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INTERNATIONAL LAW AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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THE COMMON PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW AND HUMAN RIGHTS LAW

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Abstract

This article explores the relationship between international humanitarian law (IHL) and international human rights law (IHRL), arguing that their current convergence reflects a return to shared philosophical and historical roots. It traces the principles of humanity and respect for human dignity to ancient moral, religious, and philosophical traditions, including early norms in ancient civilizations, Christian and Islamic thought, and Stoic philosophy. The article emphasizes that the true historical breakthrough was not the creation of these principles but their gradual extension from limited groups to a universal standard, forming the basis of modern international law.

It then examines how these ethical ideas evolved into a systematic legal framework during the Enlightenment, shaped by thinkers such as Hugo Grotius, Emmerich de Vattel, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and later reflected in key documents like the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. In the nineteenth century, their codification in the Lieber Code and the Geneva and Hague Conventions marked the formal embedding of humanitarian and human rights principles in international law.

The article also discusses the artificial division of IHL and IHRL in the mid-twentieth century, viewing it as a result of Cold War politics rather than a fundamental contradiction. Today, this divide is narrowing, as international courts such as the International Court of Justice and the European Court of Human Rights increasingly interpret the two regimes in harmony.

Recognizing their common origins, the article concludes, is essential for applying IHL and IHRL in a complementary way, reinforcing protection, filling legal gaps, and advancing their shared purpose: safeguarding human dignity in all circumstances.

Keywords: International Humanitarian Law, IHL, International Human Rights Law, IHRL, human dignity, principle of humanity, philosophical foundations, convergence, *lex specialis*, Martens Clause, international courts.

Introduction

The relationship between international humanitarian law (IHL) and international human rights law (IHRL) is one of the most dynamic and hotly debated issues in contemporary international law. In an era defined by complex and often blurred armed conflicts, this topic extends far beyond academic debate

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to become a matter of urgent practical importance. Contemporary armed conflicts—from hybrid wars that blur the lines between combatants and civilians, to prolonged military occupations, to global counterterrorism operations—clearly demonstrate the limitations of the outdated approach that viewed these two branches of law as isolated systems. For decades, the prevailing doctrine was that, in wartime, IHL acted as a special law (*lex specialis*) that superseded or significantly modified the application of human rights norms. However, this approach has proven incapable of adequately responding to today's challenges when applied in practice, creating significant gaps in legal protection and increasing uncertainty for states, international organizations, and most importantly, people caught in the epicentre of armed conflict.

This issue's relevance is heightened by the fact that international courts, from the UN International Court of Justice to the European Court of Human Rights, increasingly deal with cases at the intersection of these two legal regimes. Their jurisprudence advances the discussion but simultaneously highlights the risks of international law fragmentation if different courts' approaches are not coordinated. This uncertainty creates practical difficulties for states: What rules should be followed when detaining individuals during foreign military operations? How can military necessity be balanced with fundamental human rights in occupied territory? How can the armed forces be trained to act effectively while adhering to fundamental human rights standards? Answers to this question require clear and consistent legal regulations. However, this problem is most acute from a human perspective. For example, for the victims of armed conflict, legal disputes over the precedence of norms mean the difference between life and death, or protection and lawlessness. Any gap resulting from inconsistencies between international humanitarian law (IHL) and human rights law creates a vacuum of protection, leaving individuals unprotected at the very moment when they need protection the most. Therefore, overcoming the artificial division between these branches and ensuring their harmonious, complementary application is a priority, not just a legal task.

To propose solutions to these pressing contemporary problems, we must go beyond a technical analysis of legal norms and explore their shared historical and philosophical roots. Recognising that both branches of law stem from the same source – the principles of humanity and respect for human dignity – allows us to reevaluate their interaction and establish a foundation for a more comprehensive and effective protection system. This article argues that their shared origins are key to their future harmonious application.

Materials and Methods

The relationship between IHL and IHRL law is a widely discussed topic in contemporary scholarship. Most authors analyse their interaction in the context of modern armed conflicts, focusing particularly on debates concerning the concept of *lex specialis* and the harmonising role of international judicial institutions. Another group of sources examines the history of the formation and development of IHL or IHRL, analysing the key stages of their codification. However, comprehensive studies tracing the common philosophical and historical roots of both branches of law and viewing them as a single evolutionary process from ancient ideas to modern jurisprudence remain rare. This prompts us to ask: What common ideological foundations underlie IHL and IHRL, and how does understanding this shared heritage alter our perception of their current convergence?

Our analysis focuses primarily on international treaties that serve as sources of IHL and IHRL. These include the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907, the Geneva Conventions of 1949, and their Additional Protocols, as well as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. A significant part of the study involves analysing how these norms are applied by international judicial and quasi-judicial institutions, including the International Court of Justice, the European Court of Human Rights, and the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. Particular attention is given to analyzing fundamental philosophical and legal treatises that formed the doctrinal foundations of both branches. These include the works of Cicero, Hugo Grotius, Emmerich de Vattel, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, as well as key historical legal documents, such as the Codex Liber, the English Bill of Rights, and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen.

Results and Discussion

The idea of limiting the cruelty of war and protecting human dignity is not a modern invention, but rather an ancient and cross-cultural phenomenon deeply rooted in the moral, religious, and philosophical traditions of humanity. Ancient civilizations, despite frequent and destructive wars, developed norms aimed at setting certain limits on violence. For example, the ancient Indian epic Mahabharata contains clear prohibitions on the use of “destructive” weapons, as this was considered immoral and contrary to the accepted

rules of warfare (Singh, 2021, pp. 27–28). Similar restrictions existed in the practice of Greek city-states, where temples, priests, and ambassadors were considered inviolable, and mercy towards the defeated, although not always observed, was recognized as a virtue (Bederman, 2001, pp. 14–15). The philosophical basis for a universal approach to humanity was laid by the Stoics, who developed the idea of common humanity (*koinonia*) and natural law, which applies to all people. Cicero, drawing on Stoic philosophy and the Roman legal tradition of *ius gentium* (the law of nations), formulated the conditions for a just war in his works *De re publica* and *De officiis*, clearly distinguishing for the first time between *jus ad bellum* (the right to war) and *jus in bello* (the rules of warfare) (Bederman, 2001, pp. 34–35). He insisted that “no war is considered just unless it has been declared and compensation has been demanded” (Cicero, 1913, I, para. 36), thus laying the foundations for the future tradition of just war, which required not only a just cause, but also compliance with certain procedures and restrictions in the war itself.

With the spread of Christianity, theological thought also made a significant contribution to the development of humanitarian ideas. St. Augustine and later Thomas Aquinas, in developing the doctrine of just war, emphasized that even in a just war, violence must be limited, and the goal of war must be to restore peace and justice, not blind revenge or destruction. At the same time, the Islamic world developed its own system of laws of war, known as *Siyar*. This branch of Islamic law contained detailed rules governing relations with other peoples, particularly during armed conflicts. *Siyar* established clear prohibitions on the killing of non-combatants and civilians, including women, children, and the elderly, the destruction of property that had no military significance, and required the humane treatment of prisoners (Khadduri, 1955, pp. 102–112). In his instructions to soldiers, the Prophet Muhammad urged: “Do not kill old people, children, or women... Do not destroy palm trees or burn them, do not cut down fruit trees” (as cited in Weeramantry, 1997, p. 136). These norms demonstrate the existence of a developed humanitarian tradition that arose independently of the European one but was based on similar principles of protecting human life and dignity. In medieval Europe, the code of chivalry, although elitist and applicable mainly to representatives of the military aristocracy, also played a role in the formation of humanitarian customs. Chivalry required adherence to certain rules of combat, respect for opponents of equal status, and mercy towards the defeated. The practice of ransoming captured knights, unlike the killing of commoners, created an economic incentive to preserve life (Bederman, 2001, pp. 26–27). Despite their limitations, the ideals of chivalry contributed to the spread of the idea that war is not a state of absolute anarchy, but should be regulated by certain codes of honor and professional ethics.

An analysis of these early sources reveals an important pattern: the existence of humanitarian principles did not guarantee their universal application. These norms quite often coexisted with practices of extreme cruelty. Chivalry protected knights, but not peasants; the doctrine of just war was used to justify cruel crusades; the Greeks recognized certain rights for other Greeks, but not for “barbarians.” The key variable was the scope of application of these norms, which was limited to a specific community—religious, cultural, or social. The principles were applied selectively to “their own,” while “outsiders” remained outside the scope of legal protection. Thus, the long history of the development of both humanitarian law and human rights is not so much a history of the invention of humanitarian principles and the principle of respect for human dignity as it is a history of the gradual and painful expansion of their scope of application (Authoritative source not found). The real revolution of modern IHL and IHRL lies in the affirmation of the principle of universality – the idea that these protective norms apply to all people without any adverse discrimination. This principle found its most vivid expression in the common Article 3 of the 1949 Geneva Conventions, which became the minimum humanitarian standard applicable to everyone everywhere (ICRC, 1949).

The early modern era and the Age of Enlightenment marked a transition from abstract moral principles and customs to a more systematic, secular legal framework that conceptualized a universal “community of states” governed by international law. At the center of these changes was Hugo Grotius, who, in his seminal work *De Jure Belli ac Pacis* (On the Law of War and Peace), drawing on classical heritage and humanistic thought, attempted to create a comprehensive system of international law independent of theological dogma (Grotius, 1625/2004). He distinguished between natural law (*jus naturale*), which derives from human reason, and the voluntaristic law of nations (*ius gentium voluntarium*), which is based on the consent of states. Grotius argued that even in the absence of a supranational sovereign, relations between states are governed by law, and that “there are laws of war, just as there are laws of peace” (Grotius, 1625/2004, Prolegomena, para. 28). He systematized the causes of just war and, more importantly, justified the need for moderation (*temperamenta belli*), calling for the humane treatment of prisoners and the protection of civilians,

based not only on law but also on the principles of humanity and honor (Grotius, 1625/2004, Book III, Ch. 11). Grotius' ideas were developed by Enlightenment thinkers. Emmerich de Vattel, in his work *Le Droit des Gens* (de Vattel, 1797), systematised and popularised the concept of law governing relations between sovereign states (de Vattel, 1758/1797). Vattel clearly distinguished between the "necessary" law of nations, based on natural law, and the "arbitrary" law, which derives from custom and treaties. He argued that although the sovereign is the sole judge in his own affairs, he is nevertheless obliged to adhere to the principles of humanity, since "even in war, humanity must not forget itself" (de Vattel, 1758/1797, Book III, § 137). At the same time, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, although pessimistic about the possibility of establishing lasting peace between states, made a significant contribution to the formation of the idea that rights are inherent in the human personality and are not granted by the state with his theories of social contract and natural human rights. His concept of war as a relationship between states, rather than between individuals, indirectly contributed to the development of the idea of protecting the civilian population (Rousseau, 1762/1968, Book I, Ch. 4). The culmination of these philosophical explorations was their codification in national legal acts at the end of the 17th and 18th centuries. The English Bill of Rights of 1689 established restrictions on royal power and enshrined certain rights of subjects, in particular the prohibition of "cruel and unusual punishments" (UK Parliament, 1689). The American Declaration of Independence of 1776 proclaimed as "self-evident truths" that "all men are created equal" and endowed with "inherent rights," including "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" (The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, 1776). The French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen of 1789, which became the preamble to the first constitution, proclaimed that "men are born and remain free and equal in rights," and that the purpose of any political association is "to preserve the natural and inalienable rights of man: liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression" (National Assembly of France, 1789). These documents were revolutionary. For the first time in history, they enshrined the ideals of the Enlightenment as norms of positive law, establishing the principle that state power is limited by the inherent dignity of the individual. It was this domestic legal culture, which recognized the primacy of human rights, that created the intellectual and political foundation from which international protection mechanisms later grew.

The nineteenth century witnessed a decisive transition from philosophical principles and unwritten customs to codified, binding international law. This process was largely triggered by the experience of modern industrial wars, whose brutality demanded clear and universal rules. The turning point in this evolution was the 1863 Lieber Code. Compiled by Francis Lieber at the request of President Abraham Lincoln for the US Army during the Civil War, this document became the first comprehensive codification of the laws and customs of war (ICRC, 1863). The code, entitled "Instructions for the Government of Armies of the United States in the Field," was the result of the practical implementation of the ideals of the Enlightenment, in particular the works of Vattel, and represented a unique synthesis of philosophy and military practice. Article 16 of the Code proclaimed: "Military necessity does not permit cruelty, that is, inflicting suffering for the sake of suffering or for the purpose of revenge... it does not permit the use of poison in any way, nor the deliberate devastation of the country" (ICRC, 1863, Art. 16). The Lieber Code became the bridge that translated abstract human rights philosophy into concrete operational rules for soldiers, clearly balancing the requirements of "military necessity" and "humanity." Its influence extended far beyond the American conflict, inspiring many countries to create their own military statutes and becoming a model for future international codifications. The next step was the conclusion of the first Geneva Convention (Swiss Federal Archives, 1864). The immediate impetus for its creation was the shocking experience of Swiss entrepreneur Henri Dunant on the battlefield at Solferino. The Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armies in the Field was revolutionary in nature. It enshrined the principles of impartial assistance to wounded soldiers regardless of their affiliation with the parties to the conflict, as well as the neutrality and protection of medical personnel, hospitals, and equipment marked with the emblem of a red cross on a white background (Swiss Federal Archives, 1864). This treaty marked the birth of modern IHL as a multilateral treaty regime based on the principle of humanity. The logical continuation of this process was the St. Petersburg Declaration of 1868 (ICRC, 1868) and the documents adopted at the Hague Peace Conferences of 1899 and 1907 (ICRC (II), 1899; ICRC, 1907). While the Geneva Convention focused on the protection of war victims (*droit de Genève*), the Hague Conventions aimed to codify the rules of warfare (*droit de la Haye*), regulating the means and methods of war. They prohibited the use of certain types of weapons, such as bullets that easily turn or flatten in the human body, and established rules for the treatment of prisoners of war, bombing, and military occupation. Of particular importance was the so-called "Martens reservation," included in the preamble to the Hague Convention II

of 1899 and Convention IV of 1907. It proclaimed that in cases not covered by treaty provisions, “civilians and combatants remain under the protection and scope of the principles of international law derived from the customs established among civilized nations, from the laws of humanity, and from the dictates of public conscience” (ICRC, 1907, Preamble). This caveat is extremely important because it directly links positive law to its unwritten humanitarian foundation, recognizing that even in the absence of a specific prohibition, the actions of the parties to the conflict are limited by higher principles of humanity. It serves as a “safety valve” against the argument that anything not expressly prohibited is permitted, and confirms that the spirit of humanity is an integral part of the law of armed conflict (Ticehurst, 1997).

Despite the creation of the League of Nations and certain efforts in the field of international cooperation, the interwar period did not bring significant progress in the development of international human rights law at the universal level, although certain steps were taken to protect the rights of minorities. At the same time, two new Geneva Conventions were adopted in 1929, one of which concerned the treatment of prisoners of war, which was a reaction to the experience of World War I (ICRC, 1929). However, the real catalyst for the creation of modern IHL and IHRL regimes was the unprecedented horrors of World War II. The systematic extermination of civilians, the Holocaust, the cruel treatment of prisoners of war, and the destruction of entire cities demonstrated the glaring inadequacy of existing legal norms and gave rise to a powerful political will to create a new, more effective international legal order based on respect for human dignity. This momentum led to the parallel but institutionally separate development of two major legal systems. On the one hand, in 1948, the UN General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (the Declaration) (United Nations, 1948). An analysis of its preparatory materials (*travaux préparatoires*) reveals profound philosophical debates and the desire of its drafters to create a “common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations” based on “recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family” (Morsink, 1999, p. xxix). The Declaration became the cornerstone of the modern human rights regime, proclaiming the universality and interdependence of all human rights – civil, political, economic, social, and cultural. On the other hand, almost simultaneously, in 1949, four Geneva Conventions were adopted at the Diplomatic Conference in Geneva (ICRC, 1949). This process was a direct response to the gaps in IHL identified during World War II. The first three conventions updated and expanded the protection of the wounded, sick, shipwrecked persons, and prisoners of war. The fourth convention was a real breakthrough, as it established for the first time in history a comprehensive regime for the protection of civilians during war and occupation.

The political context of the beginning of the Cold War and different views on the role of the state in relations with individuals led to these two projects – human rights and humanitarian- developing separately, creating an artificial legal divide between ideologically related systems. However, even at the moment of this formal separation, the inextricable link between them was evident. The clearest evidence of this is the common Article 3 for all four Geneva Conventions. This provision, often referred to as the “miniature convention,” was a revolutionary step, as it extended fundamental humanitarian principles to non-international armed conflicts, which had previously been considered exclusively an internal matter for states. The ICRC commentary emphasizes that this article “should be regarded as an expression of the fundamental principles of humanity that underlie all four Conventions” (ICRC, 2016, para. 490). Common Article 3 prohibits “at any time and in any place” attacks on life and physical integrity, taking hostages, attacks on human dignity, and condemnation without due process of law of persons who are not actively participating in hostilities. In essence, this is a list of basic human rights incorporated into the core of humanitarian law. Thus, Common Article 3 serves as a bridge demonstrating the inseparable link between the two branches of law, even during the period of their greatest formal separation. The process of formal reconvergence began with the adoption in 1977 of two Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions. Additional Protocol I, which concerns international armed conflicts, largely reflects the influence of the human rights movement. In particular, its Article 75, “Fundamental Guarantees,” contains a detailed list of rights granted to persons under the authority of a party to the conflict, and in its content and wording resembles the provisions of the 1966 International Covenants on Human Rights (United Nations, 1977, Art. 75). It guarantees the right to humane treatment, prohibits discrimination, torture, and collective punishment, and establishes detailed judicial guarantees. The inclusion of such a provision in a key instrument of IHL was a clear recognition that the protection of human dignity is a common task of both legal regimes.

The practical application of this principle was demonstrated in the UN ICJ ruling in the case *Armed Activities on the Territory of the Congo (DRC v. Uganda)*. The Court found Uganda responsible for violations

of both IHL and the ICCPR as the occupying power in the province of Ituri. The Court found that Uganda had failed to fulfil its obligations to protect the civilian population from violence and had violated a number of human rights, in particular the right to life and the prohibition of torture (International Court of Justice, 2005, paras. 205-220). This decision clearly showed that states are simultaneously responsible under both standards and that IHL establishes a minimum standard of protection that cannot be lowered even during occupation (Lysyk, & Shperun, 2024, p. 22). Regional human rights courts have also joined this process. The European Court of Human Rights in the case of *Hassan v. the United Kingdom* considered the issue of detention during the armed conflict in Iraq. The Court recognized that the European Convention on Human Rights continues to apply during armed conflict, but its provisions, in particular Article 5 on the right to liberty and security, must be interpreted in light of IHL norms. The Court did not apply a simple *lex specialis* approach, but instead used IHL as a tool to interpret the scope of obligations under the Convention, which allowed for the harmonization of the two legal regimes (HUDOC, paras. 102-104). This approach demonstrates that IHL is not an obstacle to the application of human rights, but rather a contextual framework for their understanding. The interaction between these two branches of law is not static or unidirectional. Courts use IHRL to interpret and expand the scope of IHL, as the ICTY did in the *Tadić* case, extending protective norms to non-international conflicts (International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, 1995). At the same time, they use IHL to determine the specific content of human rights obligations in wartime. For example, the prohibition of arbitrary deprivation of life under IHRL in the context of hostilities is interpreted through the lens of IHL rules on target selection and the principle of distinction. This creates a dynamic normative feedback loop. IHRL provides a universal normative framework and language of human dignity, prompting IHL to provide broader protection. In turn, IHL provides context-specific, operational rules that give practical meaning to human rights in the extreme circumstances of war. They do not simply complement each other; they are mutually constitutive in the context of armed conflict. Understanding this dynamic interaction is key to the consistent and effective application of international law norms aimed at protecting human rights.

Conclusions

Thus, it can be stated that, by covering the evolution of humanitarian ideas from ancient religious and philosophical doctrines to the contemporary jurisprudence of international courts, it convincingly demonstrates that international humanitarian law and international human rights law originate from a common ideological source: the principle of humanity. Based on the recognition of the inherent dignity of every human being, this principle has served as a moral compass, guiding the development of norms that limit violence and protect individuals. Historical and legal analyses show that the artificial separation of these two branches of law in the mid-20th century was due to the specific political context of the time rather than a fundamental ideological divide. This separation reflected the tension between state sovereignty and universal rights rather than a difference in ultimate goals. The current trend toward convergence, actively promoted by international judicial bodies, is a restoration of a holistic vision of the human rights protection system – a return to common roots, not an innovation. Recognizing this common origin has important practical implications. It allows the two legal regimes to fill in each other's gaps and mutually reinforce their protective mechanisms, promoting a more harmonious and consistent interpretation of international law. IHRL provides IHL with a universal ethical foundation and an effective control mechanism, while IHL provides IHRL with specific operational rules for application in the extreme conditions of armed conflict. Ultimately, the goal of international law, both in peacetime and wartime, is to protect human dignity – a principle rooted in humanity.

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THE RESTRICTION OF RIOT CONTROL AGENTS UNDER THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION OF 1993: LEGAL PROBLEMS AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

The article examines the formation and development of the international legal regime of riot control agents as a specific type of chemical weapons and the prohibition of their use in hostilities. It emphasizes the awareness of States of the need to prohibit chemical weapons and further addresses the balance which the Chemical Weapons Convention tried to achieve in the definition of substances that were potentially subject to prohibition. The study includes a step-by-step analysis the formation of the legal regime of prohibition of chemical weapons from the 1925 Chemical weapons protocol to the 1993 Chemical Weapons Convention. The article explains the difference in the chemical properties of chemical weapons and riot control agents and notes that no absolute distinction can be drawn between the two, since the lethality of chemical weapons (including riot control agents) is determined not by their chemical compound, but by concentration and the circumstances of their use. The article further addressed the rationale behind the prohibition of riot control agents in hostilities and permission of their use for law enforcement purposes. The article analyzes the different approaches of States towards the prohibition or restriction of use of riot control agents in hostilities. Special attention is paid to the question of escalation risk, which may arise in case of legal use of riot control agents, that may be perceived as illegal or treacherous by the adversary. It arrives to a conclusion, that available State practice demonstrates insufficiency of approaches to the restriction of riot control agents due to absence of clear-cut prohibition of riot control agents in hostilities in the instruments regulating the conduct of armed forces. In addition, the study concludes that existing domestic regulations require improvement in order to establish clear rules on the use of riot control agents by the armed forces for law enforcement purposes. Finally, the article proposes the avenues for further research of the topic, which lie in the analysis of application of riot control agents in threshold situations, like peacekeeping missions or non-international armed conflicts, as well as in the development of concrete criteria for the determination of escalation risk in cases of lawful use of riot control agents.

Keywords: arms control, chemical weapons, chemical weapons ban, Chemical Weapons Convention, riot control agents, weapons in international law, definition of weapons, legality of weapons.

Introduction

The Russo-Ukrainian armed conflict, which began in February 2014 and escalated into a full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 has resulted in numerous violations of the most basic prescriptions of international law by the aggressor. One out of many such violations is the breach of the 1993 Convention on the prohibition of the development, production, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons and on their

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destruction (hereinafter – CWC). There are numerous reports about the use of certain chemical weapons by the armed forces of the Russian Federation (for example, Terajima, 2024), most notably – of riot control agents (Tramazo, 2024). Remarkably, both Russia and Ukraine are parties to the CWC, and neither has made a reservation or attempted to withdraw from it. Therefore, the obligations under the Convention are in full force for both parties, and the actions of the Russian Federation (as will be further argued in more detail) constitute a clear violation of the conventional commitment.

This cannot but bring about the question which actions should be considered a breach of the 1993 CWC in relation to riot control agents. These are especially hard to control due to their legality for law enforcement purposes and the fact, that such weapons can be lawfully adopted by the armed forces and applied in certain situations. Furthermore, the lethality or the degree of damage or injury caused by the riot control agents highly depends on their concentration, which, in turn, is dependent on the circumstances of their use.

In contrast to combat asphyxiating gases, riot control agents are not prohibited entirely. Some States did declare themselves free of any chemical weapons including riot control agents, but the majority of States, including Ukraine and the Russian Federation did not. This raises the question of whether and under which circumstances riot control agents can be lawfully used by the armed forces.

The theoretical approaches to compliance with the CWC are relatively well-described in literature, starting from early writings by W. Krutzsch and R. Trapp (2006) to more recent publications by B. Kastan (2012). The works of W. Krutzsch and R. Trapp present an extensive commentary on the CWC provisions, covering, among other things, the issues of ensuring compliance as a part of the general description of the CWC origins, purposes and provisions. One can also mention the scholarly writings preceding the CWC, including W. Verwey (1977) and D. Jones (1978), who covered some of the emerging issues, including the use of chemical weapons for environment modification purposes and the emerging prohibition of riot control agents in hostilities. Some questions connected to the control over chemical weapons have also been addressed in more general publications like the writings on customary international law by J. Henckaerts and L. Doswald-Beck (2005). Most recently, some aspects of compliance with CWC were touched upon by O. Dvurechenska (2020), who described the mechanism of the OPCW, its structure and activities, and O. Shamsutdinov (2022), who described the prohibition of chemical weapons from the point of view of Ukrainian law. Yet there appear to be no publications addressing the issue of compliance with the CWC in the use of riot control agents. The need to overcome this gap, which is addressed in this paper, determines its novelty.

The purpose of this paper is to outline the legal basis of the prohibition of riot control agents in hostilities under international law and domestic implementing regulations of states in the light of the recent developments on chemical agents. This purpose is supported by three objectives:

- To establish the legal basis of prohibition of riot control in hostilities agents under international law;
- To outline the practical rationale behind the prohibition of riot control agents in hostilities;
- To determine the state of implementation of that obligation by States.

Materials and Methods

The process of the research included four stages, namely:

- Establishment of the historical roots, genesis and development of the international legal norms on the prohibition of riot control agents in hostilities. This stage enabled creation of understanding of the general idea standing behind the norm;
- Research of technical aspects connected to the definition of the term “riot control agent” and its differentiation from a chemical weapon *per se*;
- Study and analysis of national legislation implementing international legal norms on riot control agents;
- Summarizing the outcome of the study and final analysis.

The progress through these stages was made possible by the use of an array of general scientific and special legal methods. In particular, the historic method enabled tracing the development of legal norms which resulted in the adoption of the CWC, as well as its further development. The historical and contemporary documents were compared using the comparative legal method, thus determining the similarities and differences in their formulation, as well as practices of their application. For instance, the comparison has been drawn between the 1899 Declaration on asphyxiating gases, 1925 Protocol on asphyxiating gases and the CWC in order to trace the development and improvement of regulations relative to enforcement of international legal norms on chemical weapons control. The article broadly utilizes

the method of formal logic for the determination of the scope of definitions of chemical weapons, including riot control agents, and for the establishment of the content of existing prohibitions and limitations of such weapons. These are combined with the methods of hermeneutics utilized to determine the meaning of treaty and customary terms and for the interpretation of their content. Furthermore, a method of systemic analysis was used to analyze the mutual interrelation of particular provisions of treaty and customary law. In addition, the article relies on general scientific methods used in the exploration of concrete prohibitions imposed on States concerning particular chemical substances prohibited or limited under the law on chemical weapons. In order to investigate the particular approaches of States and particular instances of use of nuclear weapons, the article relies on the method of case studies used for the analysis of both historical examples of the use of nuclear weapons and recent practices of States in relation to riot control agents.

Results

One of the key questions in the process of adoption of the CWC was the matter of the broadness of limitations foreseen by the treaty. This issue had several dimensions. Firstly, whether the prohibition should be complete, or States should be allowed to retain a certain amount of chemical weapons for the case of an attack by other States using chemical weapons. Secondly, should the limitation concern only some types of chemical agents, or should the Convention be applicable to all chemical substances with military application, and whether restrictions can be less strict for some types of substances. The negotiators managed to reach an agreement as to the scope of such restrictions, most importantly on the definition of chemical weapons in a manner to cover not only weapons per se, but also precursors, as well as weapons, munitions, and devices intended for their delivery (Trapp, 2006).

This method of definition of a weapon is different from the practice of other international treaties in a sense that chemical weapons were defined as a composition of all its components characterized by more or less objective criteria allowing to determine whether a particular substance in question is prohibited under the CWC or not. Previous international agreements like the 1899 Declaration concerning Asphyxiating Gases or the 1925 Protocol on asphyxiating gases mentioned only a certain type of weapons without an exact description of what is meant under that weapon. According to CWC, every concrete element of such weapons can be viewed as a type of weapon prohibited under the Convention.

However, probably the most remarkable element of the Convention relates to the peculiarities of the definition of chemical weapons. Toxicity is viewed as its basic characteristic; however, this criterion is itself insufficient for the purposes of the definition. This is especially important for the definition of dual-use chemical substances, i.e. the substances which may have a legal use or such, that were lawfully used in the past, for example, chlorine, which is applicable in the chemical industry or other chemical substances which can have industrial, agricultural, scientific, medical, pharmaceutical or other use (Shamsutdinov, 2022). Thus, Article II of the CWC does not utilize the toxicity criterion and relies exclusively on the designation criterion. Any chemical substance or its precursor can be considered as chemical weapons, if they were not created, accumulated or used for purposes that are not prohibited and in the quantities that correspond to such non-prohibited purposes.

Notably, in the course of negotiations, the toxic chemical substances were classified into supertoxic and lethal, other lethal, and other harmful substances. This distinction dates back to the Soviet-American negotiations of the late 1970s and the resulting Joint report on the progress of bilateral negotiations on the prohibition of chemical weapons (Godblat, 1980). During the expert meetings, the discussions focused primarily on standardization of methods of determination of toxicity of certain chemical substances for their future classification based on lethality. However, these attempts proved to be futile due to political discrepancies and the nature of chemical weapons itself, since many of the substances were of dual use. The final version of Article II, in combination with the responsibilities of States under Article I, enabled the creation of a comprehensive guarantee against chemical weapons, including chemical substances not yet known as of the time of the conclusion of the Treaty.

Despite active control measures and the destruction of chemical weapons, States, including their armed forces, legally retain supplies of riot control agents. The Convention provides a legal regime for such agents. Thus, according to paragraph 7 of Article II, a riot control agent means “any chemical not listed in a Schedule, which can produce rapidly in humans’ sensory irritation or disabling physical effects which disappear within a short time following termination of exposure”. According to paragraph 5 of Article I, States-parties undertook not to use chemical riot control agents as means of warfare. Instead, the Convention allows the use of such means for law enforcement purposes, including domestic riot control purposes.

This brings about the question of the logic of States in conclusion of the Convention, which led them to allow the use of riot control agents for law enforcement purposes, but prohibit their use in hostilities. The response to this question lies in the context of their use. As stated by S. Longuet (2016), riot control agents can easily become lethal in combat operations. To understand this difference, it is expedient to refer to toxicological features of such means.

The quantity of chemical substance in gaseous state or in drops present in the air and absorbed by human body is determined by its dosage. Its level depends on the concentration of a chemical substance in the air inhaled by a person and the duration of time during which a person is subjected to the influence of a chemical substance. This influence is measured in milligrams per minute per cubic meter ($\text{mg}/\text{min}/\text{m}^3$) (Sharanova, 2023). This means that a chemical will have equal effect on a person subjected to its impact under a certain concentration for a certain period of time, or a concentration ten times less for a period of time ten times longer. Therefore, every chemical substance has a dosage which incapacitates a person (i.e. an affected person is unable to continue their actions) and lethal concentration (i.e. concentration which results in the death of an affected person). Such concentrations are normally determined based on statistics, which evaluates a certain impact on more than 50% of persons (taking into account the differences in their health and their reactions to the impact of a chemical weapon). In other words, the incapacitating or lethal dosage is the one that results in the corresponding consequences for more than 50% of the affected individuals. The lower the dosage is, the more toxic a chemical is. For example, yperite (mustard gas) has a lethal dosage of $1500 \text{ mg}/\text{min}/\text{m}^3$, while sarine – only $70 \text{ mg}/\text{min}/\text{m}^3$ (Skaletskyi, & Misula, 2003).

According to the CWC, States-parties are obliged to openly declare the chemical substances which they store. As of 2022, 137 States declared that they possess chemical riot control agents (mostly tear gas), while 53 declared the absence of such chemicals (Conference of the States Parties to the OPCW, 2022).

Most States declared that they possess chlorobenzalmalononitrile (CS), chloroacetophenone (CN) and mustard gas. Although these substances have different impact on human body, they normally create a sense of burning in the eyes, respiratory tract and skin, forcing the affected person to escape, and can temporarily incapacitate that person (Longuet, 2016). At that, the incapacitating dosage makes $01\text{-}10 \text{ mg}/\text{min}/\text{m}^3$ for CS and $20\text{-}40 \text{ mg}/\text{min}/\text{m}^3$ for CN. A lethal dose for CS makes $25\,000\text{-}60\,000 \text{ mg}/\text{min}/\text{m}^3$ and $8500\text{-}11000 \text{ mg}/\text{min}/\text{m}^3$ for CN. Thus, a lethal dose of CS is 2500 higher than the incapacitating one, which makes the probability of overdosage very low. However, the existence of lethal dosage itself demonstrates that riot control agents are not non-lethal in their nature. They may become lethal in high concentrations.

Thus, the use of chemical riot control agents as a means of method of warfare creates a risk that, despite of security measures, they still can be used in lethal dosages. For instance, irritating substances were used during World War One, making around one tenth of all chemical weapons used in that armed conflict (Olajos, & Stopford, 2004). During the War in Vietnam the USA used chemical riot control agents engendering a risk of their overdosage. Thus, American soldiers were instructed not to use certain chemical substances in military operations that did not foresee lethal consequences for the adversary. However, even in the cases of use of relatively safe chemical substances, like the CS, the risk of overdosage often exists. For example, such substances were not to be used on closed spaces such as bunkers and tunnels, since the US servicemen, who used chemical grenades and dispensers, did not know the size of rooms (bunkers, tunnels), where they used chemical substances (Verwey, 1977).

One should point at the purely legal side of the question, that such gases could be considered as asphyxiating in the meaning of the 1925 Protocol. Considering the impact of such gases, which resulted in serious impairment or termination of breath, that could lead to death, they can hardly be categorized other than as asphyxiating gases.

Discussion

In view of the experience of the War in Vietnam, 1970s witnessed the development of an understanding of the necessity of the prohibition of chemical riot control agents as means of warfare. This was justified, among other things, by the fact that chemical riot control agents were considered a “threshold” weapon, the use of which could technically, legally, and morally facilitate the use of other types of chemical weapon, which could be lethal (Kastan, 2012). The escalation risk can also be linked to the risk of overdosing, where seemingly non-lethal dosages could lead to death. This correspondingly undermined the difference between lethal and non-lethal chemical means, as they would be considered simply as “gases” without further specification.

In practice, such escalation has occurred on several occasions in the 20th century, as exemplified by the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935-1936, the Japanese invasion of China in 1937, the interference of the UAE with the war in Yemen in 1962-1967, the Iran-Iraq war of 1980-1988. In all of these cases, the use of lethal chemical weapons, for example, of yperite and sarin followed the use of irritating gases. Precisely the escalation risk resulted in the conviction that riot control agents should be banned as means of warfare (Henckaerts, & Doswald-Beck, 2005).

Another argument against military use of riot control agents is the possibility of mutual escalation in case of use by one of the parties. Thus, it is sometimes argued that the first use of chemical substances during World War One was the German gas attack near Ypres in 1915, while the use of CN by the French troops in August 1914 convinced the Germans that asphyxiating gases are used against them, and the prohibition is no longer in force as a result of their use by the adversary (Jones, 1978). The research of customary international law completed by the ICRC in 2005 pointed at overwhelming evidence of use of chemical weapons in armed conflicts as retaliation (Henckaerts, & Doswald-Beck, 2005). Correspondingly, the prohibition of chemical riot control agents as means of warfare should be viewed as an additional security mechanism, which is to break the vicious circle of use of chemical weapons for retaliation purposes.

Thus, it can be asserted that a complete prohibition of riot control agents eliminates the conditions under which a party to an armed conflict may wish to rely on them. The risk of escalation can be connected to the risk of overdosage. The symptoms of poisoning by a chemical riot control agent, in case of its high concentration, can be analogous to the symptoms of poisoning by a combat chemical like a nerve agent (Verwey, 1977), especially considering that it can be complicated to determine which particular substance has been used on a battlefield. A notable example of such a mistake took place in 2013, when the US Department of State informed about the use of 3-Quinuclidinyl benzilate near the city of Homs in Syria. This substance is prohibited under the Annex to the 1993 Convention. However, the next day, the Department of State clarified that in reality a chemical riot control agent has been used (Robinson, 2013).

Certainly, there exists no risk of escalation in the context of law enforcement activities. As for the possible escalation of criminal actions, the police, obviously, do not have military chemical substances. As for the possible mutual escalation, it appears highly improbable in the context of law enforcement that a mob would respond with the use of chemical weapons against the police. This makes the situation fundamentally different from the use of military asphyxiating gases in the context of an armed conflict.

It should also be stressed that the CWC does not prohibit riot control agents as such and does not contain provisions on their destruction. They are prohibited only in the context of warfare, but can be used for law enforcement purposes. The distinction should be drawn between the use of chemical riot control agents as means of warfare and for law enforcement purposes. This engendered certain discrepancies. For example, according to Executive order 11850, in 1975 the USA decided not to use chemical weapons in hostilities, but determined the procedure of use of chemical riot control agents, namely:

- the use of chemical riot control agents against riots in the zones under the US control or against riots among the POWs;
- the use of riot control agents in situations where civilians are used as live shields for camouflaging or cover of attacks, if the use of riot control agents might prevent or minimize civilian losses;
- the use of riot control agents in rescue operations or in remote or isolated areas;
- the use of riot control agents outside of the battle zones for the protection of convoys from civilian riots, attacks by terrorist or paramilitary organizations.

According to some American researchers, the provisions of Executive order 11850 are fully compliant with the CWC (Fidler, 2005). Among other things, they correspond to the duty of the occupying power to maintain law and order in the occupied territory. As noted by D. Fidler (2005), this duty implies the right to use normal means of maintaining order, including chemical riot control agents. The legal writers also assume that chemical riot control agents may be used in POW camps to suppress riots (Krutzsch, & Trapp, 1994). Indeed, the relations between the belligerents and civilians in the occupied territory or enemy combatants after their capture cannot be considered as a part of hostilities, which means that hostile acts of the civilian population or captured combatants may be suppressed using riot control agents. Thus, such use of riot control agents cannot be equated to the use of combat gases.

However, some methods of use of chemical riot control agents may still prove to be problematic. For example, the abovementioned Executive order describes their possible use against civilians acting

as a live shield. Such use is apparently a part of hostilities against the armed forces of the adversary, which means that it does fall under the definition of hostilities. Under such circumstances, an attack with riot control agents may result in mistakes in identification of a chemical substance use, and thus the use of combat asphyxiating gases in response.

It deserves noting that when the USA ratified the CWC, its government realized the discrepancies between the Convention and Executive order 11850. This did not prevent the US President stating that the implementation of the Convention would no mean changes in the Executive order. However, the fact that the USA has internal legislation, which provides for such actions, does not make these actions lawful under international law. Here it should be recalled that under the Articles on responsibility of States for international wrongful acts prepared by the International Law Commission, “the characterization of an act of State as internationally wrongful is governed by international law. Such characterization is not affected by the characterization of the same act as lawful by internal law”.

In addition, the Executive order 11850 designates the protection of military convoys as lawful use of riot control agents. However, it should be taken into account that such protection may take place under different conditions, ranging from use against an unarmed civilian mob to repulsing an armed attack or counter-ambush actions against enemy combatants. In the former case, such use can be considered as a law enforcement activity, while in the latter it takes the form of hostilities, which means that chemical riot control agents turn into a means of warfare, and its use can result in similar actions on the side of the enemy.

There are few examples of regulations similar to Executive order 11850 in other States. Thus, the UK Joint Service Manual on the Law of Armed Conflict contains only a brief reference to the applicability of riot control agents in non-combat situations. The German Law of Armed Conflicts Manual permits the use of riot control agents for law enforcement purposes, including by the Bundeswehr, but does not go deeper into details. Finally, the Ukrainian Instruction on compliance with international humanitarian law in the Armed Forces of Ukraine avoids mentioning riot control agents. It follows that States do not pay much attention to regulating the application of riot control agents by their armed forces.

This may seem to be especially surprising in the light of the provisions of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (1998). Article 8(2)(b)(xviii) of the Statute specifically prohibits “employing asphyxiating, poisonous or other gases, and all analogous liquids, materials or devices”. Therefore, it is exactly the escalation risk that explains the prohibition of chemical weapons, as well as the prohibition of the use of riot control agents in armed conflicts.

Conclusions

The Chemical weapons convention marked a notable step forward in the definition of chemical weapons and in the establishment of a comprehensive prohibition of chemical weapons defined as chemicals that can cause death, temporary incapacitation or permanent harm to humans or animals. The Annex on Chemicals serves for verification purposes and should be viewed as a guideline rather than a complete list of prohibited chemicals. However, the prohibition does not entirely cover riot control agents, which remain permitted for law enforcement purposes and prohibited only in the context of hostilities. At that, there exists no absolute distinction between prohibited chemicals and riot control agents, and the difference is determined not by their toxic features per se, but by the context of their use, including circumstances and concentrations.

The rationale behind the prohibition of riot control agents in hostilities is based primarily on the escalation risks. Several armed conflicts exemplify that the use of riot control agents by one party can provoke another party to resort to toxic combat asphyxiating gases, thus undermining the prohibitions established by previous agreements, including the 1925 Protocol. As a consequence, the CWC is designed to exclude the possibility of such escalation by banning the use of any toxic substances in armed conflicts regardless of their mortality.

States differ in their positions on riot control agents. While some States declared themselves free of any chemical weapons, including riot control agents, others seem to believe that there exist certain combat scenarios where riot control agents can be lawfully applied. Some of these scenarios appear to be connected to law enforcement purposes, while others seem to be of a purely combat nature, which puts the system of chemical prevention at risk. There have been no recorded cases of such limited use of riot control agents for the purposes of waging the war, but such a scenario cannot be completely excluded. Indeed, the military manuals and instructions approved by States contain only superficial description of a general ban on most chemical weapons and a brief description (or no description at all) of riot control agents. This may indicate that States tend not to allow their armed forces to use riot control agents in hostilities. At the same time,

however, this demonstrates the liability of the CWC regime, within which the prohibition of some toxins and the permission of the use of others for limited law enforcement purposes creates a risk of a serious breach, which is capable of jeopardizing the existence of the entire Convention regime.

There appear to be two open questions remaining. The first is connected with technical developments bringing more sophisticated munitions on the battlefield and the development of various non-lethal substances, which may be used for both law enforcement and warfare. This question becomes especially complicated in the context of non-international armed conflicts, peacekeeping operations and internal disturbances, where it may be practically complicated or virtually impossible to draw a concrete distinction between law enforcement (for which riot control agents are valid) and hostilities (in which riot control agents are prohibited). The second question logically follows from the first one and concerns the escalation risk. There appears to be a need for a better conceptualization of this notion and, possibly, establishment (at least on the expert level) of the criteria for determination of whether a certain situation is likely to create an escalation risk. This may provide States with a concrete understanding of situations in which riot control agents should or should not be used, enabling the development of corresponding domestic legislation and policies. These two questions may be subject to future research.

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INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION AND KNOWLEDGE IN CONTEMPORARY POLITICS

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DIGITAL RESISTANCE IN AUTHORITARIAN REALITIES AND TECHNOLOGIES OF POLITICAL CHANGES

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Abstract

The article aims to analyze technology's role in the development of political movements, along with singling out activism problems in countries with limited political freedoms. In particular, the emphasis is placed on using technologies for mobilization, information sharing, and resisting repression. For this purpose, comparativist and observational methods were used, allowing for a deeper investigation of the posed questions and obtaining a complete picture of contemporary political activism. The study showed that in the context of globalization, technology plays a crucial role in developing political movements, especially in countries with limited freedoms. The Internet, social media, mobile applications, and other digital tools have become essential in organizing protests and political campaigns. They allow activists to remain anonymous, share information efficiently, and coordinate actions, often bypassing censorship and repression. Digital technologies open new possibilities for strengthening movements by enabling activists to organize protests and oppose violations. However, the same tools also pose challenges for democracy and human rights, as authoritarian regimes exploit them to expand surveillance, block resources, monitor citizens, and violate privacy. The results highlight the need for further study of the balance between using technologies to support democratic processes and human rights and the threats they pose under authoritarianism. Comparing the effectiveness of technologies in countries with different political systems is a key direction for future research. This will help assess the impact of new technologies on mobilization and political freedom in various contexts. Special attention should be paid to emerging forms of activism, such as online protests and digital campaigns, which continue to reshape political landscapes and the very nature of activism, mobilization, and the fight for human rights today.

Keywords: technologies, authoritarian political regime, political movements, activism, political freedoms limitations, protest, resistance.

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Introduction

In the modern world, technologies play a key role in developing political movements and political activism, especially in countries with limited political freedoms. This can be explained by changes in the tools of the interactions between citizens and political power, especially in cases where traditional forms of protests and resistance are being strictly controlled. Countries led by totalitarian and authoritarian regimes, where political freedoms are being severely restricted, became places where new technologies for mobilizing oppositional movements and fighting for human rights are being actively used (Simpson, 2020). In such terms, the role of the Internet, social media, mobile apps, and other digital instruments becomes critically important because these tools give activists and political movements the possibility to remain anonymous, share information, and coordinate their actions, often bypassing censorship and repressions (Henry, 2021). On the one hand, technologies create opportunities for the development of social movements in countries with limited freedoms, and on the other, they create new challenges for democracy and human rights, as authoritarian governments use the latest technologies to surveil, block Internet resources, monitor citizens, and violate privacy. The relevance of this topic lies in the necessity of analyzing how technologies can be both an instrument of resistance and an element of the controlled system that's being used by a state in order to enhance repression. For instance, in countries such as Iran, Russia, China, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and many others, where access to information is severely controlled, digital platforms provide an opportunity for activists to circumvent censorship and highlight human rights violations (Manal al-Sharif, 2017). As a result, digital technologies change not only the scale of protests but also the type of political struggle by allowing mobilizing millions of people and uniting them online.

Nevertheless, at the same time, the increasing utilization of technologies in political activism demands acknowledging the risks related to the safety of data, protection against cyber threats, and possible consequences for citizens participating in protests. Using the new technologies has a two-sided effect: on the one hand, they let people be united while fighting for their rights and freedoms, and on the other, these technologies become potent tools for control and repression (Min, 2023). In this context, it is important to explore not only the positive potential of technologies in developing political activism but also the possible dangers associated with their use. It is also worth mentioning that since modern technologies help political movements and activism develop, the chosen research topic is relevant, especially in countries with limited political freedoms. It is crucial to understand how specific technologies, from mobile apps to cryptocurrencies, can be adapted to combat political repression in countries with limited political freedoms. The vast majority of current research is focused on large political campaigns, such as the Arab Spring or the protests in Belarus, but it is important to consider lesser-known examples of technology use in less popular contexts as well. Moreover, it is worth paying attention to how authoritarian regimes change their strategies, adapting to new technological challenges, which forces activists to constantly adapt their methods of struggle.

Thus, the chosen topic is not only relevant for scientific research but also important for practical recommendations on the use of technologies in conditions of political repression, as well as for the development of international support mechanisms for activists and human rights defenders who work under challenging conditions. It is also worth noting that the chosen research topic is constantly updated, which is connected with the realities of modern challenges and, therefore, requires a new level of scientific research.

Materials and Methods

Various scientific and methodological tools were tested within the framework of the scientific research, on the basis of which the research vectors were formed, and the author's conclusions were substantiated. The stages of the research are schematically depicted in Figure 1.

Solving the tasks outlined in the research became possible, first of all, with the help of the comparative method, which is a powerful tool in the study of political movements and activism, especially when it comes to countries with limited political freedoms. Utilization of this method allows us to compare and analyze the way how various political movements and activism develop and adapt to repression. Studying authoritarian countries compared to democratic ones helps identify differences in protest strategies. For instance, it has been found that in countries with high levels of censorship, movements may choose non-violent actions or use masks for anonymity, while in other countries, they may use more aggressive forms of protest, taking into account the social and political situation, while actively mobilizing support through anonymous or closed channels of communication. Using this method, we analyzed how movements use online platforms to mobilize protests, compared to physical protests, which often face violence or bans in these countries.

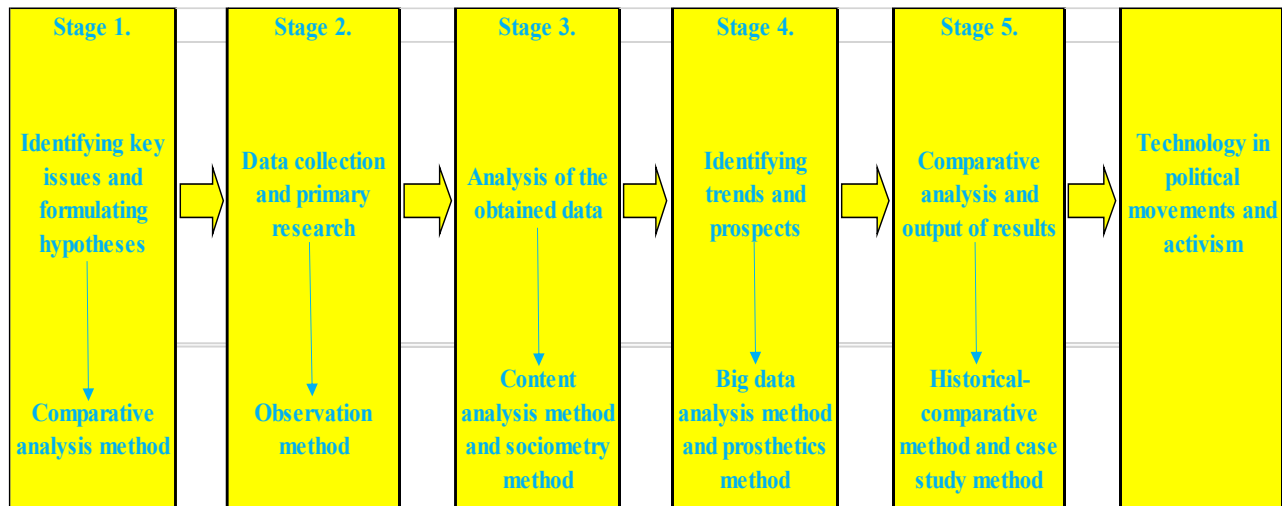


Fig. 1. Stages of the research

Comparing the efficiency of such platforms in different countries allows us to understand which technologies work better in conditions of censorship or persecution. The other crucially important notion is the level of cooperation between the movements and international organizations (e.g., the UN, Amnesty International, and the European Union) in the context of supporting human rights and combating repression. Consequently, the comparative method helps us better understand how political movements and activism in conditions of limited political freedoms adapt to specific conditions, choosing different strategies and tactics depending on the context. It is necessary not only to compare different countries but also to explore how technology, international connections, and mobilization mechanisms change the effectiveness of protest movements and activism in the long term.

The other helpful tool was the observation method, as it allows us to directly record changes in the behavior of social groups and organizations. For instance, in countries where actual gatherings are prohibited, platforms such as Twitter or Telegram are becoming the main tools for coordinating actions. Moreover, this method lets us observe the actions of governments that tried to restrict freedom on the Internet by blocking certain resources or disabling mobile communications. In China, for example, they imply “The Golden Shield Project” (i.e., “Great Firewall of China”), which limits access to international platforms. At the same time, activists in such countries use VPNs and other tools in order to avoid limitations. The following two content-analysis methods, in colocation with big data analysis, are powerful tools for investigating how technology facilitates the development of political movements and activism in countries with limited political freedoms. The content analysis method allows for systematically studying textual and visual information disseminated through digital platforms such as social networks, blogs, news sites, petitions, etc. While utilizing this method, we identified key themes, narratives, and emotional tones in activists’ messages that helped us understand their strategies, goals, and mobilization methods. Big data analysis allows us to work with enormous chunks of data that are being generated in real-time on digital platforms. This included analysis of website traffic, hashtags, social network mentions, and users’ geographic and temporal activity, which makes it possible to explore the dynamics of movements, identify key moments of protests, and their geographical spread. For instance, using these methods, we studied how certain events, such as arrests of activists or government policy decisions, prompted mass protests, as well as how themes and messages changed in the context of changing political situations. We also used the sociometry method for studying social relations and interactions between participants in political movements and identified key leaders and group structures in the context of using technology to mobilize protests. The case study method made it possible for us to study specific examples of political movements deeply and analyze their development, digital tools usage, and response to government repression through a detailed study of specific situations. The study includes a significant amount of empirical material that influenced the formation of the author’s conclusions and positions presented in the work. This study comprehensively reviews and cites thirty-one leading sources.

Results

Informational technologies play a crucial role in the development of political movements and activism, especially in countries with limited political freedoms. They provide activists and civil society organizations with new opportunities to mobilize, organize protests, disseminate information, and resist authoritarian regimes. Let us review certain aspects of this problem separately. First of all, the Internet and social networks are important mobilization tools that contribute to the rapid dissemination of information today. Social media, such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, and other new platforms, help activists spread information about political events, human rights violations, or injustice in real-time. This allows them to organize mass protests and draw attention to critical issues, even when the state controls traditional means of communication (television, press) (Wood, 2022). The states of countries with limited freedom of speech often try to control or censor the information. Nevertheless, such tools as VPN or anonymous browsers (e.g., Tor) help to bypass censorship and access banned sites or publications, allowing citizens and activists to maintain their anonymity and stay connected (Castells, 2024). While studying the impact of technologies on the development of protest movements in authoritarian states, we can classify them by different types of technological support that have different effects on the organization, mobilization, and interaction of protesters. It can be depicted as a table that divides the technological tools by their functions. (Figure 2).

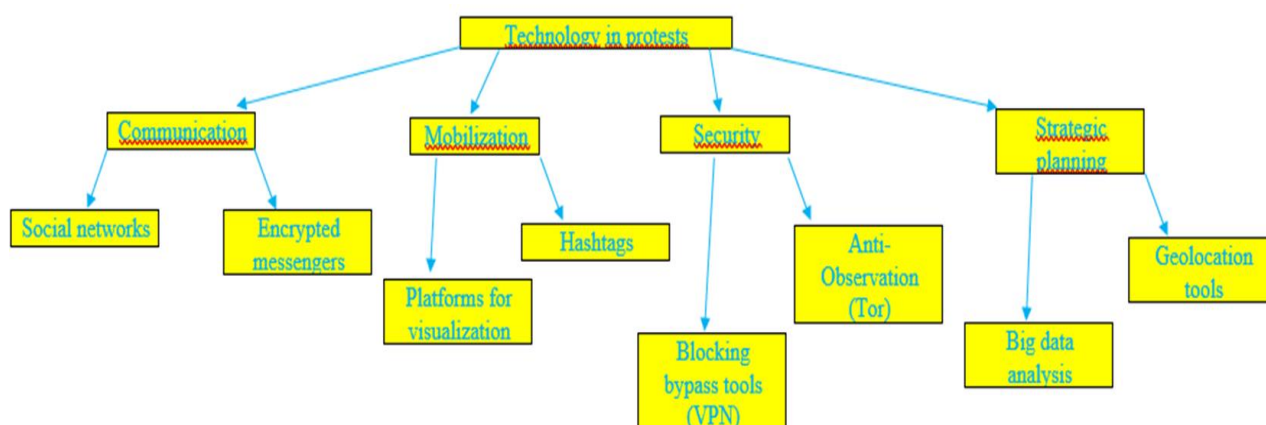


Fig. 2. The role of technology in supporting protest movements in authoritarian states

This table shows us how different technologies facilitate different aspects of protest movements in authoritarian states. It allows us to better understand how each element of the technology supports protest activities, from mobilization to ensuring the safety of protesters. Technologies are crucially important when it comes to effective organization, maintaining anonymity, and increasing influence at the international level. The role of social media can be traced in China, which still has strict censorship, and where the 2019 protests took place in Hong Kong, and millions of people went to the streets against a new extradition law, social media became the main channel for organizing mass protests. Obviously, the government used to control information actively by blocking websites and using “The Golden Shield Project” (i.e., “Great Firewall of China”). Nevertheless, activists used encrypted messengers such as Telegram and Signal to coordinate their actions. On top of that, symbols and hashtags, such as #StandWithHongKong, have become tools of global solidarity, drawing the attention of the international community to these events (Martin, 2024).

The government of China is implementing its own social networks nowadays as well (in particular, WeChat, through which user activity can be monitored). Despite that, activists still find ways to bypass censorship by creating new accounts, using VPNs to access banned platforms, or spreading information through numerous alternative channels (Pinghui, 2020). The same situation can be found in Russia, where Vladimir Putin and his government use strict censorship and repression against the opposition, the Internet has become an important tool for political struggle. One of the clear examples is the movement led by Alexey Navalny, who actively used YouTube and other social media in order to organize protests and disseminate investigations into corruption among high-ranking officials. In 2020, right after Navalny was poisoned,

his supporters used the Internet to spread information about his condition and call for protests. Despite numerous blockings of access to important resources, such as YouTube, through which live broadcasts of events were conducted, social networks remained an indispensable tool for coordinating protest movements. Telegram has become one of the most popular social platforms among Russians as it allows users to bypass blocking and protects them through encryption. Both activists who supported Navalny and his team kept using this messenger in order to exchange information, as well as to document human rights violations committed by authorities even after his death (Dollbaum, et al., 2021). In Russia, one of the most important aspects of using social networks after the death of Navalny was to counter state propaganda. Pro-Kremlin channels of information actively spread fake information, blaming protesters for crimes and riots, which endangers their safety. Consequently, the opposition and independent media actively use the Internet to expose falsifications and spread accurate information. A significant role in this case was played not only by traditional social networks but also by video hosting platforms through which it was possible to show the actual events that took place at the protests (Demydova, 2021).

A separate aspect of this issue lies in authoritarian regimes increasingly using information technology to control their citizens and primarily to suppress political activists. One of the most important aspects of this process is anonymity and protection of personal data. In authoritarian countries, where political freedom and rights are restricted, activists, human rights defenders, and other public figures opposing the political authorities often face persecution, violence, or illegal actions by government structures. In these conditions, personal data protection becomes a necessary element in the fight for the safety of activists (Meyer, 2014). Due to the development of digital technologies, online anonymity has become a key tool for protecting activists from persecution. Nevertheless, authoritarian governments use their own methods to surveil, monitor, and leak personal information. Internet-based data collection, telephone systems, and other technologies allow states to seamlessly track, identify, and prosecute activists. This increases the risk of people struggling for human rights or expressing critical views that directly threaten their safety (Figure 3).

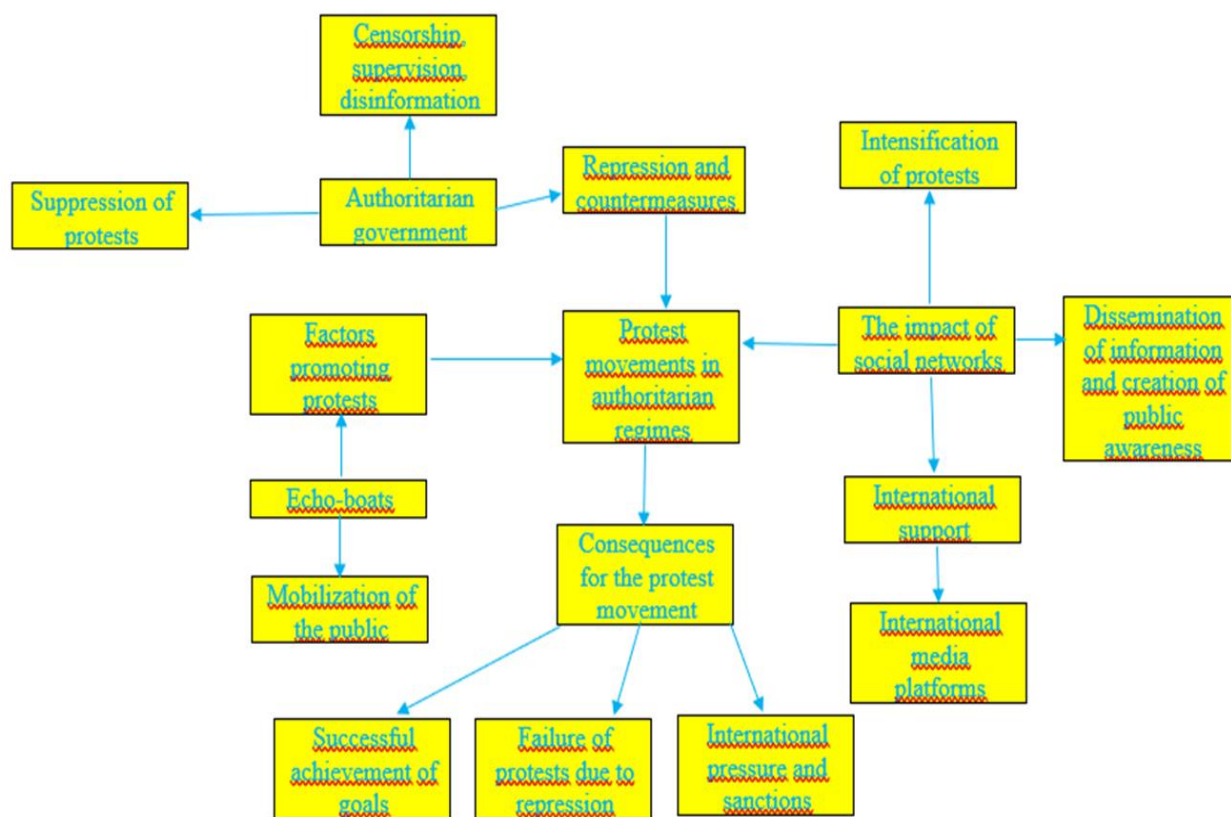


Fig. 3. Model of the influence of social networks and the Internet on protest movements in authoritarian states

In this context, it is important to highlight the phenomenon of digital authoritarianism – the systematic use of digital technologies by states to monitor, control, censor, and suppress political activity. This concept encompasses a wide range of tools, including mass surveillance, big data analytics, artificial intelligence, online content filtering, and algorithmic management of public opinion (Al-Zaman, & Noman, 2024). China and Russia serve as illustrative examples of these practices. In China, advanced surveillance systems have been implemented, including social credit mechanisms and facial recognition technologies (Creemers, 2018). In Russia, the government has actively developed the infrastructure for a «sovereign internet», while digital tools have been used to suppress opposition and restrict dissent (Polyakova, & Meserole, 2020).

At the same time, it is necessary to distinguish the notion of unintentional digital authoritarianism, which arises when technologies introduced for modernization, efficiency, or security purposes are later used as tools of repression – even within formally democratic states. This refers to cases in which surveillance or censorship emerges not as part of an authoritarian agenda, but as a by-product of digital reforms or crisis-driven policies, such as those implemented after terrorist attacks or during pandemics (Hanisch, et al., 2023).

A separate form, necessary digital authoritarianism, refers to situations in which even democratic governments impose temporary digital restrictions during states of emergency, such as war, pandemics, or national crises, for the sake of public safety, stability, or information control. Although these measures are usually legitimized by the public as exceptional, scholars warn about the risks of their normalization and the gradual transformation of temporary decisions into permanent control mechanisms (Aradau, 2021).

These three types of digital authoritarianism – from intentional to unintentional and temporarily necessary – offer a deeper understanding of how state power is transformed in the digital era, and how even neutral or protective technologies can evolve into instruments of oppression.

In these conditions, the protection of activists anonymity requires the usage of various technical and legal means. Message encryption, anonymous platforms, virtual private networks (VPNs), and other security tools have become essential for preserving personal information's privacy and protecting against repression. However, even these tools do not guarantee complete security, as authoritarian governments are constantly improving their methods of surveillance and data breaching (Howard, 2015). Despite numerous challenges, anonymity and data protection issues are critical to ensuring freedom of expression and protecting activists in such circumstances. Tools that help activists hide their locations and activities (especially by anonymizing Internet traffic or bypassing geographical blockings) allow them to actively counter surveillance by government agencies (Opp, 2022). One of the most vivid examples might be China's case. The government of China actively uses the technologies of surveillance, such as, for instance, the social credit system and facial recognition technology, to monitor citizens and harass activists (Liebman, & Curtis, 2015). The situation in Russia is worrying as well. After the beginning of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the Russian government actively utilized technical means to track activists and block access to anonymous internet platforms such as VPNs. In 2021, Russian activists and journalists faced persecution after using anonymous tools to organize protests and spread information about repressions. In particular, the laws requiring user data storage in the Russian territory significantly facilitate access to activists' personal information for government structures. (Kulichkina, 2024). Turkey has also become an example of a country where the use of digital technologies to prosecute activists is a common practice. After the coup attempt in 2016, the government increased surveillance of citizens, including by tracking their online activities. In the anti-government protests in 2020, Turkish activists faced the blocking of anonymous communication channels and restrictions on access to VPNs. Human rights activists have reported numerous cases of persecution using data obtained through surveillance of Internet communications, as well as an increase in physical violence against protesters. In Egypt, after the fall of the regime of Hosni Mubarak, the Egyptian government started actively using technologies to surveil citizens (Sowers, 2016). It became apparent after the protests of 2019 when activists used anonymous platforms to organize protests. The Egyptian government has been actively blocking anonymous communication services and trying to gain access to personal data through mobile phones and online platforms (Books, 2019). In 2020, there were cases of prosecution of activists based on data obtained through monitoring of their activities on the Internet, including through social networks and messengers.

An important role in supporting protest movements is also played by digital platforms for fundraising and crowdfunding, especially in circumstances of restrictions on freedom of expression and repression observed in authoritarian states. Such platforms allow protest organizers and activists to receive financial support from the general public, which ensures the stability and development of movements, even under political pressure. In many cases, these tools become necessary to cover the expenses for organizing protest actions, providing legal assistance, supporting injured participants, and financing other activities related to activist

activities. (Way, 2023). One of the main aspects of crowdfunding the protest movements is the ability to mobilize resources directly from citizens who support the movement without relying on traditional funding channels that the state or large organizations may control. Fundraising via digital platforms allows the creation of transparent and rapid mechanisms to attract support, which is important when government structures may block or restrict other funding methods. It also allows donors to remain anonymous, particularly in countries with authoritarian regimes, where participation in protests leads to persecution (Castells, 2017). In some cases, crowdfunding activities become not only a way of financial support but also a means of drawing attention to socio-political problems, raising awareness of the struggle of activists and protest movements at the international level. Platforms that support crowdfunding campaigns provide the opportunity to create viral campaigns capable of uniting thousands of people around the world around a particular issue, which increases the effectiveness of protests and international pressure on governments. Additionally, digital fundraising platforms enable organizers of protest movements to respond quickly to unforeseen situations. For example, in cases of violent dispersal of protests or arrests of participants, a crowdfunding platform could become a leading source of raising funds for assistance or support for the families of the injured activists. In the circumstances of the digital economy, such platforms create new possibilities for mobility and efficient organization of protest actions while reducing physical and social barriers to attracting funding (Luhmann, et al., 2022).

Despite all the advantages of crowdfunding platforms being used by protest movements, they still face many challenges. The first aspect lies in controlling finances and the risks of government authorities blocking or censoring such platforms. It is known that in some authoritarian countries, their governments try to limit access to funding for opposition movements by blocking platforms or implementing digital surveillance of transactions. Apart from that, there are risks related to the probable leakage of the personal data of donors, which may lead to persecution or other forms of repression (Figure 3).

In general, the role of digital fundraising platforms in protest movements is to provide movements with financial independence, transparency, and rapid mobilization of resources to support their activities. Such platforms become an important tool in implementing protest initiatives; however, they require careful protection against possible attempts at control and censorship by state structures, especially in authoritarian countries, where the freedom of funding and organizing protests can be significantly limited. One of the most apparent examples of crowdfunding technologies and digital platforms being used might be Belarus, where, after the attempted falsification of the 2020 presidential election results, protest movements actively applied these technologies. Mobile platforms and social networks have become the main channels for organizing protests, and crowdfunding has made it possible to raise funds for the support of affected activists and legal aid (Onuch, & Sasse, 2022). Nevertheless, the government of Belarus blocked access to many financial platforms and digital services as a response to the protests, and as a result, it made the process of fundraising more difficult. Despite that, volunteers and international organizations continued their financial support through alternative platforms, which confirmed the importance of digital channels for protest movements in the country (Brodovskaya, et al., 2024). Hong Kong can also serve as an example of a case where crowdfunding played a significant role in the protests of 2019-2020 against a bill to amend the Fugitive Offenders Ordinance. Protesters used crowdfunding to raise funds for organizing protests, purchasing protective equipment from the police, and supporting victims (Martin, 2024). The Chinese government is also actively blocking access to such platforms and trying to deport individuals seen to be providing financial support to opposition movements. Yet, regardless of severe control, crowdfunding campaigns to support protests, particularly in Tibet and Xinjiang, often use international fundraising platforms to bypass censorship (Christian, 2020). Turkey has also become an example of the use of crowdfunding to fund protests, especially after the 2016 coup attempt. After that, the Turkish government tightened its control over information and finances, making it difficult for activists to access crowdfunding platforms. However, digital tools are still being used to raise funds, mainly to cover legal aid costs for protesters and their families (Burak, 2021). In Egypt, crowdfunding platforms have also become important for supporting protest movements since the 2011 revolution. However, following increased repression and control over information, the Egyptian government began to actively block funding to opposition groups and protest movements (Earl, et al., 2022). Nonetheless, the activists kept using anonymous channels to raise funds and support their initiatives, which shows the importance of such platforms in countries where repression makes it much more challenging to organize protests. All these examples illustrate how crowdfunding activities have become an important tool for protest movements, allowing them to mobilize resources in conditions of repression. Although many governments are trying to block or limit access to such platforms, digital technologies remain important for funding protest initiatives and supporting their participants in many countries with authoritarian regimes.

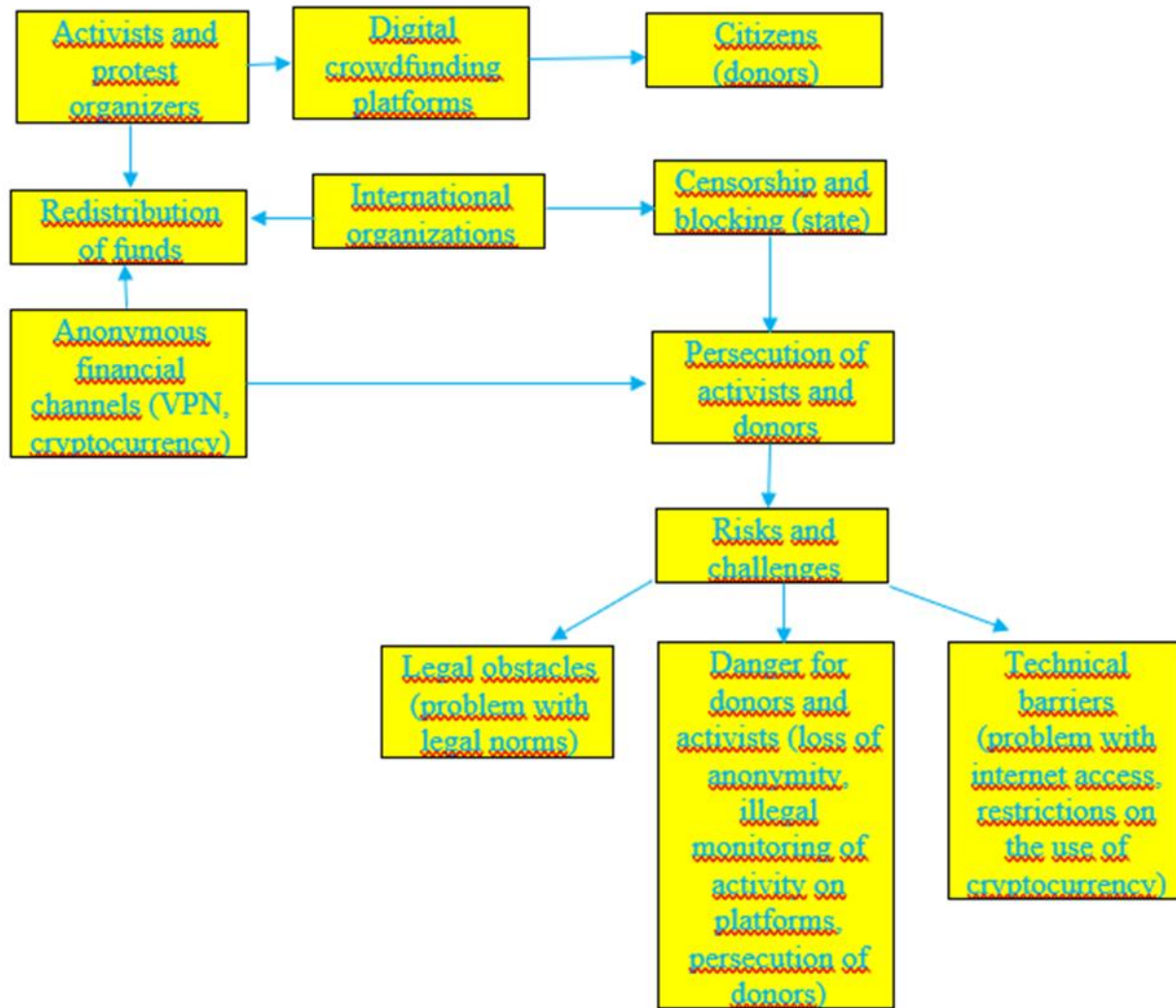


Fig. 4. Digital platforms for crowdfunding in protest movements

An important aspect of this problem is the role of technology in recording violations of human rights. With the help of mobile devices, activists can record repressions and violations of their rights, and then distribute these materials via the Internet. Video recordings and photographs can become a powerful tool for disclosing violence by the police or the military, as well as a mechanism to pressure governments (McQuiston, 2019). Documented crimes against protesters are posted on online platforms, allowing activists and human rights defenders to organize legal support for victims of political repression, contact international organizations for help, or create online petitions. For instance, when after the presidential elections in 2020, mass protests began in Belarus, they were brutally suppressed by the authorities, resulting in many activists suffering arrests, torture, and other forms of persecution. A well-known human rights defender and leader of the “Vyasna” center, Ales Bieliatskyi became one of the first to turn to international organizations for help, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. Soon, human rights activists like U. Labkovich, V. Stefanovich, V. Sazonov S. Sysia, and the director of the Center for Legal Transformation “Lawtrend”, Olga Smolyanko, joined him. International organizations have publicly condemned the use of force against the protesters and demanded the release of political prisoners. Human rights activists have also actively appealed to the UN to take measures to protect human rights in Belarus (Minakov, 2021). The 2019–2020 Hong Kong protests against the bill to amend the Fugitive Offenders Ordinance also became the subject of international appeals, and protesters used digital platforms for fundraising and mobilizing support but also faced prosecution (Lily, 2020). One example is the activist, founder, and leader of the public movement Scholarism, Joshua Wong, who repeatedly sought support from international organizations such as Amnesty

International for support after being imprisoned in 2024. Wong also appealed to international governments and organizations, calling for sanctions against Chinese officials for human rights violations in Hong Kong (Martin, 2024). It is also worth mentioning Alaa Abd El-Fattah, who is an important symbol of resistance to the authoritarian regime not only in Egypt but also beyond its borders, and who also repeatedly appealed to the European Court of Human Rights, and his literary works, some of which were secretly transferred from prison and published in international media, became a powerful call for unity for all who fight for freedom of speech and human rights (Fishere, 2024). However, Alaa Abd El-Fattah's situation is just one of many similar stories. Thousands of less famous activists in Egypt are imprisoned simply for expressing their opinions on social media. By allegedly concerning national security, the government systematically restricts freedom of speech, the right to peaceful assembly, and the right to association. While Alaa Abd El-Fattah is imprisoned, his case is a poignant reminder of the risks facing those who choose to criticize the Egyptian regime. This imprisonment not only demonstrates the government's determination to suppress dissent but also inspires many to continue fighting for freedom. All these examples show how protesters and human rights activists constantly turn to international organizations for help and protection in the conditions of persecution that occur during the protest activities. It is important to note that international organizations such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the European Court of Human Rights, as well as the United Nations have repeatedly become platforms for the protection of the rights of people who have become victims of political repression in authoritarian and semi-authoritarian countries (Tufekci, 2018).

Information technologies in conditions of limited political freedoms provide activists with new opportunities to fight for human rights and democratic values. They serve as tools for anonymous communication, mobilization, protection from persecution, fundraising, and global solidarity. At the same time, these technologies create new challenges for the political authorities regarding information control, citizens' rights protection, and data security.

Discussion

The research showed that technologies have become important tools for developing political movements and activism in authoritarian regimes, providing new opportunities for organization, mobilization, and struggle for human rights in conditions of limited freedoms. As said before, in authoritarian states, where democratic institutions are weakened or entirely controlled by the government, new technologies allow activists to overcome the many restrictions imposed on freedom of expression, assembly, and association (Simpson, et al., 2020). One of the most important achievements of digital technologies in this context is its ability to empower activists to communicate and organize, even when physical access to traditional venues for protest or political discussion is limited. This point of view is also supported by Tim Wood (2022), who stated that different platforms, such as Twitter, Telegram, and Facebook, have become not only a means for the rapid dissemination of news but also important tools for organizing protest actions. For example, in the Belarusian protests of 2020, social networks became the primary channels for coordinating actions and interacting between protesters, despite government attempts to block access to the Internet and block these tools. These platforms have become not just a place for information exchange but also platforms for creating content that draws the attention of the world community to the situation in the country (Onuch, & Sasse, 2022).

Studies show that one of the most important features technology provides to activists in authoritarian countries is the ability to maintain anonymity and protect personal data. Surveillance systems in countries such as Russia, China, and Iran allow governments to access communications and monitor the online activity of their citizens. Accordingly, data protection technologies such as VPN, Tor, or other anonymization tools are becoming vital for activists to keep themselves safe. In this context, a conclusion made by Manuel Castells (Castells, 2024) seems to be totally accurate. He states that using such technologies allows not only to avoid monitoring by government structures but also provides an effective communication channel in conditions of censorship and repression.

Many scientists emphasize that new technologies open up access to new funding mechanisms for activists. In the conditions of severe economic sanctions and control by state bodies, crowdfunding has become one of the main sources of funding for lots of protest movements (Way, 2023). As stated by Niklas Luhmann (Luhmann, et al., 2022), platforms similar to GoFundMe or Patreon enable citizens from around the world to financially support opposition movements and political activists operating in countries with authoritarian regimes. Fundraising via these online platforms allows activists to bypass traditional financial channels that may be under government control or sanctions (Min, 2023). The point of view of the scientists

confirms the thesis of the authors regarding the importance of technologies for the development of political movements and activism in authoritarian regimes.

Censorship resistance is another important aspect where technologies are drastically important. Authoritarian regimes often long to limit access to information that's crucially important for their citizens, including information on human rights violations, protests, and political repressions (Henry, 2021). However, with the help of technologies such as anti-censorship tools, activists can bypass government blocks and continue publishing and sharing information through independent media platforms or specialized sites. For instance, during the protests caused by a fuel price increase in Iran, Iranian activists used censorship bypassing VPN services, which allowed them to maintain communication with international mass media and human rights organizations (Manal al-Sharif, 2017).

Scientists support the opinion of M. Lazarovych, O. Rudakevych, and others on digital technologies also allowing activists to create alternative media platforms that governments do not control. In authoritarian countries, where independent mass media are usually censored or banned, such platforms allow not only to cover events in real-time but also to generate analysis and investigations that sometimes cannot be published in state mass media. In these circumstances, independent journalists and activists use the newest platforms to create content that helps to draw attention to important social and political issues.

The other important tendency is that technologies allow activists to respond quickly to changes in the political landscape. In authoritarian countries, where changes happen rapidly and often are accompanied by repression, it is important to adapt protest strategies and change the direction of activity with the help of modern technologies (Zuboff, 2019). Mobile applications, chats, automated systems, and monitoring systems based on Artificial Intelligence allow getting and processing information instantly. This process facilitates the effective organization of protests and responses to political challenges (Martin, 2024).

Scientific research has proved that digital technologies facilitate international solidarity. In countries where all forms of protests are usually accompanied by violent suppression, support from the international community is essential (Pinghui, 2020). By using social media and digital platforms, activists can involve international organizations in defending their rights, which can put additional pressure on the government to change policies or stop repressions. The Internet also allows activists to receive worldwide support from other activists and public organizations. It helps them to create a network of solidarity and collective action (Opp, 2022). In general, technologies have become an indispensable tool in the struggle for human rights and democratic values in authoritarian regimes. Not only do they provide opportunities for organizing protests and mobilizing resources, but they also allow for security, bypassing censorship, and funding for opposition movements. In circumstances when traditional ways of resistance often face severe restrictions, technologies open up new opportunities to fight for justice and human rights.

Conclusions

Technologies have become important for facilitating political movements in countries that restrict freedom of expression and civil rights. Social media, mobile applications, and other digital platforms allow activists to organize protest movements, mobilize support, quickly spread information, and overcome censorship. At the same time, these technologies create new challenges, especially in security, where activists may become victims of cyberattacks, government surveillance, or privacy violations. Authoritarian regimes adapt their strategies by using the most recent technologies for controlling civil movements, making activists constantly adapt their fighting methods. Despite these asperities, global digital networks and international support keep playing the most important role in supporting activism and helping to fight for human rights in conditions of political repression. Technologies provide new possibilities for empowering democracies but still require careful balancing between their use for democratic change and protection from potential threats. The technologies are important for changing the dynamics of political movements as well, especially in helping to create new forms of organization and interaction between activists. Different tools, such as VPN encryption, enable protestors to remain inconspicuous and safe, which is especially important in strict information control and repression conditions. At the same time, digital platforms allow individuals from different countries to unite in global movements, exchange experiences, and create international pressure on authoritarian regimes. However, using technologies has its drawbacks, such as a high risk of disinformation and information manipulations, which can undermine trust in political movements. Because of this, the technologies may not only broaden the possibilities for citizen mobilization and activism but also can create new challenges that need to be addressed at the strategic level of activists, human rights defenders, and international organizations.

Thus, on the one hand, technologies can create new opportunities for political activism, particularly by forming “digital platforms” for activists, for their interactions, for sharing resources and information, and for receiving support at the international level, giving them additional strength and visibility. On the other hand, technologies also cause the emergence of new forms of social control and manipulation. For instance, by utilizing big databases and Artificial intelligence algorithms, governments may not only surveil their citizens but also foresee and prevent protests using social forecasting strategies. Scientific debates on that topic have shown that the indicated questions need further and more specific research in a long-term perspective, which the authors of this article will continue to work on.

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US NATIONAL MEMORY AND THE POLITICS OF THE ‘MAGA’: HISTORY, POLITICS, IDENTITY

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Abstract

This article examines the evolution of American national memorial policy through the prism of political developments that shaped the internal discourse on national unity of the American nation. The author analyzes how the memorial policy of the United States has shaped a unique political narrative that combines historical concepts of democracy, national identity, and global leadership. One of the main aspects of the study is the understanding of the foundational role of the American Revolution and the War of Independence (1775–1783), which established key ideological principles of popular sovereignty and democratic governance. The Civil War (1861–1865) is analyzed as a critical juncture that reinforced federal authority and redefined the meaning of national unity. The study considers U.S. participation in international conflicts as reflecting the country's broader ambition to assert global leadership and promote democratic ideals abroad. Additionally, the article investigates how modern memorial policies engage with issues of social inequality, particularly in racial, ethnic, and class contexts, reflecting shifts toward inclusivity in public memory. The paper also addresses the complexities of recent political discourse, particularly under Donald Trump, whose “America First” rhetoric combined isolationism with imperial undertones. Contemporary memorial policy increasingly honors figures associated with civil rights movements and marginalized communities, thus transforming the symbolic landscape. Finally, the article highlights the necessity of reassessing national memory in response to international criticism, especially in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, when reconciling patriotism with critical reflection became a defining feature of American political culture.

Keywords: memorial policy, national identity, American Revolution, Civil War, democratic ideals, political philosophy, isolationism, global leadership, contemporary discourse.

Introduction

At every crossroads of historical paths, in the context of increasing socio-political confrontation, conflicts of collective memory are becoming more prominent. This process is not prevented by either the postmodern state of collective consciousness, the virtualization of political processes, or attempts to form a global society. The United States did not create a national memory institution, unlike many post-communist countries in Eastern Europe, because Americans, as a nation, are oriented toward the present and the future (Martynov, 2020, p.10).

However, since the early 21st century, historical politics and historical trauma have become a significant element in the struggle between Republicans and Democrats. The rhetoric of MAGA (Make America Great Again) focused on restoring the greatness of the U.S. through the rethinking of history and the revival of traditional values. During Trump's presidency, the conservative shift became more pronounced. Trump revived discussions about the mission of the U.S. in the world through a call for the revival of national protectionism in the context of unjustified spending on projects from the previous

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administration. In March 2025, President Donald Trump signed an executive order Restoring Truth and Sanity to American History. The justification states that "over the past decade, Americans have witnessed coordinated and large-scale efforts to rewrite the history of our nation, replacing objective facts with a distorted narrative driven by ideology rather than truth. This revisionist movement seeks to undermine the significant achievements of the United States, portraying its foundational principles and historical milestones in a negative light... Instead of fostering unity and a deeper understanding of our shared past, widespread efforts to rewrite history deepen societal divides and foster a sense of national shame, disregarding the progress America has made and the ideals that continue to inspire millions around the world. The previous administration promoted this aggressive ideology" (The White House, 2025). According to this order, the Smithsonian Institution is tasked with eliminating anti-American ideology and determining whether, since January 1, 2020, any public monuments, memorials, statues, markers, or similar objects have been removed or altered to commemorate a false reconstruction of American history, unjustly diminishing the value of certain historical events or figures.

Methodology

The memorial discourse in the United States demonstrates a complex transformational process of revising internal and external goals, and it becomes particularly relevant around issues of national identity and collective memory. The methodology for analyzing U.S. memorial policy through the lens of political processes is based on an approach that includes historical, discursive, socio-cultural, institutional, and ideological analysis. The historical approach involves studying the development of national memory in the U.S. and its connection to political events, such as the American Revolution, the Civil War, World War II, and the Cold War. The discursive analysis focuses on how political forces shape images of the past to achieve strategic objectives, for example, through the MAGA rhetoric or discussions about historical trauma. The socio-cultural approach examines the impact of cultural and social movements, such as the fight for equal rights, on changing national narratives. The institutional approach studies the role of government agencies and memorial sites in shaping identity through memory policies, such as the National Register of Historic Places. The ideological approach draws attention to how historical narratives are used to achieve political goals, as the U.S. forms its international image and global leadership through historical memory. The methodology for analyzing U.S. memorial policy involves studying these aspects to understand how history is used to shape national identity in political and social contexts.

Several authors have explored memorial policy in the context of transforming international relations strategies, as the U.S. shapes images through its history of interaction with other nations, which are used to implement foreign policy. For instance, Vyshnevskaya (Vyshnevskaya, 2014) focused on the U.S. strategy of forming the policy of the great power, while Potekhin (Potekhin, 2016) examined the influence of the Yalta and Potsdam conferences on international relations, revealing how the U.S., based on historical memory, shaped its global political strategy during the Cold War period. Scientists have drawn attention to the methodological aspects of the deconstruction of historical memory in the United States (Ilyin, 2019; 2023).

A number of studies (Vovk, 2020; Koch & Uzun, 2024) focuses on the interconnection between historical memory, identity, and security. In the work of Metielova (Metielova, 2019), the influence of memory politics in the U.S. on international relations is discussed, showing how it becomes a tool for internal politics and diplomacy. Tolstov (Tolstov, 2017, 2020) concentrates on the instrumental aspects of memory politics. The peculiarities of shaping the space of memory politics, the axiological orientations of American society, and their changes are the subject of Kosheliev's attention (Kosheliev, 2023, p. 20). Social discussions in the U.S. regarding national memory sites have been explored by Allison (2018), Cooper, et al. (2021), Titus (2018), Phelps, & Owley (2023), Treisman (2021). The issue of forming memory sites in the U.S. and the problem of inequality in honoring historical figures in cities are the subjects of research by Shane (2011), Capps (2016), and Lewis (2016). Complementing the understanding of memory politics in the U.S. is research on memory in the context of global history (Kolesnyk, 2022; Smolii, et al., 2022). The authors note that memory politics has become a tool for asserting the U.S. as a global leader.

The aim of the article is to explore the evolution of American national memorial memory through the lens of political processes that influenced the transformation of the internal discourse on the foundations of the unity of the American nation.

The concept of U.S. national history is built around stereotypes that embody the advantages of the American way of life and present the country's political system as a model for other nations to follow.

Interpretations of key points in U.S. national history aim to form a patriotic understanding of heritage, which is reflected in the creation of memorial complexes and their inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places, established in 1966. The register contains over 80,000 sites, of which 2,430 are designated National Landmarks, receiving protection and funding from the federal government. Among them are the megalithic sculptures of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt, and Abraham Lincoln on Mount Rushmore in South Dakota, created between 1927 and 1941, which symbolize key stages in the formation of U.S. unity (Martynov, 2020, p. 15). On Stone Mountain in the Appalachians, Georgia, the *Confederate Memorial*, completed in 1972, honors the president of the Confederate States of America, Jefferson Davis, and Generals Robert Lee and Thomas Jackson (Yancey-Bragg, & Stanglin, 2017, p. 1). Meanwhile, the unfinished mega-sculpture of Crazy Horse, the leader of the Oglala tribe (1840-1877), has been under construction since 1947 in the Black Hills.

Among the representations that shape the uniqueness of American political consciousness, the official tradition highlights: 1) the notion of the state being founded on the tradition of *democratic* governance, sanctified by the successes of the American Revolution and the War of Independence against England (1775-1783), and the successes in forming national identity (up until the 1860s); 2) the idea of the necessity of positively articulating and memorializing one of the most complex periods in U.S. history – the Civil War between the North and South (1861-1865), the results of which confirmed the unity of the Union; 3) the recognition of the significance of U.S. involvement in regional wars to support democratic regimes and protect U.S. national interests; 4) the idea of social and, later, ethnic-racial equality in the U.S.; 5) the notion of imperial grandeur and global leadership (Tolstov, 2017, p. 152).

Roots of U.S. National Memory: Victory in the War of Independence, Political Consensus as the Ideal of Democratic Governance

A key element in the system of national collective beliefs in the United States is the idea of the state being founded on the tradition of democratic governance. U.S. memorial policy focuses on creating an image of the country that revives the ideals of democracy and self-governance, with the first memorial being recognized as the Mayflower Compact (1620), which declared the natural principles of popular rule. In the history of the U.S. as a nation of immigrants, each community had its unique characteristics, but ultimately, it was these communities that formed the first universal nation in the world.

The American War of Independence is regarded as the result of the implementation of a consensus between the opposing political views of the Federalists and Anti-Federalists. In the 1790s, A. Hamilton advocated for a strong central government, while T. Jefferson championed states' rights. The reconciliation of the elites regarding the formation of the political system allowed for the realization of the current formula of American democracy.

For a long time, American historiography was focused on the images of the heroes of the War of Independence—the First President of the U.S., George Washington, and the Third President and author of the U.S. Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson, whose monuments have been erected in Washington. The historical narratives from the period of the struggle for independence form the basis of collective memory in the U.S. (Breen, 2005, p. 35).

The War of Memory: How the United States Interprets the Legacy of the Civil War

Another significant event around which national discourse continues to evolve is the Civil War. The official interpretation of the war has been framed as a tragedy, in which both sides lost 640,000 people. The idea of the necessity of memorializing the conflict between the North and South (1861-1865), the outcome of which confirmed the unity of the Union, is a foundation of national memory. Today, attention is focused on positively highlighting the historical contributions of leaders from the Civil War era, such as Abraham Lincoln and Ulysses S. Grant, whose leadership ensured that the victory of the North became a confirmation of the unbreakable nature of the United States as a federation.

At the same time, according to Richard Haass, Chairman of the Council on Foreign Relations, any war is fought three times: when the decision is made about entering the war, during the war itself, and when the discourse about the lessons of the war begins (Haas, 2019, p. 54-55).

Historical reconciliation does not mean the absence of regional territorial-political versions of historical memory. Condoleezza Rice, the 66th U.S. Secretary of State from 2005 to 2009 under President George Bush, expressed the belief that the liberal approach toward former Confederates hindered the closure of this tragic chapter in history. Rice notes that after the Civil War, only one Confederate Army officer was

arrested, while others, including General Robert Lee, returned home. Similar leniency was shown toward civilian leaders of the Confederacy: none were brought to trial. Jefferson Davis, president of the Confederacy, spent several months in prison but was released and remained a hero to the Confederacy for the rest of his life (Rice, 2011, p. 46). Rice emphasizes that Reconstruction suffered a setback, although it had some positive aspects. Military governors were appointed to enact new laws, measures were taken to educate African Americans, and freed individuals were granted positions in legislative bodies. The emotionally charged history of the Civil War, according to Rice, influenced her personal perception of history, as Confederate veterans from Tennessee founded the Ku Klux Klan in 1865, whose activities continued to affect her parents' lives (Rice, 2011, p. 47-48).

Reconstruction from 1865 to 1890 proceeded without conflicts over the interpretation of the Civil War. Citizens were encouraged to forget about the war to restore peace. After the ratification of the 15th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1870, the rights of Confederate states were restored, which became part of the process of integrating Southern states. These states were incorporated into five military districts, where commanders had the authority to declare martial law to protect the rights of African American populations. The 15th Amendment guaranteed the right to vote to all citizens, regardless of race, color, or prior condition of servitude. African Americans gained the constitutional right to participate in political life. However, the struggle for the rights of non-white populations continued (Martynov, 2020, p. 15).

According to Condoleezza Rice, the first 100 years of U.S. history were marked by corruption, protectionism, and conspiracies by interested groups, which prevented citizens from trusting the institutions (Rice, 2018, p. 44). The goal of Reconstruction was to bridge the divisions between the North and the South, but after Andrew Jackson became the first President from the South in 1868, the second President from the South, Woodrow Wilson, was not elected until 1913.

Starting from the presidency of Woodrow Wilson, the concept of reconciliation became the foundation for compromise in the interpretation of history, where the South's defeat in the war was acknowledged, but the memory of the region's heroes was not subject to prohibition. The government adhered to this approach during the celebration of America's bicentennial in 1976 under President Gerald Ford (Faust, 2008). At the same time, it was not until 1924 that a federal law granting citizenship to Native Americans was passed, and it was only in the 1928 elections that the first African American representative, Oscar De Priest from Illinois, appeared in the House of Representatives. However, due to segregation, he dined in the Capitol's basement instead of with the white congressmen (Rice, 2011, p. 7). Even after the abolition of slavery and the passing of laws guaranteeing the political rights of African Americans, discrimination persisted. Instruments of disenfranchisement included literacy tests, poll taxes, and grandfather clauses, which allowed only those whose fathers or grandfathers had been eligible to vote before 1867 to vote. The Ku Klux Klan and other racist groups used terror to intimidate black voters. The struggle for equal voting rights continued throughout the 20th century, and it was not until the Voting Rights Act of 1965 that discriminatory practices were abolished. However, America did not become blind to skin color. As Rice points out, the injustice faced by non-white Americans is similar to that experienced by people in authoritarian regimes (Rice, 2018, p. 50).

History and Politics of Memory in the U.S. through the Lens of Racial and Political Debates

Racist political discourse and anti-liberal attitudes persist in the country. The critique of liberal philosophy is presented in the book *Against Democracy* by Georgetown University Vice-Provost Jason Brennan, where the author advocates for a transition from irrational democratic participation to epistocracy – rule by the knowledgeable, criticizing the recognition of the egalitarianism principle (Brennan, 2017, p. 204).

The Great Society, proclaimed by President Lyndon Johnson in 1964, was an ambitious program aimed at fighting racial discrimination and inequality in the U.S. After the U.S. victory in the Cold War, Johnson implemented his initiatives through the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

During President Bill Clinton's tenure (1993–2001), while the country faced racial unrest, such as the 1992 Los Angeles riots, the government attempted to reduce social inequality. The presidency of Barack Obama (2009–2017), the first African American in office, was historic. Obama avoided emphasizing racial issues, focusing instead on the values of the American Dream for all. However, after his election as President of the U.S., the use of the Confederate flag became a topic of debate, and issues concerning monuments, cities' and streets' names were brought to the forefront. While the first attempts to address monuments were made in 1992, during the 500th anniversary of the discovery of America

by Europeans, it was only since 2013 that activists from the African *American Black Lives Matter* (BLM) movement began demanding the removal of monuments to George Washington, the first U.S. president and a slave owner. The police had to protect the Washington Monument, built in 1888. In 2015, after the events at the Emanuel church in Charleston (South Carolina), where a white racist killed nine African Americans, attention to the Confederate flag heightened. As a result, several states banned the display of the flag on official buildings.

After Donald Trump's victory in the 2016 Presidential Election, the divide in society deepened. His conservative rhetoric resonated and became a catalyst for the campaign to remove monuments to Confederate figures and ban Confederate symbols. Protests against Trump, who was accused of discrimination, demonstrated the divide. At the same time, Newt Gingrich, one of the ideologues of Trump's campaign and former Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives (1995-1999), believes that Trump managed to unite a diverse electorate around the idea of a new industrialization (Martynov, 2020, p. 14). In 2016, during a speech in Charlotte, North Carolina, Trump promised a new course for African Americans, emphasizing: In our veins flows the same red blood of patriots (Martynov, 2020, p. 11).

Madlen Albright, while criticizing Donald Trump's policies, described the situation of party division caused by disdain for the country's institutions (Albright & Vudvort, 2019, p. 282). Another critic, Professor of U.S. history at the University of California and editor of the left-wing weekly *The Nation*, J. Wiener, believes that Trump's electorate consists of undereducated white voters. In response, Trump accuses Democrats of supporting multiculturalism and denying the significance of the *melting pot*, the traditional assimilationist policy described by Israel Zangwill in his 1908 book *The Melting Pot*.

The 2020 police incident, in which African American George Floyd was killed, sparked the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement in the *Rust Belt states* – industrial regions in the Northeast and Midwest of the U.S. – and ignited discourse surrounding representations of the past. The movement initiated the dismantling of monuments built between 1890 and 1950 to Confederate heroes, which numbered up to 700 in 31 states (Kosheliev, 2023, p. 22; National and Historical Memory, 2013, p. 224). Monuments to the seventh U.S. President (1829–1837), slave owner Andrew Jackson; Confederate States President Jefferson Davis; and Confederate Army commanders T.J. Jackson, R.E. Lee, and J.E. Johnston became the subject of the harshest criticism.

Meanwhile, the Civil War is studied differently across various U.S. states: in the Southern states, the focus is on states' rights as the cause of the war, using Confederate symbols, while in the Northern states, the emphasis is on the abolition of slavery, with the Confederate flag associated with racism. The electoral geography of the U.S. reflects the historical and political divide. The red states in the center and South support the conservative Republican Party with its strong anti-immigration rhetoric; the blue states, wealthier and more liberal, where the BLM movement thrives, are located on both coasts—west, northeast, and in the north of the U.S.; the purple states are divided. The largest purple states in electoral significance are Florida and Ohio (Martynov, 2020, p. 12).

Political debates about the consequences of the U.S. Civil War continue, especially in the context of the essence of the U.S. nation as one created by immigrants.

National Memory in the U.S. in the Context of Interventionist Foreign Policy

The Chicago School of Pan-Americanism, formed in the mid-19th century, presented the U.S. as a unique nation with a special way of life. Proponent of the concept of the predestined fate of the American race, Fiske, in his work *American Political Ideals* (1880), emphasized that American uniqueness was the result of the special conditions under which the democratic identity of citizens was formed, and that this way of life should serve as an example for other nations. Strong, in his work *Our Country and Its Possible Future* (1885), developed the concept of American messianism in Latin America, aiming to make the American way of life the foundation of stability in the region. J. Barges, in *Political Science and Comparative Constitutional Law* (1890), and Adam Brooks, in *Economic Domination of America* (1900) and *The New Empire* (1902), as supporters of the concepts of exclusivity and chosenness, emphasized the unique development of the U.S. as the most political nation, which made it a model for other countries. At the end of the 1990s, Fukuyama noted that one of the consequences of the Civil War was liberal democracy, which represented something more than just majority voting in elections—an intricate set of institutions whose functionality is oriented toward the eternal present, not the historically conflicted. In the late 1980s, Fukuyama considered the victory of this institutional model as the end of history (Fukuyama, 2018, p. 20).

In the mid-19th century, Turner, through the concept of the frontier thesis, influenced the development of the idea of American uniqueness, emphasizing the importance of the experience of settling new territories in the formation of national identity. Other representatives of the school, such as Ritter and Apter, explored the influence of American institutions on the development of Latin America. Later, at the turn of the 21st century, Huntington, updating the discourse on tectonic shifts in American collective consciousness, in his work *Who Are We: The Challenges to America's National Identity stated: America becomes the world. The world becomes America. America remains America* (Huntington, 2005, p. 572).

Subsequently, the ideas of active U.S. involvement in regional wars with the aim of democratization, supporting democratic regimes, and protecting U.S. national interests became the justification for the country's foreign policy strategy. This is reflected in the history of interventions in Latin America and the Caribbean, such as the Mexican-American War of 1846–1848; the Spanish-American War of 1898, which resulted in U.S. control over Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and Guam; the War in Panama in 1903, which led to Panama's separation from Colombia and the creation of the Panama Canal; the intervention in the Dominican Republic from 1916 to 1924 to stabilize the political situation; the intervention in Nicaragua from 1912 to 1933 to support pro-U.S. governments and protect American investments; as well as other U.S. military actions, including the Bay of Pigs Invasion, where the U.S. attempted to support forces seeking to overthrow Fidel Castro's regime; the invasion of Grenada in 1983, or Operation Shield of the Caribbean, and later participation in wars in Korea (1950–1953), Vietnam (1964–1972), and other regions of the world.

The U.S. Vision of Active Involvement in Global Processes as the World's Policeman

The idea of active U.S. involvement in global processes as the *world's policeman* became a central tool of foreign policy strategy, beginning with Theodore Roosevelt, the 26th president of the United States (1901–1909). Roosevelt, adhering to the principle of *Speak softly and carry a big stick*, won the Nobel Peace Prize for his mediation in peace negotiations between Japan and Russia. This active global role continued, at least, with Franklin Roosevelt, who saved the U.S. from decline during the Great Depression and ensured victory in World War II. The discourse surrounding victory in World War II solidified the concept of American global leadership. Memorials dedicated to World War II heroes, veterans of the Korean War, veterans of the Vietnam War, the military memorial in the District of Columbia, and the *Franklin Roosevelt Memorial* are the most famous national sites of memory, which reinforce the image of global leadership (Tolstov, 2017, p. 156).

The myth of *exceptionalism* shaped the image of the U.S. as the *arsenal of democracy* against totalitarian regimes. Technological achievements such as the launch of the first artificial Earth satellite and the first man on the Moon became symbols of the U.S. as a missionary state. At the same time, during the Cold War, U.S. national memory became an object of self-criticism. U.S. interventions in other countries' affairs and military operations, including regime-change policies, began to appear increasingly controversial, as did the unethical medical experiments on African Americans in Tuskegee, the development of biological weapons, and more. This discourse raised questions about the blind spots in national narratives. On one hand, the idealization of victory in World War II defined the U.S.'s role as the global policeman, while, on the other hand, there was criticism of U.S. actions in global politics. A crisis of trust in the government was provoked by undisclosed secrets from American history, such as the Vietnam War, the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, Senator Robert Kennedy, Martin Luther King Jr., the Watergate scandal, and others.

In the 1990s, the U.S. was recognized as the world's hegemon. At the same time, a process of rethinking the history of the new empire and reconstructing national memory began, especially after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, when the U.S. had to reconceptualize both its foreign and domestic policies. The reconstruction of U.S. memory politics reached a new level. Memory politics became a reflection of the fight against terrorism and raised questions about a police-state model. Interventions in the Middle East, mass surveillance of citizens through programs like PRISM, and open human rights violations during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan called into question the moral exceptionalism of the U.S. and its claims to global leadership and the duty of active involvement in the democratization of countries around the world.

Deconstruction of Colonial Monuments: New Voices in U.S. History

Another cornerstone around which national discourse developed is the concept of social and, later, ethnic-racial equality among people. The elite divide, linked to the breakdown of the compromise in the assessment of the colonial history of the U.S., led to socio-political complications as demographic

and cultural preferences in U.S. metropolitan areas changed (Hartman, 1997, p. 234). The anti-colonial discourse even led to criticism of the commemoration of Christopher Columbus, whose actions led to the destruction of Native American civilizations. The critique of Columbus's memory became an element of the debate about racial and colonial heritage, as well as understanding history through the lens of contemporary ethical norms. Critics of traditional history argue that Columbus's expeditions marked the beginning of the destruction of millennia-old cultures of indigenous peoples of the Americas, exploitation, slavery, violence, and expansion. Following the rise of movements for the rights of African Americans and Native Americans, criticism of Columbus's role in history grew. Activists questioned the appropriateness of celebrating October 12 as Columbus Day, replacing it with Indigenous Peoples' Day, honoring those harmed by colonization.

Activists of the Black Lives Matter movement and other anti-racist campaigns began demanding the dismantling of Columbus monuments in cities such as Chicago, Boston, Miami, Los Angeles, and other monuments associated with colonialism and racism. However, opponents of changing Columbus's status argue that history must be understood in the context of the time when these events occurred, and that we cannot judge the actions of people by modern moral standards. They emphasize that the task of history is to understand what the conditions and motivations of people were in the era in which they acted.

A symbol of the fight for African American civil rights was the march to the Lincoln Memorial led by Martin Luther King Jr. on August 28, 1963. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the liberal immigration legislation of 1965 radically changed the discourse of memory politics (The King Center, n.d.). The assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. on April 4, 1968, in Memphis transformed him into a sacred figure – a symbol of the fight against colonial narratives in history (Carson, 2001, p. 11). His memory was honored with the first memorial to an African American in Washington, D.C., opened in 2011 on the 48th anniversary of his famous *I Have a Dream* speech (National Park Service, n.d.).

Native American and African American groups propose honoring new heroes whose actions were marked by the fight for rights and freedom: Sitting Bull (2023), the Dakota leader who became a symbol of resistance to American expansion; Red Cloud, who successfully negotiated with the U.S. government during conflicts on the Great Plains (Red Cloud, 2025); Tecumseh, who attempted to unite tribes to fight against American expansion (Tecumseh, 2023); Wilma Mankiller, the first female chief of the Cherokee Nation, who fought for the rights of Native American communities (Life Story: Wilma Mankiller, 2023); Frederick Douglass (Douglass, 2025) and Harriet Tubman (Clinton, 2005), who fought for the abolition of slavery and freedom for African Americans; Rosa Parks, who became a symbol of resistance to racism through acts of civil disobedience (Parks, 2025). These new heroes symbolize the fight for the rights of marginalized groups. Their memory is proposed as an alternative to the heroes of the past, whose actions are associated with colonialism and racism. This new memorial movement is promoted by Tania Pariona (2025), who advocates for the preservation of indigenous rights; Ta-Nehisi Coates (Pondiscio, 2016), an African American writer whose influence on the understanding of racism and the history of African Americans in the U.S. has been immense through his work *Between the World and Me*.

Thus, since the late 20th century, criticism of national memory has increased through postmodern approaches to history, which emphasized the other voices – those of minorities, women, and indigenous peoples – and which initiated a new wave of memory politics aimed at deconstructing traditional narratives.

America First: Between Isolationism and Imperialism. The Controversial Goals of Donald Trump's National Memory Policy

The 2020 and 2024 presidential campaigns in the United States became a battleground between isolationists, represented by Donald Trump, and ultra-globalists, supporters of a stateless electronic netocracy. Trump opposes U.S. participation in transatlantic and trans-Pacific free trade zones and advocates for a review of U.S. relations with international organizations. Meanwhile, ultra-globalists are creating a world without distinctions, severing the connection between the past and the present, and turning political correctness into a tool for marginalizing opponents of the liberal elite (Martynov, 2020, p. 14).

In his work *The Origins of Political Order*, Francis Fukuyama stated that "countries... are bound to their past..., and everything that has happened continues to affect the nature and character of their politics" (Fukuyama, 2018, p. 10). After Trump's second inauguration as the 47th President of the United States from the Republican Party on January 20, 2025, radical changes in both domestic and foreign policy in the U.S. became evident.

Trump's first executive orders address: ending government censorship of free speech, the U.S. withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement, increasing oil and fossil fuel extraction, weakening the regulatory powers of the federal bureaucracy, dismantling the Environmental Protection Agency, exiting the World Health Organization, declaring a state of emergency on the border with Mexico, mass deportation of illegal immigrants, halting immigration programs, recognizing the existence of only two genders, banning changes to gender in federal documents, and rebuilding traditional family values. Trump also dismantled the Department of Education and reduced federal funding for any school or program that imposes critical race theory, gender ideology, or other unacceptable racial, sexual, or political content on children (Smith, 2024).

An important step in restoring historical memory was Trump's executive order to declassify documents related to the assassinations of President John Kennedy, Senator Robert Kennedy, and civil rights activist Martin Luther King. The order states that the families of the deceased and the American people "deserve transparency and truth" and that it is in the national interest to "immediately release records related to these assassinations" (Liszova, 2025).

Trump's main demands regarding foreign countries can be viewed through the lens of an interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine, rethinking national identity through the aggressive promotion of American national interests, reducing U.S. economic dependence on other countries, particularly those to the south of the border (Latin America), as well as China and Europe.

In the Context of the Monroe Doctrine: Reasserting U.S. Control over its "Backyard"

In the context of the Monroe Doctrine, this can be interpreted as a revival of the principle that the United States should control economic processes in its backyard, which now includes Latin America, Canada, Greenland (which was previously part of the Danish realm), and several other territories. As early as the end of his first term, President Trump proposed consultations with the Danish government regarding the purchase of Greenland. However, after his victory in the 2024 election, Trump reiterated that the U.S. should acquire the island for national security and freedom around the world (Hrenlandiia nasha, 2025). Trump also expressed his goal of annexing Canada: "You will get rid of this artificially drawn line ... and it will also be much better for national security," Trump stated during a press conference in Florida at Mar-a-Lago on January 7, 2025. He referred to Canada's Prime Minister as Governor Trudeau, a title usually given to leaders of U.S. states (Levinson King, 2025). Additionally, the newly elected 47th President of the United States called for a review of trade agreements, such as NAFTA (which was later replaced by the USMCA), and imposed tariffs on countries that, in his view, unfairly profited from trade with the U.S.

Protectionism, isolationism, limiting external obligations, the demand for a reduction of the U.S. military presence abroad, and America First are seen as a modern interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine. In late January 2025, the Trump administration froze foreign aid for 90 days while conducting an audit to ensure that grants provided by foreign organizations aligned with the America First foreign policy. Trump also announced plans to merge the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) with the State Department, stripping the agency of its autonomy. But on February 2, 2025, Elon Musk, who led the initiative to reduce the size of the federal government in Trump's administration, proposed closing USAID altogether. Musk called USAID a web of worms that supports radically left-wing causes around the world, including anti-American ones (Klubok khrobakiv i kupka bozhevilnykh, 2025). Trump declared his intent to reduce U.S. involvement in international conflicts, particularly in regions where U.S. interests were not a priority, reduce intervention in the politics of neighboring countries, and cut support for foreign governments that did not align with the U.S.'s strategic interests.

One of the MAGA movement's key goals under Trump is the fight against drug trafficking, drug cartels, and illegal immigration, which are seen as central to the development of transnational criminal activity, a recognized threat to U.S. security. The Monroe Doctrine, formulated in 1823, proclaimed political autonomy for the Americas from European powers and emphasized the U.S.'s desire to maintain hegemony in the Western Hemisphere. Trump adapted these principles to modern times, where Mexican drug cartels like Sinaloa, Jalisco New Generation (CJNG), Tijuana, Los Zetas, and Gulf, which operate in the U.S., Canada, and Latin American countries, became some of the greatest threats to U.S. domestic security. To weaken these cartels, Trump announced heightened border security along the U.S.-Mexico border, the construction of a wall, measures against illegal immigration, financial sanctions, the designation of cartels as terrorist organizations, and increased anti-terrorism and anti-drug operations. MAGA's demands reflect a desire to reconsider trade agreements in the context of restoring the imperial greatness of the U.S.

On November 9, 2024, journalists from The Guardian referred to Trump as the American Caesar who had risen from the dead, and predicted that Trump's Golden Age of America would manifest as an unstoppable imperial presidency (Smith, 2024). Similar predictions were made by The Economist, which called Trump the first Imperialist President in a century in its article "America Has an Imperial Presidency" (The Economist, 2025). The Guardian journalist D. Smith wrote: "At 2:25 AM, Donald Trump looked at his joyful supporters wearing 'Make America Great Again' hats. He was surrounded by his wife ... and children, stars, and giant banners proclaiming: 'Dream Again of Greatness' and 'Trump Will Fix Everything!'" (Smith, 2024). "We will help our country heal," Trump remarked. "We have a country that needs help, and it desperately needs help. We're going to fix our borders, we're going to fix everything in our country, and today we've made history for a reason, and that reason will be this" (Smith, 2024). K. Bardella, a strategist from the Democratic Party and former aide in Congress from the Republican Party, said, "We will have an imperial presidency. This will probably be the most powerful presidential power in terms of centralization ... since F.D. Roosevelt" (Smith, 2024). J. Walsh, a former Republican congressman, said, "This will be a revenge tour on steroids. I don't think people realize what will happen" (Smith, 2024).

Memory politics in the U.S. encompass issues of national identity, historical narratives, and symbols. The MAGA policy demonstrates a desire for national self-sufficiency, a reconstruction of national identity, and a return to traditional values: 1) restoring national identity through traditional values; 2) protectionism, defending values under the slogan America First by protecting against foreign influences – whether through immigration or economic expansion by other states; 3) preserving American autonomy through isolationism, withdrawing from multilateral international agreements, and reducing the U.S.'s international presence to alleviate financial burdens; 4) protecting national borders through appeals to memory politics, defending American identity from external threats.

Conclusions

The evolution of American national memory through the lens of political processes demonstrates a complex transformation of the internal discourse about national unity, which is intrinsically linked to the foundations of political consciousness within American society. This discourse is rooted in a complex of ideas that shape the uniqueness of the country's political consciousness. First, the key concept is the notion of the state's foundation on the tradition of democratic governance, which became the basis for national identity following the American Revolution and the War of Independence. These events laid the foundation for democratic principles that greatly influenced the further development of the United States. They became a model for the formation of political institutions based on citizen self-organization and mutual consent within a unified state.

Second, the concept of the necessity of memorializing the Civil War period is crucial, as it not only solidified the unity of the nation but also significantly increased the power of the federal government, strengthening the country's system. The memory of these events and the preservation of national symbols from that era reflect efforts to reinforce internal unity and stability amid political disputes and territorial differences.

Third, the concept of the active role of the United States in international affairs – particularly in regional wars – is an important component of national political consciousness, which includes the desire to spread democratic ideals and defend national interests on the world stage. This reflects the United States' transition from isolationism to global political and economic presence, actively developing in the 20th century.

Fourth, an important element is the concept of equality for all citizens before the law, reflecting progress in class and ethnic-racial equality, which gradually became significant through the abolition of slavery and the effort to secure equal rights for all citizens, regardless of race or gender. This is also reflected in the memorialization of the history of the struggle for minority rights.

A crucial component is the idea of imperial grandeur and global leadership of the United States, defined as a natural stage in the country's development, oriented toward the defense and promotion of its interests on the global political arena. The concept of *exceptionalism* strengthens internal unity and shapes the unique image of the country on the international stage. Together, these ideas form the political consciousness of American society, reflecting the diversity of political orientations, and the discourse allows for the rethinking of national unity. These ideas retain controversial definitions in the current political discourse regarding the role of the United States in the world, as a state embodying democratic governance (first among equals) or a state embodying imperial global leadership (dominance in the hierarchical system of global subordination).

In the context of this evolution, an important idea emerges from the political discourse of the present in the rhetoric and program of the MAGA movement under newly elected President Donald Trump, demonstrating deep controversy and ambivalence regarding the country's political philosophy, between isolationism and imperialism. The attempt to return to *America's golden age*, combined with the aspiration for global leadership and external intervention, creates tension in society, where traditional notions of American exceptionalism and democratic values collide with new challenges.

Memorial policy, reflecting these processes, becomes an arena for the formation of conflicting narratives, in which society is forced to adapt to changes in the country's political orientation. At the same time, national memory, as a tool of politics, contributes to the formation of a new image of America, where the desire for imperial greatness and global leadership coexist with the preservation of traditional appeals to the misleading images of democratic governance from the past.

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Acknowledgements

The section is for expression of gratitude to individuals or organisations for all possible technical assistance, ideas, financial (material) aid, which made the research possible, etc.

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