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EDITOR'S NOTE

AMERICAN FOUNDING VALUES STRATEGICALLY COMMUNICATED IN HISTORICAL SPEECHES – A SOCINT ANALYSIS OF THE AMERICAN CULTURAL MATRIX – 06

THE CHALLENGES OF RECOVERING FORGOTTEN HISTORICAL DESTINIES: THE TRAGEDY OF CRIMEAN TATARS IN THE 'BLUE REGIMENT', AT THE END OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR 24

RUSSIAN MUSHROOM FORAGING - FROM SURVIVAL TO SYMBOL 32

CULTURAL MIRROR, IDENTITY, AND PERCEPTION: STEREOTYPES ABOUT FRANCE AND SPAIN IN THE EUROPEAN IMAGINATION 38

THE ROLE OF THE OLDER GENERATION IN MODERN RUSSIAN SOCIETY 48

THE BRITONS, A COMPLEX CHALLENGE FOR SOCIOCULTURAL INTELLIGENCE 56

THE EXPRESSION OF LOVE AS A CULTURAL INDICATOR OF SOCIAL CHANGE 66

UNDERSTANDING RUSSIAN SPACE THROUGH SOCINT: FROM CULTURAL INTERPRETATION TO OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY 74

CHINA-US COMPETITION IN THE 21ST CENTURY: BETWEEN STRUCTURAL REALISM AND THE CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS 82

EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear readers,

We are pleased to welcome you to the 10th edition of the Bulletin of Linguistic and Intercultural Studies (BSLI). This open-access, double-blind peer-reviewed journal is published twice a year under the auspices of the “Mihai Viteazul” National Intelligence Academy (ANIMV). BSLI includes articles on foreign languages, cultures, and civilizations, with a special focus on their relevance to intelligence and security.

This issue features contributions on the emerging field of sociocultural intelligence (SOCINT), spanning various linguistic, cultural, and civilizational contexts. The articles place particular emphasis on intelligence and security perspectives regarding cultural elements. We are also pleased to include a paper by an assistant professor from the University of Bucharest, highlighting our efforts to enhance ANIMV's collaboration within the broader humanities, especially at the intersection with intelligence and security. Therefore, you will delve into SOCINT topics across Russian, Chinese, European, and

Western landscapes, analyzing and interpreting social, cultural, symbolic, and identity factors through the analytical lenses of the intelligence and security field, thereby contributing to the consolidation of SOCINT as an intelligence discipline. We also aim to support the research interests of ANIMV's extended community in relevant SOCINT topics, including intelligence and security, cultural understanding, and global trends.

Once again, we reaffirm BSLI's commitment to offering an open platform for thorough, peer-reviewed research. We sincerely thank all the authors for their valuable contributions and the reviewers for their diligent and careful work. We also invite readers to continue engaging and to contribute to future issues with original research, reviews, and reflections that align with the spirit and mission of BSLI.

With appreciation,

Advanced intelligence instructor Ana-Maria SURUGIU, PhD
Editor-in-Chief
The Bulletin of Linguistic and Intercultural Studies



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AMERICAN FOUNDING VALUES STRATEGICALLY COMMUNICATED IN HISTORICAL SPEECHES

A SOCINT ANALYSIS OF THE AMERICAN CULTURAL MATRIX

Alias: Evantia DIAMANDOPOLIS¹

ABSTRACT

This study employs a sociocultural intelligence (SOCINT) framework to examine how the United States' cultural identity is encoded and transmitted through its foundational texts and major political speeches. Using the Declaration of Independence (1776) as the cultural and symbolic origin, the research explores how language functions simultaneously as identity and power, shaping national consciousness through discourse. Drawing on anthropological and intercultural theories — Geertz's interpretivism, Hall's Iceberg Model, Hofstede's six cultural dimensions, Schwartz's value theory, and Trompenaars' relational framework — the study integrates qualitative discourse analysis with quantitative cultural data to construct a "Cultural Matrix" of the United States. Findings reveal that liberty, equality, resilience, and moral exceptionalism remain enduring anchors of American identity. SOCINT demonstrates its analytical capacity to uncover the moral structures embedded in discourse while minimizing interpretive bias.

Keywords: *cultural analysis, sociocultural intelligence, USA cultural matrix.*

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Introduction

Using the analytical framework of sociocultural intelligence (SOCINT), this study aims to identify a cultural matrix of the United States, understood here as a structured mapping of enduring identity values and discourse patterns. Beginning with the United States Declaration of Independence (1776) and drawing on reference speeches from 1775 to 1987, the research examines how language can simultaneously function as an expression of identity and as a tool of persuasion, shaping national consciousness through discourse.

Drawing on anthropological and intercultural perspectives – from Geertz's interpretivism and Hall's Iceberg Cultural Model to Hofstede's cultural dimensions, Schwartz's Theory of Values, and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's relational framework – the analysis combines qualitative and quantitative research methods in order to construct this U.S. cultural matrix. The results indicate that freedom, equality, resilience, and moral exceptionalism emerge as enduring beacons of U.S. identity, guiding national discourse across centuries. In this context, moral exceptionalism is treated analytically as a recurring narrative feature through which national legitimacy and civic aspiration are framed. These identity values function not only as intrinsic ideals, but also as outward-facing symbols of political legitimacy and civic aspiration. The Founders' political writings and institutional designs were not merely intended to stabilize a new state internally; they also carried an implicit transnational message directed at the Old-World order they had departed and at wider audiences living under systems perceived as arbitrary, despotic, or oppressive. Through the universal language of liberty and rights, early American political discourse positioned the republic as more than a national project – it became a normative proposition about what social and political life ought to be.

This outward communicative dimension has had enduring consequences for how the United States is perceived globally, shaping both admiration and contestation. Because these values serve as highly symbolic, externally projected reference points, they may also be weaponized in influence operations, including disinformation campaigns that seek to exploit, appropriate, or delegitimize them. Against this background, the paper confirms the role of SOCINT analysis in evidence-based analytical assessment, which is indispensable for a holistic understanding of the operational environment in the intelligence field.

Context

Culture may be described as the foundation of human behavior and as the architecture of meaning through which societies perceive, justify, and reproduce their worldview. Within the intelligence-related disciplines, *Sociocultural Intelligence* (SOCINT) refers to the capacity to interpret the social and cultural systems that shape collective decision-making. SOCINT goes beyond the observation of facts by decoding context, including symbolic and cognitive depth that gives behavior its meaning. Culture influences perception, behavior, and decision-making (Cedru & Şaguna, 2025). From this perspective, cultural understanding strengthens analytical reasoning, enhances diplomatic effectiveness, and increases awareness of the complexity inherent in the intelligence domain.

According to Geertz (1973), the study of culture should not be understood as a global attempt to uncover a single, totalizing structure, but rather as a process of interpreting meaningful symbols that provide coherence to human experience. Culture functions as a layered system of meanings, in which understanding emerges from the analysis of these symbols and the relationships between them – true "vehicles" of perception, emotion, and thought (Geertz, 1973, p. 408). Building on this interpretive approach, the present study conceptualizes language as both identity and power: a mechanism through which societies legitimize moral and political values.

The United States of America represents a distinctive cultural case, as its foundational discourse operates as a moral grammar that continuously defines freedom, equality, justice, and the pursuit of happiness. Through a SOCINT lens, these ideals form a coherent cultural matrix that guides national development from independence to global leadership. From this perspective, cultural understanding strengthens analytical reasoning, enhances diplomatic effectiveness, and increases awareness of the complexity inherent in the intelligence domain. This study addresses how SOCINT can be applied to U.S. foundational discourse (1775–1987) to construct a cultural matrix of enduring identity values and translate abstract cultural meaning into analytically usable, potentially quantifiable parameters.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to identify and analyze from the SOCINT perspective the cultural values that define American sociocultural identity, as reflected in the Declaration of Independence and key public speeches.

A secondary objective is to illustrate how SOCINT, as an analytical discipline, can mitigate stereotypes and deepen cultural awareness.

Research Questions

1. What are the core values of American society that the Declaration of Independence of 1776 and the American political discourse from 1775 to 1987 uphold according to sociocultural and intercultural models?

2. How can SOCINT, as an analytical approach, mitigate prejudice and deepen understanding of national identity within political and cultural discourse?

Research hypothesis

Based on the theoretical and intercultural foundations of SOCINT, this study assumes that mainstream American political discourse encodes a stable set of sociocultural values – freedom, equality, achievement, pragmatism, action, and optimism – that correspond to the measurable intercultural dimensions identified by Hofstede (1980, 1984; 2010), Schwartz (2012), or Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2011).

Through an in-depth analysis of the Declaration of Independence (1776) and influential American political speeches from the period 1775–1987, the research seeks to demonstrate that these values form a coherent moral architecture, consistently reflected across centuries in national discourse. In extenso, this hypothesis argues that SOCINT can serve as a reliable interpretive framework for translating abstract cultural expressions into quantifiable parameters, ideally enhancing the predictability of specific behaviors or developments in sociocultural analysis.

1. Theoretical Framework

SOCINT integrates anthropological theory, intercultural communication, and intelligence analysis to interpret meaning in context. According to Cedru and Şaguna (2025), SOCINT consolidates social, cultural, and psychological variables to explain collective behavior and cognitive patterns.

Despite differences in approaches and perspectives, theories addressing human needs and values share a common objective: identifying the fundamental principles that shape human behavior, decision-making, and motivation (Tay & Diener, 2011). In this regard,

the literature highlights several major theoretical frameworks, including Maslow's Hierarchy of needs (1943), Rokeach's typology of values (1973), Hall's Iceberg Model of Culture (1976), Schwartz's Universal Values Model (2012), Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory (1980, 1984), and the behavioral components of culture proposed by Edward T. Hall and Mildred Hall (1987). Together, these contributions provide a robust conceptual foundation for contemporary sociocultural analysis and for understanding intercultural differences in a global context.

1.1 Anthropological Perspectives

Anthropology provides the intellectual foundation for SOCINT, framing culture as a structured system of meanings. Durkheim (1912) and Malinowski (1944) conceptualized culture as the moral mechanism sustaining cohesion. Boas (1920) argued that cultures must be understood contextually, opposing universalist generalizations. Lévi-Strauss (1963) revealed the structural logic of binary oppositions – *freedom versus constraint, equality versus hierarchy* – while Geertz (1973) reframed culture as a 'web of meanings' accessed via thick description. Later theories (Appadurai, 1996; Hannerz, 1992) viewed culture as dynamic, adaptive, and interlinked with globalization. Together, these paradigms affirm that culture is a living web of significance, not a static artifact – precisely what SOCINT seeks to decode, as an applied analytical method.

1.2 Hall's Analogy for Approaching Intercultural Understanding – The Cultural Iceberg Model

Edward T. Hall (1976) distinguishes between visible cultural forms (symbols, rituals, language) and hidden layers (beliefs, values, assumptions). From a SOCINT perspective, the model is particularly relevant because it highlights the need to analyze the 'submerged' 85% of culture in order to interpret visible actions.

From a sociocultural analytical perspective, the Iceberg Cultural Model is essential because it enables the transition from a purely descriptive level to an interpretive and predictive one. In intelligence contexts, understanding



the invisible dimension of culture is equivalent to gaining access to the motivational mechanisms that underpin decisions, perceptions, and behaviors.

1.3 Intercultural Models and Quantitative Parameters

1.3.1 Hofstede's Six Cultural Dimensions: Concept and Illustrative Comparison (Romania vs. the United States)

Hofstede (1980, 1984; 2010; 1996) identified six dimensions of national culture: Power Distance, Individualism, Masculinity, Uncertainty Avoidance, Long-Term Orientation, and Indulgence.

Power Distance (PDI) measures acceptance of inequality. Low PDI societies prefer participatory decision-making and accountable authority. The U.S. score (40) indicates egalitarian expectations (flat structures, direct address, rule-of-law legitimacy). Romania's score (90) indicates a hierarchical society in which accessibility to those in positions of authority and status is limited.

Individualism vs. Collectivism evaluates the balance between personal autonomy and responsibility versus collective obligation. The United States' score (91), among the highest globally, reflects self-reliance, individual privacy, and moral commitment – features frequently reinforced in political rhetoric emphasizing civic duty and personal freedom. Romania's lower score (30) suggests a collectivist orientation centered on group belonging, family ties, and community cohesion, where loyalty and interpersonal relationships are prioritized over individual autonomy.

Masculinity vs. Femininity (MAS) – more recently, referred to as Motivation toward Achievement and Success – captures the extent to which a society emphasizes achievement, competitiveness, and goal orientation versus care, cooperation, and quality of life. The United States' MAS score (62) indicates a performance-driven and assertive environment, reflected in public appeals to courage, pragmatism, productivity, and national success. Romania's score (42) suggests a more balanced society, where success and competition coexist with concern for quality of life and cooperation. Romania is therefore not strongly competitive, but rather more relational and empathetic.

Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI) assesses tolerance for ambiguity and innovation. A moderately low score for the United States (46) aligns with pragmatic experimentation, entrepreneurial risk-taking, and flexible problem-solving – features reflected in discourse that values innovation and negotiation. Romania's very high score (90) indicates a low tolerance for ambiguity, with a preference for clear rules, stability, security, and planning. Change is often approached cautiously, and institutions are more likely to develop bureaucratic characteristics.

Long-term Orientation vs. Short-Term Orientation (LTO) balances tradition with short-term pragmatism. The United States' low score (26) suggests a preference for immediate results, action-oriented planning, and present-focused mobilization, reflected in rhetoric that emphasizes rapid response and direct action. Romania's mid-range score (52) indicates a more balanced approach between tradition and pragmatism: past values are respected, while adaptation to change remains possible when the benefits are clearly perceived.

Indulgence vs. restraint (IVR) measures the extent to which a society encourages enjoyment, optimism, and emotional expressiveness. The United States' IVR score (68) aligns with hope-oriented, affect-rich rhetoric, the public celebration of individual happiness, and a strong belief in progress. Romania's lower score indicates a more restrained society, where social control and self-discipline are more pronounced. There is a tendency to prioritize duty, work, and responsibility over relaxation and pleasure.

Conclusion: Hofstede-Based Cultural Matrix (Romania vs. the United States)

Taken together, the six dimensions outline two distinct cultural profiles that can be operationalized as a SOCINT-oriented comparative matrix. The United States emerges as a predominantly low power-distance and strongly individualistic culture, oriented toward achievement, flexibility under uncertainty, short-term mobilization, and comparatively high indulgence. This configuration supports a discourse environment in which autonomy, direct legitimacy, pragmatic action, and optimism are consistently reinforced. By contrast, Romania's profile reflects high power distance, collectivist orientation, stronger uncertainty avoidance, and a more restrained sociocultural climate, alongside a more balanced long-term outlook. These patterns indicate a cultural emphasis on stability, hierarchy, relational cohesion, and the regulation of social behavior through clear norms and expectations. Within SOCINT analysis, such a matrix offers a structured way to interpret how cultural values shape decision-making, institutional behavior, and the

communication of legitimacy, providing an analytically usable foundation for contextual and predictive assessment.

1.3.2 Schwartz's Theory of Basic Values and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's relational framework

In *An Overview of the Schwartz Theory of Basic Values* (2012), Schwartz introduced ten basic motivational value types, whose relative importance varies depending on personal experience, culture, and other individual factors. Schwartz (2012) argues that each value reflects a distinct motivational goal derived from fundamental human needs: self-direction, universalism, benevolence, conformity/tradition, security, power, achievement, hedonism, and stimulation.

These values are integrated into a circular structure organized along two bipolar dimensions: *Self-Transcendence* versus *Self-Enhancement*, and *Openness to Change* versus *Conservation*.

Self-transcendence values (such as universalism and benevolence) prioritize the welfare of others, whereas self-enhancement values (such as power, achievement, and hedonism) emphasize personal success. The dimension of *Openness to change* includes values oriented toward innovation and autonomy (self-direction, stimulation, and hedonism), while *Conservation* encompasses values related to security, conformity, and tradition (Schwartz, 2012; Alaminos-Fernández, Alaminos Fernández, & Alaminos, 2023).

In the study *Measuring Mainstream US Cultural Values* (Burns & Littrell, 2013), statistical comparisons show that, when responses are analyzed by category (the total U.S. sample and state-level samples) against Schwartz's ten values, a coherent dominant culture emerges in the United States. The authors describe it as a "White, generally middle-class" culture, characterized by high motivational priorities for self-direction, universalism, and benevolence, and the lowest priorities for power and achievement. The study also identified significant differences between urban and rural residents, while gender-based differences were minimal (Burns & Littrell, 2013). As dominant for the United States, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2011) emphasize universalism, rule-based morality, and achievement (status through merit), reinforcing America's moral meritocracy. These models converge with Hofstede's profile, providing quantifiable parameters for quantitative analysis and SOCINT interpretation.

2. Research Methodology

Methodologically, the study employs a mixed-methods case study design that integrates qualitative discourse analysis with a quantitative component grounded in established intercultural models. The research corpus includes foundational political texts and representative speeches, analyzed qualitatively to interpret their symbolic and rhetorical layers and to identify the values and narrative patterns that shape cultural identity. In parallel, the quantitative strand relies on measurable indicators drawn from validated intercultural frameworks, such as Hofstede's cultural dimensions. This methodological integration enables the alignment of observable sociocultural patterns with underlying discursive and value-based structures, providing a coherent account of how culture is articulated, reproduced, and operationalized through language and social behavior.

Research Corpus

The research corpus was selected to capture the continuity and evolution of U.S. foundational values as strategically communicated through national discourse across key historical moments (1775–1987). It includes the *Declaration of Independence* (1776) and a set of politically and culturally influential speeches that function as enduring reference points in American public memory and institutional identity: Patrick Henry's *Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death*, (1775), George Washington's *First Inaugural Address* (1789), Frederick Douglass's *What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?* (1852), Abraham Lincoln's *Gettysburg Address* (1863), William Jennings Bryan's *Cross of Gold* (1896), Franklin D. Roosevelt's *First Inaugural Address* (1933), John F. Kennedy's *Inaugural Address* (1961), Martin Luther King Jr.'s *I Have a Dream* (1963), and Ronald Reagan's *Address at the Brandenburg Gate* (1987). These texts span contexts of state formation, constitutional legitimacy, civil conflict, economic transformation, social reform, democratic leadership, and geopolitical confrontation, enabling the identification of recurring identity values and persuasive structures through a SOCINT lens.

Analytical credibility and validity were supported through the consistent application of coding categories across the corpus, theoretical cross-checking with sociocultural and intercultural frameworks, and grounding conclusions in patterns that recur across multiple texts and time periods rather than in isolated

examples. The analytical procedure followed three core steps: textual analysis to identify recurrent moral and rhetorical patterns; narrative analysis to map foundational values; and SOCINT correlation to link discursive findings with intercultural dimensions, ensuring that the resulting cultural matrix reflects a historically sustained discursive profile.

3. Case Study: United States Cultural Matrix

3.1 Fundamental Values in the Declaration of Independence

The Declaration of Independence (1776) constitutes the moral charter of the American nation. Its key values—freedom, equality, divine providence, justice, and collective moral agency—form the conceptual core of the American cultural matrix. Thomas Jefferson’s rhetoric positions freedom both within Enlightenment rationalism and within theological legitimacy.²

The performative structure “We hold these truths...” constructs collective conviction as a moral duty. Linguistically, its declarative verbs – *declare, dissolve, entitle, assume* – transform abstract principles into political action, reflecting Hofstede’s (1980, 1984) high Individualism and Schwartz’s Autonomy. Equality likewise embodies Trompenaars’ Universalism, affirming that moral rules are universally applicable. The text functions as *cultural DNA*: a socio-moral code that later speeches continually reactivate.

3.2 Continuity of Values in American Discourse

Subsequent political oratory reinterprets Jefferson’s values for new generations:

Patrick Henry (1775): “Give me liberty, or give me death!” (Avalon) - the sacred valorization of autonomy and sacrifice, echoing high Individualism and Masculinity.³

In 1775, through his speech “Give Me Liberty, or Give Me Death!”, Patrick Henry transforms liberty into an

absolute and unconditional moral principle, asserting that an honorable death is preferable to life without freedom. The speech seeks to break the political hesitation of Virginia’s elite and to redefine loyalty – not to the Crown, but to the founding principle of liberty. From a SOCINT perspective, Henry anchors emerging American values in a culture of self-determination, consistent with high individualism, and in an ethic of courage and action characteristic of an achievement-oriented, competitive, and pragmatic profile (high masculinity). He frames independence not merely as a political option, but as an identity imperative, while any form of compromise is equated with “slavery.” The speech’s dominant themes – patriotism, sacrifice, and liberty versus submission – construct a mobilizing narrative in which defending freedom becomes a collective duty and the sacrifice of life is presented as a legitimate price for protecting the foundational values of the American political community.

■ George Washington (1789): “The preservation of the sacred fire of liberty... is finally staked on the experiment entrusted to the hands of the American people.” (Avalon). Liberty fused with collective stewardship (low Power Distance, Universalism).

In his First Inaugural Address (1789), George Washington reaffirms the moral foundation of the new state, emphasizing that the preservation of the sacred fire of liberty represents a historical experiment entrusted to the American people. This metaphor – liberty as a precious fire that must be protected – expresses a republican vision in which political sovereignty becomes a collective responsibility rather than the privilege of a governing elite. Washington thus places freedom at the core of American political identity, linking it to civic stewardship and the duty to sustain it for future generations. From a SOCINT perspective, this rhetorical positioning reflects values associated with low power distance (institutional egalitarianism) and orientation toward the common good (universalism), suggesting that governmental legitimacy derives from the active and responsible participation of all members of the political community.

■ Frederick Douglass (1852) “This Fourth of July is yours, not mine... You may rejoice, I must mourn.” (TAH). Equality becomes a moral indictment, pressing universalism to include the excluded (Egalitarianism).

² We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness (Declaration of Independence, 1776).

³ In 1775, American independence remained uncertain. Although Massachusetts had already witnessed escalating tensions and resistance, no coordinated revolutionary movement had yet consolidated across the colonies. Virginia – among the largest, wealthiest, and most populous territories—was therefore perceived as decisive to the cause. In this context, Patrick Henry (1736–1799) deploys forceful rhetoric to persuade influential and affluent Virginia landowners, who had much to lose, to move beyond diplomatic opposition to British aggression and embrace the next step: open military preparation, an act widely understood as tantamount to treason.



Frederick Douglass (c. 1818–1895), born into slavery and largely self-educated, escaped to the North, where he quickly became a remarkable orator and an uncompromising critic of slavery. In his speech delivered on July 5, 1852, to the Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society in Rochester, New York, Douglass explains why Independence Day cannot be a cause for celebration for former or current slaves. For them, July 4 represents a moment of pain and indignation, as it constantly recalls the contradiction between the ideals of freedom and equality expressed in the *Declaration of Independence* and the lived reality of oppression (Douglass, 1852). This appeal to the Declaration's unfulfilled promises remained a central element of the African American civil rights struggle through the 1960s.

Douglass's 1852 speech stands as one of the most powerful rhetorical challenges to American national identity from within. From a SOCINT perspective, this act of dissociation reveals that the United States' founding cultural values – freedom, equality, and human dignity – were unevenly distributed and conditioned by social and racial status. Douglass also exposes the selective nature of the national narrative: the very symbols that provide the majority with unity and pride function, for the enslaved population, as instruments of humiliation and alienation. Through morally charged irony and disciplined outrage, he compels his audience to confront the cultural incoherence between the ideals proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence and their denial in practice, transforming communication itself into a form of identity-based resistance and a claim to fundamental rights.

■ Abraham Lincoln (1863): “Government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth.” (LOC) - a linguistic manifestation of egalitarian Power Distance (40) and civic morality (low PDI; Autonomy + Egalitarianism).

In Gettysburg Address (1863), Abraham Lincoln reaffirms the democratic essence of the American nation through his emblematic formulation: “Government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth.” The speech reframes Civil War sacrifice as an act of national renewal, arguing that the bloodshed on the battlefield must secure the continuity of a form of governance legitimized by citizens and oriented toward their common good. From a SOCINT perspective, Lincoln reactivates foundational American values such as equality, civic responsibility, and collective solidarity, associated with low power distance and an inclusive

democratic orientation (Universalism—Schwartz). The address, therefore, reinforces the sacred character of political participation and transforms the memory of fallen soldiers into a cultural mechanism to strengthen national identity and mobilize the political community around the promise of a durable and equitable democracy.

■ William J. Bryan (1896): “You shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns, you shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold”. (History Matters). Moralized economy; justice and solidarity (Egalitarianism, Universalism).

In his Cross of Gold speech (1896), William Jennings Bryan challenges the economic dominance of America's financial elites, denouncing the gold standard as an instrument of oppression against workers and farmers. Through intensely moralizing rhetoric, Bryan transforms a technical monetary debate into an ethical and identity-driven confrontation, arguing that the American people *should not be crucified on a cross of gold* for the benefit of a privileged minority. From a SOCINT perspective, the speech reveals a structural tension between values of self-assertion and economic power (associated with elites) and values of equality, social justice, and the dignity of labor (attributed to rural communities and popular classes). Bryan legitimizes their political claims by re-anchoring them on an American ethos of solidarity and democratic participation, proposing a cultural redefinition of the nation in favor of those economically marginalized. In this way, *Cross of Gold* becomes not only an economic address but also a symbolic moment of collective identity reconfiguration, in which politics is narrated as a struggle to protect the ‘true’ values of the people.

■ Franklin D. Roosevelt (1933): “The only thing we have to fear is fear itself... This Nation asks for action, and action now” (Miller Center). Resilience and immediacy (MAS; low LTO; moderate UAI).

In his First Inaugural Address (1933), Franklin D. Roosevelt assumes national leadership at a moment of profound economic crisis, shifting the public mood from collective anxiety to mobilizing confidence through his famous assertion that *the only thing we have to fear is fear itself*. He frames the Great Depression as an unprecedented challenge to democracy and promises a program of decisive – indeed innovative – action to achieve economic recovery and restore public hope. From a SOCINT perspective, the speech activates cultural values characteristic of American society – resilience,

optimism, pragmatism, and solidarity – functioning as a discursive ritual that reconfigures national identity around collective responsibility. Roosevelt reframes governance as a shared public mission, reinforcing a model of cultural leadership in which political legitimacy derives from the state's capacity to protect social dignity and restore the community's confidence in its own resources and ideals. In this way, the address not only diagnoses the crisis but realigns the American narrative around the foundational values of action and civic courage.

■ John F. Kennedy (1961): “Ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country... Let us never negotiate out of fear, but let us never fear to negotiate” (JFK Library), a call to civic responsibility within a collectivist moral frame, duty, achievement, pragmatic diplomacy (MAS; UAI).

In his Inaugural Address (1961), John F. Kennedy advances a renewed vision of civic responsibility, encapsulated in his famous appeal: “Ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country”. Against the backdrop of Cold War tensions at their peak, Kennedy calls for active commitment to the defense of freedom and emphasizes the necessity of shared engagement for progress, while also affirming, “Let us never negotiate out of fear, but let us never fear to negotiate”. From a SOCINT perspective, the speech reactivates core American cultural values such as action, courage, active civic participation, and responsibility toward the common good – elements associated with constructive individualism, achievement orientation, and a universalist vision of freedom. Kennedy thus reframes patriotism as a collective moral obligation, in which citizens become active participants in shaping national destiny, while diplomacy is grounded in a balance between firmness and openness. In this sense, the address functions as a civic ritual of democratic identity renewal, mobilizing the political community around a shared project of peace and global progress.

■ Martin Luther King Jr. (1963): “I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed. Now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God's children”. (NARA) – the prophetic revival of equality and faith in moral progress. (Egalitarianism; low LTO).

In his landmark speech “I Have a Dream,” delivered in 1963 on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial during the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom,

Martin Luther King Jr. demands the concrete fulfillment of the principles embedded in the Declaration of Independence, declaring in prophetic terms that “Now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God's children”. The speech reactivates the United States' founding egalitarian vision and mobilizes national conscience around the ideal of a society in which citizens are judged not by skin color, but by character. From a SOCINT perspective, King places equality, fraternity, and faith in moral progress at the center of American identity, reflecting values associated with egalitarianism (Schwartz) and a temporal orientation favoring immediate action over delay (low LTO). By articulating a moral narrative with universal resonance, King transforms the address into an act of symbolic national redefinition, in which liberty becomes inclusive, and democracy is framed as an ongoing project of collective completion.

■ Ronald Reagan (1987): “Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall! and Freedom is not the sole prerogative of a chosen few” (Reagan Library) – a global articulation of liberty as universal mission and moral courage (Universalism; MAS; IVR).

In his 1987 speech at the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, President Ronald Reagan delivered one of the era's most emblematic political demands: “Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!” Through this direct challenge to the Soviet Union, Reagan transforms the Berlin Wall into a global symbol of oppression and the gatekeeping of freedom. He further asserts that “Freedom is not the sole prerogative of a chosen few”, extending the American concept of liberty beyond national borders and presenting it as a fundamental right of all people. From a SOCINT perspective, the speech reaffirms central values of American culture – moral exceptionalism, civic courage, and the universal mission of freedom – elements associated with universalism, action orientation and performativity (high masculinity), and social optimism (high indulgence). Reagan thus deploys the rhetoric of liberty as an instrument of identity construction and geopolitical influence, framing the dismantling of the Wall as a moral affirmation of a global democratic order.

Each of these speeches performs the same symbolic function: reactivating foundational values through discourse. SOCINT identifies recurring linguistic features – imperatives, binaries, and moral appeals – that align with cultural dimensions such as autonomy, equality, and achievement.

4. Results

The American Cultural Matrix: Correlations between Core Values, Cultural Dimensions, and Representative Discourse

Table 1
The American Cultural Matrix

Model and SOCINT Dimension (score)	Values and directions	Reference text (quotes)	SOCINT Interpretation
Hofstede – Individualism vs. Collectivism (91)	Freedom and Moral Virtue	- Henry (1775): “Give me liberty or give me death!” - Jefferson (1776): “We consider these truths to be self-evident...”	Independence as a moral virtue and a political identity.
Hofstede – Power Distance (40)	Equality and responsible authority, participatory governance	- Lincoln (1863): “The government of the people, by the people, for the people...” - Douglass (1852): “This 4 July is yours, not mine.”	Egalitarian norms; moral standards; moral pressure for inclusion, accountable leadership
Hofstede – Masculinity vs. femininity (62)	Achievement, courage, resilience, pragmatism	- Roosevelt (1933): “The only thing to fear is fear itself”. - Reagan (1987): “Tear down this wall!”	Performance and courage as legitimacy. Civic action and heroism as moral imperatives.
Hofstede – Uncertainty Avoidance (46)	Pragmatic flexibility	- JFK (1961): “Never negotiate out of fear... never be afraid to negotiate”.	Rational optimism, adaptive diplomacy, and problem solving.
Hofstede – Long-term vs. short-term orientation (26)	Call for immediate action Moral Emergency	King (1963): “Now is the time to make justice a reality for all God's children”. - FDR. (1933): “The Nation asks for action, and action now”.	Immediate decisions with immediate expectations; Changing the status quo, moving towards progress
Hofstede – Indulgence vs. Restraint (68)	Optimism, the search for happiness, openness, emotional expressiveness, orientation towards success and material achievement	- King (1963): “I have a dream - Jefferson (1776): “certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness”.	Orientation towards goals, hope as a collective feeling, serenity, belief in good and moral values

Schwartz’ Autonomy	Free, independent thought and Creativity Safety Self-mastery	- Jefferson (1776): “unalienable Rights; We consider these truths to be self-evident”.	Moral reasoning and self-determination.
Schwartz’ Egalitarianism	Justice and collective responsibility	- Lincoln (1863): “by the people (...) for the people” - Douglass (1852): “...not mine”.	Social justice and civic equality as ambitions and ongoing projects.
Trompenaars’ Universality	Rule-based moral order	- JFK (1961): “We shall pay any price, bear any burden...”. - Reagan (1987): “Freedom is not the sole prerogative of a chosen few”.	Principles before persons; belief in universal justice, active virtue, civil debt.
Trompenaars’ – Success/ Achievement	Merit and performance	- Reagan (1987): “Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!” - Jefferson (1776): “liberty, and the pursuit of happiness”.	The link between action and success as moral evidence. Achievement as moral legitimacy.

5. Discussions and Reflection

5.1 Answers to the Research Questions

Q1. What are the core values of American society that the Declaration of Independence of 1776 and the American political discourse from 1775 to 1987 uphold, according to sociocultural and intercultural models?

The political rhetoric analyzed (American political discourse from 1775 to 1987) operates like a ritual of identity. Each speech reactivates the moral framework of the *Declaration of Independence*, the founding values, and the ideals that formed the basis of American society, with the hope that these are, and will remain, obvious truths. Liberty, equality, justice, and providence emerge as cultural constants – via assertive syntax and universal claims (“self-evident truths”). This cultural DNA, socio-moral code, stimulates the constant desire to live in a better world, activating the awareness of universal human needs. It reveals the matrix of a society built on the hope of a better world, on the desire to believe in the better, to evolve, and to respect fundamental values such as freedom of thought and expression, human dignity,

morality, equality, justice, and providence.

The SOCINT approach reveals that these values are highlighted linguistically and rhetorically by imperatives (“tear down this wall”), antitheses (“ask not...”), and moral binaries (liberty/death; justice/injustice), appeals to divine or universal law, or anaphora (“I have a dream”), antithesis (“ask not...”). At the same time, it proves that these rhetorical techniques have no artistic, ornamental purpose. They are actually carrying cultural knowledge that consistently corresponds to the SOCINT analytical parameters, revealing a society that values freedom, autonomy, action, progress, and optimism (dimensions with low PDI/high Hofstede's IDV scores, Schwartz's Autonomy/Egalitarianism, and Trompenaars' Universalism/Achievement).

Q2. How can SOCINT, as an analytical approach, mitigate prejudice and deepen understanding of national identity within political and cultural discourse?

The SOCINT analytical framework limits interpretative biases by linking the analysis of cultural values and symbols to the dimensions of sociocultural models to identify a cultural matrix. Specifically, limiting cultural prejudices can be achieved by increasing cultural awareness and sensitivity. The discipline SOCINT responds to these training needs within a scientific

framework, applied and adapted to social changes and developments. Where purely hermeneutic readings risk subjectivity, SOCINT's linkage to quantified dimensions introduces replicable standards – an analytic check against stereotype or anachronism (Cedru & Şaguna, 2025). It situates language within measurable frameworks (Hofstede, Schwartz, Trompenaars), linking national discourse to underlying cognitive structures. Thus, intelligence analysis transcends opinion and becomes a method of moral cognition.

The American SOCINT Matrix is an integrated analytical construct that maps the relationships among linguistic expression, cultural values, and measurable sociocultural dimensions within the United States. It translates qualitative discourse – found in founding texts and landmark speeches – into quantifiable cultural indicators derived from Hofstede (2010), Schwartz (2012), and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2011).

Functionally, the Matrix is both a diagnostic and interpretive model:

As a diagnostic tool, it identifies how recurring lexical and rhetorical patterns (e.g., “freedom,” “equality,” “dream,” “duty”) encode enduring national values such as liberty, justice, resilience, and moral exceptionalism (Geertz, 1973; Hall, 1976; Cedru & Şaguna, 2025).

As an interpretive framework, it links these linguistic manifestations to empirical cultural metrics – individualism, egalitarianism, achievement orientation, and optimism – thus bridging symbolic anthropology and quantitative intercultural models (Durkheim, 1912; Hofstede, 1980, 1984; Schwartz, 2012; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2011).

5.2 Main Findings

This analysis stems from immersion in works and debates that remain central to contemporary American political identity, public discourse, and institutional self-understanding. It aims to provide a comprehensive explanation of how American values – particularly constitutionalism, civic liberty, institutional balance, and democratic legitimacy – continue to function as both a foundation of national cohesion and a contested symbolic resource in times of crisis. Examined in historical context, these values do not appear as abstract slogans, but rather as durable political commitments that generations have invoked, defended, and reinterpreted for almost 250 years.

A key finding of this study is that surface-level readings of events may obscure the deeper cultural and normative structures that continue to shape American

cohesion and strategic self-understanding. Such interpretations risk treating the most visible moments of tension as the totality of political reality, the tip of the iceberg as the whole of it, thereby misleading audiences about how governance actually functions beneath the surface. In fact, much of the country's democratic resilience is expressed through the continuity of its foundational values and institutional legitimacy, which persist beneath polarized rhetoric and episodic crises. The evidence examined in this research indicates that American public discourse remains anchored in enduring ideological reference points – such as freedom, constitutional legitimacy, and civic equality – that continue to serve as stabilizing cultural foundations even amid heightened political friction. Therefore, arguments or conflict shouldn't be interpreted as dysfunction, but as an ongoing contest over values that remain central to American identity. Democratic conflict, although sometimes intense and rhetorically harsh, can simultaneously indicate democratic vitality. The beauty of this democratic society lies precisely in its openness to confronting its own problems. Even in moments of severe polarization, public disagreement often reflects a persistent, sensitive concern for protecting fundamental values, especially those tied to constitutional order, civic rights, and political accountability. In this sense, it is not only a symptom of political pressure but can also be interpreted as evidence of resilience and continued normative investment in the American project. Yet beneath this rhetorical turbulence, there remains a sustained public awareness of the importance of the constitutional principles enshrined by the Founders.

Research Limitations

Nevertheless, the study has several limitations. First, the research relies on a limited corpus and is primarily grounded in public discourse and widely accessible political narratives. As a result, it cannot capture the full complexity of closed decision-making processes, classified assessments, or behind-the-scenes diplomatic communication. Second, the analysis focuses on rhetorical and ideological dynamics rather than on quantitative measures of narrative spread, platform behavior, or algorithmic amplification. Third, interpretations of cultural values risk overgeneralization, especially when the object of study is a highly diverse and internally plural society such as the United States. Even if this study does not claim to address every implication of the theories examined, it seeks to provide a great deal more grist for reflection by highlighting both the salience of the works analyzed and the limitations

of their application in modern contexts. In this sense, it is essential to recognize that foundational texts and political concepts were formulated under extraordinary circumstances. They bring a wide variety of perspectives to bear on the relationship between governance, legitimacy, and national purpose, both inside and outside the United States. The continuing relevance of these works is evident in the way Americans still invoke their values, demonstrating ongoing civic attachment to democratic ideals.

Future Research

Future research should therefore expand the corpus, integrate systematic SOCINT datasets, and compare discourse patterns across platforms and audiences. Further studies could also examine how American values are perceived in different cultural regions, identifying the interpretive filters through which external publics assess US legitimacy, stability, and credibility. In addition, deeper interdisciplinary work combining political theory, strategic communication, computational analysis, and cultural intelligence could provide more precise tools for identifying disinformation mechanisms and evaluating resilience indicators in democratic societies.

5.3 Implications for SOCINT

The implications of these findings for SOCINT are particularly significant, especially in the assessment of external perceptions of the United States, the analysis of contemporary strategic discourse, and the design of counter-disinformation strategies. To begin with, sociocultural intelligence is essential in combating disinformation because it explains why certain narratives persuade specific audiences, how cultural identity, historical memory, beliefs, and group dynamics shape reactions, and why simple fact-checking often fails. Applied to the United States, sociocultural intelligence helps interpret cultural meaning and clarify why disinformation succeeds by exploiting polarization, distrust, identity politics, moral symbolism, and social belonging. A key challenge for analysis is that disinformation frequently presents itself as “authentic patriotism,” borrowing national symbols and constitutional language. This is strategically relevant: adversarial narratives rarely attempt to replace American values; instead, they seek to weaponize them by turning ideals such as freedom and constitutional integrity into instruments of hostility, suspicion, and delegitimization.

From a SOCINT perspective, this has direct analytical value for assessing external perceptions of the USA. Foreign audiences often interpret American public conflict through the lens of their own cultural expectations about order, unity, and authority. In some contexts, democratic disagreement appears as instability rather than openness. Therefore, understanding the cultural matrix matters because it helps explain how and why certain interpretations emerge and attain prominence. The cultural matrix is not merely background – it shapes what external observers find credible, shocking, or persuasive. Moreover, SOCINT analysis benefits from attention to the interplay between ideas and the machinations of power, the relevance of social mores and conventions, and the impact of technique and invention. Digital technique – algorithms, amplification patterns, platform incentives – interacts with older human dynamics such as status competition, group loyalty, and moral panic. The result is that narratives become not only communicative artifacts but also tools for strategic mobilization.

This combination of sociocultural insight and SOCINT monitoring is vital for counter-disinformation work. When narratives spread through moral outrage or identity-based messaging, an effective response cannot rely solely on correcting facts. Instead, it requires anticipatory analysis, culturally tuned messaging, and careful use of credible messengers who can communicate without escalating symbolic conflict. In diplomacy, the same logic applies: losing awareness of one's counterpart and being influenced by negative press reflects a failure of professional discipline, lack of sociocultural intelligence, and weak awareness – meaning poor emotional control, biased judgment, and inability to manage the symbolic and strategic impact of communication. Ultimately, SOCINT must evolve beyond “what is trending” toward strategic interpretation: not only tracking discourse, but understanding why it persuades, what cultural assumptions it activates, and what institutional vulnerabilities it seeks to exploit.

5.4 Practical Reflection

Sociocultural intelligence offers practical analytical value by enabling a deeper interpretation of American contemporary strategy. It helps identify the enduring cultural foundations that continue to shape U.S. identity and strategic outlook – values for which generations have struggled, sacrificed, and fought over nearly two and a half centuries. This approach strengthens the analyst's capacity to distinguish between episodic and long-term normative continuity, while also supporting more accurate judgments about

the significance of contemporary debates within their historical context. As a practical illustration of this argument, the interpretive framework developed in this chapter is reinforced by the U.S. National Security Strategy released in December 2025, which frames the contemporary security environment as a contested arena defined by strategic rivalry, vulnerabilities, and the imperative to protect democratic legitimacy and national cohesion (The White House, 2025). From a sociocultural intelligence perspective, such a strategy functions not only as an operational policy document but as a formal reaffirmation of the American cultural matrix, communicating internally and externally that national security remains inseparable from the defense of foundational democratic principles and institutional resilience (European Parliamentary Research Service, 2025; The White House, 2025).

In SOCINT terms, such strategic texts also provide measurable discourse indicators – keywords, moral frames, identity markers, and legitimacy claims – that can be monitored to assess internal and external perceptions, detect manipulative reframing, and counter disinformation efforts that aim to erode trust and democratic credibility. In this broader perspective, contemporary strategic discourse does not negate the endurance of American values; rather, it confirms that those values remain central enough to fight over.

Conclusions

The American identity emerges as a coherent sociocultural matrix grounded in liberty, equality, resilience, and moral exceptionalism. The Declaration of Independence established these principles as enduring cultural codes, continually renewed through national rhetoric and political oratory. Through its integrative lens, Sociocultural Intelligence (SOCINT) reveals how language operates as both a symbolic and strategic medium – performing identity, legitimizing values, and shaping collective decision-making.

By transforming cultural symbols into analytical structures, SOCINT turns interpretation into actionable intelligence, linking discourse to behavior and values to strategy. The American SOCINT Matrix demonstrates that cultural understanding is not only interpretive but operational – an instrument of foresight and stability in complex environments.

This study examined how American values are expressed, contested, and operationalized within public and political discourse from 1775 to 1987, and how these transcendent values shape domestic debates and external

perceptions. The research has shown that American political culture is deeply anchored in constitutional ideals, civic rights, and institutional legitimacy, despite the heightened visibility of polarization and rhetorical conflict. Indeed, one of the central conclusions is that intense disagreement should not automatically be interpreted as democratic failure; in many cases, it reflects democratic openness and a continued sensitivity to protecting fundamental principles. Considering that disinformation thrives in environments where identity-based divisions, distrust, and symbolic politics can be exploited, cultural intelligence is indispensable, as it helps explain why narratives resonate beyond their factual content, linking persuasion to historical memory, group belonging, moral urgency, and cultural interpretation. It provides a robust framework for monitoring strategic discourse, evaluating narrative influence, and supporting counter-disinformation efforts.

In conclusion, this work reveals the American Sociocultural matrix and argues that American values remain resilient precisely because they allow dissatisfaction and disillusionment to manifest through social criticism and political change, while being backed by institutions, civic traditions, and historical consciousness. The enduring relevance of these values is confirmed not only by their invocation in public discourse but by the continued struggle to define and defend them – an ongoing democratic process that remains central to the American experience. In a century defined by cultural polarization, disinformation, and cognitive warfare, SOCINT provides policymakers, diplomats, and intelligence professionals with a structured method of cultural reasoning. It transforms understanding into strategic awareness – bridging analysis, empathy, and informed action in defense of democratic values.

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THE CHALLENGES OF RECOVERING FORGOTTEN HISTORICAL DESTINIES: THE TRAGEDY OF CRIMEAN TATARS IN THE ‘BLUE REGIMENT’, AT THE END OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR¹

EDUCATION, MEDIA, AND CULTURE AS SOFT POWER TOOLS

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ABSTRACT

The global scale of the tragedy of the Second World War inevitably, albeit unintentionally, cast a shadow over several episodes associated with the conflict. Among these is the tragic experience of a number of Crimean Tatars who formed the so-called Mavi Alay, ‘Blue Regiment’, a temporary ally of Nazi Germany—a cooperation that should not be understood as an ideological choice, but rather as a strategy of survival and an attempt to escape the harsh grip of the Soviet Union, which weighed heavily upon them. The end of the war would, in turn, reserve for them a fate comparable in cruelty to deportation, from which, unlike their compatriots, they had managed to escape. The decision to collaborate with the Nazis must be understood within the broader historical experience of a community shaped by migration, assimilation, and persecution under various political regimes.

Drawing on a limited range of available sources, this article seeks to reconstruct the historical circumstances that led to the formation of the ‘Blue Regiment’ and to analyze its place within the broader experience of minorities during wartime, caught between the competing interests of different political powers. The fate of the ‘Blue Regiment’ may serve as a telling example of the precarious position of ethnic communities without a state or strong political representation, which are often left with little choice but to follow decisions imposed by more powerful political actors, while also bearing the tragic consequences of events over which they had no control.

Keywords: ‘Blue Regiment’, Crimean Tatars, WW2, minorities, memory.

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Introduction

Within the course of history, including recent history, there are countless events that have been subjected to *damnatio memoriae*. Some have been deliberately silenced, others distorted, while their memory has been attenuated or completely forgotten naturally. The great tragedy of the twentieth century, the Second World War, encompasses numerous tragic episodes which, although significant in themselves, were marginalized in collective memory as they were absorbed into the vast scale of the global catastrophe. Following a methodology based on historical and documentary analysis, this study aims to examine one such event, both in order to contribute to a more complete historical picture of the conflict and to highlight the fate of minorities caught between larger powers, as well as for didactic reasons intended to support civic awareness, since, regardless of the magnitude of historical tragedies, they offer essential lessons whose absence risks allowing the present to repeat the mistakes of the past—and indeed we can see that it does so. From the outset, one of the limitations of this research must be emphasized, namely that archival documents capable of confirming the exact outcome are, according to historians, almost irretrievable. The historical episode under investigation concerns the tragedy of approximately 8,000 Crimean Tatars who formed the so-called Mavi Alay, ‘Blue Regiment’, fighting during the war, according to circulating accounts, under the encouragement of Turkey, alongside Nazi Germany, in order to escape Soviet rule. The regiment appears to have ultimately faced an implacable fate, still, in part, shrouded in mystery.

Crimean Tatars: between migration, assimilation, and persecution

The fate of the Crimean Tatars has long been shaped by their status as a frontier population. Although their stability within a clearly defined territory no longer exists, their identity has been constructed around a common language, a shared homeland, and a distinct cultural and psychological framework, and there still is „a strong surviving community of culture” (McCagg & Silver, 2010, p. 177). The identity of the Crimean Tatar diaspora has also survived due to powerful symbols derived from Crimean Tatar culture and history, which have fostered a collective memory and enabled the community to identify itself

as a distinct nation and culture (Eren, 1998, p. 338). Different practices of collective remembrance sustained the desire for repatriation, contributing to the formation of an emotional bond that made Crimean Tatars aware of their connection both to one another and to their ancestral lands (Uehling, 2004, p. 8). Changes in identity markers cannot be separated from the historical experience of the Crimean Tatars, which has been shaped by major political developments.

Until its annexation by the Russian Empire in 1783, the Crimean Khanate was one of the Ottoman Empire’s most important allies on its northern frontier, while also maintaining a remarkable degree of autonomy in relation to the Sublime Porte (Fisher, 2010, p. 79). The annexation of Crimea marked the beginning of a process of migration among the Tatar population. Part of the community, particularly members of the social and political elites, sought refuge either in the heart of the Ottoman Empire - in the Anatolian regions - or in its provinces on the western shores of the Black Sea, namely Bessarabia and Dobruja (Karpat, 1985, p. 65; McCagg & Silver, 2010, p. 182). Another major wave of migration to the Ottoman Empire occurred after the Crimean War (1853 - 1856), when more than 200,000 Tatars left the peninsula during the 1860s (Karpat, 1985, p. 66). Within the Ottoman Empire, they integrated relatively quickly into local society, adopting dominant customs and cultural norms. As a result, within a single generation, awareness of belonging to a distinct group had significantly diminished (McCagg & Silver, 2010, p. 184).

During the Russian Civil War (1917-1922), a significant number of Crimean Tatars moved to the Dobruja region, where a well-established Tatar community already existed. In Romanian Dobruja, the Tatar community paradoxically benefited from a much more favorable environment for preserving its ethnic and cultural identity, despite living in a predominantly non-Turkish and non-Muslim setting. By the late 1930s, books and newspapers in the Tatar language were being published in Constanța and were specifically aimed at the Tatar community (McCagg & Silver, 2010, p. 147). Today, the Tatar community in Dobruja consists of both Nogai Tatars and Crimean Tatars, although official statistics do not clearly distinguish between the two groups; according to the 2021 census, 18,156 individuals identified themselves as Tatars (Mambet Cheamil, 2024, p. 21). The two groups share the same religion and maintain the same traditions and customs (Mambet Cheamil, 2024, p. 18). In a study dedicated to the Dobrujan Nogai variety, the author draws attention to the danger of language extinction, noting that ‘this variety is losing so much ground to Romanian, the official language, that

young people tend to abandon it’. She further argues that ‘there is no written literature, and efforts to keep it alive remain fragile’—our translation (Mambet Cheamil, 2024, p. 280). This threat also extends to the Crimean Tatar variety spoken in Dobruja.

One reason why the Ottoman Empire was not a particularly attractive destination for Crimean Tatar migrants during the Russian Civil War was that it was itself undergoing a period of profound political and social upheaval, culminating in its collapse and the subsequent emergence of the modern Turkish state. Following the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, the Kemalist nation-building project influenced the relationship between the Tatars and the new Turkish state. Although the latter formally recognized ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity, in practice it expected all citizens to integrate into a dominant Turkish identity (McCagg & Silver, 2010, p. 188). Consequently, Tatar identity in Turkey underwent a process of cultural assimilation that reduced the visibility of its specifically Crimean characteristics.

In contrast to these two experiences, the Tatars who remained in Crimea endured severe repressive policies during the Soviet period. It should be noted that, by the 1880s, the Crimean Tatars had largely abandoned emigration as a response to Russian rule and instead began to develop a national movement, following a pattern similar to that of many European peoples. Their efforts proved successful, and by the late 1920s they enjoyed a period during which they were recognized as an indigenous population and were even granted the right to develop their own national institutions (Aydn, 2021, p. 8–9). This ‘golden age’ came to an end when Stalin consolidated his power and the persecution of the Crimean Tatars resumed, this time in a far more violent form. Within a relatively short time, the community faced collectivization and the famine associated with it, the elimination of political and cultural elites between 1928 and 1931, accusations of collaboration with Nazi Germany during the Second World War, and finally deportation to far regions of the Soviet Union, in 1944 (Fisher, 1978, p. xi). These measures irreversibly affected the cultural continuity of the Crimean Tatar community. One of the most damaging aspects of Soviet policy targeted the Tatar language directly, one of the most important components of collective identity. In 1928, the alphabet was Latinized, a reform that cut younger generations off from pre-revolutionary literature written in the Arabic alphabet and allowed only the selective republication of certain literary works (Fisher, 1978, p. 142). Later, in 1938, the Latin alphabet was replaced by the Cyrillic one, which was no better suited to the linguistic characteristics of the Tatar language than the

Arabic alphabet had been. At the same time, vocabulary of Arabic, Persian, and Turkish origin was gradually replaced by Russian terms and grammatical structures, accelerating the process of cultural Russification (Fisher, 1978, p. 147).

These examples of transformations imposed by the Soviet regime marked the beginning of even more radical measures, adopted in the context of the Second World War and the German occupation of Crimea.

Crimean Tatars between Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany

On 22nd of June 1941, Nazi Germany launched Operation Barbarossa, invading the Soviet Union. Taken by surprise, though not entirely unprepared, the USSR suffered significant losses in the first months of the invasion, both in terms of territories occupied by German forces and the number of dead and prisoners. Among the Nazi conquests in the Soviet space was the Crimean Peninsula, occupied in November 1941. However, even before its occupation, German leaders decided that the region was to become a province of the Third Reich and to be populated by Germans, while the indigenous population, consisting of Russians, Ukrainians, and Crimean Tatars—the latter being classified by the Nazis as Untermenschen (‘subhumans’) (Aydn, 2021, p. 9)—was to be deported (Odżczan, 2005, p. 66). This decision could not, however, be implemented due to two important considerations: the weak economy of the peninsula, as well as the Crimean Tatars’ close ties with the Turks, which could have meant that a possible annexation of Crimea would strain Germany’s relations with Turkey. Conversely, a friendly attitude toward the Tatars could have encouraged them to mediate Turkey’s entry into the war on Germany’s side against the USSR (Kolutek, 2019, p. 419; Aydn, 2021, p. 9).

This cordiality was expressed through the granting of religious freedom, which had been repressively restricted under Soviet administration. This apparent freedom however tightly controlled—included permission to call to prayer in restored mosques, the celebration of Ramadan, and the organization of circumcision ceremonies. At the same time, an extensive anti-communist propaganda campaign was conducted, both through the school curriculum and the distribution of pamphlets encouraging the fight against communism (Motadel, 2015, p. 289).

In the midst of the fighting between the Nazis and the Soviets, the Red Army suffered considerable personnel losses and was forced to recruit part of the

Turkic population. Subsequently, many of these recruits became prisoners of war in German hands, and in the spring of 1942 the Germans, planning a new offensive, incorporated them into their army to strengthen their forces. At the same time, recruitment of volunteer soldiers to join the German cause had begun in Crimea. Although they were not granted independence, certain benefits of cooperation with the Nazis against the Bolsheviks were emphasized (Kolutek, 2019, p. 421). Thus, the *Türk Nefsi Müdafaa Taburları* ('Turkish Self-Defense Battalions') were established.

The exact number of Crimean Tatars who composed these self-defense battalions is not known with precision. Both the Germans and the Soviets provided inflated figures, albeit for different reasons: the Germans, to demonstrate the significant support they received from the local population, and the Soviets, to justify later repressive measures against the Tatars (Odżzcan, 2010, p. 37). Nevertheless, according to archival research conducted by Kemal Odżzcan, the battalions numbered a total of 9,225 individuals – out of a population of approximately 219,000 Crimean Tatars—including both volunteers and prisoners (Odżzcan, 2005, p. 72).

In order to increase the number of volunteers, Germany distributed propaganda posters throughout the region containing messages allegedly attributed to Tatar leaders, calling on the population to fight against Bolshevism in order to protect their nation and homeland (Odżzcan, 2010, p. 37). Most of the Tatar recruits were incorporated into the German 11th Army, with assigned tasks including maintaining public order, preventing acts of sabotage, and defending the peninsula. For the Germans, more important than their combat effectiveness was their detailed knowledge of the local geography.

The self-defense battalions formed from members of the Crimean Tatar community have been mentioned in some scholarly works under different names, such as *Kırım Mukavemet Taburları* ('Crimean Resistance Battalions') or *Kırım Tatar Lejyonu* ('Crimean Tatar Legion') (Kolutek, 2019, p. 422). However, this military formation is also referred to by the more informal name *Mavi Alay* ('Blue Regiment'), a designation identified in the work *Türklerin Uğradığı İşkence, Sürgün, Katliam ve Soykırım Sözlüğü* ('Dictionary of the Sufferings, Deportations, Massacres and Genocides Endured by Turks'), which describes it as 'an army of eight thousand Crimean Turks who fought for Germany against the USSR in the Second World War, at the urging of the Republic of Turkey'—our translation (Durukoğlu/Salik, 2015, p. 242). However, based on the available historical sources, it cannot be conclusively demonstrated that the Republic of Turkey explicitly supported the association

of the 'Blue Regiment' with Nazi Germany, particularly given that during the Second World War Turkey pursued a highly cautious policy, especially with regard to its relations with the Soviet Union (Deringil, 1989). At the same time, the absence of documents attesting to official involvement does not exclude the possibility of indirect forms of encouragement.

According to Kolutek's research, the origin of the name, *Mavi Alay*, is not entirely clear. One hypothesis links it to the dark blue uniforms worn by the soldiers, while another refers to the light blue flag of the Crimean Tatars (Kolutek, 2019, p. 422).

The tragic fate of the 'Blue Regiment'

The consulted sources converge on a general consensus regarding the fate of the battalions up to the spring of 1944, when the USSR regained control of the peninsula. On 18th of May 1944, under the pretext of collaboration with the Nazis, the Soviets decided to deport the entire Tatar population to Central Asia and Siberia. This moment represents a landmark in the recent history of the Crimean Tatars, and many of them regard these tragic events as a form of genocide aimed at the destruction of the entire ethnic group (Ayдын, 2021, p. 9). It appears that the soldiers of the 'Blue Regiment' and their families also met a tragic fate, albeit one that was delayed and ultimately fulfilled a year later.

In 2003, Turkish journalist Avni Odżzgü rel—among the first voices to address these almost forgotten events—published the article *Özgürlük Umuduyula Yıkımı* ('Destruction in the Hope of Freedom') in *Radikal* (Kolutek, 2019, pp. 422–423). The original article—which cannot be found anymore—was later cited by other sources (1), thus spreading Odżzgü rel's account of the fate of the 'Blue Regiment' in the public sphere. This version of events also served as inspiration for a well-known novel in Turkish literature, namely *Serenad* (2011) by Zülfü Livaneli, which made a significant contribution to bringing the tragic fate of the 'Blue Regiment' back into collective memory in Turkey and beyond.

According to this account, when the Germans began withdrawing from Crimea, members of the 'Blue Regiment' and their families migrated into Europe alongside them. Their first place of settlement was the Pozzulla region in northern Italy. They were later transferred to the Kärnten region in Austria, where German forces still held control. The soldiers' families improvised camps of tents and huts along the Drava

River, between the villages of Irschen and Dellach. In April 1945, they were captured by the British forces that had entered Austria, and the relatively lenient attitude of the British led them to believe they would be able to contact relatives in Turkey and that, ultimately, the Ankara government would accept them as refugees. A month later, however, following the Allied victory, the British handed the prisoners over to Soviet troops. In order to avoid the more uncertain and potentially harsher fate awaiting them in Soviet convoys, the Tatars decided to throw themselves into the turbulent waters of the Drava River, and within a week approximately four thousand people of all ages perished.

Fifteen years after these tragic events, on 28th of May 1960, the Western European Muslim Society erected a monument in the village of Irschen in memory of the victims (2), where annual commemorative ceremonies are held, the most recent taking place in April 2025 (3).

The remaining approximately four thousand individuals were transported further towards Russia. However, due to the destruction of railway infrastructure in Eastern Europe during the war, it was decided that the transport would pass through Turkey, which raised hopes of salvation among the survivors, who believed that Ankara would undertake diplomatic efforts to allow them to remain in Anatolia. After crossing the Turkish border, however, salvation failed to materialize and ultimately never came. By the end of the war, Turkey had aligned itself with the Allies, and the USSR's right to demand repatriation of refugees was considered legitimate (Kolutek, 2019, p. 424). As they approached the Soviet border after crossing Anatolia, the prisoners forced open the nailed-shut doors and collectively threw themselves into Lake Kızılcakçak in the present-day town of Akyaka in Kars Province. Two thousand people lost their lives, while the remaining individuals were shot by Soviet forces right after crossing the border.

The sequence of events presented by Odżzgü rel, which has circulated in a small segment of the public sphere—given that it concerns a niche and relatively little-known subject—should be treated with caution, according to Kolutek, since in the absence of archival documents confirming the exact facts, no definitive claim can be made regarding the fate of the 'Blue Regiment' after the end of the war. Other voices (4) argue that the absence of this tragic event from archival records is due to acts of concealment carried out by Turkey—considered the expected natural ally and 'elder brother' of the Tatars—either out of a sense of shame regarding its handling of the situation at the time or, more simply, due to indifference.

Conclusion

Regardless of the degree of factual certainty regarding the outcome of this historical episode, the tragic experience of the 'Blue Regiment' represents one of the facets of the broader drama of Europe's minorities under siege in the twentieth century—ethnic groups situated within various spheres of influence, poorly or not at all represented diplomatically, and compelled to submit to decisions made by others on their behalf. The 'Blue Regiment' draws attention to the legal vulnerability of minority groups in turbulent periods marked by conflict, as they become collateral victims in the strategic games of major state actors involved in the war.

The subject remains open to further research that may clarify the details of its outcome. Until then, however, the tragedy of the Crimean Tatars associated with the 'Blue Regiment' should be framed within a balanced historical approach which, while acknowledging the limits of knowledge, still seeks to reconstruct forgotten human experiences, so as not to compound past injustices by erasing the victims' suffering from collective memory and by denying them their rightful place in history.

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RUSSIAN MUSHROOM FORAGING

from survival
to symbol

Alias: Veralia SILVA¹

ABSTRACT

Mushroom foraging in Russia is a deeply rooted cultural practice that encompasses practical, psychological, and symbolic dimensions. Historically embedded in everyday life, it has developed as both a vital food source and a seasonal ritual tied to the forest landscape. Beyond its economic role, mushroom picking offers relaxation, contemplation, and reconnection with nature, often described as a meditative experience. Psychologically, it fulfills multiple needs: pleasure, social bonding, intergenerational transmission, and reinforcement of cultural belonging. At a symbolic level, mushrooms embody meanings of hidden abundance, continuity, survival, and identity, appearing in folklore, myths, and artistic representations. This practice thus operates simultaneously as a daily activity, a cultural ritual, and a symbolic system, offering individuals and communities a structured way to experience meaning, belonging, and renewal within the natural world.

Keywords: *mushroom foraging, Russia, cultural ritual, identity, symbolism.*

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Wild mushroom foraging is one of the most prevalent ancestral rituals in the Slavic-Russian space, with deep cultural and psychological significance. This paper aims to provide the necessary background to understand the anthropological phenomenon of mushroom foraging among Russians, which may appear enigmatic or even weird to representatives of other cultures, through a multiple approach: historical, psychological, scientific, and symbolic.

Methods used include analysis of folklore content, semiotic analysis of symbols, and psychological and comparative interpretation, with an emphasis on published popular materials and contemporary scientific works. We analyzed the traditions transmitted across generations, the associated rituals, and the identity and social dimensions, incorporating the contemporary contributions of the Russian mycologist M. V. Vishnevsky and the recent observations of the vlogger Sergey Bey (Russian from Afar). In addition, foraging activity is examined through Hofstede's cultural dimensions, highlighting how cultural values influence Russians' behavior and perception of this mass cultural practice.

Mushroom foraging has been present in Russian historical sources since the Middle Ages. Medieval documents and manuscripts indicate that Russians not only consumed mushrooms but also used them for ritual and medicinal purposes. In folk literature and folklore, wild fungi frequently appear as symbols of forest wealth, fertility, and man-nature communion. "... the forest is not only a source of food, but a ritualistic space of rest and communion with nature" (Sheludkova, 2019, p. 12). The tradition of foraging was often passed on from the family, almost like an initiatory ritual, with unwritten rules on the season, favorite places, and harvesting methods.

Vishnevsky (2024, pp. 210-213) remarks in his books and video presentations that "peaceful hunting", as the Russians call it metaphorically, preserves the features of an archaic custom, with man entering the forest as another world, with its own laws, requiring respect, vigilance, and inner balance.

In Russian folklore, fairy tales, proverbs, folk songs (for example, in the traditional song "Oy griby, gribochiki" [Oh, mushrooms, mushrooms] are mentioned over ten species of mushrooms, creating a difficult situation for any translator), dress motifs, games for children reflect deep respect for the forest and all plants, similar to animist cultures, but also a sense of community, because this foraging was not only an individual activity, but also a social one, with clear moral norms and

rituals. For example, in some regions, the first basket of mushrooms is always donated to an elderly person as a sign of respect and gratitude (caring for the elderly is a cultural value among Russians).

The mushrooms are represented in folklore as a transitional element between the mystical and the ordinary, a symbol that is repeated and thus provides a rich source of material for linguistic analysis. There are also a number of popular superstitions about fungi, many of them dating back to the pre-Christian period (for example, fungi growing on the outside walls of a house is a sign of wealth and abundance in the family, or the superstition that fungi grow better if not looked at, and they may be affected by the human gaze).

In the Russian Orthodox tradition, during the fasting period, mushrooms were an accessible alternative to meat and fish, which greatly increased their nutritional importance. Ethnologists point out that the lexicon associated with fungi in the North Russian languages indicates not only culinary preferences but also social and territorial rules, as well as the delimitation of their own and foreign places (Osipova, 2021, pp. 32-35).

A study by Odintsov (2025) finds that 38% of Russians occasionally practice wild mushroom foraging, and 37% regularly do so. The quoted study reports that most Russians (75%) have engaged in this activity, but the motivations are diverse: intrinsic, since 65% practice it to spend time in nature; extrinsic, as 53% practice it for the harvest itself; and 12% to save money. The experience is individual for 27% of the respondents, who choose it for the excitement of the competition and the surprise of discovery. For 21% of the respondents, it is collective - they prefer it in order to be together with friends and family. These figures demonstrate that the social, economic, and recreational sides play an important role in the life of the Russian people.

Also, 87% of Russians responded that they distinguish harmless from poisonous fungi strictly based on their general culture, 28% ask more informed friends, 15% use applications or the internet, and 13% search for information in books and guides. Only 2% of respondents said they could not distinguish edible mushrooms from poisonous ones, indicating the extent of transgenerational information transmission. Children grow up observing the adults they go with to pick mushrooms season after season, creating psychological continuity, a competence in recognizing species, and an opportunity for intergenerational connection. However, Vishnevsky (2024, p. 218) emphasizes that an experienced gatherer must demonstrate a high capacity for selecting among

shapes, colors, and textures. This process turns the gathering into a real visual and spatial memory training, and the gatherer into a connoisseur of the forest.

In modern society, we can observe a multitude of thematic events - festivals, local and regional championships of the "mushroom hunting", forums, groups on Vkontakte or Telegram, where Russians frequently post maps and photos with their "prey" and even the GPS coordinates, useful data for a more complex SOCINT analysis of social and geographical patterns of the phenomenon. In some articles, this activity is also referred to as a "national sport".

Mushroom foraging combines recreational, cognitive, and social components. The activity is much more than a mere hobby; it involves permanent botanical documentation, careful observation, species recognition and selection, careful planning, and anticipation. For many Russians, going out into the forest after mushrooms equates to a form of meditation, "a therapy, such activity allowing them to detach themselves from stress", from the urban rhythm and the challenges of everyday life (Vishnevsky, 2021, p. 17).

From a psychological perspective, this activity develops the gatherer's patience, attention, and practical competence, as well as a sense of cultural belonging. The sensation of "peaceful hunting" offers the satisfaction of discovery and control in an unpredictable universe and can also be considered a mechanism for adapting to stressful situations in a tense society. Associated rituals (intergenerational rules, respect for nature) confer stability and reduce risk-related anxiety (food poisoning). Vishnevsky (2021, pp. 15-17) also emphasizes the psychological dimensions of fear and prudence, making knowledge of poisonous specimens not only biologically necessary but also culturally internalized as part of family experience.

Applying Hofstede's cultural dimensions model, wild mushroom foraging can also be understood as an expression of Russian cultural values. Thus, a strong emphasis on collectivism is evident, as this activity often takes place in family or community groups, and rules and traditions are shared and respected by all. There is also a preference for avoiding uncertainty, as Russians develop reliable methods for identifying and preparing mushrooms, reducing the risks associated with consumption. In terms of distance from power, the relationship with the forest and with traditions is respectful but not hierarchical - the rules are followed by everyone, not imposed. The orientation is long-term because harvest planning, mushroom conservation, and

knowledge transmission are investments in the future. Regarding masculinity/femininity, there is a balance between competition and care, reflecting both the desire to pick more and the responsibility for the safety of the group and of nature. It follows that this gathering is not only a practical activity but also a cultural ritual that crystallizes collective values and forms social identity.

Russian mycologist Mikhail Vishnevsky offers practical and educational guidance on mushroom foraging. He identifies the most mushroom-rich areas of the Moscow region and recommends several methods of thermal preparation, grinding, or drying to preserve nutrients and avoid poisoning. He also demonstrates that the human body does not produce enzymes to digest mushrooms, so they do not provide significant nutritional value and do not appear to be meant for consumption. Why are Russians then so passionate about both picking and consuming them?

Placing his research in the not-very-distant past, 300-400 years ago, the mycologist proves that until the XVII century, in Russian culture, wild fungi were used only for medicinal and ritualistic purposes. As one of the great problems of people in pre-industrial times was the provision of food, for the individual and his family, the great periods of famine, this nowadays unknown affliction, brought a major change in the psychology of the affected people.

Famine had a devastating impact in Europe and Asia from the early centuries of the Middle Ages through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries due to multiple causes: adverse climatic conditions, natural disasters that damaged crops, pest outbreaks, epidemics, and armed conflicts. During periods marked by food shortages and atrocities (including anthropophagy), Russians discovered that the post-ingestive state of fullness after eating mushrooms helped them survive famine, especially in harsh winters. Therefore, the great collectivism of the Russian people led their representatives to inform and support one another, transforming this activity into a true ritual of survival, education, and identity that naturally penetrated the collective consciousness. According to Vishnevsky's observations (2024, pp. 218-221), mushroom foraging requires a particular state of concentration and rapid decision-making, which generates a special kind of "forestry intuition" in the gatherers.

In recent years, digital ethnography and content creators' materials have become valuable sources for cultural studies, complementing traditional academic data with field stories, anecdotes, and public interactions.

An example relevant to our theme is the podcast Russian from Afar by Sergey, a Russian vlogger based in Vietnam, who produces episodes about life in exile and the preservation of cultural values and traditions, including foraging mushrooms, a practice the Russian diaspora engages in everywhere. Although he does not present academic data, his ethnographic observations show how rituals are adapted to diasporal contexts and how cultural memory is preserved through narrative and storytelling. His contribution adds a contemporary, qualitative perspective to the understanding of the psychology of mushroom foraging.

If we formulate a conceptual opposition between mycophilic and mycophobic cultures, we can spot this theme in other cultures as well, but differently. Thus, while in the Slavic-Russian space mushroom foraging appears as a strong, animistic cultural-identity practice, in Scandinavia, although the practice is common, the motivation is more recreational and urban, the knowledge is less extensive, and the cultural integration is more recent. In the US, there are online communities; they are a hobby and a form of tourism. In Ethiopia, it is tradition, medicine, and food. In Japan, the harvest has a gastronomic component, but a more specialized, refined one and a superior, prominent status. In Congo, women are the main collectors and possess extensive

expertise in mycology; in Mexico, it is associated with food, tradition, and ecology, while in Australia and New Zealand, the emphasis is on safety, as in all mycophobic cultures. Vishnevsky (2021, pp. 15-17) emphasizes that fear of poisonous fungi is culturally transmitted and influences gatherers' behavior.

Mushroom foraging among the Russian people is a complex phenomenon that combines scientific knowledge, tradition, psychology, and cultural symbolism. The present work has a mainly exploratory and interpretive character. The restricted access to original archives and Russian ethnographic collections limited the number of available primary sources. Also, it was not possible to conduct interviews with contemporary gatherers, so we based our research on surveys and indirect observations. These limitations do not affect the theoretical relevance, but suggest that future research should include participatory observations and additional empirical data. By integrating the Hofstede cultural dimensions, we can observe that the activity reflects collective values, tolerance for uncertainty, long-term orientation, and responsibility. The contributions of Vishnevsky and Sergey Bey demonstrate that the tradition is preserved and adapted, maintaining its relevance in a modern society.

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CULTURAL MIRROR, IDENTITY, AND PERCEPTION:

stereotypes about France and Spain in the European imagination

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines how stereotypes about France and Spain are formed and how they shape contemporary cultural perceptions. Drawing on the theories of Walter Lippmann, Gordon Allport, and the Stereotype Content Model, the paper argues that stereotypes serve as mental shortcuts that help people make sense of social reality but can also lead to oversimplifications and biased judgments. The study adopts an interdisciplinary approach that integrates theoretical analysis, media representations, and socioeconomic data. It shows that France is often associated with romance, refinement, gastronomy, and secularism, while Spain is commonly linked to siesta, fiesta, flamenco, and emotional expressiveness. However, statistical data on work, education, and tourism challenge these simplified images and reveal more complex social dynamics. The paper concludes that stereotypes are not accurate reflections of reality but symbolic constructions shaped by media, history, and cultural discourse, and that they should be critically examined in intercultural education and communication.

Keywords: *préjudice; Stereotype Content Model (SCM), cultural imagology, laïcité, identity pluralism.*

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Introduction

What is a stereotype: definition and directions for analysis

The concept of stereotype occupies a central place in social psychology and cultural imagology, serving as a tool by which individuals influence social and intercultural relations. Walter Lippmann (1922), considered one of the founders of the modern study of public opinion and of the role of the media in shaping social and political perceptions, defined stereotypes as an "image in our minds" through which we filter social reality for direct perception. These "cognitive templates" facilitate information processing but can also distort reality and lead to misinterpretations.

On the other hand, Gordon Allport (1954), one of the first researchers to study prejudice and stereotypes through a scientific approach, later developed a complementary perspective, defining prejudice as "an antipathy based on a false and rigid generalization." In this perspective, stereotypes become beliefs associated with social categories, which can justify discriminatory emotions and behaviors.

This paper proposes a comparative analysis of how cultural stereotypes about France and Spain reflect contemporary identities, values, and social dynamics, integrating concepts from both social and cultural psychology. The comparative analysis of stereotypes about the French and Spanish shows that these representations, although seemingly opposite—one based on refinement and rationalism, the other on spontaneity and emotionality—are generated by the same mechanism of cognitive simplification and affirmation of cultural difference.

Theoretical framework: from "images in our minds" to the content of stereotypes

Lippmann was among the first authors to argue that people live in a socially constructed pseudo-environment, shaped by cultural and media concepts. Stereotypes function as mental shortcuts that reduce complexity, but they can limit discernment. They transform reality into a network of standardized symbols and images.

Allport (1954) later integrated these ideas into his theory of prejudice, emphasizing the direct relationship

between stereotypes and discrimination. On this basis, the Stereotype Content Model (SCM) (Fiske et al., 2002), provides a contemporary framework for understanding the structure of stereotypes. The SCM predicts that perceptions of social groups are organized along two dimensions that are defining for group evaluation: warmth—associated with the perceived intentions of the group—and competence—the capabilities attributed to these intentions. This framework explains why some communities are perceived as respectful but cold (e.g., Germans) or as friendlier (e.g., Southern Europeans) (Fiske et al., 2002).

Cultural imagology, developed by Joep Leerssen and Manfred Beller, analyzes how nations and cultures are symbolically represented in literary, historical, and media texts. It starts from the idea that the image of "the other" does not reflect the objective reality of a culture, but rather the projections, comparisons, and hierarchies constructed by one's own community of perception. In this sense, imagology explains the persistence of national clichés (such as the "refined Frenchman" or the "passionate Spaniard") through their constant reproduction in European cultural discourse—literature, press, tourism, films—which repeat and recontextualize these images over time.

Methodology and comparative elements

This paper takes an interdisciplinary approach, combining theoretical analysis, interpretation of cultural discourses, and socio-economic contextualization with empirical data. The methodological goal is to understand how stereotypes about the French and Spanish are formed, perpetuated, and transformed in contemporary cultural interactions.

In a first stage, the research is based on a theoretical analysis of the fundamental concepts of stereotype, prejudice, Stereotype Content Model (SCM) (Fiske et al., 2002), and cultural imagology, drawing on the major contributions of Walter Lippmann (1922), Gordon Allport (1954), and researchers in modern social psychology (Fiske et al., 2002, pp. 878–902). This stage aims to define the conceptual framework necessary for the subsequent interpretation of cultural and media data.

The second stage consists of a comparative analysis of media discourses representative of France and Spain. In particular, we examine the series *Emily in Paris* (Star, 2020), which presents a stylized, touristy, and idealized image of French society, and the Spanish comedies *Ocho apellidos vascos* (Martinez-Lazaro, 2014)

and *Ocho apellidos catalanes* (Martinez-Lazaro, 2015), which explores regional and national stereotypes in Spain (Garcia, 2020). The analysis examines narrative and aesthetic elements, as well as the ideological dimension, by identifying tensions among identity, authenticity, and cultural globalization.

The third methodological stage involves the socio-economic and institutional contextualization of these representations through official sources, in particular public data provided by institutions such as the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) on the labor market and educational performance, UNESCO, on tangible and intangible cultural heritage, and UN Tourism, on international tourism flows and trends (UNESCO, 2025). At the same time, the analysis will incorporate elements of the legislative framework and administrative organization: the French Law on Secularism of 1905 and the Spanish Constitution of 1978, which enshrines the principle of regional autonomy. By triangulating theoretical, media, and empirical sources, the paper seeks a more nuanced understanding of how stereotypes about France and Spain function as mirrors of collective European identities.

Institutional and cultural context

France between secularism (laïcité) and gastronomy as a symbolic heritage

The principle of *laïcité* is one of the fundamental values of the French Republic. It is enshrined in law by the Act of December 9, 1905, which guarantees freedom of conscience and the separation of church and state, and establishes the religious neutrality of public institutions. By virtue of this principle, the state does not recognize, pay for, or subsidize any religious denomination, except for chaplaincy services for hospitals, the armed forces, and prisons.

Beyond its legal dimension, *laïcité* has also acquired cultural and symbolic significance, becoming a hallmark of French modernity. In public discourse, it is often associated with values such as rationalism, universalism, and individual freedom—traits that influence external perceptions of the "French spirit."

Culturally, the "gastronomic meal of the French" (*le repas gastronomique des Français*) was recognized in 2010 as an intangible cultural heritage of humanity by UNESCO (2010). This social practice emphasizes

conviviality, the ritual of serving, the balance between food and wine, and respect for regional culinary traditions. Gastronomy thus becomes a symbol of national cohesion and refinement associated with France's international image, helping to reinforce a positive stereotype of a refined, harmonious society.

Spain: the state of autonomous regions and identity pluralism

The Spanish Constitution of 1978 recognizes "the right to autonomy of nationalities and regions," establishing 17 autonomous communities and two autonomous cities: Ceuta and Melilla. This model of governance defines the state of autonomies as an asymmetrical form of decentralization that balances the unity of the state with cultural and linguistic diversity (Cortes Generales, 1978).

This political architecture explains why "national" stereotypes about Spain—flamenco, siesta, fiesta—tend to overlook the country's internal pluralism. In reality, Spain is a mosaic of distinct regional identities: Catalonia, the Basque Country, Galicia, Andalusia, and Valencia are differentiated by their languages, traditions, and specific cultural expressions. In the international media, however, the image of the "typical Spaniard" remains reduced to a symbolic synthesis of the warm, passionate, and festive Mediterranean south.

This tension between internal diversity and external representation is a key element in the comparative analysis of cultural stereotypes: while France presents itself as a model of republican uniformity, Spain illustrates a complex pluralism of identities, in which local culture coexists with European and global identities.

A defining feature of modern Spanish culture is its linguistic and cultural diversity, which is reinforced by both the state's legal framework and the historical dynamics of the autonomous regions. The Spanish Constitution of 1978 explicitly recognizes that "Castilian is the official language of the State," and "the other Spanish languages shall also be official in their respective Autonomous Communities, in accordance with their Statutes."; This provision enshrines the protection and respect for linguistic varieties as part of the nation's cultural heritage. In practice, this principle is reflected in the co-official status of some historical languages in the regions where they are traditionally spoken. Catalan is co-official in Catalonia, the Valencian Community (where it is often called Valencian), and the Balearic Islands, and its status is supported by regional provisions that ensure its use in administration, education, and the media. Basque (Euskera), the only linguistic isolate in continental Europe, has co-official status in the Basque Country and

in defined Basque-speaking areas of Navarre. Galician (Galego) is co-official in Galicia, where it is a language of public and institutional use and an essential element of local cultural identity. These regional languages are not only instruments of communication, but also symbols of cultural autonomy and collective memory, and their legal recognition reflects Spain's commitment to protecting linguistic pluralism in the context of social and administrative coexistence. Viewed comparatively, Spain's linguistic communities highlight different ways of relating to language and its function in social life. The Castilian-speaking area, which is demographically dominant and present throughout the country, uses the language predominantly as a means of interregional communication and as an instrument of institutional functioning, with the identity dimension being less explicit in this case. In contrast, in Catalan-speaking communities, the Catalan language occupies a central position in defining collective identity, being associated with ideas such as cultural continuity, regional autonomy, and the normalization of its use in public spaces. The choice of Catalan in official and everyday contexts is often perceived as an expression of social cohesion and cultural affirmation. The Basque-speaking community is distinguished by a deeply symbolic relationship with the Euskera language, which, beyond its communicative function, is invested with identity and historical value. Its unique character, as a language unrelated to other European languages, has fostered a perception of Euskera as a fundamental element of cultural belonging. Although the processes of standardization and revitalization have been more recent than in the case of Catalan, they have benefited from significant institutional support. Despite these differences, the three linguistic communities coexist within a common legal framework that allows for the articulation of cultural diversity within a unitary state, highlighting the balance between political unity and identity pluralism.

Spain's linguistic diversity is evident in everyday language use, where common expressions take on distinct cultural meanings depending on the community in which they are used. In the Castilian-speaking area, phrases such as "Buenos días," "¿Cómo está usted?" or "Muchas gracias" are widespread at the national level and reflect a predominantly pragmatic function of language, geared towards effective communication and institutional interaction. In Catalan-speaking communities, the same speech acts are performed through expressions such as "Bon dia", "Com estàs?" or "Moltes gràcies," with the use of Catalan in formal and informal contexts being associated with the affirmation of cultural identity and the normalization of the language in the public sphere. Similarly, in the Basque Country, expressions such as "Egun on" (good morning), "Zer moduz?" (How are you?) or "Eskerrik asko" (Thank you)

not only fulfill a communicative function, but are also frequently perceived as markers of community belonging and historical continuity. The differences between these examples illustrate that, although speech acts are functionally comparable, the languages in which they are performed carry different symbolic meanings, reflecting distinct references to identity, tradition, and social space.

Stereotypes about France: romance, sophistication, and gastronomy

Romantic and chic Paris." Tourist and media discourse, from travel guides to pop culture clichés such as "Emily in Paris," presents the capital as a place of fashion, gastronomy, and seduction. However, media research reveals a tension between idealized fantasy and critical local reception, in which perceptions of superficiality and lifestyle homogenization emerge (Spain Culture New York, n.d.).

"Refined at the table and great wine lovers." UNESCO recognizes French gastronomy as an element of intangible heritage, reinforcing the ritualistic dimension of dining. OIV (International Organisation of Vine and Wine) data confirms a robust wine culture, with France consistently ranking at the top in terms of total and per capita consumption, but long-term trends show a decline in per capita consumption, in contrast to the static image of the "wine nation"(OIV, 2024).

"Rigid secularism." Often presented in external discourse as a form of "uniformity," secularism actually seeks equality among citizens through the state's neutrality toward religion. Recent controversies concern the application of the principle in increasingly pluralistic contexts, not the abolition of religious freedom.

According to the SCM, France's external image tends toward perceived high competence (due to its cultural and economic status) but ambivalent "warmth": admiration for art de vivre combined with perceptions of "coldness" and "distance" in work interactions, exemplified by the cliché of the "snobbish" waiter.

Stereotypes about Spain: siesta, flamenco, bullfighting

Siesta = rest after lunch (cf. RAE-Real Academia Española)." OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) data on annual hours worked show that Spain is not a "lazy" country: in some recent series, the annual average exceeds that of other advanced European economies, and

the practice of siesta is much less common in large cities, so it does not fully reflect the diversity and complexity of Spanish reality. Although siesta has its origins in climatic and agricultural characteristics, in today's urban environments, it has become a simple short break.

"Flamenco and bullfighting define Spain." Flamenco is an art form representative of the south (Andalusia), but not of the whole of Spain. Bullfighting, a frequently invoked symbol, is increasingly controversial socially and even banned in some regions; cultural anthropology also shows that the "masculinity" excessively associated with bullfighting is a questionable construct. (Stanford SPARQ, 2022)

"País de fiesta (n.t. Party country)." Tourism confirms the country's attractiveness with 85 million international arrivals in 2023, a historic record, but this performance reflects infrastructure, services, and regional diversity. Spain's external image combines the perception of warmth (hospitality, conviviality) with a variable perception of competence, often underestimated by the cliché of "siestas" to the detriment of competence (InspirePencil Analytics, 2024).

Verifying clichés with comparative data

Work and time

OECD indicators show that the annual number of hours worked in Spain (≈1,630–1,690 in recent series) is comparable to, or even higher than, that of other European economies, contrary to the cliché of "long siestas" (OECD, 2023). In France, historical regulations such as the 35-hour week have reduced the average number of hours worked, but the correlation with "low productivity" is false: the data indicate high hourly productivity, suggesting compensatory efficiency rather than "structural laziness."

Tourism and external image

Post-pandemic trends show a rapid recovery in tourism for both countries. France maintains its position as a world leader thanks to a combination of cultural tourism, international events, and a diverse range of urban and gastronomic experiences. Stereotypes such as "Paris, the city of love" are effective in marketing, but the reality of French tourism is much more complex, including heritage, gastronomy, nature, and modern hospitality technologies. On the other hand, stereotypes such as "the French are lazy and always on

strike" are explained by the fact that protests are frequent and highly publicized in France, but this element is a central component of French civic culture, closely linked to republican tradition and democratic participation.

Spain, in turn, capitalizes on its reputation as a vibrant and diverse destination. Beyond the popular image of a "party country", Spain's tourism offering is sophisticated and varied: it includes beaches, historic cities, regional gastronomy, cultural festivals, and rural or nature tourism, reflecting the pluralism and cultural diversity of the autonomous state.

Gastronomy and wine consumption

Gastronomy is a central element of cultural identity for both France and Spain, reflecting the regional traditions and culinary innovations of each country. In France, the "gastronomic meal" is recognized as cultural heritage and is associated with elaborate rituals, conviviality, and the pairing of dishes with local wines. French cuisine includes an impressive variety of regional products and recipes, from artisanal cheeses and breads to sophisticated urban delicacies.

Spain, on the other hand, stands out for the diversity and authenticity of its cuisine, which reflects the history and specific characteristics of each region. Dishes such as tapas, paella, and gazpacho are just a few examples of this culinary tradition, which combines simplicity and conviviality with gastronomic refinement.

The role of the media in perpetuating and negotiating stereotypes

Popular culture plays an ambivalent role in the construction and circulation of cultural stereotypes: it can simultaneously reinforce and undermine them. Recent audiovisual productions are revealing examples of this dynamic.

The series "Emily in Paris" (Star, 2020) offers a stylized representation of France, and Paris in particular, by reviving established clichés about Parisian romanticism, aesthetic refinement, and a certain professional negligence. These narrative codes, although commercially effective, have been critically received in France, where numerous commentators have accused the series of "Hollywoodizing" the cultural imagination and reducing the social complexity of the capital (Martin,

2022, p. 45-58). Moreover, the French are portrayed as snobbish and arrogant, but this trait is rooted in a strong intellectual tradition that has shaped European culture.

In contrast, the Spanish films *Ocho apellidos vascos* (Martinez-Lazaro, 2014) and *Ocho apellidos catalanes* (Martinez-Lazaro, 2015) use regional stereotypes about expansive Andalusians, rigid Basques, and pragmatic Catalans to ironize and defuse them through comedy. Here, humor becomes a mechanism for negotiating identity, offering the audience a critical mirror on their own prejudices (Garcia, 2021).

Effects and implications

Education and the "stereotype threat"

Cultural stereotypes, such as the perception that the French are more romantic than rigorous or that the Spanish prefer siestas to performance, can influence the behavior and motivation of individuals in international academic contexts. The phenomenon known as stereotype threat (Creative Europe, 2023) occurs when people become aware that they belong to a group targeted by a negative stereotype, which can reduce their performance and confidence in their abilities.

Business and intercultural negotiation

In professional environments, clichés about punctuality, hierarchy, or attitudes toward collaboration are often drawn from standardized cultural indicators, but the reality is much more nuanced. For example, the perception that the French are rigid or the Spanish are relaxed at work can influence how international teams are built or negotiation strategies are developed. If these stereotypes are taken as strict rules, managerial decisions risk being ineffective or generating unnecessary tension. However, the French respect company hierarchy but do not hesitate to express their views when the situation requires it, whereas in Spain, there is still a discrepancy in the representation of women in management positions.

Tourism and cultural policies

Stereotypes can also have positive effects when used strategically: the image of romantic Paris or Spain as a "party country" attracts tourists and creates economic opportunities. Tourism programs and cultural policies that promote diversity, regional heritage, and authentic experiences contribute to more sustainable tourism and a more accurate image of cultural reality. In this way, France and Spain can benefit both economically and symbolically, without limiting their identity to simple stereotypes.

Findings

Media and intercultural education

Researchers insist on the integration of theoretical models such as the Stereotype Content Model (SCM) and the phenomenon of stereotype threat (i.e., the risk that a person will reconfirm, through their behavior or performance, a negative stereotype about the group to which they belong) into high school and university curricula, through subjects dedicated to media and intercultural education. Organizing workshops for teachers, focused on recognizing and managing cultural biases, can increase awareness and pedagogical competence in addressing interculturality (Creative Europe, 2023).

Cultural policies

Cultural projects should present France beyond the capital and the clichés of "Parisian romance and chic," promoting regional heritage and local gastronomy. Similarly, Spain can be presented beyond the triad of "siesta, flamenco, bullfighting," highlighting regional innovation, science, and design (ILOStat, 2023). Such initiatives allow for the construction of a more nuanced image and reduce the impact of reductive stereotypes on external perceptions.

Business communication and responsible tourism

Comparative cultural frameworks, such as those based on the work of Gerard Hendrik Hofstede, can be useful

for understanding intercultural differences, but they must be used with caution and accompanied by empirical data. Professional training on intranational differences (France: centralism vs. regions; Spain: autonomous communities) supports effective intercultural negotiation and management. In tourism, diversifying offerings and the event calendar help reduce pressure on stereotypical symbols and manage the seasonality of tourist flows (Collaboratory Princeton, 2023).

Conclusions

Stereotypes about France and Spain function as true "cultural mirrors," reflecting the human need for simplicity and cognitive organization rather than the complex realities of the two societies (Lippmann, 1922). In light of the classical theories of

Lippmann and Allport and the Stereotype Content Model (SCM), clichés can offer limited cognitive utility, serving as quick reference points in social perception. However, they become problematic when they replace critical analysis and interpretation of empirical data, leading to erroneous conclusions about cultural groups (Fiske et al., 2002).

Thus, France is not limited to the image of "romantic Paris," and Spain is not "just siesta and flamenco." An informed approach that integrates psychosocial perspectives alongside comparable indicators (education, work, cultural consumption) allows us to move from imagination to rigorous knowledge. This perspective not only promotes intercultural education but also contributes to more informed economic decision-making and the strengthening of European cohesion (Allport, 1954).

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THE ROLE OF THE OLDER GENERATION IN MODERN RUSSIAN SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes how the Russian Federation engages with the older generation and how propaganda narratives are used to strengthen patriotic spirit among young people by instilling respect for Russian veterans who contributed to World War II and other recent conflicts. The study also highlights that such rhetoric is gradually introduced at every stage of young people's education: from preschool to university. The paper emphasizes that the inclusion of issues related to the elderly in strategic documents illustrates the Russian state's awareness of the importance of strengthening patriotism to face contemporary geopolitical challenges. At the same time, the paper can serve as a basis for future scientific research aimed at further understanding the socio-emotional impact of these narratives, both internally and externally.

Keywords: Russia, older generation, veterans, rhetoric, propaganda.

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Introduction

This study examines how the Russian state currently relates to the older generation and how it utilizes them to instill family values and patriotism in young people. This issue has gained importance following the May 7th, 2024, publication of Russian President Vladimir Putin's Decree, which sets strategic development goals for the Russian Federation for 2030-2036. This topic has gained greater relevance, particularly for understanding Russian culture in the current geopolitical context. Given this, the following research question arises: How is respect for seniors used in Russian propaganda?

The paper is descriptive and documentary in nature, based on the analysis and synthesis of information from specialist literature and open Russian and Western sources, such as academic websites, state institutions, periodicals, and official documents. The information was selected based on relevance, timeliness, and credibility. The theoretical framework also used the model of the six cultural dimensions developed by Geert Hofstede.

This paper is subject to certain limitations, including the fact that it is not based on direct empirical data, such as surveys or interviews, but rather on data from surveys conducted by other authors. Therefore, the analysis of the information remains interpretative. Last but not least, intergenerational relationships are constantly changing, being influenced by new social trends.

Specific features of Russian society regarding interaction with the elderly

According to the model of six cultural dimensions developed by Geert Hofstede and presented in his and Gert Jan Hofstede's blog, the Russian Federation is a country with a high power distance, an avoidant orientation, and a long-term orientation, with a collectivist and feminine culture, as evidenced by the fact that an individual's behavior in society is influenced by their position in society. At the same time, in this culture, individuals express empathy, loyalty, and care for others, readily accept hierarchy, do not challenge authority, think strategically, and plan for the future.

In the article by Russian academic and sociologist Aleksey Levinson², it is highlighted that in primitive societies, the oldest person made decisions and was considered the wisest member and the group's storyteller. Basically, this individual was the one who had to pass on traditions and customs to the younger generation. Levinson points out that in certain cultures and societies, at certain levels of administrative and territorial organization, there were so-called "councils of elders" or "wise men" which were composed of the oldest men, who were consulted by the leaders of those social groups in making political, economic, military, and other decisions (Levinson, 2005). Such "councils of wise men" can still be found nowadays, including in certain federal subjects of the Russian Federation, particularly in the Caucasian and Siberian republics.

An example is the "Council of Aksakals" in the Republic of Tatarstan. The official website of the Spiritual Directorate of Muslims of the Republic of Tatarstan states that the objective of this council is to implement the institution's spiritual policy and related activities. The "Council of Aksakals" is headed by a president, who is assisted by a group of advisors that consists of elderly people with lifelong experience in various fields. They advise the mufti³ of Tatarstan on the effective exercise of his authority, the improvement of spiritual potential, and the strengthening of moral conduct of the Muslim community.

Levinson believes that intergenerational relationships are shaped by historical, religious, and social factors that only highlight the role of the family and respect for the older generation, and intergenerational dialogue, which represents a special place in Russian culture and represents key values and identity traits of the Russian people.

Furthermore, Aleksey Levinson notes that aging became a real social concern in the 20th century, when life expectancy was low. In the early 1900s, average life expectancy in Europe was about 42.7 years. By 2023, it had increased to 79.1 years, according to a sociological study published in 2023 by "Our World in Data". These data suggest that life expectancy has nearly doubled over the past century, largely due to better living conditions, advances in healthcare, improved nutrition, and changes in modern lifestyles.

Thus, the issue of old age led to the emergence of a branch of science in the early 1900s called "gerontology". This is defined as the science that studies the process of human aging from social, psychological,

biological, and economic perspectives, and its effects on individuals and society. In an article on the website of the Alliance for the Study of Aging⁴, Elie Metchnikov, a Russian microbiologist and immunologist, is presented as the founder of gerontology. He was the first to study and approach the human aging process as a medical condition and developed his own theories on how life expectancy could be extended (Stambler, 2015).

In classical Russian literature, themes of respect for the elderly and intergenerational conflict are common. For example, Ivan Turgenev, in his novel "Fathers and Sons," addressed the conflict between the generations of "fathers" and "sons," more specifically, the clash between the traditionalist and humanist ideals of Arkady Kirsanov and the materialistic ideals of young people, represented by Yevgeny Bazarov.

Respect for the elderly is also a recurring theme in the work of other authors. For example, in "Letters on Kindness" by Dmitri Likhachev (1985, p. 2), the author addresses young people directly, encouraging them to love their parents, care for older people, preserve traditions, and develop a sense of patriotism. He believes that education and respect play a crucial role in shaping the younger generation's national identity.

Russian culture also has many popular sayings and fixed expressions that are educational in nature and urge young people to respect the elderly: "*The elderly are respected even in a horde,*" "*Do not raise your hand against an elderly person and do not speak ill of the dead,*" and "*The older you are, the more right you are*".

Finally, there are several important dates in the Russian Federation dedicated to older people. October 1st, the International Day of Older Persons, highlights their role in society and draws attention to the need for a dignified, active, and secure life in old age. May 9th, Victory Day, commemorates the significant contributions of war veterans, former camp prisoners, and survivors of the Siege of Leningrad⁵.

The older generation as a tool of Russian propaganda

Russia's current political leadership emphasizes respect for the elderly and the memory of World War II veterans, while also seeking to ensure living conditions that allow them to live with dignity. This concern is reflected in the Decree issued on May 7th, 2024, by Vladimir Putin, which outlines

the Russian Federation's national strategic development goals for 2030-2036.

This document outlines several objectives aimed at improving the overall quality of life, with measures specifically for older people. These goals include raising life expectancy to 78 years by 2030 and to 81 years by 2036; increasing the number of older citizens who benefit from long-term care services; ensuring at least 70% state funding for projects aimed at promoting and protecting Russian spiritual, moral, and traditional values; and providing housing.

Because older people are a social group with strong emotional significance in society, Russian authorities actively use this potential for propaganda purposes, both at home and abroad. According to a report published by ZOIS⁶ (September 2024), between 800,000 and 900,000 Russian citizens left the country after the invasion of Ukraine in 2022-2024. Many people emigrated for various reasons, mostly because of opposition to the regime or fear of military mobilization. Therefore, the Russian state concentrated its efforts to promote patriotism and a sense of national identity among its citizens. A survey conducted by Levada-Centre in April 2025 shows that 42% of young people "unconditionally support" the Russian president, while 45% say they "somewhat support" him.

It is important to note that in Russian society, respect for the elderly – especially for war veterans – is instilled in young people from an early age, in preschool and continuing through school and university. This respect is closely associated with cultural and political events organized to celebrate Victory Day against fascism on May 9 each year, to mark the end of the Siege of Leningrad, the defeat of German, Romanian, Hungarian, and Italian troops at Stalingrad, and other major victories of the Red Army [fig. 1 and 2].

The article published on the EUvsDiSiNFO (2024) website states that, with Moscow's shift towards Eurasian cooperation and the launch of geopolitical challenges by Vladimir Putin in his famous 2007 speech at the Munich Security Conference, Victory Day has become a main tool for internal propaganda to boost patriotism, glorify the Russian army, and mobilize society against the danger posed by the collective West and its values.

An article published on the EUvsDiSiNFO (2024) website also highlights a clear shift in the meaning of Victory Day celebration over time. Before 2008, these events largely focused on honoring World War II veterans and commemorating the victims. However, after

²Alexey Levinson is the head of the Socio-Cultural Research Department at the Levada-Center, an independent Russian non-governmental organization that conducts opinion polls and sociological research.

³The spiritual leader, an Islamic scholar of a Muslim community.

⁴The Alliance for Aging Research is a non-profit organization that promotes health and equitable access to healthcare for older adults.

⁵Present-day Saint Petersburg. It was besieged by the Nazi German Army between 1941 and 1944.

⁶Centre for East European and International Studies is a publicly funded research institute.

the conflict with Georgia in August 2008, Victory Day increasingly took on a more aggressive tone, promoting Russian military strength and the Kremlin's readiness to use military force against its adversaries. As a result, the holiday gradually evolved into a celebration that glorifies war and all its atrocities.

At the same time, the article notes that since 2008, military parades in Moscow have been held annually, with a steady increase in the number of troops and military equipment. During Vladimir Putin's time, Russian propaganda also moved away from traditional Soviet symbols, replacing them with the Ribbon of St. George. As World War II veterans became fewer in number, new forms of commemoration emerged, most notably the Immortal Regiment campaign. Over time, Victory Day expanded beyond remembrance of World War II to honor the veterans of all wars fought by the Russian army, including the most recent conflict in Ukraine.

In comparison, Western societies have maintained the tradition of celebrating the victory over fascism in World War II as a day of commemoration and remembrance of the tragedies and massive destruction that occurred during that period.

Hence, the Immortal Regiment campaign plays an important role in promoting the image of World War II veterans in Russian propaganda. According to the official website of the Immortal Regiment initiative, the main stated objective of this propaganda campaign is to preserve the memory of the generations of the "Great Patriotic War"⁷ in society and in every family that had participants in this global conflict. According to the information from the Immortal Regiment website, participation in the event requires that each person who wishes to commemorate the memory of a relative – who was a veteran of the army or navy, a partisan, engaged in the war industry behind the front lines, a prisoner in concentration camps, or a participant in the Siege of Leningrad – on May 9th, participants are expected to join the march in the city, carrying a photo or placard bearing the name of their relative and join the parade of the Immortal Regiment column.

Also, in places where no Immortal Regiment march is held, people can honor their war veteran relatives at the nearest local monument dedicated to fallen heroes. At the same time, the official website of the Immortal Regiment presents the initiative as a private, apolitical civic action open to any citizen, regardless of nationality, religion, or political views. Although from a formal point of view, the movement is not intended to serve political, commercial, or promotional purposes. President Vladimir

Putin and the entire central political leadership participate in every Immortal Regiment parade in Moscow, St. Petersburg, and other major Russian cities. The stated goal of the Immortal Regiment initiative is to establish it as a nationwide tradition for the entire Russian people to celebrate Victory Day on May 9th.

Another article published by the EUvsDiSiNFO (2024) portal notes that the initiative emerged as a civic movement that brought millions of participants. Over time, it was gradually taken over by the Kremlin. While many citizens joined marches on their own – which says a lot about the sincere social adherence to this action – there were also reports of students being mobilized to participate in these events, with portraits distributed by the organizers, sometimes depicting individuals they did not personally know. Since 2023, the massive public marches of the Immortal Regiment have been canceled, with authorities encouraging participation in online formats instead. This shift is widely seen as an attempt to prevent the marches from becoming a platform of dissent. If citizens were able to display portraits of their loved ones who died in the so-called "special operation"⁸ in Ukraine, numbers that could sharply contradict official Russian data were made public.

The website dedicated to the 80th anniversary of the victory over Nazi Germany notes that veterans participating in the parade wear military uniforms and, like other participants, wear the St. George ribbon [fig.3]. The ribbon is presented as a symbol of the heroism and bravery of Red Army soldiers during World War II. Thus, the St. George ribbon is used for propaganda purposes both within the Russian state and beyond its borders, promoting Russia's interpretation of World War II history.

At the same time, at the military parade held on May 9th in Moscow's Red Square, alongside the Russian president on the official tribune are World War II veterans and well-known elderly political, military, and cultural figures [fig. 4]. This is a symbolic image that sends a powerful message from the highest political level to Russian society about how all citizens of the country should relate to older generations.

Another tool used in propaganda by the Russian authorities to strengthen respect and care for older generations and veterans in society is the Russian national civic movement Victory Volunteers. The official website of this organization states that its goal is to maintain intergenerational connections and pass on the memory of heroes to future generations [fig. 5]. The priority is cooperation with veterans and veterans' organizations to clean and repair veterans' homes, accompany them to activities and medical facilities, do shopping, and

congratulate them on national and personal holidays.

A key propaganda campaign supported by the organization's volunteers is called Victory Letter, which sends congratulations and thanks to veterans of the Great Patriotic War and participants in the "special military operation" in Ukraine. In addition to activists from the *Victory Volunteers* movement, participants in the *International Volunteer Corps* of the national initiative *80th Anniversary of Victory in the Great Patriotic War 1941-1945* and participants in the *International Volunteer Corps* of the national initiative *80th Anniversary of Victory in the Great Patriotic War 1941-1945* or humanitarian missions in the case of participants in Russia's war in Ukraine.

The website of the Volunteers of Victory lists the following partners of this Russian national movement: the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation, the official portal dedicated to the 80th anniversary of the victory over fascism, Rossotrudnichestvo, the Memory of the Generation Charitable Foundation, the Union of Russian Veterans, the national civic organization "Heroism in Labor in Russia," Yunarmia, the Russian Patriotic Center of Russian Youth, the civic organization "Rossmolodyoj"⁹, Russian Railways, the international media group Russia Today, and the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection.

The external socio-emotional impact of Russian propaganda on the topic of war veterans

Externally, Russian propaganda on the topic of veterans of the Great Patriotic War has certain characteristics depending on the objectives pursued and the intensity of actions in specific areas of application. In the former Soviet countries, propaganda narratives on this topic aim to keep them within Russia's sphere of influence not only on political and economic grounds, but also on ideological, cultural-educational, and scientific grounds.

Social adherence to Russian propaganda on the topic of war veterans varies across the states that broke away from the former USSR. It is more pronounced in countries that have chosen to be part of political-military or economic integration structures led by Russia—the CIS¹⁰, CSTO¹¹, and EAEU¹², namely Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, or where Russian

influence is still strong (Republic of Moldova, Georgia) and is much lower in states that have definitively broken away from Moscow (the Baltic States) or are at war with the Russian Federation (Ukraine).

On May 12th, 2025, the official website of the CIS published a summary of events held in member countries in 2025 to mark the 80th anniversary of the victory over Nazi Germany. CIS Secretary General Sergei Lebedev noted that this was the central and most important event held in the CIS, emphasizing that:

"Each republic made an invaluable contribution to the defeat of fascism, and every family in the CIS today cherishes the memory of those who rose up to defend their homeland, those who never returned from the battlefield, and those who forged the Great Victory with their selfless work behind the lines. The fiery years of war convincingly demonstrated that the fraternal international friendship of the peoples of the Soviet Union was not a myth, as modern falsifiers of history try to portray it, but an incredibly powerful force. It is our common duty to honor the sacred memory of those who died for freedom and peace on Earth, to defend with all our might the just cause for which they fought and gave their lives, and to strengthen in every way the unity of all people of good will in the fight against any manifestations of Nazism and neo-Nazism, as well as the threat of a new world war." (CIS, 2025)

In this context, Russia's war against Ukraine in February 2022 has led to a change in the domestic and international perception of Moscow's current propaganda narratives, related to the Great Patriotic War and, implicitly, to the theme of war veterans. Russia's aggression in Ukraine has led to the collapse of some Soviet propaganda narratives that have been taken up by today's Russia: the myth of the victorious Russian army, the myth of the Russian soldier as liberator, and the myth of brotherly peoples (Voicu&Gomboş, 2022, p.179).

Conclusions

The Russian state's concern for supporting the elderly and preserving the memory of war veterans contributes to strengthening the sense of patriotism in society and cohesion between generations, educating the younger generation in the spirit of traditional Russian moral values, and fostering a sense of belonging to a state with global superpower status.

⁷ The generic name in Russia for World War II.

⁸ This is how Russia officially refers to the war it started against Ukraine in 2022.

⁹ Russian youth

¹⁰ Commonwealth of Independent States

¹¹ Collective Security Treaty Organization

¹² Eurasian Economic Union

At the same time, patriotism significantly influences the formation of social consciousness and national identity. Patriotic education in Russia has well-defined objectives and becomes part of the collective understanding of the country's past, present, and future. Patriotic ideas promoted through education, the media, culture, and within the family, where the memory of the Great Patriotic War is usually sacredly preserved, help shape a system of values and beliefs that influence public opinion in the direction desired by the authorities.

As highlighted in this paper, the Russian authorities are aware that patriotism has the potential to become a powerful force for social consolidation and mobilization of the nation to achieve its goals and face current geopolitical challenges. This is illustrated by the inclusion of issues affecting the elderly and patriotism in Russia's medium- and long-term strategic planning documents.

The natural process of physical disappearance of people who participated in one way or another in the Great

Patriotic War will cause Russian authorities to act with greater determination to implement propaganda strategies and tools that convey the memory and respect for the status of "war veteran" to younger generations. Social adherence to Russian propaganda on this issue, both domestically and abroad, is in most cases driven by material rather than emotional factors. It is well known that war veterans recognized by Russia and their descendants receive a range of benefits regardless of whether they live in Russia or another country, as well as tax and administrative benefits if they reside in the Russian Federation.

Furthermore, the use of images of elderly people associated with events organized by the Russian state at home and abroad to mark Victory Day against fascism aims to capitalize as much as possible on the emotional potential generated by these images to promote Russian propaganda narratives regarding its own perspective on the truth of the history of World War II and maintain its sphere of influence over the entire former Soviet space.

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THE BRITONS, A COMPLEX CHALLENGE FOR SOCIOCULTURAL INTELLIGENCE

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ABSTRACT

This article examines British cultural identity from a sociocultural intelligence (SOCINT) perspective, focusing on the symbolic role of the British monarchy and the impact of cultural stereotypes on intercultural interpretation. It argues that the monarchy serves as a constitutional institution and a symbol of continuity, stability, unity, and public service. Widespread stereotypes about British society—such as emotional restraint, politeness, irony, loyalty to the monarchy, and ritualized habits—may distort interpretations in diplomatic and intelligence contexts if approached uncritically. Using qualitative documentary analysis of literature, official sources, surveys, and intercultural examples, the study finds that understanding British cultural codes can reduce bias, improve communication, and support more accurate SOCINT assessments. It concludes that stereotypes should be critically contextualized, as they can reveal social patterns but also lead to false generalizations.

Keywords: *British monarchy, stereotypes, diplomacy, patterns, intercultural communication.*

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Introduction

As proven over and over again, efforts to accurately decipher concepts, behaviors, and languages in a cultural context have been valuable for better communication and cooperation. Furthermore, cultural and civilizational particularities and their in-depth knowledge are fundamental to intelligence, diplomacy, and politics, supporting objective decisions free from preconceived ideas and strengthening strategic relations over time. For that purpose, it is fundamental to identify the values, patterns, or stereotypes that shape the core of a nation's culture and to assess the impact they may have on sociocultural intelligence. In consequence, a good knowledge of the British culture will facilitate insight into its system of values and beliefs, enabling better calibration of one or the other party on the state of things in a diplomatic, political, or economic environment, securing at the same time a tremendous strategic advantage in the world of intelligence.

According to experts, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, as it is known today, is not a truly unitary state, particularly in administrative and legislative terms. The four historical provinces that make up the state each have their own identity, although they have gradually merged since 1707, when England and Scotland formed Great Britain, later joined by Wales and then Northern Ireland. However, a common cultural identity has crystallized over centuries, resulting in the formation of nation-states during the second half of the 15th century and especially during the 17th century (Drimba, 1998, p. 73). Although he justifies the emergence of these states on economic grounds (highlighting the need for interdisciplinarity in the study of cultural phenomena), theorist Jeremy Rifkin (2004) points to a causal relationship between the two concepts, nation and cultural identity:

“The popular conception of the nation-state is of an organic creation rooted in common culture, language, and customs, that evolved over time and developed into a modern state formation. [...] The genius of the nation-state lay in its ability to provide a new collective identity for the growing numbers of autonomous free agents who made up the world of private property relations in self-regulated markets.” (p. 182)

Despite the cultural diversity that characterizes each of the four provinces mentioned above, and despite the theory of multiculturalism within the same state, a series of common elements has gradually come to define British culture and create its own profile. For

this particular situation as well, the pattern described by Tiberiu Brăilean (2005) in relation to the modern phenomenon of globalization may explain how, several centuries ago, differences came to converge:

“Cultural diversity is often presented as a major obstacle to cooperation or integration for different communities, such as – for example – the European integration. However, it can also be seen as an element of a necessary complementarity, as a factor that more often promotes cooperation and closer ties between and within communities.” (p. 150, our translation)

Within this architecture, one of the defining elements of British cultural identity is the monarch figure and the cult surrounding this institution of the state, which continues to play a major role in modern society. This reality can only be fully understood by considering a multitude of factors (historical, social, ethnic, political, etc.), proof of its complexity and, perhaps, of the monarchy's resilience over time, despite the increasingly polarized views of British citizens towards it (with a decline, at least for the past 10 years, in the British people's trust in the monarchy, especially among young people). At the same time, such an analysis can provide clues about possible pro- or anti-monarchical attitudes and behaviors, which can significantly influence various forms of intercultural communication and the relationships between the parties involved.

From a similar perspective, in a society defined by globalization, the efforts to preserve and promote the distinct features of each culture and civilization are fundamental, not only to contribute to cultural complexity at the global level, but also to ensure that each citizen has a cultural identity, based, among other things, on certain values, norms, and traditions. However, the complexity of various cultures and civilizations inevitably leads to stereotypes and prejudice, more specifically preconceived ideas about a country's population, its customs, or citizens' typical behavior. Stereotypes specific to each culture are frequently associated with a negative connotation, which is why they prevent genuine understanding of the culture in question and, at the same time, effective networking with its representatives, especially in official contexts, including meetings between state officials or members of the diplomatic corps.

Therefore, it is fundamental to establish the impact of stereotypes on how people comprehend the core of a nation's culture, as well as on sociocultural intelligence. But in the case of British culture, such a survey must never lose sight of the fact that the British monarchy is both a mirror of British stereotypes and their promoter. Those stereotypes give it substance and, at the same time, strengthen the connection between the

monarchy and its subjects.

For that purpose, starting from the literal meaning of certain notions and concepts, it is necessary to briefly review the key moments in the history of the British monarchy. This is to be done to highlight afterward the influence that the cult of royalty has on the cultural identity of the British people and how the British population relates to the monarchy in today's society. Consequently, one can see the significance of the thorough study of cultures and civilizations, not only in facilitating relations between representatives of different states, but also in understanding the behavioral patterns of citizens of different nationalities and in accurately assessing data.

This study employs a qualitative documentary and cultural-interpretative methodology. The analysis draws on three categories of sources: academic literature on culture, monarchy, stereotypes, and intercultural communication; official institutional sources on the constitutional role of the British monarchy; and public opinion data reflecting contemporary attitudes toward the monarchy in British society. The article does not aim to provide a quantitative sociological survey but rather to interpret how selected cultural symbols and stereotypes function within British identity and how they may influence sociocultural intelligence assessments. The analytical procedure involves identifying recurrent cultural themes — such as continuity, stability, public service, politeness, emotional restraint, irony, and loyalty to tradition — and examining their potential impact on diplomatic, political, and intelligence-related interactions. Particular attention is paid to the risk of analytical bias, especially when stereotypes are treated as fixed truths rather than as culturally situated representations that require contextual interpretation.

The British monarchy - theoretical view

For a better understanding of the issue, a complex perspective on what the monarchy actually represents is necessary. This concept should not be interpreted solely through the lens of its dictionary meaning, referring to a specific political system with all its particularities, but must also be understood in cultural, historical, and social terms. Usually, the term "monarchy" takes on the following meaning:

“Undivided sovereignty, ruled by a single person, who is also the permanent ruler of the state. The term now applies to countries with hereditary

sovereignty. The monarch was the ideal ruler of the new nation states of the 16th and 17th centuries; his powers aimed absolutism, although in England the Parliament limited this power. The former idea, according to which the monarch embodied (within the borders of the state) the very will of God, reached its peak in the 17th century with the doctrine of the divine right of kings illustrated by Louis XIV. Absolute monarchy adapted to the ideas of the Enlightenment, taking the form of enlightened despotism, as was the case with Catherine II of Russia. The French Revolution dealt a fatal blow to absolute monarchy, and World War I destroyed what remained of it, with the monarchies of Russia, Germany, and Austria-Hungary being blamed for starting the war and the post-war disaster. In Western Europe, it turned into a constitutional monarchy, although absolute (or almost absolute) monarchies still exist in the Near East. In Western Europe, it was transformed into a constitutional monarchy, although absolutist (or quasi-absolutist) monarchies still exist in the Near East.” (Enciclopedia Britannica, 2010, p. 300, our translation)

In the United Kingdom, the monarchy is the oldest form of government. Today, officially, the British monarchy is a constitutional monarchy:

Constitutional monarchy: “A system of government in which a monarch shares power with a constitutionally organized government. The monarch may be the de facto head of state or may be its ceremonial leader. The constitution allocates the rest of the government's power to the legislature and judiciary.” (Enciclopedia Britannica, 2010, p. 300, our translation)

The sovereign has authority, but no political or executive power (which belongs to the Parliament). Instead, he undertakes a series of constitutional and representative duties. Perhaps his most important role is being Head of State, according to the official presentation, which means that he “acts as a focus for national identity, unity, and pride; gives a sense of stability and continuity; officially recognizes success and excellence; and supports the ideal of voluntary service.” (The Royal Household, n.d.) According to constitutional principles, as summarized by Walter Bagehot in his 1867 work “The English Constitution”, the monarch has “three rights—the right to be consulted, the right to encourage, the right to warn” (p. 85). Bagehot (1867) also distinguished between the two necessary parts of a constitution and, implicitly, between two types of institutions, the “efficient” and the “dignified”. The monarchy was considered the perfect example of what the dignified element would represent: what is solemn and meant to cultivate the attraction and

reverence of the people (Lewis, 1977). This perspective remained unchanged even a century and a half later, with the British monarchy continuing to pursue this goal.

The monarch of the United Kingdom also appoints the Prime Minister — although he does not elect him; instead, the latter informs the sovereign of matters concerning the state and may seek his opinion. In addition, the king opens sessions of Parliament, and the monarch's consent (Royal Assent) is required to pass a bill — the right to refuse remains, although such situations no longer occur. (UK Parliament, n.d.) The sovereign is also the head of the Anglican Church, in which capacity he appoints bishops and archbishops on the recommendation of the Prime Minister. Formally, he also serves as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces and, from a political and administrative point of view, the monarch of the United Kingdom is the sovereign of 14 other states (“the Realms”), as well as the head of all 56 states united under the title of “the Commonwealth” — although in most of these countries the position is only symbolic (About-Britain, n.d.).

Historical landmarks

Without claiming to be exhaustive, a brief overview of the key moments in the history of the British monarchy is important for understanding how, over more than a millennium, it has shaped the consciousness and cultural identity of the subjects of the current British monarchy. Ever since medieval times, the Crown's influence has been evident in various areas, including political, administrative, economic, religious, and cultural spheres. British royalty began with the Anglo-Saxon dynasty, whose first king was Alfred the Great (849–899), ruler of the Kingdom of Wessex, renowned for his victory over the Danes. His successors recovered some of the English territories conquered by the Danes and continued the kingdom's expansion, with Athelstan (924–939) often remembered for his conquest of Northumbria and the reunification of all the English kingdoms.

Starting in 1066, the Norman dynasty took over, with William II, Duke of Normandy, conquering England (becoming William I of England, also known as William the Conqueror) and moving the capital of the new kingdom to London. The House of Plantagenet followed, Richard the Lionheart (1189–1199) being, perhaps, the most famous of its monarchs. The Plantagenets ruled England for almost three centuries, during which time attempts were made to expand into Scotland, Wales,

and Ireland. During this period, as a result of political struggles between the king and local barons, Parliament was also founded, becoming, at that time, a partner of the sovereign (Lupşor, n.d.).

From 1399, the kingdom was ruled by the House of Lancaster (Henry IV, Henry V, Henry VI), marked by the outbreak of the Wars of the Roses (1455–1487), which ended with the victory of the House of York. About two decades later, the leadership was taken over by the kings of the House of Tudor (including Henry VIII, known for the terror he instilled and for breaking away from the Catholic Church, becoming the head of the Anglican Church). They were followed by the House of Stuart (beginning in 1603), and then, between 1653 and 1659 (after the assassination of King Charles I), England became a republic (the Commonwealth). In 1660, the kings and queens of the House of Stuart returned to rule at the request of the army and the Parliament (Twinkl, n.d.). They were followed — after 1714 — by the House of Hanover, a German dynasty.

Throughout this succession of dynasties and monarchs, some crucial moments stand out. Such are the Acts of Union of 1706–1707, through which the kingdoms of England and Scotland officially formed the United Kingdom of Great Britain; and then the Act of Union of 1800, which unified Great Britain and the Kingdom of Ireland. Under the leadership of the House of Hanover, the new political entity faced, on the one hand, the loss of the American colonies and, on the other hand, the Industrial Revolution, during which the United Kingdom experienced significant economic development. In 1901, the House of Windsor ascended to the throne, and its sovereigns, through King Charles III, continued to exercise their powers.

The cult of the monarchy, a defining cultural feature of the United Kingdom

Despite the variations it has experienced over time and the degree of trust it has enjoyed among the population — whether simply British or extended to the Commonwealth — the monarchy has continued to exert a special attraction and to define the very idea of national identity, becoming a symbol of stability and of a certain ethic.

The British monarch is both a leader and someone wholly dedicated to public service, a principle deeply rooted in his subjects' consciousness. To this extent, the statement made by the current sovereign,

King Charles III, at the time of his official proclamation as head of the United Kingdom (during the ceremony on September 10th, 2022) is an eloquent example. At least in part, the logic of this speech was to recall the inherited responsibility — a responsibility previously assumed with “dedication and devotion” by his mother, Queen Elizabeth II, and programmatically continued by him: to bring “peace, harmony, and prosperity” to all his subjects, “the people who live on these islands, in Commonwealth countries and territories around the world” (The Royal Household, 2022). Just one day earlier, when he addressed the nation and the Commonwealth to announce the Queen's death, King Charles III appealed to the “affection and loyalty” of his subjects to achieve this goal. And in doing so, he was merely confirming the place that the monarch currently occupies in British culture. Furthermore, his promise to serve with “loyalty, respect, and love” sums up the ethic of service that defines the British monarchy in the collective consciousness (The Royal Household, 2022). Several landmarks allow us to reconstruct the value system on which the British monarchy is built:

Historical continuity. The long path of the monarchy, as well as the reputation it has enjoyed throughout history, including periods when it was one of the largest colonial empires, easily translates into a form of national pride, enhanced by an obvious sense of belonging and connection to this remarkable history. The nationwide celebration of significant events and moments in the life of the monarch or of the Royal Family only amplifies these echoes among the British subjects.

Internal unity and stability. In a broad sense, the identity of the monarch is assimilated to that of the unifier, the one who brings together the people he leads, in diametric opposition to that of elected political leaders, who, in most cases, come and go too often on the political scene and antagonize the masses. In recent years, particularly in light of Brexit and Scotland's increasingly firm desire for independence, the British monarchy has crystallized as a source of stability amid multiple political changes. In the United Kingdom, this stability is embodied by the Royal Family, considered a pillar of political neutrality across the nation.

The ceremonial nature of the monarchy, which over time became much more accessible to the general public, created the impression of a closer connection between the people and the monarchy — seen as the guardian of strict, unaltered traditions and customs. A large number of such events (especially coronations and royal weddings) have become invaluable assets for a monarchy whose image has suffered on more than a

few occasions in recent decades. The sympathy gained this way was not limited to the British people but also attracted the attention of the entire modern world in a symbolic attempt to recapture some of the past charm of royalty, so inaccessible to other social classes.

An embellished picture of British society. On many occasions, the British monarchy has been perceived as a genuine “calling card,” a moral and behavioral model to be followed within British society and, at the same time, a model to be admired internationally. The press and, more recently, social media have played an essential role in this equation, especially in modern society. They have become the vehicle through which the British monarchy has rebuilt its image at difficult moments and has continued to maintain it, thus adapting to the demands of modern times in terms of transparency.

How today's society sees the British monarchy

At present, the British appetite for monarchy remains a reality. Although the sovereign and the Royal Family have mostly ceremonial duties, the cult of royalty remains a constant in British culture, and the monarchy continues to enjoy the appreciation and support of a significant number of British citizens. Of course, there are also strong voices arguing against the monarchy, perceiving it as an archaic system that perpetuates social inequalities and is no longer justified in the cultural context of modern democratic societies. These voices emphasize the monarchy's purely ornamental role, lacking any real power to decisively influence the course of modern Britain and the lives of its citizens. The high costs of maintaining the Royal Household are just one of the arguments supporting this position.

However, the constant interest of the British press, reflected in regular polls, indicates certain trends among the population. In this regard, in 2012 Queen Elizabeth II celebrated her Diamond Jubilee, a national holiday marking 60 years of reign. She was the second monarch in the history of the British monarchy, after Queen Victoria (in 1897), to celebrate six decades of reign, an occasion on which the British press in particular focused its attention on the relevance of the monarchy in a modern 21st-century state. A brief analysis of the opinions expressed by those who accessed the YouGov website at that time showed that opinions were clearly polarized. However, “a significant proportion thought that the monarchy was either fairly or very important” in the UK. At the opposite end of the spectrum was “a considerably smaller yet notably outspoken group” (MacLeod, 2012).

Just a few years later, in 2015, Queen Elizabeth II became the longest reigning monarch in British history, surpassing Queen Victoria's nearly 64 years on the throne. At that point, the YouGov website turned its attention to public opinion, noting the continued popularity of the British monarchy. According to the research, at that time, 68% of the British public — supporters of all political parties and representatives of all age groups — considered this institution to be “good for Britain” (Wildash, 2015).

A similar analysis was conducted in 2022, a year that marked a new significant milestone for Queen Elizabeth II's reign. It was the first time in British history that a monarch celebrated 70 years on the throne — the platinum jubilee. Once again, according to the conclusions published by the YouGov website, the monarchy as an institution continued to enjoy the favorable attitude of British citizens, with support coming mainly from Conservative Party voters and Britons aged 65 and older. However, there was a clear downward trend, with YouGov's findings showing a 13% drop in the number of people supporting the monarchy over the last decade (“from a high of 75% in favor of a monarchy in July 2012, to 62% now”). In addition, confidence in the longevity of the British monarchy has declined significantly across all age groups: according to YouGov, in 2011, two-thirds of Britons believed that the monarchy would continue to exist in 100 years' time; in 2015, this percentage had fallen to 62%, and in 2022 only 39% still held the same belief (while 41% of respondents denied that the monarchy would still exist in 100 years) (Kirk, 2022).

The interest should also be focused on a slightly different aspect: how attitudes toward the monarchy have shifted among young people — a demographic segment that is much more attuned to current international political and social trends but, at the same time, is more prone to falling prey to social media influence. A certain strategy (though not exactly recent) of the Royal Family to open up more to ordinary citizens in order to gain their sympathy and support also carried image risks. Precisely because of the media and the information circulating today with amazing speed and ease, certain contexts and certain decisions made by the members of the Royal Family have only served to increase young people's distrust of the British monarchy. In this regard, the results recorded by the YouGov website in a series of polls revealed that, after 2019, the opinion of those aged between 18 and 24 changed significantly. The number of those who supported the monarchy gradually decreased (from 46% in 2019 to 40% in 2020), while the number of those who wanted an elected head of state increased significantly (from 26% in 2019 to 37% in 2020) (Nolsoe, 2021).

The trends identified for the entire British population also hold true for ethnic minorities in the UK. According to conclusions drawn from YouGov surveys, the number of those who support the monarchy over an elected head of state increases with age. In 2023, among young people from ethnic minorities, the balance was 43% in favor of an elected head of state (and 30% in favor of the monarchy), while as they got older, the percentage of those declaring themselves in favor of the monarchy went up (to 45-46% in favor of the monarchy for the over-50 age group) (Abraham, 2023).

The importance of understanding British culture

It is true that the researchers who study cultures and civilizations recognize the fundamental role that language and religion play in defining a culture. In this regard, given the international widespread use of English, one could argue that knowledge of English represents an easy path to intercultural communication. However, this would be a simplistic view and could create significant gaps in the proper understanding of a culture, in this case, British culture. Consequently, any further steps based on such a comparison, whether in diplomatic, political, or intelligence circles, or limited to economic, social, educational, or other contexts, bear the risk of negative consequences.

What may seem, at first glance, to be simple intercultural communication can become imperative in specific contexts. Accurately deciphering certain concepts, behaviors, and languages in the context of the respective culture will allow for a better understanding of the other and, implicitly, a calibration of one's own manifestations and approaches for better communication and cooperation. Ideological confrontations and the danger of ethnocentrism may become obstacles in this process, which is why they must first be recognized and then removed.

Therefore, a good knowledge of British culture will facilitate openness to its system of values and beliefs. This will enable a better understanding of how this combination of cultural traits can alter the perspectives of one or the other party on the state of affairs in diplomatic, political, economic, or other environments. The British nation regards the monarch as a symbol of national unity and stability amid increasingly frequent political, economic, or social imbalances. Understanding the nature of this relationship may help explain, for example, a more determined attitude of an individual or group in support of the monarchy or even a specific action.

However, as stated before, the complexity of British culture resides both in the nature of the British monarchy and in the diversity of the stereotypes that define Britons. A better interpretation of the cultural context, considering both perspectives, will play an important role in painting a more accurate portrait of British society. For this purpose, the following case study is aimed at analyzing the connection between the core of the British monarchy and the stereotypes concerning the culture and civilization of the United Kingdom.

Overview of the main stereotypes concerning the United Kingdom

According to critics, stereotypes are defined as a set of beliefs and generalizations that people hold about certain national, ethnic, or religious groups, based on a specific feature linked to a group of individuals, a particular custom, or a specific behavioral pattern, resulting in prejudice or even feelings of hostility toward the group of individuals in question (Rinehart, 1963, p. 137). In most cases, stereotypes carry a negative connotation; therefore, understanding their origin is fundamental to developing a nuanced perspective on a nation's culture and civilization and, at the same time, to pushing the boundaries imposed by people's preconceived images of the representatives of a nation or of an ethnic or religious group.

Due to the long history of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, there are a significant number of stereotypes concerning British culture, the most widespread one being represented by the *habit to serve the afternoon tea*, a habit strictly followed by British citizens every single day according to the widespread misconception. Although based on a true fact, this stereotype amplifies and generalizes a habit defined by complexity and by a long history, not by a simple daily routine. In fact, the afternoon tea has a different connotation depending on the social class, since the representatives of the working class uses this term simply to refer to dinner, while the members of the higher social class and of aristocracy refer to the afternoon tea served along with traditional snacks, but it is noteworthy to mention that the passion for tea does not define the entire population, as the habit is largely amplified, generalized and a bit outdated from certain perspectives (Murcott, 2013, p. 38). This preconception may lead to unrealistic expectations about a nation's customs among individuals who are not accustomed to British civilization, resulting in the misinterpretation of certain information or the inability to properly analyze

this information by considering other possible scenarios, in order to reach proper conclusions that are backed by tangible facts, not by preconceived ideas.

Moreover, it is widely assumed that the British approach *the topic of the weather* in almost every single conversation, but, in reality, the fact that the weather changes quite rapidly in short periods of time in the United Kingdom allows people to easily integrate this topic when initiating a dialogue, while also ensuring that the discussion is not too personal, which would lead to an undesired closeness between participants. Unconditional loyalty towards the monarchy is another notable stereotype, as there is a general belief according to which all citizens around the United Kingdom perceive the Royal Family as being a role model, but present reality indicates that, although numerous British citizens do perceive monarchy as part of the cultural heritage of the Kingdom, there is an increasingly large number of individuals who consider it to be obsolete and lacking openness towards the public and especially towards the British citizens.

In regard to behavior patterns, stereotypes describe the language specific to British citizens as being *sarcastic*, based mainly on *irony*, this type of humor is often misunderstood outside the United Kingdom or by individuals who are not accustomed to the peculiarities of British culture and civilization. In addition to the sarcastic language, British citizens are generally perceived as being quite *private*, even *distant* from their interlocutors, their attitude permanently being *formal*, which automatically leads to the impossibility of establishing a connection or discussing in a more open manner. However, this perception represents a common prejudice, since close attention paid to behavior etiquette according to context, to manners, and to respect is commonly misinterpreted as signifying a distant attitude, even one of superiority, from the interlocutor.

The analysis of the impact of stereotypes on sociocultural intelligence

The impact of stereotypes is significant in how people outside the United Kingdom interact with British citizens, especially in official contexts, resulting in difficulties in mutual cultural understanding. Even so, their impact is even more emphasized in intelligence, since, in this domain, details specific to the culture and civilization of a culture represent the basis for the proper approach of British representatives and for the accomplishment of certain objectives in relation to them, as well as for the

establishment of strategic partnerships or in the context of diplomatic negotiations.

In sociocultural intelligence, the analysis of intel based on the certainty that some stereotypes must define the representatives of a culture may lead to the narrowing of the horizon in terms of interpreting the data available; thus, people's various behaviors and attitudes may be misunderstood, leading to conclusions that only reflect reality to a small extent. Moreover, generalizing certain features may lead to a superficial understanding of the language and of actions, because, in such circumstances, the individual responsible for analyzing a case cannot establish the subtext of certain statements or decisions to act and may overlook details that are essential for anticipating major situations.

At the same time, when an analyst fulfills their tasks starting from certain preconceived ideas about an ethnic, religious, or national group, it is likely that, during the analysis, they will focus their attention on trying to identify certain details to confirm their original beliefs, not taking into consideration the possibility that the case may not fit the pre-established patterns. In this case, significant details for the case in question may be overlooked, since the focus is on the information which may confirm the individual's preconceptions, instead of maintaining a certain distance from the subject, in order to have a perspective as objective and accurate as possible.

Another way stereotypes may affect the intelligence field is through the development of official meetings held at high levels, with the purpose of addressing subjects and matters of common interest, in order to conduct negotiations or establish strategic partnerships. In such circumstances, preconceived ideas lead to misunderstanding the interlocutor's message and attitude, due to inadequate knowledge of the culture and civilization in question.

A relevant example in this regard could involve a high-level meeting between a Romanian representative and a British diplomat, the latter being known, according to existing stereotypes, as a loyal supporter of the monarchy and as using a language based on irony, while maintaining a rather distant demeanor toward the interlocutor and a superior attitude. In such a circumstance, the Romanian official, without a thorough knowledge of British culture, may use language characterized by sarcasm and irony, aiming to foster a more familiar relationship with the interlocutor, but, in fact, this approach may come across as offensive to the British official. Moreover, initiating a dialogue by discussing the weather, especially by mentioning the British preference for approaching this topic quite regularly, may be interpreted as a lack of

consideration for the culture of the United Kingdom and its citizens. Therefore, based on the Romanian official's preconceived image, discussions on cooperation between the two countries mentioned in this example may yield a different outcome than initially intended, causing difficulties in the relationship between the two officials and a lack of understanding due to insufficient training and cultural knowledge. At the international level, the importance of understanding the culture and civilization of other countries is acknowledged, especially in situations focused on identifying solutions to international political matters, leading to diminishing the distance between nations and establishing connections through cultural diplomacy (Varma, 2008, p. 68).

Conclusions

Despite its obvious popularity, the cult of the British monarchy, along with the stereotypes that accompany it, has become a frequent topic of debate over the years. The perception of an anachronistic and costly monarchy has invited considerable criticism. At the same time, intense media coverage of episodes in the private lives of members of the Royal Family has led to a decline in public confidence in the monarchy.

In fact, the reaction of the general public, especially among the British sovereign's direct subjects, is itself a measure of the responsibility with which he assumes his role in the state. The more strictly the values symbolized by the monarchy are cultivated by the representative of the Crown and by the entire Royal Family, the more their echoes are reflected in the willingness of British citizens to recognize the monarchy's privileged position and to support it. Even so, the cult of the monarchy remains one of the most striking features of British culture. With ancient origins and a rich history, often playing a leading role in international politics and the economy, the British monarchy stands today as a synthesis of a well-defined system of values.

However, Historical continuity, unity, and stability, enhanced by a sense of national pride and a specific dignity, clearly outline the skeleton of British culture, which is then clothed in a series of other particular elements. Together, these give consistency to what the British anthropologist Kate Fox (2014) called "Englishness":

"Englishness is not a matter of social position, race, colour, or creed: it is a mindset, an ethos, a behavioural 'grammar' — a set of unwritten codes that might seem enigmatic, but that anyone can decipher and apply, now that we have the key." (p. 564)

It is important not to overlook the fact that the process of "deciphering" mentioned by Kate Fox becomes necessary when effective intercultural communication is sought. All things considered, cultural and civilizational elements and their in-depth knowledge are fundamental to intelligence, since they allow analysis to comprehend various behaviors in an objective manner and beyond certain preconceived ideas, in order to have a complex perspective on a particular matter. Moreover,

in regard to international cooperation in intelligence, having a thorough comprehension of foreign cultures and civilizations encourages the establishment of relations between nations, in order to identify common solutions to international issues and to establish strategic partnerships. This is why stereotypes and preconceived ideas have a significant impact on the process of reaching these aims, with the necessity to push the boundaries imposed by these stereotypes as much as possible.

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THE EXPRESSION OF LOVE AS A CULTURAL INDICATOR OF SOCIAL CHANGE

(A Comparative SOCINT Analysis of Arab,
Romanian, and Western Cultural Spaces)

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes love as a collective emotion and examines how its expression varies across cultural codes, reflecting dominant values and functioning as an indicator of social change. The study argues that the expression of love is not purely aesthetic, but a mechanism through which societies transmit moral, religious, and identity-based norms. Using a comparative SOCINT approach, it analyzes representative cultural sources from literature, film, and music in three cultural spaces, Arab, Romanian, and Western, through Hofstede's cultural dimensions and theories of love proposed by Sternberg and Hendrick, correlated with research on collective emotions by Miu and Bar-Tal. Findings suggest that Arab love is moralized and linked to honor; Romanian love is balanced between tradition and emotion; and Western love emphasizes freedom and self-affirmation. Shifts from restrained to openly expressed love may act as early signals of broader value transformation.

Keywords: *collective emotions, love, cultural change, Hofstede, cultural indicators.*

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Introduction

The objective of this research is to examine how the expression of love can serve as a cultural indicator of collective value transformation within a comparative framework spanning Arab, Romanian, and Western cultural spaces. Modern intelligence analysis, through SOCINT, regards culture not only as the background of human action but as a force shaping perception, communication, and decision-making. The interpretation of social and cultural information helps explain the dynamics of values and collective behavior. In this sense, SOCINT uses culture as an anticipatory instrument for social change, starting from its emotional, symbolic, and discursive phases.

The study of collective emotions becomes essential because they are more than individual reactions: they are social expressions of shared values. Among emotions, love occupies a unique place, universal yet profoundly influenced by culture. How love manifests reflects a society's understanding of morality, religion, authority, and freedom.

Therefore, this study aims to show that the way a culture expresses love reflects its value system, and that changes in affective expression can be interpreted as indicators of social transformation. If emotions are not merely private experiences but cultural signals, then when love, shame, or longing change their form or mode of expression, this signals that society is reconfiguring itself at the level of values.

A review of the literature suggests that love, while universal as an experience, manifests differently across cultures, shaped by each culture's collective values. Even if love remains structurally constant, defined by passion, intimacy, and commitment, the balance among these dimensions varies culturally. In collectivist cultures, such as Arab cultures, love is associated with duty and honor; in individualist cultures, love becomes an expression of freedom, reflecting social norms directly.

Through comparative analysis, the study identifies emotional patterns specific to each cultural space and relates them to Hofstede's cultural dimensions. Taken together, the three spaces present love as an indicator of shifts in collective values: in Arab culture, love shifts from morality toward emotional autonomy; in Western culture, love tends to move beyond idealized passion toward rational choice; and in Romanian culture, love moves from traditional equilibrium toward freer

expression. Thus, although love appears to belong to intimacy, it becomes a cultural barometer of social and identity transformations and a tool for anticipating change.

Emotions and their relevance in SOCINT

In SOCINT analysis, collective emotions play a central role because they constitute the link between a society's values and behaviors. If individual emotions are personal reactions to subjective experiences, collective emotions are shared within a group and manifest in art, customs, language, and social behavior. Collective emotions consolidate group cohesion, while their expression is shaped by cultural norms.

Bar-Tal defines collective emotions as shared affective states triggered by events relevant to group identity and capable of influencing collective attitudes and decisions (Bar-Tal et al., 2007). These emotions can therefore be interpreted as sensitive indicators of social dynamics.

Miu approaches emotions from biological, cognitive, and social perspectives, emphasizing that emotions are not merely instinctive reactions but complex cognitive processes that organize thinking, motivation, and action (Miu, 2010). Shifts in a community's emotional profile signal changes in value systems and in how individuals perceive freedom, authority, and identity.

Consequently, studying collective emotions allows SOCINT analysts to detect subtle cultural changes before they become explicit at political or economic levels, warning of social developments. In Miu's view, empathy is a cognitive process through which we understand others' emotions (Miu, 2010). In SOCINT, such empathy becomes strategic: it supports the interpretation of value and the anticipation of cultural reactions.

Members of a community interpret reality and regulate behavior according to social norms and collective values. This means emotional expression is culturally learned, and cross-cultural variation reveals differences between moral systems and power structures. In socio-cultural analysis, love, shame, and pride function as mechanisms of emotional adaptation to the environment, not merely individual experiences.

Love is analytically useful when viewed as an expression of dominant cultural values. In Arab culture, it

is strongly regulated by values, linked to morality, honor, spirituality, and collective responsibility (Abu-Lughod, 2013). In Western culture, passion and individual freedom are prioritized, driving a shift toward emotional autonomy and affective subjectivism (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 1995). Romanian culture lies between these extremes, combining tradition and intimate affectivity with relatively flexible emotional expression (Shaver et al., 1992).

Hofstede as an interpretive filter for love

To understand why love does not express itself in the same way across cultures, it is useful to apply Hofstede's cultural dimensions as an interpretive filter.

In the Arab context, high power distance, collectivism, and high uncertainty avoidance produce a moralized form of love that emphasizes honor and social role (Hofstede Insights, 2023). Romanian culture operates in an intermediate zone: moderate individualism, active tradition, and high anxiety regarding uncertainty, yielding a more balanced love between norm and affect (Hofstede Insights, 2023). In the West, high individualism and high indulgence transform love into an expression of personal freedom and emotional autonomy (Hofstede Insights, 2023).

These differences support the claim that love can be analyzed as a cultural indicator rather than merely a private emotion, since emotions are not universally expressed but are adapted to the norms and values of each culture (Miu, 2010).

Beyond orientalist stereotypes: Said, Abu-Lughod, Rumi, and Gibran

In the Arab cultural space, Said showed how Western perceptions of Arab love have been distorted by Orientalist stereotypes (Said, 2001). Abu-Lughod interpreted femininity and love as forms of spiritual responsibility rather than submission (Abu-Lughod, 2013). Rumi and Gibran transformed love into a spiritual experience of union with the divine (Gibran, 1993; Rumi, 2017).

From a SOCINT perspective, love reflects processes of collective value transformation. The transition from restrained to more affirmative love signals

generational change in the Arab landscape. In Romanian culture, oscillation between tradition and modernity indicates adaptation to a new emotional culture. In the West, love expresses the stability of individualism and emotional freedom.

These differences highlight the evolution of collective emotions and their relevance as indicators of social change. Individuals in each cultural space begin to think, feel, and react differently, likely influencing cultural norms rooted in history, religion, and collective experience. The comparative analysis detects in each space a value shift, an identity tension, and a process of cultural modernization, subtle signals of societal reconfiguration.

A comparative Hofstede-based reading of collective love

Hofstede's model offers a grid for interpreting love culturally (Hofstede, 2010). Among the proposed dimensions, the most relevant to emotional expression are: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism vs. collectivism, and indulgence vs. restraint.

Power distance

In Arab culture, characterized by high power distance, emotions are expressed with respect for authority and morality, and love is filtered through codes of honor and shame. At the opposite pole, Western cultures, characterized by low power distance, express love freely and more equally, without rigid hierarchies between genders or generations.

Uncertainty avoidance

In traditional-value societies with high uncertainty avoidance, love is controlled and formalized through arranged marriages and moral rules in order to reduce social instability. In cultures open to change, love is spontaneous, even at the risk of failure.

Individualism vs. collectivism

In collectivist societies (Arab and partially Romanian), love is a social duty connected to family and reputation. In individualist societies (Western), love is a personal choice, an affirmation of individual freedom.

Indulgence vs. restraint

In indulgent cultures, emotions are celebrated and displayed publicly through music, art, and affective language. In restrained cultures, such as traditional Arab and Romanian contexts, love and emotions are more interior, subtle, and symbolically expressed. Therefore, Hofstede provides a framework through which SOCINT can interpret love not as a sentiment, but as a cultural signal.

At the same time, Said argues that the West constructed a romantic yet distorted image of the Arab world, exotic and passionate but mysterious and inferior, which influenced perceptions of love as either excessive or repressed (Said, 2001). In reality, love expresses moral balance and loyalty. SOCINT analysis can overcome such filters by interpreting emotions in their authentic context.

Abu-Lughod shows that femininity and love are not submissive but encoded differently; love is moral responsibility rather than sensual freedom (Abu-Lughod, 2013). Love becomes a moral act: a way to protect social equilibrium and honor, not to contest it.

For Gibran, love is a path of self-transcendence (Gibran, 1993). For Rumi, love is the highest spiritual expression, a gate toward divine love (Rumi, 2017). For both, love surpasses human desire and reveals the path toward the divine. Their vision influenced Arab (and Persian) culture, granting love a transcendental and collective dimension that unites people through moral values and gives shared existential meaning.

Analysis of cultural sources

Analyzing how love, as a collective emotion, is expressed and perceived differently across the three cultural spaces allows a deeper understanding of symbolic meanings and emotional nuance.

The analysis relies on representative cultural sources in music, film, and literature that authentically reflect dominant collective values and affective codes. Selection criteria were cultural relevance and social recognition, as these forms constitute legitimate expressions of collective emotions.

Music sources

- Enta Omri (Umm Kulthum, 1964), an Arab landmark song, symbolizing idealized love and moral devotion.
- Bună seara, iubite (Groza & Caramitru, 1987), a Romanian hit where love is a total, sensual, poetic experience.

- La Vie en Rose (Piaf, 1947), a Western expression of romantic love and individual hope.

Film sources

- Sukkar Banat (Caramel) (Labaki, 2007), a modern Lebanese film about femininity, friendship, and liberating love.
- Beyond the Hills (După dealuri) (Mungiu, 2012), a Romanian drama exploring spiritual love and the limits of faith.
- La La Land (Chazelle, 2016), a Western story of love as a choice between dream and relationship.

Analytical indicators

The analysis tracked four main indicators:

1. emotional tone (optimistic, fatalistic, balanced)
2. verbal expression (direct, poetic, symbolic)
3. relationship to tradition (submission, balance, emancipation)
4. degree of affective freedom (restrained, controlled, affirmative)

Findings by cultural space

Arab space

In the Arab space, love is experienced as moral devotion and spiritual harmony. It is lived intensely but expressed with restraint. It is a noble emotion, defined by moral and religious norms, in which passion is sublimated into spirituality and respect.

Enta Omri (“You are my life”), performed by Umm Kulthum in 1964, is widely regarded as a masterpiece of ideal love. The emotional tone is solemn and sacred; the voice creates an almost trance-like affective experience. The lyrics speak of devotion and veneration rather than body or desire. Love becomes spiritual giving, not a claim to personal freedom. This affective restraint mirrors collective values: high power distance and high uncertainty avoidance. Through Hofstede’s filter, emotional control and respect for morality ensure social stability.

In Sukkar Banat (Caramel), love is not passionate but negotiated between obligation and desire. Characters seek tenderness and affection quietly, through small gestures, solidarity, and a refusal to confront male authority directly. Yet the film’s warm and ironic tone explores femininity, friendship, and affective freedom

within a traditional society, suggesting a tentative beginning of emotional liberation.

Thus, in Arab culture, love is moralized, often fatalistic in tone, symbolic in expression, and limited in affective freedom. It is not necessarily repressed, but sublimated and spiritualized. From a SOCINT perspective, these traits indicate a culture undergoing a slow recalibration of values, where artists express love as subtle resistance to tradition. The emergence of affirmative love in art may be an early signal of cultural transformation, from sacred, Qur’anic love to more human, interpersonal love.

Romanian space

In Romania, the 1987 song appears near the end of the communist regime, amid cultural and psychological tension between social repression and the desire for emotional freedom. It is among the first artistic expressions to present love as total, sensual, and poetic, without being filtered through moral or ideological codes.

From a SOCINT perspective, Lucian Avramescu’s lyrics function as an indicator of collective value change: a shift from emotional silence imposed by collectivist norms to the affirmation of individual feeling as an act of freedom.

In Bună seara, iubite, love is ritualistic; it is lived actively and equally, not through submission or waiting. Emotion is sublimated but not repressed; it is intense, lucid, and balanced between passion and conscience. In Sternberg’s terms, the love triad (passion, intimacy, commitment) is complete: passion dominates, accompanied by emotional clarity (Sternberg, 1988).

In contrast to earlier models of moral love as duty (e.g., Sadoveanu’s Vitoria Lipan), this song marks the transition to sensual, affirmative love, lived and expressed freely. It signals a major shift: from silent love assumed through actions to love spoken and celebrated publicly, from traditionalism to affective modernity.

Although Romania in the 1980s displayed medium-to-high power distance, moderate collectivism, and high uncertainty avoidance, the song introduces affective indulgence, public emotion, gender equality, and a break from traditional moralism. In SOCINT terms, it signals an early departure from collectivist paradigms and the emergence of emotional expression that would shape post-1990 Romanian modernity. In Bar-Tal’s terms, the song transmits an incipient collective emotion: love as symbolic resistance and a reclaiming of humanity (Bar-Tal et al., 2007).

In Beyond the Hills (După dealuri), love becomes dramatic and spiritual. The protagonists’ relationship is pure yet impossible, defeated by dogma. The emotional tone is tense and painful, expressing conflict between feelings and authority and a rupture between traditional and modern values. Romania was undergoing identity rebalancing; love, romantic or spiritual, becomes a symbol of inner freedom. The balanced tone signals cultural maturation: society expresses itself more openly while still retaining respect for morality and intimacy.

Western space

In Western culture, love is categorically the expression of freedom and self-affirmation. La Vie en Rose represents the classic image of love as emotional salvation and optimism. The tone is luminous and sensual; language is direct; expression conveys the joy of loving. Love is lived without shame as a liberating force. This reflects high individualism and maximal indulgence, where positive emotions are celebrated publicly.

La La Land presents love as choice and responsibility. The characters feel love intensely but decide to separate to pursue personal dreams; love becomes an expression of maturity and autonomy rather than dependence. This corresponds to modern Western culture, which privileges freedom, authenticity, and affective expressivity, no longer tied to tradition but to the right to choose.

From a SOCINT perspective, this type of love reflects the stability of liberal values and the coherence of a system in which emotion becomes part of identity. Yet absolute freedom produces instability, relational fragmentation, and emotional vulnerability; even if authentic and affirmative, love becomes ephemeral. In the West, love seeks intensity more than safety, signaling a society that values emotion as self-affirmation.

After 2000, value shifts appear in the dissolution of the boundaries between the private and the public. Cultural manifestations such as Cardi B’s WAP make emotions public without censorship; sexuality is reinterpreted not as submission but as power; love and the body become cultural products, forms of consumption, and image.

In conclusion, across spaces: in the Arab space, love is viewed as destiny, shaped by morality and public shame; religious framing influences it as harmony rather than passion, while music and poetry ventilate collective emotion. In Romania, love remains balanced between longing and hope, shaped by loyalty, melancholy, and affective decency. In the West, love is freedom, individual expression, optimism, and a strong emphasis on emotional autonomy and authenticity.

Practical utility for SOCINT analysis

The emotional patterns identified in this study can serve as practical SOCINT tools for anticipating cultural and social reactions.

Media narrative analysis.

Changes in how love is portrayed in widely circulated cultural products (music, film, popular discourse) can serve as early indicators of value shifts, especially where direct political expression is constrained or delayed.

Public discourse analysis.

Language about relationships, family, honor, autonomy, intimacy, or “choice” can be tracked as a proxy for deeper negotiations between authority and freedom. These signals can inform assessments of legitimacy, moral boundaries, and social cohesion.

Youth dynamics.

Shifts in the emotional vocabulary of younger generations, toward affirmation, performance, autonomy, or retreat, can anticipate future norms regarding commitment, identity, gender expectations, and collective belonging.

Digitalization of emotions.

The move from private love to publicly performed emotion (especially online) signals a reconfiguration of cultural boundaries and identity practices. Tracking these changes provides early warning of emerging tensions (fragmentation, vulnerability) or counter-movements (renewed search for intimacy, meaning, roots).

Conclusions

From a sociocultural perspective, love is no longer merely a feeling but a collective code of meaning through which society expresses values and projects transformation. The comparative analysis shows that beyond aesthetic or moral differences, love functions as a barometer of mentalities, an affective language that signals change from within culture.

In SOCINT terms, love becomes a strategic indicator that signals shifts in community identity and values before they manifest politically or economically. How a culture allows itself to love, freely, controlled, or ritually, reflects its openness, the balance between authority and autonomy, and the tension between tradition and modernity.

Therefore, love is not merely a private experience but a cultural expression of a value system.



When the way people love changes, the way they think, communicate, and relate to themselves and the world also changes.

In a period when emotions become increasingly visible in public space, understanding love as a collective emotion offers a deep perspective on societies in transition. Love is not only the theme of poets and songs, but an indicator of cultural intelligence: a subtle yet constant signal of how a people reconfigure their values. In SOCINT analysis, love becomes the first signal of change, an affective code announcing value mutation before history confirms it.

Sooner or later, cultures seem to undergo a similar process: from moral and sacred love to free and assumed love. The path from Qur’anic love to WAP is not a fall into the abyss but a change of form. The feeling remains, but the language used to express it shifts with the values of the time. In some spaces, there may be a peak of expressivity, where everything is said and shown directly; the next step may be a return to balance, toward meaning, depth, and intimacy, where the need for roots, spirituality, and identity is satisfied.

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UNDERSTANDING RUSSIAN SPACE THROUGH SOCINT: FROM CULTURAL INTERPRETATION TO OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the application of sociocultural intelligence (SOCINT) in the Russian context, highlighting its operational value for diplomatic and intelligence activities. It demonstrates how understanding Russian social norms, values, and behaviors can reduce perception errors and increase the effectiveness of strategic interactions. By analyzing practical scenarios with Russian diplomats, the study highlights successes and failures in intercultural communication. The main conclusion is that SOCINT is not just a tool of diplomatic courtesy, but a strategic multiplier of operational efficiency, providing analysts with a way to manage culturally sensitive interactions.

Keywords: *Russian cultural profile, diplomatic interaction, operational efficiency, cultural risk management.*

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Introduction

Sociocultural intelligence (SOCINT) is an intelligence discipline that helps complete the information puzzle—the other pieces coming from areas such as HUMINT², SIGINT³, OSINT⁴ - built by analysts within any high-performance intelligence service. SOCINT focuses on deeply understanding and accurately interpreting information about the sociocultural dimensions of a space, a community, and, implicitly, its representatives (such as the Russian space). This involves a multitude of cultural elements—values, norms, symbols, beliefs, power relations, and the relationship between the individual and the community (Cedru & Şaguna, 2025). In missions to recruit sources, maintain contact with recruited sources, negotiate, and interview foreign citizens in order to assess risks and threats to national security and beyond, correctly deciphering the sociocultural context can contribute to the success of the mission or, conversely, a lack of awareness and knowledge can lead to misinterpretations and the failure of the mission (partially or totally). In what follows, we will analyze Russia from a SOCINT perspective, as it is of particular interest to intelligence services worldwide, including those in Romania.

Purpose and relevance of the paper

This paper aims to explore how sociocultural context analysis can be applied to better understand certain Russian and Romanian diplomatic behaviors, identifying similarities, differences, and practical implications for Romanian intelligence services.

The topic is relevant to intelligence studies due to the fact that awareness of cultural subtleties enables anticipation of diplomatic reactions, accurate interpretation of gestures and messages, and the development of effective communication and negotiation strategies. In addition, comparative analysis of diplomatic behavior can help identify vulnerabilities in bilateral relations and prevent crises caused by cultural misunderstandings. The same applies to relations with

human intelligence sources representing Russia, security interviews with Russian citizens, or other operational situations. However, thanks to the media and social networks, the diplomatic side is more accessible and better known to the general public. Thus, with more information that can be collected, analyzed, interpreted, and used to create fictional yet credible scenarios between representatives of the Russian and Romanian spaces, we will focus on this in this paper.

This study uses a qualitative documentary and scenario-based SOCINT methodology. The analysis is based on open-source materials concerning Russian cultural values, diplomatic behavior, communication norms, and intercultural interaction, complemented by Hofstede's cultural dimensions as an interpretive framework. They are designed to illustrate how cultural variables — such as power distance, uncertainty avoidance, collectivism, respect for hierarchy, historical memory, symbolic gestures, and communicative restraint — may influence diplomatic or operational interaction with Russian representatives. The analytical procedure consists of identifying relevant cultural indicators from the literature, translating them into interactional risks or opportunities, and testing their practical implications through hypothetical success and failure scenarios. This approach allows the study to demonstrate how SOCINT can support cultural risk management, reduce misinterpretation, and improve the calibration of communication strategies in sensitive intercultural contexts.

The cultural profile of the Russian diplomat

Geert Hofstede's model of six cultural dimensions—individualism vs. collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity vs. femininity, long-term orientation vs. short-term orientation, and indulgence vs. restraint—provides an additional framework for understanding how culture can influence a person's behavior and for better understanding the cultural differences between Russia and Romania (by referring to the scores assigned to Russia and Romania for each dimension and interpreting these scores). Russia's national cultural values indicate the following scores:

² Human Intelligence refers to the collection of information from human sources.

³ Signals Intelligence deals with the collection of information from electronic signals (radio spectrum, telephone communications, etc.).

⁴ Open-Source Intelligence deals with gathering information from open sources (such as the media or social networks).

Hofstede dimension	Russia score	SOCINT interpretation – in the sense of SOMETIMES MAY BE TRUE, not ALWAYS TRUE
Distance from power	93	Russia has a deeply hierarchical structure. Respect for authority is very high. In diplomacy, decisions are rarely delegated. Russian diplomats avoid spontaneous initiatives, preferring to consult their superiors. Gestures of deference are essential (bowing the head, pausing before responding).
Avoiding uncertainty	95	Russians prefer procedural clarity, strict protocols, and meticulous planning. The interlocutor's unpredictability (behavioral or emotional) is perceived as a threat. In negotiations, Russian diplomats demand definitions, written guarantees, and concrete terms.
Individualism vs. Collectivism	39	Russian culture is collectivist. Identity is defined by belonging to a group, institution, or state. Russian diplomats act as representatives of the state, not as individuals. Loyalty to the "Rodina" (Motherland) is central—any internal criticism is forbidden in front of foreigners.
Masculinity vs. Femininity	36	Power is shown through control, not pressure.
Long-term orientation	81	Russians think strategically and historically. The past justifies the present. In negotiations, Russian diplomats often refer to history. Patience is a weapon.
Indulgence vs. Restriction	20	The culture is one of discipline and self-control. The expression of emotions is minimized. The permanent smile, considered Western, is perceived as false. Russian diplomats prefer sobriety, calculated silence, and slow gestures.

Table 1: Hofstede scores for Russia. The scores are taken from The Culture Factor Group. (n.d.).

Table 1 provides a structural framework for understanding the typology of Russian diplomats. However, it is important to note that these scores are macro-cultural indicators and do not describe each individual. In order to have a realistic profile, we must be aware that there are other factors that can modulate the way these cultural characteristics manifest themselves, such as:

■ **Professional experience/ institutional background/ background in the secret services:** A Russian diplomat with seniority in the foreign ministry, or a former military officer, may exhibit greater rigor and discipline than a young diplomat.

■ **Rank/position in the hierarchy:** An ambassador may

have different freedoms and symbols than an attaché.

■ **Education and international exposure/languages spoken:** A diplomat who has studied in the West may be more flexible, but at the same time will play the "Russian role" in order to be accepted in his domestic environment.

■ **Line of work** (press attaché/security officer/cultural attaché/economic advisor): If the position requires them to express firmness (e.g., security issues, airspace), their behavior will most likely tend toward avoiding uncertainty.

■ **Geopolitical context** (crisis, tensions, sanctions vs. period of cooperation): In a moment of crisis (e.g., drone incident, NATO tensions), the Russian diplomat may be asked to be more cautious, less culturally flexible.

■ **Individual motivation**

■ **Regional and ethnic factors:** Russia is vast, with numerous ethnic groups; interactions may be influenced by the diplomat's region of origin.

Therefore, the actual profile of the Russian diplomat is **an intersection of national culture, personal, institutional, and situational contexts**. The existence of these variables means that the SOCINT analyst should not consider the profile as gospel, but rather as a frame of reference. This frame of reference cannot guarantee the success of intercultural interaction, but it reduces the likelihood of cultural errors, increases behavioral adaptability, and allows for more effective strategies.

From a cultural perspective, the great distance from power leads the Russian interlocutor to expect official recognition—privileged titles, appropriate forms of address, and clear decision-making structures. For a Romanian diplomat or SOCINT analyst, it is essential to understand that certain gestures, such as greeting someone without using their title, can be perceived as disrespectful.

At the same time, the strong collectivism reflected in Russian society — where individual identity is more closely tied to the group (family, institution, state) than to oneself — suggests that Russian diplomats would likely prefer a discourse that invokes "our common interest" or "institutional partnership" rather than an approach based exclusively on individual relationships.

Beyond the dimensions illustrated by Hofstede's model, there are several important cultural norms and values in Russian culture that influence the behavior of the Russian diplomat and merit detailed study. We will mention a few of them: the preference for sober behavior in public (a sign of respect)—excessive smiling in a formal context can be perceived as superficiality; the importance of rituals and symbolic gestures—for example, offering a gift, giving a seat at the table, or the correct use of a business card become tools of nonverbal communication; respect for cultural heritage—recognition of Russian literature, music, or art becomes an almost necessary bridge in diplomatic interactions (for example, mentioning Dostoevsky or Tchaikovsky in conversation may be appreciated as an act of recognition of the Russian interlocutor's identity); patriotism; respect for tradition, cultural identity, and historical memory; indirect, contextual communication—meaning is often conveyed through gestures, silence, and symbols, not just direct words.

Application of the theory – Hypothetical examples of successful and unsuccessful scenarios

In the applied part of the paper, we will present successful and unsuccessful scenarios in diplomatic interactions with the Russian side, from the SOCINT perspective.

The reason for including them is twofold:

1. **Illustrating the application** of the profile – the scenarios show how the profile elements (value, norm, variable) manifest themselves in concrete terms; thus, the reader can see "what success and failure look like" in SOCINT terms.

2. **Operational lessons learned** – through comparative analysis (what was right, what was missed, results), the paper offers not only theory but also a practical guide for cultural consultants and analysts.

In these scenarios, we will demonstrate why certain meetings failed (e.g., ignoring formality, making premature jokes, disrespecting status) and what led to success (e.g., adopting the right tone, structuring the meeting according to the Russian interlocutor's cultural code, using symbolic rituals). Thus, the scenarios complete the profile of the Russian diplomat and transform theory into a practical tool.

Scenario 1 – "Common cultural memory" (Successful dialogue: using culture and religion as a bridge between the Romanian and Russian spaces).

Broader context:

The Embassy of the Russian Federation to Bucharest is organizing a themed evening entitled "The Cultural Memory of Eastern Europe." The day before the event, the Romanian diplomat accepts the invitation to a private dinner hosted by the Russian side. Attending the dinner, although informal, is a strategic decision by SOCINT - it allows for the strengthening of mutual trust in an unofficial setting. Refusal would have been interpreted as diplomatic coldness.

Ambient details:

Romanian menu – stuffed cabbage rolls and wine – discussed with moderate humor; the Russian side praises the "common Slavic" cuisine, and the Romanian side responds with historical anecdotes about culinary influences. A relaxed atmosphere, warm lighting, and a distance of about 1 m are maintained between diplomats.

Main dialogue (at the reception):

Romanian diplomat: "Mr. Ambassador Andrei Ivanovich, I am glad that we were able to continue our discussion about our cultural memory. Romania and Russia have shared difficult times, but also a common spirituality."

Russian diplomat: "I agree. When I read Dostoevsky, I feel close to Sadoveanu—the same search for meaning and suffering."

Romanian diplomat: "Yes, and the Orthodox faith has given us a form of identity resilience. Perhaps it is precisely in spiritual values that we find the path to dialogue."

Russian diplomat: "Exactly. Politics changes borders, but not the soul of peoples."

SOCINT analysis:

- The right strategic decision: accepting the informal dinner → increases the Russian diplomat's trust in the Romanian diplomat → strengthening good long-term relations.
- Cultural adaptation behaviors: The Romanian uses a calm tone + moderate smile (being generally accustomed to smiling more), active listening — a pattern compatible with Russian communication, which avoids exuberance.
- Acceptable topics/premises/non-taboo subjects: religion (similarities are emphasized, not differences), culture, literature → mutual validation.
- Correct and respectful form of direct address by the Romanian diplomat: position + first name + patronymic.

Post-event comment:

The Russian ambassador subsequently sent an invitation to a joint literary event, a sign that a relationship of trust had been established.

SOCINT success: establishing "symbolic common ground" through cultural language.

Scenario 2 – "Contradictory perspectives: the topic of Ukraine in diplomatic dialogue" (Failure: lack of cultural calibration, direct criticism of Russia)

Broader context:

OSCE conference in Vienna, with regional security as the main topic. Before the plenary session, the Romanian side requests a brief bilateral discussion and proposes coffee in the lounge. The Russian diplomat accepts, but is visibly reserved. The café—a neutral but noisy space with little control over conversation privacy—is an uninspired choice from a SOCINT perspective (it reduces emotional control and invites public reactions).

Romanian diplomat: "Mr. Aleksei Ivanovich, Romania is deeply concerned about the attacks on civilians in Kharkiv. We believe that international law must be respected."

Russian diplomat (looking down, sharp voice): "I hope you are not just repeating NATO's position. Russia is defending people who have been persecuted for years."

Romanian diplomat: "I understand the concern for the Russian-speaking community, but the reality on the ground shows civilian suffering."

Russian diplomat (frowning, leaning back): "It is regrettable that you are no longer seeking the truth, but only condemning us. The discussion is over."

SOCINT analysis:

- Tactical error: directly addressing a topic perceived as a direct attack on Russia's image.
- Wrong setting: public space → increases the Russian diplomat's defensive reactivity.
- Cultural taboo: criticizing the Russian state in the presence of others increases the likelihood of activating the loyalty reflex.

Post-event commentary:

The Russian side cancels its participation in the joint lunch, citing "logistical reasons."

Complete failure of SOCINT. A more appropriate approach would have been to begin with a statement acknowledging the general human tragedy ("The suffering of civilians is a tragedy for everyone, regardless of which side they are on").

Scenario 3 – "Culture as common ground" (Successful: use of soft power for reconnection).

Broader context:

Event at the National Museum— opening of an exhibition on mutual artistic influences. An hour earlier, diplomats had lunch together at a restaurant, on Romania's initiative. Menu: caviar salad, smoked fish, coffee, and tea — presented as a "gastronomic bridge." The gesture of inviting guests to a local meal before an official event helps create a climate of trust.

Romanian diplomat: "Mr. Cultural Attaché Stepan Ivanovich, I discovered that Romanian sculptor Dumitru Chipăruș was inspired by Russian ballet dancers."

Russian diplomat: "Yes, and Constantin Brâncuși had a significant impact on many Russian sculptors. The Romanian spirit has a unique expressive power."

Romanian diplomat: "I propose a joint exhibition on cross-border aesthetic influences."

Russian diplomat: "An excellent idea. Art is the field where even the past becomes beautiful."

SOCINT analysis:

- Romanian tactic: strengthening relations through genuine cultural interest.
- Russian reaction: immediate validation — the language of art is perceived as accessible/acceptable, non-political.
- Nonverbal signals: slow gestures, discreet smile, prolonged eye contact (sign of genuine interest).
- Result: planned cooperation for a joint exhibition.

Post-event commentary:

The Russian ambassador sends a formal letter of appreciation.

SOCINT success: perfect synchronization of tone, space, and subject.

Scenario 4 – "The Foreign Agents Law and Freedom of the Press" (Failure: touching on a political-ideological taboo)

Broader context:

The "Democracy in Eurasia" forum was organized in Bucharest by a European foundation. The day before,

the Russian side sent an invitation to a "tea party" at the ambassador's residence, intended to lighten the atmosphere. The Romanian side refuses, considering it a "gesture of courtesy without relevance." From SOCINT's perspective, the refusal is a major tactical mistake: in Russian culture, accepting a private invitation before a public event signals respect and availability.

Romanian diplomat: "Lately, we have noticed severe restrictions on press freedom in Russia, particularly through the foreign agents law."

Russian diplomat (calm but rigid): "The law protects our sovereignty. In Russia, freedom means responsibility."

Romanian diplomat: "But independent journalists are also being unfairly accused."

Russian diplomat (cold): "They are not journalists, but activists. There is a clear difference."

SOCINT analysis:

- Error in approach and interpersonal calibration: raising a sensitive topic before establishing a relationship of trust.
- Refusal of prior informal contact → perceived as disrespectful.
- Russian communication: rigid, defensive, with appeals to "stability and sovereignty."
- Nonverbal: low voice, body leaning back, absent smile.

Post-event commentary:

After the event itself, the Russian side avoids any informal contact. In SOCINT's view, the emotional channel is closed; any subsequent dialogue becomes purely formal.

Complete SOCINT failure. Skipping the stage of relaxation and rapprochement (tea, lunch, neutral conversation) made it impossible to approach the topic without conflict.

Key SOCINT lessons for interacting with Russian diplomats:

1. **Respect hierarchy and protocol** – Titles, forms of address, and decision-making structure are mandatory for effective communication.
2. **Build the relationship first** – Meals, cultural conversations, and symbolic gestures build trust before tackling sensitive topics.
3. **Use cultural symbols** – Russian literature, art, history, and religion are bridges for identity recognition and tools for subtle influence.

4. **Avoid direct criticism** – Outright comments about politics, the state, or leaders trigger cultural defensiveness and relational blockages.

5. **SOCINT = strategic risk control** – It does not guarantee success, but it reduces the likelihood of errors, increases adaptability, and optimizes decisions in sensitive interactions.

Limitations of the paper

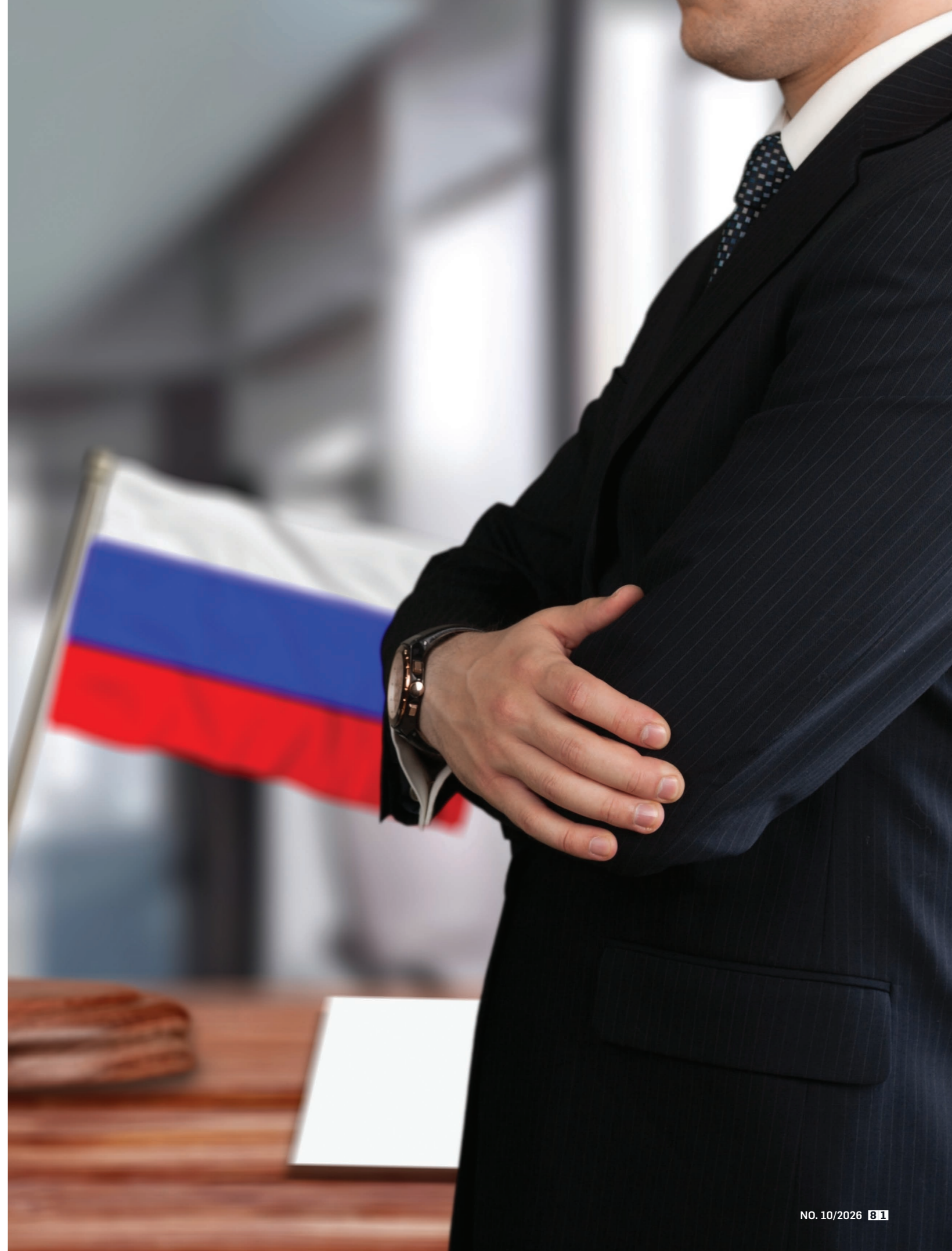
The lack of direct access to Russian diplomats or empirical interactions posed a methodological constraint, limiting the possibility of practical validation of the formulated hypotheses. Consequently, the results we obtained should be interpreted as contextual analyses based on open sources and theoretical models, not as direct observations of contemporary diplomatic behavior.

Conclusion

Sociocultural analysis applied to the Russian space highlights that the effectiveness of intelligence operations—whether diplomatic or informal information gathering—depends largely on the actors' ability to interpret and calibrate behavior in line with the interlocutor's values, norms, and other sociocultural aspects. In this sense, SOCINT becomes an indispensable analytical tool that can significantly reduce the risk of misperceptions, misinterpretations, and communication failures. The study of the proposed scenarios confirms that adapting to the Russian sociocultural context – such as respect for hierarchy, sobriety, ritual, and historical memory – is a form of strategic control of interaction, not mere diplomatic courtesy. Essentially, it is important to recognize that analysts' use of SOCINT is a true multiplier of intelligence efficiency.

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CHINA-US COMPETITION IN THE 21ST CENTURY: BETWEEN STRUCTURAL REALISM AND THE CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the complex dynamics of contemporary relations between the United States and the People's Republic of China through the dual conceptual lenses of structural Realism and Samuel Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations" thesis. It investigates whether the current geopolitical friction represents a classic power transition sequence—popularized as the Thucydides Trap—or an ontological confrontation between fundamentally incompatible Western and Sinic value systems. Moving beyond traditional Cold War paradigms, the study highlights how the modern bilateral axis is defined by an unprecedented paradox: a deep economic integration that, rather than fostering peace, has been strategically weaponized to exploit mutual vulnerabilities. Furthermore, the paper explores the emergence of a techno-ideological dualism, where the competition for technological supremacy (AI, semiconductors, and 5G/6G networks) serves as the primary theater for digital authoritarianism and the struggle over global normative hegemony.

Keywords: *sectarian division, Sunni–Shia conflict, state cohesion, systemic vulnerability, national reconciliation.*

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Introduction

This paper analyzes the dynamics of relations between the United States and the People's Republic of China through the lens of foundational theories of International Relations (IR). The study investigates whether the current state of tension between the two states represents a classic power transition sequence (the Thucydides Trap) or if we are witnessing a revalidation of Samuel Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations" thesis. Furthermore, it aims to examine whether, unlike the Cold War, the contemporary configuration is defined by the weaponization of interdependence and a competition for global normativity.

In the contemporary geopolitical landscape, the relationship between the United States (US) and the People's Republic of China (PRC) is not merely a simple bilateral interaction, but constitutes the central axis of the international system. After decades of "strategic engagement"—a policy grounded in the liberal premise that integrating China into global economic institutions (such as the WTO in 2001) would catalyze domestic political liberalization (Ikenberry, 2018)—the paradigm has irreversibly shifted toward fierce "strategic competition". This dynamic marks the end of the "unipolar moment" described by Charles Krauthammer and the transition toward a bipolar power structure, where systemic competition redefines global alliances.

This paradigm shift is not a mere diplomatic fluctuation, but a reflection of what John Mearsheimer (2001, 2019) terms "the tragedy of great power politics". From the perspective of offensive Realism, China's rise represents a structural challenge to American hegemony in the Indo-Pacific region. The current stakes extend far beyond economic supremacy or the trade balance; they target the very normative architecture of the 21st century. We are witnessing a clash between the "rules-based international order" (liberal international order) promoted by the Washington administration, and Beijing's vision of a multipolar order defined by "absolute sovereignty" and the rejection of the universalism of Western values (Allison, 2017).

The transition from cooperation to confrontation has been accelerated by the consolidation of power under Xi Jinping's mandate, whose rhetoric regarding the "Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation"² suggests a desire to revise the global hierarchy. While Washington perceives

China's actions in the South China Sea and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as tools of geopolitical revisionism, Beijing interprets the American military presence in Asia as an anachronistic strategy of "containment". Moreover, the concept of "weaponized interdependence," theorized by Farrell and Newman (2019), explains how economic and technological networks (semiconductors, AI, 5G) have become the new theater of operations, where mutual vulnerabilities are exploited for strategic, rather than merely commercial, gains.

Thus, the US-China rivalry is not a simple conflict of interests, but an ontological competition to define international legitimacy. The fundamental question guiding this analysis is whether this civilizational and political clash can be managed through diplomatic mechanisms, or if the international system is condemned to repeat the historical cycle of violent power transitions, falling into what Graham Allison (2017) popularized as the "Thucydides Trap".

I. Theoretical framework: Realism vs. the clash of civilizations theory

To decipher the complexity of the Sino-American relationship, the analysis must stem from a theoretical rigor that transcends the mere empirical observation of current events. Two conceptual lenses dominate the academic debate: Structural Realism (NeoRealism) and the Clash of Civilizations theory. Although seemingly divergent—one focusing on the distribution of material power, the other on cultural identity—both offer complementary explanations for the systemic nature of the current rivalry, as follows:

■ **Structural Realism (NeoRealism):** From the analytical perspective of Structural Realism, as articulated by Kenneth Waltz and John Mearsheimer, the international system is inherently anarchic, meaning that the rise of the People's Republic of China inevitably triggers a classic security dilemma for the United States. Within the framework of offensive Realism, great powers seek to maximize their share of global power with the ultimate, pragmatic objective of achieving regional hegemony rather than global dominance, which Mearsheimer argues is structurally unattainable

due to the "stopping power of water" and the sheer logistical impossibility of worldwide power projection. Consequently, China's strategic efforts to secure and dominate its own neighborhood by excluding American influence from East Asia are directly countered by the United States, acting as an offshore balancer, through a structural strategy of containment aimed at preventing the emergence of a peer regional rival.

■ **The Huntingtonian Paradigm:** Samuel Huntington argued that the fundamental source of conflict in the post-Cold War world would be cultural rather than ideological or economic. Furthermore, unlike the aforementioned Structural Realism, which places the nation-state at its center, the analytical unit proposed by Huntington is the civilization. The author identified the "Sinic" and "Western" civilizations as fundamentally incompatible. While the West promotes individualism and liberal democracy, China proposes a model based on Confucianism, hierarchy, and the supremacy of the collective (represented by the state).

From the perspective of Waltzian NeoRealism, the international system is defined by anarchy, forcing states—as rational and unitary actors—to prioritize security and survival through the accumulation of power (Waltz, 1979). Within this framework, the rise of the People's Republic of China (PRC) creates a classic security dilemma: Beijing's efforts to secure its "defensive perimeter" in the South China Sea are interpreted by the Trump administration as acts of revisionist aggression.

John Mearsheimer (2014) argues that in an anarchic system, great powers are "condemned" to competition. Therefore, according to Offensive Realism, China will not settle for a secondary role but will instead attempt to become a regional hegemon in Asia, replicating the American "Monroe Doctrine". This dynamic validates the hypothesis that the security architecture of the 21st century is dictated by the balance of material forces (GDP, military capabilities, technology), where ideology plays a secondary role to the imperative of power.

While Realism explains why states conflict, Samuel Huntington's (1996) "Clash of Civilizations" theory explains its nature and intensity. Huntington anticipated that in the post-Cold War era, the most prominent fault lines of conflict would emerge along cultural boundaries. The US-China competition is not just a struggle over customs tariffs or hypersonic missiles, but a confrontation between two incompatible value systems: Western universalism vs. Sinic particularism.

The US promotes an order based on individualism, inalienable rights, and liberal democracy, which it considers globally valid. In contrast, China proposes a vision based on Confucianism, where collective stability,

hierarchy, and the central role of the state take priority (Mahbubani, 2020). From Huntington's perspective, the "Asian challenge" is fundamental because China no longer accepts the moral superiority of the West, asserting its own civilizational identity as a viable alternative to Western modernity.

Thus, we notice a fusion between these two paradigms. The current conflict is "total" in the international relations sense, as material (Realist) stakes are coupled with an identity-based (Huntingtonian) mistrust. This "clash" is exacerbated by what Constructivists call the "distribution of ideas": the way each power defines the "other" as an existential threat to its own way of life. Consequently, the competition for 5G or artificial intelligence becomes a battlefield for defining the ethical and social standards of the future, transforming the rivalry into a battle for normative hegemony.

However, a rigorous ontological assessment reveals that both theoretical frameworks, when applied in isolation, remain inherently imperfect and limited by their respective analytical blind spots. While Structural Realism offers a robust account of material power distribution, it tends to dismiss the deeply entrenched cultural and ideational vectors of state behavior, a limitation frequently highlighted by Constructivist and Neoclassical Realist scholars (e.g., Wendt, 1999; Rose, 1998). Conversely, the Huntingtonian paradigm captures the visceral nature of civilizational identity but struggles to account for the pragmatic, material security calculations that drive state actions within an anarchic system, drawing criticism for its cultural determinism (e.g., Said, 2001; Sen, 2006). Acknowledging these individual shortcomings, this paper proposes a theoretical synthesis. By orchestrating a deliberate fusion of these two otherwise divergent perspectives—echoing recent efforts in IR to bridge materialist and ideational paradigms (such as Barkin, 2003 on 'Realist Constructivism')—this study seeks to generate significant explanatory surplus, capturing both the material and cultural dimensions of the contemporary Sino-American rivalry.

II. The Thucydides Trap and the dynamics of power transition

The concept of the "Thucydides Trap," popularized by political scientist Graham Allison (2017), has become a frequent explanatory lens. Inspired by the Greek historian's account of the Peloponnesian War, Allison argues that the structural stress resulting from the rise of an emerging power (Athens/China) threatening to displace an established

² Introduced as a core pillar of President Xi Jinping's "Chinese Dream" (Zhongguo Meng), this concept is explicitly tied to the year 2049 to mark the centenary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. Ideologically, the rhetoric of "rejuvenation" functions as an antithesis to the "Century of Humiliation" (1839–1949), emphasizing China's return to its rightful, historic position in the international hierarchy. Geopolitically, this narrative serves as the strategic mandate for Beijing's assertive foreign policy, the acceleration of military modernization, and initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

power (Sparta/US) creates a systemic vulnerability where minor incidents can trigger large-scale conflicts. Out of the 16 historical cases identified by the Harvard research team over the last five centuries, 12 resulted in war, raising fundamental questions about the predictability of the current trajectory.

In the contemporary context, this transition is not merely military, but represents a "rebalancing of aggregate capabilities". According to the Power Transition Theory (Organski, 1958), the probability of conflict escalating increases when the emerging power reaches parity with the hegemon and is "dissatisfied" with the rules of the existing international order. China, through its "Made in China 2025" and "Great Rejuvenation" programs, clearly signals its intention to renegotiate the terms of global governance, viewing the current liberal order as a post-war construct that exclusively serves Western interests.

The empirical analysis of power transition relies on macroeconomic data that confirms the erosion of the American advantage. Although the US maintains a nominal GDP superiority, China already surpassed the United States in terms of Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) as early as 2014, according to World Bank and IMF data. This economic reality provides Beijing with the necessary resources for an unprecedented projection of force beyond its borders.

However, unlike previous historical competitions, the current transition unfolds within an environment defined by the "technological frontier". The competition for supremacy in artificial intelligence (AI), biotechnology, and 5G/6G communications represents the center of gravity of the new balance of power. As Kai-Fu Lee (2018) points out, China is no longer a mere "imitator" but a systemic innovator. In the Neorealist view, controlling emerging technologies equates to controlling the future battlespace, turning the technological gap into a critical factor of strategic stability.

If the economy serves as the engine of transition, military projection is its most visible indicator. The modernization of the Chinese armed forces (PLA), particularly the development of Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD) capabilities, directly aims to neutralize the American naval advantage within the first island chain. This phenomenon is described by specialists like Aaron Friedberg (2011) as a strategy to "push" American influence out of East Asia.

In this context, the Taiwan issue becomes the ultimate test of the "Thucydides Trap". For Beijing, unification represents the closing of a "century of humiliation" and the consolidation of its superpower status. For the Washington administration, defending Taiwan is tied to the credibility of its alliance system and

the maintenance of a free maritime order. This collision of vital interests makes the probability of a miscalculation extremely high, confirming Allison's fears that the structural inertia of power transition often overrides the political will of individual leaders.

On the other hand, critics of Allison's theory, such as Amitav Acharya or Robert Keohane, argue that the analogy with Ancient Greece ignores modern factors that induce restraint: nuclear weapons, deep economic integration, and international institutions. Nonetheless, recent reality suggests a selective "decoupling". The concept of weaponized interdependence suggests that states utilize the central nodes of global networks (payment systems, semiconductor supply chains) to exert political pressure (Farrell and Newman, 2019). Thus, the power transition no longer necessarily leads to a total kinetic war, but rather to a state of "permanent hybrid war" for normativity and digital control.

In conclusion, the Thucydides Trap remains a valid analytical framework, but one that must be adapted to 21st-century realities. The tension between the US and China is not merely a battle for GDP supremacy, but a systemic dispute over how the world will be organized in the post-hegemonic era. Whether the American "Sparta" and the Chinese "Athens" will succeed in avoiding open conflict depends on their capacity to construct a "new model of major power relations"—a task that, historically speaking, has proven almost impossible without a major reordering crisis.

III. Ideological dualism in the technological era: Liberal Democracy vs. Digital Authoritarianism

An essential component of the contemporary "clash" is the battle over technological standards. Control over artificial intelligence, 5G networks, and semiconductors is not just a matter of profit, but of social control. While Structural Realism explains tensions through the distribution of material power, the ideological dimension of the Sino-American relationship reveals a profound ontological fault line.

The contemporary conflict is not merely a territorial or commercial dispute, but a confrontation between two models of societal organization and the relationship between the individual and the state. While the United States remains the primary exponent of liberal democracy, based on inalienable individual rights and

the rule of law, the People's Republic of China (PRC) promotes an authoritarian model of "state capitalism," legitimized by economic performance and social stability (Fukuyama, 2018). This "competition of systems" has acquired a new dimension through the fusion of ideology and emerging technologies. We are witnessing the birth of an ideological dualism that no longer targets just geographical territory, but also the control of "informational space" and data flows. In this context, technology ceases to be a neutral instrument, becoming a vector for projecting political values.

The essence of the Chinese challenge resides in the development and export of what specialists call "digital authoritarianism". By utilizing artificial intelligence (AI), facial recognition, and social credit systems³, Beijing has created a mechanism of surveillance and social control of unprecedented historical efficiency (Zuboff, 2019). This model offers a technocratic solution to the age-old dilemma of dictatorial regimes: how to maintain economic growth without yielding to pressures for political liberalization.

From Stein Ringen's (2016) perspective, China has evolved into a "perfect dictatorship," where technology allows the state to monitor not just the actions, but also the intentions of its citizens. Worryingly for the liberal order, this model is presented as an "export product" to states in the Global South. Through the "Digital Silk Road," China offers critical infrastructure (5G, data centers) coupled with monitoring tools, providing illiberal regimes with a technological alternative to the Western democratic model (Polymeropoulos and Taylor, 2020).

The competition for technological supremacy between the US and China represents, in reality, a struggle for technical normativity. Whoever controls 5G technology standards or Internet governance protocols will define the rules of life in the 21st century. The US and its allies advocate for a free, open, and interoperable internet, while China promotes the concept of "cyber sovereignty," which grants the state total control over information flows within its borders.

The fight for semiconductors (microchips) and AI algorithms is not just a supply chain issue, but a matter of national and ideological security. As Chris Miller (2022) argues in *Chip War: The Fight for the World's Most Critical Technology*, the capacity to produce the most advanced chips determines not only military power, but also the ability to impose a specific model of processing social reality. If Chinese algorithms dominate global communication platforms, values such as preventive

mentorship and the priority of the collective over the individual will become embedded norms in the global digital architecture.

A critical aspect of this dualism is the internal vulnerability of Western democracies to new technologies. While China uses technology to consolidate the state, in the US and Europe, the same instruments (social media, polarizing algorithms) have led to a fragmentation of social consensus and a crisis of trust in institutions. This "cohesion gap" provides China with a strategic advantage in the war of narratives.

Beijing exploits the failures of liberal democracies to demonstrate the superiority of its rapid and efficient decision-making model. The competition is no longer restricted to who has more aircraft carriers, but who offers a governance model more capable of managing complex crises (pandemics, climate change, inequality). In this sense, the ideological battle is one of "output legitimacy," where China's economic success challenges the Western dogma that long-term prosperity is impossible without political freedom.

We can conclude that we are witnessing a "bifurcation" of the international system. The world is heading toward a dual techno-ideological order: a sphere dominated by liberal values, centered on transparency and individual rights, and a sphere dominated by digital authoritarianism, centered on state control and technocratic efficiency. This split makes the "Clash of Civilizations" more than a cultural metaphor; it is a technological and political reality that risks permanently fragmenting globalization as we have known it since the 1990s.

Economic interdependence

Analyzing the post-Cold War paradigm, we observe a perhaps exaggerated confidence in Keohane and Nye's theories regarding interdependence. It was wagered that integrating China into WTO structures would force long-term cooperation, making any military conflict financially irrational. However, the current decade forces us to rethink this model. We see how interdependence no longer functions as a barrier against war, but is instead used strategically as an instrument of political pressure between global actors.

The concept of "weaponized interdependence" (Farrell and Newman, 2019) explains how global networks—financial, technological, and energy-related—

³The social credit system is a large-scale government initiative implemented by China, through which citizens and companies are evaluated and assigned a 'score' based on their behavior. The official goal is to promote 'trust' within society, but external criticisms often describe it as an instrument of mass surveillance.

which were supposed to ensure interstate connections, have become instruments of coercion. The United States has used its control over the SWIFT payment system and semiconductor design architecture to slow down China's technological rise. In response, Beijing has utilized its dominance over rare earth element supply chains and its position as the "factory of the world" to exert political pressure on US allies, transforming the economy into an asymmetric battlefield.

The rift between the two superpowers has given rise to the process of 'decoupling'—a deliberate attempt to reduce mutual dependence in strategic sectors. Although a total separation of the two economies is considered by many economists to be impossible without a global systemic collapse, we are nevertheless witnessing a 'selective decoupling'. This primarily targets dual-use technologies (civilian and military), such as artificial intelligence and green energy. The term 'de-risking,' promoted by the European Union and subsequently adopted by the Biden administration, has nuanced the very approach described above.

Unlike total decoupling, de-risking implies maintaining general trade ties while securing critical supply chains to avoid vulnerabilities to potential political blackmail from Beijing (Sullivan, 2023). This strategy reflects a fundamental paradigm shift: prioritizing national security and resilience over pure economic efficiency, marking the end of the era of "hyper-globalization" (Rodrik, 2011). Nevertheless, at present, American President Donald Trump considers de-risking to be an insufficient measure. His policy aims for a much broader separation of the US economy from China's, arguing that any dependence on an adversary represents a national security risk.

The dispute over semiconductors is described by Chris Miller (2022) as the new "oil of the 21st century". China relies heavily on imports of advanced chips and lithography equipment (ASML), while the US depends on assembly and testing capabilities in China and Southeast Asia. The American CHIPS and Science Act (2022) represents an aggressive industrial policy designed to repatriate high-tech manufacturing and block China's access to future generations of computing. From China's perspective, this strategy is perceived as an attempt to "freeze" its economic development. Beijing's response, through its "dual circulation" strategy, aims to achieve technological self-sufficiency and reduce dependence on Western markets and technologies, while simultaneously stimulating domestic consumption. This dynamic creates an economic arms race, where innovation is no longer stimulated by cooperation, but by the need for strategic survival.

Another critical dimension of interdependence is the supremacy of the US dollar. China, holding a massive amount of US government bonds, has begun a cautious process of diversifying its reserves and promoting the internationalization of the yuan (RMB), especially in transactions with BRICS+ states. Although dollar hegemony remains intact in the short term, "de-dollarization" efforts indicate a desire to build a parallel financial infrastructure immune to American sanctions (Zoltan Pozsar, 2022).

The economic interdependence between the US and China, which was once considered the "anchor of stability," has transformed into a major source of conflict. Instead of preventing conflict, economic ties now provide leverage for "economic coercion". The conclusion is that the world economy is entering an era of geoeconomics, where trade is subordinated to geopolitics. This fragmentation risks creating two distinct economic blocs, validating Huntington's thesis of a world divided not just by ideas, but also by integrated circuits and incompatible payment systems.

Conclusion

This study has attempted to demonstrate that the contemporary rivalry between the United States and the People's Republic of China is the result of a convergence of structural, ideological, and economic forces. While through the lens of Structural Realism we witness a classic power transition sequence marked by the "Thucydides Trap", the Huntingtonian perspective adds necessary depth, revealing that the stakes are, ultimately, cultural, and normative legitimacy.

Unlike the ideological bipolarity of the Cold War, the current configuration is defined by a paradox: an unprecedented economic interdependence which, instead of pacifying relations, has become a vector of vulnerability and coercion through the phenomenon of weaponized interdependence. Thus, the "Clash of Civilizations" no means manifests itself merely through political discourse, but is encoded in technological standards, artificial intelligence algorithms, and fragmented supply chains.

The question regarding the inevitability of a kinetic conflict (open war) remains the central point of debate in International Relations. Graham Allison (2017) warns that structural stress makes war likely rather than unlikely; however, history also offers examples of peacefully managed transitions (such as the transfer of hegemony from Great Britain to the US at the beginning of the 20th century). Nevertheless, reinvigorated nationalism, both in the US (in the form of "America First" or industrial protectionism) and in China (through

the "Chinese Dream" and "wolf warrior" diplomacy), reduces the room for compromise. In an environment dominated by the "security dilemma", any defensive step by one party is interpreted as an offensive threat by the other, fueling a spiral of militarization and hostile rhetoric that can escape the control of political leaders.

In an era of exacerbated nationalism, traditional diplomacy often seems anachronistic or insufficient. Yet, crisis diplomacy and the establishment of "guardrails" become imperative to avoid a nuclear disaster or a global economic collapse. Henry Kissinger (2011) emphasized the need for a "shared concept of order", warning that in the absence of a minimal consensus on the rules of coexistence, the world risks a catastrophe similar to that of 1914. The major challenge for 21st-century diplomacy is managing "strategic decoupling" without triggering a total rupture. This requires a shift from performative public diplomacy addressed to domestic nationalist audiences to a technical diplomacy focused on three points:

1. Transparency of military intentions in friction zones (Taiwan, South China Sea);
2. Joint governance of risks, such as generative artificial intelligence and climate change;
3. Maintaining direct communication channels between military commands to prevent tactical incidents from escalating into strategic crises.

The conclusion of this study is that we are not witnessing a simple repetition of history, but a redefinition of the concept of power. The "Clash of Civilizations" between China and the US will not be resolved through a total victory for either side, given that both states are too integrated and too heavily armed to be "defeated" in the traditional sense. The most probable, and at the same time most desirable, scenario is that of "competitive

coexistence" or a technological "cold peace". This implies accepting that Western and Sinic values will continue to compete for global influence, but that this competition must remain below the threshold of organized violence. The success of this fragile order will depend on the capacity of both civilizations to recognize that, although their worldviews are divergent, their destiny remains inextricably linked to the stability of the same global ecosystem.

Concurrently, a rigorous academic approach requires acknowledging the limitations of the proposed analytical framework. While this synthesized model offers significant explanatory surplus regarding the macro-systemic and cultural drivers of the rivalry, it inherently understates the impact of domestic political friction within both nations. For instance, electoral cycles and internal legislative pressures in the United States, alongside the complex intra-party dynamics of the Chinese Communist Party, introduce domestic variables that neither Structural Realism nor civilizational paradigms can fully encapsulate. Furthermore, the transnational interests of global corporations—which frequently push back against complete economic decoupling due to supply chain interdependencies—highlight a commercial counter-weight that occasionally disrupts both material balancing and ideological alignment. Future research should therefore aim to integrate these domestic and corporate variables into the current hybridized model to further refine its predictive accuracy.

Ultimately, the stakes of the 21st century are not the triumph of one civilization over another, but the capacity of the international system to accommodate two different models of modernity within a power structure that prevents the self-destruction of humanity.

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