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Opinion / Review

In memoriam

Articles

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Dragoš Kalajić – A Serbian critical attitude towards western culture and civilization

Abstract: Through the presentation of Dragoš Kalajić's journalistic texts with the subject of war, as well as by emphasizing Kalajić's participation in war conflicts during 1992-1995, the author strives to point to the basic corpus of values by which Kalajić was guided in life and which he fiercely defended, as well as to the higher, literary quality of his war reports. Analyzing Kalajić's understanding of war and the place allotted to the writer in war, the author gives a clear picture of Kalajić's "ideal" war correspondent, "the writer of God Mars". He dedicates special attention to Kalajić's observations regarding the character and spiritual strength of the fighters, who are the main bearers of the values about which he leaves a trace. In the conclusion, the author also gives a personal evaluation of Kalajić's war records, as well as of the character of the war correspondent/ writer standing behind them.

Keywords: Dragoš Kalajić, war, Saint-Exupéry, Krajina, aristocracy

Dragoš Kalajić (1943–2005) was not a leftist – there is absolutely no doubt about it because he never resolved the question of social justice and respect for human personality in an ideal world of the equal ones, which in practice always turned into dictatorships, totalitarianism and destruction, first of the identities of nations, and then of nations the themselves. However, Dragoš Kalajić, the man I knew and went with on several occasions to the warfront in the Republic of Serbian Krajina, was a practician. Some would say that it is the point of his potential encounter with the ideological enemy that was, just all enemies of the Serbian people, the East and Eurasia, perceived by Dragoš only as an external manifestation, incarnation of the "invisible" enemy, as perfectly described by Nicodemus the Hagiorite.

Therefore, Kalajić was a practician. He did not write for the sake of writing, nor was he carried

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away by the need to show the wealth of his knowledge and writing talent which were indisputable. Everything he wrote, according to him, was supposed to have its practical application, to show the possibility of a different opinion, life and, eventually, work, not closed in the isolated balloons, but vividly connected to the problems with which his people had to encounter in history that took place here and now. Everything he wrote, as testified by Kalajić, stemmed from practice: from historical "truths" which we witness with our deceptive eyesight, and the Truth which is felt by spirit and soul, the truth that is sensed and perceived only after the rejection of the assumption that the material contact with the world is the only one, the truth that under the name of "tradition" hides deep behind the unwinding of the tape.

Dragoš's effort, on the one hand, to find practice for his work and to return it to practice and, on the other hand, still to distance from it as from something essentially deceptive, like sand on sunny beaches, among the grains of which only occasionally a pearl shines, had, as once it was also noted by Miša Đurković, deep implications "to specific questions from the field of politics, international relations and popular culture" (Kalajić, 2024a, p. 11).

While respecting Dragoš himself and before speaking of his holy characters from the wartime days, of heroes and those who are not heroes, whom he encountered on the front line, and who will become alive before all those of you who reach the last page of this book, it is exactly the place where we should explain the way in which Dragoš comprehended the struggle in which the Serbs found themselves in the 1990s. It should be determined what they fought for and, eventually, what Dragoš concludes as a thinker or as a war correspondent/writer about the war as a denouement (never final) of the drama of modern humanity, caused by a false thesis about the end of history,

Tradition and practical solutions the Serbs fight against

Kalajić's understanding of war and its place in history cannot be comprehended unless we take into account his understanding of Europe, which has not only been "betrayed", but, despite the disintegration it has been subjected to and which is governed in line with the colonizers' needs, embodied in the masters, "the Anglo-American establishment and secret societies", and servants, embodied in the "European community", is at the same the "the empire of the future" (Kalajić, 2024, p. 11). Just as the idea of Europe is not only dissolution at the same time and the creation of something new that usually comes after every decay, death and disintegration, for Kalajić, war is not just destruction, but also a moment when the new emerges, radically different from the old that disappears.

Reducing history to the material, physically tangible and observable is, according to Kalajić, the biggest trap. It is imposed, like "truth", by those structures that, aware of the correctness of sharp observation, have only one goal – to maintain the world in the current state by permanently expanding their own system of soft power (Kalajić, 2024, p. 17). That is why Kalajić, as someone coming from the culture which is, whether it likes it or not, guided by the spiritual force that cannot be controlled (but one may try to be in its vicinity, which is the

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sole guarantee of survival and victory), once again stands on the front of defending "the occupied territory". In the West, where he resides, he tries to find those strongholds that would not strengthen his personal fort (because, eventually, it is not necessary at all), but that would, on the one hand. Prove to the Westerners that they can find in their own culture what the Serbs do, while the Serbs would have some more evidence that in their struggle, so irrationally led (in Njegoš's words, "despising human nothingness and the weaving of a mindless assembly") they are still followed (and lagging behind them) by somewhat more rational and colder Westerners, those who have been deprived of the greatness of Kosovo and Lazar's commitment to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Therefore, it comes as no surprise that Dragoš (also) found his teachers in those Western authors who resisted the communist banalization of reality. For his time and his generation, perhaps it was not widespread, but not too odd either. However, what was "odd" and what, to this day, has remained the subject of the dispute with Kalajić by local citizens, is the fact that he takes a step further, relating to "the persecuted, exorcised, marginalized and unwanted ones", who were pushed to the margin of their own communities because of criticizing the "consumption" ideology, so developed in the West (Kalajić, 2024, p. 13). They were "guilty" only of understanding that there was no essential difference between communism and capitalism. Both worldviews, profoundly materialistic, with no deeper understanding of history, are characterized by "modern nihilism and the demon of economy, which are, however, presented by the Western civilization as the world of progress, liberation and fulfilment" (Kalajić, 2024, p. 14).

Nevertheless, Kalajić does not mind such "apostasy". In his specific loneliness, "forsakenness", in that almost monastic withdrawal from the world resulting in retreat to the desert and hermitage, from which one can only come out and go to war, he recognizes not only the struggle which, deeply aware of the Truth, he wages within his people, but also the struggle which he, finally, leads against his enemies, at the same time the enemies of Eurasia and his nation. In the world dominated by the "enlightenment model", it is desirable and only proper to be "decadent", despised, conservative and rejected (Kalajić, 2024, p. 14). Staying "alone" and deeply understanding the "forsakenness" of his people in the days when masks were taken off and the new-old Director of the humanity drama stepped onto the stage, Kalajić wrote his column "One View of the World" in *Duga*, so impatiently awaited by us, his acquaintances, disciples, admirers and friends. A large number of people from the generation to which I belong admired Dragoš's aristocratic, almost Mahy-like attitude[2] towards the world which did not understand what he spoke about and in what circumstances the Serbs and Eurasia found themselves. We asked for it and Dragoš offered us the image of the world that was "radically different from the established reality, marked by economism and progress, and man entrapped by those frameworks" (Kalajić, 2024, p. 81).

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[2] As a reminder, Thomas de Mahy, Marquis de Favras (1744–1790), while reading the verdict that would take him to death, told the revolutionaries calmly and with contempt that there were three words were misspelled in the text.

Quite graphically and without the element that leads sound philosophy to meaningless philosophizing, in his columns and texts Kalajić told us that the main opponent of Europe had been and still was Atlanticism, which he "identified with Judeo-Protestantism" (Kalajić, 2024, p. 38).

This opponent, whose roots lie in the demonic worship of economy – as concluded by Kalajić looking at the ideological models of the opponent, the practical predecessors, as well as the experience of his own and other nations in the second half of the 20th century – is reluctant to leave anyone free. Atlanticism essentially has no ally; it does not need friends but slaves (here, we should also take into account Marx's idea that capital has no friends and that its only aim is consolidation, to the full monopoly or destruction of the world). If they do not accept their gradual extinction, completely aestheticized by the idea of "victory", "progress" and "freedom", those slaves will be condemned to brutal, television death, like death seen in martyr Syria, which was not so unbearably banal only to humiliate the victim (we can wonder whether it is done at all), but to frighten everyone daring to wake up from the coma in which they were entrapped (Kalajić, 2024, p. 139).

To us, who saw so many banal deaths in the 1990s, Dragoš proved that they, unlike the death from Baljak's cult documentary, were not worthless after all. Aware of the significance of his each and every word, Kalajić points out to us that deaths on the front have an incomparably deeper and higher meaning than the liquidation of Knele which was carried out in a Belgrade hotel and represents the only future for Saint Sava's soul if it allows itself to be demonized with money.

Unlike the satanic liquidations on the streets of Belgrade, death on the front, according to Kalajić, was an expression of contempt towards the demon of economy, to which the Serbs were largely immune, thanks to their Orthodoxy (and regardless of their personal will). As part of the territory that is different from the "Weberian-Protestant" in its position towards the materialistic, the Serbs waged the war for the salvation of humanity, as Kalajić wrote proudly. In that conflict, they did not defend (only) themselves, but, as a specific outpost of Russia, the main target of the demonic West – they also bought time for the Russian rise, being a catechumen together with sleeping Moscow. That is why, in Kalajić's opinion, the war was not waged only for the villages in Podrinje, Semberija, Banija, Kordun, Lika, Slavonia and Dalmatia. From this time distance, I can say (precisely thanks to Kalajić) that it was and remained an expression of the geopolitical and civilizational opposition, which still has to see its great resolution (Kalajić, 2024, p. 38).

Teaching us about the true nature of the war being waged in front of us, in which many of us participated (directly or indirectly), gazing at the "revolution", brought about no longer by the hippie movement, but by the countercultural (so we thought) British and American punk, Kalajić told us that there was nothing authentic in alcohol and the acting out of a revolution. Not really taking care of our reaction, Kalajić said that London, New York and Washington, which we had admired and then waged war against, were not magnificent capitals of humanity or a nest from which the profound transformation of the world would arise, abut the centres in which (although enslaved as well) golden shackles were made for keeping free nations in subordination.

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"Powerful" capitals of the West are nothing but ordinary "laboratories" of the new world order, and those Serbian enemies standing in the field are only its guinea pigs (Kalajić, 2005, p. 6). Kalajić finds nothing strange in this fact, which also reveals the tragedy of our enemies that, whether they like it or not, suffer with us. In his opinion, such a role actually belongs to Zagreb and the Serbian enemies trusting Zagreb; its root is at a much deeper, meta-historical level. The Western, Roman Catholic world has annulled Christ's denial and as the only space in which it seeks to prove its orthodoxy, such as "Judeo-protestants", it accepts the material world, the world dominated by the demon of economy and factual political power.

The fact that they belong to a Church that the West has not co-opted (unlike the Protestant Church) and has not corrupted (unlike the Catholic Church), the Serbs, as bluntly pointed out by Dragoš, stayed outside the declining world and happen to be its problem, even a larger one than the actual rotting of the West. Just as, driven by their demonized nature, the Catholicized Serbs from Herzegovina were the first to resort to killing to nullify the evidence of their own fall, the collective West immersed in materialism and nihilism started the war against Eurasia as the space in which the demon of economy is considered a foreign body (which does not mean that it has not managed to penetrate it as well).

In that war, whose actors were also the Serbs, two worldviews clashed: one was an expression of Luciferian pride and the thesis that man is the measure of things, and the other was based on the idea that human rights can only be truly satisfied after divine rights are placed above them. According to Kalajić, introducing hierarchy is not submission, but the only path to freedom. The Eastern man does not define the concept of freedom as a mere fulfilment of the narcissistic need to bring our own satisfaction to the end, self-proclaimed as the measure of all things, but as the discovery of salvation. (To make matters worse, such narcissistic fulfilment is not possible at all, since capitalism constantly fabricates new "needs" without which it "is not possible" to be satisfied.)

Kalajić did not wake us up from the coma in which we slept in a motherly, quiet way, so as not to scare us. He did not try to make easier our encounter with the world whose logic is opposite to the one in which we fall but never reach the bottom, in which we hit the pavement without falling apart. He did it in a manly, soldierly way, not caring about the shock we might experience. He told us that, despite historical experience, which in my generation was additionally strengthened by films about partisans and, despite the current state of affairs, compounded by the sad Croatian "Danke Deutschland", the Serbs could and had to search for a model of cooperation with united Germany. He wanted to believe that Germany would, sooner or later, "emancipate itself from American occupation" (Kalajić, 2024, p. 18). It seems that only now, despite the official establishment's efforts to suppress them and declare them "extreme", we can hear the first emancipatory voices from Berlin.

Slapping us for the sake of sobering, Dragoš wrote mercilessly about the role of American bankers in the overthrow of the Russian Empire and the contribution of the Serbian assassins in Sarajevo in 1914 to the world preparation for the collapse of

civilization initiated in 1917 (Kalajić, 2024, p. 127). The consequences were also felt in the Yugoslav bloody drama, of which we were witnesses and participants.

Yet, we should not be deceived! Kalajić did not regret the disappearance of Yugoslavia. In his understanding of the tragedy of the fratricidal war[3] (which we at times find completely incomprehensible and unacceptable) and in the revelation of the need of the Atlanticist circles for such wars. Dragoš was consistent in his belief that the state of the South Slavs was conceived as an extended arm of Western freemasonry and that it had to disappear. (Kalajić, 2024, p. 124). A new form of community was to be created in that space, with a completely changed internal character ("Slavic civilization" and the idea of "Slavic capitalism", with the village and the cooperative in its very centre, which would have sufficient strength to resist the "civilizing" missions of the West), which would logically be oriented towards Russia (Kalajić, 2024, p. 217). Likewise, Dragoš hoped for the birth of a new Russia, which, he assured, should break with its anti-Germanism and, despite circumstances that were not conducive to it, turn towards Berlin.

In the end, the struggle waged by the Serbs, according to Kalajić, had its own "earthly" dimension (hence the necessity of the manly awakening from sleep). It was and it is still the struggle for Serbian geopolitics. Milomir Stepić is perfectly right when stating that Kalajić was one of the "most deserving figures" for the renaissance of Serbian geopolitics (Kalajić, 2024, p. 31).

Posing the Serbian question as a geopolitical one, Kalajić actually put forward a thesis about the possibility of the existence of integralist Serbian nationalism, which did not depend on the changeable state of affairs in the field and did not fragment the fatherland, even when, three decades after the expulsion from Krajina, the Serbs no longer live in the territories from which, during wartime years, Kalajić invited for the continuation of the struggle (Kalajić, 2024, pp. 43-44).

Today, when in the part of the Serbian ethnic territory cultural policy has become, if not the only, then the main tool we can use, this idea of Dragoš's is once again becoming contemporary. Where it is possible to wage a political struggle, we are obliged, if we follow what Dragoš Kalajić left us, to wage it. Without fear or hesitation. Always aware that the wars we are in are not wars for space, but for tradition, which stands outside the space we are in and the time we are from.

The writer of God Mars

Kalajić believes that war is not only destruction, but also a radical position, a point at which the creation of the new. However, in Kalajić's opinion, war is not a God-given fact, but an expression of humanity's tragic inability to understand the essence of its own existence. That is why war assumes its true value only if, after it, man properly defines his position towards salvation, as the essence of history. To Kalajić, war is not "world

[3]   We should not forget that Kalajić was trying to establish healthy relations with the Croats, believing that every anesthetized nation has the possibility of awakening from the forced sleep.

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Dragoš Kalajić was also a painter as well as an author. The displayed painting is titled Modification 4 and was created using acrylic on canvas.
Photo: National Museum of Serbia

hygiene" either. In fact, the idea of the war as "purification" is complete "nonsense" in his opinion, since war always, "particularly in the age of modern technology", "affects and takes away the best ones, depriving the warring nations of enormous genetic wealth".

Just as he does not belong to the category of those "heroes" who rejoice in war, Kalajić is not among those who lament and proclaim it a phenomenon immanent to the fallen human character. Just as he does not need to fit into the theories of the "noble savage" and to make man into "a good being", Kalajić does not need to deny the inclination of the human nature towards violence and killing. The value determination has nothing in common with the recognition of facts, whereas war is exactly that: "an eternal constant of human history" which cannot be "stopped even by the greatest mobilization of pacifist wishes".

However, since it gives the opportunity to humanity to properly perceive its own tragedy and devise a new path towards a different, invincible goal, war, according to Kalajić, is "a positive selection". Citing Béla Hamvas, Kalajić clearly emphasizes that war brings a much-needed spiritual barrier that divides people into "two types, the ones who remain the prisoners of primal fear", and "those who have freed themselves from it". Moreover, this "fear" is not (only) the fear of death, but primarily the fear of life, or rather of a life different from the one that brought the individual and the collective to the current state. Therefore, as Kalajić writes, faced with his personal experience and that of those with whom he was on the front, it is only on the front line, after being freed from all delusions and lies, that

people begin to live an authentic life. By "authentic", Kalajić denotes a life without algorithms, a life that "does not give away knowledge", but rather a life one must fight for. War is just such an opportunity, which only those with a deeper sense of life can use to their advantage.

On the front, that "deeper sense", in Kalajić's opinion, begins at the moment when the hero, the warrior, rises above the banality of fear. Hence the story about war is, in Kalajić's opinion, also a story about humanity and heroism, the testimony about enthusiasm, in the same way as Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, the war narrator and hero perhaps most admired by Kalajić, created *Little Prince*. It is not war that reduces man to the lowest level, but man does this to himself in war. War, just as any other essentially unfavourable situation in which the individual and whole collectives may find themselves, gives the possibility of rising and proving one's own, personal spiritual strength. In the end, banality is transcended through war.

Pointing exactly to the example of Saint-Exupéry, in his work "Writers of God Mars" Kalajić depicts the character of the hero-narrator, the son of war. The author of *Little Prince* was not a false pacifist, as usually pointe out by those who do not understand the essence of war; he did not pose superfluous questions to himself, he did not wonder whether "he should" or "for whom", but heroically rising above the banality of destruction and false peace, which is nothing but the treason of the attacked fatherland, he fulfilled the duty imposed by love. The critical experience of the world, which is not disputable in Saint-Exupéry, according to Kalajić, was not the reason for this writer and war

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pilot to stay outside the whirlwinds of war.[4] Namely, after the collapse of France in the short-lasting war against Germany, Saint-Exupéry was one of those who suffered in the forced neutrality, resisting any false pacifism, refusing to have the love for the nearest replaced by self-indulgence, whose ultimate outcomes are desertion and betrayal. As soon as he had the opportunity for it after the occupation of North Africa, he once again got into his airplane and flew to his fatherland just as a war pilot and a hero should do.

Kalajić is honest not only towards the war and its heroes, but also towards those who speak and write about the war, while staying far from the front line and from understanding its essence. One who did not participate in the war has no right to speak about it, Kalajić told both to "our people" who, at least during the 1990s, loudly called for fighting although they were far away from guns and cannon. In Dragoš's opinion, a war correspondent who wants to become a war writer and author, is the only one with spiritual strength to see through the banal material nature of war, and must himself be a spiritual person. Otherwise, he will relate to human weaknesses and pathos, as "mediocre Hemingway" did, understanding war solely as death that does not destroy only the fighter's physical existence, but also the spiritual, metaphysical character of the fighter's heroism. That is why Kalajić emphasizes the following as the ones tin the search for the best "writers of

God Mars": Xenophon, Homer, Apollinaire, Evola, de Montherlant, Céline, *von Salomon*, Gumilyov, Heidegger, de Chardin, Hamvas, Saint-Exupéry, Jünger, Malaparte, Crnjanski and Krakov.

It is only those who were not on the front, according to Kalajić, cannot recognize heroism of the enemy. It is only those who are not driven by love in their action and who do not find the need in love to overcome the banality of the world can be limited to hatred and dehumanization of their opponents. That is why Kalajić, deeply aware of who he is, what he is and from whom he defends sanctity, despise dissemination of hatred "against the enemy on the other side of the line of fire".

In his speeches and texts, he expressed his opposition to those who, during the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, called for the complete extermination of entire nations. In his "war reports and testimonies of great writers", Dragoš wrote strictly observing that model, "it is not possible to find any calls to kill enemies. The first historical, or rather the most ancient, witness to such an ethical rule is Homer: although he certainly fought in the ranks of the Achaeans, in the Iliad he also sang of the exploits of the Trojan heroes with worthy respect, even admiration".

Those who do not recognize the heroism of their enemies (and we are aware that we, the Serbs, have also come to a state in which it is disputable whether we have the strength to see our enemy not only

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[4]   Today, when the opposition, referring to the authorities, tells us to take the opposition attitude towards the defence of our country, we should remember an example from our history – Dimitrije Tucović. Although he criticized the politics of Nikola Pašić and Stojan Protić, in his last letter to his father, directly from the front, Tucović wrote that his whole life he had shared the destiny of his people and that he was doing it in 1914 as well.

as an opponent, but also as a hero) are not heroes themselves, nor are they "the writers of God Mars".

"As war history testifies, warmongering calls and murderous incitements were written only by bad or mediocre writers, as a rule from a distant, safe or comfortable background."

Calls for killing and contempt for everything done by the enemy is, in Kalajić's opinion, part of propaganda. It is not love or self-sacrifice, but an expression of mere efforts "to artificially compensate for the lack of solid motivations for struggle". Hatred, as Dragoš Kalajić told us at the height of the worst conflicts in the Republic of Serbian Krajina and Republic Srpska, is a reflection of the spiritually weak and a direction for turning to the road that ends in defeat and total disaster.

"One of the most difficult tasks of the fighter is when – due to disbelief or doubt ion the soundness of the state he should defeat" – he cannot find any motivation for further effort. The strength for such effort, which the state (with its, most frequently, banally materialist interest) attempts to encourage by equally banal propaganda, must be found by the true hero "in himself, in his mind, in his soul". There, Kalajić finds his absolute model in Saint-Exupéry who, in a letter of 30th July 1944, written only one day before his last journey, treats with contempt the warmongers in his own ranks and the angels of banal death: "I am not touched by forcing to hatred, the carelessness and abominations they call *rising*... Under the dangers of war, I am naked and barer than it seems possible. Absolutely pure. The other day, I was surprised by the fighter planes. I barely escaped them. I felt completely blissful at that moment. It is not that I no longer feel (dangers9 due to some sporting or war delirium, but I no longer understand

anything but the quality of the essence. Virtue – it is to save the French spiritual legacy kept in the Carpentras Library. It is wandering in a plane, bare. It is teaching children to read. It is accepting to be killed as an ordinary carpenter. They are the fatherland... Not me: I come from the fatherland. Poor fatherland."

It is only the consciousness raised high like this, called "aristocratic" by Dragoš, defying the deeply rooted notions immersed in mere economic power, gained or inherited, that can find strongholds of its own and national spirit in war. Such rise, achieved mostly when, due to being close to death, man frees himself from "any slightly more important influence of the soul's fear for own life", will be observed by Dragoš in the Republic of Serbian Krajina. Its fighters wrote a message on one of their tanks: *Death doesn't hurt.* In that Lazar-like and St. Vitus message he did not see a call for death, but for heroism, a call for the absence of any fear for personal physical existence.

When speaking about the bad consequences of war, Kalajić tries to distance himself from the banality of death and destruction, which, being so obvious, did not require any special elaboration. That is why he does not have much respect for those who, after wars, neglect their "chivalrous ethics" and put images of horror in the foreground. Instead, once again outlining the essence of that ethic before our eyes, Kalajić seeks to show whether the war we went through brought about the necessary change. He highlights the positioning towards that fact of those who, surpassing the banality of physical death, succeeded in reaching the "aristocratic", St. Vitus and Exupérian consciousness.

Kalajić does not lack honesty here either. Observing the experience of his own people, he clearly

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observes that the inability of true heroes to get used to a state of "peace" is not a psychological disorder, but an expression of nostalgia for the "experienced greatness of man" in war, the greatness that disappears in peace, that is of no value in peace, and that the hero wants to pass on to younger generations. It seems that this gap was also described by Stevan Jakovljević in his book *Change of Generations.* This gap was also mentioned by General Ljubomir Maksimović, Commander of the Fifth Regiment of the Drina Division, liberator of Srem and Sušak, in his speech to the people of Mitrovica in Srem in 1940. That gap, the permanent image of the inability to understand the ethical strength of war as a source of spiritual strength, is certainly an important segment of what, in the interwar Serbian and Yugoslav political history, might be classified as a conflict of "the old" and "the new", or, as noted by Kalajić, those whose ideals are, on the one hand, "aristocracy", and, on the other – "pantry".

That conflict, as correctly observed by Kalajić, is not dominated by those who, due to their age, could not take part in the war (and, therefore, have the right to speak about it with the lack of understanding), but those who avoided "the military service or the moral obligation to wear the uniform". They are the ones who (according to Kalajić, those who have no right whatsoever to speak about war) "harbour a barely concealed or open hostility towards war returnees. Envy and hatred harboured by the self-proclaimed intellectuals from such citizen ranks towards thinkers and writers who bravely responded to war calls have already become proverbial".

Therefore, it comes as no surprise that solders and writers/warriors cannot find their bearings in the post-war "peace", but often despise it as the state supporting Dragoš's thesis from the beginning of this text: that war is no "hygiene" and the only victors in it are often (both on the side of the formal victors and the formally defeated ones) those who do not give up the banal understanding of life, in the centre of which there is demonic worship of economy.

"As testified by the works of great writers-warriors, from Drieu La Rochelle, via Ernst Jünger and Curzio Malaparte to Miloš Crnjanski" – Kalajić writes– "the worldview shaped and raised by the fires of war sees through and permanently despises civilian society and the pertaining order of values, in which it sees only the rule of perversity and lowliness, feebleness and cowardice",

Speaking, finally, not only about those he looked up to, those he met in the trenches and mountains throughout Republic Srpska and the Republic of Serbian Krajina, but also about himself, Kalajić will tell both his opponents and his would-be friends that people who went through war are fully entitled to treat the civilian world "with the voice of proud superiority". That voice is actually an expression of "aristocratic" contempt for the fear for own physical existence and Lazar-like/Exupérian calmness at the moment of the last flight, which is no longer the flight towards the enemy and death, but towards the sun and salvation.

Bright characters from wartime days

Practical and devoted to tradition, Dragoš Kalajić does not feel the need to merely describe the front and the people on the front. On the contrary, in his war testimonies, which we read with the equal

fervour as comics, Kalajić searches for "signs, personalities and ideas" showing to the Truth, concealed deep outside the banality of the matter (Kalajić, 2005, p. 5). In that respect, I can freely say that he was not overburdened by the course of history and the war within it, the part of which he became. In his texts, Kalajić appears not as a mere chronicler, but primarily as a writer, the one striving to penetrate as long and deeply as possible into the corridors of history, in its strongholds, with a clear intention of discovering the essence of being and to invite the main course to subordinate to the goal, testifying that there is no sense or reason to resist it.

Searching for a reflection of tradition among the fighters on the front, and trying to kindle the same flame within himself, Kalajić is present in his stories. That is exactly where their greatest value lies, that is how they stand out among empty newspaper reports, from which it is clear that the author is nothing more than a recorder at a meeting of a local party committee or an organization of associated labour.

Kalajić's literary war records are not a mere listing of someone's life path, but points of encounters of the hero and the writer not only with war companions on the front, but also with himself. Primarily with himself. Namely, in his search for deep roots of history on the front, without the burden of having to "fit in" with what was labelled as "life" by the Belgrade establishment (and on a larger scale), trying to understand the elements that make man think and behave in a certain manner, Kalajić presents his own Self to his fellow fighters and the public. Perhaps even more precisely, Kalajić, having evidently found his own starting points much earlier than the majority of the Serbs, clearly needs to

show them to others, in line with his practical, yet not unthinking nature. He does not do it proudly, by imposing himself as some kind of teacher, but by recognizing these starting points in the true heroes of his time, in those who, with guns in their hands and on the front lines, were the guardians of the sacred in a time of complete collapse of the profane. in the Serbian ethnic territory.

Therefore, Kalajić does not hide between his lines. He does not want to be "objective", which usually means mild. He knows what he wants; he knows where he is going and has no difficulty in clearly emphasizing it. He does it not only as a member of the Serbian people, whose aim is to justify everywhere everything good and bad done by his compatriots, but primarily as an artist, a painter, an essayist who also finds room for criticizing his war companions, in the same way as Eduard Limonov did in the hills surrounding Sarajevo. Is there anything more natural than when the writers such as Lidochka and Radovan Karadžić stand together in front of collapsing Europe? Is there anything more difficult than the fact that exactly the counter of the people who had both warned about the "highway of hell and suffering" and saw clear contours of the potential future in the dark, which was sung about by tragic Nataliya Medvedeva, poisoned by the same dark and the same rot? "Tragedy and experience teach us", Kalajić wrote, "that all phenomena, always and everywhere, express their formative and informative principles most clearly and most convincingly in their very starting points, in the centres of creation" (Kalajić, 2005, p. 6).

On 20th June 1992, at the very beginning of the war, on the ruins of Yugoslavia, Kalajić wrote in *Duga*, completely directly, that the world was

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Part of an article by Dragoš Kalajić in the newspaper *Duga*.
Photo: private archive

in the third world war which was actually just a continuation what had begun back in 1914. The Serbs, for their own reasons, the justification of which he does not doubt, were drawn into other people's interests and participated to a significant extent in the war. "This war is waged by the powers of 'Atlanticism' for the sake of imposing the 'new world order' and reducing man to the slave sacks of an economic animal"; it is a mechanism by which the "plutocratic International", after the Great War moved to America, strives to achieve its "pseudo-imperialist interests". The peak of these interests is to gain control of the Eurasian continent, "where the mind and the heart of the world reside, seen in the light of meta-geographic symbolism" (Kalajić, 2024, p. 124).

The war against the Serbs, waged by Jovo from Lika, Dragan from Ozren, Milorad from Dalmatia and Nikola from Srem, forever sleeping on the Podrinje elevations, as Kalajić said and wrote in *Duga*, had only one goal – to fragment the Serbian territory on the largest possible scale, to break up the Serbs, reduce their number and thus prevent any future resistance which would, as he believed, sooner or later come from Russia. In a way, we may freely say today that Kalajić was right. The fact that Russian resistance did not take the form of a national and conservative uprising within Russia itself, and against its own traitorous pseudo-elites, as he predicted or wished, costs Russians much more today than Kalajić's ability to predict it (Kalajić, 2024, p. 139). However, in quite an unusual manner, Kalajić was also right in that respect, having stated that the delay would cost the Russians not only Moscow, but also Belgrade and, consequently, the entire Balkans. In fact, it would cost the pan-Slavic space which

was seen by Kalajić, until his last breath, despite everything happening in that space, as a (desirable) political whole.

He wrote about it as early as 1992 in the text "Towards the Slavic Empire", in which, inter alia, he stated: "The Slavic nations (including those in conflict in former Yugoslavia, added by the author) are threatened with a new and even worse slavery. The gravity of the threat is particularly compounded by the fact of the disarmament and unreadiness of the Slavic nations to solidly resist the new cycle of enslavement and exploitation".

At the practical level, it is the war waged by Leviathan against the fatherland, against the very right to having the fatherland. Defending his fatherland on the borders of their ethnic space, which coincides with the front line of the defence of Eurasia, where the new Serbian state will be born, the Serbs defend that right and those fatherlands for the sake of those who dissolve their own, unaware of what they actually do (Kalajić, 2024, p. 197). In that war, the Serbs are not those who destroy, but those who build. That is why their task on the front is much more difficult: unlike their opponents, they have no right to a "nihilistic victory", which is reflected in the amount of the destroyed, and not in the beauty of the defended and built (Kalajić, 2024, p. 127). That is exactly what Kalajić, despite all the challenges and resisting the war begin reduced to destruction, wrote about in his 1992 text "Towards the Slavic Empire".

The "nihilistic victory" is a "privilege" of those who, aware that their idea of the "new world order" is not eternal, after all, or perhaps not even possible, fear from the punishment prepared by the true victors of the Great War that is still taking place.

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"Metaphorically speaking, like a gambler who, after a series of big wins, starts to lose his good luck and therefore wants to get out of the game, depriving his partners of the opportunity for a rematch – the strategists of the 'new world order' try, by propagating the ideas of the 'end of history', to declare the end of the game called 'history', fearing the counter-movement of other powers and new ideas" (Kalajić, 2024, p. 135). This idea, created in the trail of the analysis of Francis Fukuyama's writings, is actually one of Kalajić's most revolutionary thoughts, which is valid even today, when, finally facing the limitations in Afghanistan, Ukraine, Israel (with ever-problematic Syria), the advocates of the "new world order" have really encountered the threat of punishment. Yet, if we want to fully understand Kalajić, we must understand that we do not need the regime change, but a complete metanoia, a radically changed understanding of the world and the essence of humanity.

It is difficult to say with complete certainty whether the Serbs in the Republic of Serbian Krajina and Republic Srpska, whom Kalajić so gladly visited (and I joined him on several occasions), have understood their actual role. The individual examples Kalajić refers to show that this could be considered with great validity. However, what is most important is to understand the following: Kalajić believed that the Serbs, fortunately, had little influence in terms of playing exactly that role. The role is fatefully associated with them as the people living on the border, on a much broader and larger border than the one covered by former Krajina with the centre in the military command in Vienna. As long as there is a small number of those who understand that role (the parallel drawn with monasticism and the idea of saving the world is more than acceptable), the Serbs will find the strength and way to resist it. Such resistance, after all, does not have only a physical dimension, but also a spiritual one, so Kalajić thinks that the Serbs are victors regardless of the current outcome of the struggle waged by them, particularly because the essence of that struggle cannot be understood unless the question of soul salvation is included in the analysis.

When asked what should be done in order to resist "the conquest strategy" of the West, Kalajić, providing the examples from the front line, answers that the first and most important step on that road is – awakening. Citing Ágnes Heller, it is necessary to reach a "radical position", the point where our self-understanding will have to undergo fundamental alterations. Since those alterations necessarily imply the separation from the world which needs to fabricate identities on our behalf and for our own "good", in practice they, in the period of time in which Kalajić found himself (which, apparently, is not different today), take to war.

Those who in such a situation stand aside are despised by Kalajić, considering them "ill-intentioned" and "crazed". They are the worst offspring of their own time, the very image of the world refusing to face its own dissolution, blaming the messenger who warns them of their state of illness. Those are the people who do not see that in there are moments in history in which the pathological state of society demands a radically different reaction. That is exactly the case recorded by Dragoš among the Serbian fighters on the front. Namely, because of the commotion on the front line, a group of fighters left their older companion on the position towards

the Muslims – due to his difficult condition, he was unable to move fast. Having stayed alone, that fighter surrounded himself with ammunition and weapons and began his action; the enemies hesitated, surprised by this reaction and not knowing what was in store. When other Serbian fighters returned to the front line, they asked the older companion where such courage came from. He replied: "It wasn't courage at all! I had to stay her because my old and wobbly legs would not have taken me far!"

As far as I know and according to Momo Kapor's words and texts, Kalajić often went to war-stricken areas as a correspondent "on his own", to those zones that were not safe and where few others wanted to go. Yet, he did not go there as an adventurer but as someone who wanted to make known where he belonged, to the people who did not plan any destruction but the creation of the new world. In that respect, Slobodan Antonić is completely right when finding in Kalajić's work "effective pessimism", which denotes "heroic defiance to the spirit of time" among the Serbian fighters on the front. In their sacrifice, Kalajić saw a clear "ethical principle of the struggle to the last man, for the world which exists solely as an idea – because it was completely torn down" (Kalajić, 2024, p. 57).

That is why Momo Kapor noted on numerous occasions that he had never seen a braver man than Dragoš Kalajić. We who knew him can agree with Kapor's statement, remembering Dragoš's famous, almost ballet-like dance in Suva Međa above Dvor on the Una River, despite the enemy's active attack. In the same way, looking for the evidence of the possibility of despising death and fear for physical existence, Dragoš, ignoring his friends' warnings, crossed the clear space in Mali Alan, on Velebit. I

wish you could have seen Dragoš and me in summer 1994, while in the truck with the driver, we went along the dust-covered corridor, by Croatian snipers, rushing to our beloved Banjaluka, where General Slavko Lisica welcomed us with a bottle of brandy.

On the front, Kalajić talked to the fighters, ordinary workers, shepherds, barely literate peasants, as well as with the representatives of Italian aristocracy, Russian poets and French philosophers. He always spoke solely about one thing – the destiny of Europe. The only difference was that sometimes those conversations began in roots deeply entrenched in the Serbian border and ended at gunpoint and sometimes they began at gunpoint and spread towards the vast conceptual meta-spaces. While some of those spaces come with the theory and knowledge of philosophy, others conquer them with their heroism and *gusle*-playing on the front lines. Sensing that the former were not worthwhile without the experience of the latter, and that the latter, after their heroism, did not need the knowledge of the former, Dragoš found his full inspiration exactly at the outpost of Eurasia, among the bright characters of the war.

Dragoš loved the front; to be completely precise, he loved strong characters and heroes he encountered in every contact with potential death. While socializing with the fighters, he determined himself in his contempt for cowards, sycophants, compromisers, fakes, parasites and thieves of ideas he left behind, in the capital's backrooms and fruitless drinking parties of the writers' society (Kalajić, 2024, p. 34).

Nevertheless, he was afraid of Serbian despondency and through his wartime records he warned of the dangerous readiness of some to "give up

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everything"; at the same time, he offered examples of heroism as a call to stay on the salvation path. Perhaps the most beautiful example is that of Colonel Jezdimir Lakićević who "in the seventh decade of his life left his pensioner armchair in front of TV in order to defend his people, taking over the command of the artillery of the Herzegovina Corpus".

Kalajić's most appealing war experience with the army was *friendship*, *camaraderie*, described by him as "not only the fundamental condition of warrior life, but also its most precious common fruit to which all who tasted it will stay loyal to the end of their lives". It is totally specific *friendship*, so different from that in communism, essentially valueless and meaningless, something that can be experienced only on the front. The readers of Dragoš's texts in *Duga* might anticipate it: "there is no difference in the domain of dignity between a nobleman and a farmer, an intellectual and a worker, a rich man's son and a poor son".

That *camaraderie* as such, Kalajić wrote, is nothing new for the Serbs. In fact, it is the essence of egalitarianism, so present in the Serbian political culture. Even if he had not offered anything else but the awareness that the Serbian aspiration for equality and liberty did not come from the false enlightenment ideals and communist ideological distortions, but from the warrior, covenant *camaraderie*, he would have completed his profound ethical mission.

"Nihilistic victories" of our enemies – which are commemorated these days, while I am finishing these modest lines, on Croatian hippodromes, on the fortress of Knin and the fortress of (self-)deception in Srebrenica – are, in these terms, larger defeats than ours, that is materially tangible. In that truth revealed to us by Kalajić, it seems to me that even today, three

decades after the fall of Krajina and two decades after Dragoš's death, lies the source of strength we need if we want to survive and finally win.

Teacher, friend and difficult ally

Dragoš Kalajić was a teacher not because we had an enamoured and uncritical relationship to his erudition and beauty of his spirit, but because in the conversation, both with us and with the broader public, he did not need to ingratiate himself with anyone, not even Serbian nationalists, who could be expected to read him most intensively. He clearly and bluntly expresses his positions, with which those reading him may agree and follow him, or reject him and stay aside.

It is exactly from there that Kalajić often turned his blade towards Serbian nationalists, particularly those who appeared in large numbers in the 1990s and who looked at this idea as banal expansionism. Instead of such false nationalism, Kalajić wrote and spoke about nationalism as defence from "the plague of liberal capitalism" which, at the moment of the collapse of the communist East, clearly manifested its colonial and "conquering urges" (Kalajić, 2024, p. 83). Expansionist nationalism, as Kalajić informed the Serbs, is only "pseudo-imperialism", which neither cares for its own starting points nor relies on tradition, but exists solely as part of the "Judeo-protestant" cultural circle of the decadent West.

Dragoš Kalajić was a friend not because he was willing to be there whenever we needed him, but because everything he said, pleasant or not to our ears and souls, was said out of love, with no second

thoughts and malice. That is why we thought with full attention about his idea that every sound nationalism (and he wanted Serbian nationalism, which was in its revival stage at the time, to be exactly like that) had to take a clear, theoretical and practical attitude towards three questions: whether it brought wellbeing to its own nation; whether it provided welfare to other nations; and whether it contained sufficient spiritual strength to participate in the "creation of a new cultural-civilizational circle and cycle" (Kalajić, 2024, pp. 206-207). To this day, I have not been sure whether we can answer affirmatively to these questions, completely fundamental in their nature.

Finally, it is not easy to have Dragoš Kalajić for an ally. Sharp and always special, he made us wonder, look deep into our souls and admit our own faults. After death separated him from our time, he leaves us the possibility to ask whose positions he would support in today's divided Serbia. Seeking an answer to this question is particularly difficult having in mind that his friends, as it usually happens, found themselves on different, mutually opposed sides.

Since all Kalajić's features are considered national, the repeated search for answers to three questions might help us, so divided and fragmented, to find ourselves doing the same task. In that task of defending Eurasia, these records by Kalajić about the war and from the war, which testify not only about the ideals of humanity and heroism, but also about falls, despondency, treason and unconcern, may be a valuable ally. They may be yet another bullet frame, much needed, which we will put into a gun at a crucial moment and shoot the same enemy that is still looked at from the heavenly heights by our teacher, friend and ally, Dragoš Kalajić.

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Indo-Pacific strategy and Europe – from politics through defence and economy to cultural and AI diplomacy. The example of the Czech Republic

Abstract: In the past decades, the increase in the importance of the Indo-Pacific region, which has become not only a new geopolitical and geoeconomic, but also a geotechnical centre, led to a series of activities both of individual countries and the European Union and its member-states, resulting in a set of strategies for the Indo-Pacific during the second decade of the 21st century. The same process continued in the current, third decade. Due to their significance, the enacted strategies soon became the subject of study, whereas lately the focus has been placed exactly on analyzing the activities of individual countries. On this occasion, we have dedicated attention to the research of the activities of the Czech Republic, which adopted its strategy in 2022, immediately after the adoption of the European Union's Strategy for the Indo-Pacific (2021) and subsequently, this region also found its place in the official politics of this country, namely in the Foreign Policy Concept (2025), as well in the National Cybersecurity Strategy (2025).

Keywords: European Union, Czech Republic, Indo-Pacific, strategy, activities

Introduction

The Indo-Pacific region has become increasingly important in the past decades due to the changes on the geopolitical scene in the past few years, the dominant of which is the Ukraine-Russia conflict and the question of relations with the PR China, on the one hand, and the relations between the USA and the PR China, as well as Indo-Pacific, on the other hand. That is why several strategies for the Indo-Pacific have been enacted and their number is continuously increasing. Thus, respective strategies

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were adopted by Japan (2016), which took the first steps in that direction as early as 2007, Australia, which dedicated separate chapters to this region within its four documents (2012, 2016, 2017, 2020), and the USA (2022), while India initiated that question in 2015, 2018, and then in 2025, although it still has not adopted its official strategy (Kironska et al., 2023; Abbondanza, Grgić, 2025).[2] Furthermore, in line with the shift towards the Indo-Pacific, which has practically become not only a new geopolitical, but also a geoeconomic and geotechnological centre, the strategies were adopted first by France, (2019, 2022), the Netherlands (2020) and Germany (2021), and then by the European Union as well (2021). At the same time or soon afterwards, white papers, strategies, foundations for their adoption, or guidelines for activities, were published by Ireland (2020 strategy updated in 2023), Great Britain (2021 strategy updated in 2023), the Czech Republic (2022 strategy), as well as South Korea, or the Republic of Korea (2022), Canada (2023) and Lithuania (2023), while Sweden issued a document regarding defence policy in 2024 (Kironska et al., 2023; Abbondanza, Grgić, 2025). Switzerland also adopted its own strategy, although short-term (South East Asia Strategy 2023–2026). Based on the research so far, Slovakia will probably soon define its own strategy too (Kironska et al., 2023).

The scope of the EU's main interests also conditioned the definition of seven key priority areas of cooperation (Sustainable and inclusive prosperity, Green transition, Ocean governance, Digital governance and partnerships, Connectivity, Security and defence, Human security) (EU Indo-Pacific Strategy, 2021), while the EU's work and activities within this strategy, as well as the activities within the Digital Compass (2030 Digital Compass, 2021) also led to the agreements on digital partnership with South Korea, Singapore and Japan (Digital Partnerships, 2025).

However, the fact that every country also implements its own activities within local strategies and, of course, interests, raises the question as to how each of them approaches the given region and what activities it implements. That is exactly why on this occasion we decided to pay attention to the Indo-Pacific strategy of the Czech Republic and its accompanying activities, as well as to the results so far, having in mind that it is a country that may be ranked among those whose activities (and orientations) can be monitored in continuity and that strives to become an entry for the Indo-Pacific countries, and particularly some of them, into Europe.[3] In addition, it implements its activities continuously and in several spheres, including the above-mentioned ones, while data

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[2]   Although India has not adopted the official strategy in terms of a document, its definition and its form are being developed through various official statements and activities (Obrenović, 2024).

[3]   In that respect, it is necessary to highlight the statement by Minister Martin Kupka from 2023, from which it is possible to see clearly the plan of the economic aspiration for the Czech Republicos further breakthrough into the Indo-Pacific ("Singapore can be a gateway for our businesses to enter the Southeast Asian market", Minister of Transport Kupka in Singapore, 2023).

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about its activities are presented transparently on official pages, which ensures their monitoring.[4]

Yet, before we look at that question, it is necessary to point to the main directions of research regarding the Indo-Pacific and the accompanying strategies, concepts and activities that may now be seen in the literature as distinct.

In that respect, it is necessary to point out that there are several questions arising as the chief ones in literature. First of all, we should start from the definition of the Indo-Pacific, earlier known in literature as the Asian-Pacific region, which, with being renamed, was extended to the Indian Ocean and India, and which is defined in the EU's Strategy as a region "stretching from East Africa to the Pacific islands" (for a detailed overview of different definitions, see: Beriša, 2024; Abbondanza, Grgić, 2025). Then, there is also a question of the analysis of the adopted strategies and white papers, while the current questions include both the position of individual countries of the EU and its member-states towards the Indo-Pacific, and the activities of individual countries from the given region, as well as the questions of economic, security and normative engagement. Of course, in line with the importance and position in the world, in numerous cases attention is also dedicated to the PC China and its place within these acts.[5] However,

the papers dealing with the activities of individual EU countries in this region are still few and far between, although their number has slightly increased in the past two years, i.e., during 2024 and 2025,while part of them are also general analyses of the activities of member-states in the preparation of future strategies at the local level, for example, the analysis of the direction to be taken by Slovakia, when analyzing both the existing strategies and their elements (Kironska et al., 2023). Finally, it need to be emphasized that, in line with the fact that these are relatively new events, the number of research papers dedicated to the question of strategies – either local, i.e., of individual states, or of the EU – and important activities and countries of the Indo-Pacific, has continually increased in the past two years, while the question itself is also becoming the topic of separate collections (also see the collection: *Geostrategy of the Indo-Pacific*, 2024). Speaking of the Czech Republic, in these papers it is mostly mentioned in terms of the comparison of strategies, except for the cases where its activities are analyzed in slightly more detail within the same question (Kironska et al., 2023; Sinopsis, 2023; Zemánek, 2024), or in relation to certain countries from this region, e.g., Taiwan (Tsung-Yen Chen, 2023).

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[4]   In fact, the Czech Republic ranks among the most transparent countries because it not only allows insight into its activities successively and publicly, but also brings out publications about its activities from the previous year, including those about the activities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (see also: Czech Diplomacy 2024, 2025).

[5]   China as a separate question appears continuously in all analyses, while the greatest number of papers is dedicated exactly to China. Since on this occasion China has not been considered separately having in mind the given topic, we do not believe it is relevant to analyze or just list the papers dealing with this country both within the Indo-Pacific strategy or outside it.

Strategy of the Czech Republic and accompanying activities for the Indo-pacific

Following the happenings on the horizon, the Czech Republic very early became involved in the Indo-Pacific question in modern trends, and it was itself actively included in the adoption of the EU strategy; in September 2022, it published a document entitled The Czech Republic's Strategy for Cooperation with the Indo-Pacific – Closer Than We Think. The Czech Republic defines the Indo-Pacific as a region "surrounded by the Indian Ocean and the Pacific", which consists of 40 states and territories, with Taiwan standing out among the countries of relevance, which is subsequently said only about Lithuania. Speaking of the strategy and partnerships, in addition to listing the EU, the NATO and the Visegrád Four, to which the Czech Republic belongs, it also explicitly mentions the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD), a diplomatic-security network whose members are Australia, India, Japan and the USA, which has been done only by France as well. In the analyses of the Czech strategy so far, it is stressed that, in addition to the above-mentioned partners, it also lists the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN),[6] Australia, India, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, the USA, as well as the AUKUS with its members: Australia, the UK and the USA.[7] In relation to goals, political participation of the EU and the cooperation with the ASEAN are also emphasized. As regards China, the Czech Republic follows the course of the EU (Kironska et al., 2023; Zemánek, 2024).

The main highlighted priorities, except for peace, are also partnership, security, prosperity/economic interests and (self-)sustainability. Within security, the following is mentioned: cybersecurity, resilience building, preventing hybrid threats and terrorism, security dialogue and preventing disasters and conflicts. Within economic interests, the primary accent is placed on the expansion of Czech business activities, academic and scientific cooperation and mutual interaction, and increased participation in trade and supply, whereas one of the amin goals is the recognition of the Czech Republic and Czech companies in the Indo-Pacific. Finally, speaking of self-sustainability, the highlighted goals are agriculture, green economy, worker mobility, environmental protection and the green agenda, but also diplomacy in terms of raw materials, regional connectivity and cooperation, and even the construction of medical institutions. However, as observed by Zemánek, in terms of connectivity, the Czech Republic follows the EU-Asia Connectivity Strategy from 2019 and the EU Global Gateway from 2021 (Zemánek, 2024).

In the context of all the above-mentioned, Tsung-Yen Chen (Tsung-Yen Chen, 2023) emphasizes that, according to the given strategy as the

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[6]   The ASEAN has 10 member-states: Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, Vietnam, Singapore and Myanmar. For more details about the position of the ASEAN in politics and the Indo-Pacific region, as well as about the economically relevant elements of this Association, see: Stanojević, 2024; Qiao-Franco, Karmazin & Kolmaš, 2024; Lin, 2024.

[7]   For more details about the role of AUKUS in the Indo-Pacific, see: Scholik & Gerstl, 2022.

Czech Prime Minister Petr Fiala addresses the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit, a business event to attract investments to the Gujarat state, in Gandhinagar, India, January 10, 2024.
Photo: Guliver Images

basis in the interests of the Czech Republic, it is possible to clearly distinguish the following three dimensions: geopolitics, economy and alignment with the existing international order. Furthermore, in addition to the NATO, other outstanding partners are Australia, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea, so-called Indo-Pacific Four (IP4 countries), while the USA is seen as a partner in relation to the Chinese question. Regarding the Indo-Pacific, the same author emphasizes its geoeconomic status in the Strategy. Finally, when it comes to Taiwan, the author also stresses good relations between Taiwan and the Czech Republic, as well as the fact that Taiwan is recognized as an important strategic

partner in the Strategy, not only declaratively, since the activities of Czech politics confirm it (Tsung-Yen Chen, 2023).[8]

As a special item, the Indo-Pacific question also appears within the Foreign Policy Concept (Foreign Policy Concept, 2025), which first emphasizes that it is a region with a growing influence, while as outstanding primary powers are India, Japan, South Korea and the ASEAN members, and the conflict over Taiwan as a potential crisis. Within the same document, the foreign policy goals also refer to the harmonization of the Czech Republic with the White Paper for European Defence and the ReArm Europe Plan Readiness 2030, published just before the adoption of the Concept in March 2025, which, except for the reference to China, points out that Europe should explore the cooperation in the sphere of defence with the Indo-Pacific, and particularly with Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand (White Paper, 2025). Finally, the Concept especially points out the strategic partnership with India, Japan and South Korea, as well as with the leading members of the ASEAN, and in particular with India, while within goals, the emphasis is on further active involvement of the Czech Republic in the Indo-Pacific region, as well as in relation to the ASEAN, through traditional industry and the use of the diplomatic network and activities of the respective embassies (Foreign Policy Concept, 2025). Speaking of the Indo-Pacific, it needs to be emphasized that the Concept cites

the Czech Export Strategy adopted back in 2023 (Czech Export Strategy 2023–2033, 2023), which emphasized that one of the tasks was the establishment of free trade with that region, as well as a form of cooperation as a "trade and technological council" (TTC) with the USA or India, or so-called Indian-Pacific digital partnerships" (Czech Export Strategy 2023–2033, 2023).

However, speaking of the activities of the Czech Republic and modern diplomacy, it is necessary to point out that modern diplomacy is based on those activities connecting domestic policy ones with the foreign policy activities and relations. In that respect, the Concept includes activities starting from defence and security, via economic, cultural and scientific, to diplomacy and AI (Foreign Policy Concept, 2025), which has been defined as a separate field more recently.[9] It is exactly in this field that the Indo-Pacific is once again mentioned within the new National Cybersecurity Strategy of the Czech Republic, adopted by this country in September 2025, or several months after the Concept. In this Strategy, planned to come into force in 2026, the potential crisis in the Indo-Pacific is also mentioned once again, first regarding Taiwan (whereas there is an additional emphasis on the danger of the high presence of Chinese technology within the critical infrastructure). At the same time, in the chapter about the establishment of new strategic partnerships and the strengthening of the existing ones, the Strategy emphasizes the deepening of the

[8]   About the special importance of Taiwan, as well as of the Indo-Pacific countries as semi-conductors, see: Stekić, 2024.

[9]   This can also be seen from the speech of David Lammy, Foreign Secretary of the UK, from July 2025, who clearly points to the intersection of AI and diplomacy, with a special emphasis on foreign policy relations and relations in the domain of defence closely related to the Indo-Pacific itself and some countries in this region (Lammy, 2025).

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European Union foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas speaks during a media conference after the EU Indo-Pacific Ministerial Forum
meeting at the European Council building in Brussels, November 2025.
Photo: Guliver Images

cooperation with the IP4 countries, i.e., Australia, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand, while further pointing out that the deepening of the relations both with the Indo-Pacific and with other relevant regions will be worked on through intensive diplomacy via cyber attachés, whose number, as announced in the Strategy, will be increased in the forthcoming period and placed on a larger number of locations.[10] The Indo-Pacific is once again mentioned at the very end of the new strategy in terms

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[10]   Currently, the Czech Republic has a total of five cyber attachés, with the attaché for the Indo-Pacific is based in Canberra, Australia. Others are based in Brussels – for the NATO and the EU; in Tel Aviv, for Israel and in Washington for the USA and Canada (Cyber Attaché, The National Cyber and Information Security Agency, or NÚKIB). In that context, it can

of emphasizing further cooperation and exchange of knowledge with that region (National Cybersecurity Strategy, 2025).

In line with all the above-mentioned, the activities of the Czech Republic in relation to the Indo-Pacific may be observed from different perspectives. Speaking of foreign policy activities, according to the adopted strategy, the official visits to some countries followed. Namely, Minister of Foreign Affairs Jan Lipavský visited India (February–March 2023); Prime Minister Petr Fiala visited the Philippines, Indonesia, Singapore, Vietnam and two Central Asian countries – Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan (April 2023), and then India (January 2024), while in 2024, the Czech Republic was already one of the partners at the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit. On that occasion, the Joint Statement for Strategic Partnership on Innovation was issued. To put an emphasis on friendship, India decided that its Centre of Artificial Intelligence, Robotics & Cybernetics, inaugurated in Jaipur in 2024, should be named after Czech scientist and professor Vladimír Mařík. Afterwards, the Indo-Pacific route was once again taken by Jan Lipavský, who visited India, Australia and Japan. Without further details about these visits, which have been perfectly analyzed and presented by Zemánek (Zemánek, 2024), who also looks at the relations between the Czech Republic and the Philippines, and even the question of defence industry (while pointing out the promotion of the Czech Republic), we will only highlight that, in line with the importance of the Indo-Pacific, as well as of Australia, for the Czech Republic, this country has appointed a cyber attaché for the Indo-Pacific among its five cyber attachés, with the seat of his office in Canberra, Australia (Zemánek, 2024). However, it should be emphasized that the Czech strategy, as it can be seen from the example of the relations with Taiwan, only continues to follow the state's orientation that was clearly visible earlier – President of the Senate of the Parliament of the Czech Republic Miloš Vystrčil paid an official visit to Taiwan back in 2020 (Tsung-Yen Chen, 2023).[11]

In the end, the fact emphasized by Zemánek (Zemánek, 2024) in relation to Japan is that on the occasion of Jan Lipavský's visit to Japan, the fourth Czech Republic–Japan Business and Investment Forum was inaugurated, the emphasis of which is placed on the increase of Japanese business activities in this country and vice versa, whereas Japan is at the same time the second largest foreign investor in the Czech Republic (Zemánek, 2024); in fact, this is something that may be seen as a general direction of the Czech Republic's economic politics, while the new forum of this type was also held on the occasion of President Petr Pavel's visit to Japan in July 2025. (President of the Czech

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be expected that future cyber attachés will be appointed for other relevant countries in the Indo-Pacific, such as Korea, Japan or Singapore, having in mind the fact that, when speaking of geotechnology, the Indo-Pacific countries can be ranked among the so-called smart nations (for more details about the term "smart nation" in a broader sense, see: Sipahi and Sayyi, 2024; Das & Kwek, 2024).

[11]   It is interesting to mention that in his speech in the Parliament in Taiwan, he said: "I am a Taiwanese" (Tsung-Yen Chen, 2023: 46), alluding to J. F. Kennedy's speech in Berlin or Mark Cicero's speech in the Senate (Kennedy, 1963).

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Emperor Naruhito of Japan received Czech President Petr Pavel (left) at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo, Japan, July 25, 2025.
Photo: Guliver Images

Republic Petr Pavel visited Japan, 2025). Having in mind the economic orientation, when speaking of business forums, we should not ignore the Czech Republic–Singapore Business Forum in Singapore in 2023 (Czech Republic–Singapore Business Forum, 2023). Moreover, the fact that should not be ignored is that the Czech Republic, under the auspices of the government trade promotion agency known as CzechTrade, had initiated, just as in the case of other countries, the promotion of Czech companies and of the cooperation in the Indo-Pa-cific even before the adoption of the Strategy; in fact, the above-mentioned the Czech Republic–Singapore Business Forum was actually only the continuation of the activities of the Czech-Singapore Chamber of Commerce and the fact that as early as 2021 the Czech-Singapore Committee was founded within the Czech Chamber of Commerce. At the founding ceremony of this Committee, it was pointed out that Singapore was one of fourteen priority countries for expanding Czech business activities (Establishment of the Czech-Singapore

Committee at the Czech Chamber of Commerce, 2021). A detailed insight into the work of local offices in this region, as well as into the activities of embassies and diplomacy, can be obtained on the webpages of local embassies, and also on the webpages promoting the activities of individual diplomats, such as official LinkedIn profiles (for more details about the Czech Republic's economic diplomacy and data availability, see: Szczepańska-Dudziak, 2024). Speaking of economic relations, the activities of the Czech Chamber of Commerce should not be forgotten – in addition to a number of agreements, it also signed the one with the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry in October 2025 (Memorandum of Understanding between the Chamber of Commerce of the Czech Republic and JCCI, 2025).

At the end of the review of the relations between the Czech Republic and the Indo-Pacific, it should be pointed out that the activities of this country may also be followed in the sphere of cultural diplomacy, particularly within its participation in the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), whose member it has been since 2004. According to the above-mentioned, the emphasis must be placed on the continually increasing engagement of the Czech Republic in the Indo-Pacific with the passage of time, and in the framework of economy, international relations and security, whereas the literature further points out that in this last sphere, the state is still making a modest contri-

bution (Abbondanza, Grgić, 2025, T. 2.7.) and that this engagement must be accordingly adjusted in the spheres of cultural and scientific diplomacy. In that respect, it is also necessary to highlight the activities of the Czech National Agency for International Education and Research, whose stands are recognizable at education fairs by the slogan "Study in the Czech Republic". Speaking of the presence of this Agency, we must also mention its attendance at the conference of the Asia-Pacific Association for International Education (APA-IE), held in Australia in 2024 (Representation of Czech Education in Australia, 2024).[12] In the end, the fact should not be ignored that at the beginning of 2025 the Czech Republic opened the labour market for the citizens of nine countries, five of which are exactly the ones relevant for the Indo-Pacific region, i.e., the countries primarily standing out within the Strategy and the Concept, namely Australia, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand (IP4 countries) and Singapore (Free access to the Czech labour market for citizens of nine selected countries, 2025).[13]

At the very end of the review of the relations between the Czech Republic and the Indo-Pacific region, and the highlighted elements of the Strategy and the accompanying documents such as the Concept or the Cyber Strategy, it should be pointed out that only in the past few years, the Czech Republic has signed several important agreements on strategic cooperation, including,

[12]   The Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the first time highlighted scientific diplomacy as one of its priorities to foreign diplomats in 2024 (MFA Presented Priorities of Scientific Diplomacy to Foreign Diplomats, 2024). For more details about the position of the Czech Republic to the innovation and research, see: Ruixia and Yuncheng, 2025.

[13]   Other traditional allies of the Czech Republic include: the USA, Great Britain, Canada and Israel.

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besides the already-mentioned strategic partnership with India (Joint Statement for Czechia-India Strategic Partnership on Innovation, 2024), the one with South Korea (Joint Statement between the Government of the Czech Republic and the Government of the Republic of Korea on Strengthening of the Strategic Partnership, 2024), and the one with Vietnam (Joint Statement on upgrading Viet Nam-Czech Republic relations to strategic partnership, 2025).[14]

Conclusion

Finally, we must emphasize that the EU Strategy, as well as local strategies, or aspirations of the EU member-states to independently achieve best possible results in their own activities and for the benefit of their own states, actually turn the Indo-Pacific region into a place of conflict over the member-states' individual interests. In that respect, it can be freely said that the activities of the Czech Republic, as well as its diplomacy, are clearly heard, and in the foreseeable future they might lead to an extremely good position of the Czech Republic in the Indo-Pacific region and its outstanding place among other EU member-states. Its engagement is increasing continuously and this increase and activities should be monitored in the future not only from the perspective of the Indo-Pacific, but also from the perspective of special relations of the Czech Republic and individual countries in this region, in order to get a comprehensive insight into each of these activities and the Czech Republic's relations with those countries.

[14]   In that respect, a new agreement can be expected between the Czech Republic and Japan, having in mind that the previous document, namely the Action Plan for Cooperation, signed in 2021, was time-structured until 2025 (Action Plan for Cooperation between the Czech Republic and Japan for the period of 2021–2025, 2021).

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(Tragi)comedy of errors: state double and student plenums

Abstract: The paper is based on the assumption that workers' self-management as a road of leaving the "monopoly for power possession" of the state and party bodies developed a hybrid "state double" model as a Yugoslav predecessor of the anarcho-liberal idea of de-etatization, i.e., that self-management direct decision-making and financing social activities of common interest is the beginning of direct democracy of the plenums during the students' university blockade. The research is aimed at perceiving the roadmap of the Yugoslav liberal "state double" model which has developed into a West-centric post-Yugoslav model of direct democracy of plenums as an alternative form of civic activism at the faculties and universities in Serbia. The research methodology is founded on the comparative historical analysis of the "state double" model in the sphere of social activities, starting from workers' self-management. The empirical research refers to the alternative system of extra-institutional decision-making of the student plenums at the universities in Serbia supported by university professors and interested social groups which has articulated the crisis of democratization and institutionalization through introducing participatory and direct democracy of plenums.

Keywords: anarcho-liberalism, civil society, state double, social activities, comedy of errors, plenum, self-management, transition

Introduction

Although by all its characteristics it constituted the structural change of the attitude of the ruling Communist Party towards the state and society, the

Yugoslav model of workers' self-management was integral part of the communist ideology as a coherent set of political goals, social values, beliefs and meanings developed by the Yugoslav communist ideology. However, after the "purge of liberals" and

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their exclusion from public life, Yugoslav liberals developed their policy of workers' self-management as a road of leaving "the monopoly for power possession" of the state and party bodies (Perović, 1971, p. 47) into subversive strategies of resistance to authority. The fore, after the breakup of Yugoslavia, the self-management model in post-Yugoslav left liberal circles evolved into the model of civil resistance to the oppression of the state and its repressive apparatus. Unable to get citizens' support in elections for forming the authorities, the followers of Yugoslav liberals in political parties of the Democratic Opposition of Serbia coalition holding high public functions, together with the members of the new class of post-Yugoslav "independent" intellectuals, professional artists and cultural workers, university professors and students, developed a hybrid state double" model [Đukić, 2010, p. 227; Đukić, 2022, pp. 96–117; Đukić, 2023, p. 17, 27, 30, 51, 58] as civil resistance to the dominant way of thinking about the role of authorities in the mediators, the process of democratic transition and consolidation of the state and society.

The model, on the one hand, inherits the ideas and experience of Yugoslav liberals and, on the other hand, civil West-centric neoliberalism through which European and Euro-Atlantic integrations lead traumatized post-communist society to new structural changes, contrary to the principles of democratic transition and consolidation of the state and society. Changes are reflected in the extra-institutional pressure of civil organizations, which weakens the institutional system founded by the state and reduces the influence of the authorities on public policies to the benefit of the "counter-authorities" (Đukić, 2023, p. 13), which see themselves as a representative of post-Yugoslav civil society independent of the state and authorities.

The results of this experiment were first evident in the sphere of culture, where the cultural system was reduced "similarly to the period of Yugoslav self-management, by reducing the role of 'the family of decision-makers' on the vertical axis, in which the authorities act and budget financing is limited according to the criteria established by the independent artistic scene, and by strengthening the role of 'the family of mediators', 'independent' university professors, art critics and media that, as a 'privileged audience', establish a new value system I culture" (Đukić, 2023, p. 18).

Similarly, the structural changes in the higher education system are also manifested, where the law guarantees the university autonomy and the authorities have no effect on the "family of decision-makers" but their role, just as in the cultural system, is limited to budget financing. In this family of mediators the same actors mostly appear from the group of university professors, artists and the media that try, through the "plenum" phenomenon, to establish a West-centric neoliberal value system of a neutral, passive state with limited functions which does not interfere in the affairs of "strong civil society" (Đukić, 2023, p. 40, 47).

"State double" and direct democracy

The "state double" concept, publicly known as the "deep state", theoretically denotes an alternative model of governing the state and society, the purpose of which is to destroy the constitutional order

of representative democracy. In the territory of Yugoslavia, it appeared for the first time in the establishment period of the new social order of workers' self-management, based on direct exchange of labour and direct financing of social activities of common interest to Yugoslav society. It involves formal transfer of power from the state bodies to the working class, initiated in the area of "social services" by transferring authority from state authorities to "non-state, social bodies" (Dimitrijević, 1965, p. 128, 129). In that manner, "de-etatization" of the state and the concentration of bureaucratized power began in self-management interest communities of social activities which began shaping into a "state double". Contrary to the mediating role in direct exchange of labour, liberating labour from "all directive influences", self-management interest communities became a substitute for the state organization against whose direct influence they were supposed to protect the self-management negotiation and agreement procedure (Đukić, 2010, p. 227; Đukić, 2024, p. 337). Although it left the management of social activities to direct exchange of labour in self-management bodies and direct financing without the state's mediation, the Communist Party established the reward and punishment system based on the ideological suitability and ranged from numerous incentives to art and artists through improving their social status, the development of the art education system, international cultural cooperation and other privileges for ideologically suitable actors of social life, to repression and restriction through censorship, e.g., of the Black Wave in film etc.

The "state double" model emerges for the second time in the context of post-Yugoslav European and/or Euro-Atlantic integrations. It may be considered a continuation of the initiated process of state de-etatization through advocating neoliberal values of the Western civilization by applying subversive strategies of civil resistance to the alleged oppression by authorities. The model does not develop in the political arena where citizens express their political will, but in the arena of civil society in which self-organized social groups, movements and individuals, relatively autonomous in relation to the state, try to express political ideas in which they believe (Linz, Stepan, 1998, p. 21; Đukić, 2024, p. 336). They are led by part of the left liberal cosmopolitan intellectual and cultural elite, which acquired its social position and reputation in the period of Yugoslav workers' self-management and which strives to preserve that status in the post-communist period of democratic transition and consolidation of society. For that purpose, it uses the bureaucratic apparatus of public administration which destroys from inside all three branches of power: legislative, executive and judicial, and prevents the establishment of a functional state.

Therefore, in the changed political, economic and cultural social context of transition and democratic consolidation, the Yugoslav liberal model "against the monopoly of the authorities" (Perović, 1971, p. 47) assumed the characteristics of post-Yugoslav neoliberal counter-authorities (Đukić, 2023, p. 13). Namely, subversive strategies of self-management bureaucracy assume the characteristics of the mediator neoliberal West-centric smart soft power of the post-Yugoslav left liberal intellectual elite, which resists from inside the hard power of the authorities. It produces crisis situations and makes the unstable democratic

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system more unstable. When those in power cite their legal, political and financial authority based on the citizens' trust won in the political arena of democratic society, the hybrid self-management/ neoliberal "state double" model proclaims it a populist, non-democratic, restrictive and repressive power that threatens human rights and oppresses citizens who think freely and critically. That is how the closed circle of the struggle is created between authorities and counter-authorities, or between the state and the "state double", from which citizens are mostly excluded unless when, exposed to the sophisticated methods of political marketing, they think that they are expressing their own will in elections or in civil protests.

Although, in both cases, liberalism is the ideological background of the "state double" model through which the privileged intellectual and cultural elite develops an alternative system of participatory direct democracy,, opposed to the dominant system of representative parliamentary democracy, the difference is that the self-management "state double" model was a constitutional creation of the communist regime, developed through institutional channels of self-management bureaucracy, while the post-Yugoslav neoliberal model was developed I informal extra-institutional communication channels, in the closed circles of the post-Yugoslav left liberal cosmopolitan university elite which does not accept the principles of representative democracy of post-Yugoslav national states.

Guided by anarcho-liberal ideas of the civil state and self-government direct democracy, the post-Yugoslav bureaucracy elite established a network of new "independent" media and civil organizations which finance and logistically support global transnational networks and humanitarian organizations, citing the citizens' right to actively participate, through extra-institutional channels of direct democracy, contrary to the constitutional and legal provisions of the legal state, in the process of making decisions important for society or certain social groups.

The alternative system gradually developed during the first transition decade through the legislative activity of parliamentary left liberal and social-democratic parties. It may be perceived through minimum two constitutional and legal provisions which enabled the theoretical "state double" model to be operationalized gradually in practice as a system of direct democracy of plenums. The first provision refers to the autonomy of universities, higher education and scientific institutions which independently decide about their organization and work (Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, 2006, Article 2; Law on Higher Education, 2008), while the second refers to the freedom of association which frees the civil sector from the state's supervision and/or tutorship (Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, 2006, Article 55; Law on Associations, 2009).

After the adoption of the Law on Associations, in Serbia about 36,000 non-governmental organizations were registered in Serbia, which organize projects in the area of media, culture and art, human rights protection, development of democracy, Euro-integrations etc. They are financed from the budget of the Republic of Serbia, but also from donations by foreign governments and private foundations. Although most of these sources of financing are known to the public in Serbia, it was only after the appointment of President Donald Trump that the US administration announced the amounts and

purpose of part of donations by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) directed against the authorities in many countries worldwide, including Serbia.

Owing to the legal framework established in this manner, the hybrid "state double" model in Serbia has developed a whole series of practically applicable subversive anarcho-liberal strategies of resistance to power and the society's dominant value system in which, allegedly, it sees the cause of oppressing free critical-thinking citizens and "the root of all evil" (Đoković, 2007, p. 12). Hence the emphasis on "alternative forms of political organizing, based on the principle of freedom and free expression of every individual's opinions and will. The followers of anarchism advocate the abolition of the existing constitutional order, laws and authorities, believing that afterwards they will develop a more natural and spontaneous social order" (Projović, 2013, p. 68, 69). This allegedly more natural and spontaneous social order is advocated by the student plenums as a post-Yugoslav model of direct democracy of the minority of the students ready to sacrifice the academic year and acquiring academic titles in the name of "higher" goals of the "just" state.

Using the experience of workers' self-management and theoretical sources about anarchism, the minority of the privileged anarcho-liberal intellectual and cultural elite of civil society, relatively independent of authorities, tries to dispute the legitimacy of the state apparatus established within the existing constitutional order and to take over power outside the political arena where through democratic elections, legally and legitimately, processes of consolidated democratic society take place (Linz, Stepan, 1998, p. 22).

In theoretical terms, the model is the work of social philosopher Proudhon who is considered the father of the anarchist theory, as well as the Marxist critical theory of Guy Debord "The Society and the Spectacle" (Guy Debord) which is considered an important text of the situational international and unavoidable anarchist literature of the hybrid "state double" model in the left liberal intellectual circles. However, the monograph study *Anarchism as an*

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, French social philosopher, the father of the anarchist theory.
Photo: Wikipedia

Ideological Basis for Modern (Leftist) Terrorism (Projović, 2013) shows that anarchism constitutes a complex basis of political violence and a serious threat and challenge to the modern era.

The plenum phenomenon

The plenum is devised as an extra-institutional form of organization of the students blocking the work of the faculties and universities in Serbia. It is an alternative to the institutional form of students' parliament, just as as the state double is an alternative to the state. Since allegedly there are no mediators and self-proclaimed leaders, decision-making is reduced to the level of the plenum in which all interested students and professors participate.

In public, it is represented as a form of the citizens' direct democracy, although plenum decisions are not made by all the citizens but by the minority of the privileged social group of students and professors able to be organized and mobilized in the name of "higher goals" at a given moment and to obtain in return financial and logistic support in the country and abroad.

In that way, the holders of hard political power with legal, political and financial authority to make decisions a made of internationally networked highly-educated university intellectual elite. Thanks to its social position in the country and abroad, it ascribes itself the characteristics of the leader of social changes, just as the Communist Patty saw itself as the workers' class avant-garde leading dictatorship of the proletariat.

During the six months of the blockade of the faculties and universities in Serbia, the "state double" model has developed a multitude of subversive strategies of acting that primarily take place in the civil society arena as one of the five arenas of democratic transition and consolidation (Linz, Stepan, 1998, pp. 20–31). They are devised so as to spread the spirit of rebellion to the citizens who

show empathy for the students and create the impression of a mass social movement. An important role in this process is played by the one-way media propaganda which uses the electronic media and social network channels to promote the idea of the students' protests and provide organizational and logistic support followed by several hundred thousand people.

The first strategy implies the formulation of the students' demands that "institutions should do their job", i.e., establishing the political and criminal liability for the collapse of the roof at the railway station and violence against the students. That it is not devised as a solution to exit the crisis but as a means of deepening the crisis created by blocking the faculties and suspending lectures is proved by the refusal to accept the Government's resignation, pressing charges against the suspects and amnesty from criminal prosecution of the students and professors as the fulfilment of their demands.

The second strategy continues to deepen the social crisis through informal initiatives of the employees in higher education, science and culture („Rebel university", "Free university", "Culture in blockade" etc.) which invite to the protests of workers in education and culture, the strike of the theatres and radical actions of "liberating" educational and cultural institutions (e.g., the Students' Cultural Centre, the Cultural Centre of Belgrade) under the slogan "all power to the plenums".

The third strategy is developed by the network of independent media, cultural and artistic organizations which continue to dispute the legitimacy of the existing public authorities and the state apparatus. In the first stage, together with the students, they participated in well-devised actions

of guerrilla political marketing that strengthen the spirit of rebellion and solidarity among the students and the citizens. Walking and cycling pilgrimages are organized to different cities in Serbia (Novi Sad, Niš, Kragujevac, Belgrade, Novi Pazar etc.) and abroad (Strasbourg, Brussels etc.) where, after the arrival of the "pilgrims", carnival celebrations are organized and students' programmatic documents are presented (the Students' Edict in Niš, commemoration of the Sretenje Constitution in Kragujevac). In the second stage of the rebellion, the civil organizations throughout Serbia organize informal gatherings of citizens whose decisions can initiate different actions as an additional form of pressure on the municipalities and municipal officials which, in most cases, turn into violence (Obrenovac, Niš etc.).

The third strategy implies political articulation of the ideas presented during the students' protests. The most pronounced one is the informal initiative of university professors, cultural workers, artists and a group of citizens "ProGlas" which organizes panels in the cities, calling for the change of the socio-political system and of the ruling regime in Serbia. Finally, the students' protest was politically articulated after six months of the blockade of the

A group of students on a protest walk to Vršac, at the exit from Zrenjanin.
Photo: Shutterstock

faculties and universities in Serbia, and the plenums decided to adopt the programmatic document "Directive 134-25.0: How we have won". Apart from being unsigned and the unknown author, and the fact that the intriguing title points to the repeated victory – although it is not known whose victory – this programmatic manifest by its form and content reflects the bureaucratic manner of communication of the authoritarian minority which imposes "from above" its way of thinking and looking at the social crisis.

The Directive demands that all the students' plenums should take a clear attitude about the modalities of political articulation of the "fight for freedom, truth and justice" through the participation of the list "Students in blockade" in the electoral process, whereas candidates cannot be students. The document states that the adoption of the proposal is decided by the principle: one plenum – one vote, as was the practice at the level of university cities that had already voted by the same principle, but without the possibility of the plenums' active participation in amendments and supplements to the content, but voting "for" or "against" of the offered modalities of the political struggle.

In this manner, the university which should, due to its autonomy, defend the academic community from the influence of politics, becomes the centre of political organizing and acting of the rebel students and professors, similarly to self-management interest communities because a substitute for state organization, exactly from whose influence they were supposed to protect the direct self-management negotiation and agreement procedure.

Discussion: tyranny of plenums and (tragi)comedy of errors

The analysis of the research results shows that the students' plenums are not legal and legitimate bodies since they gather only the rebel part of the community and do not reflect the broader will and interests of the majority. Such a model causes dysfunctionality of the authorities and the polarization of society although its legitimacy is not based on the rational decision-making of all the plenum members about matters of common interest, but on the ability of the privileged minority of civil society concentrated in social activities of culture, art, media, education and social policy, capable of rapidly mobilizing with the logistic and financial support of the global, left liberal transnational centres of power in order to establish a dominant role in creating social crisis of the sovereign national states in Europe and the world. That is why this form of acting is based on tyranny and authoritarianism of the privileged minority that, owing to its position in the social hierarchy, without adequate control and space for the pluralism of opinions, assumes a dominant role in proposing topics and decision-making, which excludes from the decision-making process all actors of the social scene disagreeing with these decisions.

The role of art, artists and media in the conceptualization of the rebellion of the students' plenums is transferring the light genre of the comedy of errors from the boulevard theatre to the public life by turning the citizens into "active audience" involved in the "plot" of the theatre performance and making them believe that they actively participate in the civil rebellion of the students fighting for freedom, truth and justice. Only after six months it has become

clear to the public that the students are actually actors in a directed performance "the plenum as the only proper road of the citizens' direct democracy", while their professors are scriptwriters, playwrights and directors of this tragicomic performance with which, together with the conductors of "blockade choirs", they are taking the examination in the eyes of the democratic public. Although during the first months this comedy of errors, of the light genre and quite popular among the citizens, seemed to have the effect of excitement, cheap sympathy for the "students' struggle" and the simplest moral message contained in programmatic documents, from the "Students' Edict" to the "Directive", it is gradually turning into pre-electoral political marketing devised to attract a large number of voters outside the political arena and political parties, substantially larger than the number of voters attracted for decades by the opposition political parties.

However, one thing must be admitted. Namely, this tragicomic political "show" of the idea that there is only "one proper road", at the national and global levels creates a repressive atmosphere in which all those who disagree with the dominant attitudes of the plenums are marginalized. It is a phenomenon seen in many radical movements against dominant cultural models, regardless of the ideological background, starting from the French Revolution and the October Revolution, via the US hippie movement, the 1968 demonstrations in Europe, including students' demonstrations in Yugoslavia, to the revolutionary movement of Yugoslav workers' self-management. In Serbia, it began to develop after the "purge of liberals" in the 1970s and, since then, there have been several generations of dissidents by vocation who for their subversive

activity against the authorities use the experience of workers' self-management in combination with the ideology of neoliberal West-centric globalism. Thus, the "plenum" phenomenon becomes the guardian of self-management, direct, participative democracy of social activities, whose beginning in the field of the rule of law during the period of post-Yugoslav transition and democratic consolidation of Serbia is contained in the constitutional and legal provisions about the autonomy of universities and free association of citizens with no supervision by the authorities and the state apparatus.

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Conclusion: inserting clips into the wheels of sovereign states

The research results indicate that the "plenum" phenomenon as an extended hand of the hybrid "state double" model is, in theoretical terms, an alternative to the state's hard power, while in practical terms it is a demonstration exercise of the "deep state" which abuses students in order to show its soft power. Although the state does not apply repression over the students and citizens participating in the "plenum" rebellion, it is still shown as an authoritative and repressive force that threatens citizens, thus, in fact, concealing the actual state of affairs – the repression by the autocratic minority of the intellectual and artistic elite that hides behind the students' rebellion. From a short-term perspective, six months of the "plenumization" of society shows that the meaning of rebellion is in absurdity because both the students and the professors could have made their own electoral lists outside universities since the Constriction of Serbia guarantees everyone the right to elect and

be elected. That is why the meaning of plenums can be sought in the long-term gradual destruction of the constitutional order of representative democracy. The radical idea of globalism, that only "one road is proper", may become practically effective only if the majority of citizens accepts absurdity as meaning and allows the repression by the minority, which is passing itself off as the "guardian of self-management, direct, participative democracy". From the perspective of large geopolitical changes in the world, it seems that the neoliberal ideology, faced with the change in the foreign policy doctrine of the United States of America, shirts to the geostrategically important points in Europe and the Balkans region where, by a similar scenario of "inserting clips into wheels", there are rebellions against the authorities of sovereign national states, preventing the establishment of a new world order of the multipolar world with several centres of power, in which the unipolar West-centric ideology of globalism is losing the influence it used to have in the last decades after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

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Rethinking Machiavelli's *The Prince*: Humanist Critique and the Ethics of Objective Inquiry

Abstract: This paper demonstrates that a proper understanding of Machiavelli's *The Prince* requires a careful reconstruction of the historical and cultural context of the Renaissance at the turn of the fifteenth to the sixteenth century. Particular attention is given to the humanists' teaching on the virtuous man (*vir virtutis*) and the "mirror for princes" genre that emerged from it. Within this framework, the persistent humanist critique of Machiavelli – one that continued to exert influence well into the twentieth century – can be fully comprehended. In contrast, the interpretation advanced here contends that Machiavelli was the first to introduce a principle of methodological objectivity, later described as the value-neutral inquiry. By adopting this stance, Machiavelli can be regarded as a pioneer of political science: without the methodological foundation he established, the discipline itself could not have developed. Through adherence to this principle, he was able to present an objective account of political reality and to make it publicly intelligible, demonstrating remarkable intellectual courage. In light of this achievement, Machiavelli deserves rehabilitation from the long-standing accusations and recognition as an impartial investigator of the nature of politics— a role that humanist criticism has never been able acknowledge.

Keywords: Machiavelli, politics, mirror for prince, humanism, hypocrisy, moral appearance, ruler.

> *That book brought me, I am well aware, a sinister fame: it made me responsible for all tyrannies; it drew down upon me the curse of peoples who saw in me the embodiment of their hatred of despotism; it poisoned my final days, and the condemnation of posterity seems to pursue me still.*
>
> *Machiavelli, Dialogue between Machiavelli and Montesquieu*

Introduction

It must be acknowledged that in the literature, no figure has been as relentlessly attacked, condemned, and, quite literally, slandered as Machiavelli. How is it that no one finds it strange that such negative criticism has persisted as a constant for half a millennium? Are the reasons for this attitude truly to be

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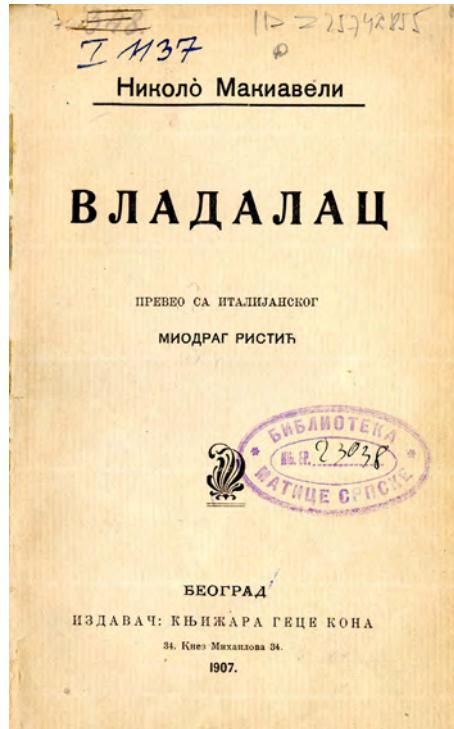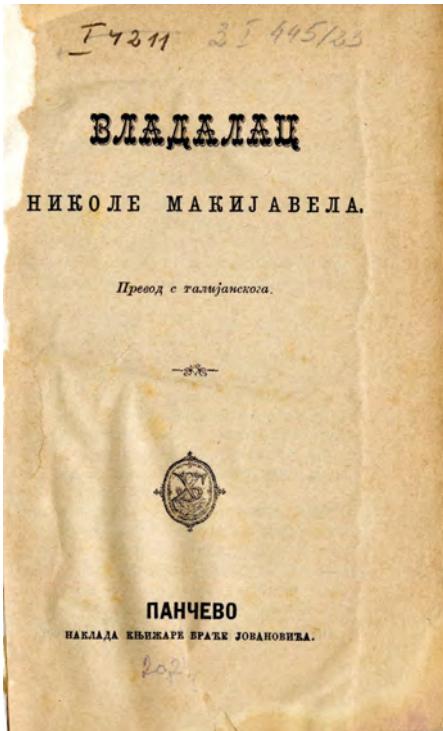
The first translations of Niccolò Machiavelli's The Prince in Serbia were published in Pančevo and Belgrade in 1881 and 1907.
The first Serbian editions were printed by the publishing houses of Jovanović Brothers and Bookstore Geca Kon.
Photo: Matica Srpska Library.

found in him, or should they be sought elsewhere? It is time to finally resolve this dilemma.

A sound interpretation of Machiavelli's intellectual achievement requires at least a minimal reconstruction of the historical and socio-political context of the Renaissance – restricted, of course, to what is heuristically relevant. In this study, that context will encompass the period from the thirteenth century (*Duecento*) to the early sixteenth century (*Cinquecento*), culminating in the appearance of Machiavelli.

A second condition for an objective interpretation and assessment of Machiavelli's work is a critique of humanism. This is indispensable because, from the Renaissance onward, humanism has functioned as a spontaneously imposed and authoritative interpretive horizon, one that remains operative to this day. Bearing this in mind, we will understand how it was possible for the deeply negative assessments of Machiavelli – assessments bound to Renaissance circumstances – to become universalized and treated as valid regardless of time and place. Since we do not accept these assessments in the slightest, as we will later explain, we shall leave aside all previous interpretations of Machiavelli

in this text. It will be of greater importance for the reader to see what a new – and indeed more just – interpretation of *The Prince* looks like.

For a historically grounded and contextually sensitive interpretation of Machiavelli's work, as well as for drawing conclusions relevant to our own time, three elements are essential:

1. The fundamental characteristics of the Renaissance mode of intellectuality;
2. A central thematic axis conducive to linking with Machiavelli;
3. The contextual consequences of Machiavelli's innovations.

As regards the broader context, the emergence of humanism in Italy was conditioned by two positive and two negative factors. The positive factors were the Italian rhetorical tradition and the revival of the cultural heritage of ancient Greece and Rome. The negative factors were the socio-political crises that beset the city-republics during the Renaissance and the consolidation of scholasticism as the dominant form of learned culture.

Circumstances and Conditions in the Formation of Humanist Thought

Ars dictaminis

The intellectual figure we later identify as the humanist arose from the milieu of the rhetorical teacher – specifically, from that branch of medieval rhetorical practice known as *ars dictaminis*, the art of composing letters. Those who taught the rules of epistolary style were known as *dictatores*. The central purpose of rhetorical training in this sense was to prepare students to draft official letters and administrative documents with clarity, precision, and persuasive force, thereby equipping them for notarial and administrative posts in the city-republics or, alternatively, in the Papal Curia.

From the twelfth century onward, the ability to compose well-formed letters was highly valued in Italy. Together with rhetoric, *ars dictaminis* constituted the core of the legal *curriculum* at Italian universities (Wieruszowski, 1971, 361). Adalbert of Samaria, the leading rhetorician at Bologna, was the first to describe himself as a *dictatore* (Murphy, 1974, 213), a designation he employed upon composing his instructional handbook *Praecepta dictaminum* (dated between 1111 and 1118) (Adalbertus, 1961; see also Haskins, 1927, 173; 1929). His work is generally taken as the moment at which *ars dictaminis* became a systematic discipline governed by formalized rules.[2] These rules dealt not with the substance of letters but with their structure: their compositional arrangement, their functional types, and their respective rhetorical purposes. In one of his treatises, Adalbert supplied forty-five *formulae*, or model letters. His templates were quickly taken up by later *dictatores* (Murphy, 1974, 212, 220; Skinner, 1979, 29), so that by the end of the twelfth century there existed a substantial body of *dictamina* offering model letters to the pope, to cardinals, to emperors, to civic magistracies, to consuls, professors, and a variety of other officials.

[2]   According to the editor of Adalbert's manual, he is the father of the *ars dictaminis* (Adalbertus, 1961, p. V).

Once these epistolary types had become codi-fied, a significant shift occurred – from the techni-calities of form to the substantive issues that letters addressed. This development, visible from the mid-twelfth century onward, unfolded along two distinct lines. First, treatises on *ars dictaminis* increasingly took up the *subject matter* of political, legal, and social concerns confronting the Italian communes. The *dictatores* thus began to function not merely as technical instructors but as commentators on the civic problems of their day. This tendency gained momentum in the first decades of the thirteenth century (*Duecento*), marking the second major ex-pansion of *ars dictaminis*.

The second line of development involved the increasingly common practice of pairing instruction in letter writing with *ars arengendi*, the art of public oratory. Guido Faba (1190–1240), one of the most distinguished rhetoricians of the period, was the first to combine the two disciplines. Around 1230 he published a collection of speeches and letters that would decisively shape the rhetorical culture. (Kantorowicz, 1941–43, 256, 275; Fulhaber, 1978).

The convergence of *ars dictaminis* and *ars arengendi*, set against the backdrop of the growing political tensions within the city-republics, trans-formed rhetoric into a vehicle for civic and political engagement (Kantorowicz, 1943, 41–57). The rhe-torical instructor – once devoted primarily to tech-nical competence – now emerged as an intellectual commentator who authored letters and speeches addressing the political challenges faced by the com-mune (Wieruszowski, 1971, 360, 365–66). By the mid-*Duecento*, the transformation of *ars dictaminis* had been largely completed: in combination with oratory, it acquired an explicitly moral and political

orientation. As it continued to expand through the thirteenth century, this hybrid rhetorical culture gave rise to two new genres of socially and politically engaged writing (see Banker, 1974, 153–68).

The first of these genres appeared in the new style of civic chronicles produced by jurists and *dictatores*. These works departed from earlier his-toriography through their rhetorical coloration and overtly partisan, often propagandistic, tone.

The second genre consisted of moral and advisory treatises addressed to rulers and civic governments. The most widely known example of this emerging literature is John of Viterbo's *On the Government of Cities* (*De Regimine civitatum*), composed around 1240.

One immediate consequence of this develop-ment was a shift in the intended audience of such works. Advisory literature no longer targeted the student but the ruling authorities of the commune. Thus the epistolary *dictatore*, once a technical ex-pert, moved ever closer to the figure of the moral and political counsellor.

A further condition shaping the rise of hu-manism consisted of the socio-political crises that beset the Italian city-republics. Their causes – well documented in the secondary literature – included external military threats, the erosion of republican institutions, the ascent of the *popolani* (the emerg-ing bourgeois strata), the rise of *signorie* and local tyrants (*condottieri*) who displaced older aristocrat-ic factions (Bowsky, 1962; 1967), and the factional struggles that continually destabilized civic life. These developments formed the broader environ-ment within which the rhetorical culture of the communes evolved into what would later be rec-ognized as the earliest phase of Italian humanism.

Scholasticism and the Classical Legacy

The third factor – arguably the most consequential for the formation of humanist modes of thought and intellectual orientation – was the consolidation of scholastic learning and the renewed engagement with the classical heritage. This subject warrants fuller discussion, particularly given how superficially it is often treated in contemporary scholarship.

The rediscovery of classical models was not an achievement of Italian humanism, but of the so-called "medieval renaissance" of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, centered primarily in France (see Post, 1964, ch. 11, 505, *passim*). At precisely the time when the aforementioned transformations in the *ars dictaminis* were taking shape (mid-twelfth century), Greek and Roman classics were already being widely read in Paris and at the school of Chartres (Delumeau, 1989, 85; see also Copleston, 1991, 167–73).

A large number of Italian rhetoricians active in the second half of the thirteenth century were trained in France. From there they brought back a new orthodoxy – one grounded in the synthesis of rhetoric with the classical legacy of ancient and Roman practical philosophy. This did not prevent later humanists, in their self-promotional narratives, from attributing the rediscovery of the classics to themselves. For a long time it therefore remained insufficiently recognized that what proved decisive was the *curriculum* of the University of Paris, through which generations of Italian students passed in the latter half of the *Duecento*.

The importation of French rhetorical culture mediated the final shift within the *ars dictaminis* tradition toward the classical inheritance, a tradition already transformed through its engagement with practical-political concerns. For humanist thought, the legacy of ancient Greece and Rome became a repertoire of models to imitate, with Cicero receiving the highest esteem and with the primacy of *oratio* over *ratio* firmly established. This turn toward moral content and civic engagement was thus completed through the imitation of classical exemplars – an imitation that would prove decisive for the formation of humanist political thought.

Brunetto Latini [1220–1294] (Latini, 1948) played a pioneering role in this development. Upon returning from Paris in 1266, he published his translation of Cicero's *De Inventione*, praising it as "the greatest work of rhetoric ever written" (East 1968, 242). The first rhetorical manual written in Latin explicitly modeled on Cicero was produced in Bologna by Giovanni Bonandrea (1296–1321), whose work won him renown throughout Italy (Banker, 1974, 159). The recovery of the classical heritage also reshaped the previously dominant *trivium*: history now assumed pride of place, followed by moral philosophy, and finally rhetoric, which served to integrate the two (Baron, 1966, 494).

The central figure at the close of the *Trecento* was Petrarch, in whom the traditions of the *ars dictaminis* and classical thought – especially Ciceronian – converged. In his rhetorical writings he emphatically underscored the primacy of moral instruction (Seigel, 1968, 222, 231–32, 215, 224; Burckhardt, 1989, 167; Hay & Law, 1989, 290; Cassirer, 1948, 105). He extended the core theme of *vir virtutis* – the "true man of virtue," or the morally excellent citizen – to encompass the broader civic community.

As scholasticism grew in influence and popularity, attitudes toward it became increasingly hostile (Kristeller, 1956, 563; Gray, 1963). Together

with the classical heritage, this antithetical stance played a decisive role in shaping humanist self-consciousness. Petrarch's motifs – *uomo universale*, the ideal unity of theory and practice, and the practical-moral significance of intellectual labor – were developed by *Quattrocento* humanists largely in opposition to scholastic learning.

Petrarch also supplied the template for anti-scholastic criticism, a paradigm that would shape humanist attitudes toward scholasticism throughout the *Quattrocento* and well into the next five centuries. He dismissed scholastics as "arrogant ignoramuses," and regarded their dialectical reasoning as an obstacle to knowledge of genuine practical and moral value. Their "barbarous method," he argued, yielded only "barren disputations," devoid of concern for the "common good" [*bonum commune*] (Skinner, 1979, 106). Accordingly, he claimed that their debates contributed nothing to the improvement of life, even when they happened to contain truths. Moreover, they failed to recognize the need for a philosophy which, combined with eloquence, might exert practical influence on political life (Gray, 1963, 505; Struever, 1970, 60–61).

In a moment of anger, Petrarch uttered what would become the enduring refrain of later humanist criticism: a fierce "anathema upon the foolish Aristotelians who waste their time inquiring what virtue is rather than acquiring it" (quoted in Garin, 1988). He further reproached scholastics for not knowing "that it is better to will the good than to know the truth" (Cassirer, 1948, 105; Hay & Law, 1989, 290; Skinner, 1979, 107). This claim was, in a basic sense, inaccurate: scholastic thinkers were also deeply concerned with the *res publica* and, in their writings, acted as engaged intellectuals of their time. Humanism would, however, chronically suppress this fact.

This collection of Petrarch's arbitrariness – at times ascending to unrestrained sophistry – would enter the very core of humanist propaganda. The seriousness of humanist thought is revealed, in fact, by the striking absence of any perceived problem in these outbursts; on the contrary, Petrarch was elevated into an icon of subsequent humanism.[3] Moreover, few interpreters have recognized, in similar humanist invectives and even in programmatic principles, the unmistakable signs of a revived "Second Sophistic" of the IV century BCE (Bowie, 1970; Trinkhaus, 1976). The reason lies not only in the appropriation of Protagoras's dictum that "man is the measure of all things," but also in the very idea for which Plato

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[3]   Petrarch's positions are representative of humanism in general throughout the following six centuries. Identical accusations against scholasticism and Aristotelianism would reappear in Protestant thought, then in seventeenth-century rationalism, and in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries they would continue to be rekindled by Marxist humanism, directing them against science and philosophy as specialized disciplines and against professionalized intellectual labor, lumping them under the heading of "positivism" and of an idiotic indifference to practical social issues. Typical variations of Petrarch's critique include: how can the positive scientist concern himself with the contradictions of scientific theories while ignoring the real contradictions of society (Adorno)? How can the analytical philosopher occupy himself with Wittgensteinian questions about "the broom in the corner" while war is raging in the world (Marcuse, 1968: 166)? And how can analytic philosophers quibble about meanings and definitions without attending to the necessity of transforming what exists? Finally, the most famous variation on Petrarch's stance — 'it is better to will the good than to know the truth' — becomes the credo of Marxist humanism: 'The world is not to be interpreted but changed.' The possession of ultimate truth was simply presupposed.

had condemned the sophists in the *Protagoras*: the claim that virtue can be taught. This aporetic thesis became, for the humanists, an axiom – the conceptual nucleus of their pedagogical identity.

Petrarch's critique of scholasticism, formulated at the end of the fourteenth century, would be amplified throughout the *Quattrocento* as a kind of summa of incontestable truths, repeated in the voices of countless followers. Aristotelian logic was rejected in favor of the *studia humanitatis*, which, in the words of Coluccio Salutati, "persuade and guide." Humanists reiterated accusations of the scholastics' "arrogance and ignorance" (Leonardo Bruni), denouncing their pretense to philosophy despite their supposed incompetence in matters of writing and rhetoric. Scholastic learning was burdened with the charge of being detached from practical life; theoretical reasoning was dismissed in the name of immediate practical engagement. Francis Bacon would later repeat this almost verbatim in his polemic against "speculation," thereby transmitting the humanist attitude into modern thought down to the present day. Wisdom, from this perspective, was no longer an intellectual (dianoetic) excellence but a moral (ethical) virtue.

This critique is hardly surprising: humanists felt at home in literature, poetry, and eloquence. Their intellectual terrain is best captured by the expression "the genre of all genres," for their thought during the Renaissance remained largely undifferentiated by disciplinary boundaries. In this lay the basis of their universality – their desire to try their hand at everything, often oblivious to the fact that breadth of learning was necessarily accompanied by superficiality in any given field. For this reason they were known in the Renaissance simply as *letterati* or "men of letters" (*belle lettere*). The term *umanista* itself does not appear until the mid-nineteenth century.

Humanist and scholastic represented two opposed intellectual types: the former emerged as an extra-institutional figure, while the scholastic occupied the institutional position once held by the traditional *dictatore* within the university. The enduring themes of their conflict revolved around the role of rhetoric, the tension between commitment to the common good versus commitment to learnedness, and the perennial question of which form of rule is superior: the authority of an individual or the authority of an institution.

For the scholastics, rhetorical skill played a subordinate role in political life, for it taught only the techniques of verbal ornamentation. Moreover, they offered no moral instruction to rulers; their attention was directed instead toward the mechanism of governance. In doing so, they downplayed the virtues of individual leaders, and gave priority to conceptualizing effective institutions as instruments for promoting the common good and securing peace. Consequently, they were far less moralistic and far more akin to political analysts.

Whereas scholastics emphasized learnedness as a form of expertise and favored the supremacy of institutions, humanists consistently championed personal rule (cf. Kristeller, 1961). They understood the purpose of their activity as pedagogical influence upon citizens and magistrates – not as technical competence or deeper conceptual mastery, but as the broad cultivation of learning under the banner of the "universal man" (*uomo universale*).

Scholasticism symbolized the medieval synthesis of knowledge and power – the union of scientific reason and ecclesiastical authority. The scholastic

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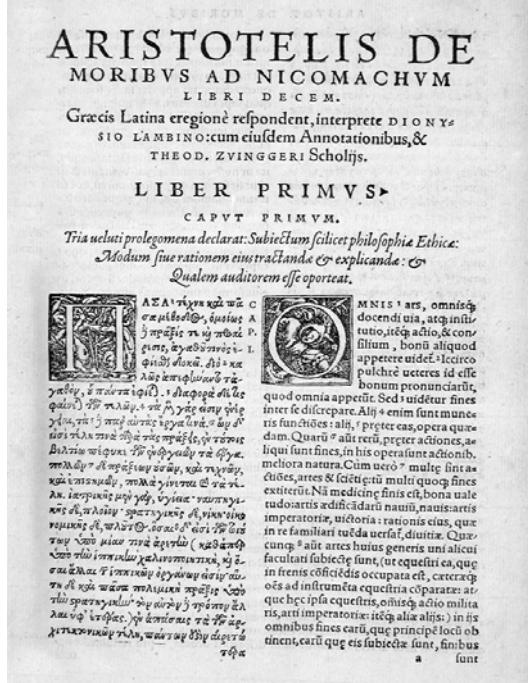
Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, the first page of an edition published in Greek and Latin, 1566.
Photo: Wikipedia

legitimated faith and official Christian doctrine, and was institutionally bound to the Church. Humanism, by contrast, introduced a new configuration characteristic of modernity: the union of knowledge and power as the alliance of intellect and the state. The humanist legitimated usurped authority, personally bound to the princely court or to the state (*il stato*). Whereas scholastics defended Christian faith, humanists gradually implemented its systematic delegitimation: (a) by delegitimization scholastic learning, (b) by reviving and normatively hypostatizing the pagan tradition, and (c) by legitimating forms of authority whose practices deviated radically from Christian principles.

The "Mirror for Prince" Genre

The leading theme of Renaissance humanism was the question of virtue (*virtù*), considered across a spectrum ranging from the individual citizen to the political order and its ruler. A particular variant of this theme was *vir virtutis* ("the virtuous man" or the true man of virtue) – directly significant for understanding Machiavelli. Coupled with this were the themes of *uomo universale* – the universal perfection of human nature, the unity of theory and practice, and the practical-moral significance of intellectual engagement. Humanism would develop all of these

themes in critical opposition to scholastic learning (Skinner, 1979, 99), since it was through this antithetical stance that it refined its self-consciousness.[4]

The themes of the virtuous man and the universally educated individual were brought together in a specific genre known as the *mirror for princes*. The central question of this genre was: "What should constitute a good ruler?"

The pioneer of this genre was Bruno Latini, active in the second half of the thirteenth century (East, 1968, p. 242). In Florence, he was celebrated as "a great philosopher who instructed in the refinement of eloquence and civic virtue" (Skinner, 1979, p. 39). Following the model of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, he enumerated the virtues of the good ruler: wisdom as the foremost virtue, encompassing foresight, care, and knowledge; sobriety, honesty, steadfastness, decisiveness, strength, patience; a sense of justice; adherence to faith; and avoidance of the sin of avarice.

From the last third of the thirteenth century (*Duecento*) onward, this theme would be taken up and elaborated over the following two and a half centuries, from Francesco Patrizi and Poggio Bracciolini to Coluccio Salutati and Leonardo Bruni. These authors added to the list of desired qualities education, skill in writing, knowledge of Greek and Latin, literature, poetry, and philosophy, noble conduct, and courteousness; they emphasized that the ruler should be a friend and patron of artists, a flatterer, and a connoisseur of refined manners.

All works in this genre shared a normative core: the depiction of the ruler as an individual full of virtues. The purpose of writing in this genre was to maintain a moral exemplar for rulers themselves to emulate in their education, conduct, and governance. Literature also addressed the virtues that city administrations should cultivate among citizens. Latini insisted that citizens should dedicate themselves day and night to the common good of their city. The step from the *mirror for princes* to the creation of "mirrors of good society" or the state was thus only a short one.

This genre formed the core of humanist political thought, especially in its fusion with the ideal of unity between politics and ethics. Its essentially extra-political portrayal of rulers would remain a constant in Renaissance political thought up to Machiavelli and his *Prince* (1513). It bears witness to the extent to which humanism, due to its normative and pedagogical hypnopedy, remained incapable of achieving a positive understanding of politics.

The Alliance of Sword and Pen

During the Renaissance, three significant historical figures were shaped in the spheres of politics, ethics, and economy: the tyrant, as ruler in the political domain; the bourgeois or entrepreneur in the economic realm; and the humanist intellectual

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[4]   We must not lose sight of two things: although the kabbalistic celebration of the human being in Pico della Mirandola's *De hominis dignitate* (1486) represents a major opposition to Augustinianism, the humanists were, first, not opposed to Christianity; on the contrary, in Augustine they saw their patron saint. Second, Pico's oration appears a century and a half after the humanist genre had been fully formed. For this reason we may justifiably say that instead of the celebration of the human being, two things were essential to humanism: first, moral-practical engagement; and second, generic undifferentiation, that is, universality.

in the ethical sphere. What these three figures had in common was that they were typically individuals *sine nobilitate*, who sought social elevation through all available means, including alliances with one another. Humanism provided a legitimizing framework for these historically novel figures, elaborating the theme of *vir virtutis* while discarding virtues and *nobilitas* inherited through lineage and tradition. In its place, a plebeian ethics of the self-made individual was promoted, favoring ascent based on personal talent and effort.

This necessitates a reflection on the alliance between the ruler and contemporary humanist intellectuals. Given that the notion of an alliance between condottieri – usurpers of power – and humanists, who prided themselves on high ideals, integrity, and moral virtue, seems at first incredulous, one must ask: how was this possible, and by what means did it arise?

The defining characteristic of the tyrant was power without legitimacy. Conversely, a similar trait among the *popolani* (the early bourgeoisie) and humanist intelligentsia was existence without security. The man of the pen faced challenges in securing the means of subsistence, while the bourgeois had resources but remained uncertain about the future. Both were subject to the arbitrary will of the tyrant. All three types were constantly threat-ened by competition: the bourgeois by other bourgeois and by the tyrant himself; the tyrant by rival claimants to power;[5] and the humanist by fellow humanists, competing for the limited employment opportunities available in city-states. This intense competition resulted in the absence of any substantial moral restraint within these circles. This is why the humanists also 'very quickly fell into disrepute', as Jakob Burckhardt writes (Burckhardt, 1989, 111).

For their part, rulers – being usurpers – were receptive to the man of the pen and the practitioner of *belle lettere*: lacking legitimacy, they required counterweights in textual form, presented in a favorable light which reality often denied them. This represented a new type of legitimacy, achieved through the textual production of a specialized stratum of humanist intellectuals (Burckhardt, 1958, 8; 1989, 10).

Humanists, in turn, had their own incentive to engage with such offers. In pursuit of existential security, they sought financial support or stable positions (Burckhardt, 1989, p. 111). Within the context of the time, many could serve as scribes in city administrations, few reached the status of lawyers, and the fortunate few became court tutors and entertainers for the tyrant and instructors of his children – a functional equivalent of the medieval court jester.[6] Crucially, nearly all participants in public life wrote panegyrics to the ruling authority.

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[5]   It often happened that a usurper remained in power only a few hours before being overthrown and killed by a rival. *Cf.* Hay & Law, 1989, p. 166.

[6]   It is not superfluous to note that the humanist nevertheless differed from the court jester in the northern European monarchies of the time. While the jesters grimaced to amuse their rulers, the humanist entertained – and even lulled – the tyrant by reading Cicero, Virgil, and other classical authors. The tyrants had a great desire for knowledge and even attempted to engage the humanists in learned conversation. Moreover, they were the first to grasp the new power of the written word. Thus the Florentine tyrant Giangaleazzo Visconti was known to say that the pen of his chancellor Coluccio Salutati (1375–1406) 'was worth more to him than a troop of cavalry.' *Cf.* Hay and Law, 1989, 238.

The alliance between the humanist – providing necessary *laudatio* to justify or legitimize – and the tyrant was mutually beneficial, a union of knowledge and power. Beyond securing existential security for the humanists, tyrants patronized incisive their scholarly endeavors, financing, for example, the translation of the complete works of Plato into Latin.[7] The humanists responded with literary panegyrics. And just as the tyrant publicly displayed himself in silk and velvet, the humanist's task was to 'gild' him with his pen and his words.

The Genesis of Humanism: From Virtue to Force

The final element necessary for understanding the emergence of Machiavelli is the genesis of humanism into anti-humanism. The most productive thread for tracing this transformation during the Renaissance runs along a spectrum whose poles are, on one side, virtue (*virtù*) without force, and on the other, force (*vis*) without virtue – situated within the horizon of power, between ethics and political physics, and within the sphere of aesthetics (or visibility).

Within this genesis, humanism effectively implements an aestheticization of both morality and politics, in full mannerist concord with its reverence for classical theories of political life and its central orientation toward literature and the arts. In the aestheticization of political power, an inherently

problem field emerges, one in which the appearance of Machiavelli becomes possible. His discourse, taken contextually, in its outcomes functions as anti-humanist, literally deconstructive, and critically inciseve. It marks the terminus of humanism's developmental arc: from that point onward, humanism ceases to produce anything of comparable significance and is overshadowed by the historical realities of a new era – the Reformation – to which it nonetheless made a profound contribution.

When Machiavelli completed *The Prince*, Erasmus of Rotterdam protested against the emptiness of Ciceronians (*De Ciceronianus*) and composed *On the Education of a Christian Prince* (*De institutio principis christiani*, 1517). In this work, he engages with the Christian virtues of the ruler in the *vir virtutis* genre, a tradition shaped by Bruno Latini two centuries earlier. Erasmus presents the virtuous man in the figure of the true or virtuous Christian (*cf.* Phillips, 1949). The image synthesized the priestly with the humanist ideal of the intellectual in a pedagogical and moral mission. The only substantive difference, however, consists in the confinement of pedagogy to a mode of instruction grounded in the principles of Christian morality – an instruction oriented toward a human being who, in accordance with the ideal of the vita activa over and against the vita contemplativa, is enjoined to enact these principles throughout the manifold spheres of everyday life.

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[7]   The condottieri, as men *sine nobilitate*, not only paid humanists generously to present them in a moral light; they also possessed a strong desire for education. A survey of their private libraries produced a surprising result: although they were soldiers, they owned the fewest books on military technique and tactics. The greatest number consisted of works of ancient classical literature – so many, in fact, that their libraries were indistinguishable from those of contemporary humanists. See in more detail Mallett, 1976.

The emergence of Erasmus demonstrates that, while Northern European humanism was only beginning to orient itself around questions of Christian virtue and preparing the way for the Reformation initiated by Luther (Buck, 1984; Goodman & MacKay, 1990; Green, 1985),[8] in Italy humanism had already shifted its focus toward the question of force, as evidenced by Machiavelli's work. This, together with the broader shift from poetry to scientific prose – most clearly traceable from Petrarch to Machiavelli – represents the final stage in the transformation of humanism, on which the modern conception of politics ultimately becomes possible.

Machiavelli's Innovation

The practical and political philosophy inspired by Cicero and the classical tradition amounted to an appealing form of moral–political propagandistic prose – one that captivates the heart, leaves reason in a state of perplexity, and remains entirely irrelevant for any genuine understanding of politics. Machiavelli's thought, in contrast, is radically different. It is not the product of imagination, nor the outcome of a search for refuge in classical texts that would lead one into moral–political poetry. Rather, it privileges reality: the reading of historiographical texts apart from their propagandistic
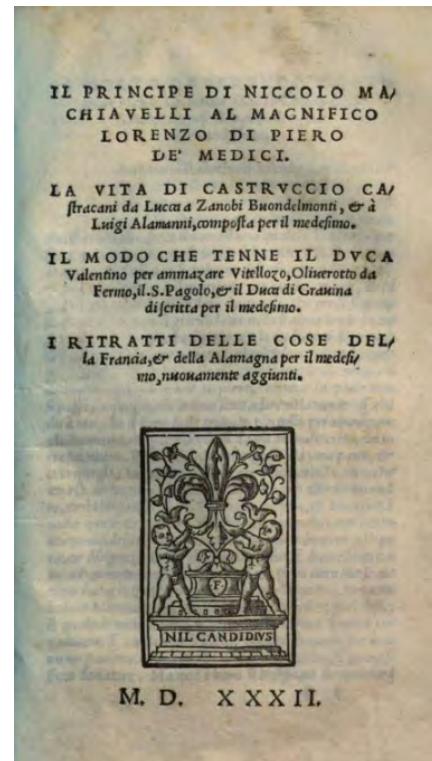
1532 edition of The Prince in Italy.
Photo: Wikimedia Commons

use, as informative accounts of *res gestae*, of how events actually transpired. Moreover, it entails the observation of current events and the decision to speak publicly about matters that that are effectively public secrets – known to nearly everyone, yet about which all remain silent.

[8]   This Erasmian story set the head spinning of a provincial priest, Martin Luther, prompting him to rise up against the corruption of Rome and the Pope himself in the name of restoring original Christian values. Once turmoil erupted, Erasmus withdrew into a mouse-hole and abandoned his disciple Luther to his fate. This is a frequent pattern among humanists – something rarely discussed in the literature, since it largely remains under their control: they know how to lead people into adventurous undertakings, but when danger approaches, their civic courage evaporates; they flee and lie low until the storm passes, only to resume acting as generals after the battle.

The Prince emerges from a tradition of advisory, engaged writing. Like Bruno Latini before him, Machiavelli asks questions regarding the qualities of the ruler. Yet he introduces a subtle but decisive modification that completely sets him apart from this entire tradition: whether a ruler must genuinely possess all the virtues advocated by Renaissance humanist thought? In response, he would have no objection to a ruler cultivating all the virtues and qualities enumerated by the humanists, provided that he does so in his leisure time – while not engaged in politics (all the more so since these values have nothing to do with politics). While a ruler is actively engaged in politics, Machiavelli emphasizes that adherence to these virtues can only lead him to ruin. Thus, he offers indirect counsel to the ruler: first, that he need not conform to the model of virtue prescribed by Renaissance humanist thought; and second, that it is not necessary for him to possess these virtues, so long as he appears to possess them.

This dualism between appearance and reality in rulership is evident in the central portion of *The Prince*, particularly in the fragment of chapter XVIII, which encapsulates the essence of the work as a whole:

"There are two modes of contest: one by law, the other by force. The former is proper to human beings, the latter to beasts; yet because the former is often insufficient, a prince must learn how to draw upon both the nature of man and that of the beast. Thus the ancient writers, in their allegories, taught that Achilles and other princely figures were entrusted to the centaur Chiron, so that they might acquire mastery of both dispositions.

Since a ruler must therefore make use of the beast within, he ought to be at once a fox and a lion: a fox to discern snares, and a lion to terrify wolves. Those who rely solely upon the lion's strength understand little of the art of rule.

A prudent prince cannot, and ought not, keep his word when keeping it turns to his disadvantage, and when the reasons that once obliged him to pledge it have vanished. Were all men good, such counsel would be unnecessary; but because they are wicked and do not keep faith with you, you are under no obligation to keep faith with them.

One will always find plausible grounds on which to excuse the breach of a promise; history abounds with examples of treaties rendered void by the perfidy of princes. And he has ever fared best who has best known how to employ the fox's craft. It is essential, however, to know how to conceal such qualities, and to be a consummate actor and dissembler.

For men are simple and governed by the necessities of the moment; thus he who is skilled in deception will always find those willing to be deceived.

A prince, then, need not truly possess all the virtues considered good, but he must unfailingly appear to possess them. Indeed, I dare affirm that actually possessing them and adhering to them at all times is harmful, whereas seeming to possess them is advantageous. He must present himself as merciful, faithful, humane, sincere, and devout – and, if possible, he should indeed be so – but he must retain a disposition that allows him, when necessity demands, to act contrary to these very qualities.

For a ruler, and especially a new prince, is often compelled, in order to preserve the state, to act against faith, against mercy, against humanity, and against religion. He must not depart from the good

when circumstance permits, but he must know how to enter into evil when constrained by necessity.

Therefore, whenever the prince is observed or heard, he must seem the very embodiment of mercy, fidelity, honesty, humanity, and piety. Nothing is more essential than that he appear to possess these virtues. Men judge more readily by the eye than by the ear; all can see what you seem to be, few can discern what you truly are. And these few will not dare oppose the judgment of the many, especially when the many are buttressed by the majesty of the state.

Let the prince, then, concern himself with securing and maintaining his dominion; his means will always be deemed honorable, and all will praise them, for the multitude is captivated by appearances and by the success of the deed itself – and the few matter little when the majority rests upon the authority of power."

When this passage is subjected to analytical scrutiny, Machiavelli's innovation may be distilled into three fundamental observations:

- that politics and ethics are external to one another;
- that, consequently, their internal unity (in the sense of ethics *within* politics) is impossible; yet
- that it is also impossible their complete separation.

The conclusion follows that ethics may well exist without politics, whereas politics cannot subsist without ethics. And since political action cannot itself be moral in the way humanist imagination depicts it, it must nonetheless *appear* moral if it is to be legitimate and accepted by the citizenry.

The resolution of this tension lies in the thesis that what the prince requires of ethics is only a moral *semblance*, for it suffices so long as what it conceals remains undisclosed. The maintenance of that moral appearance is, as it were, entrusted to the humanists through their discourse – not only in the Renaissance but throughout subsequent epochs, down to our own time.

Machiavelli thus established the unity of politics and ethics in the sphere of *aesthesis*. Such an elevation of appearance within political life was, in Renaissance thought, largely unknown and scarcely imaginable. In earlier portrayals, the prince had been bound exclusively to virtue. Yet, from Latini to Machiavelli, the very notion of virtue had undergone a dramatic transformation: it became specified, narrowed, and ultimately reduced to a strictly political meaning.

Machiavelli's treatise also stands within the conflict between humanism and scholasticism regarding the educational dilemma: the formation of the whole person versus the training of the specialist. His counsel requires that the ruler be a specialist – specifically, in the manipulation of force. Virtue assumes a new meaning as mastery of force within the realm of secrecy (*res arcanae*). This mastery is indispensable to the man of politics if he is to be a ruler. At the same time, the ruler must skilfully combine force with a moral appearance, which becomes decisive within the sphere of public affairs (*res publicae*).

Machiavelli likewise brings the tradition of dictatorial instruction to its consummation, completing the entire arc of the dictator's genealogy. It was shown at the outset that the *dictatore* appeared as the teacher of formal technical rules for letter-writing, and thereafter as the instructor in moral norms. Machiavelli, as a *dictatore*, is identical to the pioneer Adalbert, insofar as he returns to

the dictate of technical rules, the difference being that he does so for the sake of acquiring and maintaining political power.

This closure of the circle, through a return to technical precepts, is instructive for all interpreters of Machiavelli. Namely, the pieces of advice he gives to the ruler have as much to do with morality as Adalbert's lessons on letter writing. Just as the original *dictatore* was indifferent to what the letter conveyed, so Machiavelli remains indifferent to the content or aims of power. Whatever they may be, and whomever they may serve, the rules remain one and the same. They apply equally to one who seeks to destroy the world and to one who seeks to make it the best imaginable.

Alongside the indispensability of moral appearance, Machiavelli establishes a further positive insight: that citizens will swiftly forget the immoral or repugnant means employed – should they be discovered – provided that they derive tangible benefit from their use.[9] For this, Machiavelli has often been denounced for a misanthropy.[10]

Deconstruction of the Genre as a Critique of Humanism

Machiavelli emerges as the singular point at which Italian humanism brings forth its own anti-humanist culmination. *The Prince* stands as the last significant work issuing from the venerable tradition of the "mirror-for-princes" genre. His treatise follows the formal conventions of the genre with meticulous precision, even as it breaks out of its inherited frame with a disarming abruptness. Machiavelli's mirror is the first to be free of distortion precisely because it is purely descriptive, stripped of all normative elements. The consequences of such a mirror are extensive, above all in its critical thrust:

1) It is a critical deconstruction of the genre itself, akin to shattering a mirror; in addition,
2) it constitutes a critique of humanist propagandistic political rhetoric; and
3) it is a critique of all previous political philosophy that rests on the internal unity of ethics and politics.

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[9]   At the height of humanism, buildings that survived from Ancient Rome were being plundered throughout Italy, while the extermination of the Inca and the Aztecs in South America was underway. Not one humanist ever spoke or wrote a word about this. All the while, they professed their love of mankind.

[10]   Let us dispense with humanist hypocrisy: with the professed love of man joined to indifference before the destruction of millions. Has anyone ever condemned Robespierre for severing the heads of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, or the Revolution for the slaughter to which it led? Did the humanists perhaps condemn Lenin, who, as a true usurper, in the arcane manner of a condottiere, orchestrated the vile extermination of the imperial family and brought an entire nation to the brink of ruin? They defended him with brazen falsehoods – claiming he "knew nothing of it" (as if he would have saved them had he known) – and attributed the national catastrophe to foreign intervention.
And what shall we say of our own humanists who extolled Tito as a genius "born once in a thousand years," "equal to Einstein," one who "entered into a child's dreams" and was "beloved more than father and mother"? Throughout history, humanists speak only of the successes of rulers whom they deify; concerning the means – especially when they are abhorrent – they first pretend they never existed, and when exposed, defend them without shame. (Have we not heard endlessly from Marxists: "One cannot make an omelet without breaking eggs," or "There is no revolution without broken heads.") And above all, instead of analyzing politics as it truly is, they persist in writing of what it *ought* to be – doing so for centuries, to the point of tedium.

What is genuinely new – indeed without precedent – is Machiavelli's disclosure of the true character of the link between politics and ethics. Its character is nothing other than the truth of their unity. What proved intolerable was not that unity itself – for the humanists knew well enough what it entailed and simply concealed it – but the fact that Machiavelli made it public. Only with him does the secret sphere of politics (*res arcanae*) enter the domain of the public (*res publicae*). The secret is not only what the ruler enacts under the cover of night, but also what the humanists perform openly, by crafting his gilded image through their rhetoric.

As previously noted, aesthetics forms the fundamental sphere of humanism; within this sphere, ethics and politics converge. The question of the ruler's morality is settled on the plane of aesthetics – a plane endowed with the capacity to persuade the public that his deeds are moral even in their innermost core.

Machiavelli's revelation of this dualism constituted an implicit indictment of humanism:

1. for its superficial affirmation of the unity of politics and ethics without ever probing the nature of their relation;
2. because they sell that supreme ideal in service of both their own and the ruler's interest – while simultaneously urging others to sacrifice private interest to the "common good" (*buono comune*);
3. By elevating the ideal of the unity of politics and ethics on the basis of reality, they not only provide the ruler with a semblance of legitimacy, but also dangerously mislead the citizens into error and onto a political wrong path; and

4. The humanists were publicly exposed as actors serving the function of bought deceit, despite presenting themselves as supposedly autonomous and highly moral independent writers. It turned out that they did not merely misrepresent the tyrants, but also themselves.

Machiavelli's recognition of the humanists' political function – namely, their role in sustaining the dualism between moral appearance and amoral truth, not through the education of the ruler but through the fabrication and maintenance of his public image – amounted to a complete delegitimization of humanism. Brought into the open was the reality that their refuge was never in ethics, as they claimed, but in a deep hypocrisy aligned with the tyrants. This would be Machiavelli's unforgivable transgression – not merely "his conception" of politics. The humanists' retaliation was still to come.

The Humanist Revenge, Intensified by Jesuitism

When *The Prince* is read within the social and political constellation of the early sixteenth centuries, the seemingly benign sentence in which Machiavelli discloses the dualism of appearance and truth assumes the force of an implicit interrogation addressed to the humanists themselves: Why do you speak of virtue when the real matter is force? Why do you praise your own virtue when you are steeped in hypocrisy? And from his assessment of the centrality of appearance, the message to the tyrant follows with equal clarity: O ruler, forget not the humanists, for you require them to maintain your moral semblance.

Niccolo Machiavelli
Photo: Wikipedia

The hypocrisy permeating the public life of the Florentine republic on the eve of *The Prince* had already become a commonplace, a shared civic habitus. The duplicity of both rulers and humanists had reached the level of a "public secret"; all that remained was for someone to name it aloud. Machiavelli's discourse, presented with the claim to strict factuality, could by necessity win no approval. All recoiled – though none could deny he had spoken the truth, no one was willing to acknowledge it openly. Thus Machiavelli's renewed lesson for the instruction of prince was destined to remain futile: the Medici ruler already knew it – else he would not have been a ruler – and in any case, he could not

publicly affirm it without tarnishing his own legitimacy, especially having seized power only a year earlier. The humanists knew this as well, yet were compelled to maintain silence and conceal their own hypocrisy even among themselves. Machiavelli was fated to stand alone.

Because hypocrisy reigned universally, those implicated could have chosen simply to ignore him. However, the humanists regarded a more vociferous counterattack as their only means of salvation. This posed no difficulty: Machiavelli, isolated and without patrons, was a convenient object for blows that entailed no danger. No one would come to his aid, and the assaults would arrive from every quarter.

That Machiavelli sealed his fate for centuries by unveiling the ethos of duplicity is evident from the scale of the hunt unleashed against him – one that far exceeded the boundaries of the Renaissance. It is therefore unsurprising that the torrent of humanist invective directed at him subsequently acquired the status of "criticism," though it scarcely rose above the level of unrestrained defamation. Reappearing in waves over time, it always returned to the same counter-narrative: that *The Prince* does not reveal the truth of politics, but merely Machiavelli's own "conception," which is monstrous, amoral, cynical, even diabolical. Having thus dehumanized him – nearly transforming him into a figure sprung from hell – his critics restored their own tranquillity at the cost of abandoning even minimal moral restraint.

From the Renaissance to the present, the humanist mode of responding to *The Prince* has remained structurally unchanged; it is a defensive maneuver played out on the terrain of aesthetics.

To Machiavelli's de-aestheticization of politics and of humanist discourse itself, they answered with the aestheticization of Machiavelli as a figure – above all through the same mechanism of attributing to him a morally demonized appearance. This rehearsed gesture enabled the humanists to perpetually restore their angelic façade, so they might continue their hypocrisy under the guise of moral authority. Their alleged "critique" of Machiavelli thus merely continued their own duplicity. For that reason, such criticism is devoid of scholarly value.

The apologetics of princes, politics, and of themselves never disturbed the duplicity that had already been laid bare. The humanists' efforts were, and remained, futile, for they became perpetual victims of a boomerang effect: the portrait of hypocrisy and cynicism they projected onto Machiavelli – intending to "destroy" him – proved to be nothing other than a collective self-portrait, sustained to this day by their characteristic absence of self-reflection and their conviction that they had settled accounts with him once and for all. The point is clear: they were not defending politics from Machiavelli; they were defending themselves. This applies to the entire line of his critics over five centuries – from Renaissance humanists to the Jesuits from the sixteenth century onward, and ultimately the Marxists, the leading humanists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Indirectly, Machiavelli's analysis also amounted to a critique of the Roman Church. By approaching political phenomena from a standpoint that privileges fact over normativity, he separated politics from Christian values – values which, as normative foundations, impede the objective thematization of politics itself (Wolin, 1961, 86–87,

et passim). The anti-political character of Christianity is expressed in the belief that the course of the world lies under divine jurisdiction, such that the individual can only accept an unavoidable fate. Machiavelli, by contrast, reasons within a field of contingency, in which opportunity, or chance appears – and is recognized only by the Fortune's favorite.

The Paradox of Christianity

The paradox of Christianity lay in the fact that it dismissed the significance of politics for human life (Wolin 1961, 86), while the Roman Church had always been immersed in politics up to its neck. For centuries it operated as a deft political actor within a dualism of its own making: on one side, the public profession of theodicy and divine law; on the other, the relentless exploitation of opportunities arising from the contingencies of worldly affairs – proceeding, when advantageous, in open contradiction to God's commandments, reducing their force to the space of the confessional, where absolution for misdeeds was granted and received.

In contrast to the moral question – *may I do what I am able to do?* – the political question asks: *how may I make possible what I will?* Since politics is not governed by moral principles, abandoning the norms of Christian ethics becomes permissible whenever full exploitation of the field of possibilities requires it. Thus, within its sphere, lying becomes allowable (contra *"Thou shalt not bear false witness"*), as does killing one's Christian brother (contra *"Thou shalt not kill"*), stealing (contra *"Thou shalt not steal"*), and professional or private indifference toward one's neighbor (contra *"Love thy neighbor as thyself"*), and so on.

In violating the Christian ethical code, the Roman Church lagged not a step behind the condottieri in perpetrating every manner of atrocity. It even sanctified these acts as accomplished *ad maiorem gloriam Dei*, and required no humanist stylization to appear in evangelical guise, since it did so on its own. The case of the Borgia house, under Pope Alexander VI, together with the reforming counter-blow it provoked, bears sufficient witness.[11] Not to mention that the Holy See, to escape the fury of the Roman populace, was forced to flee to Avignon, where it would remain for seven decades.

By the mid-sixteenth century, the Jesuit order was established to defend the Roman Church in the turmoil of the Reformation. Ready to employ every means beneath the veil of the Gospel, the Jesuits joined the humanists in attacking Machiavelli. The only difference lay in motive: the humanists defended themselves, while the Jesuits defended the radiant evangelical image of the Roman Church and the pope personally. They quickly reached consensus with the humanists around a shared, discrediting counter-narrative: that Machiavelli was a messenger of the devil, that

[11]   Because Catholicism had sunk into vile politics, corruption, and the complete betrayal of Christian values, the Reformation began – four years after *The Prince* was published. Luther, well-read in Erasmus, struck at the very foundations of the Church in the name of original Christianity. The subsequent spread of Protestantism throughout Western Europe would itself serve as evidence for the legitimacy of this critical blow.

the metaphysics of misanthropy lay at the core of his doctrine, that he was an unprecedented degenerate and cynic advocating an "unacceptable conception of politics." And always with the obligatory flourish: that his separation of politics from ethics reduces the former to a cold technology of crime.

In this self-apologetic framework, it is entirely irrelevant whose maxim – *the end justifies the means* – is at issue, around which the literature endlessly speculates. The maxim is not Machiavelli's; it is the principle of politicians and rulers, and thus of the Roman Curia and the Jesuits, to the extent that they acted as political agents rather than people of authentic faith. It was not introduced by anyone, as if it had been unknown until then. It was merely *disclosed*: revealed as one of the operative components of political skill on the far side of all morality.

The Scope of Machiavelli's Critique of Political Philosophy

Machiavelli was the first to introduce *par excellence* the explicitly political question of acquiring and maintaining power. His individual achievement may appear modest, yet its consequences are profoundly far-reaching: it is not only the humanist tradition – from Bruno, Latini, to Machiavelli – that comes under scrutiny, but the entirety of preceding political philosophy, in regard to its epistemic value.

The conventional literary claim that Machiavelli's conception of politics is limited to the modern age or to modern politics is a mistaken humanist fable. In fact, Machiavelli's discovery applies to politics in general, from Hammurabi to the present day. That his insight into the nature of the bond between politics and ethics is unprecedented merely indicates that only at the dawn of the Modern Age were the conditions ripe for reliable knowledge in this domain. Prior obstacles to such knowledge lay not merely in Renaissance humanism but in the entire corpus of political philosophy of ancient Greece and Rome.

Machiavelli's work dismantles the illusory vision of unity between politics and ethics in antiquity. The problem lies in the fact that the reception of that era, concentrated in the aesthetic-ethical dimension of humanism, could not arrive at an accurate understanding, despite the fact that the truth is discernible in the political histories of Polybius, Thucydides, Livy, and others. Humanism has, to this day, perpetuated its errors, clustered around the normative models of the idealized vision of ancient Greek polis.

An intrinsic unity of politics and ethics never existed anywhere, except in the imagination of humanists. In this light, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, and their heirs offer no practical guidance, for they left no instructions concerning the methods of acquiring or sustaining power. Accordingly, tales of the ideal state or typologies of political regimes carry absolutely no relevance to this question.

Humanist historiography has never been able to recognize the full historical significance of Machiavelli, for such recognition would have required abandoning its cherished ideal of the unity of politics and ethics. And what would remain of it then? It is precisely this "happily guided illusion" of humanism that has served as a chronic impediment to the

stabilization of positive knowledge regarding the nature of politics, at the level of a political science properly conceived.

Why Machiavelli is the Founder of Political Science

Machiavelli's achievement does not reside in any systematic theory – because he had none (Allen, 1961, 465, 470), nor did he intend to develop it – nor is it to be found in metaphysics, which some interpreters imagine as "the foundation or the underlying principle of his thought." He is a pioneer, the initiator of political science, if we consider that he laid its cornerstone. And the cornerstone is method.

His achievement was made possible, as we have already noted, by the fact that in Florentine public life the truth of politics was practically "at hand," a tacitly acknowledged public secret:

a) through the intrusion of reality into the very dimension of appearance and visibility, and

b) through the shift from the purely aesthetic sphere toward the ethical and epistemological, which characterizes the genesis and transformation of humanism to the point at which a figure like Machiavelli could emerge at all.

Regarding the relationship between politics and ethics, although Machiavelli acknowledges their unity, he maximally departs from humanism in the novelty he introduces. This novelty can be discerned on two levels, corresponding to a differentiation in the very concept of political science:

1. *At the object level (the subject of analysis):* politics and ethics are indeed and must be inextricably linked. Yet, because they are external to one another, their simultaneous impossibility of complete unification and separation renders their relation akin to Schopenhauer's "prickly hedgehog": neither too close, nor too distant. Consequently, in politics the decisive and sufficient factor is moral aesthetics – the appearance of morality.

This constellation of insight reveals several significant consequences. First, when we speak of politics as the art of the possible, it must be borne in mind that the field of possibilities not constrained by moral norms, but by obstacles that a politician can overcome through force. The entire point lies in how that force is represented and whether it is mentioned at all.

It is this realization that revealed the political field as existing beyond morality, with relations among actors analogous to the interactions of pagan gods. In the field of political physics, individuals are personifications of opposing forces. And since these events occur among humans, the field must be endowed with the semblance of moral appearance. Hence, there must always exist a legitimizing envelope: philosophers in antiquity, humanists in the Renaissance, Jesuits in the Reformation, and progressive writers, in the age of Enlightenment, and Marxists, and other humanists in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Max Weber aptly characterized this political field through his brilliant insight that the rationalization and secularization of the modern world is accompanied by increasing irrationalization, through a revival of ancient paganism and polytheism. In modern politics, every actor follows the directives

of their own "god," making the Other not a brother, but solely a threat – a phenomenon Weber termed "double rationality" (*Dopelrationalität*) of modernity (Spinner, 1986).

2. *At the meta-level, or theoretical level:* Machiavelli's innovation consists in the complete separation of ethics from politics. This is realized through the depoliticization (and de-ideologization) of thought about politics, with the fundamental principle: *Do not lie, even when speaking about politics!* In other words, in contrast to the inextricable unity at the object level in the aesthetic sphere, at the meta-level there is a deliberate separation and foundation of observation in the ethics of truth (*in stricto sensu*).

Machiavelli's discourse is profoundly anti-humanist, first because it is formed in opposition to humanist discourse, second because it is not normatively corrupted, and third because it is formulated on the basis of a moral stance and a decision to break with the pervasive hypocrisy and reciprocal deceit of the governing ethos of humanism in public speech. His discourse is grounded in the ethics of truth, with a corresponding attitude that constitutes a necessary condition for an objective or positive depiction of the phenomena under scrutiny. In this sense, he is the initiator of a mode of thought whereby political philosophy transitions into political science.

Although political science, in its fully modern form, cannot yet be said to exist, it would be inconceivable without the principle introduced by Machiavelli. It would later appear as a methodological axiom: "subordination of imagination to observation"

(Auguste Comte). In Machiavelli's case, this meant subordinating the humanist fable of politics and the ruler to the revealed facts that the propagandistic fable had previously concealed. Because this principle guides the establishment of facts, humanism would later deride it as "crawling positivism" and, over the centuries, would continually hinder the formation of political science, smothering it beneath the pillow of its moralizing imagination – all the way to the twentieth-century humanists-Marxists.

The methodological stance underlying Machiavelli's insights would much later be recognized as the principle of value-neutrality. In line with the claim made above that it is rooted in ethics, this value-neutrality is by no means detached from all moral considerations; on the contrary, it presupposes a very specific moral ethos, which we may call the *ethics of truth*. It is the stance of uncompromising discourse on what has been established, a presentation delivered impartially – colloquially, 'without favoritism' – combined with a readiness to endure all the consequences of such discourse, all in the pursuit of objective knowledge.

Such a stance was always alien to humanism, weighed down as it was by normative overload and by the primary task of promoting narratives about "how man ought to be understood" and what politics "ought to be" as a form of humanitarian endeavor. We need not here recall what was written about Hobbes, another founder of modern political science, who, like Machiavelli, was castigated for revealing the so-called "misanthropy" inherent in human nature as unacceptable.[12] This was intrinsic

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[12] We would leave the faculty with our minds saturated by such accounts. Indeed, it is only the humanists—among whom the Marxists also belong—who remain convinced that science can be constructed out of desiderata, idealized representations, and

to humanist thinking, so much so that it produced countless testimonies against value-neutrality. Nor should we forget what Marxists – likewise operating within a humanist register – wrote in opposition to Max Weber regarding this principle. It is unsurprising: any particular political or ideological commitment (and thus value-laden stance) had to be propagandistically represented as a posture of "true science."

The humanist image of Machiavelli, long entrenched as a conventional cliché, as a superficial anti-propagandistic tale that appeals more to normative benchmarks than to positive truth, remains a scandal of humanism that is still hushed to this day. This is possible because humanism has maintained a near-monopoly in the social sciences and political PHILOSOPHY, enabling it to censor truths about itself and to chronically sustain its errors and falsehoods concerning politics. Consequently, the positive truth of Machiavelli's achievement, as with much else, cannot and will not attain the status of a commonplace until science becomes autonomous from humanism itself.

Conclusion

Through the preceding exposition, we have presented Machiavelli in stark contrast to the image of a cynic and hypocrite that humanists imposed upon him – and continue to impose to this day. His only "fault" was that, surrounded by hypocrites, he was honest and sincere to an almost unbearable degree. Modernity, grounded in both the principle of Machiavellianism and the hypocrisy of humanism, has been unable to forgive him for this for five centuries. This characteristic of the modern age explains how an utterly unfounded accusation – an openly fabricated lie about him – has retained its force up to the present day.

Having repositioned the details of the constructed image of Machiavelli according to their true context and rightful place, we may conclude that the "principle of Machiavellianism," as a principle of dualism and the unity between the inner truth of politics and its public (external) appearance, deserves to bear his name – just as a unit of magnetic field strength bears Tesla's name. This principle is Machiavelli's discovery, not his personal trait. That alone provides ample justification for the long-overdue rehabilitation of his name from five centuries of unjust accusation.

a selective partitioning of what is deemed "acceptable" and "unacceptable." Consequently, their works on politics offered little of genuine intellectual substance. Nor could they have, given that they routinely and without reservation repudiated the most significant political thinkers—from Machiavelli, through Hobbes and de Sade, to Carl Schmitt, and beyond. All were dismissed as aberrant figures, malign reactionaries, and misanthropes. These writings are propagandistic in nature, characteristically marked by the overt display of personal ideological commitments—precisely the defining feature of the humanist lecturer. Their thought, guided by images of "how the human being ought to be understood" and what politics "ought to be," is *par excellence* normatively compromised, with no prospect of attaining the scholarly rigor required for serious theoretical reflection. For this reason, their discrediting treatments of Machiavelli never exceeded the level of amateur comprehension, whose superficiality and dilettantism remained insulated by the enforced humanistic monopoly. Even today, in our academic milieu, the highest commendation one can bestow upon a scholar in the social sciences or philosophy is that he is (or was) a "person of humanist convictions" and of the corresponding activist orientation. We have, moreover, a century of publicly self-declared humanists behind us—and yet not a single monograph on humanism itself.

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Between Hollywood glamour and bureaucratic grayness: film as a means of influencing the public opinion determinant of foreign policy

Abstract: Film represents a powerful instrument capable of influencing public opinion. This paper therefore examines this medium and its impact on shaping foreign policy and determining the course a state pursues in international relations. Furthermore, it explores how different models of film vary in their influence on public opinion, as well as how they affect public attitudes toward specific issues. The theoretical foundations of foreign policy determinants, public opinion, and film are presented with the aim of identifying their common intersection—that is, the ways in which the cinematic medium can indirectly, through public opinion, influence foreign policy. The hypothesis positions film as one of the most significant factors in shaping the public-opinion determinant of foreign policy, while also partially addressing the effects it may have on the public.

Keywords: foreign policy analysis, determinants of foreign policy, public opinion, film, media

Introduction

The best way to predict the future is to design and direct it, and foreign political intentions are served well by foreign policy analysis (FPA). Based on the information begotten by such an approach, it is much easier for the planners to channel intentions of their state and create an itinerary. The analysis of foreign policy decision-making (FPDM) is also emphasized as an important component of strategic planning. Some authors view this approach as useful in identifying both unique and general patterns of decision-making that cannot be established through classical foreign policy analysis (Mintz and DeRouen, 2010, p. 5).

While offering individual insights, certainly very important ones, the observation of decision-making processes cannot encompass everything that foreign policy analysis entails. The most general classification of the factors influencing foreign policy

would divide them into external and internal factors (Kaarbo, Lantis, and Beasley, 2012, pp. 1–26). Among internal factors, public opinion constitutes a fundamental subject of interest in foreign policy analysis (Boucher, 2024, pp. 249–266). Given the very nature of the possibilities for shaping and directing public opinion, which will be discussed in a later section of this paper, it is important to examine how it influences foreign policy. Since the media represent the primary channel through which public opinion is shaped, and at the same time the main platform for communicating policy, this research will examine film and its influence on the public-opinion determinant of foreign policy.

Initial assumption claims that film is one of the essential tools the state can use to influence the public's opinion of foreign policy. Public opinion does not develop organically in all matters. Through certain instruments, in this case film, it can be influenced and sometimes subjected to state politics in any given moment.

The first part of the paper addresses the issue of public opinion in foreign policy, specifying and generalizing its terminological definition its influence on foreign policy, which is achieved through abstraction. The entire paper draws on public opinion theory, film as a media phenomenon, and the application of foreign policy analysis within a conceptual framework. The second, central chapter discusses the impact of film on the public-opinion determinant of foreign policy. The final section of the study represents an attempt to use qualitative analysis and synthesis to present selected films and the ways in which they influence public opinion. By analyzing empirical material, the paper addresses the question of the importance of properly artic-

ulating film. At the same time, it illustrates a two-way process of film production: on the one hand, to empower the public in relation to the external sphere, and on the other, to enable foreign policy to gain the support of public opinion that challenges it.

The public opinion tradition within foreign policy

An old Jewish saying holds that it is not important who rules Judea, but who rules the hearts of its inhabitants. Achieving such power is a Nietzschean struggle for power in which two groups confront one another - the ruling elite and the masses who are governed. Although there are authors who "interpret the indifference of the masses toward political issues as the stupidity of the masses, the lack of the ability to manage public affairs as the absence of competence, and the willingness of the masses to vote as a refusal of the masses to govern" (Šušnjić, 2011, p. 84), their aspirations must nevertheless be taken into account, because the ruling elite will "more easily keep under its control a city accustomed to living in freedom by governing it with the support of its inhabitants than in any other way" (Machiavelli, 2003, p. 46). Of course, it is possible to govern a state in other ways, but these most often come at the cost of much bloodshed.

The term "mass" has a severely negative connotation due to the lack of the capability to articulate higher goals and its strive for destruction: "We often speak of the mass's desire for destruction. This is the first thing we notice about it, and we cannot deny that this desire exists everywhere, in all kins of countries and cultures" (Canetti, 1984,

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p. 13). Gathered out in the streets, the mass will influence the start or an end of a war through the pressure it exerts, make a ruler abdicate, which is true all over the world. One influences the masses to influence the public opinion. This is where the need to understand film in this context stems from.

On the other end stands the civil public, which "can first be understood as a sphere of private individuals who, gathered together, constitute a public; they need a public regulated by the authorities' rules and from the outset oriented against public authority itself, in order to settle accounts with it regarding the general rules of interaction in a fundamentally privatized yet publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labor. The medium of this political confrontation is specific and historically unprecedented: public reasoning" (Habermas, 2012, p. 81).

The two groups exert different types of pressure on the determination of foreign policy, even though they are motivated by some form of idea or opinion. This further complicates the relationship between public opinion and foreign policy, which is already complex due to the very fact that it is difficult to determine who and how influences its formation (Day and Hudson, 2020, p. 161). It is important to adequately monitor trends in public opinion, as it is known that it can direct extreme actions in foreign policy, such as the use of force, escalation of conflict, or the severing of relations (Mintz and DeRouen, 2010, p. 131). Although such phenomena align with mass pressure, they do not preclude changes in attitudes, as the public is not a static category.

Deconstructing the social system as a determinant of foreign policy, Ivo Visković notes: "The

social structure would include: the basic economic–class structure, national structure, social stratification, and the ideological–political organization of particular classes, strata, and groups. The political system, as a group of determinants, would encompass: the political institutions of a given society, forms of relations between government and other social structures, political tradition and culture, as well as forms of political communication" (Visković, 2007, pp. 69–70). Within this categorization, public opinion can be observed at all structural levels. The masses influence foreign policy when multiple "groups" intersect around a common interest. At that point, even political determinants become involved in some way. The role of film in such cases is evident - it mobilizes members of different classes and, through emotional appeal, easily transforms them into a mass. Confirmation of this is also found in Đuro Šušnjić: "Structural analysis of the mass reveals that the mass is composed of classes and that each class is, as a rule, capable of critically judging and condemning messages arriving from various sources" (Šušnjić, 2011, p. 84). Beyond insight into what can influence the formation of the public, a unified finding emerges that the mass is, in some way, determined by the most dominant class.

If they do not turn into masses, classes possess critical reasoning because they bring together a number of similar individuals. By embodying their views, a class forms public opinion that "on the historical stage becomes an active subject, capable of overseeing the actions of the government" (Gozzini, 2011, p. 10). Film language addresses the conative and affective dimensions, so that classes, in part or in whole, are transformed into a mass that ultimately influences foreign policy. The importance

of this becomes greater when the complexity of foreign policy analysis is understood, as well as the historical differences in the functioning of agents and structure (Carlsnaes, 1992, pp. 245–270). While the discourse of foreign policy has changed, public pressure has remained largely consistent, along with the position of the media.

Determining a precise definition of public opinion is a more complex process. In their research, Zoran Pavlović and Dragomir Pantić, comparing more than fifty different definitions, identify several common points: "the breadth of consensus among the subjects of public opinion; the object of public opinion and citizens' interest in that content; the new quality of public opinion (collective versus aggregative); the nature of the public; and the type and strength of the subjects' expression through public opinion" (Pantić and Pavlović, 2007, p. 138). This definitively justifies the position of public opinion as a determinant of foreign policy. In the foreground of this paper are the object of opinion and people's interest, which is logical when discussing politics in any form. From state to state, these two variables fluctuate considerably. When foreign policy is placed in focus, interest may increase or decrease, but the key point is that public opinion is passive and influenced by governments or professional opinion shapers (Lippmann, 1998, pp. 253–255). By adding the notion of a "phantom public," it becomes clear that public opinion is constructed (Lippmann, 1993, pp. 4–5). Film, of course, serves professionals as a tool for shaping influence and generating interest, so in direct relation to foreign policy certain issues become more compelling.

Regardless of whether interest exists naturally or is manufactured, it will always be smaller and greater. The traditional wisdom about the marginal influence of public opinion on US foreign policy, known as the Almond–Lippmann consensus, reflects a lower level of public interest, while Leslie Gelb's post-Vietnam perspective challenges the notion of an uninterested public (Rosati and Scott, 2010, pp. 329–330). These views extend well beyond the boundaries of the United States and represent two poles between which the public can be observed.

Film is often used in politics to secure agreement, which could be derived from the attitudes of individuals toward mass media (Lippmann, 1998, p. 248), and there are those that afford them the key place in the production process (Herman and Chomsky, 1988, pp. 1–2). Public opinion, observes in that way, is not interested or disinterested, nor is its interest a subject of influence, but it rather accepts or does not accept a certain foreign policy initiative that put to a vote indirectly. Media today has become a kind of a square that dialectically synthesizes public opinion, but, above all, what is needed is the individual's freedom to access that square: "Formally, subjective freedom for individuals as such to have and express *their own* judgements, opinions, and advice on general affairs appears within the community that is called public opinion" (Hegel, 1989, p. 441).

By understanding the categories of interest and consent, it is confirmed that the mobilization of the public occurs only after it has become interested. In both cases, film occupies a very important place. Whether it targets interest or consent, when so engaged it influences foreign policy. Its language is the same as that of television, which is "necessary for war in order for it to emerge from the anonymity

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of the slaughterhouse and to be adorned with that title" (Remondino, 2002, p. 17). The process is clear, emerging from the hall of shadows requires encompassing the broadest possible public, and in this way television gathers support or creates enemies. Film does the same. "Critical political theory has established that mass media are decisive institutions for the manipulation of opinions," writes Ljubomir Tadić, unequivocally pointing to how much film helps direct public opinion, and thus its influence on foreign policy, in a particular direction (Tadić, 1993, pp. 471–482). All of the above is relevant given that there are US presidents who, with regard to the use of force, act to a large extent in accordance with prevailing public attitudes (Brulé and Mintz, 2006, pp. 157–173).

"Film" influence on determinant of foreign policy

In studying foreign policy analysis, some authors identify the role of the media as a connecting link between the public and the state, and acknowledge their influence on shaping public opinion in foreign policy (Kaarbo, Lantis, and Beasley, 2012, pp. 1–26). Zoran Jevtović recognizes their primordial influence in the process of generating public opinion: "With the emergence of the press, few people were aware of the importance of a medium essential for the formation of public opinion, so with the expansion of the right to vote, which is the basis of political decision-making, a race began to capture the spiritual nature of every individual" (Jevtović, 2003, p. 30). The importance of the media is evident in the process of mobilization, which is

logical because "opinion is formed in the clash of arguments over a current social problem" (Jevtović, 2003). It should also be added that domestic policy is shaped on the basis of the attitudes of both the elite and the masses (Hudson, 2005, pp. 1–30). More precisely, it is created through the synthesis of pressures from both groups, for which there is no better arena than the media.

Film, on the other hand, does not allow for the crossing of opinions. The elite or the mass both tell their story from their own viewpoint. A film about the interview between Robert Forst and Richard Nixon is experienced differently than the interview that took place on television. It is evident that both media speak the same language, but they differ in their freedom of interpretation. The specific advantage of film compared to television lies in its degree of involvement. Marshall McLuhan) dissects this incisively: "[...] a hot medium such as film and a cold one such as television differ according to one crucial principle. A hot medium is one that extends a single sense in "high definition". High definition is a state of data saturation," adding that "hot media do not leave the audience with much to fill in or complete" (McLuhan, 1971, p. 58). The goal of a film is not to consider a question, but to set an angle. Through television, a filmic expression can be observed: "It also succeeds in what needs to be shown, but in such a way that it is not in fact shown, or is rendered insignificant and trivial, or is constructed so as to assume a meaning that does not correspond to reality at all" (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 34). Both media are capable of achieving this thanks to a wide spectre of expression tools at their disposal. Everything in film, shots, scenes, camera angles, are subordinated to transmitting

the desired message. Attention is directed, or, in Heideggerian terms, there is an attempt to divert it "toward something on the path that thinking is only intimated on the way, to draw attention to something of the path that shows itself to thinking and yet eludes it" (Heidegger, 2003, p. 7). It is important to maintain a constant state of uncertainty by pointing attention to elusive signs. The cross on the tower of a red-brick Adventist church, whose outline appears in the window frame of a neighbouring house during a scene of interaction between the actors, may go unnoticed by many, yet it carries a message - nothing in film is accidental. Some researchers therefore observe: "Film material is thus encoded according to the way people experience their social reality, which underlies its popularity. Although the viewer consciously understands the unreality of what unfolds on the screen, they relate to the content as if it were a real event, sometimes even emotionally" (Labaš and Mihailović, 2011, pp. 95–122). In its engagement with media content, film offers the possibility of intensifying affective influence on the public-opinion component, which places a greater burden on foreign policy. There is a correlation between an increased number of reports on threats posed by the USSR to US security in The Washington Post and heightened support for larger defence budget expenditures (Entman, 2004, pp. 134–135). If simple textual content has contributed to increased support for a given issue, the potential of film is even greater.

The emotional moment is the most important here. Very often, it produces a reaction that generates stronger public pressure on foreign policy. This is aided above all by the careful use of the sign: "So what is attributed to those persistent bangs? Quite simply, they are the emblem of Romanitas. We see, in fact, how the main lever of the representation operates openly here, and that is the sign. The bangs on the forehead bombard us with obviousness, so no one would doubt that they are in ancient Rome" (Barthes, 2005, p. 25). If we accept as correct the definition of a sign as a mental image intended to provoke the creation of another image for the purpose of communication, then the bangs on the forehead, as bearers of meaning, generate the perception of a Roman in its full sense (Giro, 1976, p. 26). Such a representation was reinforced by films like *Ben-Hur*, *Spartacus*, or *Quo Vadis*, and the modern era simply adopted it, for which the film *Gladiator* provides sufficient evidence. According to this model, during the Cold War, films offered hints of how the Soviets would be perceived. The same applied in the case of Iraqis, Vietnamese, and even Serbs during the 1990s.

Such statements are drawn from real life and are very often shaped through a binary logic of dividing characters into good and bad guys (Despotović & Jevtović, 2019, p. 161). A prime example is the fight between Rocky Balboa and Ivan Drago, while in reality the Cold War was experiencing its hottest moments. Hollywood has been and remains one of the greatest repositories of stereotypical narratives (Dej, 2004, p. 48). The danger of cinematic representation lies in two extremes: when a sympathetic Russian, with a nose and cheeks flushed from vodka, is turned into a highly trained, cold-blooded killer whose only sacred institution is the KGB; or when a good-natured, chubby German with a beer stein and Bavarian sausages is transformed into a blue-eyed, blonde Aryan in a black leather coat with two thunderbolts on his epaulettes. "For most

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The film "Rocky IV" as an example of the use of cinema for propaganda purposes during the Cold War.
Photo: Guliver image

Americans (and this generally applies to Europeans as well), the branch of the cultural apparatus that delivers Islam mainly includes television and radio networks, daily newspapers, and the mass weekly press. Films are, of course, important, if for no other reason than because the visual sense of history and distant lands informs our own, which is often shaped by films. This powerful concentration of mass media can be said to form the public core of interpretation, giving a particular image of Islam and, of course, reflecting the interests of power in society as presented by the media. That image, which is not only an image but also a transferable set of feelings about that image, is accompanied by what we might call the overall context," observes Edward Said, adding a note of religion to cinematic

stereotyping, which today is also highly important in influencing public opinion in the shaping of foreign policy (Said, 2003, p. 35).

The true name of this phenomenon is stigma. "As a stranger stands before you, he may showcase characteristics that make them different from the rest in the category of persons offered for them, and that they are a less desirable kind – to the extreme view that the person is entirely bad, dangerous, or weak. This is how they are reduced in our mind from a whole and usual individual to someone who is bad and worthless. This characteristic is stigma, especially when the effect of discrediting is strong; sometimes it is also called failure, shortcoming, or a handicap," writes Gofman (Gofman, 2009, pp. 14–15). From the above, the coherence of cinematic expression and stigma becomes clear, particularly when a film provides a category through which to think about a character. In doing so, it retains the quality of "hot communication," continuing to demand a high level of sensory engagement. An additional argument can be found in the process of stigmatization, where Milan Krstić usefully synthesizes the positions of numerous authors and observes that in the role of actors are states, international institutions, and, finally, individuals, who constitute the building blocks gathered into the "society of the normal," as the author vividly expresses it (Krstić, 2020, pp. 24–27). If a film stigmatizes, and the film is supported by the state, the process of influencing public opinion and securing support for a particular foreign policy issue becomes evident.

There is clear evidence of this: "By operating in 136 USIS units across 87 countries, the Film Service had at its disposal an enormous distribution network. With abundant government resources, it was virtually a "producer," fulfilling every need. It employed producer-directors who were thoroughly vetted and made films that articulated the goals the United States wished to achieve and that could best reach the prepared audiences that we, as a film medium, had to engage. The Service advised secret bodies, such as the Operations Coordination Committee, on films suitable for international distribution" (Saunders, 2013, pp. 246–247). The influence is not exerted only on the domestic public but also on public opinion of other countries, thus exerting pressure on public opinion as a determinant of foreign policy. Certainly, this is not limited to the United States. Examples could include the Film Center of Serbia, as well as any other institution seeking to use film to advance the interests of its state. The situation is likely the same in France, Russia, Germany, China, Turkey, India… Media, including film, are not directly controlled by formal state structures, but their reach is significant, and they can influence the shaping of foreign policy (Alden & Aran, 2017, p. 63). Film is far too powerful a tool to be left unchecked, and its role in a state's efforts to mobilize public opinion, generate consent, or stimulate interest is clear.

Types of films in relation to public opinion

The role of the Creel Committee in mobilizing public opinion during entry into the Great War is well known (Tomić, 2016, p. 239). This was not a unique example in history, as many intellectuals participated in mobilizing public opinion during the Second World War as well, and there were examples

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even before that, though they are not relevant to this paper. The Committee on Public Information, which was the official name of the committee, was a pioneer in using new media to influence public opinion. Under its guidance, a Film Section was established within the committee in 1917, which merged with the Picture Division by 1918 (Axelrod, 2009, p. 93). At that time, the film medium had only recently come of age. Its potential was recognized from the very beginning. Perhaps this was influenced by *The Birth of a Nation*, which had already made a strong impression on American sentiment in 1915. This set the stage for everything that would follow with Nazi propaganda.

Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* remains a symbol of those films that the state promotes to consolidate public opinion. The Nazis came to power in 1933 after a tight electoral race, and the following year saw sharp upheavals that culminated in the Night of the Long Knives, which makes 1935, and the moment in which this work was realized, particularly indicative. One could argue that this concerns public opinion and domestic policies more than foreign policy, but that is only one side of the coin. The other side is that the film, in part, focused on the contribution of the Nazis to restoring Germany's status as a great power, which is relevant when discussing the international order. A clearer example of this type of film is Frank Capra's series, which sought to strengthen public opinion in favour of American participation in the Second World War. The accuracy of such claims lies in the existence of various forms of domestic pressure on foreign policy, among which are the media, and thus film, public opinion, and interest groups (Breuning, 2007, p. 120). Regarding Capra's films, either

the filmmaker responded to public sentiment and created films that would appeal to it, or, the option closer to the truth, an interest group, through the media and film, sought to direct public opinion and secure consent for entering the war.

After the end of the war, former allies formed Cold War blocs and commenced latent fighting for the role of the global hegemon. "The United States and the USSR utilized propaganda extensively during the Cold War. Both parties used print, film, television, and radio programs and other media to influence their citizens, each other and third world countries", Radenko Šćekić observes (Šćekić, 2012, pp. 389–401). This was even mor important, especially due to changes in relations between the two countries. Both the USSR and the US productions adhered to the official policies.

Media simply offer an image of the world: "Nobody possesses direct knowledge about the entire globe. Excluding personal experience, what we know originates from school, discussions – but primarily from media. For ordinary people, the majority of lands, people, and topics not covered by the media simply do not exist" (Bertrand, 2007, p. 18). The things an ordinary citizen sees, in accordance with the above, is conditioned by the way the media present topics.

To more precisely establish a group of films which are employed to influence public opinion aspirations in foreign policy, media agenda establishment needs to be considered. First and foremost, this stems from the function of the media in determining relevant topics within social discourse (Rus Mol, 2014, p. 47). If reality is considered carefully, regarding the discourse, it is obvious that this is the main function of film. Films *Barbie* and

Oppenheimer generated additional shows, texts, and generally speaking, their emergence took up a lot of the public discourse, which testifies to the creative power of the public, given that it gave rise to the neologism (Bahr, 2023).

Given that people most often encounter a world they have not personally seen when it comes to films dealing with themes that enter the domain of foreign policy, it is possible to speak of such films as providers of "second-hand reality" (Kunczik & Zipfel, 2006, p. 154). John Street argues that "to the extent that the mass media are responsible for the circulation of certain ideas and images, and to the extent that they shape thoughts and actions, they are considered to possess discursive or ideological power" (Street, 2003, p. 197). Simultaneously, in generating this type of power, films are profiled as educational and mobilizing in their influence on public opinion attitudes toward foreign policy. In parallel, they also generate interest in particular topics. The Barbie doll may have been a cultural commonplace, but widespread knowledge of Oppenheimer the scientist certainly did not exist in the same way prior to the film's release. By placing a particular topic under the public spotlight, film influences public opinion and creates a buffer zone around foreign policy.

Attention should be paid to a more significant phenomenon in which the issue is neither classical mobilization nor the production of consent. This can be illustrated by Kosovo and the way it was represented in the film The Battle of Kosovo. "I am a devout patriot, but when I compare these two images — the misery of a café in Đakovica and the splendour of a café in Belgrade — I clearly feel as if some mysterious voice is commanding me

to rebel against every social order, be it created by God or by Government," writes Puniša Račić, concluding: "And if I knew that I could improve it, I would truly try, even if I were labelled an unbeliever or a traitor" (Imami, 2017). By recording these words in a letter to King Alexander, Račić indirectly conveys the reality of how important Kosovo was to the public at the time. It did carry a sentimental weight, but it was nowhere near the level of priority it holds today. In his extensive study, Ivan Čolović concludes that the topic of Kosovo, classified by the author as a "myth," was revived in the 1980s, which is also when his interest in the issue began (Čolović, 2016, p. 14).

Račić's lines and Čolović's reference to the eighth decade of the twentieth century are separated by some sixty years during which Kosovo was not at the centre of Serbian national consciousness. That Čolović is correct regarding the beginning of the revival of the Kosovo narrative is evident from the very project *The Battle of Kosovo*. The importance attached to realizing this work can be inferred from the testimony of director Zdravko Šotra about the hastily executed project of the film *The Battle of Kosovo*: "We received funding for a TV drama. Such projects are filmed over six months and prepared for a year. We threw together *The Battle of Kosovo* in one month. Happy are the nations that do not have great histories like ours" (Danas, 2023).

Obviously used to define a Serbian identity forgotten in a failed state, the film opened Pandora's box from which misfortunes continue to emerge even today. The spectacular rediscovery of the lost Serbian spiritual being on Vidovdan in 1989 was further marked by the gathering at Gazimestan. At that moment, the overall effect of the film was

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concerned exclusively with internal divisions and the consolidation of Serbian identity. What the creators did not anticipate was that the fire they were playing with could rage out of control. Compared to Vietnam, the Cold War, and both World Wars, Kosovo constituted and continues to constitute an integral part of the Serbian struggle. By reviving the collective unconscious through phrases still quoted today—referring to "entering the battle for the sacred site being defended", "paying with one's head for the heavenly kingdom," or that "Serbia is not a handful of rice for every crow to peck at"—a paradigm was revived that perhaps occupies the most important place in Serbian discourse. The fact is that the heads lost at Kosovo were not sacrificed for state-building, since Serbia soon fell under centuries-long and brutal Ottoman rule, but they laid the foundation of the Serbian ethnos. Zdravko Šotra had a correct understanding of the magnitude of Serbian history, and it is certain that Kosovo alone represents a history unto itself.

This type of film, which is rare, should be approached with the utmost care due to its destructive power and can rightly be called films of emotional cult. Although there are many other works of the seventh art that could be placed in this category, there is none more fitting for this study than *Boj na Kosovu* because of its timelessness. Three and a half decades after the creation of the aforementioned film, the issue of Kosovo remains an iron grip influencing Serbia's maneuvering space in foreign policy, and there are even announcements of a new film on the same topic (Mondo, 2022).

Dragan Simić and Dragan Živojinović artistically note that "democracy, the free market, and globalism are no longer the only successful models for organizing the state and society, and power no longer resides only in the skyscrapers of New York and the appeal of Apple and Microsoft, but also in the gleaming high-rises of Shanghai and the growing popularity of Lenovo and Huawei" (Simić and Živojinović, 2021, pp. 17–55). It is clear that Washington and Moscow no longer have a monopoly on film departments. Every state that aspires to the status of a great power has its own Hollywood, and even small countries like Serbia take film very seriously, as it remains influential in shaping public opinion, which in turn affects its foreign policy, and can also be used to subtly shape the foreign policy ambitions of other states.

At the end of the discussion, it is entirely appropriate to say that the film was the most significant cultural resource of the 20th century and will continue to be so in the 21st century, as it still occupies a "central place in managing impressions and defining social positions and status" (Lou, 2013, p. 35). Ultimately, opinions on the connection between the powerful, power itself, and the management process are illuminated not only by the place of the film in that hierarchy but also by its strength in influencing public opinion, and thereby indirectly shaping foreign policy (Weber, 1999, p. 165).

Conclusion

Starting primarily from the assumption that film is a fundamental tool of the state in shaping public opinion, this research fully confirmed that premise. From this follows the confirmation of the film's influence on the public-opinion determinant of foreign policy. As long as state financing of film

production exists, such influences will remain commonplace. As shown in this paper, this is not only the case for superpowers but also for small states, which have their own means of guiding public attitudes toward foreign policy through film funding.

Public interest and disinterest rarely arise organically, making it clear how effectively states understand the significance of film influence. Using powerful language, states shape public opinion domestically and internationally through institutions. Film production is only seemingly free; it is truly free only when the subject matter does not touch on state affairs. This research provides a different insight into how films can generate consensus and engagement.

The study describes ways in which film can shape specific foreign policy, although the classification of films according to how they are produced remains unresolved. It is possible to distinguish between films that are produced or supported by the state and those that emerge organically from public opinion due to the relevance of a particular topic. In the first case, their influence is controlled, calculated, and predictable; in the second, it is marginal, and such films tend to arise more as a reflection of an era, usually surfacing post-factum. This does not mean that the latter are less powerful, but rather that they do not have an immediate impact on shaping foreign policy. The limitation of this study is also its weakness, as films that emerge "from public opinion" need to be examined more deeply, especially regarding the "pacification" of foreign policy or specific withdrawal from a particular issue.

Above all, film remains a tool for guiding public opinion. The popularity of individual works serves as a kind of barometer of public sentiment. This makes it clearer to policymakers what needs to be done to implement a given initiative. Potentially, a lack of public consent could lead to temporary or permanent abandonment of an action. By bringing films into focus and examining the relationship between public opinion and foreign policy, this study provides, along with the confirmed hypothesis, a theoretical foundation for further research on the use of not only film but also other media and art in foreign policy.

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A citizen's guide to waste incineration

Abstract: Waste incineration is a controversial topic, even in technologically advanced and highly industrialized countries. Due to the complexity of this issue, it is necessary to approach the analysis from a broader perspective that encompasses all relevant aspects of the incineration process. This paper examines not only the technological dimensions but also the institutional conditions that support the implementation of the waste management hierarchy, as well as the principles of proximity and self-sufficiency. Special attention is given to the energy recovery of waste through various incineration and co-incineration technologies, with a focus on mechanisms that enable the control and reduction of harmful emissions.

Keywords: waste incineration, incineration, landfills, pollution, waste-to-energy

1. Introduction

In the Republic of Serbia, there is a constant increase in the amount of waste generated, which is a direct consequence of accelerated urbanization, industrialization, and rising purchasing power of the population. This phenomenon, which can rightly be called a "disease of modern times," is increasingly taking on global dimensions, with developing countries being particularly exposed to its negative impacts. One of the key challenges in the field of waste management is inadequate waste separation at the source, a problem also faced by all European Union member states. The lack of systematic sorting leads to the production of waste of insufficient quality for reuse, recycling, or other forms of recovery.

Energy recovery from waste is becoming an increasingly common solution, especially in urban areas worldwide. In the European Union, the leading countries in the construction and operation of municipal waste incineration plants are France (127 plants), Germany (89), and Italy (44). A similar situation exists in the treatment of hazardous waste, with France leading with 48 plants and Germany following with 31. According to available data, waste

represents one of the largest sources of methane emissions caused by human activity, accounting for 15–20%, with a rising trend.

However, despite the importance of waste management, it is often marginalized even within panels and debates dedicated to climate change. Such practices result in an insufficient understanding of the link between inadequate waste management and greenhouse gas emissions.

According to Eurostat data, citizens of the Republic of Serbia generate over 3.1 million tonnes of municipal waste annually. Of this amount, more than 2.5 million tonnes are disposed of in landfills, a significant portion of which ends up in unsanitary locations. This practice contradicts the waste management hierarchy established by the Waste Management Law, according to which landfilling represents the last and least desirable option. In addition to its lack of environmental sustainability, landfills in Serbia frequently experience fires, further exacerbating ecological risks. Accordingly, landfilling cannot be considered a long-term sustainable solution.

Unlike other complex challenges related to climate change and sustainable development that require a high degree of innovation, solutions in the field of waste management already exist and are applicable in practice. Energy recovery from waste offers not only environmental but also socioeconomic benefits, enabling a circular approach to energy production and consumption based on the principles of reuse, recycling, and resource regeneration. This model has the potential to contribute to sustainable development, as well as to create new jobs and business opportunities at the local level.

In accordance with the provisions of Directive 2010/75/EU on industrial emissions (Directive 2010/75/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 November 2010), two types of thermal waste treatment are recognized), incineration plants and co-incineration plants.

An incineration plant is defined as any stationary or mobile technical unit intended for the thermal treatment of waste—with or without energy recovery—where the waste is treated through oxidation, pyrolysis, gasification, or plasma processes, provided that the resulting substances are subsequently burned.

On the other hand, a co-incineration plant is a technical unit whose primary purpose is the production of energy or material products (e.g., cement), with waste used as a primary or supplementary fuel. In this case as well, treatment involves processes such as pyrolysis, gasification, and plasma technology, with the final products of these processes also subsequently burned.

The key difference between these two types of plants lies in their primary purpose: while incineration may or may not involve energy recovery, co-incineration is directly linked to the production of energy or materials. Both definitions are implemented in the Waste Management Law, which provides the fundamental regulatory framework for thermal waste treatment in the Republic of Serbia.

2. Thermal treatment – waste incineration

Every waste thermal treatment facility must have basic elements on site, including a reception area,

Photo: Freepik

waste storage, in some cases a waste preparation unit, an incineration plant, and optionally a facility for the physico-chemical treatment of ash from the plant and a container for disposal of such waste.

Procedures for receiving waste, its treatment, and disposal of residues are strict and regulated by the Waste Management Law ("Official Gazette of the RS," Nos. 36/09, 88/10, 14/16, 95/18 – other law, and 35/23) and by the specific Regulation on

the technical and technological requirements for the design, construction, equipping, and operation of plants and types of waste for thermal treatment, emission limit values, and their monitoring ("Official Gazette of the RS," No. 103/23), which further regulates the conditions for thermal waste treatment.

The combustion process itself takes place in high-temperature chambers, at temperatures above

850°C, or 1,100°C in the case of waste containing halogenated organic substances. At these temperatures, waste decomposes and transitions into a gaseous state, allowing further treatment of the gases in accordance with environmental standards.

Types of waste thermal treatment plants

Waste thermal treatment plants are classified based on the type of chamber in which the incineration process takes place. With the development of technology and the emergence of innovative solutions in waste management, various systems have become available that allow treatment to be adapted according to the type and characteristics of the waste. However, to ensure compliance with standards related to human health and environmental protection, it is necessary to rely on the Best Available Techniques (BAT)as described in the European Union's reference document on waste incineration (*BAT Reference Document for Waste Incineration)*). This document identifies three main types of chambers for thermal waste treatment:

    i. grate chambers,
    ii. rotary kilns,
    iii. fluidized bed chambers.

i. Grate chambers

Grate chambers represent the most widespread type of technology in plants for the thermal treatment of mixed municipal waste. It is estimated that around 90% of incineration plants in the European Union use this technology. In addition to mixed municipal waste, these chambers also treat other types of non-hazardous waste—commercial and industrial in origin—as well as sewage sludge.

This type of facility usually includes a reception bunker where waste is directly unloaded from transport vehicles, a mechanized grate for combustion (most commonly the so-called Martin grate), a bottom ash collection tank, an air supply system necessary for combustion, the combustion chamber itself, and auxiliary burners to support the process.
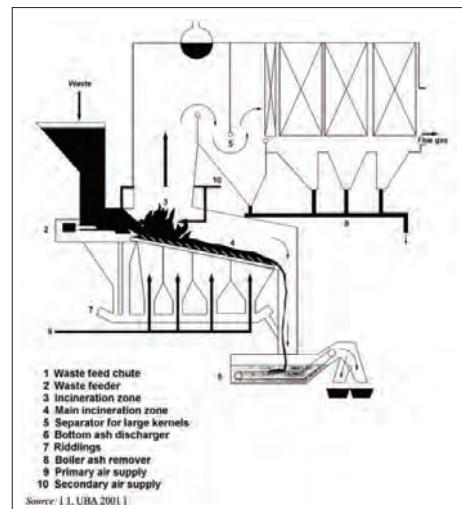
Figure 1. Grate chamber scheme
*BAT Reference Document for Waste Incineration

Grate incinerators are designed to enable efficient and complete combustion of waste, with particular attention paid to temperature parameters, gas residence time, and oxygen concentration. To ensure optimal conditions for the thermal decomposition of organic compounds, the gases generated during the combustion process must be maintained at a minimum temperature for at least two seconds, with an oxygen concentration of no less than 6%.

Combustion temperatures in grate chambers range from 850°C to 1,100°C, with higher temperature regimes applied in cases where hazardous waste is treated. Controlling these parameters is crucial to ensure process safety and to prevent the emission of toxic compounds into the environment.

One of the main indicators of combustion process quality is the concentration of carbon monoxide in the flue gases. A high content of this gas indicates incomplete combustion, which can lead to inefficient thermal treatment and increased emissions of pollutants.

Rotary kilns

Rotary kilns are highly durable, allowing almost any type of waste, regardless of its type or composition, to be efficiently thermally treated in this facility. Rotary kilns are widely used for the incineration of hazardous waste. Operating temperatures of rotary kilns range from 850°C to 1,200°C.
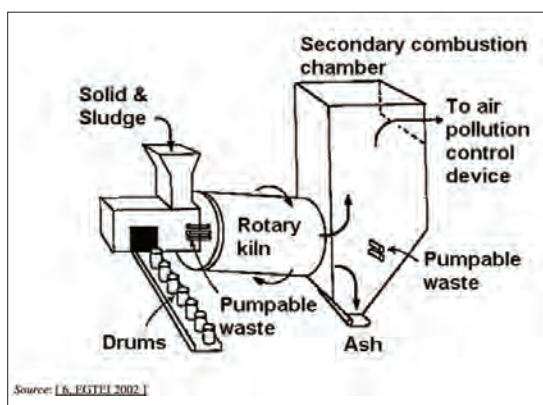

Figure 2. Rotary kiln scheme*
*BAT Reference Document for Waste Incineration

A rotary kiln is a type of thermal chamber consisting of a cylindrical vessel slightly inclined relative to the horizontal axis. It operates on the principle of rotation or oscillation around its axis, which allows waste to gradually move through the chamber by gravity. This type of facility is particularly suited for the treatment of various forms of waste, including liquid, gaseous, and pasty (pumped) waste, which is injected directly into the chamber. This method of dosing significantly reduces the risk of incidents during handling and minimizes worker exposure to hazardous substances.

The residence time of solid material in a rotary kiln is determined by the cylinder's angle of inclination and rotation speed. The typical residence time of waste in the chamber ranges from 30 to 90 minutes, which is sufficient to achieve complete combustion and process stability. Due to their flexibility and ability to process waste of different physical states and compositions, rotary kilns are often used in plants for the incineration of industrial and hazardous waste.

iii. Fluidized bed chambers

Fluidized bed plants are primarily used for the thermal treatment of finely prepared and homogenized waste, such as prepared alternative fuel (RDF – *Refuse-Derived Fuel*) and sewage sludge. This technology, which has been used for decades to burn homogeneous fuels such as coal, raw lignite, biomass, and sludge, is based on the principle of fluidizing solid particles in a layer of heated sand or ash into which the waste is introduced for thermal treatment.

Combustion temperatures in the fluidized bed range from 850°C to 950°C. Although these conditions

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are suitable for the treatment of non-hazardous waste, the indicated temperature range makes this technology less suitable for the incineration of hazardous waste, as well as waste containing high concentrations of halogenated organic compounds (especially chlorine).

The plant itself consists of a vertically oriented cylindrical chamber with a refractory lining. Waste is continuously fed into the reaction zone—the fluidized bed—via dosing systems such as pumps and mechanical feeders. Within the bed, processes of drying, evaporation, ignition, and final combustion take place, ensuring high thermal efficiency and process stability, provided the input material is homogeneous.
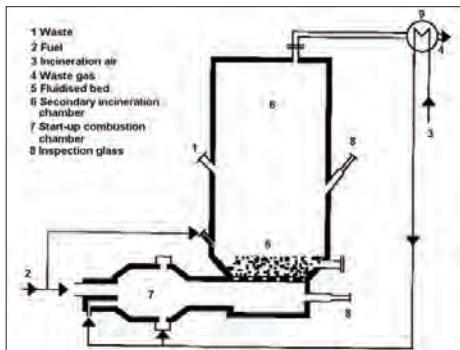
Figure 3. Fluidized bed furnace scheme*
*BAT Reference Document for Waste Incineration

3. Energy recovery from waste

Incineration plants are designed to include heat exchange devices that convert the hot gases from the furnace into useful energy. Waste combustion in an incinerator is an exothermic process that releases heat. Most of the energy produced during this process is transferred to the flue gases, and cooling of the flue gases enables two key processes:

- energy recovery from the hot flue gases;
- purifying of the flue gases before they are released into the atmosphere.

In plants that do not perform heat recovery, gases are usually cooled by injecting water, air, or both. However, most modern plants use boilers that serve two primary functions:

- cooling the flue gases;
- transferring heat from the flue gases to another fluid, usually water, which is converted into steam within the boiler.

The characteristics of flue gases depend on the composition of the waste being treated. For example, hazardous waste often shows large variations in composition and may contain significant concentrations of corrosive substances, such as chlorides, which further affect the composition and quality of combustion.

The energy transferred can be used on-site (replacing imported energy for plant needs) and/or off-site. It can be applied to various processes, such as:

- district heating systems;
- industrial processes requiring heat and steam;
- occasionally, as driving power for cooling and air-conditioning systems.

Additionally, the generated electricity is often supplied to national distribution grids or used within the plant itself.

The efficiency of energy recovery depends on the chemical and physical characteristics of the waste being incinerated. Various local factors can influence the characteristics of waste, including: the addition of industrial waste to municipal waste,

on-site or off-site waste treatment, and different waste collection and separation regimes. Market factors can also redirect certain waste streams to other forms of treatment or away from them.

In some cases, operators may have very limited influence on the characteristics of the delivered waste, while in other cases their influence can be significant.

Ranges and typical net calorific values for some types of input waste for incineration (Rios, L., & Picazo-Tadeo, A. J., 2023) are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Ranges and typical net calorific values for some types of input waste for incineration*

Input waste	Comment and example	Lower calorific value in the original material (including moisture)	
		Range (Gj/t)	Average (GJ/t)
Mixed municipal waste	Mixed household waste from homes	6.3-10.5	9
Bulky waste	Furniture, for example from households	10,5–16,8	13
Waste similar to mixed municipal waste	Waste with similar properties to mixed household waste originating from shops or offices	7,6–12,6	11
Residue from mixed municipal waste after separation	Waste from which fractions for recycling and composting have previously been separated	6,3–11,5	10
Commercial waste	Separately collected waste from shops or offices	10–15	12.5
Packaging waste	Separately collected packaging waste	17–25	20
RDF	Pellet or pelletized material obtained from the treatment of municipal and similar non-hazardous waste	11–26	18
Products from specific industrial waste	Residues of paper or plastic	18–23	20
Hazardous waste	Chemical and other hazardous wastes	0.5–20	9.75
Sewage sludge	Generated after wastewater treatment	See below	See below
	Raw (dried to 25% dry matter)	1.7–2.5	2.1
	Digested (dried to 25% dry matter)	0.5–1.2	0.8

*Rios, L., & Picazo-Tadeo, A. J., 2023 J. 2023

Besides the quality of the waste and technical aspects, the efficiency of the waste incineration process largely depends on the options for utilizing the energy produced. The highest efficiency of waste energy use is usually achieved when the heat from the incineration process is recovered, allowing continuous energy

supply for district heating, process steam, and similar applications, or in combination with electricity generation. However, the implementation of such energy supply systems heavily depends on the plant's location, particularly the availability of reliable energy users.

Electricity generation alone, without simultaneous heat supply, is more commonly applied and generally represents a stable way to recover energy from waste. This approach is less dependent on local circumstances, as the electricity is fed directly into the national power grid.

In cases where there is no demand for thermal energy, the produced heat is often used on-site to support the incineration process, significantly reducing the need for imported energy. For plants incinerating municipal waste, this type of internal energy use can reach up to 10% of the total energy produced from waste incineration.

In general, factors to consider when selecting the design of an incineration plant can vary, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Factors considered in incineration plant design*

Factors for consideration	Detailed aspects for consideration
Input waste	Quantity and quality
	Availability, traceability, quality variations depending on the season
	Possible changes in the nature and quantity of waste
	Effects of primary separation and recycling
Energy sale potential	Thermal energy
	Sale to local communities
	Sale to private industry
	Use of heat in processes
	Geographical aspects and infrastructure for heat transfer pipelines
	Duration of energy demand and contracts
	Obligations for supply availability
	Seasonal requirements
	Substitutes and alternative ways of obtaining energy in the region
	Security of contracted energy supply
	Electricity
	National power grid, on-site energy use
	Electricity price
	Loans or incentives that may affect investment
	Technical requirements regarding capacity and energy production capabilities

Factors for consideration	Detailed aspects for consideration
Local conditions	Meteorological conditions
	Acceptability of 'plume' from water vapour (cooling tower)
	Access to cold water (river or sea)
Combination of heat and energy	Distribution by season
	Future distribution
Other	Choice between increasing output energy, reducing investment costs, and complexity of treatment operations
	Permissible noise level
	Site availability
	Architectural challenges

*BAT Reference Document for Waste Incineration

4. Flue gas cleaning system

The flue gas cleaning system is one of the most important elements of any waste thermal treatment facility, as it plays a key role in reducing pollution and preventing the emission of hazardous substances into the environment. This system is designed to ensure that harmful gases generated during waste incineration are adequately treated before being released into the atmosphere.

Depending on the type and quantity of waste, the temperature developed in the primary furnace, and the types of pollutants expected, appropriate techniques are designed for the reduction and elimination of pollution. Typical flue gas cleaning systems include combinations of various techniques, such as gas scrubbing in scrubbers combined with bag filters, to achieve maximum efficiency in removing harmful substances.

One of the greatest public concerns regarding waste incineration relates to emissions of dioxins and furans (PCDDs – polychlorinated dibenzo-p-dioxins and PCDFs – polychlorinated dibenzofurans). These substances are by-products of various industrial processes but can also be formed during forest fires. Dioxins and furans belong to a group of persistent organic pollutants that pose a significant risk to human health and the environment.

Prevention of dioxin and furan formation in modern waste incineration plants is achieved by using technologies that increase the temperature in secondary flue gas combustion chambers, with a residence time of at least two seconds. In facilities that incinerate waste at temperatures above 1,100°C, dioxin and furan emissions are well below the levels prescribed in reference documents, ensuring compliance with strict environmental standards.

5. Conclusion

Sustainable waste management is a key component in responding to global environmental challenges and is particularly important for developing countries. According to data from 2020, only 8.6% of the total waste generated is utilized in accordance with circular economy principles. This percentage is lower compared to 9.1% in 2018, a consequence of increased exploitation of natural resources, growth in material stockpiles, and low levels of recycling and end-of-life quality in production cycles (De Wit, Hoogzaad, Von Daniels, 2020).

Diverting waste from landfills to incineration or co-incineration facilities has significant environmental and climate benefits. This process prevents methane emissions, one of the most potent greenhouse gases. Methane released during the decomposition of organic waste in landfills has a global warming potential up to 86 times greater than carbon dioxide (CO_2) over a 20-year period, according to the European Environment Agency. Transitioning to energy recovery from waste through thermal treatment also helps reduce these harmful emissions and contributes to mitigating the negative effects of climate change.

Given that the average calorific value of solid municipal waste is around 9 GJ/t, its use in energy production represents a promising approach that can significantly contribute to addressing two important issues: waste management and the growing demand for energy. This process not only allows for the effective utilization of waste but can also play a key role in transitioning to a more sustainable model of production and consumption, in which energy is derived from renewable sources and negative environmental impacts are reduced.

New and existing municipal waste incineration plants must achieve electricity production efficiency of 20–35% and heat production efficiency of 72–91% in accordance with reference documents.

New and existing hazardous waste incineration plants must achieve boiler efficiency of 60–80%, while sewage sludge incineration plants must reach 60–70%.

New generation plants are more efficient at processing larger amounts of waste, which increases the demand for high-quality waste for incineration. This trend in waste treatment has significant implications for waste management. Specifically, there is a growing need to shift away from landfilling, which is particularly important as the pace of waste prevention plans has slowed, while disposal and cross-border movement of waste have increased significantly.

In this context, countries or regions that still rely on landfilling should carefully analyse the costs of disposal compared to the costs of constructing thermal treatment (incineration) plants. This analysis must include factors such as the number of people who will use the produced energy and the quantity and quality of waste that will be used as fuel.

Using waste as an alternative fuel represents a long-term and sustainable investment, especially given the decreasing availability of fossil fuels. Furthermore, considering the lower emissions of harmful gases compared to traditional fuels, this approach can be considered a more efficient and environmentally acceptable solution.

We have shown that there are numerous aspects often overlooked when choosing technology and designing waste incineration plants, which can

Photo: Freepik

have a significant impact on the final results in waste-to-energy production.

The main challenges, however, relate to quality and quantity of waste intended for incineration. These factors not only justify the energy efficiency of the plant but also support investments in this type of infrastructure, as well as their impact on environmental quality.

Creating an adequate institutional framework is essential to achieve satisfactory levels of energy recovery. This requires stricter control over waste sent to landfills, because otherwise the plant may exceed actual and projected needs.

Properly planned and implemented waste-to-energy initiatives can result in large amounts of energy, which can be used for producing heat and electricity. Through this process, waste gains a new life, transforming into a useful resource essential for modern society.

The construction of such plants in the Republic of Serbia, which produce energy from waste, is more cost-effective in the long term than maintaining landfills. Moreover, these plants offer significant environmental benefits, as they emit fewer pollutants and pose lower risks in the event of accidents. Green solutions for alternative energy sources are key in the modern era and should be prioritised to reduce the amount of disposed waste and carbon dioxide emissions.

In conclusion, waste incineration plants represent a sustainable option in the context of global efforts to reduce pollution and improve energy efficiency. This technology, when properly managed and combined with the application of best available techniques, can significantly contribute to achieving circular economy goals and reducing negative environmental impacts.

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Opinion / Review

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Social power and a new understanding of the world in the age of artificial intelligence

A review of the book by *Kate Crawford: Atlas of AI: Power, Politics, and the Planetary Costs of Artificial Intelligence*; Belgrade: Faculty of Media and Communications

When, in a single book, one can see how artificial intelligence subtly shapes geopolitical, economic, security, military, psychological, cultural, and historical spheres, we feel compelled to recommend it to a wider audience. But when you add to this that AI simultaneously transforms technical and social practices, institutions, and infrastructures at an unimaginable speed, it becomes clear that it deserves our full attention. Kate Crawford, a leading scholar of artificial intelligence and the material changes it entails, shatters all doubts and dogmas about the neutrality of digital technologies in her new book, making no

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secret that they serve to consolidate the dominant power of existing global elites while deepening economic inequalities, accompanied by increasingly pervasive surveillance and control of civilian populations. A professor at the University of South Carolina, lead researcher at Microsoft's New York lab, and the first visiting chair of artificial intelligence and justice at the École normale supérieure in Paris, she dismantles taboos surrounding the design of new technologies because, fundamentally, every use depends on the ethical norms of the society that employs them. Responsibly and expertly, she argues that AI is neither artificial nor intelligent, as it entirely depends on political and social structures: "Due to the capital required to build AI at scale and the way it optimises perception, artificial intelligence systems are inevitably designed to serve existing interests of domination." In this sense, artificial intelligence is a "register of power" (p. 21).

From a terminological clarification of the concept itself to a phenomenological analysis of a precise conceptual atlas of AI, the author offers numerous practical examples, structuring the most important points of social power that are crucial for framing technology, politics, capital, and the governance of reality. The imaginary map guides us through the "aesthetic paradigm of the visual and the epistemic paradigm of knowledge," assisting us on a journey through the unknown world of artificial intelligence, which, after reading this book, we come to understand in a completely different way. Crawford points out how the IT industry aims to firmly grip the entire world, yet these opportunities remain accessible only to technologically educated and politically aware social categories. Knowledge lies in the skill to understand how a system functions, and how a contextual environment is built with models that guide the

desired policies. Western centres of power are now colonising public space, which is anything but neutral!

This work is essential for understanding what is happening to us today, as well as for anticipating what lies beyond our limited cognitive horizons. Although it is presented to laypeople as a purely technological and communication tool, in practice it depends heavily on fossil fuels, rare minerals, and intensive human labour. For example, lithium is a mineral without which modern computing cannot exist, so extraction costs for companies can never be limiting, no matter how high they are. To make computer-generated images even more perfect and enticing, increasingly demanding software is required, which consumes ever more energy. Human dependence on technological tools casts a shadow over ecological extraction: seventeen rare elements are necessary for the continued use of mobile phones, laptops, and the most critical components of artificial intelligence infrastructure. The world should know that just last year Google's data centres consumed nearly 23 billion litres of water, roughly a third of Turkey's annual consumption. The carbon footprint of AI will become even more visible, as the voices of environmental activists grow louder due to the lack of ecological safeguards, yet the artificial intelligence system rests on the logic of big capital expressed in the militarisation of the new world order, which offers no acceptable alternative. In other words, artificial intelligence is a new force reshaping the life of the planet, and nations and cultures that recognise this will have an advantage over others. "Artificial intelligence, in the process of remapping and intervening in the world, is politics by other means, even if it is rarely acknowledged as such. The politics are driven by the Great AI

Houses, about a dozen companies that dominate planetary-scale computing" (p. 31). It is an extractive industry, whose success is measured by the degree of exploitation of underdeveloped environments.

The tightly structured content of the book, organised into seven chapters, examines both secret and well-known knowledge about computing and artificial intelligence, always highlighting the dialectical closeness of technology and the development of human society. The historical arc is evident, from the invention of the steam press, which increased productivity and accelerated the movement of capital, to artificial intelligence, which will optimise social decision-making, control climate change, and enable sufficient food production for an already overpopulated planet. The author possesses a strong critical spirit, with a distinctly clear stance on the dangers that *technosolutionism* brings, accompanied by its propagandistic mantra.[2] The game is sophisticated and cunning: the myth of pure technology conceals a series of "battles and secret agreements", while the greatest costs of its logic are borne by the Earth's atmosphere, ocean ecosystems, and poorly paid workers around the world. The experience of work is being redefined as surveillance increases, while algorithms assess the limits of human labour. "False automation does not directly replace human labour; it merely relocates and disperses it across space and time", observes Crawford (p. 75), as powerful industries creatively design different combinations of computer and human work interaction. Neural networks, logistic regression, and decision trees are only a small part of the machine learning repertoire, which can scan millions of emails, photos, or speeches in a matter of moments. Clichés like "data mining" or claims that data is "the new oil" rhetorically camouflage the centuries-old practices of powerful colonisers: if nature is no longer alive but merely a fund of free resources, then data is no longer personal but a profitable corporate investment.[3] Here we can recognise a colonial pattern applied in the early phases of territorial conquest – from other people's land (*terra nullius*) to other people's data (*cookies*) – extending a neoliberal view of the information market as the primary measure of value. Crawford names this phenomenon the ideology of data, warning of its consequences in the field of political and security action: "When data are merely a form of capital, then everything is justified, and all spaces can be subjected to increasingly invasive means of datafication", she concludes.

A major strength of this book is its simplicity and accessibility to the average reader, who does not need an expert level of knowledge to understand and interpret it. The titans of the technology industry have become so thanks to the naivety of people who willingly offered them their family albums, business photos, and military exercises – overlooking that in doing so they were exposing their own privacy. Ethics is observed from a distance, as is the protection

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[2]   According to the *Cambridge Dictionary*, technosolutionism represents the idea that "all problems can be solved with technology, even though the truth may be more complex". This means that in the social sciences, the term has a negative connotation, which critics see in the emergence of so-called capitalist modernity that favours only economic growth.

[3]   "To say that data are 'the new oil' not only highlights their profitability, but also conceals the problems of the fossil fuel industry: from the costs of the oil and mining industries, to contractual slavery, geopolitical conflicts, resource depletion, and consequences that exceed the timeframe of a single human lifetime", Crawford notes (p. 118).

of public goods. AI is not neutral, with algorithms producing discriminatory or biased outcomes, which are analysed in detail throughout the content. "A typical structure of an episode in the ongoing narrative about AI bias begins when an investigative journalist or insider discovers that a particular AI system produces discriminatory results. The story then becomes widely known, and the company in question promises to address the issue. The system is subsequently replaced with a new one, or technical interventions are made to produce more equitable outcomes. These results and technical corrections remain proprietary secrets, while the public is told they can be confident that the bias 'disease' has been cured."[4] The selection of information that artificial intelligence will use in training and technical systems is important for the accuracy of the results obtained, but the real question is – who decides which criteria will be applied? "Histories of classification show us that the most harmful forms of human categorisation – from apartheid systems to the pathologisation of homosexuality – did not simply disappear under the scrutiny of scientific research and ethical critique", highlighting the importance of political organisation and long-term media campaigns. In the digital constellation, even emotions can be recognised and captured within networks of standard behavioural patterns, but if we leave it to machines to construct and shape them, we are entering an age of orchestrated revolutions. In this context, we interpret conclusions about the weakening role of states and nations, replaced by complex, intertwined networks of multinational and multilateral programmes, infrastructures, and labour. The delegation of key state functions to technology entrepreneurs will be felt through the phenomenon of the outsourced state, where territorial sovereignty is exchanged for data sovereignty. "Space becomes the ultimate imperial ambition, symbolising an escape from the limitations of Earth, the body, and law", the author concludes, announcing a new colony where the *ubermensch* will live freed from any biological, social, ethical, or ecological boundaries.

Kate Crawford is a public policy advisor at the United Nations, the White House, and the European Parliament, where she frequently speaks on the political design and application of artificial intelligence. When she states that the shaping of knowledge, communication, and social power today directly depends on the scale of artificial intelligence employed by the state, she should be trusted. Careful reading of this work may help us better understand the fear Crawford discusses — both of individual and collective death — the "fear that our time is truly running out".

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[2]   Tristan Greene, "Science May Have Cured Biased AI," The Next Web, 28 October 2017, available at: https://thenextweb.com/artificial-inteligence/2017/10/26/scientists-may-have-just-created-the-cure-for-biased-ai

In memory of
Ljubica "Buba" Miljković
(1949–2025)

Vesna V. Bašić[1]

Editor of the trilogy *On Serbian Art with Love*
Novi Sad (Serbia)

Ljubica Buba Miljković
– A sanctuary for the soul

Ljubica Miljković
– A dedication to remember

God gave us words

Ljubica "Buba" Miljković (Belgrade, January 02 1949 – Belgrade, May 26 2025).

She graduated in art history at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade. She briefly worked as secretary of the Department of Art History and as a librarian at the Republic Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments. She was a curator at the National Museum of Serbia from 1984 to 2015; she worked in the Graphics Cabinet and later took charge of and managed the Collection of Yugoslav Painting of the 20th Century. After passing her professional exam, she earned the title of senior curator and later museum advisor. She researched 20th-century Serbian painting and the history of the National Museum of Serbia, where she worked. She also engaged in art criticism and was a member of selection committees, award juries, and gallery councils.

She authored dozens of thematic or commemorative exhibitions, scholarly studies, professional

Ljubica Buba Miljković
Photo: Enter media

papers, catalogues, and monographic publications. She wrote the scripts for three television documentaries entitled "Secrets of the National Museum" and dozens of contributions for the RTS Educational Program. She gave hundreds of lectures at

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Memorial evening for Ljubica Buba Miljković, Gallery '73 in Belgrade
Photo: Enter media

Kolarac University, the Faculty of Education, and cultural institutions throughout the Republic of Serbia. She also launched and edited the *Journal of the Society of Friends of the National Museum.*

She was an honorary member of the Lada Association of Fine Artists of Serbia. She was a donor and a member of the Assembly of Matica Srpska in Novi Sad. For her decades of dedicated work, commitment to the profession, and contributions to the advancement of museum practice, she received numerous acknowledgments, awards, and significant professional recognitions.

She was the recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award "Mihailo Valtrović," presented by the Museum Society of Serbia for outstanding contributions to national culture in the fields of research, preservation, use, collection, and presentation of movable cultural heritage. In Ljubica Buba Miljković,

Memorial evening for Ljubica Buba Miljković, Gallery '73 in Belgrade
Photo: Enter media

we had a rare and invaluable collaborator in the preservation and promotion of Serbian cultural, artistic, and spiritual heritage. Her works are equally a testament to the continuous human journey between reality and vision, earth and sky, the material and the spiritual — a reflection of the fragile sense that arises and fades within a person, pulsating with life itself.

As a preserver of continuity of what was begun, a seeker and devoted fighter — working in the glory of God, her people, and her homeland — she has left us indebted through her industriousness, knowing that *only acts of love endure.* The true benefit of her labour will be felt by readers and by those who are to come.

Her life and museum work testify to gratitude and love, immortalized in the monumental three-volume work *On Serbian Art with Love,* published by the Foundation "For the Serbian People and the State."

Evoking joy and goodness

Buba's Singing Heart

"On view to the whole world, which will exclaim:
Behold, the Serbs!"
Miloš Crnjanski, *Migrations*, vol. I

Ljubica Buba Miljković (1949–2025), through her entire being and her devoted and dedicated work, belonged to and served her people, finding in that belonging her greatest duty, and in that service her greatest joy. With the bitterness of knowing the tragedy of the Serbian people, yet with the breadth of a person who perceives life and history more deeply and over time, she withstood the harshness of the era we live in — because she knew that *only acts of love endure.*

Her academic diligence in comprehensively examining complex topics in the diverse and rich national artistic and literary creation rested on knowledge, dedication, patience, and faith in the *perfect law of freedom.* And her prayer to the Creator, along with her unquenchable desire to contemplate Truth and the Path, strengthened her to see the certainty of the future *in the service of light.*

From this calling and response, Ljubica Miljković, with all her being, legacy, understanding, and convictions, was oriented toward the heavenly heights, and from this harmony arose her worldviews and creative motives. Undoubtedly, this could only be achieved through insight and understanding of the general and national historical, cultural, and artistic context, proving that art transcends na-

tional boundaries and belongs to the world artistic heritage. Ljubica Miljković, with her many years of curatorial experience and abundant literary talent, based on facts and layered, diverse data from archival sources, brought together the lives, paintings, and artistic works of selected Serbian painters — confirming the path of "glory and honour."

Buba strove for every artistic-literary meditation, idea, ideal, aspiration, and description of artists and their works to contribute to shedding light on certain neglected yet crucial issues of our culture, spirituality, and education, influencing our refinement and helping to reassess some of our misconceptions while ennobling everyday life.

She carried within her a longing for peace and meaning — affirming that death does not exist, only a journey, whether real or metaphysical. Essentially, it signifies a quiet, humble life lived with Meaning. In a cognitive sense, Buba followed the thought of Božidar Knežević that "words are living images of things", returning to them an analogical key of connection through symbols, while seeing their original power to represent reality as continuous transformations of words — which leads to the fullness of their meaning.

Through her knowledge and long curatorial experience, Ljubica Miljković guided us through complex historical truths, artistic paths, and the nature of painterly creation, artistic intersections, and the heights reached by Serbian painters over a century. She presented, concisely and compellingly, how the lives of these artists demanded self-sacrifice and hardships, effort and suffering, bitterness, misunderstandings, and uncertainty. Narratively effortless, thought grounded in the conviction and faith that the past contains living and potent layers, those that radiate in every age.

Throughout her life, wherever she moved, whatever she reflected upon, over everything she did and wrote — Ljubica Miljković perceived the mysterious light of art in *immediate proximity*. Art contributes to the integrated joy of theology. Ljubica recognised this secret of artistic creation — in the devoted praise of the Divine Logos. If profound thoughts require life experiences beyond the bounds of the possible and often surpass the power of comprehension, and if the calling she embraced requires great strength, Buba possessed both. She was gifted with the ability for deep reflection, a sense for strict methodological rules of thought, and an affinity for patient and prolonged study.

Anyone who ever encountered or spoke with Buba felt her cultivated calm. In her presence and bearing radiated the soulful mental strength of an inner world that trembles and burns within, yet appears outwardly serene and untouchable.

A person is always mysteriously prepared, both for their own thoughts and for those that come to them, as if by some miraculous force always ready for feelings that will stealthily enter the soul. Father Tadej of Vitovnica offered guidance exactly in pro-portion to the soul that came to him in confession, yet of all his teachings, by some thought, the most well-known words have remained in this world: "What your thoughts are, such is your life". Buba repeated these words daily, both to herself and to her friends. Following Father Tadej's teaching, she believed that a person who governs their thoughts demonstrates spiritual health.

Buba sought a beacon in every age, a support in every adversity, a guide in every longing, light in every darkness, faith in improvement, in the meaning of existence in this world, in the universe. She gladly shared her knowledge and experiences with others. We all carry that memory of her. She was always in the service of humanity. Tireless in giving love. Buba saw and was convinced that it is precisely the Divine moments of life that constitute the true substance of the world; and that a person with a singing heart is an island of God — His beacon, His proxy.

On earth, there is only one kind of true happiness, and that happiness is the bliss of a *loving and singing heart:* for even in life it grows into the spiritual essence of the world and participates in the Kingdom of God.

List of peer reviews
for the journal *Progress* in 2025

Name Surname	Academic degree	Affiliation	Academic position
Avramović, Zoran	PhD	Institute for Educational Research, Belgrade	Principal Research Fellow
Aracki, Zoran	PhD	University of Niš, Faculty of Philosophy	Associate professor
Babić, Miloš	PhD	University of Banja Luka, Academy of Arts	Full Professor
Bajić, Predrag	PhD	Union-Nikola Tesla University Faculty of Sport	Assistant Professor
Baltazarević, Borivoje	PhD	Institute for Serbian culture Priština – Leposavić	Research Fellow
Blagojević, Veljko	PhD	Institute of International Politics and Economics, Belgrade	Senior Research Fellow
Bojanić, Bojan	PhD	University of Priština, in Kosovska Mitrovica, Faculty of Law	Full Professor
Vranješ, Aleksandar	PhD	University of Banja Luka, Faculty of Political Sciences	Assistant Professor
Vuksanović, Divna	PhD	University of Arts in Belgrade, Faculty of Dramatic Arts	Full Professor
Gajić, Aleksandar	PhD	Institute of European Studies, Belgrade	Principal Research Fellow
Glišin, Vanja	PhD	Institute for Political Studies, Belgrade	Research Fellow
Drid, Patrik	PhD	University of Novi Sad, Faculty of Sport and Physical Education	Full Professor

Name Surname	Academic degree	Affiliation	Academic position
Elezović, Zvezdana	PhD	Institute for Serbian culture Priština – Leposavić	Senior Research Fellow
Zarić, Ivan	PhD	University of Defense, Strategic Research Institute	Research Fellow
Ilić, Dušan	PhD	Institute of European Studies, Belgrade	Research Fellow
Jokić, Aleksandar	PhD	Portland State University	Professor of Philosophy
Kajtez, Ilija	PhD	Singidunum University, Faculty of Political Studies and Security	Full professor
Kalik Mario	PhD	Institute for Political Studies, Belgrade	Research Fellow
Kovačević, Mirjana	PhD	Higher School of Communications, Belgrade	Assistant Professor
Milašinović, Srđan	PhD	University of Criminal Investigation and Police Studies, Belgrade	Full professor
Mitrović, Ljubiša	PhD	University of Niš Faculty of Philosophy	Professor emeritus
Nikolić, Neda	PhD	University of Kragujevac, Faculty of Technical Sciences	Associate Professor
Perić, Nenad	PhD	Institute for Serbian culture Priština – Leposavić	Senior Research Fellow
Pršić, Miloje	PhD	University of Defense, Military Academy, Belgrade	Full Professor
Stamenković, Slobodan	PhD	Megatrend University, Faculty of Business Studies	Full Professor
Stekić, Nenad	PhD	Institute of International Politics and Economics, Belgrade	Senior Research Fellow
Tomić, Boban	PhD	Higher School of Communications, Belgrade	Associate Professor
Ćalović, Dragan	PhD	Faculty of Contemporary Arts, Belgrade	Full professor
Šmakić, Katarina	PhD	Faculty of Diplomacy and Security, Belgrade	Assistant Professor