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NAVIGATING CULTURAL DIFFERENCES:
THE ROLE OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the key role of intercultural communication in detecting and embracing cultural differences among leaders to encourage productive cross-cultural relations. It explores three key components: insights from multicultural consciousness, understanding and adaptability, as highlighted in Erasmus programs and international conferences. Emphasizing intercultural competence, the article underlines its importance in effective communication and relationship-building across cultural barriers. By applying Hofstede's Cultural Dimension Theory to my experiences in Poland, on the NS Mircea, and at the 2023 USNA Leadership Conference, the analysis reveals how cultural values and attitudes impact communication, socialization, and leadership styles. It also discusses the advantages and challenges of multiculturalism, presenting multi-channel communication, cross-cultural leadership, and broad perspective-seeking as best examples of multicultural awareness in business. Through continuous learning, self-reflection, and a growth mindset, students develop intercultural competence. This article contributes to the literature on intercultural communication and leadership, providing practical guidelines for leaders in different contexts.

Keywords: intercultural communication, leadership, cultural self-awareness, adaptability, Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory.

Introduction

The process of globalization spreading has accelerated, and this is the reason why there are increasing encounters between people with different cultural elements. Consequently, because of the current emphasis on intercultural relationships, regardless of whether in personal or professional contexts, the competence to communicate and forge relationships across cultural barriers has become a vital ability. Intercultural communication can be achieved by developing communication skills. It plays a very important role in breaking cultural barriers, and it enables successful cross-cultural relations. During my last four years of academic studies, I have come to recognize the great importance of intercultural communication in navigating cultural differences by being part of many intercultural environments. Hence, this paper explores three main components of intercultural communication: cultural self-awareness, empathy, and adaptability, supported by my analysis based on my experience from Erasmus+ and international conferences.

Cultural Self-Awareness

Cultural self-awareness is considered to be a reflective cognizance about one's own cultural background, values, beliefs, and prejudices, as well as the ways they form one's perceptions, behaviors, and interactions with others. Awareness of this is achievable by self-realization that the cultural lens dictates and plays a role in the way a person views and understands the world around him. Cultural self-awareness plays a key role in the development of intercultural competences and is required for successful business communication and separate teamwork in a multicultural environment (WUL, n.d.).

How does one become aware of one's cultural preconceptions? A first step would be to move yourself outside your cultural frame. See yourself from a third-person perspective and think outside the box. Culturally speaking, there are some main aspects that differentiate cultures most of the time, such as food, language, and religion.

Examine the variety of meals you ate during the past week and wonder if any of them may seem bizarre or disgusting to others who belong to different cultural settings - or even from other regions within your country. Coordinate a meeting with a classmate who is native to a different neighborhood within the city, state, or country than you. Your conversation aims to show these products as something unusual and share your opinion on them.

Other students will also exchange their ideas. Consider how such an exercise may deepen your awareness of the subtle and unconscious implications embedded in the civilizing process. Besides that, consider how our culture's food rituals interfere with linguistic behavior. Exhibiting this language diversity, you will never say in French that you are "still working on your dinner" ("Are you still working on your plate?"); otherwise, instead of concentrating on relaxation and enjoyment, mealtimes become unbearably dreary. This lifestyle translates into the French office, where typically the employees almost always consume their lunch for one hour simply to enjoy the meal and the company (WUL, n.d.).

Think about the expressions through life you have come across, behaving among your family and friends and your culture group. This is an area where, in investigation, you may find that some idioms present difficulty in correctly translating both literally and figuratively into the different languages and cultural contexts. To provide more context on this topic, set a time for a get-together with someone from a different village, city, county, or country (one who may not speak your mother tongue). Within this conversation, you should tell the folks the children's sayings you were hearing when you were growing up and their meaning as well. Ponder over the wonders of these trivial phrases that manage to unravel the beauty of a culture and the details of its relationship with language (WUL, n.d.).

While the relationship between religion and culture can be more complex to investigate because of the different levels of people's belief in their own gods, it is an enriching and fascinating area of study. If everyone in our group is tolerant enough to confront the idea with an open-minded dialogue without offense, this topic can perfectly be considered one more method of cultural conditioning. There is no wonder that a person with the same religious background but a different regional or country affiliation would usually have contradictory opinions with other believers. On the other hand, a great number of people who are profoundly attached to their own specific religions have been instructed to disbelieve that theirs is the correct religion. The contemplation of the effect of such a state of things may furnish us with additional knowledge on indoctrination and its influence.

Empathy

The term *empathy* is the English equivalent to feeling grief or sadness through others. Translated literally from the Greek *empathia*, is the ability to relate so correspondingly to other people by entering their world or, to put it in a metaphor, to stand in their shoes. In the world of foreign language teaching and communication, it becomes intercultural empathy. This is about the person in particular who should be able to internalize a native-speaker's way of thinking based on which the person would communicate with the world. Intercultural empathy demands of language learners to be more than being able to actually use language skills, even as they communicate with the culture which is a companion to the language they are learning. By taking this step they can build a more informed and appreciative attitude towards the target culture. In result, it empowers people to communicate effectively with representatives of a different cultural milieu and establish a relationship based on understanding.

Empathy to those from different cultures is serving as a significant factor in effective communication as well as reducing cultural gaps. It enables a person to step in other than their own culture's shoes, while also remaining themselves, and as a consequence experience the broader scope of understanding of engaging. Cultural empathy is not about conforming with the culture or pitying it or even defending it but rather to be aware of and to accept what makes it truly a culture. That is not only to look at the world through the lens of others, and to feel what the inner world is, but also to stick to their own identity of culture. Cultural empathy is a component of a powerful relationship that is also about communication with others, which helps in a way as a person gets to move past their personal differences and get to learn more about the experiences of others around them. Through volunteering or other experiences to gain knowledge about society or culture an individual can develop his or her empathy and perspective-taking, thus, the psychological barriers occurring by cultural difference is a case in point. Therefore, cultural empathy can be basically described as the ability of a person to associate the feelings of another person from the target culture with one's own feelings and to talk with them easily (Zhu, 2011).

Adaptability

The last, but not least, criterion of intercultural communication is being able to adapt. Leaders, among other things, have to be flexible and able to apply different communication styles, behaviors, and approaches to navigate cultural differences. This might be accomplished by a change in your speech, the use of nonverbal methods, or a change in how you make decisions to fit into the set social norms and regulations. Adaptability itself needs an open mind, readiness to learn, and preparedness to do the unexpected.

By doing so, they can react positively to cultural diversity and achieve creative spaces as well as collaboration (Cromarty, n.d.).

Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory

The Cultural Dimensions Theory, developed by the Dutch social psychologist Geert Hofstede (1928-2020), is a conceptual construct meant to make intercultural understanding and comparison of nations viable. The theory proposes six key dimensions that influence how people from various cultures perceive, think, and behave: power distance index (PDI); individualism vs. collectivism (IDV); motivation towards achievement and success (MAS), which distinguishes collective from individual goals; uncertainty avoidance index (UAI); long-term and short-term orientation (LOW); and indulgence (IND) (Culture Factor Group, 2024). In terms of MAS, different cultural strains might be expected. Also, short-term orientation (LOO) vs. long-term orientation (LTO) and indulgence vs. restraints (IVR) are the two different approaches to intercultural differences. In developed cultures such as those of the United States, saving (SAV) (this pattern prevails in developed economies such as those of the US) is very high (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010; Hofstede, 2011). Cultivating cultural dimensions allows leaders to be rewarded with great benefits during intercultural communication.

Erasmus+ in Gdynia, Poland (October 2021 – February 2022)

The period of my Erasmus+ mobility in Gdynia, Poland, offered me a perfect chance to communicate with people from various cultural backgrounds, such as Poles, Italians, Bulgarians, and Kuwaitis. Taking Hofstede's dimensions as a basis, a phenomenon of different communication styles as well as cultural values among these four cultures stands before me.

Cultural Differentiation Index Poland, which shows a high rate on the PDI (68), indicates social acceptance of and expectation of an unequal distribution of power (Culture Factor Group, 2024). These cultural inclinations appeared in the communication flow I had with older people or those who were in supervisory roles, particularly in its more formal and hierarchical mode. Cultural conflicts showed me how I should change my

communication style in order to demonstrate respect and modesty. When I did so, I quickly started to deal with the cultural challenges in a better way. In addition, Poland approximates the middle point (60 for the individualism scale and 64 for the masculinity scale) (Culture Factor Group, 2024) on the polarity between personal aims and collective goals and a relatively high score on performance and success orientations.

As opposed to that, Italians have a slightly lower score on the PDI (50) and take the lead on the individualism dimension as compared to other countries (Culture Factor Group, 2024), which emphasizes a more equalitarian and autonomous cultural belief. During my interaction with Italian students, I figured out that the way of talking was more focused on the direct expressions of people involving opinions and personal aims. Unlike Poland (Culture Factor Group, 2024), Italy is the country with a higher degree of indulgence (30 out of 100). Hence, enjoyment and leisure are given higher priorities in Italian society. The ability to acknowledge and savor such a cultural difference made it possible to create stronger bonds and to put in place collaborative relationships between myself and the Italian participants. Bulgarian people score high on the axis of the PDI (70) and low on the individualism dimension (30) (Culture Factor Group, 2024). Thus, they represent a hierarchical society where collective attitude and group loyalty are a must. The case with the Bulgarian students was that they practiced less law-direct communication and had a priority on the maintenance of harmony and the avoidance of tension. Among others, Bulgaria has a high score of 85 on the Uncertainty Avoidance Index (Culture Factor Group, 2024), which signifies great demand for orderly life, safety, as well as certain rules and expectations. A contextualized and sensitized approach to the Bulgarian participants' group dynamics allowed me to not only build their trust and rapport but also to gain my own acceptance and appreciation.

On the basis of the PDI (90) and more towards the lower position on the individual index (25), I can safely conclude that the social setup in Kuwait is highly power-oriented and has a stronger collectivism character (Culture Factor Group, 2024). When communicating with Kuwaiti students, I saw that there is reverence for authority, collective harmony, and non-direct communication. The culture of the Kuwaiti students caught my attention when I noticed that they have great respect for authorities, collectiveness, harmony, and an indirect way of communicating. In the same context, Kuwait gives a lower score on the indulgence dimension (Culture Factor Group, 2024), which is an indicator of a high degree of adaptability and people's tendency to use the social norms and expectations of other individuals to regulate their actions.

Sailing Practice on Board NS Mircea

As a student responsible for international cadets, I had the chance to communicate with midshipmen from the United States, the United Kingdom, Bulgaria, and Poland during a practice on board the training ship from June to July 2022. Through seeing myself in the bigger picture of leadership on the training ship, I realized that being culturally self-aware and adaptable is what great leaders are made of.

The Americans and the British reduce highly on the individualism dimension (91 and 89, respectively) (Culture Factor Group, 2024), which is related to autonomy, self-reliance, self-achievement, and independence. Aboard the ship, they may be more willing to take up the initiative, talk freely, and expect one's own praise and recognition of their achievements. As a leader, I found out how I could provide individual support, feedback, and opportunities for self-directed learning, as previously mentioned, to account for these cultural preferences while welcoming and acknowledging diversity. But on the other hand, it was vital to infuse a feeling of having a shared goal and working as a team since the performance on a ship is highly dependent not only on an individual but rather on the crew effort, too. Through achieving the balance between individual self-discovery and group harmony, it was possible for me to set up a platform that has as its objective both personal development and collective team success.

The United States and the United Kingdom represent countries that get relatively low marks on the PDI, scoring 40 and 35, respectively (Culture Factor Group, 2024). That means they are the ones who like to promote more egalitarian and participative leadership styles. Thus, an individual from the aforementioned group may tend to have a conflict with authority, ask questions and be involved in the decision-making process. I, being their immediate link to the system, had to make the communication style more open with keeping the transparency needed as well as ensure the inclusion of their input and reactions. I became able to collaborate with the students more effectively, create a participative learning setting, and show that I was competent in engendering trust, involvement, and a sense of togetherness in the class.

Unlike the West, Bulgaria has strong hierarchical and collectivist culture in its community and this may constantly lead to the limitation of its individualism (30), while on the other hand, it could increase its power distance (70) (Culture Factor Group, 2024). Another opportunity is to give the youngsters a chance to meet each other on the training ship, who will already know what is most important, which is being united, being a part of the same group, being loyal, and respecting the chain of command. In order to exercise leadership, I helped to create group identity by forming a common culture and goal and stating the respect of the ship's command hierarchy. This happened by trying to make my guidance as clear and direct as possible, giving directions, and chalking out the agenda while also keeping myself connected to the inner team sentiment of my students. By studying my communication style and bringing on some elements of a directive, supportive, and holistic approach, I was able to provide Bulgarian cultural values through the group and elicit a sense of acceptance and belonging from the students.

Poland gets an average result at individualism (60) and the top one at the power distance indicator, according to Culture Factor Group (former, Hofstede Insights). This represents the notion of a civilization that works together, respects hierarchy, and acknowledges the equality between individual interests and those of society at large. In this case, we conclude that Polish students get a quality of educational balance between the grade and the classmates' collaborations and that they are used to flexible and hierarchical learning and teaching. Being a leader among these campus groups meant that I had to master walking the cultural line. One of the ways in which I was able to ensure this was by constructing a lot of opportunities for the workers to grow as individuals while making teamwork, discipline, and respect for authority the most important values. This was my way of working to have a win-win situation between participants who would operate by common rules, receive regular feedback and support, and be jointly responsible and held accountable for learners' performance.

United States Naval Academy (USNA) Leadership Conference 2023

The participants of the 2023 USNA Leadership Conference came from different cultural brackets in countries such as the USA, Bulgaria, Japan, Germany, Peru, Canada, Taiwan, Brazil, the Philippines, and Mexico. The title of the conference, *Returning with Honor: Trials to Triumph*, meant celebrating the return of the prisoners from the Vietnam War, and guest speakers such as LT Brad Snyder, CDR Everett Alvarez, CAPT Charlie Plumb, RADM Robert Shumaker, and MajGen Charles Bolden Jr. provided a perception of cultural differences and the importance of intercultural communication in leadership.

Despite the variety of cultures, Japan stood out because of its unique cultural values and style of communication. Japan is known as one of the countries with the highest rank of uncertainty avoidance (92) and long-term orientation (88), which means there is a kind of preference for stability, plans, and perseverance (Culture Factor Group, 2024). A careful structure, meticulous details, and planning for a long-run approach were familiar to Japanese societies in social situations. This implied that I would have to provide supplementary clarifications, pay extra attention to communication, and show respect to authority and power.

The United States and Canada register a score of 46 and 48 in terms of uncertainty avoidance index, and a score of 91 and 80 score equivalent to the individualism dimension (Culture Factor Group, 2024). This is more characteristic of a high-context culture, which displays the capacity to accept low clarity and the personal aims of individual achievements. In interacting with members of the ethnic groups we came across, I found it necessary to acknowledge the importance of individual manifestation and make it possible for that interaction to instill growth into new ideas.

Germany and Bulgaria, based on the Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI), a measure of the extent to which a culture is comfortable with ambiguity and complexity, scored 65 and 85, respectively (Culture Factor Group, 2024), and this well explains their love for structure and clear expectations. On the contrary, Germany is more preferred, not only on the individualism dimension (67), but also compared to Bulgaria, which is rarely thought of as (30). This shows that there is a balance between individual and collective interests in German culture, while Bulgarian culture is more collectivist (Culture Factor Group, 2024). Recognizing the different contexts guided the adjustment of messages and roles in the proper handling of participants from those countries.

Latin American countries, like Peru, Brazil, and Mexico, foster societies that may be hierarchical (64, 69, and 81 on the Behavior Cultural Dimension) and collectivist in nature (16, 38, and 30 on these dimensions) (Culture Factor Group, 2024). It implies that there is surely the presence of a centralized social structure

grounded in the principles of group solidarity and mutual benefits. And when engaging with community members from such cultures, it was indispensable to demonstrate laid-down rules of authority, personal care for people based on friendship, and the cohesion of a group.

The theme of our conference, *Returning with Honor: Trials to Triumph*, allowed us to have discussions on intercultural communication and leadership with stronger backing. The former prisoner of war guests CDR Everett Alavarez, CAPT Charlie Plumb, and RADM Robert Shumaker narrated their experiences of being resilient, adaptive, and remaining unified under challenging death and bone-chilling conditions. Their stories, however, have drawn attention to developing strong and trusting relationships and building up a sense of shared goals, even though cultural backgrounds vary. Through the creation of similarities between the classic conference proceedings and the process of intercultural communication, the conference confirmed the role and importance of personality traits such as empathy, tolerance, and adaptability in leadership.

Reflections on Intercultural Experiences: Developing Leadership and Communication Skills

My multicultural experiences have fine-tuned the efficacy with which I apply different strategies to confront the sophisticated impediments as well as the deeper understanding regarding the crucial subtleties in cultural diversity. Those encounters from the different aspects of my life and the newly gained skills of collaboration or interaction with people of a different background did not only offer me possibilities in cross-cultural communication but also brought some positive influence on me as a person and as a leader as well.

The cross-cultural interaction through my Erasmus+ experience in Poland, the sailing training practice aboard NS Mircea, and the USNA Leadership Conference in 2023 have imprinted on me the unspoken reality of cultural self-awareness, adaptability, and empathy. With the help of Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory, I got to understand how the values of a culture and the expectations of the people in it affect the manner in which communication takes place, social interactions, and leadership.

Moreover, I will point out that such experiences have enabled me to become more inclined to recognize and perceive the existing differences among various cultures. Through learning about the various, culturally particular grounds and choices of people from countries like Poland, Italy, Bulgaria, Kuwait, the USA, Britain, Japan, Germany, Peru, Brazil, and Mexico, I have learned to tailor the way I communicate and lead towards a more inclusive, collective, and effective guideline for collaboration. Personally, this has shifted my communication style, some cultural norms and values have been demonstrated, and diverse perspectives are actively being sought and accommodated.

Although this is the case, there are certain cultural differences with which I am confronted that are not without troubles either. On the other hand, the isomorphism of cultures confronting each other is the most common issue that results in misunderstanding or conflict. More specifically, the components of power distance, individualism vs. collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance are the basis of such different views on organizational operations, such as roles, operations procedures, and communication standards. The cultures of two regions could be very distinct in the expressions of life values or the understanding of job and life balance. Unquestionably, an extremely high level of cultural sensitivity, patience, and open dialogue had to be achieved to close the gap that existed as a result of the cultural barrier.

Moreover, such practices made me aware that not only knowledge and development are essential factors for cultural competence, but adaptation and individual personality are also the same. Being determined to interact with other cultures on a regular basis, in addition to being open and flexible, I was able to deepen my cultural knowledge, improve my adaptability, and strengthen my leadership skills in a multicultural context.

Conclusion

To sum up, this paper deals with the search for the meaning of intercultural communication for leaders and is focused on the necessity to move beyond the appreciation of diversity and into successful cultural navigation. What I have done is combine academic knowledge with personal experiences in this article as a means of showing the importance of intercultural competence as one of the factors for building understanding, collaboration, and success between people of different cultures.

The experience as an Erasmus+ exchange student in Poland, the NS Mircea training ship practice, and the USNA Leadership Conference 2023 are analyzed from the cultural perspective of Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory. Surprisingly deep insights on how different cultures can be perceived and on how to communicate and lead across cultures have come to light during those three international experiences. The variety of multicultural communications that I have been involved in has led me to understand that transforming my cultural self-awareness, empathy, and openness are the main points in the process of the formation of links that touch upon all people, including people of different cultures.

Besides that, I think the paper has illustrated intercultural connections both in advantages and disadvantages in that it has aligned itself to the process of continuous learning, the maintenance of self-awareness, and the development of a growth mindset. Like a person born in a border town, a leader with the philosophy that intercultural communication is a vital determinant of organizational success is the one whose values are deeply rooted in cultural contexts and whose mind and soul are adapted to diversity.

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THE RUNWAY BETWEEN NATIONS: AVIATION LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to discuss some aspects of the multicultural environment and how different people can work together for the same purpose in the aviation field. I was inspired to do this project because I consider that different people with different cultural backgrounds, languages, and environments, can leave everything behind and start to work, creating amazing things for the good of everyone. I am going to present how the need for communication appeared in aviation, some standards and rules, verbal and nonverbal communications and cases with real applicability. This article aims at showing that everything which implies humans represents hard work and this is why everyone needs to know their job, this aspect being possible only by communicating and understanding the future mission. In the aviation domain there are a lot of rules, written with "blood", so it is our duty to not repeat the errors and improve the weaknesses.

Keywords: communication, aviation, military, civil, nonverbal.

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Introduction

From the earliest days, the human species has been fascinated by the aspiration to soar high in the sky like birds or to dive into the depths of the planet's oceans like fish, and is constantly looking for ways to fulfill these dreams. This fact is seen a lot of times throughout history and confirmed by events. It is unanimously accepted that the first attempt and manifestation to break through the gate of heaven dates back to the Chinese empire and the appearance of kites, in the 5th century BC. The next relevant event was the perspective of aviation shown by Leonardo Da Vinci in the 15th century. He had design ideas, but without a well-founded basis. The next step was the first flight with a hot air balloon on November 21, 1783, but this was not sufficient to kickstart the aviation industry. Modern aviation, as we know it nowadays, had its start with the first considered flight, the one of the Wright Brothers, dated December 17, 1903 (Spartan, n.d.). In the early age of modern aviation, the sky was considered to have no limits and the probability of meeting another aircraft in the air was very reduced. In that period there was a rudimentary communication system between aircraft and ground personnel, by using visual signs, colored paddles, signal flares, and hand gestures. Unfortunately, these systems were not efficient in communications between pilots, so after a while wireless telegraphy appeared. These systems, which conveyed communication in Morse code, emerged together with aviation development. Initially, ground-to-air contact was established in this way and later air-to-ground communication became possible. The efficiency of flights was increased and the problems regarding safety were decreased thanks to the appearance of portable radios inside the aircraft. The complex technology represents the foundation of modern aircraft technology. Some of the new technologies are GPS, Internet, advanced radio and video capabilities. English is the official language of aviation, as stipulated by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). Pilots must take English proficiency examinations to ensure a high level of skills on communication across language difficulties (Aviation eLearning, n.d.). After a lot of work from visible signals to cutting-edge technology, aeronautical communication has come a long way, considerably contributing to the safety and success of aviation journeys.

Civil Aviation

The Second World War served as a strong impetus for aircraft technology advancement. Even if nations did not communicate to each other in part, every one of them was in a constant race for supremacy on all domains. Aviation started to gain more and more terrain in this race, because people realized that every operation like reconnaissance, medical evacuation, assault, and deep strike would be problematic without air supremacy. Realizing the importance of this factor, aviation developed (Rosen Aviation, 2023).

Although a huge network of freight and passenger flights was established during that time, numerous political and technological roadblocks continued to impede the development of these modes of transportation and the air routes toward new civilian uses. Every big nation had its part in the research and development of the aviation domain. Some technological advancements were represented by improved airframes, using aluminum and other lightweight durable materials, these becoming the new standard. Navigation and communication systems became more important and efficient, having towers with radar technology and radio communication, which were vital for managing increased air traffic. Infrastructure developed, because WWII necessitated the construction of numerous airfields and the expansion of existing ones, so some of them were modified for civil use. After the war, companies like Boeing, Douglas and Lockheed Martin moved on from military to civil production (Smithsonian, n.d.).

After the conflicting situation ended, it was clear that civil aviation became a huge industry which needed some standards and procedures known and respected by a big number of countries to ensure everyone's safety. The Convention on International Civil Aviation, drafted in 1944 by 54 nations, was established to promote cooperation. This convention, also referred to as the Chicago Convention today, served as the foundation for the development of the policies and guidelines required for international air navigation during times of peace. Air services should be formed "on the basis of equality of opportunity and operated soundly and economically," according to the Agreement's primary goal, which was to promote international civil aviation "... in a safe and orderly manner" (Chicago Convention, 1944). The Chicago Convention was successful in setting the hope up for creating the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) to reality. The ICAO was meant to coordinate and facilitate the close international collaboration that the recently formed global air transportation system requires.

The primary goal of ICAO, which has not changed over time, was to assist states in reaching the utmost degree of uniformity possible in rules, standards, procedures and organization. The number of the Convention's annexes has increased from the moment of foundation and until the present. As of right now, they contain over 12,000 international standards and best practices (SARPs), all of which have been approved by consensus of the 193 Member States that currently make up the Convention.

One of the most important decisions made by ICAO was the one regarding the communication factor between nations. Because even if they were working for the good progress of this industry, for safety reasons they had to decide about linguistic standards. The first aspect was the language of use, and they decided English as the universal language for international aviation communication. Other aspects to consider were pronunciation (clear and understandable), structure (clarity and focus on the correct use of tenses), vocabulary (unambiguous, aviation specific terminology and general vocabulary), fluency (coherent, without hesitation, speed around 100 words/min), comprehension (understanding spoken English in both routine and non-routine contexts) and interaction (abilities of initiating, sustaining and concluding conversation) (ICAO Doc 9835 AN/453, 2004).

Military Aviation

It was not by chance that the linguistic standards imposed on pilots in civil aircraft and military aviation were examined first and foremost, respectively. The concept of aviation itself was first connected with military aviation at the turn of the 20th century, and then with civil aviation. However, when it comes to the language competence requirements for military pilots, things are not all that different. The objective of pilots' professional training and their work setting depends on the area of work in which each of them will perform. The civilian pilots' primary duty is to fly passengers or move cargo, whereas the military pilots' main duty is to fly military aircraft that have different technologies and equipment, and first and foremost, to defend the skies of their nation. Advanced language proficiency in a foreign language, as well as understanding of the specialized languages used, is mandatory for using all the resources available, including the technology aboard. When an expert completes his/her education entirely in his/her native language, he/she will have a knowledge disadvantage compared to someone who has strong language proficiency in a language that is widely spoken around the world.

Aviation English

Because aviation is a specialized, technologically driven field that encompasses a wide variety of activities, the language codes related to the many professional sectors are collectively referred to as Aviation English or English for Aviation. Every employee in the aviation domain can benefit from learning more English because their daily tasks are based on the use of English and linguistic codes. The air specialists' use for safety and coherence some innovative combinations of technology, automation, and language, such as DATALINK, a computerized communication system that transmits menu-based communication options between the aircraft and the control tower computer (ICAO Doc 4444-ATM/501 Amendment No. 1, 2007). In the near future, these technological systems will be able to distinguish both voice and communication nuances and will be used in simulated or real-world scenarios. In the majority of our minds, there is a correlation between specialized language codes and images of pilots in their cockpits communicating with air traffic controllers while using a set of uniform protocols to preserve airspace order. In aviation there is a wide array of codes, because, just like in other jobs, a set of capabilities are required, such as physical talents, emotions, and intricate technical knowledge.

Clarification

The Chicago Convention of 1944 selected the motto of pilots, "Aviate. Navigate. Communicate.", which reflects the flying activity in every situation especially in emergency ones. The pilot must have the control of the aircraft and the ability to fix it if needed, to know their position and where they are going to and to be able to communicate with other pilots or air traffic controllers. According to the Second Edition of ICAO Doc 9835 AN/453, 2004, radio stations or other cutting-edge face-to-face or nonverbal technologies serve as the channel or means of transmission for messages exchanged between pilots and traffic controllers, as well as between pilots and other pilots/interlocutors, using a communication code unique to the aeronautical environment. Mostly formal in nature, the communication can take several forms: written, verbal, paraverbal (e.g., voice modulation, speech rate, pronunciation, pauses, hesitations, etc.), and nonverbal (body language/signaling). Pilots use a specific, restricted code when interacting with personnel from the same sphere of expertise. Both native and non-native

English speakers must use the same code and language in order to properly communicate the message with the recipient. Both parties should be able to decode and understand the message. When carrying a conversation, both the pilots and the radio station personnel must respect the communication guidelines and acknowledge and accept the others' cultural variations, just like their cultural baggage should be respected by the other party (The Air Pilot's Manual Vol. 7, 2013).

Verbal and Nonverbal Communication

It might be argued that during communication, the pilot not only conveys information to the other party, but can also indicate something about himself by sharing essential details regarding his background and experience. The pilot can show his knowledge in this domain even just by the messages he sends. He can "talk" about the theoretical knowledge of the aircraft, its operating principles, maneuvers, aerodrome organization, execution phases of the direction, type of mission, weather conditions, etc.

Because in this industry a limited code is used, which is understood only by persons in this domain, its particularity regarding the language must be understood and used in context of common English. This kind of language code is composed of the following language elements:
■ phonetics (the sounds of calls);
■ vocabulary (the words and phrases used in calls);
■ semantics (the meanings of words and phrases);
■ syntax (how words are ordered or combined to make a meaningful call);
■ pragmatics (how a call relates to the real situation or activity in which it is transmitted).

In our area of study, verbal communication occurs not just in radio communication but also in side meetings, working visits, briefings and debriefings, pilot training courses for collaborative actions with strategic partners, and other settings. As a result, it is equally important to be aware of the cultural quirks of the people you are speaking with, to adhere to the state's cultural norms and values, to use appropriate forms of address, to understand military grades and their equivalents in English and American, etc.

People who operate airplanes on the ground employ gestures, more especially nonverbal communication, to guide the aircraft's movement using their arms and body posture (Fig. 1). All air traffic users, military or civilian, use and recognize the reference system since it is standardized.
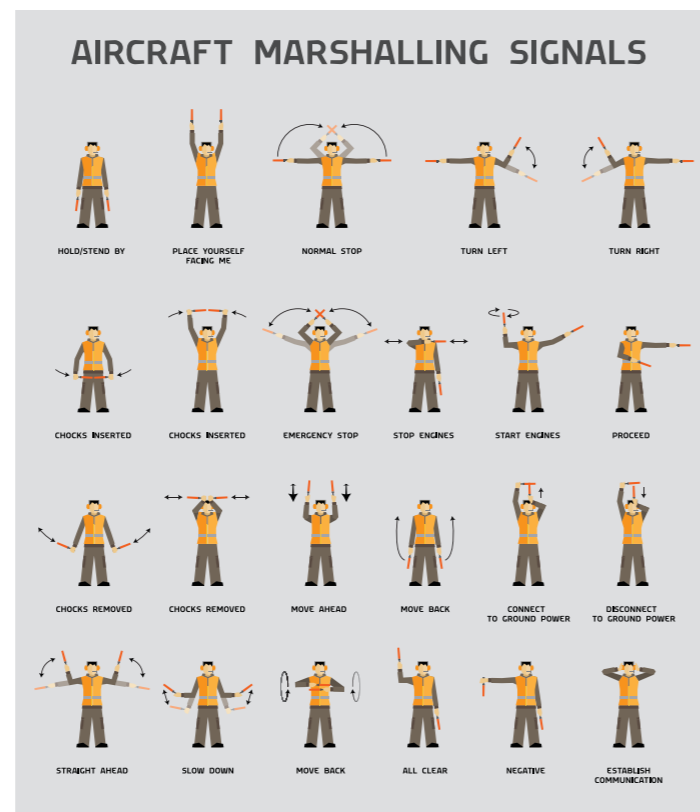

Figure 1: Marshalling signals (http://civilaviationindia.blogspot. com/2011/09/marshalling-aircraft-signals.html)

There are no other examples of nonverbal communication in standardized aviation language outside of this system. However, in terms of professional relationships, pilots taking part in international missions need to be mindful of the cultural differences of their cooperating colleagues as well as the possibility that some nonverbal cues could be misconstrued or even objectionable to individuals from other cultural backgrounds. Gestures, proxemics, and eye contact are the most prevalent nonverbal communication manifestations that sociologists and anthropologists have studied for a long time. In certain cultures, it is considered impolite to look someone in the eye like in the Japanese case, in others, it is customary to touch the person you are addressing like in Asian countries (Tan, 2024); in certain regions of the world, specific gestures made by shifting the positions of the hand, fingers, palm, convey different messages according to different codes of meaning (Kern, n.d.).

In the year 2023, I had the opportunity to be involved in the Erasmus+ program in my Air Force Academy, and I had the chance to be the coordinator of the team from Romania. The project started in October and lasted for approximately three months. The countries involved in the International Air Force Semester and the partners of Romania also, were Bulgaria, Greece, Poland, and Portugal. This experience made me think about how different cultures can react to usual gestures and things we do by instinct, but for my international colleagues it can have another meaning and at the first view this may be something good, but in most cases, this may be inappropriate. For example, a Greek person would consider it highly offensive to show someone their open palm, even if they are merely indicating the number five. However, if the palm is turned towards the speaker, it indicates a neutral gesture that could be interpreted as the number five. In aviation we can show by using our fingers how readable you are on the radio station, using a scale from one to five. In Greek culture, a gesture like this can be seen as rude at first, because they can see this as *moutza*, which is a highly insulting gesture. Another gesture can be thumbs up, which in aviation we use for transmitting: "All clear!", but in the normal use of Greeks this is something impolite (Owen, 2024). In the realm of aviation, verbal communication and certain nonverbal forms of communication are inextricably linked to the cultural norms of the people who utilize them. Radio communication is the lone exception, although even in this case, cultural cues reveal information about the transmitter.

Communication through Written Messages and Emblems

In the military and, of course, in military aviation, written communication is realized by abiding by a strict set of rules for documents (development, preparation, and dissemination). The guidelines must be followed by all participants in international and multinational missions. Written messages frequently include graphic insignia and/or adhere to the same rules as spoken communication, with the exception of phonetic aspects.

For documents that do not technically connect to aeronautical activity, such as military reports and official information on a state of affairs, issuers must master and use specific characteristics of English usage, in writing. Among the most relevant, we can list:
■ correct, standardized completion of military ranks (abbreviated or in their full form, if provided in the completion instructions). There are situations in which military ranks are incorrectly used, by translation into English: e.g., to Romanian pilots, the rank of a general in command of an Air Flotilla (a small fleet of airships), corresponds to an Air Flotilla General not to a Brigadier General, but such a rank does not appear in any NATO reference; the abbreviation of the rank of Lieutenant Colonel is, in aviation, LtCol, and not LTC);
■ correct use, or, where appropriate, avoidance of the use of personal pronouns and replacement of nouns by pronouns (the English way of directly addressing anyone by using the personal pronoun you may be perceived as impolite, and even aggressive, by people from other cultural backgrounds);
■ avoiding the use of the passive voice in military reports (in the case of passive voice, the action is made by someone else for the subject of the sentence, which does not comply with the military rules specifying that the order is executed by the designated person).

As far as our field of observation is concerned, written communication comprises a wide range of types of messages, for the transmission of which technology and emblems, or graphic signs, contribute. There are also special situations, in which the "message" is interpreted as written, even when there is no text in the message, but only graphic representations that are decoded by receivers, based on the aforementioned restricted code. The decoding of the message is always the same for pilots, as it is established internationally. Among the most commonly used forms of graphic messages we can include:

A. RUNWAY SIGNS AND MARKINGS;

4-22	**Taxiway/Runway Hold Position:** Hold short of runway on taxiway
26-8	**Runway/Runway Hold Position:** Hold short of intersecting runway
8-APCH	**Runway Approach Hold Position:** Hold short of aircraft on approach
ILS	**ILS Critical Area Hold Position:** Hold short of ILS approach critical area
⊖	**No Entry:** Identifies paved areas where aircraft entry is prohibited
B	**Taxiway Location:** Identifies taxiway on which aircraft is located
22	**Runway Location:** Identifies runway on which aircraft is located
4	**Runway Distance Remaining** Provides remaining runway length in 1,000 feet increments
	Runway Safety Area/Obstacle Free Zone Boundary: Exit boundary of runway protected areas

B. LIGHTS:

Figure 4: Lights (https://www.askpilot.info/2020/06/approach-lighting-systems-als.html)

ALSF—Approach light system with sequenced flashing lights
SSALR—Simplified short approach light system with runway alignment indicator lights
MALSR—Medium intensity approach light system with runway alignment indicator lights
REIL—Runway end identification lights *(rapid identification of the ends of the runway)*
MALSF—Medium intensity approach light system with sequenced flashing lights (and runway alignment)
ODALS—Omnidirectional approach light system

C. LIGHT SIGNALS;

Figure 5: Light signals (https://www.aviationio.com/?p=569)

D. ONBOARD GAUGES (WHOSE DISPLAY SHOWS CODED INFORMATION RAPIDLY)

Figure 6: Board gauge (https://www.aircraftsystemstech.com/2017/05/vor-navigation-system.html)

Figure 2: Runway signs (https://encrypted-tbn0.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcQ2D5CwtDXoRPRYh_sXpKJ7H7m3B-fRt-fLOHIP6PnzFQ&s)
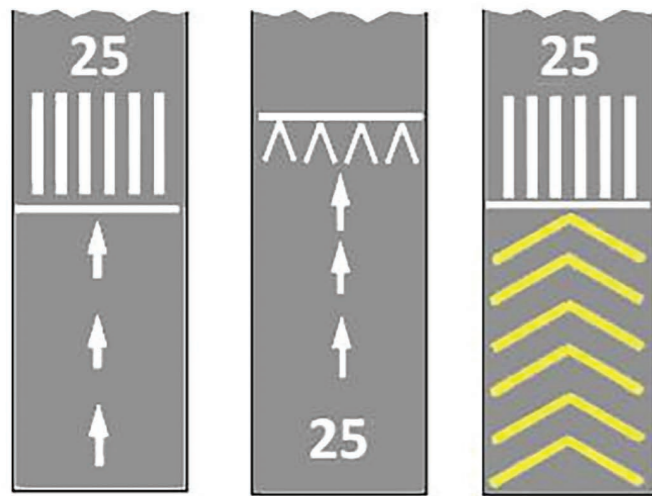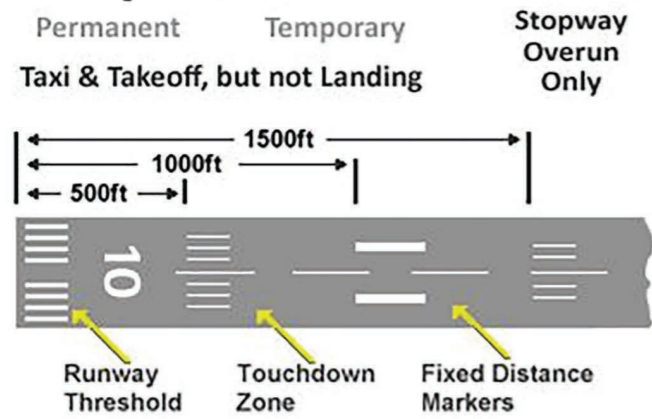
Figure 3: Runway markings (https://www.flygo-aviation.com/ppl-challenge/explanations/air-law/)
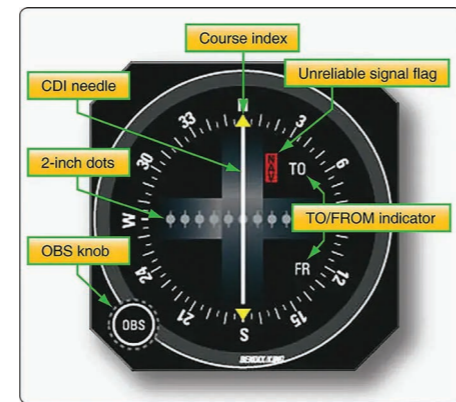
E. OTHER GAUGES COMBINING GRAPHIC TEXT WITH CONVENTIONAL SIGNS (GPS, RADAR, ETC.)

These examples represent an important part of every pilot life, and they are very common in this domain. Actually, they can show vital aspects about position on the airport, landing path and distances to the runway, the position of another aircraft by your position and some navigation facilities. Every pilot must know all of them and even more, be they either civilian or military, because there are airports (e.g.: LROP) which are used by both types of pilots.

Conclusion

In conclusion, aviation is like we know it today because every nation that took part in this process contributed to it. From the beginning, with kites, until the present day with airplanes of the 5th generation, one thing remained constant, and that is the humans with their eyes every time on the sky. Communication between humans evolves constantly, day by day, and indeed in the aviation domain we need to find constant solutions for the new needs of the society and make every word or gesture really mean something. Sometimes in this industry the hard part is not represented by a formula, but by the human part. The diversity in every domain represents a proper way for ideas to be born, but the right ones appear when they intersect the same goal. Yes, it is true that all of us represent different types of people and we can find ourselves in a competition, but the most important subject needs to remain the humans' lives, and their quality.
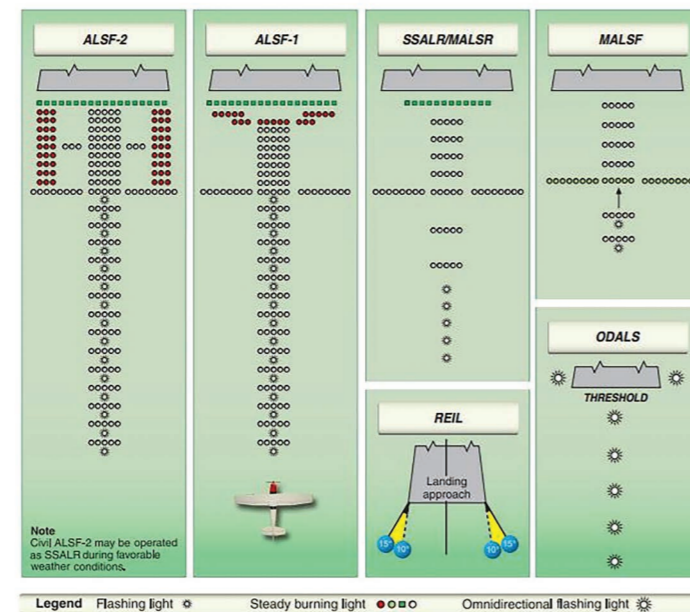
With this article I tried to show a respectful and representative area where things work mostly well in aviation. Even if this had a huge development in conflictual periods, they have their importance as well. I presented the beginnings of aviation, modern aviation and aeronautical communications, the problems of communication and culture, solutions such as trying to find a common point of view and having a standardized set of rules. I discussed both military and civil parts, which are interconnected, some types of verbal and nonverbal communications and some perspective differences. I had the chance to share a personal input on this work and I described everything through my point of view but based only on real facts.

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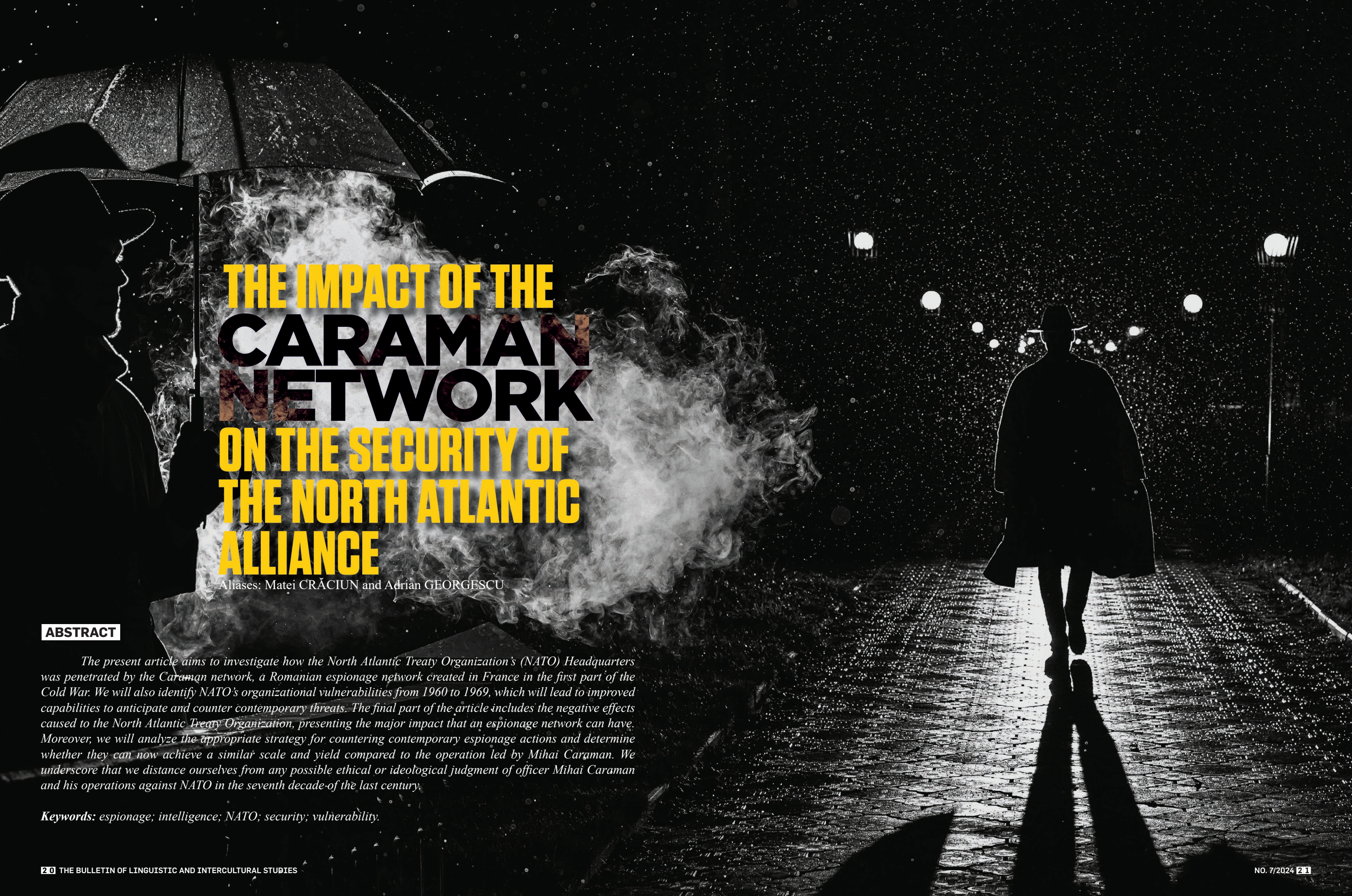
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THE IMPACT OF THE CARAMAN NETWORK ON THE SECURITY OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC ALLIANCE

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ABSTRACT

The present article aims to investigate how the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) Headquarters was penetrated by the Caraman network, a Romanian espionage network created in France in the first part of the Cold War. We will also identify NATO's organizational vulnerabilities from 1960 to 1969, which will lead to improved capabilities to anticipate and counter contemporary threats. The final part of the article includes the negative effects caused to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, presenting the major impact that an espionage network can have. Moreover, we will analyze the appropriate strategy for countering contemporary espionage actions and determine whether they can now achieve a similar scale and yield compared to the operation led by Mihai Caraman. We underscore that we distance ourselves from any possible ethical or ideological judgment of officer Mihai Caraman and his operations against NATO in the seventh decade of the last century.

Keywords: espionage; intelligence; NATO; security; vulnerability.

Introduction

The Caraman network was one of the most effective and mysterious espionage operations carried out and managed by the Foreign Intelligence Directorate (and its subsequent structures within the Ministry of Internal Affairs) during the Cold War (March 1947 – December 1991, in fact, from the creation of the Iron Curtain until the break-up of the Soviet Union), with the aim of gathering strategic intelligence on NATO for the Soviet Union, Romania and the other socialist states that made up the Warsaw Pact. Created and coordinated by Mihai Caraman, a young Romanian foreign intelligence officer working in Paris under diplomatic cover, the Network succeeded in stealing a very large number of classified documents from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Headquarters, both when it was located in Paris, France, and after its relocation to Belgium, in Brussels and near Mons (inaugurated on March 31, 1967, following General Charles de Gaulle's decision to withdraw France from NATO's command structures). The Romanian officer's extensive espionage operation was active between 1960 and 1969, when it was dismantled by the Western intelligence services following a complex counter-espionage operation triggered by the defector Captain Ioan Iacobescu, one of Caraman's deputies (Accoce & Pouget, 1999).

Our study analyzes the impact that the Network has had on the security of North Atlantic structures, both historically and from today's perspective. Our main goal is to provide a better understanding of how historical events can guide current security strategies and to present the organizational vulnerabilities of NATO over a span of nine years, in the period 1960-1969, which allowed Caraman's agents to carry out their intelligence gathering activities unhindered, mainly the acquisition of classified materials and documents, both military and civilian (diplomatic, economic, industrial). The secondary aim is to contribute to the intelligence literature with an objective perspective on a poorly studied subject, as well as to develop our skills and knowledge as intelligence students.

The motivation for writing this article is the professional interest in the field of security, as well as the desire to enrich the knowledge of other people eager to learn about an emblematic case that jeopardized the collective security of the Transatlantic Alliance and influenced the evolution of the two political-military blocs that confronted each other in the Cold War. We emphasize that in spite of an obvious temptation, we distance ourselves from any possible ethical or ideological judgment of officer Mihai Caraman and his operations against NATO in the seventh decade of the last century, this not being the subject of our research.

The central objective is to assess the feasibility of replicating an espionage network similar to Mihai Caraman's in the current context. This includes analyzing potential strategies to counter contemporary intelligence-gathering actions and estimating the possibility that they could reach a scale and efficiency comparable to the Romanian officer's operation. At the same time, the article aims to assess the impact of the network on the relations between NATO and the European countries of the socialist camp, as well as on the internal dynamics of the Western Bloc.

To achieve all the objectives, we will use the case study method, which consists of an in-depth analysis of a concrete phenomenon or situation, in a historical or current context, using primary and secondary sources of data. We consider this to be the appropriate method to explore the causes and consequences of an espionage case, involving a variety of actors, interests and motivations, and to generate directions for further research.

In addition to its contribution to academic research in the field of intelligence, the paper also aims at the practical benefit, seeking to facilitate the development of improved tactical and operational thinking for intelligence analysts. The actions of Romanian foreign intelligence officer Mihai Caraman highlight the importance of knowledge of human psychology, efficient resource management, ingenuity, and perseverance in achieving objectives.

Historical Background

Knowing the context of the evolution of the international relations between East and West makes it easier to understand the Caraman Affairs. In September 1953, Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev came to power in the Soviet Union. At the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in February 1956, the new General Secretary Khrushchev condemned the purges and crimes ordered by Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin, leader of the USSR from 1922-1953, the sinister Leningrad Affair, the poor preparation of the defense against the Nazi Germany's attack to invade the USSR on June 22, 1941, and also released a huge number of political prisoners. In addition, Khrushchev took steps to re-establish relations with Western left-wing Freemasonry, a collaboration that political scientists have dubbed the *Khrushchev Thaw* or the *Geneva spirit*. The objective pursued by Nikita Khrushchev through his concessions to left-wing Freemasonry was a complex geopolitical strategy, namely the penetration of North-Atlantic military structures (Tismăneanu, 2018; Hogan, 1956; Troncotă, 2008).

France, led since January 1959 by General Charles de Gaulle, has become an undesirable ally of NATO, even an irritating one (Banu, 2019). Reorienting their approach in European integration, the French president and Khrushchev entailed considerable transformations in the political configuration of the era. Through this policy, the French president may have sought to pay a policy to the United States in response to the humiliation suffered during the Suez Canal Crisis of October-November 1956 (Troncotă, 2008).

Additionally, the history of the Cold War is peppered with unknown and unseen episodes of intense confrontation on the *invisible front*. Maintaining a *bearable temperature* during this period depended on the efforts of many people on both sides of the Iron Curtain who permanently risked their lives to gather crucial information needed to prevent surprise attacks and a major new conflict in Europe, a new human hecatomb like World War II (Banu, 2022).

The Romanian state, inevitably regimented on one side of the Cold War since 1948, developed its own intelligence services and engaged in a major confrontation. As a member of the Warsaw Pact, the representatives of the regime in power in Romania concentrated their espionage efforts on Western countries, especially NATO member states. This game of intelligence and geopolitical influence persisted until the collapse of the Soviet Union (in December 1991), which marked the end of the Cold War and the beginning of a new world order (Banu, 2022).

The Caraman Affair

Mihai Caraman was born in Oancea commune, Covurlui county (now Galați county) on November 11, 1928, exactly a decade after the end of the First World War. He obtained his baccalaureate diploma in the summer of 1947, and in March 1950 he graduated from the Officers' School of the Ministry of the Interior in Măgurele, receiving the rank of lieutenant (Banu, 2022).

A few weeks before his thirtieth birthday, Mihai Caraman was sent on a mission to Paris, under the cover of first secretary and commercial counselor of the Romanian Economic Agency in Paris, with the main objective of collecting classified information from NATO Headquarters. He was joined by other foreign intelligence officers such as Mihail Simula, Secretary II at UNESCO; Ioan (Iacob) Iacobescu, Secretary III at UNESCO; Mihail Georgescu, Secretary II at the Embassy; Gheorghe Ionescu, Secretary II at the Embassy; Eugen Vișan, Secretary II at the Embassy; Pavel Cișmaru, Secretary I at the Embassy; Constantin Mirea, Secretary II at the Embassy; Ion Păduraru, Secretary II at UNESCO; Marin Negrea, Secretary II at the Embassy; Mihail Ilie, First Counselor at the Embassy (HAI România! Youtube channel, 2021). The Romanian officer saw this very difficult mission as a unique chance to prove his operational capabilities (Banu, 2022; Troncotă, 2008). One of his colleagues considered him to be a very demanding man, even saying with admiration that "You don't call a whaler if you want to catch bleaks" (Accoce & Pouget, 1999).

To establish his first contacts, Mihai Caraman analyzed the diplomatic and business circles of the French capital. The first person he was in contact with was Minister Counselor Roberto Cordero d'Aubuisson from the Embassy of El Salvador. From talking to him, he realized that he is left-leaning and an advocate of peacekeeping between the two antagonistic military blocs in confrontation. By fructifying the relationship with the Latin American dignitary, Caraman learned about a NATO Secretariat official, Robert Van de Wielhe, who was the key to the whole operation (Racoviceanu, 2019; Banu, 2022).

After a whole process of documentation on his personality, a first contact was made during a reception at the Paris City Hall in January 1960, where Mihai Caraman introduced himself as a Romanian diplomat, according to the deposition of NATO official Van de Wielhe, given to his investigators over the years. Van de Wielhe's father happened to have been doing business in Romania before the Second World War, so they also had a common topic of conversation, leading to the two exchanging business cards at the end of the conversation (Banu, 2022; Racoviceanu, 2019). There followed nights out at fancy restaurants, during which the Romanian realized the future French agent's sexual orientation, as he was gay. In order to recruit him officially, the Romanian suggests a gay approach, which he later used to coerce him into providing information. From that moment, Caraman had Van de Wielhe under his control, who would willingly provide him with a first document concerning a NATO Research Center in Italy (Banu, 2019).

As they say in the world of intelligence, an agent can be persuaded to do a lot if he is inoculated with the belief that he is serving a just cause. The dignitary responded in the affirmative to the Romanian's request to provide him with more important documents, believing that in this way he was preventing a conflict between the blocs on either side of the Iron Curtain. The most important document obtained was a NATO master plan, which

included the entire armed forces by category, with the capabilities of each member state and their strategies for the next five years. The relationship was further cultivated and a very large number of documents, hundreds of pages, including some classified *COSMIC TOP SECRET*, were obtained. All these materials and documents were sent to the central office in Bucharest, and finally to the KGB, in accordance with official protocols between the Bucharest and Moscow governments (Accoce & Pouget, 1999; Banu, 2019).

In this context, it is worth noting a key vulnerability within NATO - the high officials were not controlled when leaving NATO Headquarters, as this was interpreted as offensive behavior and considered an insult, so Van de Wielhe could, without any hindrance, remove classified material from the building (and then re-enter the circuit) at any time, using only a common briefcase (Accoce & Pouget, 1999).

The relationship between the two of them began to regress due to some accidental events from both sides. The first was generated by the NATO official, who left the locker's door open, this way generating suspicions and security checks. The second one was provoked by the Bucharest Headquarters, which ordered Caraman to give the agent a Soviet-made camera, in order to photocopy documents faster. The Frenchman felt guilty and confessed to the Romanian that he did not want to be a spy, that everything he offered him was out of friendship. Subsequently, Robert van de Wielhe resigns in September 1961, but the Romanian officer manages to obtain one last piece of information from his former agent, namely a notebook of all his acquaintances employed in the North Atlantic Alliance structures (TVR, 2021; Banu, 2019).

By tenaciously analyzing this list of various categories of NATO officials (the information is also corroborated with other telephone directories from the NATO High Command), over the next seven years, approximately twelve thousand NATO documents were supplied to the East - all with the help of a single person working as documentalist in the translation office. In the fall of 1962, Francis André Élie Roussilhe became Tudor's agent. Before contacting him, Mihai Caraman intensively studied his habits, his background, his personality and his residence in order to choose the right way to approach him. After this process, he learnt that the Frenchman was well known among the Alliance officials because he sold *foie gras*. On the pretext that he was a member of the Greek delegation and wanted to buy the famous delicacy, the Romanian officer appeared one evening at Francis Roussilhe's door. He agreed to sell him the product and invited him to the NATO Headquarters the next day. In order to conclude the transaction and not to arouse suspicion, Caraman waited for Roussilhe in the main hall of the building (where he could enter without being legitimized), offered him the money in exchange for the *foie gras* and left. Thus, the relationship created was developed with professionalism and care by the Romanian, the orders of *foie gras* increased, and so did the sums handed over. In this context, their friendship was established, the officer revealed his true identity to him and, from this moment on, we can say that the Caraman Affair also began for Roussilhe (C. M., 2020; Accoce & Pouget, 1999).

Another high-profile agent was a Turk, Imre Nahit, who held an important position in the economic department of the North Atlantic Alliance, him being the third person in hierarchy. He had access to all economic contracts and accounting documents. He had been recruited by other Romanian foreign officers from the spy residence in Ankara while he was in Türkiye. After the agent's secondment to the NATO Headquarters in Paris, he was handed over to Mihai Caraman, who managed him with great skill, until September 1968, when he was arrested (Banu, 2019).

The Romanian spy network always had a subterfuge when it came to attracting their agents. In this context, it is interesting to note Pierre Rocheron's case, for whom the head of the Paris office put a lot of effort, because he considered that he had potential. The Frenchman had graduated from the National School of Administrative Studies and in June 1963 he was sent as Second Secretary at the French Embassy in Washington. In the United States capital, officer Victor Dorobanțu had already been waiting for him for a month. The Romanian intelligence officer easily penetrated his inner circle, found out about his precarious financial situation and the fact that he was in love with a Black woman, Eva, whom he had impregnated. At that time, it was inappropriate for a high-ranking French official to have such connections, so Dorobanțu helped his *friend* with a free abortion for Eva, in Mexico. This surgical intervention represented the right premise that allowed Rocheron's manipulation (Accoce & Pouget, 1999).

So far, we only mentioned male identities, but that does not mean that the cell formed in the *city of lights* was devoid of women. In 1964, Miss Sylvie Borel was 27 years old and was working in the Ministry of Economy and Finance. Up to that age, she had been deprived of any romantic affairs and Caraman knew how to take advantage of this. Sylvie provided documents regarding oil resources, France's economic problems in the West and Franco-Soviet economic relations. For a better outline of the Caraman Affair, there are other important agents to be mentioned such as Antoinette X, the Austrian citizen Klaus Edelmann, the French colonel Charles de Jurque De La Salle (Accoce & Pouget, 1999).

The spy network created with intense work by the undercover officer Mihai Caraman was dismantled in July 1969, but not because of him. The defector was a captain by the name of Ioan Iacobescu, him being the deputy of the network. As he feared that he would be recalled to Bucharest, he requested political asylum at the British Embassy in France for him and his family. It is believed that Iacobescu was initially taken to Scotland (other sources claim that he was taken directly to the United States) where his interrogation began. In order to provide a good enough reason for him to be taken quickly to the United States, he confessed everything he knew about the activities of his colleagues in Paris - about the agents of the Caraman Network. In a short period of time, all the agents were arrested and tried and the Romanian officers involved were discreetly recalled to Bucharest, none of whom being declared *persona non grata* by the French authorities (Ierunca, 1986). Even more, the diplomat Mihai Caraman organized a farewell cocktail party on August 14, 1969, sending invitations to all the personalities he had had the opportunity to meet and with whom he had collaborated during the ten years he had worked on the banks of the Seine - diplomats, high ranking officials, businessman and French industrialists (Banu, 2019).

However, some scholars in the field believe that the disintegration of the Caraman Network began in Berlin in October 1967, with the betrayal of a KGB officer who had negotiated with CIA agents to take refuge in the United States in exchange for an impressive amount of information about sources that the Eastern intelligence services had gathered in some Western states (Banu, 2019).

Despite the distancing from the USSR - which President Nicolae Ceaușescu claimed during his speeches - The Foreign Intelligence Directorate was *subordinated* to the KGB, an aspect deliberately emphasized by the defector Iacobescu. Therefore, all documents collected regarding NATO and France were a priority for Moscow (Ierunca, 1986).

Vulnerabilities Imply Consequences

The lack of an effective counterintelligence system, which would ensure the protection of secret documents within NATO structures, as well as the counterintelligence training of the officials, allowed the network led by the Romanian Mihai Caraman to achieve a spectacular penetration. At that time, Romania and obviously, the Soviet Union, had knowledge about NATO's organization, logistics, communication systems and their training. As a result, in the event of an alleged military conflict between the two antagonistic blocs, the Warsaw Pact countries had an undeniable strategic superiority, having detailed knowledge of their adversary's capabilities. For the time being, it is impossible to quantify the costs incurred in rethinking and reconceptualizing NATO strategies as the result of the theft of the Alliance's operational documents by agents of the Intelligence Network that Caraman created in 1960 and coordinated with mastery until the summer of 1969 (Rusu, 2022).

Instead, it was through the information obtained by the spies of communist Romania - *Moscow's Trojan horse* - that the strategy of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization became fully known. Realizing that this military alliance was a defensive one, the fears of the leaders of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe of a surprise attack against their countries were significantly diminished. As a consequence, the political leaders of the Eastern Bloc approached the arms limitation talks with increased confidence, building collective security mechanisms that facilitated finding ways for bilateral cooperation (Rusu, 2022).

The Actual NATO Security

From a security perspective, NATO has implemented numerous measures to protect its personnel and classified information, making the penetration of the Alliance structures an extremely difficult target for any hostile entity. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization binds all member states together in a strong and cohesive alliance.

The evolution of cooperation within the organization has greatly enhanced security, both at the micro and macro levels. In certain specific international contexts, NATO member states share intelligence information, strengthening their ability to prevent and counter threats more effectively. NATO communications are encrypted to prevent interception. Technological advances have played an important role in ensuring preventive measures against contemporary risks.

Access to NATO classified information is granted on the basis of a security clearance and requires compliance with the need-to-know principle (no person is entitled by rank, position or security clearance alone to have unrestricted access to certain NATO classified information). The level of access provided by the certificate shall be similar to the classification level of the information used for the performance of the duties (ORNISS, 2022).

Individuals who work on a NATO classified contract need to have a security clearance. The objective of this extensive process is to reduce the risks of unauthorized theft or disclosure of information and material. The main criteria for assessing an individual's suitability for security clearance are character traits that may raise the security risks. The views and the conduct of the life partner may also be relevant and should be taken into account. Once the security clearance expires, the same rigorous vetting process starts again. This process can also be initiated when there are indications of the manifestation of risk factors or at the request of NATO representatives (ORNISS, 2022).

Moreover, as it is well known, any attack against one NATO member-state is considered an attack against all NATO members - against the entire Alliance - thus creating a deterrent against acts of hostility. The expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization - from its 12 founding members to 32 countries in Europe and North America - provides a strong disincentive to military espionage by adversaries. The exposure of such illegal actions against any of NATO's structures would inevitably damage the image of the aggressor on the international stage, with long-term losses, impossible to quantify at present. As a result, on the *invisible front*, some *apparent victories* can have the *flavor of defeat*. This makes NATO a difficult organization for any enemy to penetrate. Nevertheless, its members must remain vigilant and its safeguards must constantly evolve to protect the Alliance's values and promote its interests.

The Possibility of Replicating the Espionage Case Today

Notwithstanding the evolution of NATO security and the management of classified information, the risk of penetration by adversary entities seems to be omnipresent. Technological development has revolutionized modern espionage. These changes enhance, in a seemingly paradoxical way, the role of the human factor in intelligence gathering. The evolution of technology is like a double-edged sword, with both sides benefiting from its advantages. Artificial intelligence has the capacity to search and analyze large amounts of open source data. However, the truly valuable information lies in the well-kept and hidden secrets, beyond the understanding of algorithms that only a human being can discover, decipher and capitalize on (AP & Euronews, 2023).

In an organization where people work, there will undoubtedly be mistakes. Intelligence is no exception. It is not always possible to predict the future or to detect the person who betrays by providing valuable information to adversaries. Throughout history, social evolution has led to changes in thinking and behavior, resulting in diverse cultural landscapes. The methods of coercion applied by the spy network led by Mihai Caraman will not have the same results today. It is certain, however, that as people develop, they have complex feelings and emotions, the manifestation of which can radically influence the way they act. As long as a spy can use these specifically human weaknesses to his advantage, he can penetrate even the most hermetic environments. Subsequently, he becomes a ventriloquist who influences actions and decisions in favor of the actor (state or non-state) for whom he spies. Another important factor is the fact that, in the right context and at the right time, money is a sufficiently satisfying motivation to induce a person to undertake a certain activity (even an illegal one).

In conclusion, a replication of the successful penetration of the Caraman Network is still possible today in any seemingly hermetic environment. Obviously, the circumstances of conducting such an operation and the potential outcomes must be rigorously analyzed in advance. Targets may have good counterintelligence preparedness, and this can be a hindrance to achieving their goals. In addition, weaknesses in human nature are present on both sides, and people are susceptible to influence. As a consequence, this game becomes unpredictable, complicated and professionalism, intelligence and ingenuity will determine the winner.

The Smart Approach

At present, an exhaustive analysis of the possible courses of action in the event of an espionage network being uncovered is impossible. Given the counterespionage service's intentions, the methods to counter action or neutralize the negative effects are varied. The unmasking itself seems to be rather inefficient due to the fact that it leads to a subsequent consumption of significant resources. After the network's destruction and applying the right measures, the hostile entity can bring new people in, who would create a new structure that would need to be countered and annihilated, too. Otherwise, if the aggressor's image is intended to be affected on the global political arena, this way of counteraction can be efficient.

Another way of neutralizing the negative effects of an espionage case is by intoxicating the opponent. Following the certification of the clues regarding the network's hostile actions, its members would be deliberately delivered false information. The invisible battlefield is fluctuating, the defensive situation thus turning into an offensive one, without the enemy realizing the change. The informational volume can be gradually increased in order to determine the opponent to invest more of its resources, finally reaching a point that is totally lacking in concreteness.

Conclusions

The Caraman Network constitutes not only a remarkable moment in the history of espionage, but also a comprehensive phenomenon that has significantly influenced the geopolitical and geostrategic landscape of the Cold War. Operating between 1960-1969, this group of spies, managed by the native Mihai Caraman succeeded in collecting a significant amount of classified information from NATO's general Headquarters, affecting the collective security of the Alliance and changing the dynamics of the relations between the blocks on either side of the Iron Curtain.

The analysis conducted has shown that NATO's organizational vulnerabilities during that time were ingeniously exploited by officers of the Romanian external intelligence agencies, under diplomatic cover. This exposure of the North Atlantic system's weaknesses underlines the importance of continuous adaptation and the need to constantly improve the counter espionage strategies in the face of threats to national and international security.

The results have shown us that the replication of such an operation in the contemporary era is attainable, which changes the game into an unpredictable, complicated one. The lessons learned from Mihai Caraman's actions bring to the forefront the importance of deeper understanding of human psychology in the intelligence field, efficient resource management and perseverance in the face of challenges. These facets are not only relevant in the historical context of the Cold War, but also through contemporary threats, highlighting the need for a comprehensive approach in managing security and counterespionage. Therefore, the Caraman Network remains a complex and relevant case study, offering perspectives on both the past and the future of Euro-Atlantic space security.

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE RUSSIAN FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE SERVICE

Aliases: Alexandru CAMBURU and Alexandru NICOLAE

ABSTRACT

At the end of 1991, the former Directorate I of the KGB, which dealt with collecting foreign intelligence, became the Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR - Служба внешней разведки Россcийской Федерации Россcийской Федерациии), an organization led by Yevgeny Primakov. Subsequently, in August 1992, the objectives that the SVR needed to achieve were outlined, with gathering economic and technological information from the West being a priority. Although initially disorganized, the SVR quickly evolved from a poorly organized service to a proficient one. The current leadership, headed by director Sergei Naryshkin, reflects the service's closeness to the Kremlin leader, becoming an essential component in Vladimir Putin's strategic vision. The purpose of the SVR is to recruit secret human sources to ensure the security of the Russian Federation, training its officers so that they can build a productive and loyal agency.

Keywords: SVR, Russian Federation, Herman Simm, intelligence

Introduction

States are looking for as much information as possible to guarantee superiority and security in front of their enemies. One of these states is the Russian Federation, which, following the dismemberment of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), has found itself in a situation of inferiority to the United States. Thus, the Russian Federation is trying by all means, including the improvement and modernization of intelligence services such as the Federal Security Service (FSB- Федера́льная слу́жба безопа́сности Росси́йской Федера́ции), the Main Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation (GRU- Гла́вное разве́дывательное управле́ние) and the Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR-Слу́жба вне́шней разве́дки Росси́йской Федера́ции) to regain what it had lost with the collapse of the Soviet state, namely spheres of influence, economic zones, strategic partners, and recognition as a global, not just regional, Great Power.

This paper aims to identify the role played by the Foreign Intelligence Service of the Russian Federation in guaranteeing the security of the Russian state. At present, it is one of the most successful intelligence services and, given that this is the objective for which the secret services were created, the following questions can be asked: Why did this service emerge? What is the organizational structure? Who runs the SVR? What are the objectives of the SVR? Which intelligence services does the SVR cooperate with? How are external intelligence officers trained?

The paper also analyzes the motivations that can lead to the decision to betray one's own country in favor of the Foreign Intelligence Service of the Russian Federation. It can therefore be appreciated that the Foreign Intelligence Service of the Russian Federation is particularly important in realizing Russia's security goals.

The Collapse of the KGB and the Rise of the SVR

Before 1989, there were two intelligence services in the Soviet Union: the Committee of State Security (KGB - Комите́т госуда́рственной безопа́сности) and the Main Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the USSR (GRU - Гла́вное разве́дыывательное управле́ние). After the breakup of the Soviet state, the Russian intelligence services were reformed. The former Directorate I of the KGB, which was in charge of gathering information from outside the country, became the SVR, an organization headed by Yevgeny Primakov, at the end of 1991. Subsequently, in August 1992, the Law on Foreign Intelligence was adopted, which clearly set out the objectives to be achieved by the SVR, with Western economic and technological intelligence being a priority in intelligence gathering. Under Article 5, the SVR "shall support the economic development and scientific and technical progress of the country by collecting economic and technical information and provide this information to government bodies". The same law stipulated that "career personnel could occupy positions in ministries, departments, institutions, enterprises and organizations without their presence there, compromising those institutions and making them liable to the charge of association with foreign intelligence institutions". Article 15 also mentioned cooperation between the SVR and other governmental bodies, stating that "Ministries and departments of the Russian Federation shall assist the foreign intelligence institutions of the Russian Federation in their intelligence work" (Knight, 1996, p. 135).

Despite the reforms, the SVR was a weak service when it was established in comparison with former KGB Directorate I. This was due to the fact that the scope of the SVR's activities was reduced as a result of the transfer of the intelligence agents of some 40 Third World countries into a state of conservation. Also, the number of intelligence officers with diplomatic cover[1] embassies based in Western Europe and the United States were reduced by about 20% (Troncotă & Blidaru, 2020). In addition to this, the SVR had to establish cooperative relations with other intelligence services in the West on issues that seriously affected the security of the Russian Federation, such as terrorism, drug trafficking, organized crime, and nuclear weapons proliferation (Zaitseva, 2007). At present, the SVR has moved from the stage of a deficient service to a real intelligence service, which strives to reach the highest standards.

Management and Organization of the SVR

The head of the SVR is Sergei Naryshkin. He was appointed as director of the Foreign Intelligence Service by President Vladimir Putin in 2016, replacing Mikhail Fradkov. Naryshkin has worked in St. Petersburg city hall with Vladimir Putin since the 1990s (UNANSEA, n.d.). Prior to his appointment as head of foreign intelligence, he served as head of the Presidential Administration, and in 2011 he became chairman of the State Duma of the Russian Federation (Lenta.ru, n.d.). In terms of the SVR chief's youthful activities between 1978-1982, his biography has a gap, which has led many critics to claim that this is the period when he trained to become an intelligence officer. From 1988-1992 he was at the Soviet Union Embassy in Brussels as an expert for the State Committee for Science and Technology. This position is ideally suited as a cover for an officer in the KGB's Directorate I, which was in charge of intelligence gathering from the external environment (Troncotă & Blidaru, 2020).

Next to Sergei Naryshkin, the SVR is headed by deputy directors, including Aleksandr Nikolaevich Balakin, Andrey Mikhaylovich Moryakov, Aleksandr Nikolaevich Smolkov, Sergey Aleksandrovich Gerasimov and the first deputy director of the SVR, Viktor Fedorovich Lavrentsov (RuPEP.org, n.d.).

The Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) is organized into five departments as follows: the Analytical and Intelligence Department, the IT Department, the Operational Technique Department, the Economic Intelligence Department, and the Foreign Counterintelligence Department (Agentura.ru, n.d.). Within the Analytical and Intelligence Department, the most notable is the U.M.39949, commanded from February 1, 2024 by Pavel Ivanov, which has under its subordination several directorates, among which we can mention the Political Intelligence Directorate (P), the Legal Intelligence Directorate (L), the Scientific and Technical Intelligence Directorate (N) and the S Directorate, the department that supervises the work of illegal officers. It should be noted that Pavel Ivanov, prior to his current position, headed the Department of Economic Intelligence, focusing his attention on Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and the Baltic States (The Insider, 2024).

More information about Directorate S has come to light in recent years, especially after the discovery of the 10 illegals operating in the United States. They were betrayed by the former deputy of Directorate S, Colonel Aleksandr Poteev. Anna Chapman, the most notorious illegal uncovered in 2010, testified that she was caught after an FBI agent contacted her with the code that only Poteev and her liaison officer would have known. After the SVR colonel defected, he was sentenced in absentia to 25 years in prison for high treason and desertion (ABC-News, 2011).

The SVR also includes the Zaslon structure, which carries out autonomous actions in support of Foreign Intelligence Service operations outside the Russian Federation. This structure was created in 1997 by a secret order issued by the President of the Russian Federation, Boris Yeltsin, and was to be subordinated to the Director of the SVR (Brocard, 2023). The Foreign Counterintelligence Directorate is also in charge of collecting information about traitors within the SVR and about the activities of Russian institutions abroad. Counterintelligence officers are tasked with recruiting human covert sources from opposing intelligence services. The most eloquent case is that of CIA officer Aldrich Ames, who was recruited by counterintelligence officer Victor Cherkashin (Latunsky, 2019).

The Foreign Intelligence Service of the Russian Federation operates globally and is responsible for gathering intelligence from most geographical areas. Its wide area of coverage has led to the establishment of several departments with regional competence within the service. In this way, the SVR divided the world into several departments along linguistic, ethnic, and cultural lines. Using the model of the former Directorate I of the KGB (Andrew & Gordievski, 1994), we can identify the following areas of interest of the SVR: Department 1 (North America), Department 2 (Latin America), Department 3 (Scandinavia and the Commonwealth), Department 4 (Germany and Austria), Department 5 (France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Benelux, Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Albania, and the countries of the former Yugoslavia), Department 6 (China, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, and North Korea), Department 7 (Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Papua New Guinea, Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines), Department 8 (Türkiye, Iran, Afghanistan, Israel, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan), Departments 9 and 10 (English and French-speaking African countries, except Egypt), Department 17 (Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Bangladesh), Department 18 (Arab countries and Egypt) and the former Soviet Department, covering countries such as Ukraine, Belarus, Republic of Moldova, Baltic States, etc.

Objectives of the SVR

According to the new version of the Federal Law "On Foreign Intelligence" of January 10, 1996, the objectives of the SVR are set by the President of the Russian Federation. Article 12 states that the President "determines the tasks of intelligence work", "controls and coordinates the activities of the foreign intelligence agencies of the Russian Federation", makes decisions on the conclusion

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[1] Colonel Oleg Penkovsky revealed, as early as 1962, that of the 5,200 Soviet diplomats in Soviet embassies and consulates in 72 Western countries, about 3,000 belonged to the two services KGB and GRU (Ştefănescu, 1992).

of cooperation agreements of the SVR with "intelligence and counterintelligence services of foreign states" and "appoints the heads of the foreign intelligence agencies of the Russian Federation". The objectives that both the SVR and the GRU are to fulfill, according to Article 5, relate to assisting "the economic development, scientific and technological progress of the country and the military and technical security of the Russian Federation", as well as "ensuring favorable conditions for the successful implementation of the security policy of the Russian Federation" (Federal Law No. 5-FZ, 1996). The Foreign Intelligence Service of the Russian Federation is also authorized to carry out disinformation and propaganda missions, to protect employees of Russian institutions abroad and their families, to conduct strategic, economic, military, scientific and technological espionage, and to conduct electronic surveillance abroad (DIA, 2017, 72).

At the same time, the strategic interests of the Russian Federation in the former Soviet area should not be ignored. In these countries, the SVR works closely with the Presidential Administration. Within the latter is the Department for Interregional and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, headed since 2021 by former SVR colonel Igor Maslov (Kremlin.ru, 2021). Before receiving this post, Igor Maslov was in charge of the department's "Moldovan Division", reporting to former SVR general Vladimir Cernov. Those under Igor Maslov's command prepared briefing notes and reports on politicians, monitored compromising information and drafted speeches that referred to ex-Soviet states. The information was forwarded to the SVR headquarters and the Presidential Administration (Thorik, 2020). Through the economical entity Promsvyazbank, run by Petr Fradkov, the son of former SVR director Mikhail Fradkov[2], the separatist regions of Moldova and Ukraine are financed. Evghenia Guțul, the pro-Kremlin Bashkan of Gagauzia, signed an agreement during her visit to Moscow in 2024, which stipulates that all pensioners and public sector employees in the region can claim a monthly payment equivalent to 100 dollars, which is possible by using MIR cards (payment system in Russia) (Borogan & Soldatov, 2024). According to these circumstances, we can assume that through this operation, the Russian secret services are trying to illegally finance pro-Russian parties in the Republic of Moldova in the context of the presidential elections in the form of support for the population of Gagauzia.

In terms of cyber activity, SVR has a hacking unit known as Cozy Bear (APT-29), which in 2021 affected the American company SolarWinds Corporation. SVR accomplished this by gaining access to the internal network of software maker SolarWinds, inserting malware into a version of the Orion IT monitoring application. Subsequently, users of the program downloaded and installed the update along with the Russian malware, thus creating the opportunity to steal sensitive information. According to a statement released by the White House, "the SVR's compromise of the SolarWinds software supply chain gave the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service the ability to spy on or disrupt more than 16,000 computer systems around the world" (Cimpanu, 2021). Following the start of the war in Ukraine, the SVR, along with the FSB and GRU, began cyber- attacking major Romanian government institutions. According to Gen. SRI Anton Rog, head of the National Cyberint Center, "before the war in Ukraine started, there were two services that were buzzing us in one - GRU with APT-28 and FSB, with much more complex malware. GRU is noisier, it's from the military. FSB is more stylish and more complex malware. Since the war started, the SVR, with APT-29, came along" (ELR, 2023).

The SVR is also responsible for counter-terrorism, although the FSB has most of the counter-terrorism duties. The latter heads the National Anti-Terrorist Committee (NAC), headed by FSB Director Alexander Bortnikov. The director of the SVR is also a member of this committee, along with other dignitaries of the Russian Federation (FIDH.org, 2009). However, the importance that the SVR attaches to the fight against terrorism, as well as to other issues of interest to the Russian Federation, is reflected in the cooperation relations that the service has with foreign partners.

Collaboration with Counterpart Services

As a rule, cooperation with partner foreign services is carried out on counter-terrorism issues. Article 4(1) of the Federal Law "On Countering Terrorism" (Federal Law No. 35-FZ, 2006) states that cooperation with other services is mandatory. The article states that "the Russian Federation, in accordance with its international treaties, will cooperate in the fight against terrorism with other foreign states, their law enforcement agencies and special services, as well as international organizations". As for the SVR's cooperation with other intelligence services, Director Sergei Naryshkin said, "At present, I know of only a few special services that have openly declared their refusal to communicate with us. We constantly cooperate with all significant intelligence agencies in the world. Among our partners is the CIA in the United States, with which we continue to interact on issues of countering international terrorism and exchange views on topical issues of our time" (EADaily, 2021). As for cooperation with the US service, the outbreak of the conflict in Ukraine has caused the cooperation between the two agencies to decrease in intensity, with the SVR director stating that there are no substantial contacts at the moment between the two intelligence services (TASS, 2022). The situation became so tense that the SVR leadership announced that the US military base Tanf, located on the border between Syria, Jordan and Iraq, is being used to train Daesh militants to carry out acts of sabotage and terrorism not only on the territory of Syria, but also on the territory of Russia (TRT.net, 2023).

There is a close cooperation between the SVR and the services of the countries that are part of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), apart from Ukrainian and Moldovan secret services. In addition to these countries, the Russian services have good relations with the intelligence services of the states that are part of the BRICS[3] and the SCO[4], the main collaborator being the People's Republic of China (TASS, 2023).

Training of SVR Officers

Compared to the FSB Academy, the SVR Academy does not accept young people who have not completed higher education. To be eligible to enroll in the SVR Academy, candidates must be citizens of the Russian Federation "who are ready to serve their Motherland, have a higher education, are under 30 years of age, are physically healthy, have the ability to study foreign languages, and have a sufficient level of political, scientific and technical education and general culture". Candidates have to pass a series of psychological tests, which assess the level of intellectual development, quick thinking, sociability and neuropsychic stability (SVR-msotr, n.d.). According to Victor Suvorov, a former GRU officer, an important criterion in the selection of Soviet spies was that psychologists established the presence of a sense of humor in candidates. In their conception, "the man without a sense of humor, even if at first glance he seems very intelligent, is in reality a fool" (Suvorov, 2016, p. 93).

Admitted students have to learn how the operational work is carried out. They learn several foreign languages, counterintelligence techniques, philosophy, sociology, economics, psychology, informational, operational and technical analysis, Russian and foreign literature and art, military history, self-defense techniques, driving different types of vehicles and basic use of firearms (Bennett, 2000; Braun, 2020). Colonel Mikhail Frolov, a professor at the SVR Academy, stated that he was teaching students the "art of intelligence". This is "the ability to get in touch with people, the ability to choose the people we need, the ability to ask questions in which our country and our leadership are interested, the ability, if you will, to be a psychologist" (Kremlin.ru, 2021).

In addition to officers who are trained by the SVR Academy, there are also illegal officers. The training of Directorate S staff is known to a limited number of people. According to Horațiu Blidaru, before being sent on foreign missions, "the illegals undergo intensive training, which includes the assimilation of foreign languages, the use of encrypted communication systems, codes and ciphers, steganography, the learning of techniques of counter- surveillance and concealment of equipment and materials used in secret activity, and the use of impersonal mailboxes" (Blidaru, 2021, p. 88).

Recruitment Methods Inherited from the KGB

In order to recruit agents to work with the Foreign Intelligence Service of the Russian Federation, officers of the SVR have to go through a certain process, which in Western literature is called the Agent Recruitment Cycle (Burkett, 2013). This process consists of identifying people who can meet the need for information; assessing the persons sighted, in terms of placement capacity and access to the desired information, and starting the process of determining the motivations and vulnerabilities of the agents; developing a relationship with the individual to assess their actions and whether they will be responsive to the demands of the officers; actual recruitment, which can be direct, with the officer disclosing his or her SVR membership, or by the new officer gradually coming to understand this; training and coordination (handling) meetings[5] with the agent, including outlining the tasks to be performed; and handing the officer over to another case officer or ending the relationship.

[2] Currently, Mikhail Fradkov is the Director of the Russian Institute for Strategic Studies (RISI), which until 2009 was part of the SVR under the designation of U.M.613.

[3] BRICS is an international organization, and the name comes from its main member countries: Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.
[4] The abbreviation SCO stands for Shanghai Cooperation Organization. It is an organization that includes Russia, China, and four former Soviet republics in Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan).
[5] The publication Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies (2023, p. 5) documented that agents recruited from Ukraine began in the fall of 2021 to go on short vacations to resorts in Türkiye, Cyprus, and Egypt, where they met with their Russian handlers, from whom they received their future assignments.

These steps have been rigorously followed since KGB times. In a recently declassified 1989 report entitled "Some Aspects of Training the Operative for Psychological Influence of Foreigners During Cultivation", it is noted that the emphasis was predominantly on the power of persuasion, on psychological influence, which was generally directed towards a person's consciousness, reason, logical thinking, sphere of ideas and worldview and a person's subconscious emotions, feelings, and attitudes (KGB Report, 1989).

At the same time, to assess the agent's personality, intelligence officers have to identify "the degree of his dissatisfaction with his own life, the successes he has achieved and his inner conflict", especially since "a dissatisfied person, who is in a state of conflict with society, with his close persons or with himself, is receptive to the highest degree to new ideas, because he sees in them the possibility to change his existing situation for the better". Also, the age of the agent is an important factor. An agent can be young and inexperienced, so that he or she can fall prey to Russian intelligence officers, who can take advantage of his or her naivety. But, according to the KGB Report, Russian foreign intelligence officers have to keep in mind that "the most vulnerable employees are those between 36 and 45 years of age, who occupy lower-ranking positions. Their enthusiasm for work is low, there may be problems in their family, financial difficulties arise, funds are needed for their children's education, to cover mortgage debts etc.". Moreover, it is added that "these employees lose self-confidence. Their feelings of worry, dissatisfaction and resentment towards their bosses increase. They start actively looking for a way out of the impasse" (KGB Report, 1989).

In order to recruit a person of interest, the Russian secret services will help to deepen the deplorable situation in which they find themselves (Suvorov, 2016). For example, if a potential source has financial problems, the SVR will try to aggravate them, so that the individual becomes more receptive to the ideas propagated by Russian intelligence officers.

After the moment of recruitment, most individuals realize that their situation has worsened considerably. According to psychologist David L. Charney (2019), after this phase, the agent faces two failures: "the first failure was not being able to manage his life during the crisis, before he became a traitor. And the second is that of being trapped in an existential black hole" (Charney, 2019, p. 9). This emerges from the statements of former traitors who worked for the Russian services. The Russian agent David Boone stated that the actions he took "overshadowed everything good I did in my life before and after. I'm glad it's over." Likewise, Robert Lipka, a National Security Agency (NSA) employee who had spied for the Russian services for 30 years, said that when "I started, I didn't realize what it all meant. As I was doing it, I tried to withdraw several times. For 30 years I lived a life of terror thinking that the whole thing would be uncovered" (Charney, 2019, p. 14).

The aim of the SVR officers is to strengthen the relationship with the covert source so that the source can be certain that he will not betray. Officers must induce a sense of security by recognizing to the agents the importance of the actions and services provided. In short, the more people feel validated, involved and rewarded, the more the quality of the bond will increase. It is this ability of Russian officers to influence individuals necessary for intelligence work that led Edward Lucas (2018), a specialist in Russian intelligence, to assert that many of the greatest traitors, from Kim Philby to Herman Simm, have admitted that they were not simply defectors, but employees of the other side.

The Reasons of Treason: the Herman Simm Case

The reasons for betrayal are multiple, and the purpose of SVR officers is to observe the vulnerabilities of future agents in order to recruit and coordinate them. Without secret human sources, intelligence services cannot function properly. Despite technological developments, HUMINT has remained the only way in which a high-performing intelligence service can satisfy, at least partially, its intelligence needs. For this reason, intelligence officers' identification of agents' motivations must take precedence in their work. Thus, for an individual, idealism, ideology, patriotism and religion are among the main motives when it comes to making a complicated decision such as betraying one's own country. Likewise, professional or social failures, states of frustration, as well as the desire for social recognition and appreciation constitute, as presented above, a complex of motivations, which can affect the capacity for critical thinking (Albu, 2022). After recognizing motivations, the officers of the former Directorate I of the KGB, later SVR, had to have the ability to find the right words. To realize the desires of the agent, the officer "must talk to him about things that can be understood, using simple and concrete expressions" (KGB Report, 1989).

According to a CIA psychologist, Dr. Ursula M. Wilder (2017), individuals who have been recruited by an adversary intelligence service live double lives. Among the elements she lists when it comes to the possibility of a person betraying their own country, she emphasizes personality disorders, which refer to the traits, attitudes and values that characterize a person, and a state of crisis, manifested by a period of intense stress in a person's life.

Case Study

In what follows, in order to reveal both the persuasive skills of SVR officers and the dysfunctions and motivations of an agent, the case of Estonian Herman Simm we consider to be relevant. In order to understand not only the modus operandi, but also the psychological processes behind the actions, we will present the development of the relationship between Herman Simm and the Foreign Intelligence Service of the Russian Federation in stages. The action went through several stages: crisis stage, recruitment stage, active stage, pre-arrest stage, and arrest and post-arrest stage (Charney, 2019).

I.   CRISIS PHASE
Following a corruption scandal, which Herman Simm vehemently denied, he was dismissed as Director General of the Estonian Police. According to the Estonian Intelligence Service (Security Police Annual Review, 2008), one of Simm's desires was to obtain the rank of general, and his dismissal dashed his hopes of achieving this goal. When asked by journalists why he allowed himself to be recruited by the SVR, Simm stated that he felt "frustrated" because he had "lost his job as police chief because of false accusations" (Spiegel, 2010). Thus, it can be seen that before being approached by the Russian service, Simm went through a period of crisis, in which the state of frustration and the desire for recognition were stronger than the oath he swore to his own country.

II.   RECRUITMENT STAGE
Herman Simm was recruited in 1995 by the SVR officer Valeri Mihhailovich Zentsov, a former KGB officer in Estonia. After the dissolution of the State Security Committee of the Estonian Socialist Soviet Republic on January 1, 1992, Valeri Zentsov became an official military pensioner of the Russian Federation. In reality, he continued to work in the SVR, used the cover of a businessman and, with temporary residence permits, lived in Estonia. Subsequently, Herman Simm's activity was coordinated by the SVR's Directorate S officer Sergei Yakovlev, who was alias Antonio Amurett de Jesus Graf, with Portuguese citizenship. In addition to offering cash[6] to Herman Simm, the Russian officers lied to Herman Simm that he would receive the rank of major general and multiple decorations (Security Police Annual Review, 2008). To motivate his collaboration with the SVR, Herman Simm stated that he feared for his daughter's life (Spiegel, 2010).

III.   ACTIVE STAGE
After it began to be coordinated by Sergei Yakovlev, training meetings and receiving assignments took place outside the borders of Estonia (Security Police Annual Review, 2008). According to Simm, "in the beginning, it was very difficult to get information out illegally. But the higher I climbed, the easier it became". He likened his work to "constantly walking on the edge of a knife", stating that he used to get nervous when he met "the same person twice in one day" (Spiegel, 2010). In short, in the active phase of providing the most important information, the agent experienced an intense state of anxiety and fear of not being caught by the Estonian intelligence service.

IV.   PRE-ARREST STAGE
Herman Simm stated that he realized that his arrest was imminent when his liaison officer, Sergei Yakovlev, called him from his cell phone stating that he could not come to the meeting, thus, this action went against "all the rules of conspiracy", making him understand that his liaison officer had been uncovered (Spiegel, 2010).

V.   ARREST AND POST-ARREST STAGE
This is the stage when stress levels increased the most, followed by the feeling of anxiety decreasing after the officer got used to the thought of being caught (Charney, 2019). Traitors tried to justify their actions and minimize their seriousness. This was also done by Herman Simm, who said he did not give the Russians the information they "really wanted" (Spiegel, 2010).

Thus, from the statements of the Estonian Intelligence Service, as well as from the statements of Herman Simm, we can observe that the act of betraying his own country was taken at a time when he felt wronged. Because of frustration and professional failures, he became vulnerable to the ideas propagated by SVR intelligence officers, who offered the Estonian agent money, the so-called 'general rank' and protection. Herman Simm experienced the same sensations that are typical for traitors: he felt anxiety, fear of not being caught and the feeling of being trapped in this vicious circle from which it was impossible to escape.

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[3] Herman Simm is said to have received 1.3 million Estonian kroons, or about 83,000 Euro, for the work.
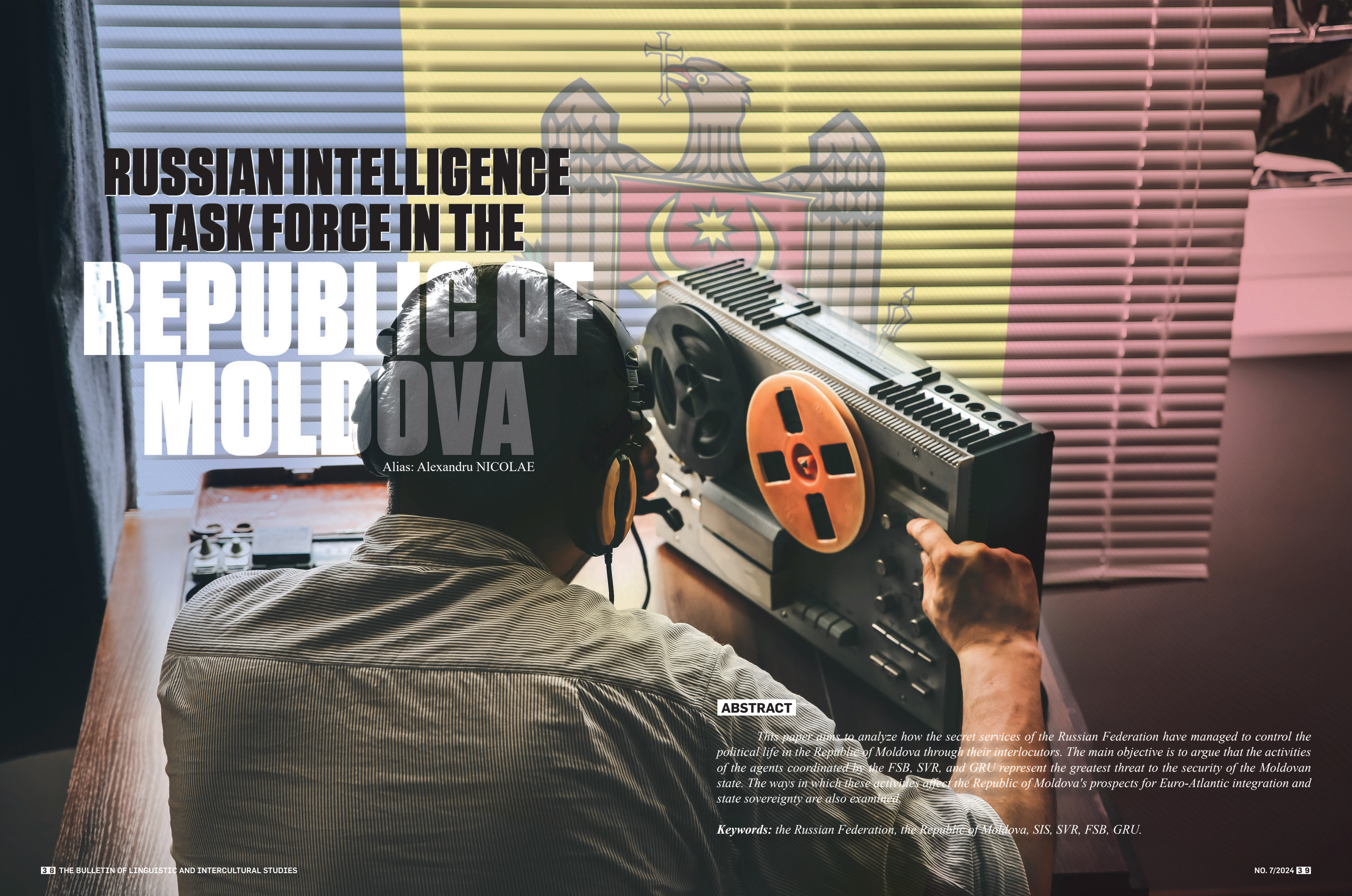
Conclusion

Following the analysis of open-source information, we were able to observe some of the activities of the Foreign Intelligence Service of the Russian Federation. It was created and organized by its first director, Yevgeny Primakov, and has developed into a high- performance intelligence service with a wide range of activities carried out on a global scale. The service has well-trained officers who seek to ensure the security of the Russian Federation while harming other states. The institution, according to the 1996 Federal Law "On Foreign Intelligence", reports to the Kremlin leader, who outlines its tasks. The closeness between SVR director Sergei Naryshkin and President Vladimir Putin also makes the Foreign Intelligence Service more politicized than the GRU.

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RUSSIAN INTELLIGENCE TASK FORCE IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to analyze how the secret services of the Russian Federation have managed to control the political life in the Republic of Moldova through their interlocutors. The main objective is to argue that the activities of the agents coordinated by the FSB, SVR, and GRU represent the greatest threat to the security of the Moldovan state. The ways in which these activities affect the Republic of Moldova's prospects for Euro-Atlantic integration and state sovereignty are also examined.

Keywords: the Russian Federation, the Republic of Moldova, SIS, SVR, FSB, GRU.

Introduction

The Russian Federation's strategic interest in the ex-Soviet zone is in instability and dependence. This interest has been highlighted in countries that have declared their independence from the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), such as the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia, and the Baltic States. In order to undermine the security of these countries, the Russian Federation has stepped up its espionage activities.

Since the days of the Soviet Union, the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR, until June 1990), later the Republic of Moldova (declared its independence on August 27, 1991), has received special attention from the Kremlin administration. This was due to the danger posed by Romania, which contributed to the spread of the national idea in the region. In this case, the KGB in the Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldova (name used for a short period, between June 1990 and May 1991) was important for the Moscow authorities, because through the 5th Directorate[1], the regime's opponents, including those promoting the Romanian identity, were monitored. Intelligence officers from the other Soviet republics were sent to the local KGB for further training and, in most cases, those who had worked in the Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldova acquired command positions in the security structures of the republics that emerged after the dissolution of the USSR. These included Yakov Pogonii - head of the Moscow FSB Directorate, Andrei Homici - first deputy director of the Ukrainian Security Service, Vladimir Cozma - deputy head of the Ukrainian Counterintelligence Service and Anatol Taran - head of the Security Service of the Russian Federation's Border Guard Troops (Moraru, 2019). Although in most of the republics of the USSR, the KGB directors were natives of those regions, also belonging to the same ethnicity, the first local KGB chief from the Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldova was Gheorghe Lavranciuc, who was appointed only in January 1989, followed by Tudor Botnaru (Moraru, 2019). However, their ethnic origin should not mislead us into believing that they had pro-Romanian sympathies[2].

Currently, the Russian Federation is the greatest threat to the security of the Republic of Moldova. Out of the six threats identified in the National Security Strategy adopted by the Parliament in 2023, three refer to the threat posed by the Russian state. The spectrum of activities carried out by the Russian secret services against the security of the Moldovan state is highlighted by the fact that "the Russian Federation and its interlocutors in the Republic of Moldova represent the most dangerous and persistent source of threat which, if not countered, can have severe effects on the statehood, democracy and prosperity of the country" (SSNRM, 2023).

Therefore, the paper analyzes the objectives and methods through which the Russian secret services have managed to influence the political life in the Republic of Moldova. It also aims to establish a pattern of the subversive activities that the Russian Federation is carrying out in the Republic of Moldova and who are the persons and entities that provide support to the Kremlin.

Iurie Roșca and the Destruction of the Unionist Movement in the Republic of Moldova

During the 1980s, the nationalism of the peoples of the Soviet republics began to manifest itself publicly, questioning the Soviet Union's right to control these regions. In an organized way, the national movement in the Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldova was promoted by the Popular Front of Moldova (FPM – Frontul Popular din Moldova), created in 1989. The topics discussed by the members of the FPM were the sovereignty of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldova and the *right to leave the USSR*, the adoption of the Romanian language and the *tricolor* (the national flag), and the consequences of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact on Bessarabia (Corneanu, 2016). As a result, as objectives, the KGB had to infiltrate the Popular Front of Moldova, and in 1985 it received a secret directive stating: "Infiltrate our trusted persons into the National Liberation Movements, so that they will do everything possible to denigrate and compromise those who are truly committed to these movements, so that in time they can take their place" (Dabija, 2004). KGB Major Alexandr Sevciuc was sent to Chișinău, specializing in the *National Movements* of the Soviet republics, with the aim, according to historian Anton Moraru, of penetrating "deeper into the organizational structures of these movements, monitoring their leaders and controlling them, and if necessary, compromising or neutralizing them politically" (quoted in Dabija, 2004). Alexandr Sevciuc, as a result of his work in the Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldova and with the support of the local branch of the KGB, draws up a list of trustworthy individuals, including Iurie Roșca, the future and longest-serving head of the FPM, who, on Moscow's instructions, dismantled the unionist movement in the Republic of Moldova (Dabija, 2004).

Iurie Roșca was recruited in 1986 by the KGB, while he was working for the publication *Tinerimea Moldovei*, under the conspiratorial name *Budulai*. Also, in 1986, Roșca joined the editorial staff of *Teleradio-Moldova*, where he received a salary of 400 rubles. In order to find out about the intellectuals in the Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldova that supported the unionist movement, Roșca was sent to the Dimitrie Cantemir Museum of the Writers' Union of Moldova[3], where he was paid 75 rubles[4]. To justify his departure from his former job, Roșca first used as a cover the accusation that some of the employees of the TV station belonged to the KGB. Later, this strategy was also used against Nicolae Costin, the mayor of Chișinău at that time, who was seen by Roșca as an opponent for the position of head of the Popular Front. Thus, Roșca managed to infiltrate the movement and became its leader in 1993, being re-elected in 1996 and 1999. As a result of the change in statute, Roșca's conspiratorial name was changed from *Budulai* to *Leader* (Sitov, 2009).

In August 1990, at the Second Congress of the FPM, one of Roșca's initiatives was to rename the Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldova into the Romanian Republic of Moldova. This project led the Transnistrians to announce the creation of the Transnistrian Moldovan Republic, in September 1990. Later, Roșca abandoned the project because its purpose was to give the separatists a justification for future actions. Also, in 1992, during the Moldovan-Russian war on the Dniester, Roșca declared that the frontists being *Christians, pacifists* and *anti-violence* should not get involved in the war, in the context of Moldovan Romanians being killed by Russian separatists supported by the Russian 14th Army (Sitov, 2009). Iurie Roșca's *pacifist* position has now been abandoned. In the wake of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, Roșca urged people to pray "not for an end to the war, but for the continuation of this war and for the victory of Putin's Russia against Satanist globalism" (Botnarenco, 2022).

Between 1998 and 2001, Iurie Roșca and Vladimir Voronin, the leader of the Communist Party, formed an alliance that led to the dismissal of the government of Ion Sturza before it managed to sign the Helsinki Document of 1999, which allowed the Republic of Moldova to begin the process of European integration. On April 4, 2005, Iurie Roșca and the 11 members of Parliament of the Christian Democratic People's Party, formerly the Popular Front, voted to re-elect Vladimir Voronin as President of the Republic of Moldova, marking a new stage in the rupture of relations between Republic of Moldova and Romania. For this support, Iurie Roșca was rewarded with the position of Deputy Speaker of the Parliament, and in 2009 he became Deputy Prime Minister (Sitov, 2009).

As a result, the Russian secret services managed to infiltrate and destroy the unionist movement in the Republic of Moldova by making Iurie Roșca a unionist. Thus, it can be seen how, through a good agent, the secret services can cause disastrous effects.

FSB Activity in the Republic of Moldova

The Federal Security Service (FSB - Федера́льная слу́жба безопа́сности Росссси́йской Федера́цииии) is one of the intelligence services of the Russian Federation. It has an extensive list of responsibilities inside the country, covering counterintelligence activities, counterterrorism, defense of state borders, economic and information security. Officers of this service also operate in the former republics of the USSR. Directorate 5 of the FSB[3] has these tasks and has been headed since 2009 by Sergei Beseda (TVR-Moldova, 2022). Within this directorate is the Operational Intelligence Department, headed by Georgy Grishaev, his deputy is Dmitry Milyutin, responsible for the Republic of Moldova and Belarus. The latter supervises the work

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[1] Directorate 5 or the Service for Operational Intelligence and International Relations provides the FSB leadership and the Kremlin administration with assessments in the "near abroad".

[2] Tudor Botnaru was deployed until 1978 to covert residences in Romania, Belgium and France. His official capacity was First Secretary of the Embassy. Botnaru collaborated in Bucharest with Gagauz Feodor Angheli, a KGB officer undercover as a correspondent for the newspaper Pravda. The two had him in charge and were constantly interested in Ion Iliescu, former Romanian president in the periods 1990-1996, 2000-2004. Botnaru was the head of the KGB in the MSSR from 1990-1991, and between 1997 and 1999 he was Minister for National Security of the Republic of Moldova. The appointment of such a person in a leadership position, who worked against Romania, testifies that the Russians were actively involved in the Republic of Moldova even after the declaration of independence (Sorin Aparaschivei, KGB Residence in Bucharest (1970-1980), in Historia, https://historia.ro/sectiune/general/rezidenta-kgb-la-bucuresti-1970-1980-2297779.html).

[3] At present, The National Museum of Literature Mihail Kogălniceanu.

[4] In 1986, 400 rubles were worth 645 dollars. This means that Iurie Roșca's salary was reduced to about 112 dollars as a result of his change of job. According to Nicolae Dabija, former editor-in-chief of the weekly Literature and Art published by the Writers' Union of the Republic of Moldova, during that period, Roșca bought a four-room apartment, while his colleagues, who received a similar salary, "were living from today to tomorrow" (Nicolae Dabija, "The Killers of National Awakening", article first published on April 15, 2004, https://www.podul.ro/articol/14910/killerii-deteptrii-naionale).

[5] Ghennadi Moskal, the former governor of Lugansk region, stated in 2014 that "Russian and Ukrainian foreign intelligence services have signed an agreement committing the two states not to spy against each other. To circumvent these agreements, President Vladimir Putin signed a decree on the creation of this Fifth Directorate of the FSB, but there is no signed agreement between FSB and the Ukrainian Security Service. So, they operate in three countries: Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia" (Moskal: In Lugansk the Transnistrian brigade of the Russian FSB is active, November 5, 2024, https://centers.ulbsibiu.ro/ccsprise/lact/05-11-2014-moskal-in-lugansk-actioneaza-brigada-transnistreana-a-fsb-ului-rusesc/).

of Valeri Soloha, head of FSB operations in the Republic of Moldova, as well as Ivan Koroli, head of operations in the Transnistrian region, who has maintained contacts with the chiefs of the Tiraspol security structures in recent years (Thorik, 2022; Kanev, 2024).

The FSB provided support to the pro-Russian establishment in Chișinău during the election campaigns through political consultants. Among these advisers were Yuri Gudilin, FSB officer of Directorate 5, Olga Grak, Leonid Gonin, Sergei Galiev, Sergei Galiev, Stanislav Patriev, Igor Golubev, Dmitry Dimler, Sergei Perfiliev, and Vladimir Shirobokov. They were trying to help Igor Dodon win the 2020 presidential elections (Thorik, 2022). The work of the consultants was condemned by the US Treasury Department, which said that "although efforts to influence the 2020 and 2021 elections in the Republic of Moldova have failed, the Kremlin continues efforts to return a pro-Russian government to power. Recognizing the loss of popular support for Moldova's old pro-Russian political elite, Gudilin's team has offered support to an opposition political group, the National Alternative Movement" (U.S. Department of the Treasury, 2022), a party led by Ion Ceban, the mayor of Chișinău.

Ion Ceban's pro-Russian orientation has been noticeable since 2014, when he supported the illegal referendum in the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia and improved relations with the Russian Federation[6]. When the conflict in Ukraine broke out on February 24, 2022, Ion Ceban was in Moscow. The decision to leave the territory of the Republic of Moldova is said to have been taken following instructions from Grigory Velikikh, an FSB colonel acting under the cover of deputy director of the Roscongress Foundation[7], in the context of the special military operation, which was also intended to occupy the Republic of Moldova. According to Guildhall, the FSB regards Ceban as the most promising pro-Russian politician in Moldova and expects to use him both as the country's leader in case of an occupation and as a possible political opponent of Maia Sandu, if the military scenario fails (Guildhall, 2022).

On July 10, 2023, Alexandru Musteață, the director of Information and Security Service of the Republic of Moldova (SIS – Serviciul de Informații și Securitate), stated that SIS has dismantled an agent network led by

Yuri Gudilin and Vadim Iurcenco, Igor Dodon's deputy in the Moldovan-Russian Business Union. According to the director of the SIS, the group allegedly transferred in the period 2021-2022 about 500,000 USD to support illegal actions to influence political processes in favor of the Russian Federation (Liubec, 2023). The aim of the network was to establish contacts with persons in the political and economic circles of the Republic of Moldova, to maintain the dependence of the Republic of Moldova on the Russian Federation and to finance media platforms in the context of influencing public opinion (SIS.md, 2023). Thus, the activity of FSB officer Yuri Gudilin began during the 2020 presidential elections and continued until 2023, when SIS managed to document and destructure the network led by him.

To finance operations in the Republic of Moldova, the FSB, through Milyutin, worked closely with Igor Ceaika, a Russian businessman and son of former Prosecutor General and member of the Security Council of the Russian Federation, Yuri Ceaika. Dmitry Milyutin is said to have communicated with Ceaika more than 6,000 times between December 2020 and June 2022. According to an official of the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU - Служба безпеки України), the FSB discussed with Ceaika all the issues that needed to be resolved in the Republic of Moldova (ZDG.md, 2022). Against the background of the crisis within the Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova (PSRM) in 2021, the FSB arranged the withdrawal of Igor Dodon from political life. Documents produced by FSB-affiliated advisers allegedly show that the defeat of the PSRM in the July 2021 parliamentary elections was "the result of a systemic crisis" and that Dodon is a person with an "irreversibly damaged reputation" whose removal from the political scene should be carried out with "surgical virtuosity" (ZDG.md, 2022). After Igor Dodon resigned from the PSRM, he was appointed president of the Moldovan-Russian Business Union, an organization founded by Delovaya Rossiya, with a monthly salary of 45,000 USD (ZDG.md, 2022). One of the founders of Delovaya Rossiya is Igor Ceaika, the ambassador of this organization to the Republic of Moldova and Transnistria, who has financed with millions of rubles the organization where Igor Dodon was appointed (Thorik, 2022; Kanev, 2024). About Igor Ceaika, the U.S. Department of the

Treasury said that he "brokered an alliance between supporters of Ilan Shor and the PSRM" with the aim of removing the Security and Intelligence Service (SIS) from the control of President Maia Sandu and bringing it under the opposition-dominated parliament, and that the Russian government "used Ceaika's companies as a front to funnel money to collaborationist political parties in Moldova", which was earmarked for bribes and electoral fraud (U.S. Department of the Treasury, 2022).

The period of retirement from politics from 2021-2024[8] helped Igor Dodon avoid public scandals. His return and election as president of the PSRM on March 23, 2024 is nothing more than an operation carried out by the Russian Federation to stop the re-election of Maia Sandu as President of the Republic of Moldova (Apostu, 2024).

Involvement in election campaigns is a way for Russian secret services to infiltrate their interlocutors into key positions in Moldova. Alexandru Musteață said that the SIS has information on how "attempts are being implemented to jeopardize the referendum on European integration, to interfere in the presidential elections, as well as to denigrate institutions and political candidates who will promote EU membership". The Kremlin also aims, by 2025, to gain control over the Republic of Moldova "by gaining access to Parliament for political parties under the influence of the Russian Federation" (Gherța, 2024). At the same time, the Russian services will make use of several actors, such as Ilan Shor, "whose main task for 2024 is to compromise the results of the referendum" on EU accession. SIS also warns that there is a high probability that the "sovereignist/statist" groups and the Shor group are "guided by Russian intelligence services or Russian Federation centers of influence linked to the Kremlin President's Administration" (SIS.md, 2024). The relationship between the FSB and Ilan Shor has been highlighted in the context of the party led by Ilan Shor receiving support in 2021 from FSB-affiliated Russian advisers. In order not to be discovered, they bought PrePay SIM cards and kept confidential the addresses of the apartments they rented in the Republic of Moldova. The FSB also coordinated a deal in 2020 in which Shor's controlling stake in the company that managed the Chișinău airport was transferred to Andrei Goncharenko, an oligarch close to Russian intelligence (ZDG.md, 2022; SIS.md, 2023).

The head of the General Inspectorate of Police of the Republic of Moldova, Viorel Cernăuțeanu,

has confirmed that about €1 million enters Moldova from the Russian Federation every month to illegally finance pro-Russian parties in the context of the 2024 presidential elections. In these subversive actions, the Russian Federation is using Moldovan citizens as *mules*. According to Cernăuțeanu, at least four political parties would benefit from the money sent from Russia. Of the four, two have been confirmed as the parties Șansa and Renașterea, both led by Ilan Shor (Putregai, 2024).

SVR Activity in the Republic of Moldova

The Foreign Intelligence Service of the Russian Federation (SVR - Служба внешней разведки Росссийской Федерацииии) is also concerned about the situation in the Republic of Moldova. One of those in charge is SVR Colonel Igor Maslov, head of the Department for Interregional and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries of the Administration of the President of the Russian Federation, who previously was in charge of the "Moldovan Department". He replaced SVR General Vladimir Cernov, head since 2012, on March 2, 2021, following a decree signed by Vladimir Putin (kremlin.ru, 2021). Those under Igor Maslov[9] prepare "briefing notes and reports on politicians, monitor compromising information, draft speeches that refer to the Republic of Moldova, both for Russian and Moldovan dignitaries and politicians" (Thorik, 2020). The information Igor Maslov receives is directed to the SVR headquarters and the Presidential Administration (Dossier Center, 2020).

The briefing notes are based on information sent by Russian agents in the Republic of Moldova. One of them is Igor Tuleanțev, former leader of the Russian Youth League of Moldova. Between 2012 and 2014, he promoted the Eurasian current, setting up several media platforms, among which today only www.eurasianews.md is still functioning. Tuleanțev was also observed in the company of Dmitry Rogozin, the former Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, who was declared *persona non grata* on the territory of the Republic of Moldova. Igor Tuletanțev maintains links with people in the Transnistrian region who are connected to Russian secret services, such as Igor Beloborodov, director of the Pruto-Nistrean Analytical Information Center in Tiraspol

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[6] Video of Ion Ceban: https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid0SLK6x4eu28Ee9Zajbzue6fewQVyMi5FBmY 5GBmiS394Ud8SQiTiSdNPAflTJzrAVl&id=100047673480177.

[7] Grigory Velikikh's affiliation with the FSB is evidenced by the fact that he was present at Milyutin's 50th anniversary, where he said, "Working with the team of Dmitry Vitalievich Milyutin, I have achieved a lot. That is why, in the process of work, he became for me an important and remarkable person, a mentor and a Commander with a capital letter". Moreover, the indirect relationship between Ion Ceban and Grigory Velikikh is evidenced by the fact that in 2020, the Chișinău City Hall signed an agreement with the branch of the Roscongress Foundation, which provides for "the development of the master plan for the development of the city and the creation of the Joint Center for the management of investment and infrastructure projects" (FSB agents responsible for Moldova, in RISE Moldova, op. cit. More at: www.facebook. com/Ion.Ceban.public/photos/a.1919025351652737/2618553455033253/?ty).

[8] It was only a withdrawl form the foreground, because he continued to be particularly active in the organization's activities taking on the role of honorary president.

[9] Igor Maslov is an official of the Russian Presidential Administration who served in the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service, responsible for the Kremlin's subversive policy and activities in the "near abroad". He is known for advising President Vladimir Putin on Ukraine, Moldova and South Ossetia (Official Journal of the European Union, Vol. 65, April 8, 2022, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:L:2022:110:FULL&from=EN).

(Ziarul Național, 2022). This center is a subdivision of the Russian Institute for Strategic Studies (RISI)[10], which was created by Lieutenant General Leonid Resetnikov, head of the SVR's Intelligence and Analysis Department until 2009 (LACT, 2014). The recipient and forwarder of the information obtained by Igor Tuleanțev was Vasili Kashirin, who in 2014 held the position of deputy of the Tiraspol Center and advisor to the former so-called Transnistrian Foreign Minister Nina Shtanski. In October 2014, he was detained and deported to Russia, and in 2015 he was transferred from RISI to the Department for Interregional and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, working until now in the "Moldovan Department" (Jurnal.md, 2020).

Therefore, the Department for Interregional and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries of the Presidential Administration, coordinated by SVR Colonel Igor Maslov, and the Russian Institute for Strategic Studies (RISI) headed by Mikhail Fradkov[11], former head of the SVR, were highlighted as levers to support the work of the SVR in Moldova.

GRU-FSB Activity in Transnistria

Officers of the Main Intelligence Directorate (GRU - Гла́вное разве́дывательное управле́ние) are mainly active in Transnistria, contributing to the growing instability in the region. Their tasks are to prepare provocations in the region, train sabotage groups and destabilize the political situation in the Republic of Moldova and several regions of Ukraine. Coordination of these activities is carried out by President Vadim Krasnoselsky's adviser, Major General Vitaly Leonidovich Razgonov, who was sent to the region in 2019. Between 2011-2019, Razgonov served as the head of the Novosibirsk Higher Military Command School (nvvku.mil.ru, n.d.). Since March 2012, this military educational establishment has been training officers of GRU special troops called Spețnaz (nvvku.mil.ru, n.d.).

GRU agents, who support the work of the Russian Federation, are placed in the most important positions in the Tiraspol administration[12]. Among them are Nyagu Vitaly Nikolaevich, Minister of Internal Affairs of Transnistria, Nebeigolova Igor Petrovich, attaman of the Black Sea Cossack Army, Gerasyutenko Sergey Pavlovich, former Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces and First Deputy to the Minister of Defense, Slobodenyuk Ruslan Viktorovich Slobodenyuk, a colonel in the Ministry of State Security (MSS), who uses the position of Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Transnistria as a cover and Paulescu Ruslan Vasilievich, Deputy Minister of Defense (Moldova-news.md, 2022).

Following the outbreak of the conflict in 2022, the Russian Federation began to carry out a media campaign to justify aggression against Ukraine. To this end, Russian media outlets are working closely with military intelligence structures to create credible narratives, distributing disinformation about the military events in Ukraine into the Moldovan information environment. GRU officers have been appointed to head the Russian news agencies in the former Soviet space. They have the ability to coordinate these operations, which result in influencing public opinion and Moldovan politics. In this regard, we can talk about the case of Vitaly Denisov, the head of the Sputnik Moldova agency, who has been in this position since 2022. He was discovered to be a GRU officer of the Special Service Center 72[13]. He was expelled from the Republic of Moldova on September 13, 2023, banned from re-entering the country for 10 years because he endangered state security (Dermenji, 2023).

The Federal Security Service also plays a very important role in destabilizing the Transnistrian region and parts of Ukraine. The FSB is the service that coordinates all activities carried out by the Ministry of State Security in Transnistria (MSS), which is in fact a subdivision of the Russian service. The MSS is headed by Lieutenant General Gebos Valeri Dmitrievich, who has held senior positions in the FSB (mgb.gospmr.org, n.d.). Valeri Gebos is known for being the most "loyal defender of Kremlin interests in Tiraspol" (EARC, 2024). RISE Moldova journalists have also posted a photo in which Ivan Koroli, the head of FSB operations in Transnistria, Ivan Koroli, is in the presence of Vitali Nikolaevich Suhodolsky, Valeri Gebos' deputy, who is in charge of operational activity in the MSS (Thorik, 2022).

Ministry of State Security (MSS) operations in Transnistria, coordinated by the FSB, have been particularly directed against Ukraine, especially after the annexation of Crimea in 2014. Thus, the SBU documented a case in 2014 in which Russian secret services attempted to create a "People's Republic" in Odessa. Through a criminal group coordinated by the Russian services, Transnistrian smugglers were mobilized to smuggle arms, ammunition and explosives into the Ukrainian territory, with the aim of carrying out protests against the official leadership (Infotag.md, 2014). Also, FSB agent Igor Tkachenko, the former head of the Dnestr military broadcasting unit in the Transnistrian region, was tasked with recruiting SBU officers. The information Tkachenko obtained was provided to the Russian Consulate General in Odessa or the Transnistrian MSS. He was caught in 2017 by the SBU (LACT, 2017). At the same time, following the start of the war in 2022, the SBU condemned the fact that Ukrainians, who illegally crossed the border with the Transnistrian Moldovan Republic (TMR)[14], were being recruited by FSB officers in the region. Under the threat of expulsion to Ukraine, the FSB is trying to get Ukrainians to provide information about military installations and the arrangement of the Ukrainian border section with the Transnistrian Moldovan Republic (sprotyv.ua, 2024).

Ethnic Russians born in the Moldovan Socialist Soviet Republic also helped destabilize and promote separatism in the eastern regions of Ukraine and Crimea, and are Kremlin henchmen. Among the Russian Federation's most important acolytes can be named: Sergey Valeryevich Aksyonov, head of the so-called "Republic of Crimea", Vladimir Andreevich Konstantinov, "chairman" of the "State Council" of the "Republic of Crimea", Andrey Yurevich Pinchuk, former "minister of state security" of the "People's Republic of Donetsk", Oleg Vladimirovich Bereza, former "Minister of Internal Affairs" of the "Donetsk People's Republic", Aleksandr Akimovich Karaman, former Head of the "Administration of the Council of Ministers of the Donetsk People's Republic", Mikhail Nikolaevich Kushakov, "First Deputy Minister" of the "Donetsk People's Republic". Of these, Andrey Pinchuk, Oleg Bereza and Aleksandr Karaman were coordinated by Vladimir Yurievich Antiufeev, the former "Minister of State Security" of Transnistria, who in 2014 was appointed as "Deputy Prime Minister" of the "People's Republic of Donetsk", but was dismissed after a short period of time (EUR-Lex, 2014). Vladimir Antiufeev communicated in the period from November 2021 to May 2022 at least 18 times via unsecured telephone connections with the Director of the FSB's Operational Intelligence Department, Georgy Grishaev (Thorik, 2022).

Under these conditions, we can assume that the Transnistrian region is controlled by the Russian secret services. The people in the so-called leadership of Transnistria are agents of the GRU and FSB, and their main objectives are to destabilize the RM and the southern regions of Ukraine. At the same time, ethnic Russians from the former SSMR have played an important role in consolidating separatism in Crimea and Donetsk, receiving leading positions in the "new republics" created by the Russian Federation.

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[10] The Russian Institute for Strategic Studies (RISI) operated under the SVR until 2009, with the designation U.M.61360. It is now subordinated to the Presidential Administration (Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service Review, chapter "Covers Used by Russian Intelligence Services", p. 50, https://raport.valisluureamet.ee/2023/assets/4-1-WEB_VLA_ENG-raport_2023.pdf).

[11] Mikhail Fradkov's son, Petr Fradkov, was also involved in subversive activities in the Republic of Moldova. During her visit to Moscow in 2024, Evghenia Gutul, the pro-Kremlin Bashkan of Gagauzia, signed an agreement with the Promsvyazbank run by Petr Fradkov, which stipulates that all pensioners and public sector employees in the region can claim a monthly payment equivalent to 100 dollars, which is possible by using MIR cards. It can be considered that this action was an attempt to illegally finance pro-Russian parties in the Republic of Moldova in the context of the presidential elections in the form of support for the population of the Gagauz ATU. The bank should have financed at least 30 million dollars per year in relation to the population (Irina Borogan & Andrei Soldatov, The Kremlin Decides to Buy a Population, March 12, 2024, https://cepa.org/article/the-kremlin-decides-to-buy-a-population/).

[12] The publication The Insider has revealed that former Chief of the General Staff of the Republic of Moldova Igor Gorgan, who held the position from 2019-2021, was recruited by the GRU. Even after his dismissal, Igor Gorgan constantly maintained contact with his liaison officer Alexey Makarov, a military attaché. This provided information on the political and military situation in the Republic of Moldova. Gorgan also called for the armed intervention of the Russian Federation in the Republic of Moldova, specifying that he would support this intervention by neutralizing the army: "We urgently need to clean the country of all fascist filth! Many are ready. Transmit on...The time has come. I have the whole situation under control. Here, fortunately, there is no "Azov" or other national formations, and we will deal with the politicians quickly". SIS has complied with the information published by The Insider, and by the Presidential Decree of June 11, 2024 Igor Gorgan was stripped of all state honors. So, it is not only Transnistrian "decision-makers" who support the subversive activity of the Russian Federation (Sergey Kanev, Moldovan liaison. Chief of the General Staff of Moldova leaked secret information to his handlers from the GRU, The Insider, June 5, 2024, https://theins.ru/politika/272103 ; "We know the objectives, the actors and the tactics applied". SIS confirms information published by THE INSIDER, ZDG, June 5, 2024, https://www.zdg.md/stiri/cunoastem-obiectivele-actorii-si-tacticile-aplicate-sis-confirma-informatiile-publicate-de-the-insider/; For the Presidential Decree see: https://presedinte.md/app/webroot/Decrete/1483.pdf).

[13] This unit deals with GRU psychological operations. U.M.54777 created the narrative of "dogs of war" and "werewolves" to denigrate Chechen separatists, as well as fabricating narratives to justify Russia's intervention against Ukraine in 2014. U.M.54777 may also support any governmental, public or religious institution of the Russian Federation to accomplish its objectives (AQUARIUM LEAKS: Inside the GRU's Psychological Warfare Program, Free Russia Foundation, Washington DC, 2020, p. 4-7, https://www.4freerussia.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2020/12/AquariumLeaks-EN-Web-1.pdf).

[14] The illegal smuggling of Ukrainians was the work of a criminal group broken up by the SBU and SIS. Its members transported citizens fleeing conscription into the army. The cost of escaping was up to 5 thousand dollars, depending on the urgency of the departure. The criminals drove their payers to the Transnistrian border and then escorted them along forest roads outside checkpoints. To find customers, the gang members created several Telegram channels, and to hide their illegal proceeds, they forced Ukrainians to pay using crypto wallets (https://t.me/SBUkr/10776).

Organization Rossotrudnichestvo - A Threat to Moldova's Security?

The Rossotrudnichestvo Organization (RCSC) is headed by Yevgeny Alexandrovich Primakov, grandson of former prime minister and SVR director Yevgeny Primakov. The European Union has imposed sanctions on Yevgeny Alexandrovich Primakov because "he has clearly demonstrated his support for Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. He is responsible for supporting and implementing actions and policies that undermine and threaten the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine" (Europa.eu, 2023). Also, at the head of the Public Council of Rossotrudnichestvo, which is a civilian control body, is Yuri Ceaika (rs.gov.ru, n.d.), who supported and coordinated part of the FSB's operations in the Republic of Moldova.

Organizations dealing with Russian emigrants have existed since the time of the Soviet Union. The most important organization was the Soviet Committee for Cultural Ties with Compatriots Abroad, which closed in 1992. Rossotrudnichestvo was established in 2008 and it inherited the tasks from the former Soviet organization. In a 1968 KGB document entitled "The Use of the Soviet Committee for Cultural Liaison with Compatriots Abroad in Intelligence Service Activities", it was stated that: "The main operational task carried out through the Soviet Committee is the use of official activities, propaganda and other methods of influencing compatriots in order to prepare the ground for recruitment, respectively for other intelligence and counterintelligence measures, using emigrants as an operational base" (Soldatov & Borogan, 2022, pp. 231-232). These practices are also currently used by Russian intelligence officers. For example, in 2013, the FBI suspected Yuri Zaitsev, the head of Rossotrudnichestvo in Washington, D.C., of espionage for allegedly facilitating the recruitment of American citizens by Russian intelligence services (Newsru.com, 2013). Moreover, in 2020, the head of the Russian Center in Prague, Andrei Konchakov, was expelled for allegedly being a Russian intelligence officer charged with attempted assassination (Soare, 2020).

The former head of this organization in the Republic of Moldova, Andrei Muravyov, was expelled on August 14, 2023, along with other officials of the Embassy of the Russian Federation. He had contacts with pro-Russian leaders in Transnistria (mid.gospmr.org, 2020). Also, one of the most important promoters of the "Russkii Mir" in the Transnistrian region is Pavel Anatolyevich Shevtsov, Deputy of Rossotrudnichestvo (rs.gov.ru, n.d.) and member of the Board of Directors of "Russkii Mir" (russkiymir.ru, n.d.). Pavel Shevtsov has visited the Transnistrian region at least three times between 2021-2022, and is also the only deputy of the organization to have visited the area since 2015 (mid. gospmr.org, 2021; mid.gospmr.org, 2022).

The official purpose of the Rossotrudnichestvo organization is to promote Russian culture and protect the rights of *compatriots*. For the Russian Federation, the term *compatriot* does not have an ethnic meaning, but is more of a social construct. Therefore, people who have chosen to identify with Russian spirituality and culture can be considered *compatriots* (rs.gov.ru, n.d.). These ideas to promote the culture and spirituality of the Russian people are aimed at dividing the societies of the former Soviet states and are based on the Lukianov doctrine, which, in the period close to the break-up of the Soviet Union, envisaged the Kremlin supporting the populations of the union republics that did not agree with leaving the USSR. Territories with such a population were encouraged to leave the republics seeking independence. The Lukianov doctrine contributed to the emergence of separatist republics (Moraru, 2023, p. 292). Therefore, the real aim of Rossotrudnichestvo is to support the separatist regions by promoting their Russian identity, hindering the former Soviet states in their efforts to consolidate their own identity and statehood. In this context, the visits to the Transnistrian region by Pavel Anatolyevich Shevtsov are intended to convey the message that this territory belongs to the "Russian World".

Strategy of the Russian Federation - Why is the Republic of Moldova so Important?

The importance of the Republic of Moldova should not be analyzed from an economic point of view, but rather from a geostrategic point of view. The Republic of Moldova is necessary to the Russian Federation because of its landform, the plain, which, once mastered, can ensure Russia's security in the Black Sea region. Given that the declared interest of the Kremlin leaders is to create Novorussia, which would encompass the whole of southern Ukraine, the pro-Russian positioning of the Republic of Moldova is a guarantee of security for the Russian Federation if the Russian army carries out its military plan. In this context, in order to realize its strategic goals, the Russian Federation has the following tasks to accomplish:

1.	Infiltration of interlocutors in the leading positions of the Republic of Moldova (president, government, parliament, prosecutor general, director of SIS, etc.);
2.	Promoting the neutral and disarmament status of the Republic of Moldova;
3.	Sabotaging the referendum on European integration;
4.	Promoting separatism in UTA Gagauzia[15] through propaganda and people subordinated to Ilan Shor;
5.	Breaking relations between the Republic of Moldova and the EU and NATO;
6.	Stopping the good relations between the Republic of Moldova and Romania, promoting those with the FR;
7.	Promoting "Moldovan identity" and the "Moldovan" language;
8.	The imposition of Russian as the language of inter-ethnic communication;
9.	Redirecting the Moldovan economy to the RF, creating dependencies (including by motivating Moldovan businessmen to strengthen economic relations with the RF);
10.	Exclusion of economic pressures exerted by Moldova on Transnistria;
11.	Maintaining Russian armed forces in Transnistria;
12.	Interrupting the process of Moldova's exit from the Commonwealth of Independent States;
13.	Accession of the Republic of Moldova to the Eurasian Economic Union.

Consequently, in the period 2024-2030, we can expect the Russian Federation's attempts to fulfill the mentioned objectives. By accomplishing these tasks, the Russian Federation wants to destabilize the Republic of Moldova, changing the European course taken by the government of President Maia Sandu.

Conclusion

The Russian Federation manages to maintain its influence in the former Soviet space, especially in the Republic of Moldova, due to the activities of the FSB, SVR, and GRU services. With the support of intermediaries coordinated by the intelligence services, Russia is trying to control political life in the Republic of Moldova. The operations are well-organized, with the secret services using in their work both people with Unionist and pro-European legends and people with assumed pro-Russian leanings. The actions of the interlocutors are financed by the Kremlin, with the aim of blocking the Republic of Moldova's orientation towards Euro-Atlantic structures and Romania. The Transnistrian separatist region is also an outpost from which destabilization missions are being carried out against Moldova and Ukraine. Under these circumstances, the objectives of the Russian secret services for the year 2024 are to place their interlocutors in key positions in the Moldovan state and to sabotage the referendum on European integration, which would at least prevent the re-election of Maia Sandu as president.

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[15] In 2014 a referendum, declared illegal by the Chișinău authorities, was held in which it was decided to proclaim Gagauzia's independence in the event of the loss of Moldova's sovereignty by joining the EU or uniting with Romania. The former Gagauz Bashkan Mihail Formuzal, members of the PSRM led by Igor Dodon and Ion Ceban, Russian MPs and Russian secret services contributed to the organization of the referendum. In 2024, Bașchana Evghenia Guțul, a subordinate of Ilan Shor, visited the Russian Federation where she met President Vladimir Putin, who promised "support and help to the Gagauz people" to defend their "rights" violated by the government in Chișinău. After returning to Moldova, Evghenia Guțul said that "any unification initiative (with Romania) will imply the immediate start of the procedure to separate Gagauzia and return to the independent republic of Gagauzia".

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SOFT POWER AND INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN THE CHINESE STYLE

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the implications of soft power and intercultural communication in education, taking China's Confucius Institutes (CIs) as a subject of discussion. It regards intercultural communication in China, Romania, Poland, and England where educational institutions presented as the place to 'practice' soft power and shape a narrative about a country. For this purpose, the authors present their first-hand observations and integrate the principles of globalization along with the findings of scholarly research to explain how people can engage in multicultural communication and use the principles of soft power. To achieve the goal of the paper, which is to increase the awareness of the influence exerted by soft power on the intercultural discursive framework in academia, the study employs methodological approaches, such as case and comparative analysis and data analysis.

Keywords: soft power; intercultural communication; China; Confucius Institutes; Romania.

Intercultural Communication

In 1992, Linda Beamer, Professor Emeritus at California State University, defined Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC) as the ability to encode and decode meanings that correspond to the meaning held in another communicator's mind. Developing ICC involves moving through five stages: acknowledging diversity, organizing information according to stereotypes, posing questions to challenge the stereotypes, analyzing communication episodes, and generating "other culture" messages (Beamer, 1992).

A key aspect of ICC is understanding how individualist versus collectivist value orientations impact communication. Individualistic cultures like the United States value directness, specificity, and separating the person from the issue. In contrast, collectivist cultures favor indirect, ambiguous communication and inseparable personal/professional spheres.

Other cultural variables that affect communication include power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity-femininity, and long-term orientation. For example, high power distance cultures have greater inequality between superiors and subordinates.

Beamer recommends cross-cultural training focused on real-world business cases and communication analysis rather than just learning cultural trivia. Ultimately, ICC develops through mindful attention to the communication process over time. As professor Beamer (1992) proposes, ICC, like any other form of communication competence, necessitates changing cognitive habits. With practice, businesspeople can bridge cultural divides and communicate effectively across borders (Beamer, 1992).

Soft Power: Definitions, Manifestations and Related Concepts

Soft power represents one of the relevant topics not only in this paper, but it also weighs a great importance when discussing political influence, international relations and diplomacy. Seen as a tool in obtaining one's objectives, soft power can be described as the opposite of hard power, or the use of coercion in the sake of gaining an advantage and proposes the attraction of a targeted entity in order to change its behavior. The behavioral change is the main reason why power exists and is sought by people, states and organizations, meaning that power is used for shifting the valence of interactions between those entities (Chitty, Ji, Rawnsley & Hayden, 2017).

In defining soft power, it is important to highlight the way it can be manifested, especially in the field of political relations between states. Passive soft power implies that a population or group is attracted to core values, positive examples and a cultural image, without a great deal of persuasive discourses being directed to the group. On the other hand, active soft power is described as the persuasive approach that is directed through diplomacy, media and education onto the targeted group. In this case, perceptions are deliberately influenced as a way of creating a positive image of a particular entity (Nye, 2011).

In order to succeed in its persuasive initiative, a state can use a conglomerate of instruments and strategies that belong to both categories identified: diplomatic relations represent a must, in a hyper-globalized world, while the culture of a country can play a strategic role in shaping a positive outlook for foreigners. But a country needs to either have a strong cultural heritage and history, or be considered a civilization, a pole of influence in the geopolitical sphere, in the interest of successfully using passive soft power. Moreover, culture represents the core of applying soft power tools, when regarded as a form of power in itself, in the present context, of a multi-polarized global scene.

Culture can be defined as a set of characteristics and knowledge of a group that has collective features, such as one language, one ethnicity, religion, shared history, national identity or customs (CED, n.d.). Culture serves political interests, operating as an instrument that gives a unique perspective into dealing with conflicts, adopting a different communication technique in negotiations or in the way a country is governed (Carbó-Catalan & Roig-Sanz, 2022).

Oftentimes, culture and its use as a soft power tool is stronger than politics, meaning that diplomatic endeavors can have the expected outcome if a strong cultural base exists, even though the political system comes in opposition with the other one. For example, bilateral relations continue to be maintained between countries with a democratic governance and authoritarian states, if their national culture attracts the other party. In addition, a historical civilization can draw support no matter its present political system (Chitty, Ji, Rawnsley, & Hayden, 2017).

In this way, the promotion of culture, history and language poses a significant role in shaping our perspective regarding a country and furthermore, this appeal can transcend into biased opinions. We are prone to push aside negative or problematic elements of one country's political system, such as the adherence to human rights, if we are attracted to the national culture. Soft power acts as the main driving force in diplomacy and intercultural relations, forming bonds between different nations and creating positive images that generate collaboration. By implementing educational and academic projects, having a powerful social media presence or a prominent film industry, sustaining bilateral and multilateral relations with other states and cooperating in the economic domain, a country can win its place in the international scene. All of this effort can be considered a soft power strategy, and its success can be achieved without any military threats regarding sovereignty, or embargoes imposed on another state.

Case Study: China's Confucius Institutes as a Soft Power Tool

The People's Republic of China is regarded as a civilizational center of the East, with a consistent culture and long history, spanning over thousands of years and multiple dynasties. Especially after the 1949 establishment of the People's Republic by Mao Zedong's Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the country developed a variety of soft power tools, starting with economic collaboration with African and South American states, such as Zimbabwe, Ghana or Venezuela. But, in regards to the capacity of influencing and drawing attraction, China can be considered a master of using education and the academic sphere as a soft power instrument.

In this part, the focus will be oriented towards the Confucius Institutes (CIs) and a study case will be presented, in order to shed light on their importance in obtaining a positive image in the world. China remains a country that draws supporters, by using educational programs. In terms of innovation, methodology and academic research, the present chapter represents a case study, encompassing both an academic input, but also the personal experience.

Firstly, the Confucius Institutes are an educational non-profit worldwide organization, established in 2004, funded by the Chinese government, with the purpose of promoting Chinese culture, serving as a facilitator for the learning of Mandarin and running cultural exchanges for foreign and Chinese students. These institutes are present in the majority of European countries, including Romania, and on the other continents of the world, in dozens of countries. Their establishment comes as a result of cooperation between them and universities from the guest countries, and the CIs manage the process of certification of Mandarin knowledge, using the HSK standardized test (Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi or the Chinese Proficiency Test). In addition, research is an important part of the Confucius Institutes, regarding topics of relevance for China, such as economy, development and culture. Mutual benefits, respect and friendly collaboration are stated as the core values for the functioning of this entity affiliated with the Hanban, the Office of Chinese Language International Council.

When observing how China develops its soft power strategies, the majority of Chinese scholars claim that, at the heart of the Chinese model of implementing soft power, culture occupies this crucial place. Therefore, the Chinese cultural school (文化 派; wenhua pai) has its main focus in forming diplomacy and communication skills, aimed at promoting this culture into the present geopolitical context. Even more, the cultural aspect of this Asian country can be considered so embedded into their research interests and academic scene, because of the development of cultural soft power (文化 软实力; wenhua ruanshili). As a result, the educational agenda and intercultural interactions within the Confucius Institutes have a strong cultural aspect, promoting not only the acquiring of language proficiency, but also traditional culture and Chinese moral values (Repnikova, 2022).

In order to demonstrate the attraction that emerges within the Confucius Institutes, there are a few factors to take into consideration. The first factor that demonstrates the success of educational programs as soft power instruments is the need for uniqueness. In this particular case regarding the acquisition of Chinese culture and language knowledge, students worldwide can be attracted to study Chinese as a way of creating a unique and exotic self that differentiates from another people's identity. They are not Chinese, but knowing even a few phrases makes them look different, cool, like they just stepped out of a martial arts movie (Hubbert, 2019).

China benefits from this need of an exotic identity because it can not only attract students into the Institute and offer them lessons, summer camps and scholarships at Chinese universities, but project its core values and shape a positive image as a civilization, not just an ordinary state with demographic and economic developments. From this aspect results an internalization of the traditional moral values, for example, perseverance (毅; yi), a sense of shame, in order to prevent flaws and immoral behavior (耻; chi) or integrity (廉; lian).

On the other hand, another factor that stimulates the rate of success of the CIs is represented by the opportunities that emerge from studying Chinese language and culture. Students are inclined to search for

extra-curricular programs that have a positive impact on their resume, while still being enjoyable. Chinese classes from the Confucius Institutes offer the HSK proficiency certification, and through the organization, some diligent students can even access fully-paid scholarships in China, with the prospect of living and working in cities like Beijing or the cosmopolitan Shanghai. There are cultural contests organized by the CIs that offer participation diplomas and other awards, which can be useful for a student that needs to find that special opportunity in life (Hubbert, 2019).

In regard to the personal experience and a direct form of observing how soft power works in practice, three years of Chinese language and culture courses were filled with cultural, historical concepts and events that highlighted mainly the Sino-Romanian bilateral relations. In Romania, there are five institutes, integrated in the University of Bucharest, Transylvania University in Brașov, Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj, Lucian Blaga University in Sibiu and in the University of Medicine and Pharmacy "Grigore T. Popa" in Iași. In addition, the institutes have subsidiaries in smaller Romanian towns. In terms of funding, there are joint partnerships that deliver funds from the Chinese International Education Foundation[1] and the universities mentioned above. The Chinese courses are held by native speakers, providing a high level of understanding of the linguistic aspects and the administration staff is formed by Romanian citizens. As a former student, in 2019, there were surely advantages and opportunities available, consisting of summer camps, scholarships, cultural events and competitions. First of all, the Confucius Institutes in Romania attract students from all over the country with the prospect of participation in summer camps. In two weeks, the students visited China, and in 2019, the main cities that were included in the trip were Shanghai, Beijing and Zhujiajiao, an ancient town connected by water canals and declared as a cultural heritage element by UNESCO. The necessary visas were obtained with an invitation from Hanban and Peking University, and regarding the costs, domestic transport, accommodation, food and the tickets for museum entries were all covered by the Chinese government. By showing a positive image of the ancient civilization, rich heritage and general welfare, the CIs was able to shape the students' opinions related to the economic power of China, its safety and identity, because there was a focus on providing the idea of a satisfied nation, with a high rate of technological development and low rate of poverty. At the end of the summer camp, the students were awarded with a certificate.

Moreover, the students that obtained a B2 level of Chinese proficiency (level 4 in the HSK test), were presented with the opportunity of studying with a full scholarship at the Peking University from Beijing. The paperwork could be completed with the support of the administrative staff and after graduation, there were jobs available in Romania and in China. If a student chose not to apply to this type of scholarship, the teachers encouraged the student to apply to the Chinese language bachelor's degree program from the University of Bucharest. The majority of peers encountered in the three years of participating in the Chinese classes attended this degree and some students are now studying in Beijing. The students that remained in Romania were offered an internship in the summer of 2023, at the Sino-Russian Studies Center, in Bucharest. In this way, the Confucius Institute promotes an active academic environment, persuading students to complete not only linguistic studies, but also cultural ones.

Additionally, high school students could participate in a variety of cultural events, with the occasion of the Spring Festival, the Chinese New Year and the National Day of the People's Republic of China (on October 1st). In the context of every event attended by one of the authors, the Sino-Romanian diplomatic relations and the countries' friendly interactions were promoted and represented a highlight of those events. A special case is represented by an informal event from February 2020, when teachers and students gathered at one student's home to learn how to cook *bao zi*, traditional Chinese dumplings. At the end, the group photo consisted of the attendees holding "Get Well, China" banners, as a way of showing support to the population affected initially by the COVID-19 pandemic. With the occasion of the Spring Festival, there were celebrations where local officials could learn from student's Chinese calligraphy and traditional poems and dances were presented to the audience.

What is relevant in those cases was the discourse, oriented towards maintaining benevolent relations, presenting the economic power of China, the historical continuum of the nation and its promotion of healthy mindsets and customs. In lieu of conclusions for this study case, it can be argued that culture plays a crucial role in delivering soft power instruments for shaping perceptions regarding China, and education represents one of those tools, having the advantage of its role in forming opinions.

Promoting Cultural Exchange and Understanding

The Confucius Institutes (CIs) have emerged as a significant tool for promoting cultural exchange and understanding between China and the host countries. As Hartig (2012) notes, CIs obey and operate by the local laws of their host and respect local cultural exchanges. This approach allows the CIs to serve as a bridge for cross-cultural communication and friendship, fostering a deeper understanding of Chinese language, culture, and society among the host communities.

The main task of the CIs is to offer educational services and materials, such as Chinese language and culture, which can be accessed by everyone. As Whittaker (2013) points out, the CIs "are undoubtedly soft power initiatives directed by the Chinese government, but their primary activities are educational rather than political" (p. 106). Through the efforts of "cultural insights" to provide language instruction, cultural programs, CIs provides a deeper understanding of China, its nationals and the diversity of heritage. This educational focus is central in fostering the trustworthy and friendly relationship between the host institutions and communities.

Furthermore, the CIs can accomplish their mission of encouraging cultural exchange by adapting themselves to the local environment and needs of the host communities. As Liang (2020) argues, the CIs should "combine the teaching activities of the practice link and the production and operation activities of the enterprise, let the university teachers, the enterprise personnel and the related students participate in the related topic research" (p. 232). Working together with local businesses and organizations as well as the representatives of the community is what will significantly enhance the relevance and effect of the CIs' programs and make them a perfect response to the current needs and urges of the homeland community.

Besides, the educational center could help to spread the culture and contribute to its exploration by creating partnerships with the local schools and culture organizations. Chang Li, Mirmirani, and Ilacqua (2009) state that the CIs can serve as a platform for distributed leadership and knowledge sharing in a worldwide network. By working closely with local partners, the CIs can develop joint programs, events, and initiatives that bring together Chinese and local perspectives, fostering mutual learning and understanding.

Consequently, cultural intelligence of the CIs in ensuring the cultural exchange and mutual understanding depends on trust building, effective engagement, adaptability, and fostering collaboration. Through observance of local habits, delivery of learning programs, and interaction with a transparent manner, CIs can act as a communication pass-through and a friendship across the world to China.

Language Education as a Bridge for Intercultural Communication

Language education serves as a bridge for intercultural communication, and the Confucius Institutes (CIs) play a significant role in this regard. Established with the aim of promoting Chinese language and culture worldwide, CIs "devote themselves to satisfying the demands of people from different countries and regions in the world who learn the Chinese language, to enhancing understanding of the Chinese language and culture by these peoples" (Hanban, 2019, as cited in Liu, 2019, p. 258). By providing a platform for language learning and cultural exchange, CIs strive to "strengthen educational and cultural exchange and cooperation between China and other countries" and "promote the development of multiculturalism" (Hanban, 2019, as cited in Liu, 2019, p. 258).

The CIs model is unique in its approach to language education, as it involves "a cross-cultural collaboration" between Chinese and foreign partner institutions (Liu, 2019). This collaborative approach allows CIs to function as "cultural scouts that woo people around the world" (Zhou & Luk, 2016, p. 635), creating opportunities for people-to-people interactions and cultural understanding. The language courses, cultural events and academic exchanges provided by CIs tend to be part of the coming up of intercultural competences among learners and participants.

Confucius Institutes are bridges across cultures by means of language teaching, cultural activities, and a variety of events that help people in different countries learn about each other. The call for learning Chinese as a foreign language is experiencing substantial annual growth, and CIs have played an indispensable part in meeting this demand (Liu, 2019). Offering individual Chinese language education and cultural amenities to the CIs users makes global community development possible for Chinese language enthusiasts and learners.

Consequently, these institutes have the power to facilitate cross-cultural understanding and tolerance. Language education and cultural exchange are the means through which diplomats can contribute to the reduction

of stereotypes, promotion of cultural dialogue and development of an inclusive comprehension of people about Chinese culture and society. Dr. Sunny Xin Liu argues that CIs are capable of subtle promotion of the mutual understanding by giving chances for people to people contacts as well as cultural learning (Liu, 2019).

Collaborative Partnerships and Local Adaptations

Collaboration with other stakeholders and local adaptation are two core elements that must be an integral part of the well-being and success of the Confucius Institutes (CIs) from an intercultural angle. In terms of the operating model, CIs is distinctive, as it involves a tripartite collaboration between a university in China, an overseas host university and Hanban (the HQ of the CIs) (Liu, 2019). This collective way of operation enhances the participation by partners in all aspects of the start-up and running of the CIs, as well as a division of roles between the partners in the steering of the CI's decisions and activities Thus, the host university becomes a partaker in the CIs venture showing the sustainable nature and the wider audience of the communication aspects (Zaharna, 2014).

The CIs approach brings local communities one of the greatest advantages which is the adaptability to their own settings. In contrast to the Western counterparts such as the British Council and the Alliance Française which mostly apply the standardized model throughout the participating countries, the CIs is free to adapt its activities and focus areas to be in line with the specific requirements and priorities of the home institution and the community (Liu, 2019). The ability of the institute to adapt enables it to have an increased targeting and being more effective in campaigning for Chinese language and culture, as it considers the specifications that apply to the local community.

As an instance, some CIs are committed to constructing their activities on the strengths and specializations of their partnered-institutions. The case of the CIs at the London School of Economics and Political Science comes to mind here (Hartig, 2015), where areas of cooperation were business. This approach is premised on getting the best out of the host university to provide pertinent and powerful activities. Similarly, in the CIs at the University of Nairobi, Kenya, the importance is given to traditional Chinese medicine in line with the medical focus of the host institution (Kragelund, 2014). It will be proper for CIs to align their activities with the prevailing local setting. That is when the CIs will be able to get their intended audience and develop enduring attachments.

In particular, the interaction and mutual exchange of knowledge and resources in the CIs mode of operation makes the two universities open to each other. This exchange does not just enrich the cultural knowledge of both parties but it also creates an atmosphere for numerous academic research projects, academic exchanges, and other cooperative ventures to be undertaken (Li, 2018). The exchange and collaboration programs, on one hand, help to develop cultural relations between China and the host country, leading to increased cultural expressions and appreciation of the existing cultures.

Comparative Analysis: China versus Romania

Comparative analysis of intercultural communication in the academic sphere offers the opportunity for deepening the understanding of the process through which students interact, even when they originate from different national backgrounds. In this section of the paper, we will present a comparison between Romanian, Chinese, Polish and English academic beneficiaries, such as students involved in Erasmus programs and enrolled in the Confucius Institutes from China.

When observing behaviors and perceptions of Romanian and Chinese students, there are key points that represent both complementary elements and differences. In terms of associated aspects, both Chinese and Romanian students present strong educational values. The Confucius Institutes in Romania rely on the diligence of Romanian students eager to learn about a completely different culture and language, on their behavioral characteristics like memorizing. In this way, there is a high rate of success in learning Chinese characters and grammatical structures. The CIs observed, for their benefit, the desire of expanding one's personal experiences, thus the continuous promotion of summer camps. Competitivity plays an essential role in the Romanian educational system, and this is one of the reasons why the CIs implemented the *Chinese Language Bridge*, a competition that tests the linguistic and literary knowledge of students. Even more, there is a strong desire of Romanian students to gather opportunities when it comes to higher education, this being the reason why fully-paid scholarships in China represent an attractive way of persuading students to enroll in Chinese classes.

On the other hand, there is still a dose of reluctance on the Romanian part of pursuing a Chinese course, mainly because of its alien culture, that does not resemble anything familiar for Romanian students. Another difference refers to consistency, meaning that Romanian students are not appealed by the prospect of investing six years for obtaining the maximum level of proficiency, and the sense of shame that teachers promote, as a way of motivating young people generates an opposite effect, because of the familiarity to the traditional education system.

Comparative Analysis: England versus Poland

In what follows, we will provide a comparative analysis between England and Poland, focusing on some key aspects of the Confucius Institutes like language learning, cultural exchange, cultural adaptation, academic freedom, transparency, and perception:

Aspect	England	Poland
Language Learning	Accessible Chinese language courses for students and the public	Chinese language courses offered to students and the public
Cultural Exchange	Organization of cultural events, such as Chinese New Year celebrations and art exhibitions	Events celebrating Chinese festivals alongside Polish cultural traditions
Cultural Adaptation	Events showcasing Chinese cuisine alongside traditional English afternoon tea	Efforts to blend Chinese and Polish cultural elements in events and activities
Academic Freedom	Concerns raised about the potential for Confucius Institutes to influence academic discourse and limit discussions on sensitive topics related to China	Concerns expressed about the potential for Confucius Institutes to promote Chinese government interests and influence Polish academia
Transparency	Lack of transparency regarding funding and operation	Questions raised about financial arrangements between Confucius Institutes and host universities, and potential compromise of autonomy
Perception	Mixed reception, with some praising the institutes for promoting language learning and cultural exchange, while others criticize their lack of transparency and potential to undermine academic freedom	Mixed reception, with some praising the institutes' efforts in promoting Chinese language and culture, while others raise concerns about their potential to spread Chinese government propaganda and influence Polish academia

Conclusion

To sum up, the People's Republic of China developed a soft power strategy centered around the educational field, and the Confucius Institutes represent the best example in order to prove this point. By using intercultural communication skills oriented towards maintaining bilateral exchanges with the host countries, the CIs can project a positive perception of China to its students.

In terms of communication, the ICC has shown its importance even in Confucius Institutes. Starting with promoting cultural exchange and understanding, followed by language education as a bridge for intercultural communication and ending with collaborative partnerships and local adaptations, this concept revealed insights into how CIs adapt their perspective to the intercultural domain. In addition, it is worth mentioning that Confucius Institutes adapt their intercultural perspective in concordance to their host country.

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