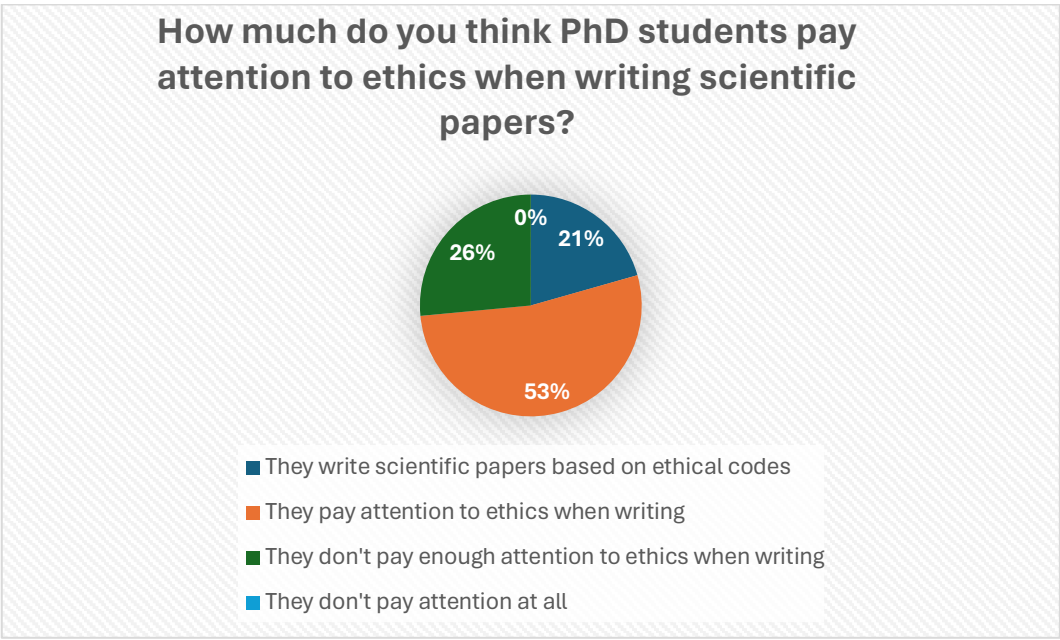
The analysis shows that while ChatGPT is a valuable tool for PhD students, its usage varies widely. Over half of the students use it occasionally, indicating its growing role in academic work. However, a sizable minority of students either rarely or never use it, pointing to potential areas where the tool could be better integrated into academic workflows or where additional training and awareness could be beneficial. Overall, the data suggests a trend toward increased adoption but also highlights the diverse approaches students take in leveraging technology for their studies.

The sixth question referred to the specific academic duties for which students most often used the ChatGPT application. 35.3% of them responded that they used it for research and literature analysis, while the majority, 38% of respondents, indicated that they used it for solving academic tasks. Only 8% reported using the application to assist in writing scientific papers. 32.4% of

students stated that they used ChatGPT to generate ideas and concepts. Since this question was also semi-open, allowing respondents to add their own answers, one of the participants indicated that they use the application to improve their English language skills. The remaining students stated that they did not use this application.

Regarding how familiar the students are with the ethical aspects of writing scientific papers with the help of artificial intelligence, which was the seventh question, 58.8% of respondents indicated that they have only partial information. 35.3% of students were uninformed about the ethical aspects, while the remaining students stated that they were sufficiently informed. PhD students share the general belief that they pay attention to ethics in writing during their research work.

Figure 3

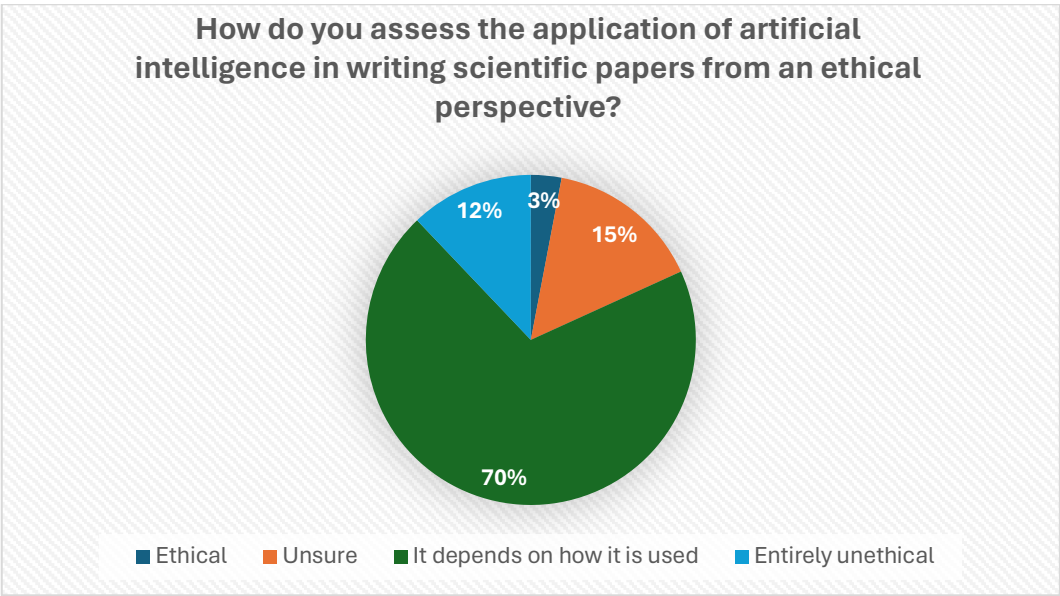


The analysis reveals that most PhD students are mindful of ethics in their scientific writing. However, 26.5% feel they don't focus on it as much as they should. This highlights a need for enhanced ethical training and awareness to ensure that all students fully understand and consistently apply ethical principles in their research. While it's positive that no students entirely disregard ethics, the significant number who feel they could improve suggests there's still work to be done in promoting a strong culture of ethical standards in academic writing.

In response to the question about how often you pay attention to ethical codes when writing, the majority of students (71.8%) indicated that they pay significant attention to their writing. Meanwhile, 25.3% of students reported paying less attention. Additionally, 2.9% admitted to paying even less attention, while none of the students stated that they did not pay attention at all.

Figure 4 shows the opinion of the students regarding the assessment of the application of artificial intelligence in writing scientific papers from an ethical perspective.

Figure 4



The survey results reveal a nuanced view on the ethical implications of using artificial intelligence in writing scientific papers. A small percentage of respondents (3.00%) consider the application of AI in this context to be ethical. This indicates that only a few view AI as inherently compatible with ethical research practices. A significant portion (15.20%) remains unsure about the ethical aspects of AI usage, suggesting a level of uncertainty or lack of clear guidelines on this issue.

The majority (69.70%) believe that the ethicality of AI in scientific writing depends on how it is used. This highlights the importance of context and application in determining whether AI practices align with ethical standards.

Lastly, 12.10% view the use of AI in this context as entirely unethical, reflecting concerns about potential ethical breaches or misuse.

Overall, the results indicate that while a substantial number of respondents are open to AI's ethical use depending on its application, there is still a notable divide in opinions, with some expressing clear concerns about its ethical implications.

The following question asked whether you believe there should be regulations or ethical standards to govern and oversee the use of artificial intelligence in writing scientific papers the results were as follows. The majority of students, or 68.6%, believe that there should be regulations and ethical standards to control and regulate the activities of artificial intelligence in writing scientific papers. 8.6% of respondents answered that they do not think such regulations are necessary, while 22.9% of doctoral students were uncertain in their responses.

Regarding the final question, "Which part do you pay the most attention to when writing papers from the given options?", the results were as follows.

The question utilized a scale from 1, representing the lowest value, to 5, representing the highest, with 2 indicating a poor rating, 3 a neutral or fair rating, and 4 a good rating.

From the collected responses, we can conclude that doctoral students focus the least on non-discrimination, with six respondents rating it as 1. Citation, however, is considered quite important by doctoral students, with 39 respondents giving it a rating of 5. The lowest value for citation was a rating of 2, with two respondents indicating this. Regarding research methodology, 23 students stated that they assign the highest importance to this aspect, while one respondent rated it a 2. Copyright is a segment where the majority of doctoral students gave a rating of 2, with a total of 3 respondents. Additionally, 8 students gave a rating of 3, which was the most common rating for this aspect.

CONCLUSION

Artificial intelligence plays a significant role in the educational process, particularly impacting higher education and research. AI has the potential to enhance interpersonal communication and the accessibility of information, which

could positively influence individuals in higher education. One of the most prominent AI-based tools is ChatGPT. As an AI tool, it can assist in academic writing and research by generating paper summaries, extracting key points, and even providing citations. These capabilities can be advantageous, saving researchers considerable time and effort. However, the development of AI also raises the question of ethical research practices. Ethics is crucial in any work environment and must be carefully considered, especially in academic and scientific research.

The survey, which included three state universities and responses from 51 doctoral students—most of whom were from "Saints Cyril and Methodius University"—found that most respondents have occasionally used the ChatGPT tool. A significant percentage of respondents also agreed that they pay close attention to ethics in their writing. The surveyed doctoral students agreed that the ethicality of research depends on how the tool is used. A substantial portion, or 68% of respondents, agreed that ethical standards are necessary for the use of artificial intelligence in writing scientific papers. Citation, research methodology, and copyright were rated highest as the areas where doctoral students focus most in the research process.

To ensure the ethical use of AI in scientific writing, it is essential for universities, educators, and researchers to establish clear guidelines and training programs that emphasize responsible AI practices. AI-generated content should be critically evaluated, and proper citations must be given to maintain academic integrity. Institutions should establish protocols that define acceptable practices for AI usage, including transparency in how AI tools contribute to the writing process. Furthermore, fostering an awareness of the ethical implications of AI will help researchers make informed decisions that uphold the credibility and authenticity of their work. Ethical considerations should be an integral part of research methodology, including a focus on accuracy, originality, and respect for intellectual property rights. By integrating these practices, the academic community can harness the benefits of AI while upholding the highest standards of ethical research.¹

¹ First printed in: XIII International Conference on Economy, Business & Society in Digitalized Economy - Proceedings Book

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THE CHANGING FACE OF SOVEREIGNTY: DE-SOVEREIGNIZATION, RE-SOVEREIGNIZATION, AND THE NATION STATE

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INTRODUCTION

Few organizing ideas in international politics have been declared obsolete as often as sovereignty, and few have proved as difficult to dispose of. Across the closing decades of the twentieth century and the opening decades of the twenty-first, states accepted limits on their own freedom of action at a pace with little historical precedent. They signed agreements that bound future governments, amended constitutions under external pressure, and rewrote domestic statutes to satisfy standards drafted elsewhere. Taken together, these adjustments describe a process that can usefully be named de-sovereignization: the gradual thinning of the state's capacity to govern its territory, its population and its legal order without reference to outside authority. Globalization is the principal engine of that thinning. Integration deepens interdependence, and interdependence converts what were once internal choices into externally conditioned ones. The effect is not confined to any single policy field. It registers in economic regulation, in political procedure, in cultural production and in education. A state that wishes to trade on favourable terms, borrow at tolerable rates, or attract the support of international institutions must first demonstrate that its domestic arrangements conform to standards it had no decisive part in writing. Conformity purchases access; the price is discretion.

The mechanisms through which this occurs are familiar enough to be catalogued. Competences are transferred to supranational institutions, most comprehensively within the European Union, whose legislation, standards and regulatory practice member states adopt as their own. Treaties on commerce,

environmental protection and human rights narrow the range of admissible domestic policy. Occasionally international decisions reassign territory outright, whether between states or to an international administration. Accession to the World Trade Organization, or participation in customs unions and free trade areas, subordinates national economic policy to external rules and dispute procedures. Agreements on migration and mobility constrain what had been an almost paradigmatic prerogative of the state, namely the decision as to who may enter and remain. Membership of the United Nations, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund brings a further layer of influence over budgets, monetary arrangements and institutional design. Even collective defence works in this direction: the pooling of responsibility and resources within NATO secures protection at the cost of some latitude in responding to security problems a member might otherwise define for itself.

None of this proceeds without contestation, and the contestation is the second half of the story. Alongside the record of dilution runs an equally visible record of recovery. States and regions have begun to reclaim competences, loosen their dependence on international organizations, and reassert control over matters they had ceded or allowed to drift. This counter-movement, which may be termed re-sovereignization, is not merely defensive. It is bound up with a structural change in the distribution of global power. The rise of China and India, the consolidation of regional groupings, and the relative decline of a single hegemonic centre have produced an environment in which the costs of autonomous action have fallen. Where a unipolar order rewarded alignment, a distributed one rewards manoeuvre. National autonomy is accordingly reappraised, not as a nostalgic attachment but as an instrument of security, economic stability and cultural self-definition.

The argument developed here proceeds in six further steps. Section 2 sets out the Westphalian template and its post-Westphalian revision along three axes. Section 3 traces the reach of erosion beyond those axes, with particular attention to the human rights norm complex, which has proved its sharpest edge. Section 4 introduces the distinction between authority and control, and argues that this distinction does most of the analytical work in the debate. Section 5 examines three theoretical reconstitutions of sovereignty, cosmopolitan, assemblage-based

and exceptionalist, that attempt to describe what replaces the classical model. Section 6 turns to multipolarity and the conditions it creates for sovereigntist reassertion. Section 7 reads three contemporary policy domains as evidence of re-sovereignization in practice, before the conclusion draws the two movements together.

THE WESTPHALIAN TAMPLATE AND ITS REVISION

The Peace of Westphalia of 1648 supplied the legal foundation of the modern state and, with it, the organizing principles of modern world politics. At its core lay a reciprocal undertaking among the rulers of Europe: each would recognize the others' right to govern the territories they held, and none would intervene in the internal affairs of another. That undertaking is what is now called state sovereignty. Its content can be disaggregated into three propositions, and it is along these three that the distance between the Westphalian and post-Westphalian orders becomes measurable.

The first proposition concerns territoriality. Westphalia assumes that humanity is organized primarily into territorial political communities with precisely drawn boundaries, and that political life takes place within them. Borders and territories have not ceased to matter under globalization, but they no longer exhaust the map. A second geography of political organization and power has taken shape alongside the first, one whose lines of force run across state boundaries rather than stopping at them.

The second concerns supremacy. On the Westphalian account, a state enjoys within its borders a political and legislative authority that is supreme, unconditional and exclusive, answerable to no superior. The post-Westphalian position is more qualified. Governmental authority has been transformed, but transformation is not the same as disappearance. What has emerged instead is the joint exercise of authority across national, regional and global levels, with the state as one participant among several rather than the sole locus of decision.

The third concerns autonomy. Westphalia establishes the principle of self-determination and self-government, constituting the state as an autonomous subject of political, social and economic action, with a clear demarcation between

the domain of internal authority and that of external relations.² In conditions of dense interdependence, that demarcation is difficult to sustain. States now pursue domestic objectives through continuously renegotiated multilateral arrangements, so that the achievement of internal goals is routed through external commitments.

The practical consequence is a persistent mismatch between what governments are asked to deliver and what they can deliver alone. Embedded in regional and global networks, states face demands across the whole span of applied policy, from education, health and employment to the suppression of illicit activity, at a moment when their autonomy is no longer operating at full capacity and is increasingly conditioned by external factors (Baylis, Smith and Owens 2008). De-sovereignization, understood in this restricted sense, is the simultaneous alteration of all three axes. That simultaneity is the principal difference between the Westphalian and post-Westphalian orders.

Two observations qualify the picture. The first is that the erosion described here is not confined to the three axes; it has spread well past them, and supraterritorial relations cannot be located within any single territorial jurisdiction. The second is that states themselves accelerated the transnational networking that now constrains them. The era of intensive globalization drove the expansion of supraterritorial relations, and those relations reach into conditions inside states without crossing any border in the physical sense, with the result that even heavily resourced states rarely exercise the unimpeded internal governance they once claimed. A number of material conditions of the present order make the classical construction of sovereignty unsustainable. It is

²On the autonomy condition, Schmitter and Karl note that a polity must be self-governing and able to act independently of constraints imposed by some other overarching political system. They observe that contemporary democratic theorists, referring to formally sovereign nation-states, largely took this condition for granted, whereas the development of blocs, alliances, spheres of influence and various neocolonial arrangements has made autonomy a salient question: whether a system is democratic when its elected officials cannot make binding decisions without the approval of actors outside their territorial domain, a question that remains significant even where those outsiders are themselves democratically constituted and the arrangement can be altered or ended, as in Puerto Rico, and becomes critical where neither condition holds, as in the Baltic states. Schmitter, Philippe C., and Terry Lynn Karl. 1991. "What Democracy Is... and Is Not." *Journal of Democracy* 2 (3): 75-88.

worth recalling, however, that the Westphalian principle had been rejected on moral rather than material grounds long before, by universalists, liberal cosmopolitans and Marxist internationalists alike (Scholte 2005).

THE REACH OF EROSION

Beyond territory, supremacy and autonomy

Erosion is felt well outside the three classical axes. In the public media sphere, the state has lost much of its former leverage to new technologies, social platforms and the communicative possibilities of the internet. In the economy, the mobility of capital makes independent monetary policy progressively harder to conduct. In education, the ubiquity of networked information means governments no longer control the transmission of knowledge. In culture, the uniformity generated by global media circulates content that is consumed largely without critical mediation. Security structures, the privacy of personal communication and the handling of personal data are subject to the same pressures.

It is nonetheless in the field of human rights that de-sovereignization is felt most acutely. International human rights norms contest, by construction, the claim of states to determine for themselves the rules governing individuals within their borders. Non-governmental and international organizations press governments openly to adopt particular standards, and over the past two decades such pressure has on occasion escalated to the point of military intervention (Krasner 2001).

Human rights as the sharpest edge

A substantial literature of the second decade of the twenty-first century addresses precisely this mechanism. Jean Cohen, writing on the revival of human rights, democracy and sovereignty under globalization, identifies three waves in the career of the human rights idea. The first followed the Second World War, with the creation of tribunals, treaties, conventions and declarations. The second

accompanied decolonization, the movements that emerged against Soviet influence in Eastern Europe, and the democratic transitions of South America and Southern Europe. The third began in the final decade of the twentieth century and is distinguished by the appearance of humanitarian military intervention as an instrument for the protection of universal rights (Cohen 2008). The cumulative effect is a world in which national interest is no longer the only consideration of first rank. Human rights and humanitarian concerns now shape domestic political agendas directly. Every prior attempt to justify armed intervention by reference to the condition of human rights has already redefined the concept of sovereignty inherited from Westphalia.

The lineage of the institutions doing the redefining is itself worth noting. Kant's thought underlies the international organizations whose declared purpose is durable peace, and supplied a starting point for the drafting of the Charter of the United Nations; the League of Nations, and subsequently the United Nations, are the institutional translation of that idea. The Kantian conception of perpetual peace sits at the base of the UN's understanding of international peace and security, and the condition Kant attached to it, a republican constitution, is realized today through sovereignty and self-determination (Strauss and Cropsey 1987). The right of states to exercise national sovereignty is in turn secured through non-intervention and the inviolability of territorial integrity, and the Charter derives from this the values by which lasting peace and a world society are to be pursued.

The difficulty lies in the application. In a world of mutual dependence, which some analysts read as the imposition of Western values, the values codified in the charters and instruments of international organizations are enforced unevenly. They are, in origin, largely the project of the most powerful states and the victors of the Second World War, and they are breached by those same states with some regularity. Rules of this kind bind others while proving pliable for their authors. Where human rights are invoked selectively, in the interest of the strongest, the sovereignty of states whose governments are constrained by limited power and territory is what gives way. On the Westphalian understanding, human rights and minority rights are not complements to

sovereignty at all, and states that ground the exercise of domestic competence in their sovereignty tend to experience international law as standing against it.

Henry Kissinger's treatment of the problem is instructive. On his reading, the United States may adapt its conception of human rights to the pursuit of its priorities, but neither its history nor the judgement of its citizens will permit it to abandon that conception altogether. China, viewed from a greater distance, rejects the justification of international action by appeal to the international community's understanding of rights. Kissinger cites Deng Xiaoping to the effect that national sovereignty matters considerably more than human rights, and that the Group of Seven regularly violates the sovereignty of poor and weak states of the Third World; on this view the vocabulary of rights, freedom and democracy is constructed to protect the interests of strong and wealthy countries, which use their advantages to coerce weaker ones and to sustain hegemony and power politics (Kissinger 2014, 455).

It is not unduly cynical to conclude that the powers which built an international order on rights and freedoms have found in them a serviceable instrument of intervention, and that the exercise undermines the sovereignty of the states subjected to it. A conception of sovereignty is thereby imposed which cannot be applied to states as subjects of international relations, and arguably should not be.

Underneath the normative argument lies an economic one. Rights and freedoms, and the theories of equality and property that accompany them, are not separable from exchange in open markets. As George Friedman puts it, military power and geographical reality between them produce economic reality (Friedman 2009, 17). Advocates of globalization who understand it principally as an economic phenomenon reduce cosmopolitan norms to a thin version of the rights to life, liberty, equality and property, realized in step with the expansion of free markets and trade.

Theorists of empire, notably Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, supply a vocabulary for this configuration by distinguishing empire from imperialism. Imperialism denotes an exploitative order in which one or more sovereign powers impose their will on others, and therefore presupposes identifiable sovereign centres. Empire denotes something else: an anonymous network of

rules, regulations and structures locked into the system of global capitalism, accompanied by legal norms that protect capitalist property relations and govern the technological, communicative, informational and security infrastructure on which accumulation depends. Empire, on their account, is a hegemon without a centre (Hardt and Negri 2000). The formulation captures why de-sovereignization is so hard to resist by conventional means: there is no counterpart against which sovereignty could be asserted.

A parallel critique has been advanced from within realism. John Mearsheimer's account of liberal hegemony describes the ambition to remake other societies in a preferred image as a project that outruns both its means and its legitimacy, and whose failures return as costs to the intervening power itself (Mearsheimer 2018). Whatever one makes of his prescriptions, the diagnosis converges with the one offered here: the extension of a universalist normative order and the erosion of sovereign prerogative are the same movement described from opposite ends.

AUTHORITY AND CONTROL: LOCATING WHAT IS LOST

The proposition that sovereignty has been eroded under globalization is, in one sense, beyond dispute. What requires precision is the sense in which it holds. The erosion is primarily a matter of control rather than of authority. States retain, formally and legally, the competence to decide; what they have lost is the practical capacity to make their decisions effective against flows that do not respect the jurisdiction in which those decisions are taken.

Richard Cooper's analysis of interdependence anticipated the point. In a world of large and open capital markets, smaller states cannot conduct an independent monetary policy, because they cannot govern cross-border capital movements (Cooper 1968). The formal authority of the central bank is untouched; its instruments have simply been disarmed by the environment in which they operate. Global capitalism under conditions of deregulation and diffusion becomes transnational and moves outside the regulatory reach of any national economy. The intensified interconnection of national economies has produced production networks and trade flows that are transnational by

constitution, and economic fluctuation at this scale is not a question to which national or even international economic policy can supply an answer. The relevant domain is the world economy, and its movements depend on the expansion of markets and trade organized around international liberalization.

The same logic governs the movement of goods, persons and information across frontiers. The circumstances in which modern states operate are transnational rather than national, and control over cross-border flows is correspondingly compromised, which is precisely the dimension at stake in interdependence sovereignty. The consequence reaches inward. Internal sovereignty, which requires that the organs of political authority exercise effective control over what occurs inside the state, is weakened when the state proves unable to do so. The loss of external control thus undermines domestic control directly: a state that cannot regulate what crosses its borders will not be able to control what happens within them (Krasner 1991, 12).

Holding authority and control apart clarifies both halves of the argument. It explains why the formal apparatus of sovereignty has survived a period that was widely expected to dissolve it, and why claims of its disappearance have repeatedly proved premature. It also explains what re-sovereignization is actually trying to recover. The campaigns examined in Section 7 are not attempts to reclaim a legal title that was never surrendered. They are attempts to restore effective control over supply chains, borders, data, currency and narrative, and it is because control rather than authority is the object that they take the particular forms they do.

RECONSTITUTIONS: COSMOPOLITAN, ASSEMBLED, EXCEPTIONAL

If the classical model no longer describes what states do, the question becomes what description should replace it. Three answers deserve consideration, and they differ less in their diagnosis than in what they propose to put in the place of the concept they unsettle.

The first is David Held's. The reformulation of sovereignty, on his account, begins after the Second World War, when the classical model proves unable to meet the challenges of the new era. Liberal sovereignty is the first reformulation:

it recasts the relationship between state and citizen, and grounds political legitimacy in the state's role as guarantor of basic rights. Held regards even this as insufficient for present conditions and proposes a further revision under the heading of cosmopolitan sovereignty. Legitimate political power is no longer tied exclusively to the political communities that were once assumed to be its only centre, and territorial rule by states with fixed borders ceases to be the sole form of authority. Sovereignty becomes a networked domain of public authorities, shaped by a general cosmopolitan legal framework while remaining distinct from it, within which political decisions and democratic practice are carried on both inside and beyond national borders. Held's own formulation of the necessity is blunt: common problems and a common fate can no longer be ignored, and coexistence and cooperation require a moral and political framework of interaction, since neither environmental catastrophe nor economic collapse admits of any but a shared solution (Held 2010, 19).

Held is careful to distinguish this from a Western aspiration to ideological control. Cosmopolitan sovereignty is offered as a framework of ideas and principles for confronting global challenges, resting on the acceptance of diversity and local belonging, on the rule of law, and on the recognition that individuals and communities require political autonomy if they are to live wisely and justly. The stakes of its absence are the point of the argument. Without such a framework, decisions will be settled not by law and justice but by power and economic weight; the pressing issues of the age, on his account, can only be addressed through cosmopolitan principles, and a world without them is not one in which differences are valued for their own sake but one in which power in its various forms determines outcomes (Held 2010).

The second answer, Saskia Sassen's, is less normative and more structural. Globalization, on her reading, has reconstituted state sovereignty rather than simply eroded it. The state remains a decisive actor, but its authority is increasingly embedded within global assemblages that cut across the older distinction between the national and the international. The European Union is the clearest illustration: member states share and pool sovereignty in pursuit of collective ends, which dilutes absolute authority while representing a pragmatic adaptation to interdependence rather than a surrender to it (Sassen 2006). The

reading matters because it makes re-sovereignization intelligible. If sovereignty were simply draining away, its return would be inexplicable; if it is being reassembled, then the components can be reassembled differently, and political contestation over the arrangement is exactly what one would expect. The objection voiced within Europe itself, as when Václav Klaus warned that the Union's integrationist ambitions rested on assumptions about the obsolescence of the nation-state that its populations did not share (Klaus 2003), is on this reading not an aberration but a predictable feature of an assembled order.

The third answer is Giorgio Agamben's. The sovereign, on his account, is defined not only by the capacity to rule but by the capacity to suspend the rule of law, and the state of exception is therefore the point at which sovereignty shows itself most clearly. In a de-sovereignized world that capacity is increasingly claimed by actors other than the state, whether international organizations or private entities, which challenges the state's monopoly over legal and political decision (Agamben 2005). The criterion is a demanding one, and it locates sovereignty wherever the power of suspension actually sits rather than wherever the constitutional text says it should.

Read alongside these, the philosophical vocabulary of the late twentieth century supplies a further diagnosis. Jean Baudrillard's account of hyperreality describes a condition in which symbols and simulations displace the reality they once represented, and power becomes diffuse and indistinct. Sovereignty, once embodied in the tangible authority of the state, approaches the condition of a simulacrum: an image with no corresponding reality beneath it. States remain sovereign in name while lacking the capacity to perform the functions the name implies, as supranational organizations, transnational corporations and non-state actors assume roles formerly reserved to them (Baudrillard 1994). Michel Foucault's conception of power as decentralized and pervasive points in the same direction. Power is not exercised solely from a central authority but distributed across networks, institutions and discourses, and de-sovereignization on this view is not the disappearance of power but its dispersal across multiple sites. Global financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank exert considerable influence over national policy, and multinational

corporations operate substantially beyond the regulatory reach of individual governments, which unsettles the territorial premise of sovereignty at its root.

What follows from all three reconstitutions is a common conclusion. The world cannot be understood solely through the state and the rights and obligations contained within its frame, which is to say through the sovereignty that issued from Westphalia. A state unable to realize its internal sovereignty and to establish order in the interest of its citizens will not be equal to the demands that international sovereignty now makes of it. Sovereignty as the principle that gathers authority within a state remains indispensable; under global conditions it is nonetheless subject to a transformation that allows the state, as a subject of international relations, to act in relation to a wider order. The possibilities open to societies within states depend increasingly on actors outside them, which is the erosion of the principle of non-interference that the Westphalian settlement established.

The Kantian conclusion retains its force here. We live alongside one another and are inescapably interconnected, each community with cultural particularities that demand recognition. Collective political problems and transnational activity impose a transformation of political organization. Processes once understood as the creation and confrontation of nation-states alone are no longer territorially bounded, particularly where global institutions ground their decisions in regional and global law. National governments no longer answer to the traditional conception of state power as inviolable, exclusive and indivisible across a unified territory. The individual policies that once determined the reach of democratic practice and national legislation within a political community lose their purchase when they operate inside networks of political power whose regional and global configuration is increasingly intricate. Sovereignty, which affords independence in domestic matters, becomes fragmented when a state associates itself with others and accepts, voluntarily, subordination to human rights principles and to decisions taken by transnational organizations.

These processes raise a serious question about the continuing relevance of the traditional nation-state. As state power fragments under interdependence, the ability of governments to control their territory and their decision-making is

undermined across media, economy, culture and security alike. Yet the trend does not unfold in a vacuum. It is accompanied by new dynamics in global politics, including the reassertion of sovereignty in particular contexts and the emergence of a multipolar order, and it is to these that the argument now turns.

MULTIPOLARITY AND THE CONDITIONS FOR REASSERTION

A distributed order and its participants

The contemporary multipolar order is distinguished from earlier ones by its global reach and by the diversity of its participants. China, Brazil, Russia, India and South Africa now occupy central positions, and they treat sovereignty as an inviolable principle of territorial rule (Agnew 2018, 4). That diversity introduces a wide range of positions on global governance, economic cooperation and security, which complicates the maintenance of a stable international system. Ambition tends to grow with capability: rising powers seek to improve their security by expanding their capabilities and extending control over their external environment (Gilpin 1981, 94-95).

The shift has been described as the rise of the rest (Zakaria 2008a; Acharya 2014). As a number of states have grown rapidly and begun to shape international power structures, researchers have observed that emerging powers within a multipolar system tend to uphold traditional norms such as sovereignty and non-intervention while opposing unilateral action by dominant states (Acharya 2014, 74). Multipolarity is argued to produce a more stable international environment than unipolarity, which is thought to permit instability and unrestrained behaviour, and the resulting landscape both challenges the liberal hegemonic order led by the United States and enlarges the room for smaller and medium-sized states to pursue autonomous foreign policies, as the trajectory of BRICS illustrates (Alexandroff and Cooper 2010a, 140). Fareed Zakaria's account of a post-American world describes a structure in which the United States must move from unilateral action toward the role of global mediator, concentrating on alliances and on the facilitation of cooperation. He expects American power to persist, supported by a strong educational system conducive to innovation and by continued immigration of the young, in contrast with the ageing populations of

Europe and parts of China, while noting that the rise of other states will be gradual and will require the transition from traditional superpower to a more strategic and collaborative role (Zakaria 2008b).

As the United States adapts to this restructuring, the relevance of sovereignty itself requires restatement. The concept has been central to debate about nation-states, their governance and their interaction since Jean Bodin (1606) and Thomas Hobbes (1651), and its treatment by scholars such as Stephen Krasner (1999) demonstrates how the interpretation continues to adapt to changing political and social circumstances even as the principle endures. Its significance is not confined to theory. Sovereignty demands active maintenance, and particularly so in an order where power is distributed among many.

Structural change and the conditions of dissatisfaction

Periods of significant structural change in the international order, especially where power and influence are at stake, are also the periods in which conditions and outcomes are most vulnerable. Systemic shifts depend substantially on how far the major powers are satisfied with the existing arrangement (Carr 1939). Change in the power dynamic occurs when a rising competitor is dissatisfied with established international leadership, its rules and its norms, and seeks to alter them (Tammen et al. 2000, 9). Within a multipolar system, emerging powers tend to adopt values that promise fairness and justice for weaker states while opposing unilateral, plurilateral or coalition-based action by dominant powers (Alexandroff and Cooper 2010b). Dominant states, for their part, will pursue alterations to the system where they judge the benefits to exceed the costs (Gilpin 1981). What is notable is the normative conservatism of the risers: they remain attached to traditional international norms such as sovereignty and non-intervention rather than to newer principles such as the responsibility to protect (Alexandroff and Cooper 2010a, 140).³ Western

³Some multipolarists argue that while unipolarity can lead to instability and unrestrained behaviour by a single dominant power, multipolarity fosters a more stable and balanced international environment (De Keersmaecker 2015, 4).

European proponents of multipolarity make a complementary claim, presenting it as an enlargement of freedom of action and a capacity to resist the unconditional American influence inherited from the Cold War (De Keersmaeker 2015, 2). The interplay among powers with conflicting interests also enlarges the space available to small states, which can withstand external pressure and exploit the balance of military strength among larger players (Fox 1959). Unlike the rigid East-West blocs of the Cold War, multipolarity produces a more differentiated and interconnected structure in which alignments and coalitions form and dissolve according to the issue and the domain, whether economic or military.⁴

Deterrence, alliance and the calculus of restraint

One route to understanding how sovereignty is restored under multipolarity runs through the distribution of comparable nuclear capabilities among several major powers. Stability then depends not only on mutual deterrence, as in a two-power case, but on how each power expects third parties to behave after an exchange. An uninvolved state might benefit from the mutual weakening of belligerents following an inconclusive strike, or might exploit the outcome of an effective first strike, and its self-interest would incline it toward preserving the multipolar balance rather than favouring any particular state. The alignment of self-interest with systemic stability can therefore deter aggression and check escalation (Liska 1962, 269-270). The future nonetheless remains open, shaped by the competing pulls of polarization, multipolarity and hegemony (Liska 1962, 284). Liska also anticipated much of the present configuration, observing that states of the Global South might in time emerge as great powers,

⁴W. C. Wohlforth argues that multipolarity tends to produce an international order characterized by a balance of power and spheres of influence, while bipolarity is likely to create competing orders around the two leading powers, and unipolarity may drive the dominant state to shape the global order according to its own preferences. The current order is often described through this framework: the United States established a rules-based system during the Cold War to counter the USSR; the end of the Soviet Union produced unipolarity and an effort by the United States and its allies to globalize that order; the rise of multipolarity has disrupted the effort and is leading to a resurgence of balance-of-power politics and spheres of influence (Wohlforth 2022, 411-424).

and that as the system became more multipolar these powers would have to manage the complications posed by non-aligned states while assuming greater responsibility for regional and global security (Liska 1962, 255-257).

Polarity itself implies a threshold in the distribution of capabilities, and the theoretical claims made about multipolarity become applicable in proportion as the capabilities of the major powers are distinctly defined and genuinely comparable (Ikenberry, Mastanduno and Wohlforth 2009, 5). Where no single power dominates, several great powers may sustain greater international cooperation, since a larger number of actors increases the range and flexibility of interaction and generates overlapping interests capable of moderating conflict (Deutsch and Singer 1964). China's competitive posture toward the United States is tempered, for example, by its interest in stable relations with Pakistan and with Southeast Asian states that stand closer to Washington. By multiplying shared interests across powers, multipolarity can thus produce cooperative outcomes (Deutsch and Singer 1964, 318).

Alliance behaviour follows the same pattern of fluidity. Each shift in polarity brings with it a characteristic lateralism and a limited capacity to predict how matters will unfold. Alliances remain a principal strategy for states seeking security and survival, and in a multipolar setting they are inherently complex. Where a bipolar system produces rigid commitments, because the division between two blocs leaves little room for manoeuvre, multipolarity produces issue-specific alignments that track the shifting interests and strategic calculations of their members. Liska's observation holds: the pattern of roles and claims within an alliance changes as national capabilities rise and fall, and while rising capability on the part of the core power may increase cohesion and effectiveness, members of an association of sovereign states tend to seek equilibrium within the alliance as well as against its opponents (Liska 1962, 88-89). Sovereign states within any alliance must therefore manage the tension between the gains of cooperation and the requirements of independence. Economic incentives tend to integrate them, while strategic and political considerations preserve a degree of separation, particularly as external threats recede and states grow wary of arrangements that are highly integrated yet stop short of full unification (Liska 1962, 117).

Multilateralism as instrument, sovereignty as obstacle

Shifts in global polarity involve lateralism and unpredictability, and both unsettle approaches grounded in traditional sovereignty. One reading presents multilateralism as the route to a global order founded on interdependence rather than power politics; another holds that multilateralism is neither inherently benign nor inherently harmful, functioning instead as an instrument available for the advancement of national interests (Morningstar and Blacker 2004). The liberal internationalist tradition, associated with figures such as Cordell Hull, argued for an order founded on interdependence rather than sovereignty, expecting that multilateralism would render spheres of influence, alliances and the balance of power unnecessary, a formulation President Roosevelt echoed the following year (The Federalist 2024).

Charles Krauthammer drew out the implication. Liberal internationalism seeks to move beyond power politics and narrow national interest, and ultimately beyond the nation-state itself, through multilateralism; the weakening of sovereignty is therefore not an unfortunate side-effect but the mechanism by which a global order governed by norms and legal frameworks resembling those of domestic society is to be reached (Krauthammer 2002, 12). Seen from this angle, the arrival of a multipolar order signals the exhaustion of the liberal hegemonic project that had been most visible during the period of American unipolarity (Acharya 2014).

The relationship between sovereignty and unilateral action can be stated compactly. Where leaders judge that core national interests are engaged, and where they possess the requisite power, they are more likely to act alone; sovereignty combined with power and national interest yields unilateralism, and the greater a state's sovereignty the more inclined it is to act unilaterally (Morningstar and Blacker 2004, 75). In an order that is neither unipolar nor bipolar, influence is exercised through shared interest and persuasion rather than compulsion, in a structure where economic growth and political sovereignty intersect with a continuing nuclear standoff among major powers (Liska 1962).

Sovereignty and identity in the new configuration

Josep Borrell, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Vice-President of the European Commission, addressed this configuration directly in September 2023. Writing on multipolarity without multilateralism, he observed that the shift toward a distributed order has not been matched by a corresponding growth in cooperation through international institutions, and attributed much of the shift to the rapid rise of China and India. Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America now present credible alternatives to the West across the political spectrum. Europeans continue to uphold values rooted in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the United States invokes the Declaration in support of its universalism, while China, Russia and much of the Global South converge on a form of political culturalism in which each society defines its own values and national sovereignty takes precedence over universal rights. Borrell's central observation is that multipolarity is not merely a matter of the distribution of wealth: the new multipolar world is characterized equally by a growing demand for sovereignty and identity (Borrell 2023).

China's own strategic literature makes the connection explicit. Chinese strategists argue that multipolarity advances the democratization of the international system by enlarging the participation and influence of developing states, while hegemonism and power politics, particularly on the part of the United States, obstruct justice and peace (Eisenman and Heginbotham 2019). Beijing accordingly pursues a dual strategy, soft-balancing through collaboration with emerging powers in order to foster multipolarity, and working to democratize international institutions so as to constrain American unilateralism and shape global norms (Eisenman and Heginbotham 2019, 58). BRICS and the dense network of bilateral partnerships China has assembled follow from the proposition articulated by He Yafei, formerly Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, concerning the importance of partnership with states that favour a multipolar and democratic international system (He 2016). The approach combines an emphasis on diplomacy and economic development with a consistent defence of sovereignty norms, and despite periodic friction its commitment to non-

interference frequently coincides with the interests of other major developing states. Multipolarity thus appears, in this literature, as a natural and beneficial evolution away from American hegemony, oriented toward the autonomy and regional influence of states rather than toward direct confrontation with dominant powers, though even on the most favourable assumptions it may still generate adverse consequences for particular participants (Eisenman and Heginbotham 2019).⁵

Emerging powers, more broadly, contest a Western dominance of long standing and introduce a wider range of cultural and intellectual perspectives into global debate. Given that the existing arrangements were shaped by Western traditions, it is improbable that these states will accept Western control over global rule-making, or allow themselves to be absorbed into the American-led liberal order, without substantial concessions (Acharya 2014, 78).

The attachment of the new powers to sovereignty is pronounced enough to raise a question about its consequences. Their commitment to Westphalian sovereignty complicates their contribution to global governance, since a number of the more urgent challenges, climate change and financial volatility among them, require forms of intervention in domestic affairs (Acharya 2014, 75). The point restates a familiar claim, namely that international cooperation must reach into the domestic policies of nation-states if contemporary problems of governance are to be addressed at all (Alexandroff and Cooper 2010a, 31), a position shared by scholars such as Hurrell. Emerging powers differ in their approach to global norms concerning domestic politics and security, yet converge on the value of non-intervention, a principle of particular weight outside the West, and share a general commitment to state sovereignty (Acharya 2014, 75-76).

A structural explanation for this convergence is available. In a multipolar system, dominant powers exercise a weaker socializing influence, since no single state holds overwhelming international authority. The result is greater tolerance

⁵On the rise of states outside the West, the editorial "Sovereignty in an Emerging Multipolar World" discusses the impact of the multipolar order on the African continent. It examines the concept of sovereignty and argues that the shift from a unipolar to a multipolar system will significantly shape Africa's opportunities and challenges in global affairs, advising African states to evaluate their positions carefully and adjust their strategies accordingly (Africa China Reporting 2024).

for divergent domestic political systems, with leading powers frequently avoiding interference in the internal affairs of others in order to prevent instability. Where a bipolar system regularly contests the legitimacy of competing political models, multipolarity accommodates a more varied and more readily accepted range of domestic structures, and the dependence of smaller states on larger ones is spread across several patrons, which broadens the appeal available to different political ideologies (Väyrynen 1995, 362-363). Greater flexibility and more numerous opportunities for interaction make states more risk-averse and reduce the intensity of rivalries. Considerable variation in ideology and institutional form becomes possible, because systemic factors bear less heavily on internal arrangements; the influence of market dynamics and civil society on political systems grows more pronounced, and the relationship between state and society becomes more balanced and pluralistic than the state dominance characteristic of bipolarity or unipolarity (Väyrynen 1995, 363-367).

Joseph Nye's observation that unipolarity proved ineffective at controlling global events (Nye 2019) is borne out by the recession of 2008, which marked a significant economic displacement from the West, and from the United States in particular, toward the East and toward China. Structural change of this kind requires, as noted above, that members of the international system be dissatisfied with the prevailing order and demonstrate rising power, principally through economic growth (Tammen, Kugler, Lemke, et al. 2000). The BRICS states supply the evidence, having grown rapidly in economic weight and in diplomatic reach alike. The systemic change that followed opened ground for smaller and medium-sized countries to pursue more assertive or value-driven foreign policies and thereby to enlarge their autonomy, and the emerging powers have in consequence come to occupy a more prominent position on the global stage (Mouritzen 2022).

RE-SOVEREIGNIZATION IN PRACTICE

The revival of the nation-state under multipolarity is not a return to the absolute sovereignty of the Westphalian era. It is a recalibration, and it is visible in three domains in particular. Globalization has diffused power across

transnational networks, but nation-states remain the only entities capable of mobilizing resources at scale, enforcing law, and representing collective identities, and it is on these capacities that reassertion is built.

The first domain is geopolitical realignment and strategic autonomy. Amid shifting alignments and intensifying competition among great powers, states are reasserting sovereignty in order to preserve freedom of manoeuvre. India's practice of multi-alignment is a pragmatic balancing of relations with the United States, China and Russia in which national interest supplies the ordering principle. The United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union represents a reassertion of authority over trade, immigration and legislation, though its difficulties illustrate how far the recovery of formal competence falls short of the recovery of effective control.

The second is economic sovereignty and protection. The resurgence of economic nationalism, visible in the America First agenda and in China's Belt and Road Initiative, reflects a renewed emphasis on state-led economic strategy. Both are attempts to reclaim control over critical industries, resources and trade flows, and both respond to vulnerabilities that globalization is perceived to have created. In terms of the distinction drawn in Section 4, these are control-recovery measures: the authority to regulate industry was never lost, but the capacity to make regulation bind had migrated into supply chains no single jurisdiction governs.

The third is cultural and identity sovereignty. The nation-state remains a powerful vehicle of collective identity, particularly in a period marked by cultural homogenization and large-scale migration. Governments in many regions have emphasized policies intended to reinforce national identity and cultural inheritance against what is perceived as the erosion of established values by global influences. The pattern is especially pronounced in states such as Hungary and Poland, where sovereignty is articulated as a defence against external cultural and political pressure. Whatever one concludes about the substance of these programmes, they confirm that sovereignty retains a mobilizing power that the literature on its erosion did not anticipate.

CONCLUSION

De-sovereignization names a real and far-reaching transformation. Sovereignty, traditionally understood as the supreme authority of a state over its territory and population, free from external interference, served as the cornerstone of the modern international order and affirmed the autonomy and indivisibility of the nation-state. Under conditions of globalization, transnational challenge and fragmented authority, that construction has come under sustained pressure, and what the term captures is the erosion, redistribution and reconfiguration of sovereign power across an increasingly interconnected world.

The argument advanced here has been that this transformation is better described as a displacement than as a disappearance, and that the displacement is principally one of control. Formal authority has survived a period widely expected to dissolve it. What was lost was the capacity to make authority effective against flows, norms and institutions organized on a scale the state does not command. Cooper's smaller economies, unable to conduct monetary policy amid open capital markets, and Krasner's observation that a state which cannot regulate its borders will not control what happens within them, describe the same predicament from different angles. The theoretical reconstitutions surveyed in Section 5 take the measure of it in their own idioms: as a networked domain of public authority under a cosmopolitan legal framework, as an assemblage in which state authority is embedded rather than superseded, as the migration of the power of exception to actors beyond the state, and as a name that persists after the substance it denoted has thinned.

Whether that condition represents a loss depends on what sovereignty is taken to be. If it is a fixed attribute of states, then its dispersal is straightforwardly a decline. If it is instead a relational and negotiated construct, capable of adapting to the complexity of the environment in which it operates, then de-sovereignization describes a redistribution of authority across a multi-layered order rather than its destruction.

The second reading is the one the present configuration supports, because sovereignty has visibly returned. The transition from a unipolar to a multipolar system, driven by the relative decline of American hegemony and the rise of

China, India and regional blocs including the European Union, has reshaped the international order. Multipolarity resists the homogenizing tendencies of globalization and opens space for divergent political, economic and cultural models. Within that space states have rediscovered the utility of sovereignty as an instrument for asserting autonomy, protecting national interests and engaging in competitive collaboration with other global actors. The emerging powers have proved, on the evidence surveyed above, markedly more attached to non-intervention and territorial rule than to the newer normative repertoire, and the demand for sovereignty and identity that Borrell identifies is not a residue of the old order but a constitutive feature of the new one.

De-sovereignization and re-sovereignization are therefore not opposed diagnoses between which a choice must be made. They are two moments of a single, continuing renegotiation of where authority is exercised, by whom, and on what terms. The nation-state emerges from that renegotiation neither restored to its Westphalian condition nor dissolved into a cosmopolitan order, but altered: less able to act alone, more able than the erosion literature predicted, and still the entity to which populations address themselves when they want an answer. The open question is not whether sovereignty survives, but whether the forms of authority now assembled around it can carry problems, from climate and financial volatility to the governance of information, that no sovereign, however reasserted, is able to solve within its own borders.

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE RULE OF LAW AND RECHTSSTAAT: THE ORIGINS OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

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“In the best case, the human is the most noble of all the creatures; separated from law and justice, becomes the most cruel”

Aristotle

INTRODUCTION

The development of the rule of law on Europe has never been a simple or rapid process, but one thing is certain—it has been clearly outlined and universally accepted as a necessary condition. This is especially demonstrated through the key objective of the Council of Europe, as established in its 1949 Statute, concerning “the protection of the rule of law and fundamental human rights and freedoms.” In the modern context in which this paper is written (March 2024), perhaps the best way to analyze the mechanisms and contributions of these organizations is to view them as a tandem. This idea is especially encouraged by the fact that the Council of Europe serves as a “waiting room” for EU accession, and conversely, all EU member states are also members of the Council of Europe. The emphasis on the rule of law aims to establish the ideal of modern liberal democracy in practice. However, despite strong efforts, in many parts of Europe this ideal remains uncertain, hindered by slow reforms or insufficient continuity that would render a state truly “legal.”

The European development of the rule of law particularly advanced with the emergence of the Council of Europe and the later realization of the rule of law's significance by the European Union. Initially, this marked a key distinction between the two institutions:

- a) The Council of Europe has the rule of law as the core of its existence and has developed additional institutions and mechanisms over time to ensure productive functioning in various areas;
- b) The European Union did not initially focus on the rule of law, only beginning to assign it significant weight in the context of EU integration negotiations over time—especially in Chapter 23, which became particularly relevant following the accession of Romania and Bulgaria in 2007.

Before delving into the specific contributions of these organizations to the development of a functional rule of law, it is necessary to define what we mean by the concept and how it is specifically used in this paper.

THE LEGAL STATE AND THE RULE OF LAW: PARALLELISM OR COMPLEMENTARITY?

In the modern context, the differentiation between democracy and liberal democracy is increasingly being addressed. One may refer to the symbolism of the former and the origins of the latter, but the crucial difference lies in the stability of the game and the rules for its application. Furthermore, when we stand at the intersection between the foundational and the upgraded concept, illiberalism⁶ arises as a semblance of liberal democracy.

In summary, democracy provides the basis for both models. It initially revolves around the idea of "rule by the people," but does not always adequately address how the people govern—or whether they truly govern at all. In its quasi-evolution, we see an upgrading of the first concept toward practices of sustainability and the notion of good governance, yet all of it is often neatly packaged like Potemkin villages—what is written in the rules does not always reach its practical application. Ultimately, liberal democracy is the embodiment

⁶ The term “illiberal” has been coined by Fareed Zakaria, a renowned political commentator in *The Rise of Illiberal Democracy*, *Foreign Affairs Journal*, 1997. See more at: [The Rise of Illiberal Democracy](#).

of justice in and before the law—of accountability, concise knowledge, and nurturing of practice, establishing the absolute truth that “no one is above the law.” While liberalism seeks to limit all forms of power and answers the question of how governance is exercised, democracy answers the question of who holds power or governs. The right of a citizen to participate in political power can be considered the most important liberal right, as liberalism has historically been closely connected to democracy through this very right.⁷

In addition to its significance in contributing to the modern ideal of liberal democracy, it is essential to clarify what is meant by Rechtsstaat (legal state) and what is meant by the Rule of Law.

Godefroid defines Rechtsstaat as a “state that functions through rules (general, abstract, and permanent norms) that are non-contradictory, possible, comprehensible, defined, public, and without retroactive effect. This sheds light on the principle of hierarchy among norms and leaves the material sanction for rule violations to a power that is distinct from and independent of normative power. Furthermore, one or more authorities that are distinct and independent from the normative power control whether commands are in accordance with the rules and whether the meta-rule (that rules must be general) is respected.”⁸

The concept of the Rule of Law was first introduced by English constitutional law professor Albert Venn Dicey in 1880. He believed the first element of the Rule of Law was the supremacy of law, meaning the absence of arbitrary and discretionary power. The second element was the principle of equality of every individual before the law and their subordination to the law, which should be applied by the regular courts. This means that all public officials in a state are subject to the same legal responsibility as any other citizen for unlawful conduct. The third element assumes an independent and effective judiciary that is capable of protecting citizens' rights and ensuring their freedom.⁹ Unlike Germany, whose national-socialist history justifies a fundamental mistrust in the legitimacy of parliamentary majorities, the Westminster democracy has not

⁷ Klimovski, S., Siljanovska-Davkova, G., Karakamisheva-Jovanovska, T., and Spasenovski, A., *Political System*, Konrad Adenauer Foundation, 2022.

⁸ Van Dun, F., *Political Liberalism and The Formal Rechtsstaat*, 2004.

⁹ Dicey, A. V., *The Law of the Constitution*, 3rd Edition, London, 1889, p. 303, cited in Treneska-Deskoska, R., Ristovska, M., Trajkovska-Hristovska, J., *Constitutional Law*, Prosvetno Delo, Skopje, p. 164.

experienced a comparable legacy and, therefore, has no reason to harbor such a mistrust. Indeed, the Rule of Law remains an unwritten principle in British constitutional law—practically subordinated to the theoretically unlimited supremacy of Parliament and its legislation. In contrast, the concept of Rechtsstaat forms, together with the principles of democracy, federalism, and welfare, a fundamental legal principle in the German constitution, with numerous sub-principles developed from Rechtsstaat by legal practitioners and academics.¹⁰

In summary, the two concepts are similar and share a common goal: the protection of fundamental human rights and freedoms, albeit through different approaches. The German concept, from its theoretical inception, focuses on limiting arbitrary power by invoking pre-established constitutional amendments. The German Basic Law goes even further with the inclusion of the Ewigkeitsklausel (eternity clause), which prohibits amendments to certain constitutional provisions, even by constitutional amendment.¹¹ Moreover, the Rechtsstaat concept, by definition, focuses much more on the nature of the state itself. While the Rule of Law emerges from courtrooms, Rechtsstaat originates from the written constitution.¹²

THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE AND THE RULE OF LAW

Amidst the devastation of the Second World War, an idea emerged on European soil for the creation of a supranational body that would oversee the implementation of legal mechanisms in order to prevent a repetition of the gruesome and recent past. Thus, the Council of Europe was established on May 5, 1949, in London, by governmental representatives of Belgium, Denmark, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. The initiative to form the Council of Europe was originally launched by

¹⁰ Mecke, Eric C., *The “Rule of Law” and the “Rechtsstaat”: A Historical and Theoretical Approach from a German Perspective*, Brunswick European Law School, 2019.

¹¹ The role of the Landers in legislative, basic democratic virtues, human rights and freedom and republican establishment are just some of the principles that can’t be derogated in *Grundgesetz* (Art. 79 (3)).

¹² Wennerström, E. O., *The Rule of Law and the European Union*, Uppsala: Iustus Förlag, 2007, p. 61, cited in Venice Commission, *Draft Report on The Rule of Law Study No. 512/2009*, Strasbourg, 2010.

five signatory governments—namely Belgium, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom—on March 17, 1948.¹³

Article 3 of the Statute of the Council of Europe states:

“Every member of the Council of Europe must accept the principles of the rule of law and of the enjoyment by all persons within its jurisdiction of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and collaborate sincerely and effectively in the realization of the aim of the Council as specified in Chapter I.”¹⁴

The emphasis that the ten founding countries placed on the concepts of “rule of law” and “human rights and freedoms” only four years after such widespread destruction reveals the fundamental necessity of these values and determines a direction that remains a core standard for states aspiring to a better future.

For the Council of Europe, the most important references to the rule of law are found in:

“The Preamble to the Statute of the Council of Europe, which underscores the “devotion” of member states to “the spiritual and moral values which are the common heritage of their peoples and the true source of individual freedom, political liberty, and the rule of law, principles which form the basis of all genuine democracy”;

The Preamble to the European Convention on Human Rights, which states that “the governments of European countries... are like-minded and have a common heritage of political traditions, ideals, freedom, and the rule of law.”¹⁵

Among its most well-known legal acts, the Council of Europe has adopted: the European Convention on Human Rights (1950), the European Cultural Convention (1954), the European Social Charter (1961, revised in 1996), the European Charter of Local Self-Government (1985), the European Convention for

¹³ Van Dun, F., *Political Liberalism and The Formal Rechtsstaat*, 2004.

¹⁴ Council of Europe, *Statute of the Council of Europe*, London, May 5, 1949.

¹⁵ *Draft Report on The Rule of Law Study No. 512/2009*, Strasbourg, 2010.

the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1987), and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (1995), among others. In addition to these acts, the Council of Europe also adopts reports, protocols amending the original conventions, resolutions on actions in specific areas, recommendations, and so forth. When it comes to accession to the Council, ratification of the European Convention on Human Rights is the first requirement for membership.¹⁶ Since 1994, signing and ratifying the Convention for the Prevention of Torture, and later also the European Social Charter, have become additional conditions for joining the Council.¹⁷

The question of practical applicability emerged in the 1990s when both the Parliamentary Assembly and the Committee of Ministers recognized the need to establish mechanisms for monitoring the situation in certain member states. Thus, monitoring procedures were introduced by both bodies. While the Parliamentary Assembly's monitoring focuses on specific member states, the Committee of Ministers decides on principles and verifies the manner in which all member states implement them (although it may still choose to examine specific countries more closely).¹⁸

Apart from these advisory methods, the most significant instrument is the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. Its jurisdiction is derived from Article 46 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which outlines that “the High Contracting Parties undertake to abide by the final judgment” and that “the Committee of Ministers shall supervise the execution of the judgment.”¹⁹ There is no doubt about the contribution of the Council of Europe to the development and maintenance of a functional rule of law, which is precisely why it is often regarded as the “anteroom” to the EU. However, despite these mechanisms, it is important to note that in recent years the Court has not always adequately kept pace with the challenges it faces. As of January 2022, 47% of the leading judgments issued by the Court in the past ten years remain unimplemented. In total, about 1,300 leading judgments are still pending execution. The average waiting time for

¹⁶ Benoît-Rohmer, F., Klebes, H., *Council of Europe Law – Towards a Pan-European Legal Area*, Council of Europe Publishing, 2005.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Council of Europe, *European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms*, as amended by Protocols Nos. 11 and 14, ETS No. 5, November 4, 1950.

implementation is six years and two months.²⁰ It may still be too early to determine whether this institution has reached its peak—especially considering that all EU member states are first and foremost members of the Council of Europe. The existence of a “parallelism” of mechanisms undoubtedly confuses the ordinary citizen, but whether it contributes to progress is a matter to be examined in the next section.

THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE RULE OF LAW

The law of the European Union (EU) is a comprehensive and complex body of treaties, regulations, directives, decisions, and case law that governs the relationships and activities of the member states within the EU. The EU legal system ensures uniform application and enforcement of laws, striving to create a cohesive and integrated European system.

The foundation of EU law is built upon a series of treaties, which are formal agreements between member states establishing the constitutional framework of the Union. The most significant treaties include:

- The Treaty of Rome (1957), which established the European Economic Community (EEC) and laid the groundwork for the EU,
- the Single European Act (1986), aiming to create a single internal market,
- the Treaty of Maastricht (1992), which formally established the EU and introduced the concept of European citizenship,
- followed by the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) and the Treaty of Nice (2001), which reformed the institutional structure of the EU,
- and the Treaty of Lisbon (2009), which further streamlined EU operations and expanded the powers of the European Parliament.

EU law is derived from primary and secondary sources.²¹ Primary sources consist of the treaties that make up the constitutional law of the EU. These treaties are legally binding agreements between the member states and represent the

²⁰ For more informations regarding the implementation on the verdicts of European Court of Human Rights, see more at: <https://www.einnetwork.org/countries-overview>.

²¹ Craig, Paul, and de Búrca, Gráinne, *EU Law: Text, Cases, and Materials*, 6th ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

highest form of EU law. Key primary sources include the Treaty on European Union (TEU) and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). The TEU establishes the overall framework and guiding principles of the EU, while the TFEU details its competencies and operational mechanisms. These treaties define the distribution of powers between the EU and its member states, the institutional structure, and the legal procedures for adopting and implementing legislation.²²

Secondary sources are legal acts adopted by EU institutions based on the competencies granted by the primary treaties. These include: regulations, which are binding legal acts directly applicable in all member states without the need for national implementation measures; directives, which bind member states to achieve certain results but leave them the discretion to choose the form and method of implementation (e.g., the Consumer Rights Directive)²³; decisions, which are binding and may be addressed to member states, companies, or individuals (e.g., antitrust decisions by the Commission); recommendations and opinions, which are non-binding instruments expressing the views of EU institutions.²⁴

The European Union, through its various institutions and mechanisms, plays a significant role in promoting and strengthening the rule of law both within its member states and in candidate countries. The rule of law, as a fundamental principle of democratic governance, includes respect for legal norms, the protection of human rights, and the effectiveness of judicial systems. At the heart of the EU lies this very principle, serving as the foundation for all its activities and relationships among member states. This commitment is not only expressed in words but is also embedded in the very structure of the EU through its founding treaties.

²² European Union, *Treaty on European Union (Consolidated Version)*, Article 19, Official Journal of the European Union, C 202 (June 7, 2016): 30.

²³ Foster, Nigel, *EU Law Directions*, 6th ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.

²⁴ Chalmers, Damian, Davies, Gareth, and Monti, Giorgio, *European Union Law: Cases and Materials*, 3rd ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

The Treaty on European Union (TEU)²⁵ and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)²⁶, along with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union²⁷, form the legal framework that guides and regulates the EU's actions in accordance with the rule of law. Article 2 of the TEU²⁸ explicitly states that the EU is founded on principles including freedom, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law. These principles are not merely aspirational—they are specific standards that all member states are expected to uphold. Essentially, the rule of law serves as the foundation of trust among member states, ensuring that their relationships and mutual obligations are governed by rules rather than arbitrariness.

Furthermore, Article 19 of the TEU²⁹ emphasizes the obligation of member states to provide effective judicial protection in areas covered by EU law, which is crucial for safeguarding fundamental rights. This underlines the importance of a functioning, independent, and effective judiciary that ensures the protection of citizens' rights and provides remedies when those rights are violated.

The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, proclaimed in 2000³⁰, further strengthens this foundation by codifying a wide range of human rights and fundamental freedoms that must be respected across all member states. On issues such as the right to liberty and security, freedom of expression, and data protection, the Charter serves as a cornerstone document ensuring the EU remains committed to the protection and promotion of fundamental rights as a key component of the rule of law.

These treaties and legal instruments collectively shape the EU's legal and moral framework, ensuring that all member states and institutions operate within a system that values and upholds the rule of law. The rule of law not only guarantees legal certainty and predictability, but also serves as a foundation for

²⁵ European Union, *Treaty on European Union (Consolidated Version)*, Article 19, Official Journal of the European Union, C 202 (June 7, 2016): 30.

²⁶ European Union. *Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), Consolidated Version*. Official Journal of the European Union C 202, June 7, 2016.

²⁷ European Union. *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union*, 2012/C 326/02. Official Journal of the European Union C 326, October 26, 2012.

²⁸ European Union, "Treaty on European Union (Consolidated Version)," art. 2, Official Journal of the European Union C 202 (June 7, 2016): 13.

²⁹ European Union, "Treaty on European Union (Consolidated Version)," art. 19, Official Journal of the European Union C 202 (June 7, 2016): 30.

³⁰ European Union, "Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union," Official Journal of the European Communities C 364, (December 18, 2000): 1-22.

the protection of the freedoms and rights of every EU citizen, establishing the European Union as a community of law and justice.

MECHANISMS FOR ADVANCING THE RULE OF LAW IN THE EU: IMPACT AND CHALLENGES

The European Union (EU) employs a diverse range of mechanisms to promote and safeguard the rule of law within its member states and candidate countries. One key instrument in this regard is the Rule of Law Framework, introduced by the European Commission in 2014, aimed at addressing systemic threats to the rule of law within the EU.³¹

This framework empowers the Commission to engage in dialogue with member states, conduct assessments, and recommend corrective measures in cases where deficiencies in the rule of law are identified. Through this mechanism, the Commission plays a proactive role in monitoring and addressing challenges to the rule of law, thereby reinforcing the EU's commitment to upholding legal norms and fundamental rights.

In addition to the Rule of Law Framework, the European Court of Justice (ECJ)³² plays a crucial role in supporting the rule of law by ensuring consistent interpretation and application of EU law across member states. Through its jurisprudence, the ECJ strengthens principles such as legal certainty, non-discrimination, and effective judicial protection, significantly contributing to the development of the rule of law. By providing authoritative interpretations of EU law and resolving disputes, the ECJ enhances legal certainty and reinforces the principle that all member states are bound by common legal standards. Furthermore, the EU accession process³³ serves as a powerful incentive for candidate countries to align their legal systems with EU standards, particularly those related to the rule of law. Accession negotiations typically involve comprehensive reforms aimed at strengthening judicial independence,

³¹ European Commission. "A new framework to strengthen the rule of law." European Commission, Last modified March 19, 2014. Accessed April 7, 2024, available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu>

³² European Court of Justice. "About the Court: The Court's role." European Court of Justice, Accessed April 7, 2024, available at: <https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/government-in-ireland/european-government/eu-institutions/europeancourt-of-justice/#:~:text=>

³³ European Commission. "The EU enlargement process." European Commission, Accessed April 7, 2024, available at: <https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/f0b3b894-5e85-43ab>.

combating corruption, and enhancing legal certainty. By undertaking such reforms, EU aspirants demonstrate their commitment to democratic values and the rule of law, paving the way for their integration into the EU's legal framework.

These mechanisms collectively emphasize the EU's dedication to promoting and protecting the rule of law as a cornerstone of democratic governance and fundamental rights in both member states and candidate countries. By leveraging tools such as the Rule of Law Framework, ECJ jurisprudence, and the accession process, the EU reaffirms its commitment to legal norms, the protection of fundamental rights, and the cultivation of a culture of respect for the rule of law across its diverse member states.

Efforts by the European Union (EU) to promote the rule of law have produced notable outcomes both within its member states and in candidate countries. For example, Romania and Bulgaria underwent extensive judicial reforms and implemented anti-corruption measures as part of their EU accession process, resulting in tangible improvements in the rule of law. These reforms, which included actions to strengthen judicial independence and fight corruption, demonstrate the transformative influence of EU accession negotiations in promoting legal certainty and accountability.

Similarly, within the EU, the Rule of Law Framework has facilitated dialogue and cooperation between the European Commission and member states facing rule of law challenges, leading to reforms aimed at reinforcing judicial independence, media freedom, and anti-corruption efforts. Through mechanisms such as the Rule of Law Framework, the EU demonstrates its commitment to addressing rule of law deficiencies and strengthening democratic principles within its member states.³⁴

However, the EU's efforts to uphold the rule of law have also encountered significant challenges and criticisms. One major challenge is enforcement—the EU lacks effective mechanisms for sanctioning member states that persistently violate the rule of law. Although the European Commission can initiate infringement proceedings against states for breaches of EU law, addressing systemic rule of law deficiencies remains complex and politically sensitive.

³⁴ Ibid.

Moreover, the rule of law is often subject to political manipulation and selective enforcement, with some member states accused of using legal reforms to undermine democratic checks and balances. For instance, Poland and Hungary have faced criticism over judicial reforms that allegedly jeopardize judicial independence and undermine the rule of law. These criticisms underscore the need for vigilance and a strong commitment to ensuring that legal reforms are not exploited for political gain or used to erode democratic values.³⁵

The EU's efforts to promote the rule of law have thus experienced both successes and setbacks. While mechanisms such as the Rule of Law Framework have facilitated dialogue and cooperation, enforcement issues and political manipulation remain significant obstacles. Nonetheless, the EU's commitment to the rule of law remains essential for protecting democratic principles and fundamental rights, highlighting the ongoing importance of addressing rule of law shortcomings and promoting accountability within the European Union.

CONCLUSION

Undeniably, the peace experienced on European soil—with the exception of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which has occurred twice in the past ten years—is historically unprecedented and largely attributable to the development and continuity of ideas, values, and principles upheld by these organizations. Although often overlapping, the Council of Europe and the European Union have significantly contributed to the advancement of the rule of law within their member states and candidate countries through a multitude of mechanisms and initiatives.

The Council of Europe has actively advocated for its principles in practice, allowing space for candidate countries of diverse backgrounds to participate and observe its operations. On the other side, the EU's efforts—ranging from the Rule of Law Framework, to the accession process, to the jurisprudence of the European

³⁵ European Commission. "Rule of Law Report: Communication and Country Chapters." Accessed April 7th, 2024., available at: https://commission.europa.eu/publications/2023-rule-law-report-communication-and-country-chapters_en.

Court of Justice—have highlighted the central role of the EU in promoting legal certainty, fundamental rights, and effective judicial systems.

It is necessary for both institutions to establish closer coordination in order to ensure a consistent approach to the rule of law among member states. While the EU already employs mechanisms such as the Rule of Law Framework and Article 7, there is a need for these tools to be enhanced and applied more efficiently and swiftly, as the current procedures often take too long and may prove ineffective.

Addressing inconsistencies, dysfunctionality, and lack of principled enforcement of decisions should fall under the vigilant scrutiny of high-quality NGOs, which would present their findings to the public. These two organizations must recognize an old adage that says: "The beginning of solving a problem starts when you acknowledge it."

The consistency of these organizations is of fundamental importance to the world. Avoiding an alternative historical trajectory is due, in part, to the sustained efforts of these two bodies—the Council of Europe and the European Union—who, despite the many challenges they have faced, are facing, and will likely continue to face, remain a beacon of hope for a functional rule of law. After all, without the direct involvement of these organizations, would we even be speaking of a functional legal state in post-war Europe today?³⁶

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GEOPOLITICAL FORECAST: ANTICIPATION FOR NEW GLOBAL GOVERNANCE UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF BRICS

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INTRODUCTION

The BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) geopolitical alliance, comprising both economically developed nations with significant global influence and countries from the 'Global South,' emerged with the aim of enhancing its impact on the geopolitical landscape. In early 2024, the original group consisting of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa expanded to include five new members (Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates). Furthermore, now the group includes Indonesia and Nigeria as a partner. This expansion marked a new phase of development, providing the alliance with increased demographic, democratic, and economic weight.

As the 21st century progresses, the world grapples with growing economic instability and insecurity. Amid the ongoing restructuring of globalization, strategically-minded countries are swiftly repositioning themselves, which is a trend exemplified by BRICS. Despite each member having distinct priorities and national interests, they face similar challenges that arose after the shift from a bipolar world. Simultaneously, they share common goals, such as the aspiration to amplify their influence and dominance. These shared objectives drive collaboration within the alliance, laying the groundwork for a new world order. In doing so, BRICS aims to shape the global political and economic agenda and influence the dynamics of international relations. Faared Zakaria (2008), just as other academicians, has remarked on a significant shift in global influence moving away from North America and Western Europe, with the BRICS positioned prominently in leading this transformation.

The conventional global governance system is facing a crisis, evident in its repeated failures to address global issues effectively. The cooperation among BRICS countries reflects these evolving trends and challenges. Central to this discourse is the possible outcome of the influence of BRICS over the structure of global governance. This discussion on understanding the role of BRICS remains pertinent, given the substantial changes in today's external geopolitical landscape compared to when the grouping first emerged. The potential scenarios for global governance and the functioning of international relations here presents three possible distinct path, taking the position of the likelihood of one overturning the rest.

BACKGROUND AND POSITION OF BRICS

Following the period of bipolarity in the international system during the 20th century, followed a period of an American dominance on the world stage, as it championed the Cold War era, which it declared to envision a unipolarity and prosperous world. However, simultaneously rival ideologies, regional spheres of influence appeared to creat an multipolar world (Layne, 1993). Unipolarity lasted for a brief period of around two decades before witnessing the resurgence of a stronger Russian Federation, economic strength in the European Union, Brazil in South America, and the rise of both China and India in Asia. The world has returned to a multipolar state, and recent unilateral actions by the United States (Iraq), Russia (Ukraine and Crimea), and China (South China Sea) indicate that attempts at cooperation, even within the framework of UN discussions, are not gaining much traction. Presently, power dynamics are multipolar, marked by varying degrees of military, economic, and diplomatic influence among regional actors (Russo, 2018).

Historically compared of the transitions of global polarity, the current transition towards multipolarity is more configurational, by the structural nature of emergce of regional powers and their coverage of influence. Distinguishingly for Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS), credit for the creation of this alliance goes to Jim O'Neill from Goldman Sachs. In 2001, he coined the term BRIC for the first four significant emerging economies, and their collective growth

surged, showcasing the ascent of Brazil, Russia, China, and India as formidable economic powers (Agtmael, 2012). The origin of BRICS can be traced to the Doha Round in Cancun, Mexico, in September 2003. Prior to the meeting, the US and the EU collaborated on a biased negotiating draft for the World Trade Organisation. However, this proposal, intended for imposition, faced rejection from developing economies like Brazil, India, and South Africa during the Doha Round (Drysdale, 2011). After a hiatus and several gatherings, in 2009 BRICS was formed to be an essential institution in global relations and politics. It's important to note that the rise of BRICS, as a grouping of influential "new powers," evokes both skepticism and optimism. It poses a challenge to the dominance of the US-led Western powers in global politics, indicating a rapid change in power dynamics driven by increased interdependence among nations and the resulting economic and financial challenges (Singh, 2022).

As BRICS had fluctuating growth which is seen to stabilize in the last decade, its rise and expansion has become to be of crucial interest to explore the consequences it has on the global political economy, mainly in the aspect of the new geopolitical commodities of consumption, production, distribution, investment and value chains "These new emerging production and consumption relations, they argue, have incrementally shifted what has thus far been a predominantly EuroAmerican dominated global economy to one more polycentric³⁷" (Chatterjee & Naka, 2022). Despite BRICS' factual large scale resiliency to combat with world issues, as a result to the sufficient amount of natural resources, diverse but complementary economies and political structures, the outlook on what BRICS is constituted of is necessary and by no means avoidable.

Looking demographically, with the enlargement of 2024, BRICS, along with BRICS+ conveys 46% of the world's population and economically BRICS already largely contributes to the world GDP, with a share of 31.6% in 2022, growing to over a third (35.6% in 2022) due to expansion. China leads the group, making up 52% of its total GDP, similar to the United States' role in the G7. What is

³⁷ The citation is based on a previous research conducted by Sudip Chakraborty: Chakraborty, S. (2018). Significance of BRICS: Regional powers, global governance, and the roadmap for a multipolar world. *EMERGING ECONOMY STUDIES*, 4(2), 182–191.

interesting and analyzed in 2024, is the prediction that the gap between BRICS+ and the G7 is expected to widen further, reaching 37.6% of world GDP by 2027 (Afota et al., 2024). To challenge already existing international economic institutions, in 2014, the members of BRICS have agreed upon to establishing the New Development Bank (NDB). Furthermore, taking the geographical perspective all members of BRICS are located in crucial locations which constitute of the world's most crucial sea routes, the Arctic, the Pacific, the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Benegal and the South of Atlantic Ocen, making them available to create not only enormous economic innovations and developments, but also to improve the security of sea routes: "Building the third-longest underwater fiber optic cable through the Indian Ocean to connect the Pacific and Atlantic oceans is one of the most critical maritime projects undertaken by the BRICS nations" (Thangjalen & Chakrabarti, 2022, p. 449) Knowing this, the external networks that BRICS allignes are of further importance, as the organization engages with nations outside the BRICS grouping and this can be a strategic way to exert influence and shape the policies, perspectives, and interests of other governments: "outreach can be a group strategy to influence non-members, more precisely to reshape their governments" policies, views, and interests by socializing them into the group"s consensus in terms of common interests and views" (Zhao & Lesage, 2020, pp. 72).

GEOPOLITICAL HOSTILITIES

As BRICS continues to rise in global political and economic perspective, multiple scenarios may arise, and one of them being the increase of geopolitical hostilities between the geographically positioned 'North' countries and 'South' states. Beginning with the philosophical perspective of the realists and their idea that states will always strive for more power and protection of their own national interests, a clash between the opposing alliances may continue to occur and be on an even larger scale. Analyzing through previous historical events, arguments may further support this scenario. Taking the example of the Crimean War is a significant historical event that sheds light on the interplay of personalities, power vacuums, and hegemony, influencing modern geopolitics. By 1870,

Germany had emerged as the most powerful country in Europe militarily and industrially, surpassing France in population and military strength by 1914. Bismarck strategically created a unipolar scenario on the continent, leveraging power vacuums and internal instability in other states to unite and empower Germany. The complex interactions of leaders and policies, coupled with concerns about German hegemony, pushed Europe to the edge of destruction and triggered global chaos. Despite anti-Russian sentiments, Germany's decision to shift alliances from Russia to England backfired, leading to strained relations with both nations. The lack of cooperation and shared goals among influential individuals fueled the events that ignited the First World War (Russo, 2018).

Shifting the states in question to today's geopolitical players, similar notions leading to the consecutive events can be noticed. Furthermore, today as states mirror populism and increasing nationalism, while unipolarity shifts to multipolarity, the power void increases the possibility for large scale hostilities. Academics point out that as the relationship between superpowers soured in the 1980s, the use of proxy warfare, strategies to destabilize, and the exploitation of weak or failing states intensified significantly (Harbom, Melander & Wallensteen, 2008, pp. 702). The contemporary world faces a familiar challenge reminiscent of historical epochs, where the pursuit of influence and hegemony, coupled with the right mix of power vacuums, capabilities, and ambitions, often led to the eruption of wars. Recent headlines echo gloomy predictions, highlighting the immense potential costs if such conflicts were to materialize. For instance, in the Global War on Terror, the United States spent close to 1 trillion dollars, allocating 4.3% of its GDP to defense in 2008 alone, even without direct war declarations by other states (Daggett, 2010). The looming specter of conflict primarily revolves around the strained relations between China and the United States, presenting a potential source of global unrest extending it to the alliances they identify with. Achieving peace through collaborative efforts, requiring the willingness to compromise on certain interests and fostering mutual respect, even if imperfect, has the potential to mitigate conflicts. Avoiding substantial conflicts between powerful entities in the foreseeable future hinges on a widespread acknowledgment and acceptance of the existing global order, coupled with a sense of complacency regarding the established global hierarchy. This emphasizes the significance of diplomatic

endeavors and a shared commitment to maintaining stability in international relations (Ikenberry, Mastanduno, & Wohlforth, 2011, pp. 30).

As BRICS continues to expand in terms of membership, power, and influence, it is possible to await a shift in the global geopolitical landscape. The competition for resources, markets, and strategic interests, could lead to a further fragmentation as both sides value natural resources and strategic geography which would be a crave for influence by both sides. Following those lines, the geopolitical frictions may extends to ideological differences, with Western states promoting values that were supposed to be “the end of history” while BRICS nations may advocate for a more diverse set of political systems and cultural values, even though that seemed more likely during President Biden’s administration.

What can be a boiling hostility under the newly re-elected President Trump’s administration is the ongoing efforts by BRICS to reduce reliance on the U.S dollar. Even in January 2023, the U.S President Donald Trump issued a direct warning to BRICS nations, threatening to impose 100% tariffs on their exports if they attempted to replace the dollar in international trade. Trump's stance reflects Washington’s deep concern over BRICS’ de-dollarization agenda, which has accelerated following Western sanctions on Russia and gained further momentum under Brazil’s 2024 BRICS presidency. All BRICS member states, but especially the Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva has reiterated BRICS' commitment to challenging U.S. dollar hegemony, dismissing Trump’s threats and vowing that the bloc will not stop its pursuit of alternative payment systems. While the bloc does not yet have a common currency, members have increasingly conducted trade in local currencies and enhanced banking cooperation. At the 15th BRICS Summit in 2023, Russian President Vladimir Putin explicitly called for expanding settlements in national currencies, positioning de-dollarization as a geopolitical necessity. The expansion of BRICS+ to include Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran, and the UAE further strengthens this initiative, broadening the coalition of nations seeking financial alternatives to the economic order, led by the United States and the Western nations. The enlargement and strength of BRICS in power and influence is living up to its potential to reshape the geopolitical landscape, introducing new dynamics and challenges. While it may

foster multipolarity, it also raises the risk of heightened hostilities, ideological clashes, and economic competition between the Global South and Western states and alliances.

MULTIPOLAR COOPERATIVE WORLD

In order to prevent the previously mentioned scenario of hostilities between the multiple regional powers and alliances that represent them, the costly consequences of such events must be understood. By enhancing cooperation between the West and East, or in other words, Western states with BRICS, they can create a beneficial world for both ends, in contrast to create a new global order through conflict. The United States and the European Union lacks the necessary capabilities to address both domestic and global challenges. It is ineffective in responding to military threats and has a historical track record of struggling to unite unless compelled by external pressures. The EU tends to react to situations rather than taking proactive measures (Russo, 2018). This argument can go further by elaborating the theory, initially rooted in Europe but relevant in today's globally interconnected world shaped by its architects, which suggests the existence of a balance of power. This theory posits that when one state begins to dominate others, a collaborative effort is necessary to challenge and restore a balanced and potentially multipolar order. Khachikian (1999) elaborates on this hypothesis, emphasizing that the balance of power imposes limitations on unilateral intervention and prompts great powers to collectively intervene. The idea is that, since no single power possesses sufficient strength to act alone, multiple great powers intervene together to regulate the distribution of gains among themselves.

According to the theory of John Ikenberry (2011), the global orders and the polarity of them, do not just rise and decline, but rather they also develop, so the idea may arise that even if historical events tend to distribute themselves on black or white note, the coercion of democracy and new advancements may lead to new and more collaborative ways. Attaining cooperative multipolarity represents the potential next phase in the international system's evolution, offering a more democratic and equitable trajectory since its inception at Westphalia. The achievements of the 20th and 21st century encompass the

prohibition of military force use, except in cases of self-defense or under specific multilateral authorization.

De Aguiar Patriota, 2019). The respect for international values and spread of global democratic relations is difficult to be overturned, and even more so it is seen through the member states of BRICS, mainly through the respect of sovereignty of the countries. Avoiding unforeseen challenges is possible with firm leadership and effective diplomacy. Some encouragement can be drawn from current responses to shared challenges, both in terms of multilateral governance structures and the challenges themselves. In adapting to a multipolar context, international governance mechanisms are expanding participation. The disappearance of the 'Quad' group, consisting of the US, the EU, Japan, and Canada, from GATT/WTO negotiations is an early example of this trend. Since the Cancun Ministerial conference in 2013, developing countries, particularly India and Brazil, have gained entry into the inner decision-making circles of the WTO, especially regarding agriculture negotiations: "The informal group of larger economies, known as the G7 (and then G8 as it temporarily reached out to Russia) was enlarged, in the wake of the 2008 economic crisis, due to the perception - among its founders - that the group should include other players, including in particular the BRICS. Quota reform at the IMF and World Bank is starting to redress the asymmetries in voting rights at the International Financial Institutions (IFIs), bringing these more in line with the real economic weight of member states" (De Aguiar Patriota, 2019, pp. 8). A more positive outlook that argues on the side of cooperation between the East and the West or BRICS and Western alliances, such as the IFIs or G20, is that at the moment BRICS is operating all together with different groupings, especially with G20, as the presidency will fall in the hands of India in 2023 and to South Africa in 2025, which are both members of BRICS. This can bring the assurance of BRICS members to increase their reliance and reliability on G20 to push forward reforms of great international financial institutions.

BRICS' Johannesburg summit that occurred during the summer of 2023 brought about the outcome that should be viewed in the context of objective international trends rather than as a result of rivalry. Those advocating for BRICS to become an anti-Western association did not succeed, as members, apart from

Russia, are not keen on direct conflict with the West. Member states' interests only align to a certain extent. The decision to invite new members represents a choice for the next developmental stage, opting for expansion over deepening ties. With this, it can be seen that BRICS moves are in the direction of an alter-West instead of an anti-West, which indicates on larger cooperation: "Each of the BRICS states is free to develop its relations with the United States and Europe, but it should not harm its relations with the BRICS states. Current and future BRICS members have one thing in common: they reject the right of the United States and the European Union to impose restrictions on other countries' foreign policy and economic activities. The BRICS space can be developed as a tool for diversifying the world and moving away from Western domination toward a far more multifaceted scenario. It will be further enhanced and strengthened in the process, albeit a long process" (Lukyanov, 2023).

Another argument that can contribute to this context, is the writing of Minda Holm (2025) in which she examined the ideological realignments shaping the global order, particularly the growing divergence between the Western right³⁸ and BRICS+ nations. The incoming Trump administration, along with right movements in Europe, represents a strong pushback against liberal internationalism, advocating for a more sovereigntist world order with stricter national borders and less multilateral influence. Holm identifies a potential convergence of interests between the U.S. and BRICS+ in their shared skepticism toward expansive liberal governance models **and their** critique of Western hypocrisy in global politics. While BRICS+ seeks greater representation in international bodies, right-wing movements in the U.S. and Europe focus on national sovereignty, rejecting perceived Western globalist overreach. This common ground opens the door for strategic cooperation on issues such as trade realignment, reforming global financial institutions, and reducing dependency on Western-led governance structures.

In view of recent occurrences, the complex relationship between the Western and Eastern blocs appears to have already shifted (so far), chiefly since

³⁸ In the article Holm refers to the right-wing political parties as "far right or radical right" political parties, even to those which have not declared themselves as such. For accuracy purposes I have referred to the same political parties and agendas only as "right wing".

the inauguration of the new U.S. President. President Donald Trump has indicated the possibility of an imminent meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin, as officials from both countries prepare to engage in discussions in Saudi Arabia regarding a resolution to the war in Ukraine. President Trump multiple times has expressed optimism about President Putin's willingness to end the war, acknowledging Russia's historical military resilience. These statements signal a potential shift in U.S.-Russia relations, highlighting a willingness to explore diplomatic avenues for conflict resolution. Furthermore, during the second month of 2025 a significant shift in the international relations can be seen, reflected by the United Nations resolutions. In two separate votes, the U.S. aligned with Russia, first by opposing a European-drafted UN General Assembly (UNGA) resolution condemning Moscow's actions, and later by drafting its own UN Security Council resolution, which called for an end to the conflict but excluded any criticism of Russia. While the U.S. resolution passed, key allies such as the UK and France abstained, underscoring growing transatlantic divisions. As Russia remains a key actor within BRICS, this dialogue understands the possibility of strategic cooperation between Washington and a BRICS member state. While geopolitical tensions persist, diplomatic engagements such as these could pave the way for a more pragmatic approach to international conflicts, fostering areas of mutual interest between the U.S. and BRICS nations. However, not the same can be said about the European Union, since they opposed President's Trump stances regarding this matter.

While BRICS paved the way to multipolarity its rapid growth of influence and power within BRICS nations could pave the way for the establishment of strong alliances with Western states. This cooperative aspect would not only be rooted in diplomatic engagements but could extend into substantial economic cooperation, creating a network of interdependence among major players on the international stage. This envisioned collaboration, even if seen as utopian, might encompass shared efforts to address pressing global challenges, ranging from climate change and sustainable development to transnational security threats. Therefore, it can be proposed, that transnational challenges and the openness of BRICS of non-intervention and respect for sovereignty might be the two necessary ingredients for this equilibrium to take place.

A SHIFT IN INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP

With the rise of Western dominance during the 20th century and mainly after the Cold War, the United States maintained its military ascendancy as prevention on rising powers from challenging its interests. Nevertheless, this dominance was shaken in 2008 with the financial crisis, which as a result the United States was not as able to invest in its military capacities as previously. Consequentially, during the same period the emergence of BRICS occurred, which further down the road to today, its members and mainly China are seen to become wealthies, by which it is expected for their military expenditures to expand. This portrays the aspect that state power and indeed, alliance's power can be measured through its military capacities, alongside of influencing others to make decisions as they see fit. The decline of the United States in economic and military aspect, now poses challenges to the established international order, especially from assertive regional powers like China, Brazil, India, Russia, Turkey, and Indonesia. With the United States experiencing a relative loss of influence, emerging powers are gaining confidence to challenge and explore the existing order, aiming to reshape the international system according to their own interests, norms, and values. China, having overcome its historical "century of humiliation" by the West, is particularly unlikely to embrace a role as a "responsible stakeholder" within the international order primarily shaped by the United States to favor American interests and values (Layne, 2012). Furthermore, a distinctive aspect of the evolving global power dynamics is the unprecedented shift where a trend that may extend to other Southern regional powers in unique and unpredictable ways. Russia, experiencing a resurgence, will likely maintain substantial military strength, while a cohesive Europe, potentially led by Germany, may see renewed prominence. Japan faces new strategic challenges, influenced by the nature of the U.S.-China relationship—whether cooperative or adversarial (De Aguiar Patriota, 2019). Moreover, BRICS includes three of the world's top five military spenders: China, Russia, and India. The United States holds the top position with a 2021 military spending of \$801 billion, followed by China at an estimated \$293 billion, marking a 4.7% increase from 2020

(Thangjalen & Chakrabarti, 2022)³⁹. India ranks third in military expenditures, allocating \$76.6 billion, with a focus on modernizing arms through domestic production, with 64% of its military budget dedicated to updating domestically produced components. The findings of numerous academicians, as it can be seen, described the shift from Western dominance to Southern states dominance, even before BRICS expanded its economic and political power, and even so, the countries in question are interestingly, the members of BRICS, which further proves the argument in this scenario.

Christopher Layne (2012), just as others, predicted the concerns about the dollar's destiny over this and the following decade, which would be a consequence of a United State's political standstill over its fiscal troubles⁴⁰ and the internationalization of the Chinese renminbi, knowing that the dominant currency falls under the nation with the largest economy. By the same token, the forming of the New Development Bank (NDB) is a threat to the already known development banks and institutions which are dominated by the West, and mainly the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (Roychoudhury and Vazquez, 2016). Nevertheless, the BRICS, particularly China, are disrupting the established framework of global economic governance, as China appears to aspire not only to leadership within the BRICS but also on the global stage. This shift in dynamics raises questions about the evolving role of emerging economies in shaping international economic policies and institutions. China's growing influence within the BRICS framework hints at broader ambitions to redefine the global economic order, challenging traditional structures and signaling a reconfiguration of power dynamics in the international arena (Vlados, 2020). As BRICS maximized the opportunity it had during the period of the financial crisis in 2008, it set the roots for changing global norms, institutions, patterns and functioning. As often compared to G7 or now G20, BRICS too aims to construct institutional reforms globally, including their creations of NDB and CRA, which

³⁹ The data found is based on a research conducted by Stockholm International Peace Research Institute in 2022.

⁴⁰ The fiscal difficulties of the U.S can be seen today, as portrayed by Olivier Blanchard, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics and former IMF chief economist, in an interview in February of 2024, who expressed concern about the significant and growing US government deficits, emphasizing that there is no effort in Washington to reduce them. The soaring deficits, exacerbated by Presidents Biden and Trump, have raised alarms, particularly as the US government debt reaches over \$26 trillion, equivalent to 97% of GDP.

claim to lay a foundation to a more “democratic” institutional structure and decision-making process in contrast to the Western-centric design and “hegemony” observed in the IMF (Chaturvedi and Saha, 2019).

The dynamical shift can be noticed too from the goals that BRICS portrays and works towards, such as technological, scientific and agro-cultural advancements and investments. The shift in technological capabilities in China and Russia, Brazil's dominance in agro-commodities, South Africa's role in minerals, and India's expertise in IT-enabled services has brought about significant changes in the global economic landscape related to production, consumption, and trade (Chatterjee & Naka, 2022). As capital seeks greater profits, cheaper resources, and labor with relaxed regulations in the Southern hemisphere, less viable regions in the Northern hemisphere, such as the declining American Industrial Belts like the Rust Belt, experience economic decline, marked by unemployment, persistent poverty, a lack of opportunities, and increasing crime. This disparity emerges as new alliances in the South–South cooperation create unequal pockets of prosperity and poverty (Neuman, 2016). Furthermore, BRICS in 2015 signed a memorandum focusing and cooperating in the aspect on Science, Technology and Innovation. With this they aimed to superscribe socioeconomic challenges on a regional and global scale, while at the same time taking a step further to shifting the power dynamics towards them.

Appropriately utilizing the geographical location of the member states of BRICS and their large portion of natural resources enhanced by their expansion, it signals a growing convergence of geopolitical and economic objectives within the BRICS, including significant oil producers near strategic trade routes like the Suez Canal, Strait of Hormuz, and Bab-al Mandab Strait. Initiatives such as the International North-South Transport Corridor and the inclusion of key countries like Argentina, especially at Brazil's request, highlight the group's efforts to strengthen integration. Aspiring to reshape global governance, the BRICS aims to increase trade in local currencies, reform international institutions, and align on issues like agriculture and sustainable development. While not challenging existing groups like the G20, the expansion poses challenges and opportunities that will test the BRICS' cohesion and effectiveness, crucial for its role in reshaping global governance (Gruzd & De Carvalho, 2023). Moreover, according

to a research conducted by Hossein Yousefi, Armin Ardehali, Mohammad Hasan Ghodusinejad (2023), China and Russia have made remarkable strides, securing top positions in renewable energy generation, with China projected to produce an impressive 1,339,253.018 TWh and Russia 6425.857804 TWh of renewable electricity. In contrast, Brazil is expected to face a decline in rankings, emphasizing the need for stable policies to attract investments in renewable energy. The G7 countries, including the U.K., Italy, and France, are predicted to experience a downward shift, while the United States is making noteworthy progress. Their study explicitly states that BRICS countries, especially Russia and China, play key roles in the energy transition, necessitating collaboration on renewable sources for a swift transition to a low-carbon economy.

What would increase the likelihood of the shift in the international order is the wish of other countries to join BRICS in the future. As Gallagher and Cheatham (2024) analyze the motivations behind the expansion of BRICS and its implications for the United States, highlighting how over 30 countries have expressed interest in joining the bloc, including Turkey and Thailand. A major factor behind BRICS expansion is global dissatisfaction with the U.S.-led financial system, is what they have analyzed. Furthermore, the dominance of the U.S. dollar allows Washington to wield significant influence through sanctions and export controls, leading countries like Russia, China, Iran, and Venezuela to seek alternatives. What Andrew and Adam analyzed is that, Beyond economic concerns, BRICS expansion reflects broader geopolitical grievances from **the** Global South, particularly perceived inequities in the international order. Many countries view the West as hypocritical, citing vaccine hoarding during COVID-19, selective enforcement of international law, and Western bias in conflicts like Ukraine and Gaza. While some BRICS members and aspirants, such as India and Malaysia, seek strategic autonomy rather than an outright challenge to the West, others view BRICS as a means to reshape global governance into a more equitable system. Moreover, as Ofir Dayan and Jesse Weinberg (2024) analyzed the BRICS summit held in October of 2024, that held place in Kazan, Russia, they have emphasized the bloc's non-aligned strategy reminiscent of the Cold War era. Despite Russia and China's ambitions to position BRICS as an alternative to the Western-led global order, the organization remains a mechanism for cooperation

rather than a unified geopolitical entity. The expansion of BRICS to include Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the UAE reflects the perception among developing nations that the international system is shifting from U.S.-led unipolarity to multipolarity, “The desire of many developing nations to join BRICS reflects their perception of the structural changes in the international system, which has gradually transitioned from a unipolar order led by the United States to a multipolar one” (Dayan & Weinberg, 2024, pp. 1).

Shifting to a historical perspective, the aftermath of World War II reshaped international politics by causing the collapse of Europe, triggering the decline of European colonies in Asia, and paving the way for the United States to establish the postwar international order. Similarities can be noticed today, by reversing the roles, which opened the way for a new global order. With its latest enlargement BRICS+, comprising BRICS countries with additional participants, wields significant demographic and economic influence, representing nearly half of the world's population and over a third of global GDP. The prevailing scenario, which holds the biggest ground, suggests BRICS dominating Western alliances in economic and political realms, particularly in international trade and influence, while reducing reliance on Western compositions, because these two oppositions highly differentiate, by many things, but one thing in particular, as Samuel P. Huntington (1997 pp. 51) would narrate: “The West won the world not by the superiority of its ideas or values or religion . . . but rather by its superiority in applying organized violence. Westerners often forget this fact; non-Westerners never do”.

CONCLUSION

As the 21st century unfolds, BRICS has strategically positioned itself amid the global economic restructuring, aiming to shape a new world order characterized by increased collaboration and equilibrium in global power dynamics. The alliance's cooperative efforts reflect the evolving trends and challenges in global governance, offering an alternative to the traditional Western-led order that has faced repeated failures in addressing pressing global issues effectively. The inclusion of new members further strengthens BRICS, not

only demographically and economically but also in terms of its geopolitical reach and influence.

The rise and expansion of BRICS, traced back to the early 21st century, pose both challenges and opportunities. It challenges the dominance of Western powers and signifies a rapid change in global power dynamics driven by increased interdependence among nations. Despite fluctuating growth, BRICS has demonstrated resilience, particularly in the last decade, becoming a crucial player in the global political economy.

The future of the global governance can be envisioned through three aspects, by looking at geopolitical hostilities escalating as BRICS enlarged its membership, power, and influence; by envisioning a rather optimistic and opportunistic approach, which proposes that as BRICS continued to grow in influence, it would contribute to constructing an interdependent multipolar world and; lastly, presenting a shift in international leadership, with BRICS dominating over Western alliances in economic and political realms, emphasizing global trade and influence while diminishing reliance on Western compositions.

Nevertheless, BRICS alliance, with its expanded membership and multifaceted influence, is poised to play a pivotal role in shaping the future of global governance and international relations. As the world grapples with multipolarity and evolving power structures, BRICS presents a compelling model of cooperation and shared objectives that challenges traditional norms and contributes to the ongoing narrative of a changing global order.

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