

RESPONSIVENESS OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND THE SIZE OF MUNICIPALITIES IN SLOVAKIA

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Abstract:

The paper examines the relationship between bureaucratic responsiveness of local governments and the size of municipalities in Slovakia. Using quantitative method, it finds that despite the theoretical expectations, there is only weak positive correlation between the two variables. The paper also introduces our measured data on responsiveness of local governments for the entire Slovak territory in the late 2019 and early 2020 time period and compares it to the data from a previous measurement in the early 2019. The values of responsiveness are calculated for individual districts. The paper finds that the values the two measurements – both using probability samples of Slovak municipalities, but with different municipalities in each measurement – are not always consistent, although both show the lowest values to be in Eastern Slovakia, especially in the Prešov Region. We argue that one of the main reasons for that is small size of municipalities in this region, which makes bureaucracy understaffed and shorthanded there. But this relationship is clearly only part of the explanation and other influences are also interfering, otherwise the data would have shown a stronger correlation there.

1 Introduction

In our previous researches, we were looking into the capacity and willingness of the local governments in Slovakia to respond to requests for information – one of their stated duties by law. We were either comparing levels of this responsiveness in various parts Slovakia to the levels of social capital (Bušša 2019a) or were trying to identify alternative explanations for the different levels of responsiveness in different regions and districts of Slovakia (Bušša 2019b). In one earlier research (Bušša 2017), we

tried to measure the values of social capital in Western Slovakia in the sense that Robert Putnam understood this concept. Putnam and his colleagues focused on the impact of measured social capital on the functioning of institutions, which they called the real performance of institutions. One of the indicators that used to measure the real performance of institutions was the responsiveness of bureaucracy. Since we have had already measured the values of social capital for Western Slovakia, we decided to compare the levels of social capital and responsiveness of bureaucracy. Unfortunately, we have found

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practically no relationship between the two variables. In the subsequent research, we tried to come up with an alternative explanation for the varying levels of responsiveness of the local bureaucracy in Slovakia. We came to the conclusion that the various size of municipalities in which the local governments operate might be the best predictor of the level of responsiveness – the bigger the municipality is the higher responsiveness we can expect from its local government. In this paper we are trying to confirm this relationship statistically in our sample of 380 municipalities and cities. We are also trying to compare our levels of responsiveness with the levels from our earlier research (Bušša 2019b) to find out how stable these levels are. We come to the conclusion that only some differences between levels of responsiveness at district level are stable and reliable, although the generally lower levels of responsiveness in Eastern Slovakia, which was our main finding, seems to be one of them. This is likely influenced by small size of municipalities in Eastern Slovakia. We also found that there is a positive correlation between the size of the municipalities and the level of responsiveness of the local governments in Slovakia, although the correlation is relatively weak.

2 Methodology

In our research, we measured how local governments in various parts of Slovakia responded to requests for information from citizens, to which it was their legal duty to respond in prescribed time limit. The responsiveness of the bureaucracy speaks to the ability of the authorities to adequately respond to citizens' suggestions and to provide the necessary service on their basis. It is possible to measure responsiveness in various ways, but for methodological, financial and time reasons we have chosen a simple and accessible tool - a request for information. We compiled a set of 12 questions on the administration of the municipality / city for the whole of 2019, which had the potential to reveal the inefficient use of financial resources of local governments. We sent these to the municipalities and cities of the Slovak Republic in December 2019 and evaluated three different features: response / non-response to the request (2 points), timely / delayed response (1 point), complete / incomplete response (1 point). It is a quasi-experimental research design that is usually ethically problematic in the social

sciences, as it involves manipulation of people (Disman 2006). In our case, however, it was an examination of whether public administration employees will behave in accordance with the law and fulfill their duty towards a citizen requesting specific information, whose role we played in this quasi-experiment. One of the questions we had to answer when creating the research design was which level of authorities would be right to include in our research. If we wanted to repeat the procedure from Making Democracy Work as faithfully as possible, we would choose the level of self-governing regions. But in Slovak case there is just eight self-governing regions, which is a relatively small number to use for finding correlations and these regions are not always ideally defined. Self-governing regions are very large and often artificially combine disparate natural regions with different values of variables, which was criticized by Sloboda and Dostál (2005). We therefore chose local governments, the high number of which allows us to obtain enough data. But we came across the opposite problem. Even with the use of email, we would not be able to manage communication with all 2890 municipalities in Slovakia and evaluate their reactions to our suggestions. Therefore, we created a simple random sample of 380 municipalities by drawing lots, which represents about 13% of all municipalities, and we addressed those. For such a sample, it is necessary to take into account a deviation of around 5%, which is acceptable for our purposes, as we tried to get only a basic idea of the spatial distribution of the researched property. We were particularly interested in the relationship between responsiveness of the local government and the size of population of the given municipality or city. We compared the size and the responsiveness at the local level and computed the correlation between the two variables. Then we also transformed the obtained data on responsiveness into values for individual districts as it is shown in the Table 1 and represented on the map of Slovakia in Fig. 1. To collect the data, we collaborated with the students of the master degree study program of political science at the Alexander Dubček University of Trenčín. Each student had a part of 380 municipalities to ask for information from and to find out the official number of its inhabitants. They subsequently evaluated if each local government answered the questions they sent, if it answered in time and if there was any question omitted. A municipality

could gain 0, 2, 3 or 4 points. In case of not receiving the information at all, the municipality was awarded 0 points. In case of responding, but both late and incompletely, it would still get 2 points. In case of responding but either late or not to all required questions, the student was awarding it 3 points. If it responded in time and to all questions, it got 4 points. Due to considerable differences between the municipalities, it would not be useful to make the evaluation of the responsiveness of the local governments any more complex. This value of 0 to 4 points was then compared to the size of the municipality to find out, if there is a positive statistical correlation between the two variables.

3 Results of the Research

This was the second time we used probability sampling to create a representative sample of the municipalities and cities in Slovakia. The first time it consisted of 400 municipalities out of the total of 2890, this time it was 380 municipalities, but since we were using the original sampling sequence, none of the 380 municipalities was identical with the 400 contained in the first sampling. Theoretically, we could combine them into a combined sample of 780 municipalities, but we decided not to, since there was a year difference between gathering the data in the first and the second.

The largest city in our current sample was Nitra with almost 80000 inhabitants, responding in time and to all questions, and the smallest was Uhrovské Podhradie with less than 40 and not responding at all. These reactions were quite typical among the largest cities and the smallest municipalities respectively. However, when we calculated the correlation between the two variables among all 380 cases, the relationship seemed much less clear and the correlation was only 0,12. So there is a positive relationship, but the size of the population is far from being reliable predictor of responsiveness of the local governments.

In the next step, we calculated average values of bureaucratic responsiveness for individual districts in Slovakia. There are 79 districts, but 9 of them are just parts of the two big cities – Bratislava and Košice – neither one of which is included in our sample. There is also no municipality belonging to the Banská Štiavnica District. These districts are therefore without data. There are also some districts being represented by just one municipality or city,

which makes reliability of values for these districts questionable. There is a star next to those districts in the Table 1. The districts are Kysucké Nové Mesto, Levoča, Turčianske Teplice and Šaľa.

We can see quite big differences between districts, even between districts lying next to each other. This is probably caused by relatively low number of municipalities representing each district in our sample. Were there more municipalities in the sample, we would probably see some regression toward the mean. We can generally observe low values of responsiveness in the easternmost districts in Slovakia and in most of the southern ones.

In the Fig. 1 we can see the spatial distribution of the districts with colors representing different levels of responsiveness – red means none, green means full responsiveness of the local governments in the given district. We can see that generally higher levels are around big cities and in more developed north-west of the country. Although there are exemptions such as Žilina district.



Fig. 1 Levels of responsiveness of local governments in Slovak districts (green: complete responsiveness, red: complete non-responsiveness) in late 2019 and early 2020.

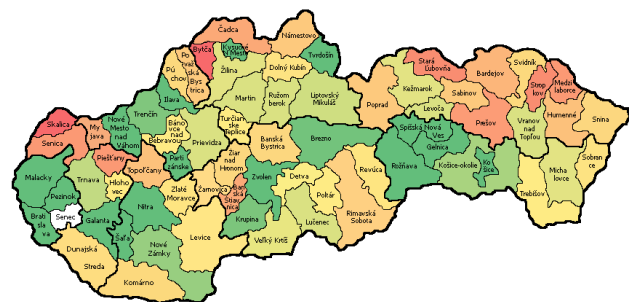


Fig. 2 Levels of responsiveness of local governments in Slovak districts (green: complete responsiveness, red: complete non-responsiveness) in early 2019

Table 1 Calculated average values of bureaucratic responsiveness for individual districts in Slovakia (4: full, 0: none) in alphabetical order. Source: research of the author.

District	Results	District	Results
Bánovce and Bebravou	2,00	Poltár	4,00
Banská Bystrica	3,20	Poprad	2,67
Bardejov	2,29	Považská Bystrica	3,20
Brezno	3,33	Prešov	2,33
Bytča	2,67	Prievidza	3,20
Čadca	3,00	Púchov	3,00
Detva	2,67	Revúca	2,40
Dolný Kubín	2,00	Rimavská Sobota	1,44
Dunajská Streda	2,00	Rožňava	1,38
Galanta	2,20	Ružomberok	4,00
Gelnica	1,50	Sabinov	2,00
Hlohovec	3,00	Senec	2,75
Humenné	1,33	Senica	2,40
Ilava	2,00	Skalica	4,00
Kežmarok	4,00	Snina	2,00
Komárno	2,38	Sobrance	1,00
Košice-okolie	3,20	Spišská Nová Ves	2,71
Krupina	3,00	Stará Ľubovňa	1,33
Kysucké Nové Mesto*	0,00	Stropkov	2,33
Levice	3,25	Svidník	0,67
Levoča*	4,00	Šaľa*	0,00
Liptovský Mikuláš	3,50	Topoľčany	3,29
Lučenec	3,00	Trebišov	1,78
Malacky	3,50	Trenčín	2,67
Martin	2,80	Trnava	2,70
Medzilaborce	1,33	Turčianske Teplice*	4,00
Michalovce	2,29	Tvrdošín	4,00
Myjava	2,00	Veľký Krtíš	2,08
Námestovo	3,67	Vranov and Topľou	2,29
Nitra	2,00	Zlaté Moravce	3,38
Nové Mesto nad Váhom	4,00	Zvolen	3,00
Nové Zámky	3,20	Žarnovica	3,50
Partizánske	4,00	Žiar and Hronom	1,33
Pezinok	4,00	Žilina	0,00
Piešťany	2,00		

We can compare the distribution in Fig. 1 with the results of the earlier research in Fig. 2. We can see that the distribution of values is not very stable. In the Fig. 2 the south has somewhat higher values. But both show the Eastern Slovakia as the region with low responsiveness, as well as south of the central Slovakia to a smaller extent. Other areas with low values according to Fig. 2 are looking better now, according to the Fig. 1.

4 Discussion

Again, it is worth mentioning that the data are less reliable when converted for districts, nevertheless it is possible to notice at least two areas with a low degree of responsiveness of local governments - most of the Prešov Region together with the eastern part of the Košice Region and the southern part of the central Slovakia, or of the Banská Bystrica Region. Both are among the least developed parts of Slovakia.

In addition to the generally lower level of economic development of this area and emigration from the territory, it should also be mentioned that the low level of responsiveness may be due to the very small size of municipalities in the area - especially in the Eastern Slovakia. As Čavoječ and Sloboda (2005), Tichý (2005) or Daško (2015) note, with the decreasing number of inhabitants of the village, the number of employees whose local authority can employ also decreases and ultimately the workload of employees increases disproportionately. In the case of smaller municipalities, there is also smaller chance that they will fulfill their legal obligations. They simply won't have enough time and workforce for them. If a municipality is small enough, even the most basic duties are becoming a challenge to fulfill. Often the people in elected posts are doing a great deal of unpaid work in order to keep their villages functional. On the other hand, we can see that even some of the cities or big municipalities are not fulfilling their duties as they should. So we can't expect that some simple administrative decision alone – such as merging the small municipalities together – would automatically cure all the problems.

It might be useful to try to merge the results from the two rounds of our research as they are shown in the Fig. 1 and 2 respectively. We were reluctant to do that because of differences between the

two. They are very similar in terms of requests to the local governments - the only difference is the time period about which we requested the information in the first and the second round has changed because we requested it a year later in the second round. Otherwise the kind of requests was very similar.

The other problem with merging the results from the two rounds together is the different time in which we were requesting it. It was a similar time of the year, but in very different part of the electoral cycle of local governments, which is the most likely thing to influence the responsiveness of the municipalities in cases such as this one. The first round was conducted right after the municipal elections, which took place at the beginning of November 2018. The second round, which we write about in this paper, was conducted more than a year after the new local governments were in place and they were to report information about their own conduct. So from this point of view the situation was not the same for the municipalities from the first and the second round of requesting the information.

Still, should we merge the data we would gain a sample of 780 municipalities, which is more than a quarter of all cities and municipalities in Slovakia and the results would be much more reliable in this respect. Especially the data for individual districts, which we currently calculate out of too small number of municipalities in each district. So depending on which municipalities are representing the district, the district average can change quite significantly between individual measurements. This problem would be reduced, which might be a good enough reason to try to do it despite the mentioned disadvantages. We might try to do this and see if some of the researched relationships appear stronger than they appear now when using smaller samples. In that case an entirely new round of research with a bigger sample would be justified to confirm those new findings.

5 Conclusion

The findings presented are particularly beneficial in that they provide impetus for further research. We have not been fully successful in confirming that the size of municipalities would be a good predictor of the degree of responsiveness of local

governments. There is this correlation, but it is a weak one. However, a look at the data for the whole of Slovakia suggests that the level of responsiveness follows a certain logic - it is steadily declining from northwest to southeast. We can see that a bigger sample would be helpful in clearing up the relationships between the variables. It is possible that under such circumstances we would be able to identify some new relevant variables influencing the responsiveness levels. And maybe even the correlation with the size of the municipalities would turn out to be higher. Therefore, further research will be needed.

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Democracy and Human Rights in Captivity of Security and Covid-19 Pandemics

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Abstract:

The article deals with issues of human rights, liberty and democracy in the context of a widely perceived concept security, including protection of public health in the European Union and Slovak Republic during the long-term coronavirus pandemics of Covid-19. In the text of contribution, there are critically judged a solitary relation of human rights and democracy in an European rate, reasons of deformation of the agenda of human rights, thereafter some aspects of the contemporary human rights discourse and potential incompatibility in a field of human rights and finally restrictions of human rights and principles of democracy within a fight against Covid pandemics in Slovakia.

1 Introduction

The submitted paper is a contribution into the discussion on limitation of values of democracy and human rights (HR) relating to the security concept (including public health protection) especially in the present-day periods of coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemics in the European Union (EU) and the Slovak Republic.

In the last 30 years, HR and their investigation in the EU have been through evident changeover which manifested itself in proliferating the examined themes, as well as modifications of applied techniques. The discussion on mutual relation of HR and democracy cannot be only limited by any frame of support to democracy. Changeovers in formulating and raising some concrete HR themes and issues such as social-economic inequality, inequality in parentage, slavery, national, ethnic and racial identities, different positions of males and females, or seniors and the young and so on, as well as different consequences of attempts on their reflection in politico-social practice, are in the long-term actual problems, whereby some of them are persisting during some centuries. Despite this, human rights did not use to be exclusively identified with democracy as a model of arranging the public place, as well as undemocratic regimes did not use to be identified with the absence of HR, eventually with encroaching them.

Decisive victory of a liberal version of democracy as fulfilling the democratic ideal in political practice, being appeared in the second half of the 20th century, meant starting up a new period of debates of which the central point was an issue of liberalism. Tieng up democracy with emphatic respecting, abiding and protecting HR was anticipated by identification of the liberalism ideology with doctrine of filling up HR mainly in political and civil, economic and social spheres

2 Experimental details

Investigation of human rights and their protection allude to several fundamental problems, first of all, to dissonant, ambiguous definition of an examined domain. But there does not exit a general accord on the solitary definition. Scholars markedly divide upon a question why we have human rights. (HOLZER et al. 2013: 17) The contemporary discourse on HR in relation to various forms of security is slightly more elaborate as in case of democracy and creates a more stable basis for further research. Within a context “*human security*”, a level of an individual and his security is connected to HR which shall be guaranteed through the medium of security. However, the solitary relation is not so trouble-free as it can seem. Many authors regard human rights and security enforce-

ment (irrespective of which form) as antagonistic terms that are in a systematic conflict. It results from simple argumentation that one's security means danger for the other one, and contrarily. A problem is also a different starting position at evaluating both terms relating to adopting a final decision when the approach "security first" is preferred. (GOLD, LAZARUS 2007: 3-4) Some scholars endeavour in this context to reconcile the both terms achieving a state of co-existence, but the relation by itself remains henceforward in imbalance.

The element of security (including protection of public health) can be perceived as a double-edged weapon which, on one hand, represents a necessary condition for further development and confirming the democratic order and legally consistent state, and, on the other hand, undermines democratic and HR principles. Therefore, security should not be in this understanding perceived as an absolute goal, but first as one of elements (though a cardinal one) which underlie democracy. This approach is in considerable contradiction with contemporary tendency of powerful governance in the EU states which posted security within various lockdowns over a level of all other goals of government programs. Likewise, this is also actual in today's Slovakia.

The familiar expression that security can exist without democracy and HR, but democracy and HR without security not, reflects a basic causal relation which in ideal case directs towards creating so-called democratic security. This represents a certain status when a state ensures an objective or subjective sense of security also in case of the contemporary coronavirus pandemics, whereby there shall be coming to a loop check of this activity through democratically elected authorities. Human rights and democracy are in the political and law practice so mutually re-bound, they can be shown that exercitation and fortifying principles of democracy and legally consistent state are contemporaneously pursuit of enthroneing or improving HR protection, and contrarily. HR and democracy are most frequently connected with using the key terms "equality" and "dignity" which seem to be directly a definition for both mentioned concepts. And just now this close mutual cohesion of HR and democracy are often distorted by their separation. Anyway, at developing democracy there appears excited paradox of clash of human rights with pro-democratic strategies of which outputs can be either balancing between giving a priority to some right before the other one, or even their denial (e. g. direct responsibility or guilts for serious corrupt, crime whether other social-political causes joined with abusing the might). The bolstering of democracy and legally consistent state can be thus accompanying by constraining or even by ignoring HR. In such a way, in a process of formation of tenable democracy, there can become victims such rights as freedom of speech and movement, a right for personal honour and dignity, right-minded court trial, freedom of enterprise, protection of private property, or a right to administration of public affairs.

On the other hand, various movements for HR often enforce their minority interpretation of human rights, whereby they do not hesitate to work with strategies and tools unrespecting nor procedural, nor material interests of the say a "retarded" majority. The key question, for all that, is forming new human minorities, mainly to where extend borderlines of forming an "in general" admissible human-minority actor. Thus, we find ourselves on an explosive field of discussions on expanding catalogue of phenomena which are under protection of political correctness or argumentation of catching-up some alleged paragons, as well as discussions on contents of arena of human-rights activism and its used tactics. There does not exist a clear borderline behind that the HR politics becomes an aggression jeopardising the open democratic practice.

Human rights have apparent multi-disciplinary characteristics and strong cross-sectional character because each more general social or political problem can be also investigated through the human-rights optics. The criticised specific feature of the HR agenda is a fact, that authors of various publications investigating the monitored issue, are often former or contemporary human rights activists whose goal of their activity (including public or publishing ones) is deepening a respect of HR. Even, before starting their activities they have ahead clear to what result they want to come. Such an a priori guided procedure can have many additional consequences leading to deforming reflection of reality. To the most typical critical reflections belongs mainly mindless or primitive hand-picking the outputs and conclusions of those international human rights organisations and institutions which most pronouncedly support or encourage so-called progressive approaches.

In the last period, HR became a principal tool and a real linguistic instrument in domestic and international politics, as well as to a great extent also in political theory and theory of democracy. The continually growing cluster of political problems, challenges and disputations is framed by the HR language, what naturally leads to warming of uncontrolled expansion of the HR public discourse and activism. In their implication, there threatens spalling a peculiar significance and position of HR, similarly as terminological uncertainty or intricacy. (GRIFFIN 2008: 14) HR are simultaneously closely fastened with democracy, whether for in a political and judicial levels or again within context of its politico-theoretical or constitutional-law reflection.

Though between HR and democracy exist close instrumental and terminological connectedness and relations, in principle is true that HR have achieved a privileged place on the European continent. Strengthening their position can be an expectation as well as an implication of improving democracy, eventually their mutually conditional symbiosis in this process. In conjunction with expansion of a HR debate there grows also significance

and a role of judicial organs that are traditional institutions intended for protection of HR. In the last years, there cannot neglect the phenomenon of so-called judicializing the politics what means steadily bigger and more frequent reliance on decisions of judicial organs in some issues of moral and political significance, and thus on growing importance, influence and mightiness of judiciary. (HIRSCHL 2006)

In connection with relation between a state and HR, there comes to a decisive change in relation between law and politics. Law shall no longer be subordinated to politics and, contrarily, politics again becomes a tool of updating law. Therefore, originally from a clearly political ideal of HR became now a juridical ideal. There so comes to legalization of politics and, at the same time, to politization of law because content of what is wanted as a right by people, it has always an origin in their political attitudes. (FERRAJOLI 2004: 339) Up to now unregulated spheres of life have got under protection of rights, whereby law has started to frame the functioning and evolution of politics. Any social and political conflict is likely to interpret in a language of rights, and hence the decision-making of legal disputes became in paramount a political affair. Acceptation of the rights language can be viewed as an attempt to answer to some demands of various human, civil and political minorities.

Constitutional judges became main protectors of constitutional principles. They should represent a main counterbalance to democratic political majorities – when these majorities, controlling the legislation and executive, are not balanced by anybody and can so easily infringe constitutional principles. According to some scholars, constitutional courts shall even create a supreme power over other authorities because they are guards of the ultimate law of a state – a constitution.

Protecting and abiding HR suppose existence of a certain authority which is able to enforce given norms. In this context, there is a principal entity of a judicial code which esteems HR as a concept and, on its basis, there exists a space for their implementation. However, the HR concept is in a much greater conflict with a concept of security, whereby solitary character of this dispute is possible to determine by a concept of potential inconsistency. This situation is now sensed (mainly in liberal circles) as an urgent intellectual challenge. The HR protection, in this context, is getting into a situation when a character of universality is conditioned by significance of a solitary situation. Implication of this assertion is a state when predominates persuasion that some human rights can be, under certain circumstances, “turned off”. (GOLD, LAZARUS 2007: 4) This is evidently seen e. g. in contemporary Slovakia during Covid-19 pandemics.

This reflection is also reformed into real policies of supporting HR in concrete environments where a tense political situation persists in the state. Protecting HR is, in such cases, frequently complicated, sometimes even impossible. A basic anticipation is unconditionally conclud-

ing any form of violence which directly eliminates protection of HR and principles of democracy. In the context of contravening HR, the conflict in a version of violent interaction can be a reason as well as a consequence of these procedures. A threat is also transforming a conflict into a systematic restriction of HR and principles of democracy (e. g. within a contemporary pandemic situation or lockdowns), when a violent interaction in a form of an imminent political conflict or even a threat of civil war, is getting only other forms and appearances. The problem can be also persisting hostility or a feeling of injustice or an endeavour for vengeance. (SRIRAM, ORTEGA, HERMAN 2009: 4-5)

A legitimacy issue of application of violence in an environment, which is in principle undemocratic and comes within it to constant contravening HR and democracy, is a subject matter of long-term discussions. Apology is connected with solitary qualities of democracy which exceed any variants of a power format. However, a substantial part of scholars is convinced of unsubstantiality of the assumption that regards political and security interventions of governance towards a political opposition as a suitable tool of evolving democracy.

The period of the years 2020 – 2021 in Slovakia is under a badge of the global coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemics which dramatically influenced social-political evolution in the state, a measure of the applying of HR, fundamental freedoms and respecting the principles of democracy. The pandemics markedly deepened disparities in their application and increased sensitivity of the Slovak society to their abusing. This fact is reflected not only to an increased interest of the wide society and media, but also to the amount of submitted instigations of infringement into the hands of some state and independent institutions. The increased number of these instigations means that some anti-pandemic measures meant an expressive intervention into HR, fundamental freedoms and democracy.

Nearly all universal aspects of the political and social life during coronavirus pandemics investigated in the former chapters, referring to HR, freedoms and democracy, have evidently occurred also in the Slovak society, maybe in a more dramatic form than in other EU Member States. The attempts at the change-over of the Slovak society (connected with a fight against corruption, with a so-called cleansing of society from corrupt high-ranging politicians and their hangers-on, influenced oligarchs, mafiosos and criminal elements, as well as also connected with the fight against coronavirus pandemics and so on) promised by the present governance before and after the parliamentary elections (29 February 2020) are running in an extremely explosive environment. The issue of abiding HR, principles of democracy and all democratic forms of security so has become a dangerous cleavage between governance and political or civil opposition in the state.

In accepting measures for handling the pandemic crisis in Slovakia, as well as in some other states of the EU, we have not anywhere seen till now applying democratic security. In time, when pandemics Covid-19 has intervened the whole state in 2020, security in the context of the incoming new governance was more or less apprehended as a part of the promised general alteration during which the social and political order should have been changing in main features. To this change-over, the incoming government made use of the pandemic situation for social, political and economic lockdown which led to the expressive limitation of HR, principles of legally consistent state and democracy. In the pandemic period, there has been ceased to govern by a traditional democratic way – the Slovak parliament became a servant of the government (the government has in deed accounted to nobody), controlling the state has been purposively realized by some documents of low legal force (mostly by some ordinances of the Office of Public Health) by means of which some human rights, freedoms and principles of democracy were constricted.

The lockdown in Slovakia expressively constrained putting into effect of the HR agenda and strengthened misusing power. Into a forefront of the state, there got some cribbers, laggards, double-crossers and mafiosos with an absence of accessories with fundamental moral values, for whose is an authoritative way of governing naturally very close and mainly highly effective. Systematic arresting of many high-ranking people (former or present ones) mainly from the sphere of activities of some law enforcement authorities, the abusing of some financial funds, as well as from the economic sphere where considerable financial means were illegally poured. Politico-powerful manipulations and an active governmental support of the contemporary executive and judicial mightiness for purposive creation and promotion to so-called expiators – corrupt people with their criminal past readily to falsely testify against the politically accused and arrested within a long-term collusive custody in their efforts to rescue themselves from criminal prosecution – are drawing suspicions that the contemporary governance is, at any rate, trying to liquidate political and civil opposition in the state by a governmental way. For this purpose, the existing governance has made do with more or less a purposively announced and the endlessly prolonged hard lockdown which expressively confines fundamental HR, infringes some principles of democratic and legally consistent state and which threatens with hard sanctions, much harder than in the case of a normal status of a social life. Some eccentric forms of putting under arrest of some significant high-ranking people, e. g. two former police presidents, the head of the Special Prosecutor's Office, the head of the Slovak Intelligence Service, the former director of the National Criminal Agency and so on, and their extraordinary long-term retention in a collusive detention only on the basis of purposively prepared depositions of some expiators and without investigatory

acts. Thus, there comes to destruction of law enforcement institutions, mainly security and police units, as well as to big tensions among state force branches what naturally leads to their mutual conflicts and squaring accounts reciprocally. By this means, today's Slovakia approaches any Jacobin form of governance, whereby this governance is under the supervision of some foreign undemocratic bodies. Of course, this is not only a case of Slovakia which can get into a situation that it will not be able to govern itself independently and so there will be inevitably needed interventions (including a financial one) from outside, likewise in Greece.

Fundamental attributes and features of 15-months governing of the new government in the SR from the parliamentary elections'2020 during coronavirus pandemics are evidently connected with counteracting or restricting HR, fundamental freedoms, legally consistent state and democracy. They can be briefly summarized in the following way:

Anti-constitutional measures (also confirmed by the Slovak National Centre for HR) (SNC HR 2021); restraining up till switching off some HR and freedoms during the extraordinary pandemic situation joined with a hard lockdown; fast and flexible prolonging the lockdown according to the "needs" of the government; limitation of ownership rights; ban on gathering and curfew; unrespecting the right for correct and authentic information on a process and fighting against Covid-19 pandemics (e. g. on the full-area testing, purchasing the tests and vaccines, or voluntarily obligatory vaccination); illegal long-term detaining within collusive custody in nonhuman conditions only on the basis of allegations of some corrupt grafters; misusing the institute of the collusive custody in form of a "torturing" tool for fighting against political opposition and for groaning it down; breaking the claim to a fair process of the prosecuted and busted; corruption of some new leading public agents; discrimination in public procurement by direct awarding a tender in millions Euros to some predetermined subjects; disregarding and cecity of some mainstream media to violating many aspects of democracy and legally consistent state, liberty and HR and to abusing a governmental might; long-term serious tensions within the present government coalition at decision-making on sensitive political, economic-financial and social issues leading to a possible, early break-down of unstable governance; and so on.

The tangle of undemocratic elements of authoritative governance, liberal-Nazi and anarchistic features have tragically subscribed under the decrepit state of Slovak society, mainly its economics in which dominates the incompetent judicial power. This situation is possible to interpret as a period of undemocratic governance, when the previous elite expressively weekend and a new elite quickly usurped an exclusive monopoly for using violence and injustice. To this state, there decidedly ministered and still minister also liberal-progressive media and some political non-governmental organizations supported

from the outland. Politically motivated transformation of existing institutions and purposive creation of the new ones in the name of fighting against corruption become irresponsible, not ensuring protection and strengthening democracy, legally consistent state and HR. All of this serves as a support to political provision and ambitions of present governance.

Results and discussion

The coronavirus pandemics Covid-19 pronouncedly perplexed the social, political and economic evolution in the EU and its Member States. Neither the Union's leadership, nor the States' one was not able to react long time by a suitable way. Their initial quandary in the fight against Covid-19, hasty implementation of full-area testing the people, introducing an emergence state and lockdown, restricting liberty, democracy and some HR, complications connected with vaccination and issuing so-called covid passports for free travelling and so on, are the common attributes of inelasticity and incommensurate ability or competence of the European and national leaders to manage a fight with pandemics. In the context of this fight, there occurs a factor of security and protection of public health which massively intervenes into the agenda of democracy and HR and these are getting into a special, up-to conflicting mutual relation.

Though between HR and democracy exist some instrumental and conceptual relations, there is basically in force that a result of the meeting of these two phenomena is now privileged position of HR, or more precisely HR in their content have "overbuilt" a concept of democracy. At the same time in some European democracies during an emergence state caused by global pandemics, from the agendas of HR and democracy have become any "tear-off calendar" and by means of their purposive limitation, from politics of state power there has become a strategic pressure tool against political and civil opposition. Hence urgently grows a significance of strict conceptualization of the agenda of HR, liberty and principles of democracy in some states, where tradition of rights has relatively very short duration what can limit the misusing of language of these concepts. This extraordinarily pertains exactly to the SR, the sequence of actual events and facts,

appearing in the Slovak society after the last parliamentary elections'2020 till now, confirms it unambiguously.

According to massive dissatisfaction with present contemporary functioning of democracy, legally consistent state and HR in Slovakia, there can seem to be paradoxical that just the ensuring of justice is an ideal which constitutional democracy shall endeavour after. The permanent shifting of this ideal, however, implies enhancement of claims for political conductorship of the state whereby fulfilling these claims is still expressively perceived as an indicator of defectiveness or hybridism of the democratic regime.

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THE WESTERN BALKANS AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

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Abstract:

In this article, we address the issues of the countries of the Western Balkans related to the accession to the European Union. We focus on areas to which we have so far had the opportunity to obtain information on the countries belonging to the Western Balkans region.

In our paper, we aim to introduce the region of the Western Balkans in more detail and look at the arguments that support the integration of countries into the EU. For the European Union, but also for the countries of the Western Balkans, to point out what enlargement policy is like and what the benefits are.

From a methodological point of view, we classify the paper among qualitative research, using a descriptive, comparative and analytical method. As part of enlargement policy, it can be seen that this policy is constantly changing. It can be said that nothing is more permanent than change, which brings with it benefits as well as certain challenges and benefits, which we want to point out in this paper.

1 Introduction

In this article, we aim to elaborate on what we have been able to know so far about the countries belonging to the Western Balkans region, what the arguments for joining the European Union (hereinafter also as the EU) prevailed and what arguments against joining the EU. In our paper, we also aim to introduce the individual countries of the Western Balkans in more detail and look at the arguments that support the integration of countries into the EU, but also at the threats and challenges that such integration brings. For the European Union, but also for the countries of the Western Balkans. What is the enlargement policy and what are the benefits of this policy?

In our paper, we aim to bring closer the enlargement policy, which is one of the youngest policies of the European Union. From a methodological point of view, we classify the paper among qualitative research, using a descriptive, comparative and analytical method. The

sources used in this paper are data and knowledge based on statistical data from the Balkan Barometer from 2020, from professional foreign and domestic publications and we also used data available on the Internet, such as data from the European Commission or the European Union's website.

2 Experimental details

The issue of the Western Balkans needs to start with the definition of which countries belong to this region. The definition of the Western Balkans is difficult due to the lack of a uniform definition. It is not only difficult in theory, but also in practice. It is not possible to uniformly define which countries belong to the Balkan region, resp. they do not belong, as some views call into question the very existence of a region called the Western Balkans. This was due to the absence of works and professional publications that would define the Balkans from a geographical point of

view, despite the fact that the geographical concept of the Balkans is older than the cultural one.

Geographically, the region of the Western Balkans is most often defined as the south-eastern part of the European continent, whose border is terminated by the line of the Trst and Odessa, known as the Balkan Peninsula. The countries of the Balkans that include the Encyclopedia Britannica in their definition are Greece, Albania, Romania, Bulgaria, as well as Slovenia, and thus the countries of the former Yugoslavia.¹ The geographical encyclopedia of the world, in turn, defines the Danube-Balkan Region, which includes Bulgaria, Greece, Croatia, Hungary, Macedonia, Albania, Serbia and Montenegro, along with Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Romania. The Western Balkans are defined as the Danube-Balkan region with the countries of Greece, Albania, Macedonia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia, Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary by the World Geographical Encyclopedia.² It is possible to strictly and precisely define the region of the Western Balkans on the basis of geographical parameters, but as we mentioned above - the definitions differ. According to Janusz Bugajski³, of the Center for European Policy Analysis in Washington, the term Western Balkans is geographical but also political and originated to describe part of the Balkan Peninsula. The part that remained outside the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU). Specifically, they described seven countries, namely Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, Kosovo, Macedonia and Slovenia, along with Albania, which emerged from international isolation.⁴

This region is a region with a dynamic and turbulent past, which has only relatively recently ended the deep Balkan crisis on its territory. The region of the Western Balkans, as a post-conflict region, is a region that is a potential focus of further conflict. It is also a place where there may be a risk to global stability and security unless otherwise provided. The reason may be non-integration into the European Union, which would mean greater isolation from global influences and trends.⁵

The European Union (as well as the EU) considers the integration of the countries of the region to be its priority. The aim is to promote peace, stability and prosperity not only for the EU but also for the region of the Western Balkans. Last but not least, the promotion of freedom or prosperity from an economic point of view. After the Balkan crisis, the European Union is the largest trading partner in south-eastern

Europe. The intensity of business transactions and its slowdown was observed during the economic crisis. On the other hand, intra-regional foreign trade has intensified, which can also be attributed to the conditions within the integration process.

For the purposes of our paper, we are working with the definition of the Western Balkans and the countries belonging to it: Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, Kosovo⁶, Albania and the Republic of North Macedonia⁷

Enlargement policy is the youngest of the European Union's policies. As Tanja Mišćević⁸ says in her study, for this policy to succeed, three conditions must be met from all three parties, the European Union, its members and the candidate countries. The first condition is a clear political consensus on the need and desire to become a member, then there is an integration and absorption capacity and, last but not least, the credibility of all participants in important activities. The policy of enlargement did not occur immediately with the creation of the EU itself, but only with the integration processes of Central and Eastern Europe. The EU, which at that time registered member states such as Germany, Italy, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg as founding countries, the United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark in 1973. Greece (1981), Spain and Portugal in 1986 and 1995 Austria, Finland and Sweden. Mention should also be made of 1991, when Germany was reunited and thus the territory of the European Union was substantially expanded.

The need for enlargement policy has arisen mainly due to the need for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, which also wanted to become members sui generis. This policy was to help in the process of transition, in other words, in preparation for EU membership, in meeting the conditions for EU accession, and only then could the country become a full member of the EU.⁹

Assistance in the integration process came in the form of determining the criteria that a country must meet so that the EU can also assess that a candidate country is ready for EU membership. Among the first criteria was the 1993 Copenhagen Criteria, which define the basic criteria for meeting economic, political and legal criteria. These include a functioning market, competitiveness, democratic institutions, respect for human rights and the harmonization of legislation with

¹ <https://www.britannica.com/place/Balkans>

² Tomljanovic, 2018

³ Janusz Bugajski,

⁴ <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com>, 2021

⁵ Barčáková, 2018

⁶ The designation does not affect the positions on the status and this designation is in accordance with UNSCR. 1244/1999 and the Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the Declaration of Independence of Kosovo.

⁷ www.europarl.europa.eu, 2020

⁸ Mišćević, 2016

⁹ Ibid.

the *acquis*. In 1995, the so-called Madrid criteria defining administrative capacity. All these enlargement policy measures have been and are being developed primarily for aid. Not only financial aid, but also aid that shows the direction and timetable of how a country can become a member of the EU. The countries mentioned above, around 1995, became members of the EU without any major complications. Only for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe did more serious problems arise, which could also be solved thanks to the enlargement policy.

In 1999, the European Union decided to support the countries of the Western Balkans through the Stabilization and Association Process (SGP). This process defines and frameworks relations between countries (eg the Western Balkans) and the EU itself. In addition to this process, the Stability Pact, in which international actors in particular participate, also supports integration processes.

Further enlargement policy assistance also came in the form of the Accession Partnerships, which included priorities for countries to meet in order to become full members. They should also help in the harmonization of the so-called *acquis*, which included the then 29 negotiating chapters. Following this example, European Partnerships, also known as Partnerships for European Integration, have been established for the countries of the Western Balkans. This form of assistance included priorities for countries in the short and medium term. The short horizon was set for a period of one to two years, while the medium-term priority horizon was set for three to five years. Thanks to these priorities, the reform process should have been more intensive and faster. The political platform of regular meetings of representatives of the countries or representatives of the European Union-Western Balkans political dialogue should also contribute to the pace. Last but not least, the mentioned financial and non-financial assistance is a part of this policy.¹⁰

Within the enlargement policy, the year 2005 was important when the EU introduced the so-called benchmarks. Benchmarks are a measure not only for the EU, but also for the candidate country itself, which talks about whether a given chapter can be opened or not. closed. It is a double check, double evaluation of the fulfillment of conditions in a given chapter, in a given integration process.

Analyses of the enlargement policy, which said Musladin (2012) in his professional articles in particular countries have shown that the most serious factors that determine the process, the process itself and the results of the EU integration process can be divided into three main groups: The first is the specific interests and thus the interests that flow from each sector. The question

arises in the competitiveness of products from other countries, respectively. from countries aspiring to join the EU. The second group are the so-called "National interests" and thus a factor that speaks to the possibility of a negative impact on the decision-making process in a Member State. The third group is the union system and thus the structure, methods and processes of the decision-making process.

One of the priorities in the integration processes is close regional cooperation, which leads and has led to an increase in this type of trade. As Gabrielová¹¹ writes does not confirm in its study that, despite the higher intensity of intra-regional trade, the position of the European Union vis-à-vis the countries of the Western Balkans as their main trading partner would be weakened. In his study, he also points out that the orientation of the countries of the Western Balkans towards the European Union would be more economically advantageous than intra-regional cooperation, but does not deny the positive effects of such cooperation. It recommends for the countries of the Western Balkans, and we agree with the given recommendation, the so-called simultaneous north-south and south-south integration, and thus integration into the European Union and at the same time internal economic integration. The resulting benefits are less vulnerability to external influences in economic crises. Higher attractiveness for foreign investors and deepening of internal relations. It is not excluded that the given high intensity of intra-regional trade is not only temporary, as it is assumed that in the case of individual integrations into the European Union and withdrawal from CEFTA (Central European Free Trade Agreement), with membership ceasing to be a member of the EU membership will strengthen the country's relations with the EU itself.¹²

Economic prosperity and stability in the countries of the Western Balkans is a priority for the European Union in relation to the countries of south-eastern Europe. This is evidenced by the large amount of EU assistance in the integration process. These are, for example, financial instruments such as the CARDS (Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilization) funds. This fund was established in December 2000 and is primarily funded by this "financial package" to meet objectives such as democratic stability, institutional development, law enforcement and harmonization with EU law, human rights, social and economic development. etc.¹³ Other financial funds for assistance are SAPARD, IPA (Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilization), IPA II, or PHARE. Since 2004, administrative and technical assistance programs

¹⁰ Mišćević, 2016

¹¹ Gabrielová, 2013

¹² Gabrielová, 2011

¹³ www.europskaunia.sk, 2018

known as the twinning program and the Technical Assistance Information Exchange Office (TAIEX) have been available to the countries of the Western Balkans. These forms of assistance were created to help countries with the capacity to implement reforms within the *acquis*¹⁴ Preferential trade agreements, autonomous preferences have been introduced, and the countries of the Western Balkans have joined international organizations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the Stabilization and Association Agreements. Within the framework of assistance to the countries of the Western Balkans from the European Union, we can talk about multilevel assistance within the integration process and thus a great advantage for the countries of the Western Balkans.

The mentioned autonomous preferences were created with the aim of liberalizing exports for the countries of the Western Balkans to the countries of the European Union. This liberalization of exports, resp. duty-free access to the European single market covered all goods except wine, veal, sugar and certain types of fishery (restrictions on tariff foods were introduced for those foods and products). This assistance was initially agreed for a limited period of five years, but was extended several times. Stabilization and Association Agreements are bilateral cooperation agreements at political and economic level. Although these agreements bring fewer advantages than the autonomous agreements themselves, they are for a longer period of time and therefore their importance is considerable. The agreements aim to harmonize trade law. Regional cooperation is also mentioned, as well as ECAA 2006, which is the European Common Aviation Area, the SEETO - Center for Transport in South-Eastern Europe, the Energy Community, the judiciary, the police and border protection. The MARRI Regional Forum is a further cooperation in the framework of migration, asylum and refugees, with the aim of detecting their smuggling and illegal migration.¹⁵

It is important for the European Union to integrate the countries of the Western Balkans as effectively as possible, because its subsequent political, social or economic stagnation can destabilize the region, but also the forces of the European Union. An example is Brexit, resp. withdrawal from Great Britain from the European Union, direction of policies of Poland and Hungary and their blocking of the EU budget, or higher involvement of third parties in the countries of the Western Balkans (eg China during the covid-19 pandemic in Serbia)

Table n. 1.: Current state of the Western Balkan countries in the process of integration into the EU¹⁶

	The application for EU membership	Current state
Albania	April 2009	Candidate country (june 2014)
Republic of Northern Macedonia	March 2004	Candidate country (december 2005)
Bosnia and Herzegovina	February 2016	Potential candidate country
Montenegro	December 2008	Candidate country (december 2010)
Serbia	December 2009	Candidate country (december 2012)
Kosovo		Potential candidate country

3. Conclusion

In our paper, we analyzed the benefits of the accession of the countries of the Western Balkans to the European Union from the perspective of the countries themselves, but also from the perspective of the European Union. We believe that the integration of countries is not a problem, but on the contrary, it is an example of a solution and therefore certainly belongs to the European Union, once the necessary criteria and conditions have been met. The integration of countries is a solution, for example, how to achieve a high degree of democracy, peace, stability, whether economic or political, in the countries of the Western Balkans, how to increase regional cooperation and so on.

In this paper, we analyzed the integration processes of Southeast Europe, with which forms of financial and non-financial assistance they can work. This is a clear benefit for countries in the process of joining the EU. The EU is a major trading partner for the countries of the Western Balkans, but also thanks to the conditions of accession to the EU and various cooperation, the countries of the Western Balkans also benefit from intensive intra-regional trade and political cooperation. Following the recent enlargements of the EU, the Western Balkans is a priority for the EU, as the countries of south-eastern Europe have become immediate neighbors and thus neighbors of the European Union's external borders. We believe that, although the current situation on the Balkan Peninsula is stable, it is a source of possible disputes and conflicts. This may also be the reason why the countries of the Western Balkans are not indifferent to the European Union and are cooperating in their integration into the EU. However, it should be recalled that the countries of south-eastern Europe have much to offer not only economically and politically, but also within a skilled and unskilled workforce. The people of these countries often have knowledge of several foreign languages at a communicative level. If even their work (skilled and unskilled labor) is legalized and the gray economy is eliminated to the lowest possible percentage, it will bring economic benefits not only to the country itself, but also to EU countries.

During the integration processes, from the fulfillment of the basic criteria to the specific criteria, a relatively deep and complex relationship will be established between the candidate country and the European Union. It

¹⁴ Mišćević, 2016

¹⁵ Zubaľová, 2017

can be said that the more conditions a given country has to meet, the deeper the relationship between them and the EU is established.

As part of enlargement policy, it can be seen that this policy is constantly changing. It can be said that nothing is more permanent than change, which brings with it benefits as well as certain challenges. The advantage is a certain degree of flexibility, additional assistance for candidate countries. On the other hand, there is a challenge for the candidate countries, who say that they must be prepared to add the necessary new criteria if necessary. This may lead to some pessimism about the countries' expected accession to the EU. This topic is relatively dynamic and therefore requires further research, which we plan to work on.

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POLITICS - IN TERMS OF PUBLIC CREDIBILITY (2013- 2018)

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Abstract:

This work aims to describe and analyze aspects of politicians credibility in the Slovak Republic. I will perform the given description and analysis through the following terms: political culture, ethics, morality, virtue.

In this work, I will focus on the analysis of negative manifestations of selected politicians. For the plurality of opinions and ideas, I chose one politician from the governing coalition and the other from the opposition. From the government coalition, I chose the chairman of the strongest government political party, Igor Matovič, and from the opposition, I chose the chairman of the Smer-SD party, Robert Fico. In the case of Robert Fico, I will discuss his populism, statements, relationship with journalists and the degree of self-reflection.

1 Introduction

Many political theorists think about politics in a different sense than the general public. They are aware that politics is not just about lawmaking and legislation, but also about phenomena in the relationship between citizens and political leaders. In a utopian world, the selection of political leaders would work in such a system that people would choose their representatives based on certain aspects such as virtue, courage, knowledge of political culture, honesty or pragmatic behaviour. However, in the real world, it usually works in such a way that people do not have the choice of political leaders who meet these attributes and are therefore they are forced to choose politicians based on emotions and current situations. Because politicians are just people like everyone else, their lives are also accompanied by negative qualities. In our work, We focus on the negative manifestations of politicians and their impact on the credibility of politicians.

2 Theoretical background

In this section, we will define some of the selected aspects of credibility, including Political Culture, Ethics, Morality, and Virtue. As early as ancient times, Aristotle and Plato, two of the most important ancient philosophers, discussed values, attitudes and knowledge. They talked about the great influence of political culture on the formation of political systems. „Political culture is a certain system of values (citizen, political system, regime) and the way of their reflection (application) in practical political activity. (For example, political values, moral personalities, etc.)“ (Korim, 2012:33) Political culture is thus a certain system of values and unwritten ethical rules that the public demands to be respected by politicians or political parties. „Political culture, these are the attitudes that citizens take towards politics.“ (Skovajsa,2014:123) The level of political culture depends on the extent to which politicians manage to adhere to these unwritten ethical rules or values. „The media more often point to the vulgarities of politicians than to violations of political culture.“ (Lincényi, 2013:94)

We will focus on one of the three important sciences of ancient Greek philosophy, ethics. Ethics examines people's behaviour in the context of good and evil. „*The Greek word ethos denoted morality, moral character, behaviour, feature, inner essence, law, transcription.*“ (Janotová, 2005:13) Ethics, in general, is a science that deals with natural law as well as the science of morals. This science includes a set of universal knowledge that is methodically developed, and there is no room for error, as its relevance is documented by generally applicable principles. It is a discipline that deals with the values of human deeds. Based on the highest intellectual rules, it can also be the science of administering human deeds to the ultimate goal. Ethics organizes human deeds mainly from the aspect of moral values, it deals with the consequences, causes and goals of man. „*Historically, ethics, along with economics and politics, has been an integral part of practical philosophy.*“ (Korim, 2012:26) Ethical behavior of politicians is important. If a politician behaves virtuous, his political credibility can be enhanced.

This phenomenon, in which politicians do not derive their political responsibility in the event of a mistake, is a sign of low political culture. Ethics in politics demands, in particular, the creation of beneficial laws for society and well-functioning institutions. „*The meaning of institutions can be understood as political rationality, and the moral quality of politics also depends on the use of the system of institutions.*“ (Bočáková - Tomášiková, 2014:69) This is important because it demonstrates the absence of morality. Many times we encounter the immoral behaviour of politicians, and society often condemns this immoral behaviour. If these institutions are to fulfil their potential, both politicians and citizens must comply with certain principles for the common good in matters of morality.

Politics is an art of possible, but it is not a simple discipline. Sometimes this can be reflected in the emotional state of politician. When a politician acquires moderation, he can control his passions and always makes decisions judiciously and rationally. As Cicero said, "Fury is the enemy of balance." That is why politicians need to maintain balance and moderation because good decisions are a step forward for society. If a politician acquires all the virtues, then society will reward him with trust, and that is the most important thing for politicians. If a politician is virtuous and cares about society, public confidence is his indicator of whether he is doing his job well or bad. A politician needs to remain virtuous throughout all his political life. „*The greatness of a politician is not measured by how he entered the policy, but how he left it.*“ (Banáš, 2015:133)

3 Methodology

In this work, we will focus on the analysis of negative manifestations of selected politicians. For the plurality of opinions and ideas, We chose one politician from the governing coalition and the other from the opposition. From the government coalition, We chose the chairman of the strongest government political party, Igor Matovič, and from the opposition, We chose the chairman of the Smer-SD party, Robert Fico. In the case of Robert Fico, We will discuss his populism, statements, relationship with journalists and the degree of self-reflection. Subsequently, we will describe the development of his political credibility. In the case of Igor Matovič, We will analyze his populist, statements, the absence of ethics in politics and his lies in politics. Subsequently, as with Robert Fico, We will describe the development of his political credibility. The analysis aims to find out whether, due to the negative manifestations of selected politicians, is their political

credibility significantly reduced. In this work, We assume that despite the negative manifestations of selected politicians, their political credibility is not fundamentally reduced. The table of results of surveys of the credibility of individual politicians from the Focus agency will provide me data to confirm or dismiss this claim. In this work, We further assume that the number of negative manifestations of selected politicians has increased. As a primary method for proving hypotheses, We used the method of analysis as well as the method of description. The secondary goal of our analysis is to find out what are the main negative manifestations of selected politicians. Another partial goal of the analysis is to examine the development of political credibility among selected politicians.

4 Research result

Statements of Robert Fico

Robert Fico has often polarised society with his statements. In 2013, for example, he commented on unemployment in Slovakia by outraging the Roma minority. „We have incredibly distorted our unemployment figures by the huge number of Roma we have in Slovakia. We know very well that these are people for whom it is difficult to find work, who are difficult to retrain, whose work habits and work discipline are very low. If we didn't have this problem, our unemployment is at maybe 8 or 9 percent.“ (SITA, 2013) The issue of Roma people in Slovakia has been resonating for many years. Part of the public agreed with this statement, while part of the experts warned of a possible rise in extremism because of this Robert Fico's statements. On reactions Robert Fico, The Gypsies, on the other hand, demanded an end to labelling in society because not everyone from the Roma minority in Slovakia is not working.

Statements of Igor Matovič

Another verbal attack was addressed to MEP Monika Beňová. „I don't like such whores who show off for other people's money and make a fool of themselves. Any honest working woman who lives off her honestly earned money is a thousand times more human to me than such filthy thieving plastic ogres.“ (FB Igor Matovič, 2017) She had previously described him as a "vindictive, bitter wretch". Even though Monika Beňová made an unpleasant remark about him, such a statement is not worthy of a decent person. A politician should be careful in his statements and should not insult the opposite sex as Igor Matovič did. This statement was condemned by many people. They admitted that they do not like Monika Beňová, but this is already over the line.

Relationship with journalists of Robert Fico

„Mass media always play an essential role in influencing public opinion.“ (Laczkó, Lincényi 2020) It is characteristic of Robert Fico that he has specific relations with journalists. In 1998, when he was a member of the Slovak National Assembly for the SDE, he preached the independence of the media. He was a supporter of independent news coverage by the Markiza television station. „We understand freedom of expression not only as spreading

positive and beautiful information. Freedom of expression is also the dissemination of critical, sometimes shocking information. And that is what it takes for Markiza to fully realise such freedom of expression, as it is understood throughout Europe.“ (Mikušovič, 2016) His relationship with the media has evolved and escalated to hatred of certain media. In 2008, he even named media outlets that Robert Fico has long considered to be anti-government. "I want to ask Pravda, Sme and TA3 to stop behaving like prostitutes.“ (Čorej, 2008)

Absence of ethics in politics

The fact that Igor Matovič and some rules and principles do not go together can be examined in relation to the change of the Rules of Procedure in the plenary of the National Assembly of the Slovak Republic. From the beginning, he was reluctant to submit to the changes that the Rules of Procedure represented. A politician should not only act within the framework of the Code of Conduct, but he should also act and present himself in public. The fact that politicians should dress like politicians have been respected by probably all members of the Slovak Parliament in the history of the independent Slovak Republic. They used to go to work in suits until the arrival of Igor Matovič to the Parliament. Matovič wears a suit to parliament one day and a T-shirt with the inscription "Fico protects thieves" on the other. This not only violates the etiquette of dressing up but also belittles the dignity of politicians. This defamatory writing on a T-shirt is an attack on one of the three highest constitutional officials that should not be represented in a modern democracy and certainly should not be taken to be okay.

Development of political credibility Robert Fico

To help understand the evolution of political credibility, We use the results of surveys conducted by Focus, an agency that has been studying the credibility of politicians since 1993. The results of the Focus research can be found in the appendix of this book. Since 2000, Robert Fico has almost continuously, with minor interruptions, been at the top of the credibility rankings. In 2002 and 2016 he was in second place, then in 2017, he was in the

first place together with the President of the Slovak Republic. Paradoxically, a rather large part of the population takes him as the opposite of a trustworthy politician, because the dissatisfaction of citizens is reflected in the form of constantly organised protests against Robert Fico and his policies. In 2013, when Smer-SD formed the government on its own, up to 45% of the public, i.e. almost half, distrusted politics and political representatives. Trust in that year was low because this period was associated with the period of "mečiarism" when only one person decided everything and had almost all the power. Despite this, Robert Fico was named the most trusted politician this year. At the end of January 2018, Robert Fico was the second most trusted politician, surpassed by the President of the Slovak Republic, Andrej Kiska. Based on the data collected, it can be said that negative manifestations in the form of statements or actions in politics do not fundamentally affect his credibility.

Igor Matovič

To assess the development of Igor Matovič's political credibility, We will again use the results of Focus polls. In 2011, 3% of people trusted Igor Matovič. A year later, the trust had climbed to 9%. In this year, parliamentary elections were held, so Igor Matovič was able to raise his profile and so a wider circle of people was able to get to know his vision for the functioning of the country. In 2013, his political credibility dropped to 7%, and the following year it dropped by another one percent. In 2015, Matovič began pointing out various scandals of the then government and started wearing a T-shirt to parliament with the title "Fico protects thieves". That year, his credibility rose to 8%. In 2016, parliamentary elections were held, and Igor Matovič's strategy was to defeat Fico and rid the country of the oligarchs. Igor Matovič and opposition political representatives wanted to fold the government. The government was eventually formed by Smer - SD, but Igor Matovič secured the highest level of credibility he has ever had, up to 13%. In 2017, the same percentage of respondents trusted him. In January 2018, 10.1% of those polled trusted him. From these available data, it can be concluded that the credibility of Igor Matovič was slightly increasing. AltBANÁŠ, J. 2015. Dementi. 1. Vyd. Bratislava : Ikar, 2015. 252 s. ISBN 978-80-551-4547-1

though there was a little drop of less than 3% in January 2018.

5 Conclusion

At the beginning of the paper, I assumed that despite the negative speeches of the selected politicians, their political credibility is not fundamentally diminished. Based on the results provided by Focus, the hypothesis was confirmed. Robert Fico has always been the most trusted politician since 2000 - 2018. Except for two years when he was in second place. Igor Matovic's credibility had a growing tendency, later it stabilised and his political credibility is around 10%. It can be concluded that despite the negative speeches by selected politicians, their political credibility is not decreasing. The second hypothesis was the increased incidence of negative talk among the politicians in question. The hypothesis can be considered confirmed as the number of negative speeches increased for these politicians from 2013 to 2018. This may be caused by the relationship between Robert Fico and Igor Matovič because many negative speeches have arisen from the conflict between them.

Describing and analysing negative manifestations in politics and also discussing aspects of credibility on a professional level is not very sufficient. There are many scholarly articles or books on certain aspects of credibility such as ethics or political culture. However, the tabloids in Slovakia are the most devoted to this topic, pointing out either negative manifestations or the established rules of behaviour of politicians in politics. There is a lot of unanswered questions on this topic and a lot of room for further analysis and research on this issue. A possible comparison of Slovak politicians with politicians from abroad could be made in this area. In this way, a more effective measure of political culture in Slovakia could be ascertained. Also, we have not discussed all aspects of credibility in this research. There is room for other aspects such as politician's beliefs, psyche, intelligence, emotions, values and so on in other works.

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Basic Determinants of Diversification of Mankind in Contemporary World

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1 Introduction

Energy is the basic condition of existence of all natural and social systems.¹ No energy, no evolution. *Energy is of central importance; it is a basic driving force and crucial condition of evolution of all living systems* (human beings and mankind, too). Logical to suggest that *search for energy* is one of the most essential and most important activities of all living systems. Ability of living systems to *diversify* is a crucial condition of searching, drawing and consumption of energy. If the system is not able to adapt its structures to new internal and external conditions both structurally and functionally, then it is also not able to diversify and to find new sources of energy. And if the system is not able to diversify, to penetrate and to discover its surroundings, then it will not be able to find new energy needed for its own existence and adaptation to further development. Adaptation itself depends on new arrangement of the system and arrangement depends on energy. Systems draw endogeneous energy from internal resources. But exogenous energy must be drawn from system's surroundings. In fact, diversification helps systems to find and to draw energy. *If any living system wants to survive, it has to draw energy, it has to diversify and self-organize.* Diversification, adaptation and self-organization are basic conditions of existence and evolution of all living systems (including human being, mankind and state). They are mutually interconnected and they

cannot be separated. Considering the previously mentioned the paper outlines basic determinants of mankind in modern world. It is a result of synthesis, induction and extrapolation of various theories, paradigms and knowledge, e.g. thermodynamic paradigm, holistic paradigm (network theory, system as network), system thinking and the second law of thermodynamics as well as the fourth law of thermodynamics.

2 Experimental details

Information is one of the key and crucial conditions of the arrangement process of systems. No information, no system change, no new organization and no evolution. Information represents all changes, processes, things, relations, elements, energy, norms, knowledge etc.; it is a *base* of organization (self-organization) of the system. It influences formation, evolution, existence and extinction of every natural and social system. New organization of social system depends on the following attributes: various types of energy, money, human labour, technologies, new institutions, new norms, new management, new relations etc. There will be no new system organization without them.² Of course, system has to be able to detect, to obtain, to use and to transform them to physical world or to organizational or another spiritual or

¹ It is very difficult to give a comprehensive definition of the term "energy". Energy may take many forms; energy means all spiritual and material processes and phenomena that support evolutionary processes of all systems (from atom to cosmos).

² STONIER, T. (2002): *Informace a vnitřní struktura vesmíru. Průzkum v informační fyzice.* Praha: BEN, s. 29, 32, 36)

material form. If system does not have those attributes, then it will lose its driving force and base for new self-organization. If organization of social system is one of the crucial conditions of further development and diversification, then development and diversification are not possible without information. Information is of great importance.

It is also necessary to emphasize that information has to be carried and processed by somebody (or something), or it will not survive, it will become defunct. The Sun is a direct source of solar information and solar activities, i.e. material elements, radiation and particles are carriers of information. Living system, i.e. cell or DNA is a source of genetic information. Human being and human society are sources of socioinformation. Human being is also a source of scientific information. If humans put in danger nature and whole mankind, then they also expose to danger sources and carriers of natural and social information. Therefore it will be necessary to survey those fundamental and initial information. There exist four types of information in nature and society, which can also be considered fundamentals of existence and organization of *four main subsystems of nature and society*:

1. **Cosmic information** (CI), formation and structure of the Universe;
2. **Genetic information** (GI), creation and existence of living systems and biosphere, including humans;
3. **Social information** (socioinformation) (SI), establishment and structure of contemporary human society (anatomically modern humans);
4. **Scientific and technological information** (STI), establishment and structure of contemporary scientific and technological system of mankind (picture no. 1).

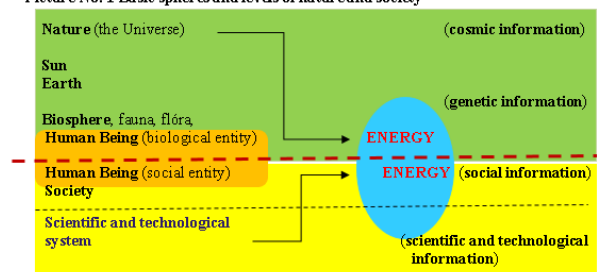
If we made a distinction between the world of nature and the world of humans, then it is logical to suppose that cosmic and genetic information (the term “natural information”) is

responsible for formation of nature, and **socio-information** and **scientific** and **technological information** is responsible for establishment of human society.

The following *basic cosmic information* (CI) is responsible for formation, evolution, organization and structure of the Universe:

- light;
- particles;
- matter, dark matter;
- energy, dark energy;
- radiation (corpuscular radiation, particle and wave radiation);
- electromagnetic processes (electric and magnetic field components);
- plasma (ionization of an atom and a molecule);
- gravity (interpreted as attraction of physical bodies as well as spacetime continuum);
- reactions between atoms (electromagnetic, strong and weak);
- speed;
- pressure;
- temperature.

Picture No. 1 Basic spheres and levels of nature and society



Cosmic information is the crucial factor of diversification of the Universe, started by the Big Bang (or cosmic inflation processes). The Universe appears to be expanding (the accelerating Universe), according to many theoreticians. Structure of the Universe, as well as formation of the Milky Way (Galaxy) and our Solar System, is a direct result of cosmic information activity. The existence of the Sun is considered a key factor influencing the existence of the Earth (and a life on the Earth as well). *Solar information*, as a result of interactions of information, phenomena and processes between the Universe and the Sun, is the most

important of all cosmic information. Basic solar information is as follows: plasma, electromagnetic radiation, corpuscular radiation, magnetic fields, heliospheric processes, heat, light, gravity etc. Considering the formation, evolution and life phases of the Sun (and Solar System as well) we claim that the Sun is about halfway through the most stable part of its life. But the Sun is growing old. This information will deeply influence size, composition and structure of the Solar System. It will influence the life on Earth, too. This is the reason why it is necessary to survey the Sun and to collect information from the Sun. Today, permanent survey of the Sun and its behavior is very important for further survey of Earth and existence and diversification of mankind.

The formation and existence of *the Earth* is a result of both cosmic information activity and new structure of the Universe, particularly structure of the Sun and the Solar System. The physical properties of the Earth, as well as its orbit, size, structure and rotation, have created two systems: inorganic system³ (geological structure, lithosphere, outer and inner core, magnetosphere, magnetic poles, electricity, atmosphere, hydrosphere) and organic system (referred to as biosphere). The existence and persistence of life on the planet Earth is a unique phenomenon within the known Universe. Cosmic information (CI), particularly solar information, formed genetic information (GI), which became essential for creation of life and whole biosphere. There were formed two new natural genetic information within biosphere – *genetic information of plants* (GIP) and *genetic information of animals* (GIA). Further development and coevolution of both new natural genetic information may be responsible for evolution of new unique natural information – *genetic information of human being* (GIHB). Evolution of human beings (anatomically modern humans) is closely related to establishment of *human society* and creation of new type of information

called social information, or *socioinformation*. Establishment of human society brought new system – social system. But social information is not a direct base and continuation of natural, i.e. genetic information. It is relatively autonomous information. Evolution of human cognition and establishment of human society brought on *asymmetry* and *conflict* to relations between nature and human society (human being, mankind), between evolution of natural and social information. Since the very beginning of social information, the evolution and diversification of mankind have been connected with oppression of natural information. Here we have information, genetic and system causes of *conflict between nature and society*, i.e. diversification of nature and diversification of mankind. *Diversification of mankind*, permanently competing with diversification and existing order of nature and planet, is a decisive point.⁴ There are several key moments in the evolution of relations between *nature* and *society* (between natural and social information):

- it is one of *the biggest global conflicts* of mankind;
- there is no evident winner of this conflict; humans will never defeat nature, humans can bring human society to an end, humans can destroy biosphere and deform life on planet Earth (total nuclear war) but will never be able to conquer and rule the nature;
- humans and socio-scientific and technological information will never dominate the nature, although they can influence, replenish and change the nature (genetic manipulation, genetically modified foods, „artificial“ life, fission and fusion of atoms, nanorobots etc.);
- conflict between nature (natural information) and society (social information) showed up *human limits*, going beyond

³ LOVELOK, J. E. (2001): Gaia. Nový pohled na život na Zemi, Bratislava: Abies

⁴ VOLNER, Š. (2012): Bezpečnosť ľudstva. Planéta. Vesmír-technický systém. Vesmír.Mikrosvet. Bratislava: IRIS,s. 167-170

critical limits means self-destruction of mankind;

- the order of formation and activities of information and systems is as follows, according to genetic approach: cosmic information and the Universe, planetary systems (the Earth) and planetary information, biosphere and genetic information, social sphere and socio-scientific and technological information;
- there is an antagonistic evolution of nature and society, e.g. evolution of cosmic, genetic and socio-scientific and technological information; social information often violates natural information and influences formation of natural structures and evolutionary process;
- there is a difference between exponential evolution of society and organic evolution of nature; it causes asymmetry, non-equilibrium and conflict; diversification of mankind is more rapid than that of biosphere and the Earth;
- further diversification of mankind will increase energy consumption;
- there is a problem of unbalanced evolution; *rise of non-equilibrium* between nature and society;
- rise of entropy of both planet Earth and human society as a direct result of exponential diversification, exponential growth of consumption and chaotic development of mankind;
- outbreak of new global conflicts, e.g. conflicts with global impacts;
- establishment of new social systems (energetic, scientific and technological) as a direct result of growth of entropy, bifurcations and new organization of mankind.⁵

Movement is a crucial condition of existence and evolution of all systems (nature, biosphere, human beings and mankind). *Diversifi-*

cation of mankind is considered a basic global problem. It is also a biggest threat of mankind. It is a key to evolution of mankind; it helps us to understand the whole process of evolution. Main problem of diversification is the speed. As it was mentioned before, diversification of mankind is exponential and more rapid than that of nature. It violates the fourth law of evolution – the level of speed.⁶ One of the main reasons why information and systems have to spread and develop is that they reached information and energy *non-equilibrium*, that they needed sources of new information and new energy for further evolution and movement. Drawing of energy is not possible without *diversification of systems*. *Diversification is in fact basic condition of evolution of all living systems on the one hand and source of conflicts between human society and nature on the other.*⁷ Therefore diversification of mankind and collision of basic types of information in four previously mentioned systems are keys to understanding of inevitable but conflictual evolution of mankind. There are many questions that have to be answered: Why do humans have to diversify? What are the basic conditions and tools of diversification? What are consequences of diversification?

Humans have to diversify in order to draw new energy for existence and further evolution. Humans have to diversify in order to grow, to change, to self-organize, to struggle for survival, to satisfy interests and needs of individuals and human societies.

Basic and determining *conditions* of movement and diversification of mankind are as follows:

- *habitable natural environment* (e.g. climate, hydrosphere, atmosphere etc.);

⁶ KAUFFMAN, S. (2004): *Čtvrtý zákon. Cesty k obecné biologii*. Praha – Litomyšl: Paseka; VOLNER, Š. (2012): *Bezpečnost' v 21. století*. Bratislava: IRIS, s. 81-106.

⁷ KAUFFMAN, S. (2004): *Čtvrtý zákon. Cesty k obecné biologii*. Praha – Litomyšl: Paseka

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PRIGOGINE, I. - STENGERSOVÁ, I. (2001): *Řád z chaosu. Nový dialog člověka s přírodou*. Praha: Mladá Fronta

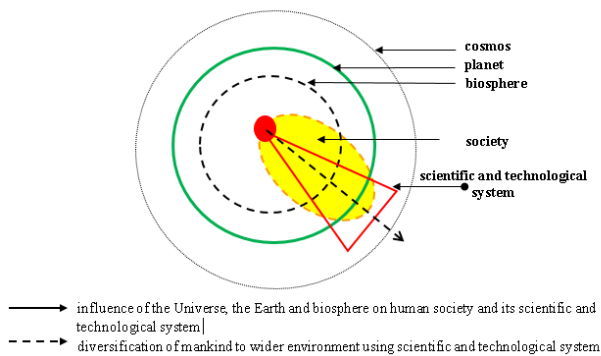
⁵ VOLNER, Š. (2012): *Bezpečnost' ľudstva. Planéta. Vesmír. Mikrosvet*. Bratislava: IRIS, s. 172-174

- *energy*⁸ (exogenous and endogenous, including food);
- *information*;
- *direction of energy and movement of mankind*;
- *arrangement (organization) of mankind, i.e. social system.*

Basic tools of diversification of mankind (globalization) can be identified as follows:

- *energy, energy flows, water, oxygen, food etc.;*
- *information, information system of mankind, knowledge;*
- *organization, network;*
- *scientific and technological system;*
- *power;*
- *other regulatory social tools: law, norms, ideas, values, relations and moral.*

Picture No. 2 Cosmos – Planet – Society – Scientific and Technological System



Scientific and technological system, including scientific and technological information, is a basic tool of diversification of mankind. (Picture no. 2) It helps humans to discover new territories, to create new structures and new energy. Main territories and spaces of discovery of new types of energy are *cosmos* and *nanoworld*. Main tools of globalization and penetration of the future are *science* and *technology* (networked to new organization and quality). Science and technology help humans to create new alternative energy resources, new robots and intelligent machines, new information systems and virtual world in order to observe nanoworld

⁸ The term “energy” means all inevitable internal and external resources (gravity, radiation, heat, light, water, oxygen, foods etc.) inevitable to formation, evolution, new organization and movement of social systems to new territories.

(abiological – atom, subatomic particles and quantum processes, and biological – genetic structures of living systems, including human being).⁹

3 Conclusion

Result of diversification of mankind is in its further development, occupation of the Universe and nanoworld; it is also in influencing of natural phenomena, information and systems. Besides many positives, diversification of mankind has brought on many problems. There are often referred to as *global problems of mankind*. Global problems affect the whole mankind; neither nation states nor human beings are able to solve them.

Main *global problems of mankind* can be identified as follows:

- *change of climate system and climate conditions on the planet;*
- *exponential consumption of natural resources of energy, exploitation of natural resources (particularly non-renewable ones) of the planet;*
- *conflict between existing resources of natural energies and demands of social development for energy and feedstock; limited natural (fossil – biological and abiological), renewable and non-renewable, artificial, alternative resources of energy, water, soil, etc.*
- *misuse of science, technology and knowledge; new dimension of conflict between human being, information system and intelligent machine;*
- *antagonism between the existence of biological limits of human being and its “unlimited” perspective and consequences of development of scientific and technological system (human and ecological aspect), genetic manipulation etc.;*
- *relative samostatnost’ of social activities of humans, “superior” and independent” from nature;*
- *crisis of “modern” state and political elites;*
- *crisis of “modern state” democracy;*

⁹ VOLNER, Š. (2012): Bezpečnosť ľudstva. Planéta. Ve-decko-technický systém. Vesmír.Mikrosvet. Bratislava: IRIS, s. 170-176.

- *moral hazard and institutionalization of moral hazard* on global level (moral hazard of global players);
- *power* of global players, global elites and the development of mankind;
- *crisis* of economic system;
- *way of movement and development of money*; money as a important tool of diversification (particularly economic and geopolitical globalization)of mankind;
- *creation and spread of virtual world* (information and financial), conflict between real and virtual world;
- *globalization and rule of the "market"*;
- *massive production and consumption*, which are in direct contradiction to state and evolution of nature;
- *property and income polarization* of mankind, which leads to asymmetry, non-equilibrium, crisis and conflicts in social development;
- *predominance of global infrastructure* (economic, financial, social, information etc.);
- *global social chaos*; global social chaos includes evolution of demographic structure of mankind, global migration, crime, fall of states, violence, conflicts, social and political resistance, asymmetric warfare, conflict state vs. citizen, conflict between global players and nation states or global players and citizens, etc.;
- *global control and mastery of mankind*;
- *rise and spread of Neo-Malthusianism* as a result of the following problems: human population growth, lack of food and energy, outbreak of pandemics and epidemics, genetic manipulation, rise of social crisis, climate catastrophes, clash of civilization, violence, terrorism, armed conflicts, ethnic and religious conflicts, globalization, geopolitical activities and blockades, export of revolutionary ideas etc.;
- *global food problem* (including problem of genetically modified plants, animals and food);
- *global geopolitical movements and geopolitical epicentres*, geopolitical pressure, "occupation" of the Universe and cyber space;

global media, intentional and sophisticated manipulation with human consciousness, moral, values and ideas of human beings

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