KOMPARATĪVISTIKAS
ALMANAHS

JOURNAL OF
COMPARATIVE STUDIES

EDITORIAL BOARD

JOURNAL OF COMPARATIVE STUDIES

CONTENTS

INDIVIDUALITY AND A COHERENT PLACE: REPRESENTATION OF IDENTITY WITHIN THE IMAGE OF HOME

DOMANTĖ VAIŠVYLAITĖ

GABIJA BANKAUSKAITĖ

Domantė Vaišvylaitė, MA
Institute of Languages, Literature and Translation Studies
Kaunas faculty, Vilnius University, Lithuania
e-mail: domante.vaisvylaite@knf.vu.lt
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2663-7320

Gabija Bankauskaitė, PhD, Professor
Institute of Languages, Literature and Translation Studies
Kaunas faculty, Vilnius University, Lithuania
e-mail: gabija.bankauskaite@knf.vu.lt
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3276-8159

Domantė Vaišvylaitė has been pursuing a PhD in Lithuanian Literary Studies at the Kaunas Faculty of Vilnius University since 2021. Her research interests include aspects of theology, memory, archetypes and trauma in Lithuanian literature. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Lithuanian Philology and Advertising and a Master's degree in Public Discourse Linguistics. Currently, she is working on her dissertation on the works of Algirdas Landsbergis under the supervision of Prof. Dr Gabija Bankauskaitė. She has participated in international conferences, delivered presentations, worked with students and developed creative projects.

Gabija Bankauskaitė is a professor at the Institute of Languages, Literature and Translation Studies at the Kaunas Faculty of Vilnius University (Lithuania). Her research interests include the discourse of Modernism in literature, twentieth century Lithuanian literature, Lithuanian diaspora literature, the press and advertising of interwar Lithuania, trauma in literature and egodocuments. Her recent studies focus on memory and experience in literary works. She is the author and co-author of several monographs, including *Stefania Jabłońska: Woman at the Turn of Two Centuries. Overview of Life and Creativity* (2020, with Nijolė Bankauskienė) and *Balys Sruoga – Traditional and Contemporary Conception* (2007), as well as academic study books such as *Art of Rhetoric* (2008, 2013, 2020), *Modern Literature from the End of the 19th Century to the First Half of the 20th Century* (2009) and *Lithuanian Language Teacher Activity: Methods and Research* (2007, 2010, 2015, with Nijolė Bankauskienė). She has authored more than seventy scientific articles and book reviews. Together with Laimutė Adomavičienė and Domantė Vaišvylaitė, she co-edited the scholarly publication *Connecting Worlds: The Criticism of Algirdas Landsbergis / Collection* (2024). Professor Bankauskaitė is the editor-in-chief of the peer-reviewed scholarly journal *Respectus Philologicus*, jointly issued by Vilnius University (Lithuania) and Jan Kochanowski University of Kielce (Poland).

ABSTRACT

The article explores the recurring need to solidify a personal identity in a coherent space and attempts to show how each individual meaning of home, such as privacy, identity or familiarity, can be interpreted as physical, psychological and social constructs and be related to the wider concept of a familiar place. To achieve this, the article applies the phenomenological approach of the Husserlian theory of homeworld, analysing home as a multidimensional concept and depicting different aspects of it. The cultural memory of a nation is revealed through the personal context and complex emotional states. The author analysed – Algirdas Jeronimas Landsbergis (1924–2004) – was a playwright, prose writer and journalist who was forced to flee Lithuania shortly before the second Soviet occupation. His short stories reveal the creative existence of a forced migrant, closely related with the formation of the image of home. This article focuses on the dominant and recurrent ideas of home in three of Landsbergis's short stories: "Dangūs tuštėja, dangūs pildosi" [The Skies are Emptying, the Skies are Filling up], "Duetas moters balsui ir smuikui Venecijoje" [Duet for Female Voice and Violin in Venice] and "Karveliai virš stogų" [Pigeons over the Rooftops].

INTRODUCTION

The development of identity is shaped by environmental stimuli and encompasses key geographic, cultural and cross-cultural identifiers: community, race, ethnic group, cultural region, geographical country, etc. Identity refers to a sense of self that is achieved through harmony with one's environment and others. From the psychological point of view, this internalised and identifiable self – which is the core of human individuality – is understood as a product of the formative stages of identity formation reflecting an internalised set of family and environmental norms and values. It is arguable that the success of this process is one of the essential elements of the formation of human personality, and its necessity and essentiality for a person's psychological health reveals the issue of internalisation. Due to the possible incompatibility with the inherent community environment, in this article, the concept of home is considered to be a field of meanings encompassing the experiences associated with the basic place of human relationship formation. Home is seen as a space of personal identification. It implies a sense of security, permanence and coherence which is not necessarily linked to the geographical and intercultural aspects of identification mentioned above. Security, permanence and coherence are all units of environmental stimuli determining the process of identity dissemination, and inevitably linked to it.

This article explores the issue of the relationship with home along with the need to belong in the aspect of identity in the short stories of Algirdas Landsbergis. The short stories "Dangūs tuštėja, dangūs pildosi" [The Skies are Emptying, the Skies are Filling Up], "Duetas moters balsui ir smuikui Venecijoje" [Duet for Female Voice and Violin in Venice] and "Karveliai virš stogų" [Pigeons over the Rooftops] were chosen for analysis.

Algirdas Landsbergis is an expatriate writer who emigrated from Lithuania in 1944 under the threat of Soviet occupation. The author spent his entire life living abroad, influenced by the existential currents of the literature and philosophy of the time. Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus and Stearns Eliot shaped the author's natural worldview and universal wartime experience, and became the basis for conveying the search for Lithuanian identity and place in the radical situations of exodus. This aspect of Landsbergis's work is particularly pronounced; themes such as settling down, finding and creating one's own place, and the fundamental notion of home are highly relevant.

Separation from home, indigenization and identity are all phenomenological occurrences. The main axis of the article is the phenomenal need to fit in, the importance of home, the experience of place and the emotions and experiences it evokes. For this reason, Husserl's phenomenological homeworld theory is applied to explore the emotional, intellectual and sensual stimuli for identity formation associated with the space of home, as well as the dissipation of space in the encounter with, or the separation from, the place considered home.

HOME: THE MOST IMPORTANT CARRIER OF EXPERIENCE

The phenomenological approach considers an individual subject as living and acting in the world, and relating to it through experience. The concept of the "lived world", like many concepts in phenomenology, was formulated by Edmund Husserl. He believed that the way we perceive the world is a reflection of ourselves (Landgrebe 1940, 39). A phenomenological perspective is therefore thought to conceptualise the natural world and to provide insight into how this world is structured and experienced by consciousness.

The Husserlian distinction between the familiar and the unknown, the world of the home (the "*lebenswelt*"), and the world of the strange (the "*umwelt*") was a proposition derived from an observation that the concept of the lived world was too abstract (Husserl 1989, 234). Husserl uses the term *lebenswelt* to express the way in which the world always appears in a familiar context (Ibid., 235). The world, for Husserl, is constituted by normality and abnormality, and it necessarily reveals itself in the relation of closeness and distantness. This description of the world through familiar and unfamiliar places indicates that space is not homogeneous and is largely dependent on the personal experience. Thus, a subjective perspective, bodily experience, space and place become the main characteristics determining the relationship between the individual and the world. As the paper explores the relationship between place and personal identity, the world is seen not only as an objective, physical phenomenon but also as a plane of cognition and experience in which human beings are operating (Jackson 1996, 29).

From a phenomenological point of view, place can be defined as any environmental locus that gathers all human experiences,

actions and meanings spatially and temporally (Seamon 2013, 150). As David Seamon observes, by this definition, the concept of a place can range from a favourite chair, an outdoor sitting place or a well-used room or building to an urban neighbourhood, a city as a whole, or a geographic region (Seamon 2018, 3). The reconstruction of place, in line with Husserlian philosophy, treats the past not as a dead set of facts but as a set of living problems in dialogue with the present (Moran 2013, 72). Thus, places are the pre-given, unreflected-upon environmental contexts that sustain particular lifeworlds and homeworlds – the locales, settings, resting points and pathways that provide the environmental, spatial and temporal grounding for one's every day, taken-for-granted experiences, understandings and actions (Seamon 2018, 3).

Emmanuel Levinas noted that the alterity of the world becomes an opportunity for self-identification through home and dwelling: "To exist henceforth means to dwell. […] it is a recollection, a coming to oneself, a retreat home with oneself as in a land of refuge, which answers to a hospitality, an expectancy, a human welcome" (Levinas (1961) 2007, 156). So home is the core condition creating a possibility for personal interiority. Levinas also indicated that "home would serve for habitation as the hammer for the driving in of a nail or the pen for writing" (Ibid., 152). Therefore, home is "extraterritorial", meaning that it is excluded from territorial jurisdiction: "The interiority of the home is made of extraterritoriality in the midst of the elements of enjoyment with which life is nourished. […] It is produced in the gentleness or the warmth of intimacy, which is not a subjective state of mind, but an event in the oecumenia of being – a delightful "lapse" of the ontological order" (Ibid., 150). Based on the insights of Levinas, the space of the home is defined as a place of personal identification, determined by the place's relation to the identity of the self and the expression of the conceptuality of experience.

According to Esin Hasgül, environment can be understood as a physical property, but its meaning can also be defined in terms of the communication between the subject and their surroundings (environment) (Dúll 2020, 39). A person's identity can usually be described analysing three reoccurring notions: roles, patterns and activities (Heimsath 1977, 54) associated with the home place. Since the home is an expression of the personality (both in relation to the past and the present), the roles, recurring trait patterns and associated activities are thought to be a reflection of the person's own sense of self. Since phenomenology rejects preconceptions, human experience, objects and phenomena are described as they

appear to the consciousness. The phenomenological perspective allows for the identification and analysis of spaces as they appear to the perceiving consciousness of the protagonist. Based on this approach, a double action is carried out: the identification of the relational place and the disclosure of the expression of personal identity.

HOME AS A PLACE OF PERSONAL IDENTIFICATION IN SHORT STORIES BY A. J. LANDSBERGIS

This article is based on the idea that places are characterised by not only tangible, sensorially identifiable aspects of space but also invisible yet consciously experienced and perceived ones. Place identity (personal identity with a place) arises because places – as bounded localities imbued with personal, social and cultural meanings – are an important basis on which an identity is created, maintained and sometimes transformed. The article perceives the home from two different perspectives: as a physically defined place or as a dynamic, emotionally based symbolic area within the consciousness.

In Algirdas Jeronimas Landsbergis's short stories, the idea of home is not fixed in time but rather fluid, dependent on the protagonist's ever-changing stages of life, family structure, and general circumstances. The emotional dimension of the concept of home is undeniably linked to the subjective emotional outlook, memory and experience. As a diasporic author, Landsbergis particularly focuses on the links between place and communal, familial and national characteristics. The spatial inaccessibility of a premise becomes a recurring consequence of deportation, repression and expatriation. The motif of change is one of Landsbergis's most striking authorial features. The change of the place in which one is acting is considered to be parallel to the change of values and personal state of mind. Running away from threats, looking back to the past, searching for a place where one can feel at home (or resume the former experience of this feeling) becomes vital for Landsbergis' protagonists. In the author's texts, identity becomes a dynamic product of the interaction between the consciousness and structured perception, memory, physical and social structures and the processes of influence constituting the social context.

Based on Husserl's theoretical approach, this study distinguishes three elements of the relationship between locational characteristics and personal identity: the demographic characteristics of the home, the personal identity of the acting agent, and the relationship between the dissemination of the personal identity and the location of the home. In order to determine the relationship between home and identity, two relevant characteristics of the place analysed are distinguished: its existence on the plane of reality and its direct influence on the process of personality formation of the acting experiencer. The aim is to determine whether the identity answers the question "Who am I?" by answering the question "Where do I belong?".

The protagonist of the first short story, "The Skies are Emptying, the Skies are Filling Up", is Adele, a Lithuanian–American who settles in a Sicilian metropolitan area and is surrounded by foreigners and their culture. The short story begins by establishing the inherent dissonance between the protagonist and the place she physically resides in. Adele believes in the possibility of maintaining her Lithuanian-ness by living elsewhere, but her feelings of home, place, and identity are associated solely with Lithuania:

> She looked up. Yes, and that precisely circumscribed expanse of sky, studded with television antennas, different from the more spacious sky in Lithuania above the rooftops, was part of her longing and the strangeness that surrounded her. (Landsbergis 1992, 209)

The ritualistic act of the protagonist's repeated gaze to the sky while standing on the porch can be seen as searching for the promise of return, as it is accompanied by a poetic association implying a positive connotation of a distant homeland. From a phenomenological point of view, Adele's movements are the holders of meaning, expressed through experience in the metaphysical statics of space. This allows the reader to understand that longing is not only a psychological experience but also includes bodily experiences, the connection of the physical body with the notion of place, resulting in the irresistible urge to find coincidences that bring the new home closer to the "real" one. When finding no real connection to the physical plane of place – America – Adele transforms the space of her home into a sublime medium of Lithuanian customs, ethics and mindset, and imprisons herself in it.

Adele feels particularly insecure in a multicultural and multireligious urban area as the previously prioritised social ties that had prevailed in her original home environment lose their importance. The significance of Lithuania as a home is evident in the opportunity to share common values. For Adele, the Lithuanian devotional community's Sundays are the core of her personal identity, pride and honour: "The ribbon of Sundays continued through her childhood and infancy, one of the few threads and strands of her life that had not been torn by expatriation" (Ibid., 210). It is of interest to note that Adele sees nothing but the influence of folk traditions on people's mutual identification in the Lithuanian community. Having lost the community that shaped her during her youth, she starts to search for new vantage grounds. In both Lithuania and America, Sundays offer Adele the chance to be seen and to present a social image – what she calls the "Sunday round" (Ibid., 209). For Adele, this artificial image-making is acceptable, it is a part of her perceived through details.

Without any spiritual contact with the place she is living in, Adele experiences America through her own physicality and also that of others: she observes the sweaty bodies of the local Afro-American workers and condemns the possessive and physical manner of her new Lithuanian neighbour's communication with his wife. At the same time, she looks down on his wife from above, as a member the local urban American culture, considering her uncovered, insufficiently restrained, and lacking Lithuanian-style modesty. Adele dehumanises her neighbour, deeming her to be a fake woman with an artificial appearance, assuming that her lush, beautiful, blonde hair is merely a wig.

It should be added that connections with the past are also sought through the corporeal – through wearing a dress from Lithuania, clutching a prayer book, looking up to the sky when homesick. Adele constantly tries to recreate past bodily experiences associated with Lithuania. This need to feel and experience the place of home also supports Husserl's theory; for Adele, Lithuania is perceived as home because of the bodily experience and the communion felt through it. A place is a *tabula rasa* until the people who act in it have created meaning. The only link between place and the body is the material touch which encodes the secret of the feeling of home.

Adele also considers her growing daughter, Danguolė, as her own flesh and blood, and thus a kind of extension of herself, of her own personal identity. She is most concerned about her daughter's maturing body, her physical corporeality, which will inevitably

"belong to some strange boy who will embrace her waist with a possessive wave like that bearded Lithuanian across the street" (Ibid., 20). Adele is a homemaker representing the family element. Her social space is strictly limited within the confines of the church, child-rearing and home. The German model *kinder–kuche–kirche* was used during the German Empire to describe the inherent role of women. Nowadays, it usually has a pejorative connotation describing what is seen as an outdated model of women's role in modern society. Adele's association with the element of home and her status as a mother can also be seen as a result of the manifestation of corporeality. Her children – who are directly connected and come into this world through the transformation of their mother's body – are her gateway to the world, her connection to it. Since the values of the surrounding society clash with those of Adele, the burden of self-identification of the mother is placed on Danguolė.

Adele does not want to adapt or settle down; she tries to raise her daughter according to the rules she brought from her previous environment. Although she is subconsciously aware that her daughter needs to socialise, to create her own identity, to "start learning to earn money" (Ibid., 211), she nevertheless cannot suppress the need to confine the daughter to the intermediate transitional living space of the maternal home. Danguolė is connected to the new social space which becomes a milieu for growth, psychological maturation, socialisation and self-awareness; meanwhile the things that her mother has instilled in her begin to seem unfamiliar and artificial. Danguolė's personality serves Adele as an extension of her "self", a means of fulfilment. In a sense, Danguolė's corporeality "enfleshes" Adele's identity, linking it to something other than herself.

Adele's personality is best reflected in her little room, which embodies the most important highlights of life:

> Adele was proud of her little room, where she kept her sewing machine and her burial board, but which was always clean. Once dedicated to their baby son, who died before he was a month old, the room still held the solemnity of a distant event. Adele glanced fleetingly at the flower pots in the windows, at the green edge of her territory. (Ibid., 211)

One of the ways in which identity is linked to a place is through a sense of security, the sense of a sanctuary creating a favourable environment for the true personality to emerge. An

inability to settle down and re-establish the security of home in a community leads to a sense of meaninglessness in life, to reduced activity and weakened personal ties. Adele experiences all of this outside the walls of her little room, but within it she feels as if she were in a fortress protecting her from the blasphemy that exists outside the walls.

It is arguable that Adele, as the protagonist, is characterised by a world-rejecting point of view. The need for assimilation arises from the stimuli of the inner subconscious but is confronted with conscious actions which deny the possibility of such an event in an unfamiliar environment. Adele tends to shut herself in, thus gradually seeking an ever smaller and smaller domestic unit where she can feel safe from the external threats and dangers. For her, home is a feeling of security – or rather a distorted notion of security – a place where the community adheres to acceptable ethical rules, conforms to the expected standards of belief, where family members are directly obedient. The inability to discard these attitudes leads to a sense of homelessness and a constant turmoil of conflicting emotions, which prevents Adele from discovering a "self" that exists beyond faith or motherhood.

The narrative of "Duet for Female Voice and Violin in Venice" is presented in the form of a letter written by the protagonist. The letter is addressed to a deceased former teacher and tells the story of an unrequited love that leads the protagonist to an epiphany and helps him to understand the meaning of the fundamental events of his life.

The representation of the storyteller consists of a mixture of various elements. As the protagonist was growing up, his self-identification was largely determined by others: parents and the priest of the Displaced Persons camp saw the protagonist as a future Jesuit priest, and he felt he was following a path he was destined to. In his youth, the formation of self-awareness was based on the opposition of good and evil, exclusively oriented towards the category of the good based on the church and priesthood. The most vivid memories that reveal the process of personality formation relate to the 11-year-old protagonist's departure from his homeland with his family to a refugee camp in postwar Germany. The extension of national identity becomes an interpersonal space realised through the local cultural environment – family, kinship and the local community. The ritualistic nature of everyday activities creates an inarticulate sense of belonging – of being at home – and thus national identity is perceived as innate, ascribed

and expressed in everyday life through obedience to the norms of the community.

Excessive submissiveness to family and community results in his school in Pfingstoberheim becoming a special space–time for the protagonist, a childhood "paradise". He writes that "From the time I was an infant, I was surrounded by a loving circle of people of all good will: my parents, brothers, sisters, cousins and all the other regular attendees of the Masses I served"; describes himself as "the perfect altar boy" and speaks of "my desire to please my family" (Ibid., 192). At school, one must learn discipline, an order which is different from the domestic and the authority of teachers. The main values here are the subjects being taught, the knowledge that needs to be accepted, understood, and revised. Here, one learns about the world outside the community where the learner's knowledge and efforts are valued more than obedience. It is a new experience that the protagonist accepts and preserves in his own way; he "inscribes" it in his inner world, in the space of his personal experience, and ties it to his own image of self.

It is interesting to note that the protagonist's corporeality unfolds only through a relationship with a significant place. Being in a space of personal identification enables the protagonist's body to relax and consciousness to open up to experiences that were previously stifled by submissiveness to the rules of those around him. The externality of place and its imagery suddenly become interior and turn into aspects of personal identity expression. It is only at school that the protagonist experiences and endures the bodily experience of place: the smell of lilacs, the sounds of trams, the aromas of the corridors (Ibid., 191). For the protagonist, school becomes a place of transition between family and society, a place of false identity and the possibility of the self and therefore the first place with which the process of personality formation is associated:

> Through the open windows, a language unintelligible to the house sprang up [...] I breathed in the aroma of the corridor again – children, mould, lilacs – and I heard the streetcar gnashing its teeth as it curved around the corner of the gymnasium street. (Even now, well into my studies, the words and concepts I first heard in that gymnasium building are still marked like scratched coins by the sharp sound of the tram). (Ibid., 191)

Perhaps this is the reason that school is the only place in the short story remembered with such emphasis on the details of the surrounding environment.

Germany is soon left behind, and the impact of the protagonist's artificially imposed identity once again becomes so strong that it overwhelms any need for personal identification. He is reluctant to make decisive decisions for himself – he chooses church due to his family's wishes, whereas he chooses to leave church because of a woman. He sees himself only as others see him. Even after the decision to leave the priesthood, his desire to live up to the expectations imposed on him is still there:

> I kept hearing a voice inside me whispering that I didn't really want to leave the Church, but I hoped that the Church would change so quickly that eventually it would be able to embrace Claudine and I. In the meantime, I'm going to take a holiday.... (Ibid., 193–194)

This reveals that the protagonist's personality is not formed naturally but is based on the desire to please, to conform to the standards that have been set.

As C. Heimsath suggests, home is usually associated with certain roles, actions or repetitive and habitual patterns of behaviour (Heimsath 1977, 54). For Adele, the heroine of the short story analysed previously, the association with home is expressed through the maternal role, while for the protagonist of "Duet for Female Voice and Violin in Venice", it is a complex mix of repetitive processes based on instilled family values. To Claudine, he is a devoted husband ("my first steps in my marital life seemed so clumsy that I automatically took all the blame"; "My guilt was so deep that I took it all on as part of my repentance" [Landsbergis 1992, 194]); to his parents and relatives, he is a humble son. For him, therefore, being at home means total dedication, sacrifice and commitment.

It is soon revealed that the marriage to Claudine lasted only five months, after which she asked for a divorce. The time, the home that has been created with his wife in America becomes a kind of "valley of dolls" based on lies, on his wife's phoney behaviour. Their communication seems like that of a cheap romantic novel: "After she left, I found that novel, Valley of the Dolls, behind the sofa, and I read the whole thing in one long sitting, hoping to understand her better. From that book, her mind spoke to me, her world, her whole being" (Ibid., 194). This is the

first time that the pressure of the environment becomes palpable, destroying all links between the protagonist and his surroundings: "Stunned, guilt-ridden, I would have crawled into a shell or fallen into ecclesiastical repentance" (Ibid., 194). He becomes a stranger to the life he has chosen.

He soon discovers that his wife has lied and has a lover, the family dentist, with whom she is planning a trip to Europe, paid for with the protagonist's credit card. He channels his confusion and purposelessness into an urge to avenge himself on her by interrupting her trip. However, the trip acquires a real meaning: for the first time, in a new environment, he notices people and their behaviour, relaxation, openness to the surroundings, their connection to home and nationality. Here, the body's autonomous action is combined with conscious awareness: "The city began to signal me, to tempt me with lights, signs, hints of melodies, as if it knew my anguish" (Ibid., 198). Guided by his body, the protagonist travels through the streets of Venice, which his body does not recognise but his consciousness familiarises as a space that feels close to home. The fragments of overheard conversations convey Landsbergis's intention to portray the context of sincere encounters as the core of the experience of home – the protagonist's experience of meeting Venice becomes grounded in a specific sensual experience: "They shone, as if enveloped in the happiness I had sought in vain; the child's blond hair glistened in the sun; the wife snuggled against her husband" (Ibid., 198). Body and consciousness once again become open to new experiences and environmental stimuli.

At the end of the short story, the protagonist's self-realisation is connected to the Venetian "stage", "the Venice of the heart" (Ibid., 196), "where all the strings came together, everything was revealed, and you entered the stage again" (Ibid., 205). He writes that the "crystalline strings connected Venice to my childhood, to the post-war German town" (Ibid., 203). The bodily experiences of the other become the protagonist's opportunity for knowledge: the Venetian concert, which takes place outside his body, opens up the meaning of his impulses, gives meaning to past experiences.

For a place to be experienced, there must be a moral or social historical significance and a human being who perceives meaning. For the 12-year-old version of the protagonist, security and home were represented by the melody of the teacher's violin which he heard at school: "It encompassed and sang my happiness and from that evening onwards it has stayed with me all my life" (Ibid., 205). He realises that he loved his wife because of the melodiousness of

her voice, as it was the only link to a place in which he felt at home. This is why the fear of losing Claudine was so intense: she represented everything that he could have never afforded to have. Venice has the capacity to recreate the state of the past, the comfort of home, and so it is here that the protagonist has an "epiphany, a moment of holy clarity" (Ibid., 205), a realisation of what has been missing and sought after all this time. The placelessness of his "me" and the perceived need for identity finally prompt him to search for home and self.

He associates home with the world he lives in and the feelings and experiences it evokes. In this way, he expands the notion of home beyond the confines of the physical space: "I no longer believe in hell, but I know where paradise is: where her voice, heard for the first time, meets your violin phrase on that special evening of my childhood" (Ibid., 205). After the epiphany, the home becomes the space of life, the existential substance of creativity. The environment in which the protagonist is acting changes the lived experience as a space of existential identi-fication. Home is still associated with total devotion as the melody that brings back the feeling of home encourages complete abandonment of the past and a joyful welcome of a future that is true to the protagonist's personality.

In "Pigeons over the Rooftops", Landsbergis portrays eighteen-year-old Petras Budėnas – that is, Peter. He escapes the war in Lithuania and, after staying in a German Displaced Persons camp, he decides to travel to a distant unknown America. Soon after his arrival, Peter begins to feel the disparity between himself and his new home: "Everybody speaks English as one. The streets are roaring, shaking. [...] Everything murmurs, flickers, everything gets in the way", "Colours bite the eyes" (Landsbergis et al. 2006, 64). The geographical dimension of the short story is highly pronounced. America is a new space which is first experienced metaphysically – as existing, visible, real, concrete and tangible. However, as it seems meaningless, so he begins to search for the criteria for assimilation. The trauma of leaving one's native home seems to be repressed, but the reflections reveal a very close relationship with the past – i.e., the homeland in Lithuania. Peter's life is brought into the era of homelessness, and soon comes the realisation that a person makes his own home, makes his own safe place in the surrounding chaos. Thus, the end of homelessness can only be achieved by realising the meaning and significance of *place*.

It should be noted that Peter's corporeality is only related to the space of the United States and has no connection with memories of Lithuania. The US milieu is narrated through the perspective of Peter's awareness, as it manifests itself in his consciousness and is experienced by his physical body:

> Peter's *eyes were most drawn* to the pigeon houses. A man on the other side of the street opened one, and a white group filled the space like a blizzard. *It appeared as if* the snow was falling in large chunks through the sooty curtains and fire ladders. [...] *The sky rang and melted*, and a stream of pigeons drew the grey of the petrol tanks and spread into the mix of houses. (Ibid., 63; authors' emphasis in italics)

As the phrases marked in italics show, the body's sensations are reflected in its relationship with the environment and its attributes.

The geographical dimension of the short story is intertwined with the element of mythical symbolism. The recurring image of an angel emerges as Peter talks about places: "The earth was new, full of mystery and strangeness. [...] he could not tell whether it was Michael or Lucifer" (Ibid., 66). Primarily, the angel symbolises America: "Yes, an angel. With a painted face, an invisible heart, mysteriously strange, but an angel. She is an angel!" (Ibid., 72). However, the angel's association with the former land of his parents is also recognisable as it is mentioned in reference to Lithuania. Thus, it is possible that the primary source of the angel's image is the native land, religious imagery, the organ, grandparents, parents, the church: "Angel is more than the earth" (Ibid., 64). This leads to the hypothesis that the meaning of the angel as a symbol is variable. Its meaning depends on the place within the protagonist's reach, the environment that he seeks to understand and experience. The need to be assimilated is also associated with a certain aggression – the angel is not meant to be understood and tamed but rather to be overcome, fought, "wrestled with": "If my great-grandparents were to rise from their graves right now [...] If they could see through the seas how I wrestle with an angel, they would be surprised" (Ibid., 65). Since returning to the place that shaped the protagonist – his homeland – is not possible, his subconscious suggests that the old must be killed, defeated, so that a new representation can emerge.

The protagonist's consciousness reflects the separation between America and Lithuania, the contrast between rural and

modern urban culture: "Everything is different. A plank, floating in the harbour, also different from those in Germany and Lithuania. The colours devour the eyes" (Ibid., 63). Having become part of modern society, Peter feels as if he has been thrown into the world, a homeless man plagued by the ignominy of social ideology's rebirth. American urban culture in particular diverges from the continuity of traditional rural culture and the meaning of kinship, both linked to the notion of land: "beyond the seas was his land, where his great-grandparents lay buried with their kind, patient eyes" (Ibid., 65). The motif of land is usually considered one of the essential signs of national self-understanding, synonymous with home and inseparable from a person's roots, language and culture: "The land quickly sits in the palm of one's hand and, somehow, in one's heart" (Ibid., 65). Peter's Lithuanianness is conceived as a specific identity that has been displaced in a foreign land but is always brought back by memories and is thus doubly affected by the process of losing home. The condition for the construction and reconstruction of identity is, therefore, the presence of home and homeland. For Peter, the necessity of home embodies the special attraction of a particular place: "The earth quickly burrows into the palm of the hand and somehow into the heart" (Ibid., 65). The land of Lithuania is seen as a metaphysical object connected to the body and its experiences. This is probably because the young man's diasporic identity has been shaped by others presenting the homeland to him not as a dear place but as an idea that has no connection with *his* personal identity. Peter is aware that it is experienced by others as an emotional and spiritual presence, and therefore he clearly recognises that it is not part of his identity, but more of an artificial preference imposed by those around him.

It is of interest to note two emerging planes of place as a significant spatial identification: Lithuania as a natural, national authenticity and America as a disintegrating, once romanticised fiction. Peter emphasises the past, his childhood home, which emerges as a counterweight to the present. He desperately resorts to a psychological compensation that establishes identity. Due to experiencing a sense of not fitting in, he searches for common points of contact with anything familiar. However, both places are devoid of any real sentiment of home, thus creating confusion and forcing Peter to leave his current space and embark on a search. The decision creates a moment of perfect fullness:

> Peter laughed in the face of the city. He knew, he heard. [...] there was meaning and rhythm in the movement of people.

The lights were ringing in all the tones of the organ. There was plenty of heaven and it was waiting for the music. [...] The buildings were singing. You could hear the heart of the city beating. Immeasurable spaces loomed before his eyes and he understood their language. Everything was one. His blood was connected to the earth, the sky and the angel. (Ibid., 72)

The most important spatial points and places are connected by music and the colour white:

And in a distant village church, his great-grandfather pressed the keys with passionate fingers.
His body quivered like a string and his eyes watered with happiness. He looked up to the adjacent roof and tried to see something white. (Ibid., 72)

White can thus be interpreted as a color accompanying initiation into adult life: settling in a place; assimilating it; combining sensation, hearing, vision, empathy and perception experienced in places significant for one's self-identification. The music, accompanied by the colour white, connects Peter's artistic identity with his future in America.

The question of identity reveals the futility of the process of identification. This feeling is only liberated by understanding the need to take responsibility for one's own identity and to interpret it properly, which is the essence and freedom of local autonomy. It is here that the vulnerability and fragility of the identity begins – without a home, a safe haven that allows for freedom of expression and identification, it is powerless to flourish.

CONCLUSION

Social exclusion is thus caused not by the personal desire to take on the role of a social recluse but rather by economic, political and cultural barriers which create imbalance between the acting agent and the acting space. Emotional reactions to the loss of a home are manifested at the cognitive, physiological, emotional and behavioural levels. The characters are afflicted by homesickness for their former or possible future home, which leads them to self-reflexive experiences and a sense of not fitting in.

In these short stories, the sense of home materialises in a sense of loss. As noted above, the exclusive prioritisation of certain

spatial features essentially refers to their association with personal characteristics. It can be argued that Adele learns about the world through the body as a dimension of her own experience, the plane of the physical being. Her relation to the new place is antagonistic. She lives in America but her home is in Lithuania, a place to which her personal identity is linked. Self-identification in this short story is not self-reflexive since national and cultural traits are perso-nalised and accepted as units of self-expression.

For the former Jesuit priest, the image of the domestic space is revealed as an objective phenomenon, an intermediate variant between the constructed image brought from childhood and adolescence and the mosaic of places in everyday life. His home is an image of childhood security, a space for self-realisation, self-expression and creativity. The space of the home is intricately multidimensional; domestication takes the form of the fulfilment of the spatial equivalent necessary for personal expression.

Peter tries to embrace and assimilate the new place in a dual sense – both as a metaphysical phenomenon and as a plane of cognition and experience. The world for him is an open playground, an adventure, a path to the "self". However, it is clear that self-identification through the home space is linked to the space of America rather than to Lithuania. The challenge of reconciling the new place with the protagonist's personal identity highlights Peter's need for self-awareness and identity maturity, which previously seemed impossible within the confines of his homeland and loved ones.

Despite the differences in protagonists, the authors of this article consider them actively self-reflexive, evaluating the past vicissitudes of life and projecting a desired future, influenced by social transformations. The element of voluntary separation from home does not exist in the short stories and it appears to be only ostensibly voluntary – the home is left because of the war, the sense of an impending threat. However, distance from the "familiar" opens up the possibility of true self-identification and demonstrates it to be critically necessary for the development of each protagonist's identity. The recurring need to solidify a personal identity in a coherent space remains the main creative aspect binding the stories together. The recurring need to solidify a personal identity in a coherent space remains the main creative aspect binding the stories together. The development of personality without a domestic space which reflects and embodies it might not be impossible.

REFERENCES

1. Dúll, A. (2020). "Things and Places: The Meaning of the Physical Environment from an Environmental Psychology and Environmental Communication Perspective." *Mental Mapping. The Science of Orientation. New Approaches to Location – Spatial Patterns of the Global Economy Conference*. Pallas Athene Geopolitical Institute, 35–48. https://doi.org/10.14267/978-3-944850-78-8_3

2. Heimsath, C. (1977). *Behavioral Architecture toward an Accountable Design Process*. USA: McGraw-Hill Book.

3. Husserl, E. (1989). *Aufsätze und Vorträge (1922–1937)*. Eds. T. Nenon and H. R. Sepp. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers/Springer.

4. Jackson, M. (1996). *Things as They Are: New Directions in Phenomenological Anthropology*. Indiana University Press.

5. Landgrebe, L. (1940). "The World as a Phenomenological Problem." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 1 (1), 38–58.

6. Landsbergis, A. (1992). *Kelionės muzika*. Vilnius: Vaga.

7. Landsbergis, A., Mekas, J., Mekas, A., and Leonas, L. (2006). *Modernioji lietuvių egzilio proza*. Vilnius: Versus aureus.

8. Levinas, E. ((1961) 2007). *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.

9. Moran, D. (2013). "'Die verborgene Einheit intentionaler Innerlichkei'. Husserl on History, Life and Tradition." *Alter* 21 (21), 117–134. https://doi.org/10.4000/alter.889

10. Seamon, D. (2013). "Lived Bodies, Place, and Pheno-menology." *Journal of Human Rights and the Environment* 4 (2), 143–166.

11. Seamon, D. (2018). "Well-Being and Phenomenology – Lifeworld, Natural Attitude, Homeworld and Place." In: Galvin, K. (ed.) *Routledge Handbook of Well-Being*. Abingdon: Routledge, 100–109.

THE VICTORIOUS YOUTH DOUBLE DILEMMA: FROM HERITAGE NETWORKS TO ORIGIN AND BACK

ILIJA RUMENOV

LJUBEN TEVDOVSKI

ILE MASALKOVSKI

DONCHE TASEV

Ilija Rumenov, PhD
Associate professor in Private International Law
Faculty of Law "Iustinianus Primus"
University Ss Cyril and Methodius
Skopje, Macedonia
e-mail: i.rumenov@pf.ukim.edu.mk
https://orcid.org/0009-0000-2763-5119

Ljuben Tevdovski, PhD
Associate Professor of Classical Archaeology
and Archaeological Theory
Institute for History and Archeology
University "Goce Delcev"
Stip, Macedonia
e-mail: ljuben.tevdovski@ugd.edu.mk
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9486-4341

Ile Masalkovski, PhD
Associate Professor of Public Administration
Faculty of Administration and Information Systems
University St. Kliment Ohridski
Bitola, Macedonia
e-mail: ile.masalkovski@uklo.edu.mk

Donche Tasev, PhD, researcher
International Cultural Relations Institute - Skopje
e-mail: donce_tasev@yahoo.com

Dr. Ilija Rumenov is an Associate Professor at the Law Faculty "Iustinianus Primus" in Skopje, with over a decade of experience in academia and legal practice. Specializing in Private International Law and Conflict of Laws, Rumenov has made significant contributions to the fields of Private International Law, Cross-border Judicial Cooperation, EU Private International Law and Cultural Heritage Law. His work focuses on the intersection of national and international legal systems, particularly in the context of the Western Balkans and EU integration. His academic focuses involve cross-border judicial cooperation, recognition, and enforcement of foreign judgments with focus on international family law, child abduction, and the application of Hague Conventions. Rumenov has professional experience in restitution of cultural property, alternative dispute resolution and private international law aspects of cultural heritage law. He was actively involved in legal reform projects in the Western Balkans, and supported by organizations such as GIZ, UNOPS, and the Nordic Council. Rumenov is a member of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA), the European Association of Private International Law and the research teams on EU integration and legal reforms in the Western Balkans.

Dr. Ljuben Tevdovski is classicist, archaeologist, diplomat, lecturer, international expert and cultural manager with more than two decades of experience in leading positions in educational, scientific, and governmental institutions, and NGOs. His core fields of expertise incorporate international relations, history of religion, classical studies and theory and history of archaeology. His research and analyses also involve the scientific areas of cultural studies and cultural and public diplomacy. Tevdovski is Associate Professor of Classical Archaeology and Archaeological Theory at the Institute of History and Archaeology, Goce Delcev University. He also taught courses in the Faculty of Educational Sciences, Faculty of Law, and the Macedonian Diplomatic Academy, and

gave lectures in numerous universities in different countries. Tevdovski served as: Deputy Director of Research of the Holocaust Fund of the Jews from Macedonia, Director of the Museum of the City of Skopje, Macedonian Ambassador to Canada, Public Diplomacy Advisor and Member of the Foreign Policy Council of the President of Macedonia. He has also served as founder, Editor-in-chief and member of the editorial boards of numerous prestigious Macedonian and Balkan academic journals. Tevdovski has written and edited academic and fictional books, articles, and analyses, and led important inter-university and think-tank initiatives and research projects.

Dr. Ile Masalkovski is Associate Professor at the Faculty of Law, St. Clement of Ohrid University in Bitola. His specializations involve the areas of Public Administration, Public opinion and mass communications. He has extensive theoretical and practical experience in the areas of international relations and protocol. He has attended and co-organized numerous conferences and published in the fields of public administration, public policy, public opinion, cultural heritage and tourism. He has served as Deputy Secretary General for protocol and communications affairs at the Office of the President of Republic of Macedonia, adviser and expert in protocol, and expert to the Chamber of Commerce and various nongovernmental organizations and initiatives.

Dr. Donche Tasev is a prominent legal expert with extensive experience in theory and practice of protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. His doctoral thesis, defended at the Faculty of Law, the University of Ljubljana, deals with comparative legal and political aspects of the protection of individual and collective rights provided by international treaties. In the last two decades, he was actively involved in case studies and long-term research on the related legal framework and practices of different EU and non-EU countries. In addition, his expertise extends to public international law, the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, as well as aspects related to the work and judgments of the European Court of Human Rights, particularly in the area of identity issues such as minority rights, freedom of association, protection of cultural heritage, and related matters. In the last years, his scientific interest also involves special focus on the protection of cultural heritage under European Union law.

ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the multifaceted journey of the Statue of Victorious Youth, an extraordinary Hellenistic bronze sculpture with a contested modern legacy. The study adopts an interdisciplinary approach, combining art historical and archaeological analysis with private international law to explore both the statue's origins and the complex legal disputes surrounding its ownership. Central to the analysis is the dual challenge of reconciling the legal doctrines *of lex originis*—the law of cultural origin—and *lex rei sitae*—the law of location—highlighting a "double dilemma" between juridical frameworks and evolving cultural-historical understandings. The research critically examines recent landmark rulings, especially the European Court of Human Rights decision affirming Italy's claim, while engaging with current archaeological scholarship that advocates moving beyond fixed cultural containers toward a networked view of heritage. The paper underscores the need for nuanced, ethically grounded legal policies that respect the interconnected nature of ancient material culture, and it outlines the implications of these insights for heritage management, restitution processes, and museum ethics in a globalized world.

Keywords: Hellenistic sculpture, Victorious Youth, *lex originis*, *lex rei sitae*, cultural heritage law, cultural networks, interdisciplinary study

INTRODUCTION

In The Statue of Victorious Youth, also known as the Getty Bronze, is not only a remarkable artistic masterpiece of the ancient world but also a focal point where multiple disciplines converge to unravel its complex story. This life-sized bronze statue of a youthful athlete—imbued with the triumph and cultural ideals of the Hellenistic period—embodies far more than aesthetic achievement. Its journey from creation, through centuries submerged beneath the Adriatic near Fano, Italy, to modern legal disputes underscores a profound interdisciplinary and juridical dilemma at the intersection of art history, archaeology, cultural heritage law, and international relations.

This paper foregrounds the necessity of an interdisciplinary approach to fully appreciate the statue's multifaceted significance and contentious modern fate. It situates the Victorious Youth within its artistic and cultural contexts, drawing on art historical and archaeological scholarship to understand the statue's stylistic origins, technical mastery, and symbolic meaning within the broad, intertwined networks of Hellenistic culture. Simulta-neously, it introduces the complex legal and ethical challenges that have emerged following its acquisition by the J. Paul Getty Museum and Italy's subsequent claims for restitution, anchored in the competing private international law principles of *lex originis* (law of cultural origin) and *lex rei sitae* (law of location).

These competing legal principles frame a "double dilemma." The first is the legal challenge of determining which jurisdiction's laws rightfully apply to the statue – a question complicated by the statue's mobility, uncertain provenance, and the historical layering of cultural identities it embodies. The second dilemma resides within the cultural and scholarly domain: how to reconcile fixed, often Eurocentric and nationalistic cultural categories used in legal settings with contemporary archaeological and historical understandings of the ancient past as a dynamic network of interconnected cultures rather than isolated "containers." These dual tensions reveal the limits of traditional frameworks and highlight the urgent need for dialogue between disciplines to develop nuanced legal and ethical approaches that reflect complex cultural realities.

By emphasizing this interdisciplinarity and the dual challenges posed by both legal doctrines and cultural-historical paradigms, this chapter frames the Victorious Youth not merely as an artwork or legal object, but as a catalyst for broader reflections

on heritage, identity, and international cooperation. This paper aims to deliver a holistic analysis that weaves together artistic scholarship, archaeological theory, international law, and cultural policy to illuminate the statue's historical journey and the contemporary questions it raises for cultural restitution, museum ethics, and the evolving definitions of cultural belonging in a globalized world.

HOISTED FROM THE DEEP, LINGERING IN THE AIR

The Statue of Victorious Youth has been the subject of considerable scholarly attention across multiple disciplines, establishing a rich, but fragmented, body of research. One of the first art historians and archaeologists who influenced the analyses on the statue was Bernard Ashmole. He was an early expert consulted during the statue's acquisition phase and, thus, had unique opportunity to inspect the statue in the early 1970s. He is among the early supporters of the initial attribution of the statue to Lysippos, the renowned sculptor working on the court of Alexander the Great (Ashmole ca. 1970–1977; Getty Museum 1996). The analyses of stylistic and technical attributes of this remarkable artefact continued from 1973 to 1986 under the guidance of the curator at the Getty Museum, Jiri Frel, revealing the technical mastery of a lost wax-casting technique and its representation of youthful athletic idealism in contrast to Classical muscular forms. Frel placed the statue in the wider Hellenistic context, suggesting stylistic parallels with a portrait of Demetrios Poliorketes (king of Macedon 294–288bc) and other representations of the same period (Frel 1981, 72–75). While certain conservation efforts were also documented and analysed at that point, a more comprehensive overview with be published a decade later (Frel 1978; Scott and Podany 1989; Mattusch 1997).

It was only in 1997 that Mattusch published the monograph *The Victorious Youth*, with wide focus and thorough analyses of the art historical aspects, possible archaeological contexts and scientific dating, as well as discussions of the statue's attribution and cultural significance (Mattusch 1997). The limited art historian and archaeological investigations focus on provenance, material culture, and regional contexts, albeit indirectly due to the statue's lack of archaeological excavation context. Researchers like Mattusch (1997) and others have pointed to the wide geographic

parallels of similar sculptures across the Hellenistic world, from Macedonia to Bactria, underscoring the cosmopolitan cultural networks of antiquity. The statue's submerged discovery and ambiguous journey remain central puzzles in archaeological inquiry.

On the legal front, significant attention has been directed at the dispute over the statue's ownership, which created a wider forum of authors that, through this case, already provided some broader analyses of the complex interplay of national laws, international conventions, and ethical considerations that define cultural property disputes.

The growing legal literature on this case in the last two decades mostly addresses the intricate issues surrounding cultural property disputes, focusing on the conflict between national heritage claims and museum acquisition rights. Central to the discussion is Italy's assertion of ownership based on cultural patrimony and laws prohibiting illicit export, contrasted with the Getty Museum's defence emphasizing legal purchase and the statue's disputed provenance, including its recovery in international waters (Ritchie 2009; Li and Sargent 2017). The literature highlights challenges posed by inconsistent international conventions and enforcement difficulties, emphasizing the need for flexible legal frameworks that consider both the cultural nationalism of source countries and the broader nature of heritage (Lanciotti 2021; Bernard 2023; Ku 2024). These analyses collectively reveal the complexity of repatriation cases, advocating for nuanced, context-sensitive solutions that balance legal, ethical, and cultural considerations (Ritchie 2009; Li and Sargent, 2017; Lanciotti 2021; Bernard 2023; Vrdoljak 2024; Ku 2024).

At the same time, and independently from the developments of this case, interdisciplinary scholarship increasingly emphasizes the importance of transcending rigid cultural and national categorizations when examining cultural artefacts and confronting "culturalist thinking" in archaeology and broader historical research (Holtorf 2017; Versluys 2024). In recent decades, archaeologists and anthropologists have forged collaborative, multidisciplinary works that reconnect heritage to sociological, political, ecological, and other societal challenges, broadening academic interests and perspectives (Funder et al. 2019; Hodos et al. 2017; Colomer 2017; Meskell 2009). These multidisciplinary approaches have introduced vital new viewpoints, encouraging a move beyond traditional boundaries and enriching our understanding of the past (Appiah 2018; Cannadine 2013).

However, while such research has generated important conceptual advances, the theoretical and practical legal aspects of heritage related to these endeavours remain insufficiently integrated and are often understudied within contemporary interdisciplinary discussions.

Despite the breadth of existing research, notable gaps remain and emerge in the last years. In that context, this paper reaches towards the missing links, but also, towards new dynamics, encouraged by significant epistemological and ontological questions of an inevitable upcoming multidimensional and multidisciplinary academic and societal dialogue.

First, the art historical and archaeological literature related to Victorious Youth is mainly centred on reports and analyses of Getty's own curators and associates. While many of those analyses are of high quality, a wider comparativist approach and decentring of the research focuses will provide important perspective both for the statue and Hellenistic art in general.

In addition, the introduction of a new interdisciplinary approach in the research related to this artefact will reveal its hidden potential to contribute to the present vivid debates among archaeologists, historians and researchers from related disciplines dealing with the complex relations between heritage and identities, globalization of ideas vs. globalization of materials and connectivity in antiquity and modernity.

Most importantly, the landmark decision of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in 2024 in the case J. Paul Getty Trust and Others v. Italy which is specifically and atypically affirmative towards the *lex originis* principle, creates a new tendency in transnational legal settings and implicitly, but inevitably, refocuses the multidisciplinary academic endeavours. It is more than obvious, now, that this case will become emblematic for many future interdisciplinary debates focused on the cultural and legal aspects of heritage, identities and belonging. This rapid legal development creates a critical gap of knowledge in the complex definitions and paradigms that determine the elements of global, regional, local, intertwined, unique and shared heritage of cultures, nations, states, communities, groups, entities and individuals. Academic conceptions that might have a significant bearing on future court cases and decisions built upon the *lex originis*.

THE UNIQUE JOURNEY OF THE STATUE OF VICTORIOUS YOUTH

The Statue of Victorious Youth, also known as the Getty Bronze, is an exceptional example of ancient bronze sculpture dating, according to majority of researchers, from the period of life of Alexander the Great to the later centuries of rule of his esteemed descendants – widely known as Diadochi. This life-sized bronze figure was discovered submerged in the Adriatic Sea near Fano, Italy, in 1964 and subsequently acquired by the J. Paul Getty Museum in 1977 (Mattusch 1997; Ashmole 1977). The statue depicts a nude young athlete in a contrapposto stance, raising his right hand to place a victory wreath upon his head, symbolizing triumph in athletic competition frequently utilized in the court propaganda of the descendants of Alexander the Great (Frel 1982; Pausanias 2nd century CE).

Since the statue was not excavated archaeologically, no contextual evidence about its original placement, dedicatory inscriptions, or setting is available. While our understanding of its precise cultural role, original audience, and the identity of the youth depicted, are limited, its geographical origin and journeys represent a mystery that keeps on piling up even today.

The archaeologists and art historians have made efforts to grasp the context of the statue, underlining that it was crafted using the lost wax technique. The present analyses clarify that the sculpture exemplifies the high technical skill and artistic finesse of bronze casting during the Hellenistic period (roughly the period between Alexander the Great and Cleopatra VII) (Mattusch 1997). Stylistic analyses also confirm this dating, as the figure's slender and elegant physique illustrates the typical aesthetic departure from the muscular ideal of the Classical period towards a more naturalistic and expressive representation of youthful beauty in the Hellenistic period (Mattusch 1997; Frel 1982).

The statue's attribution remains a subject of scholarly debate. While initially attributed to Lysippus, the renowned 4th-century BCE sculptor and official artist of Alexander the Great's court, more recent analyses propose it was created by later artist on one of the Hellenistic courts that innovated the technics, but kept certain proud traditions and symbolics related to "time of Alexander" and Lysippus' stylistic innovations (Frel 1982; Mattusch 1997; Daehner and Lapatin 2015).

Yet, these convincing academic reconstructions of the statue's original social and cultural context as a political symbol linked to the Macedonian elites (Mattusch 1997), are not particularly helpful in generating a clear picture of its geographic origin. The art historian research and numismatic evidence provide wide parallels, not just in the traditional centers like the Macedonian kingdom, Antioch or Alexandria, but also throughout the Hellenistic world, as far as Bactria (present day Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan) (Mattusch 1997, 80–86). The assumption that this statue relates to a vast number of artefacts hoarded in Rome from the closest Hellenistic kingdoms that the Romans conquered and looted is logical, yet hypothetical.

However, the journey of the Victorious Youth is neither geographically limited between Uzbekistan and Italy, nor completed in antiquity. In modernity this "adventurous Youth" moved from the Mediterranean to the continent (Germany) and all through the New World form Brassil to California (Fincham 2014; Dettelbach 2018). After all, it is a representation of the Hellenistic kings that irrespective of the geographical location of their courts unanimously claimed that they are rulers of the "whole world" – *cosmocrators* (Tevdovski 2025, 61–90; Tevdovski 2020; Strootman 2014, 38–6; Stewart 1993).

LEX ORIGINIS, THE RETURN AND THE JOURNEYS YET TO COME

The story of the modern journeys of the "Victorious Youth" began in 1964, when Italian fishermen off the Adriatic coast near Fano hauled up this long-submerged bronze from their nets. The modern adventures of the celebrated "Youth" went through a murky chain of sales through antiquities dealers of numerous countries and continents, shadowed by smuggling and incomplete document-tation. By the early 1970s this ancient statue was in the hands of the international art market, and in 1977 it was purchased for the J. Paul Getty Museum in Malibu (later relocated to the Getty Villa) for nearly $4 million, becoming one of the museum's signature masterpieces. Nonetheless, this was not the end of the road.

No matter how glorious this far new destination was, the "Youth" has yet new journeys ahead. While the world is still waiting of its glorious return to Italy, this "ancient hero" opened many new avenues for us to travel. Part of them certainly being the analyses of the accomplishments, shortcomings and the potential

of legal, scientific, sociological and humanistic research and their implementation in contemporary and future international challenges.

Many new analyses in these and related fields will commence from and build upon the proceedings and landmark decision of ECtHR in the case of J. Paul Getty Trust and Others vs. Italy, regarding a dispute centring on the Victorious Youth.

This case in essence focuses on the consequences of Article 1 of Protocol no. 1 to the ECHR and the tension between private property rights and the public interest in preserving cultural heritage. The judgment that is in favour of Italy, underscores the principle that states have a legitimate interest in reclaiming cultural artefacts that are part of their national heritage, even if those are held by private entities abroad (Rumenov and Tasev 2025). Interestingly, without formally abandoning *lex rei sitae* principle, the Court weighed Italy's cultural connection to the artefact – its symbolic, historical, and narrative relevance – as legally and morally significant:

> irrespective of that issue, the Italian State had acquired ownership of the Bronze as it had been discovered by an Italian-flagged vessel and therefore within Italian territory, in accordance with Article 4 of the Italian Navigation Code (see paragraph 116 below). Moreover, although antiquities experts had put forward several hypotheses (that the Bronze was an original, a Roman copy, a travelling exhibit or part of an imperial collection), the Bronze was most probably the work of the Greek artist Lysippus and its connection with Italy had to be considered 'certainly not marginal', as at the time the Statue had been created the artist had most probably visited Rome and Taranto. At the relevant time, Greece and Rome had enjoyed good relations and, thereafter, Roman civilisation developed as a continuation of Hellenic civilisation. This was sufficient, according to the GIP, to establish a significant connection between the cultural object and Italy. (ECtHR 2024, par. 89)

In addition, the Court of Cassation, entering an extensive overview and interpretation of classical history with relative focus on cultural history, has held as follows:

> there is no doubt that the Statue of the 'Victorious Youth' […] is part of the State's artistic heritage. This conclusion is based

[…] on its belonging to that cultural continuum that has, since its inception, linked Italic and Roman civilisation to Greek culture, of which the Roman culture can well be regarded as carrying the torch. As Mr [S.C.]'s defense expertly reminds [us] […] substantial military incursions into Greece on the part of the Romans only began in 146 B.C. with the fall of Corinth and the defeat of the Achaean League (although the conquest of Macedonia occurred before then, which is not a coincidence when one considers that the sculptor Lysippus owes part of his fame to his bronze statue depicting, with astounding realism, the features of Alexander the Great, who favoured him as the master of the craft; see the Anthology of Planudes, epigram no. 119), so much so that only in the proto-imperial era Horace, in his Epistle to Augustus, mentioned, in the famous couplet, Graecia capta, ferum victorem cepit/et artes intulit agresti Latio ('Greece, the captive, made her savage victor captive, and brought the arts into rustic Latium', from Horace's Epistles, 1, 2, v. 156 et seq.), the Greek influence on Italian territory goes back much further; many of the most important Greek historical figures were born in what were then the Greek colonies on Italic territory (Gorgias was born in Leontinoi, Archimedes in Syracuse, to name but a few of the major figures), other lived there to the point of claiming a sense of belonging (notably, Herodotus, born in Halicarnassus in Asia Minor, was called 'Herodotus of Thurium', due to his lengthy stay in the Greek colony of Thurium, today's Apulia); the first literary and artistic expressions referring to Latin culture can easily be attributed to figures educated in a Greek environment (one for all, Livius Andronicus, who arrived in Rome – following Livius Salinator, whose family name he took – from his native Taranto, the city where Lysippus of Sicyon had stayed and worked. (ECtHR 2024, par. 100)

Moreover, this extensive historical argumentation reaches an overarching conclusion heavily burthened with historical and archaeological paradigms, or rather hypotheses, reaffirmed the position that:

a continuum between Greek civilisation, which had expanded onto Italian territory, and the subsequent Roman cultural experience; a continuum confirmed by the presence

off the coast of Pedaso, in what is now the Marche Region, of the Statue of the 'Victorious Youth'. (ECtHR 2024, par. 100)

it may be reasonably inferred that, whether the Statue was carried by a ship that in turn had sailed from Italian territory – the presence of Lysippus of Sicyon in what used to be Taranto has been indeed documented – or whether it was transported by a ship that had set sail from the Ionian coast of the Greek peninsula, the final destination was one of the Adriatic ports of the Italian peninsula, in further support of the artefact's place within our country cultural orbit from as far back as that time. (ECtHR 2024, par. 101)

Such affirmative relation of the ECtHR towards the *lex originis* principle, shows implicit support and enables legitimacy of *lex originis* reasoning in transnational legal settings. Furthermore, such position of the ECtHR can be seen as a warning for museums, collectors and art dealers, emphasizing the need for thorough due diligence when acquiring cultural artefacts. With that position it also highlights the growing trend of restitution claims and the potential legal and reputational risks for institutions holding disputed items (Rumenov and Tasev 2025). By affirming states' rights to reclaim unlawfully removed cultural artifacts – even decades after their displacement – the ECtHR has redefined the balance between private ownership and public interest under the ECHR.

This decision bears some repercussions for future legal and policy frameworks. Firstly, the case clearly provides that the inconsistent understanding of the main aspects of cultural heritage needs to be addressed, and more clear definitions have to be established for the key concepts such as "stolen" cultural property, or the application of *lex originis* or *lex situs*. Current frameworks—whether PIL's *lex situs* or cultural heritage law's *lex originis*—force artificial choices between competing legitimate interests. Moreover, this conceptual aspect needs to extend to other definitions such as due diligence requirements and restitution procedures based on EU provisions and international agreements. Secondly, the decision, shows the difference in the cross-border approach towards cultural property including the recognition of foreign patrimony laws and the forum shopping (Rumenov and Tasev 2025). Thirdly, the most important aspect that comes out from this decision and the support of the *lex originis* principle is the duty of museums, collectors and dealers to adopt rigorous

provenance research as a legal and ethical obligation, moving beyond mere compliance to proactive accountability. National legislation should mandate transparency in acquisition that fails to meet due diligence standards. This would require institutions to assess not just the legal title but to take into account the historical context (Rumenov and Tasev 2025).

Finally, it is more than obvious from this case that the definitions and paradigms that determine the relations of certain cultures, nations, states, communities, and the related material culture will have a meaningful bearing on the future court cases and decisions build upon the *lex originis* principle. Thus, this novel tendency opens multidimensional and multidisciplinary dilemmas that transcend from epistemological to ontological aspects of these interdisciplinary endeavours.

LEX ORIGINIS VS *LEX REI SITAE*: THE PRIVATE INTERNATIONAL LAW DILEMMA

The case of J. Paul Getty Trust and Others vs. Italy, regarding a dispute centring on the Victorious Youth, represents an unequivocal reminder that the consequence of the "belonging" of cultural heritage is specifically manifested in terms of the private international law aspects of cultural property. Private international law is part of law that refers to the cross-border dimensions of civil and commercial matters. Specifically, it concerns the international jurisdiction of courts, determination of the applicable law and the recognition and enforcement of foreign judicial decisions. The subject of cultural property lies on the line of public and private law relations. Its position is largely defined by the movable nature of cultural objects (Vrdoljak 2024, 2). So, this possibility to move cultural objects from one point to other distinguishes them from other forms of cultural heritage, rendering it able to be possessed, transferred, exchanged, imported, exported, removed, stolen, or returned (Ibid.). As a consequence, to properly protect cultural objects a more comprehensive action is needed covering public international law instruments (The 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property; The 1995 UNIDROIT Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects) and private international law actions.

In context of private international law actions, the problem here arises in regard to the characterization of the connecting

factors, such as *lex situs* (which is dominant in the determination of the property rights) and *lex originis*. This ambiguity is highlighted for more subjective components. The *lex situs* principle refers to the law of the place where the object is situated at the time of transfer and tends to dominate in questions of title transfer of the title (Roodt 2015, 40). In terms of movable and immovable objects, it is argued that the *lex rei sitae* principle determines the applicable law with simplicity, objectivity, transparency, legal certainty and ease of application (Chechi 2017/2018, 276). Nonetheless, there are huge concerns about the implementation of a principle that generally is provided for commercial transactions, since transaction of cultural objects have different specifics (Ibid.). Most serious concern is that *lex situs* principle will provide for forum shopping and finding the best place to transfer any title regarding cultural objects (Rumenov and Tasev 2025).

It is without suprise that the *lex originis* principle is the most serious alternative for the *lex situs* principle (Chechi 2014, 97). *Lex originis* principle is implicitly affirmed in the *J Paul Getty Trust and Others v Italy* case and explicitly provided in Belgian, Kosovar, Macedonian and Montenegrin Acts of Private International Law (see Article 90 of the Belgian PILA, Art. 67 of the Macedonian PILA, Art. 69 of the Kosovo PILA, Art. 33 of the Montenegrin PILA). Its rationale is very natural, the country of the origin of the cultural objects needs to determine the applicable law, because it has the closest connection and the most legitimate claim to the objects comprising its cultural heritage (Belgian PILA Art. 90, Macedonian PILA Art. 67, Kosovo PILA Art. 69, Montenegrin PILA Art. 33). However, its application comes with a serious problem especially in terms of its ambiguity. The illustration of this problem can be seen even in the *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea* from 1982 where Article 149 provides:

> All objects of an archaeological and historical nature found in the Area shall be preserved or disposed of for the benefit of mankind as a whole, particular regard being paid to the preferential rights of the State or country of origin, or the State of cultural origin, or the State of historical and archaeological origin. (*United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea* 1982, Art. 149)

Such provisions represent a legal nightmare for the judges which need to determine the applicable law based on pure historical circumstances such as country of origin, country of

cultural origin and state of historical and archaeological origin. For example, what will be the case where the State of origin of a particular cargo may or may not be the flag state of a wrecked ship (Nafziger 2021, 37). Moreover, in such cases, what law could have priority over the others, if for example, the country of origin under which the vessel sailed, the state where the vessel was supposed to arrive or which provided a home port, or the state whose government or nationals commissioned the artifact (Ibid.). Another significant problem regarding the characterization of the cultural heritage in connection with the "*lex originis*" principle is the "historical nature" as opposed to "historical significance" or "historical value" (Ibid., 38). In other words, how old are objects of "historical nature"? Another problem which adds to the complexity of the characterization of the term "*lex origins*" is the continuity or the succession of the rights regarding the country of origin. For example, weather todays Italy can have claim on all or the artifacts that are produced during the reign of the Roman Empire?

All these complex historical, social and philosophical questions are brought upon a judge that needs to determine the applicable law regarding property rights, contract law and damages based on connecting factors not tailored for cultural objects (Chechi 2017/2018, 274). So, to properly determine the relevant connecting factor, a judge needs to know the mechanism of commerce of cultural objects. This mechanism is consisted of a network of vast number of actors, such as auction houses, antiques dealers and galleries (Ibid.). Moreover, very important aspect that the judge needs to consider is the method in which these objects were obtained, whether these objects are of licit or illicit provenance (Chechi 2017/2018, 274). In essence the problem of the determination of the applicable law, can be summarized to the question of the transfer of property; weather the substantive applicable law allows transfer of licitly or illicitly obtained objects and does it take into consideration the protection of *bona fide* purchasers or the original owner. By the time these disputes do reach courts of law, resolving them will always be difficult, because there is a huge interest from the side of the claimant and the respondent - the original owner from whom the work was taken and the good-faith purchaser (Fincham 2008, 113). Such legal scene provides for forum shopping, where claimants can intentionally choose jurisdictions with laws more favourable to their case (Rumenov and Tasev 2025).

One of the proposed approaches towards building a more comprehensive system for the protection of cultural objects, different from the usual commercial transactions is the building of *lex culturalis* (Chechi 2017/2018, 290; Chechi 2014, 244; Roodt 2015, 55). This system is built on the premise that there is need to restrain the uncritical application of ordinary business norms to transactions involving cultural objects (Roodt 2015, 55). The ideas behind this approach is firstly to apply the laws of the State that has the closest connection with the case at the expense of the culture insensitive *lex rei sitae*, secondly to extend limitation periods in order to prevent criminals, reckless art professionals and dishonest collectors from profiting from the expiry of time limits; and thirdly to take into consideration and enforce the ownership rights set out in the patrimony laws (Chechi 2017/2018, 293). The result of such actions should be that *lex culturalis* will allow private international law and cultural heritage law to work together with a view to restraining the application of norms that seem deferential to the commercial imperatives that dominate the international art market, and that have proved to be unable either to control or discipline effectively the demand side of the market or to fight the illicit trade of cultural property through the vast international networks (Chechi 2017/2018, 293). Only time will reveal whether this approach will ultimately prevail over the others, however recent developments in the ECtHR in the J. Paul Getty Trust and Others v. Italy case clearly indicate certain directions of the future development.

THE MATERIAL CULTURE OF CULTURAL CONTAINERS VS. THE MATERIAL CULTURE OF CULTURAL NETWORKS: THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL THEORY DILEMMA

The case of J. Paul Getty Trust and Others vs. Italy, concerning the dispute over the ancient statue known as the Victorious Youth, vividly illustrates the growing significance of historical, anthropological, and archaeological evidence in different legal proceedings. These disciplines are increasingly playing a crucial role in providing essential context and enabling the formulation of well-informed arguments, which are indispensable in resolving complex private international law issues related to cultural property.

At the same time, it is a blunt reminder that legal arguments regarding archaeological artifacts often rely heavily on conservative legal definitions of cultural and national origins that do not fully embrace the complexities of archaeological methodologies and historical cultural dynamics. The existing legal frameworks tend to define ownership and heritage through fixed "cultural" categories that emerged centuries ago from historical, philological and archaeological arguments, discourses and hypotheses. Yet, while these institutionalized, semi-institutionalized and memorized "cultural" and cognitive categories are a proud reminder of the strong influence of history, archaeology, classics and related disciplines on society, many of them represent only rudimentary remnants of redundant hypotheses long since abandoned by scholars, some as far back as centuries ago.

The findings of the Court of Cassation in this case illustrate the risks of misuse of archaeological, historical and wider "cultural facts" and argumentations in providing informed and culture sensitive court decisions.

Thus, the tautological "Roman civilization developed as a continuation of Hellenic civilization" that evolves as a general ideological mantra throughout the court's "culturally sensitive" findings, represents not just a scientifically redundant argument, but also one that lacks any cross-cultural sensitivity (ECtHR 2024, par. 89). One can just imagine how this eulogy to the nineteenth century Eurocentric view of the past, as a "Greco-Roman antiquity" interrupted by intrusions of barbarians and dark centuries, might play out if one of the parties in the case were Egypt, Syria or even Greece (Asirvatham 2008; Mac Sweeney et al. 2019; Tevdovski 2021).

So insistent are the findings of the Court that "the first literary and artistic expressions referring to Latin culture can easily be attributed to figures educated in a Greek environment", and so many Greeks lived in ancient Italy, and "Greece, the captive, made her savage victor captive," that one might question if the decision of the Court supports the return of the Victorious Youth to Italy, or the return of all Italian classical heritage to Greece (ECtHR 2024, par. 100). In this context, there is no wonder why Ritchie locates a "strong" opportunity for a Greek claim of restitution of the "Youth" (Ritchie 2009).

In the light of the knowledge of the Hellenistic provenance of the statue of a Victorious Youth, the legal search for "origin" of this prominent artefact becomes another direct and grotesque reminder of the inconsistency of the outlived "Greco-Roman model". One

has no need to explore the extensive historical and archaeological research and analyses of the last decades for the shortcomings of our ideologized periodization but just be reminded of the important twentieth century remarks of Barry Strauss. Explaining the intensity of the Eurocentric bias and Saidian Orientalism embedded in the term Hellenistic (the period of provenance of the "Youth"), invented in the 19th century, Strauss underlines its "doubly problematic" character. Thus, while "one half of the term - 'istic' suggests a mere derivative of the pure and original Hellenic", or oriental hybridisation of the Western brilliance, the other half - "Hellen" ignores the great majority of non-Greek and even non-European inputs in the global developments of this historical period (Strauss 1997, 165–166). And, yet, decades after this colonialist remnant in academic research of the past were disclosed and extensively deconstructed, the culturally sensitive Court decision would assign the belonging of the heritage of the most interconnected period of ancient Afro Eurasia to the first available European – Italy, if not Greece.

It is exactly the Hellenistic period that showed all the discrepancies of the Eurocentric views of world history. Today, the extensive analyses of this period underline the destruction of the main centres and political and ideological credos of the "Hellenic world of city states", which culminated with the destruction of Athens by the Romans (Morris 2005; Reger 2008; Kuin 2018). In this historical context the Court findings of "Greek culture, of which the Roman culture can well be regarded as carrying the torch", become almost cynical (ECtHR 2024, par. 100).

Yet, in order to understand how weak and academically redundant the historically-spiced legal argument or the historical argument with legal consequences that "cultural continuum that has, since its inception, linked Italic and Roman civilization to Greek culture", one must be reminded again of an accurate summary of present academic views in Harvard University Press edition "Classical Tradition" stating that "Alexandria, not Athens, supplied Rome, and hence later European civilization, with her models" (Grafton et al. 2010, 33; ECtHR 2024, par. 100). Furthermore, the authors of the edition underline their argument, placing focus on the arts and material culture, by quoting Oscar Wilde's visionary statement that "there is really not a single form that art now uses that does not come to us from the critical spirit of Alexandria" (Grafton et al. 2010, 33).

Maybe, here lies the reason why the advocates of the Greco-Roman synthesis in the case of J. Paul Getty Trust and Others vs.

Italy avoided the most obvious argument of the Greco-Roman political synergy, or according to the findings of the Court: "At the relevant time (before the fall of Corinth), Greece and Rome had enjoyed good relations" (ECtHR 2024, par. 89). While the ancient propaganda connected with the early Eastern-Mediterranean intrusions of the Romans, "fighting for the freedom of Greece" might be convenient and utilized effectively in front of the Court, the slippery outcome is explaining who did Romans fight against. The Macedonian "invincible" (*aniketos*) rulers of the Hellenistic period, that built their imperial model on the Near-Eastern traditions of the Persians and the Neo-Assyrians, were the direct opponents of the Romans, and the "oriental otherness" upon which the "Greco-Roman world" built its ideological core (Spawforth 2012, 55–57; Strootman 2008, 207–227). And, yet this "Italian" Victorious Youth represented the "innocent" and pure glory of these "oriental despots".

In order to comprehend the level of distortion of the "historical context" of the Court findings one might focus on a simple argument related to "location" of the "possible" author of a statue. The argument that "Lysippus […] connection with Italy had to be considered 'certainly not marginal', as at the time the Statue had been created the artist had most probably visited Rome" represents a "high probability" based on three hypotheses. First, that Lysippus is author of the statue, which is at least unprovable at this point, if not already dismissed claim by the experts in the field. The second hypothesis, the Lysippus connection with Italy "was certainly not marginal", and the third, his visit to Rome is "most probable". While the probability of the first hypothesis has been already answered by numerous experts, the last two hypotheses are most interesting from the aspect of the "distorted historical context". In essence the Court is convinced that the personal and Court artist of the new "ruler of the world", Alexander the Great, out of all the important centres of the early Hellenistic world, like Pella, Ephesus, Babylon or one of the many Alexandrias would "most probably" decide to go to Rome, and if he does, that would be "certainly not marginal" episode in his life or wider societal and cultural context. A historical episode from antiquity might illustrate very accurately the level of distortion created by the traditional "Greco-Roman conceptualization", as well as the level of probability. At the year 300bc, which is the exact year Lysippus has departed, Alexander descendent, "the most famous man of his day" that sailed and fought throughout the Hellenistic world before becoming new king of Macedon, Demetrious

Poliorcetos, captured Roman pirate ships that were sailing from the "half-civilized" Roman coast city of Anzio. The king sent the ships back to Rome with a message aiming "to teach them in good international manners" (Veyne 1979). Mentioning that he has heard that they are related to the "civilized" Hellens, and there have built already a temple of Castor, protector god of sailors, the king educated them: "When one has these signs of civilization, pirating can no longer be tolerated!" (Ibid.).

In other words, not just Lysippus and Alexander, but also many from the next generation of Hellenistic elites, including the most travelled among them, have not been to Rome, and have barely heard of the developments on the margins of the wide Hellenistic world that spread as far as India. It seems that the highest probability of Lysippus' visit to Rome is related to a possible abduction by pirates.

The thorough analyses of Tony Spawforth on (re)inventing Greeks in Late-Republican and Early Imperial Rome for the needs of Roman identity and the ambivalent place of the Macedonians in the narratives related to the same process, is a unique possibility to explain these contemporary misunderstandings of the Hellenistic "historical and cultural context" (Spawforth 2001, 375–400; Spawforth 2012; also, Asirvatham 2008; Kuin 2018). Yet, such quest requires a more extensive elaboration inconvenient to the scope and purpose of this paper. Instead, few additional illustrative examples from the same Hellenistic Mediterranean context might serve the purpose, for the needs of this paper and expose some of the complexities of the "origin" of Victorious Youth.

Let us imagine that, instead of the "Victorious Youth", the statue was one of Hellenistic Isis. The originally "Egyptian" goddess, that was revived for the needs of the Ptolemaic religious policies and court propaganda and closely related to the established cults of the Ptolemaic and Macedonian queens (Versluys 2016; Carney 2000). The statue, in that case, as in the case of majority of Hellenistic Isis statues, would have certain Macedonian royal and/or Egyptian symbols, and yet it would resemble closely the Winckelmannian artistic standards of "Greko-Roman art" (Grafton et al. 2010).

This strong religious symbol was intimidating for the Roman elites of the republican period, to the level of prosecution, and yet one would certainly be able to claim continuity of this Hellenistic heritage with Imperial Rome. While the Roman Isis statues were iconographically very close (some art historians would claim - replicas) to the Hellenistic ones, the arguments in this case would

not be centred on iconography or archaeology (Versluys 2020). The cult of Isis with many of its Hellenistic aspects, as verified by different historical sources and archaeological evidence, transformed in the later centuries into central ideological and institutional element of the Roman imperial power (Levick 2007, 153). It that context one might search for analogies with the case of Victorious Youth. Would the hypothetical Hellenistic Isis also represent the "continuity of the Greco-Roman civilization", or would it represent a glorious artistic allegory of the strength and refinement of its adversaries (Strootman 2010, 140–57; Strootman 2018, 173–204)? Should contemporary Egypt place rights on all Hellenistic and Roman Isis sculptures around the Old World, as country of origin or through the "continuum" of the ideological, religious, artistic and civilizational contributions of its ancestors (Versluys 2021)?

It would be so much easier if these statues or their original owners could speak to us, one would think. Therefore, it might be illustrative to analyse briefly few statues that do tell us who they are, whose they are, and what and why they represent. On another corner of the Mediterranean, in South-East Turkey stands a glorious complex of statues, representing the sanctuary devoted to another descendent of Alexander the Great. Antiochus Theos of Commagene in his elaborate sepulchral monument and related epigraphic document made a serious effort to explain to us, or rather to his contemporaries and followers, how he felt about himself, his country and the world. There, his statue of a living god, much like the Victorious Youth, stands as an idealized symbol of the Hellenistic kingship. In the midst of his ambitious architectural, political and religious project Antiochus stands surrounded and shakes hands with his "deified ancestors" and "all the ancestral gods from Persia and Macedonia" (Versluys 2017, 260; Fleischer 2002, 59–60). Among them, Alexander the Great, many Macedonian later kings, including Antiochus' Macedonian royal mother Laodice Thea, and his grandmother the Ptolemaic princess Cleopatra Tryphaina, Persian kings and local rulers of the region of Commagene, but also gods like Zeus, Helios, Mithra and other gods of the Orient. Stylistically, in Antiochus own words, the statues were made in the tradition of craftsmanship of the Persians and the Hellens, and of course there is the Goddess Commagene, a symbol of the country of this global ruler and god. Finally, the historical context, that this king was close ally, some might claim client, of Rome, whose family rose to leading positions and influenced strongly the developments in the Roman Empire. After

all of that, one might ask if Antiochus own words are helping us determine any legal right in contemporary circumstances. And is he placing words in the mouth of the Victorious Youth? Does this plethora of ancient ethnonyms and conceptions translate into anything concrete today? And do archaeology, history and law possess a matrix that translates accurately and consistently all the information that the "historical context" provides?

All this complexity leads us to a scientific dilemma developed by archaeologists, historians and other researchers of the past in the last few decades. Are the artificial boundaries developed in the process of exploring historical narratives and material culture still helpful tools in the research process or they have transformed into an obstacle that reflects our present image, while distorting our understanding of the past and heritage?

The new trends, increased knowledge and the shifting paradigms in humanities and social sciences are increasingly suggesting that neither ancient historical narratives nor material remains from antiquity could be analysed adequately through the rigid categorizations created in modernity or through any other form of consistent "cultural container" (Pitts and Versluys 2015, 12). Furthermore, the application of the globalization theory in the study of ancient past extends the possibilities of this "beyond container thinking" framework, that also involves deconstruction of the stereotypical nomenclatures, like Greek and Roman, or Greko-Roman civilization, or Eastern or Near-eastern civilizations or influences (Versluys 2015, 143–147). Instead, the complex transformative processes that created the Roman, Greek, Egyptian or other "world(s)" and their heritage has to be reanalysed, in this context, only in the wider frame of the spatio-temporal continuities and change of the Afro-Eurasian and wider globalization processes (Beaujard 2010; Agut-Labordère and Versluys 2022; Tevdovski 2024).

Through this new conceptual and methodological framework, the former "cultural containers", ancient and modern are transformed, into a complex, vivid and constantly evolving systems of interconnected networks. This new methodology that focuses on connectivity and networks creates a shared understanding of a connected past with all its local, regional and global complexity (cf. Brughmans et al. 2016). In such new context, any ancient artefact, site, phenomenon or culture is triggered, created, modelled and predestined to dwell in correlation with numerous networking hubs and their actions and reactions in the interrelated global system.

Finally, this change of the paradigm in the research of the material culture and wider research of the past from rigid "cultural containers" to "interconnected cultural networks", affects directly and dramatically the application of the knowledge of the past into the cases of private international law.

While the legal dilemma between the more dominant *lex rei sitae* and the unique approaches of *lex originis* that this case study analyses, place new focus on the national and local "historical and cultural" contexts, the archaeological dilemma creates a reverse momentum. The usage of accurate and profound knowledge and understanding of heritage through the perspective of researchers of archaeology, history and related disciplines, reconnects the importance of global connectivity and networks in the past and present and establishes multiple cultural rootedness of each artefact from the past.

CONCLUSION

The Statue of Victorious Youth encapsulates far more than the artistic excellence of the Hellenistic period; it symbolizes the complex intersections of history, culture, and law in the contemporary world. This paper has demonstrated that understanding its significance and resolving the disputes surrounding it demand a truly interdisciplinary approach—one that integrates art historical, archaeological, and legal perspectives to grasp both the statue's multifaceted past and its contested present.

The legal conflict exemplified by the J. Paul Getty Trust versus Italy case reveals the limitations and tensions inherent in current private international law principles, especially between *lex originis* and *lex rei sitae*. These tensions constitute a "double dilemma": a juridical challenge of applying relevant laws to mobile cultural objects, and a broader cultural challenge of reconciling rigid, often Eurocentric legal categories with the fluid and interconnected realities of ancient cultural networks. The case elucidates the urgent need for legal frameworks that are sensitive to cultural complexity and historical nuance, encouraging transparency, rigorous provenance research, and ethical accountability from museums, collectors, and policymakers.

Moreover, this paper highlights how evolving archaeological and historical scholarship, which increasingly favours networked and globalized understandings of past cultures, challenges

entrenched notions of heritage as fixed within singular national or cultural containers. Such insights call for a reframing of cultural heritage law and policy that better reflects the hybrid, transregional realities of ancient material culture.

Ultimately, the journey of the Victorious Youth from antiquity to the modern museum, and the debates it has sparked, serve as a prism through which the broader challenges of cultural heritage stewardship can be examined. This paper calls for continued interdisciplinary dialogue and innovative legal and ethical approaches that honour the statue's rich, layered legacy while ensuring just and culturally informed stewardship of the shared heritage it represents. Only through such collaborative efforts can the complex legacies of ancient art and cultural property be responsibly managed in an interconnected world.

REFERENCES

1. Ashmole, B. (ca. 1970–1977). *Expert Evaluations and Correspondence on the 'Victorious Youth' Statue* [Manuscript/letters]. Los Angeles: Getty Museum Archives.

2. Ashmole, B. (1977). *The Lost Bronze Sculptures of Classical Greece: Their History and Rediscovery*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

3. Asirvatham, S. R. (2008). "No Patriotic Fervor for Pella: Aelius Aristides and the Presentation of the Macedonians in the Second Sophistic." *Mnemosyne* 61, 207–227.

4. Beaujard, P. (2010). "From Three Possible Iron-Age World Systems to a Single Afro-Eurasian World-System." *Journal of World History* 21 (1), 1–43.

5. Borgia, E. (ed.). (2025). *South-Eastern Anatolia at a Crossroads: A Multicultural Mediterranean Area from the Hellenistic to the Early Byzantine Period*. Oxford: Archaeopress.

6. Brughmans, T., Collar, A., and Coward, F. (eds.). (2016). *The Connected Past: Challenges to Network Studies in Archaeology and History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

7. Cannadine, D. (2013). *The Undivided Past: History beyond Our Differences*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

8. Carney, E. (2000). "The Initiation of Cult for Royal Macedonian Women." *Classical Philology* 95 (1), 21–43.

9. Chechi, A. (2014). *The Settlement of International Cultural Heritage dDsputes*. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press.

10. Chechi, A. (2017/2018). "When Private International Law Meets Cultural Heritage Law: Problems and Prospects." *Yearbook of Private International Law* XIX, 269–294.

11. Colomer, L. (2017). "Heritage on the Move: Cross-Cultural Heritage as a Response to Globalisation, Mobilities and Multiple Migrations." *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 23 (10), 913–927.

12. Daehner, J. M. and Lapatin, K. (eds.). (2015). *Power and Pathos: Bronze Sculpture of the Hellenistic World*. Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum.

13. Dettelbach, C. (2018). "Victorious Youth: Ownership Dispute over the 'Getty Bronze' Continues." *Center for Art Law* (June 23, 2018). Available at: <https://perma.cc/5UKU-6M6T> (accessed December 2025).

14. European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). (2024). *J. Paul Getty Trust and Others v. Italy*, App no 35271/19, Judgment 18 (January).

15. Fincham, D. (2008). "How Adopting the Lex Originis Rule Can Impede the Flow of Illicit Cultural Property." *Columbia Journal of Law and the Arts* 32, 111–150.

16. Fincham, D. (2014). "Transnational Forfeiture of the Getty Bronze." *Cardozo Arts & Entertainment Law Journal* 32, 471–488.

17. Fleischer, R. (2002). "True Ancestors and False Ancestors in Hellenistic Rulers' Portraiture." In: Højte, J. M. (ed.) *Images of Ancestors*. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 59–74.

18. Frel, J. (1978). *The Getty Bronze*. Malibu: J. Paul Getty Museum.

19. Frel, J. (1981). *Greek portraits*. Malibu: J. Paul Getty Museum.

20. Frel, J. (1982). "The Getty Bronze and the Sculptor Lysippos." *The Getty Museum Journal* 10, 45–74.

21. Grafton, A., Most, G. W. and Settis, S. (eds.). (2010). *Classical Tradition*. Cambridge, MA/London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

22. Hodos, T., Geurds, A., Lane, P., Lilley, I., Pitts, M., Shelach, G., Stark, M., and Versluys, M. J. (eds.). (2017). *The Routledge Handbook of Globalisation and Archaeology*. London: Routledge.

23. Kuin, I. N. I. (2018). "Sulla and the Invention of Roman Athens." *Mnemosyne* 71, 616–639. Leiden: Brill.

24. Levick, B. (2007). *Julia Domna, Syrian Empress*. London/New York: Routledge.

25. Mac Sweeney, N., et al. (2019). "Claiming the Classical: The Greco-Roman World in Contemporary Political Discourse." *Council of University Classical Departments Bulletin* 48 (19), 1–19.

26. Mattusch, C. C. (1997). *The Victorious Youth. Getty Museum Studies on Art.* Los Angeles: Getty Publications.

27. Meskell, L. (ed.). (2009). *Cosmopolitan Archaeologies*. Durham: Duke University Press.

28. Nafziger, J. A. R. (2021). *Frontiers of Cultural Heritage Law*. Boston: Brill Nijhoff.

29. Pausanias. (2nd century CE). *Description of Greece* (Trans. W. H. S. Jones). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

30. Pitts, M. and Versluys, M. J. (2015). "Globalization and the Roman World: Perspectives and Opportunities." In: Pitts, M. and Versluys, M. J. (eds.) *Globalization and the Roman World: World History, Connectivity and Material Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 3–31.

31. Reger, G. (2008). "Hellenistic Greece and Western Asia Minor." In: Scheidel, W., Morris, I., and Saller, R. (eds.) *The Cambridge Economic History of the Greco-Roman World*. Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press.

32. Roodt, C. (2015). *Private International Law, Art and Cultural Heritage*. Cheltenham/Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing.

33. Rumenov, I. and Tasev, D. (2025). "Cultural Heritage, Property Rights, and Cross-Border Disputes: The Influence of J. Paul Getty Trust and Others v. Italy on National Legislation and Private International Law." In: *EU and Comparative Law Issues and Challenges* 10. Osijek: Faculty of Law, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, 3–20.

34. Scott, D. and Podany, J. (1989). "Ancient Copper Alloys: Some Metallurgical and Technological Studies of Greek and Roman Bronzes." In: *Small Bronze Sculpture from the Ancient World: Papers Delivered at a Symposium*. Malibu: J. Paul Getty Museum, 31–60.

35. Spawforth, A. J. S. (2001). "Shades of Greekness: A Lydian Case Study." In: Malkin, I. (ed.) *Ancient Perceptions of Greek Ethnicity*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 375–400.

36. Spawforth, A. J. S. (2012). *Greece and the Augustan Cultural Revolution*. Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press.

37. Stewart, A. F. (1993). *Faces of Power: Alexander's Image and Hellenistic Politics*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

38. Strauss, B. (1997). "The Problem of Periodization." In: Golden, M. and Toohey, P. (eds.) *Inventing Ancient Culture*. New York: Routledge, 96–131.

39. Strootman, R. (2010). "Queen of Kings: Cleopatra VII and the Donations of Alexandria." In: Facella, M. and Kaizer, T. (eds.), *Kingdoms and Principalities in the Roman Near East*. Occidens et Oriens 19. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 140–157.

40. Strootman, R. (2014). *Courts and Elites in the Hellenistic Empires: The Near East after the Achaemenids, c. 330 to 30 BC*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

41. Strootman, R. (2018). "Antiochos IV and Rome: The Festival at Daphne (Syria), the Treaty of Apameia and the Revival of Seleukid Expansionism in the West." In: Coşkun, A. and Engels, D. (eds.) *Rome and the Seleukid East: Select Papers from Seleukid Study Day V*. Brussels: Éditions Latomus, 173–204.

42. Tevdovski, L. (2020). "The Beauty of the Oikumene Has Two Edges: Nurturing Roman Imperialism in the 'Glocalizing' Traditions of the East." In: Irvin, A. (ed.) *Community and Identity at the Edges of the Classical World*. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 7–28.

43. Tevdovski, L. (2021). "The Classical Message in a Bottle: Should 'Classical Wisdom' Determine Our Identities in the Future?" *Journal of Comparative Studies* 14 (43), 146–173.

44. Tevdovski, L. (2024). "Globalization, Ancient Cosmopolitanism and the Western Bollywood." In: Kruijer, L. W. Versluys, M. J., and Lilley, I. (eds.) *Rooted Cosmopolitanism, Heritage and the Question of Belonging*. London: Routledge, 61–90.

45. Tevdovski, L. (2025). "Tiny Kingdoms of Prophetic Ideals: The Impact of the Melting Pot of Roman-Dependent South-Eastern Anatolia." In: Borgia, E. (ed.) *South-Eastern Anatolia at a Crossroads*. Oxford: Archaeopress, 165–200.

46. UNIDROIT. (1995). *Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects*. Rome.

47. Versluys, M. J. (2015). "Roman Visual Material Culture as Globalising Koine." In: Pitts, M. and Versluys, M. J. (eds.) *Globalization and the Roman World: World History, Connectivity and Material Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 141–174.

48. Versluys, M. J. (2016). "Exploring Aegyptiaca and their Material Agency throughout Global History." In: *The Routledge Handbook of Globalisation and Archaeology*. London: Routledge, 74–89.

49. Versluys, M. J. (2017). *Visual Style and Constructing Identity in the Hellenistic World: Nemrud Dağ and Commagene under Antiochos I*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

50. Versluys, M. J. (2020). "Haunted by Egypt: A Long-Term Perspective on History, Mnemohistory and Material Culture." In: Versluys, M. J. (ed.) *Beyond Egyptomania: Objects, Style and Agency*. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 15–21.

51. Versluys, M. J. (2021). "Anchoring Egypt: The Iseum Campense in Flavian Rome." In: Raimondi Cominesi, A., de Haan, N., Moormann, E. M. and Stocks, C. (eds.) *God on Earth: Emperor Domitian*. Leiden: Sidestone Press, 169–173.

52. Vrdoljak, F. A. (2024). "Introduction." In: Vrdoljak, F. A., Jakubowski, A., and Chechi, A. (eds.) *The 1970 UNESCO and 1995 UNIDROIT Conventions on Stolen or Illegally Transferred Cultural Property: A Commentary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 3–30.

DEMOCRACY BY DESIGN? UNPACKING EU AND US STRATEGIES AND TOOLS IN NIGERIA'S DEMOCRATIC LANDSCAPE

CHRISTOPHER AMROBO ENEMUWE

Christopher Amrobo Enemuwe, PhD student
Department of Political Science, College of Arts and Letters
Idaho State University, the USA
e-mail: christopheramrobo@isu.edu
https://orcid.org/0009-0002-3143-2618

Christopher Amrobo Enemuwe is a doctoral student in Political Science at Idaho State University. His research revolves around population change and development processes, democracy promotion, and military coups in Africa. He holds an Erasmus Mundus Joint Master of Arts in European Politics and Society from Charles University, Leiden University, Jagiellonian University, and Pompeu Fabra University. He also holds a second Master of Arts in population studies from the Regional Institute for Population Studies, University of Ghana, Legon. He has published in the *Journal of African Elections*, *Africa Insight*, *Population Review*, *Ghana Social Science Journal*, and *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*.

ABSTRACT

This paper offers a comparative analysis of the European Union's and the United States' democracy promotion strategies in Nigeria, focusing on the period before the Second Trump administration (1999–2024). Drawing on qualitative desk research, it examines how both actors balance normative democratic ideals with pragmatic geostrategic interests, such as security, migration, and economic cooperation. While both the EU and US employ similar tools – election observation, civil society engagement, and political dialogue – their funding instruments, policy frameworks, and strategic motivations differ significantly. The EU often adopts a multilateral, development-linked approach, while the US tends toward bilateral, security-driven engagement. These differences reflect more profound divergences in how democracy is conceptualised and promoted. Despite their shared objectives, the impact of their efforts is shaped by Nigeria's internal political dynamics, limited financial commitments, and the prioritisation of strategic stability over normative accountability. This study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of external democracy promotion in Africa's largest democracy.

Keywords: EU–Nigeria relations, US–Nigeria relations, geostrategic interests, democracy promotion, election observation, civil society organisations

INTRODUCTION

The "Third Wave" of democracy, according to Samuel Huntington, which began in the 1970s, saw a global increase in democracies following the collapse of Soviet communism and the end of the Cold War, resulting in notable democratic transitions across areas including Latin America, Asia–Pacific, Eastern Europe, and sub-Saharan Africa (Huntington 1991; Diamond 1996; Huntington 1997; Saka et al. 2015). However, every wave of democracy is accompanied by a counterwave of democratic backslides (Huntington 1991). Recent literature has paid increasing attention to democratic backsliding following the third wave (Diamond 2008; Waldner and Lust 2018; Akinola 2024). Leininger (2022) argues that the global trend of autocratic regimes is eroding numerous democratic advancements achieved since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. The disintegration of the Soviet Union, the reunification of Germany following the collapse of the Berlin Wall, and the progression of democratic principles in Eastern and Central Europe during the 1990s sparked a revitalised fervour for global democratic ideals. Additionally, a significant transformation in the perception of security emerged following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, which effectively undermined the previously prevailing hard-power framework focused on military confrontation throughout the 1990s (Amirah-Fernández and Menéndez 2009). This transformation, in conjunction with the rise of neoliberalism, has created an environment that promotes the advancement of democratic principles, which has become a key objective for Western governments, notably the United States (US) and the European Union (EU) (Young 2024).

The initial two waves of global democratisation – the first occurring from 1828 to 1926 and the second from 1943 to 1964 – faced crushing counterwaves of backslides that entrenched autocratic institutions and state actors, along with reverts to parochial and subject political cultures within those societies. In a similar vein, the contemporary phenomenon of democratic backsliding after the third wave has demonstrated from the outset that as the process of democratisation accelerates, authoritarian regimes devise strategies that include manipulating electoral processes, co-opting opposition forces, employing legal repression, controlling media narratives, and limiting civil liberties to maintain their grip on power (Diamond 1996; Young 2024).

In Africa, the third wave process has unfolded in a complex manner, resulting in a confluence of distinct paths, trajectories, and

outcomes. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, countries across Africa, from Ghana in the West to Idi Amin's Uganda in the East, experienced the imposition of military regimes that stifled democratic governance, curtailed freedom of expression, restricted the right to assemble, and undermined private property rights. Over the past three decades, since the civil transition in the 1990s, the advancement of democracy in sub-Saharan Africa has been hindered by new challenges that have emerged under civilian governments (Adejumobi 2010; Omotola 2010; Omotola 2011). These encompass the risks posed by incumbents dismantling constitutional regulations regarding term limits, consolidating additional executive authority, and engaging in electoral misconduct and corruption, all of which are related to the functioning of political institutions. As Diamond suggests, "Political institution building is the most urgent and important challenge of democratic consolidation" (1995, 32).

The problems with democracy in Africa have been widely identified and discussed by researchers, pundits, and organisations that monitor state performance based on key indicators, such as Freedom House, Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem), the Economic Intelligence Unit (EIU), and the Electoral Integrity Project (EIP). For example, the EIU (2024) indicates that only 6.6% of the global population resides in full democracies; meanwhile, 38.4%, 15.7%, and 39.2% reside in flawed democracies, hybrid regimes, and authoritarian regimes, respectively (EIU 2024). Regionally, across all 44 sub-Saharan Africa countries, a 4 out of 10 score (10 = best form of democracy) was recorded on the democracy index (unchanged in both 2023 and 2024), indicating stagnation (EIU 2024). Sub-Saharan Africa is the only region that outperforms the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, which is considered the least democratic region in the world, but below the world average of 5.17 out of 10. This score has been gradually declining in recent years, driven by violence and insecurity, slow recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, foreign interference, and widening inequalities.

Since Nigeria's return to civilian governance in 1999, the nation has demonstrated potential for democratic development, exemplified by efforts to conduct regular elections (a total of seven), uphold multipartyism, and facilitate the transfer of power between administrations. Nevertheless, challenges persist, including incumbents manipulating oppositions, restrictions on political and civil liberties, interference in judicial processes, and a weakening of the rule of law (Adejumobi 2010; Omotola 2010;

Ajayi and Ojo 2014). Despite initial optimism, Nigeria has proven to be sui generis in its democratic experiment (Ajayi and Ojo 2014), further complicated by ethno-religious chauvinism arising from the tragic civil war of 1967–1970, which continues to engender social maladies in the contemporary context.

The development of democracy in the country is hindered by various factors, including its colonial history, deep-rooted ethnic divisions, ineffective leadership, past military interventionists who have refused to relinquish power through a electoral democratic process that is free and fair. Other challenges, such as electoral fraud, widespread poverty, human rights violations, and literacy-level differentials, complicate the issue (Oni 2014; Oladipo 2016). With regular elections that can hardly be considered free and fair, electoral fraud prevails with a definitive nature. As Erameh et al. (2021) put it, electoral fraud exacerbates ethnic conflict, institutional degradation, and political instability. Unlike Ghana, an English-speaking country in West Africa with a total freedom score of 80, reflecting a society marked by liberty, Nigeria is categorised as partly free, with a considerably lower score of 44.[1] All these factors highlight the fragile state of Nigeria's democratic system, which remains weak and insufficiently embedded in the lives of citizens, politicians, and civil servants and is plagued by corruption.

The situation in Nigeria, characterised by violence, corrupt-tion, human rights violations, and electoral irregularities during elections, suggests a heightened susceptibility to misconduct within its democratic framework (Obi 2004; Uwazuruike 2020). However, Nigeria stands out as an important actor in West Africa, serving as a notable example of democratic principles within the region. Nigeria's participation in peacekeeping missions across Africa, its role in multilateral negotiations, and the significance of its workforce for global development frequently overshadow the logic behind the corrupt and unscrupulous kakistocracy within the country. The country serves as a significant example for regional nations, demonstrating both effective practices and cautionary lessons.

Lessons learned from Nigeria's experiment with civilian rule provide a clear framework for evaluating foreign donor support and engagement within a tangible aid-recipient environment. Consequently, any observable impact of support for international

[1] Information regarding the ranking of the global freedom index, which includes political rights and civil liberties, and the methodology employed can be found at: Freedom House (n.d.).

democracy in Nigeria, whether beneficial or detrimental, extends beyond its borders, especially in vulnerable or hybrid neighbouring countries that have recently been caught in military coups and constitutional turmoil. The prevention of events like these has underscored democracy promotion by actors such as the EU and the US and justified the critical need to strengthen institutional buffers against the abuse of state institutions and the suppression of democratic processes at the start of the twenty-first century. Both actors have endeavoured to cultivate democratic governance in Nigeria through a multifaceted strategy, utilising various tools to advance the democratic agenda. These include their foreign policies, international agreements, support for civil society organisations (CSOs), projects and programs, political dialogues, and election observation activities.

The existing literature acknowledges the importance of the EU and the US as key donors, particularly in relation to their continuous and often organised involvement in enhancing Nigeria's institutional capacity and public institutions (Nwokedi 1994; Erameh et al. 2021). This is notable given Nigeria's significant role in the geopolitics of foreign powers within the African context (Khakee 2007; Enemuwe 2024a). Nevertheless, the EU and US face a dilemma between maintaining a value-based foreign policy approach and one driven by material geostrategic interests such as security, mineral exploration, trade, and migration.

The literature has frequently overlooked the need for a more systematic and thorough examination of the similarities and differences in these global actors' strategies and approaches to engagement. In fact, this study will represent the first of its kind, considering the pre-Second Trump administration dynamics and politics of EU and US democracy promotion in Nigeria. Investigating the functions of both actors in Nigeria reveals the intricate dynamics between the advancement of democracy and the practicalities of geopolitical interests, while also providing significant insights that may be relevant to other hybrid or fragile democracies across Africa and beyond. This case presents an opportunity to gain context-specific insights and explore broader theoretical implications regarding the effectiveness, conditionality, and legitimacy of foreign democracy promotion.

The study will be conducted in four separate phases. Following this introductory section, the next section will examine the literature on democracy promotion to gain insight into the current state of scholarly discourse. This study does not include a

section on the history of bilateral relations, such as Nigeria–US or Nigeria–EU, or even triangular relations (Nigeria–US–EU), as extensive coverage of these topics is already available in the literature. The third section provides a comparative analysis of the EU and the US in promoting democracy in Nigeria. The fourth section offers some concluding remarks on the study.

STUDY METHODS

The research conducted for this paper was based on extensive qualitative content analysis, otherwise known as a desk review. The desk review method systematically analyses literature, reports, and documents related to a specific topic, enabling researchers to gather insights without requiring primary data collection.

The materials examined comprised policies, reports, and official documents from the US and EU that outlined aspirations for democracy promotion over the past 25 years (1999–2024), leading up to the second Trump administration, during which he terminated the crucial US democracy promotion and development aid agency, United States Agency for International Development (USAID). This timeline is established based on observations made after Nigeria transitioned back to civilian governance in 1999, during which it was noted that the initial two elections faced significant challenges due to the actions of incumbents aimed at consolidating power via serious violations of civil and political rights (Stauss and Tertsakian 2004). Furthermore, the ruling party during that period, the People's Democratic Party (PDP), maintained its dominance at both the federal and local government levels, thereby undermining the multiparty system that has been fundamental to Nigerian politics since its independence. The 2011 general elections marked a significant turning point, as a wave of newly established parties emerged, notably the current ruling party, the All Progressives Congress (APC). This development has contributed to a more competitive electoral landscape, influencing policy choices and critiques within the system.

The selection of secondary-source materials for analysis in this study included peer-reviewed articles on democracy promotion in developing countries, especially in Africa. News reports and internet sources from NGOs were also selected for analysis. The study employs this method to enable a thorough examination of the diverse perspectives and strategies employed by both actors, as well as the varying strategies used by different

EU and US administrations within each actor's political climate, to facilitate an in-depth understanding of their similarities and differences in the Nigerian context.

Nonetheless, the desk review method has certain limitations. It offers a comprehensive and cost-effective synthesis of existing knowledge, enabling the analysis of a wide range of official documents, academic publications, and policy reports to compare democracy promotion strategies in Nigeria. However, its dependence on secondary sources restricts the ability to gather up-to-date, context-specific insights and stakeholder perspectives, potentially diminishing the immediacy and empirical depth of its findings. Future studies could utilise interviews with key informants and experts (both Nigerian and foreign nationals) working with EU and US plenipotentiaries on political relations to uncover stakeholder perspectives on democracy promotion. This study does not focus on elections in Nigeria, even though both the US and EU have become significant players in election observation in Nigeria. The author has previously addressed the issue of US and EU election observation as instruments of democracy promotion in Nigeria (Enemuwe 2024a; Enemuwe 2024b).

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION OF DEMOCRACY AND DEMOCRACY PROMOTION

To frame this study analytically, it is necessary to define what is meant by "democracy promotion" in the international context. Democracy promotion encompasses various strategies, forms, and modalities aimed at facilitating the transition to (liberal) democracy. It encompasses both indirect approaches that target the prerequisites of democracy, which may include economic and social factors, and more direct approaches, such as democracy assistance, that focus on political objectives (Burnell 2011).

If democracy promotion entails various strategies, forms, and modalities aimed at facilitating the transition to democracy, what then is democracy? Cyril Obi articulated in his 2008 Claude Ake Memorial Lecture that democracy is "the only game in town", stemming from the assumption that the proliferation of democracy as a new political game is distinct from the centuries-old game of conquest and total dominion by powerful foreign states or leaders over less-powerful states, groups, or people (Obi 2008b, 7). Thus, it represents a shift from the rule of the gun to the rule of the vote

(Obi 2004). At the same time, the pervasive influence of militarism and winner-takes-all politics remains significant in the political process, exacerbating discontent, inciting violence, and simultaneously fostering new movements for the advancement of societal democratisation (Obi 2004).

The concept of democracy, although rhetorically appealing, is often complex and subject to varying interpretations. There is a broad literature on democracy, ranging from debates on its definition and origin to its various typologies. Research indicates that democracy embodies self-governance in the interest of the people, reflecting a collective sociopolitical identity (Fahner 2017). In this study, democracy generally refers to a governance system where citizens can influence state affairs directly or through elected representatives, emphasising constitutional rights and the public's role (Gillin 1919). This notion asserts that the leaders of a polity must seek consent from the governed, a fundamental aspect of democratic practice, to make public decisions.

THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL DIMENSIONS OF DEMOCRACY PROMOTION IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The vast literature on international democracy promotion is instructive about examining the efforts of advanced democracies and international/regional organisations – such as the EU, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Community of Democracies (CoD), the Organization of American States (OAS), primarily in the Global North (or Global North periphery) – to promote democracy in less developed countries in the Global South. Debates surrounding democracy promotion reflect the contentious nature of the concept of democracy, the motivations and desirability of democracy promotion, as well as the obstacles confronting actors seeking to promote democracy (Diamond 1995; Carothers 1999; Diamond 1999; Burnell 2004; Khadiagala and Nganje 2015). However, democracy promotion is not solely the purview of developed nations and intergovernmental organisations as a superficial political gesture towards developing countries in Africa; emerging state/regional actors and organisations such as South Africa (notably during the Nelson Mandela era), the Economic

Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the African Union (AU) have also actively engaged in fostering democracy within their spheres of influence through legal instruments to prevent unconstitutional changes of government (Legler and Tieku 2010; Khadiagala and Nganje 2015; Nyinevi and Fosu 2023). Nonetheless, these efforts have faced constraints arising from internal difficulties linked to the pressures of optimising practical national or regional interests, which at times compromise the democratic principles in areas where the chances for democracy are either almost non-existent or excessively challenging to achieve (Legler and Tieku 2010; Khadiagala and Nganje 2015).

The evidence remains ambiguous regarding the extent to which factors such as political conditionality and incentive structures, such as foreign backing for civil society or funding of elections abroad, influence national political development, particularly in terms of the impact of support on political reforms by altering the incentive structures of elites (Crawford 2001; Ethier 2003; Burnell 2011). For instance, in challenging the notion that democracy is solely a domestic issue, Ethier (2003) contended that the conditional political reforms mandated by the EU for eastern and central European applicant countries have led to significant strides compared to the limited effects of incentives from democratic aid programs provided by donors. Meanwhile, Burnell (2011) argued that the effectiveness of the support for democracy in European nations previously in the Soviet orbit of influence was primarily attributed to those countries' resolve to liberate themselves from Soviet/Russian control – the incentive of freedom.

Nonetheless, a consensus exists among academics, development practitioners, and advocates of global democratic initiatives that the core principle of democracy promotion lies in the realisation of democratic ideals within a framework of liberal internationalism (McFaul 2004; Amirah-Fernández and Menéndez 2009; Burnell 2013). Liberal internationalism, as a foreign policy doctrine, emphasises the importance of a rules-based international order in which states collaborate through institutions and utilise soft power (such as leverage, aid or diplomacy) or hard power (coercive sanctions or threat of invasion) to tackle common challenges or foster specific ideas (such as the myth of global/international peace) and interests (such as trade, migration, or security). Whatever the case, the fundamental emphasis is on advancing liberal democracy and economic interconnectedness, based on the conviction that these factors will enhance international stability and ensure the interests of states. This

framework, developed by influential figures such as John Locke, Immanuel Kant, and Adam Smith, established the foundation for promoting democracy on a global scale by emphasising individual rights, the rule of law, free trade, and the idea of enduring peace through international collaboration, regardless of how effectively these principles are implemented (Moravcsik 1997).

A central focus in the literature on promoting democracy is the assumed positive link between expanding democratic governance and the potential for international peace and stability (Kahl 1998; Gat 2005; Parmar 2013; Layne 2014). Research has shown that widespread global democratic peace is increasingly supported by Western leaders, reaching beyond academic circles (Kahl 1998; Young 2024). The initiatives undertaken by Western donors and state development partners to advance democracy globally underscore the importance of cultivating "international peace" (Placek 2012, 1). This alignment is accomplished by connecting the concept of economic interdependence, which has emerged from globalisation since the end of the Cold War, with the goals of multilateral institutions focused on the diffusion of liberal political and economic norms.

Notwithstanding, the third wave of democracy altered the foreign policy approaches of many developed countries regarding the state of global democracy. In the last three decades, beginning in the 1990s, Western governments, including regional organisations, have increasingly focused on intentionally designing foreign policies that promote democracy globally (Youngs 2001; Gillespie and Youngs 2002; Goldgeier and McFaul 2003; McFaul 2004; Schimmelfennig 2005a; Schimmelfennig 2005b; Khakee 2007; Legler and Tieku 2010; Khadiagala and Nganje 2015; Saka et al. 2015). These policies have become a central strategy in their approach to development aid directed at developing nations (Diamond 1992; Huntington 1997; Carothers and De Gramont 2013; Mello 2014). As Huntington points out:

> The great achievement of the Third Wave has been to ensure the universality of democracy in Western civilisation and to promote its manifestations in other civilisations. If the Third Wave has a future, that future lies in the expansion of democracy in non-Western societies (Huntington 1997, 6).

The appeal of democracy promotion at the multilateral level can be linked to its connection with the necessity for international peace following World War II, as emphasised in the 1945 UN

Charter. The victorious Allies particularly championed this in Article 2(3), which asserts that "All Members shall settle their international disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security, and justice, are not endangered." This provision underscores the enduring significance emphasised by democratic peace theorists, who argue that an increase in the number of democracies will facilitate the resolution of disputes through nonmilitary compromises, ultimately leading to peace (Russett 2019). The implication for promoting democracy internationally suggests that fostering democratic governance globally is perceived as both a normative objective and a strategic political move for improving international peace and stability by reducing the likelihood of violent conflicts between nations and strengthening their relationships. This approach underscores the profound impact that fostering democratic governance can have on the global community.

In addition, the end of the Cold War transformed the approach of key players, such as the US and the EU, towards promoting democracy in their foreign policy, which can be partially linked to the evolving dynamics of the early twenty-first century. This includes important events such as the 9/11 attacks in the US (Gat 2005), the emergence of globalism (Hambleton et al. 2003), the introduction of the internet (Thornton 2001), and a shift in the narrative of global security (Amirah-Fernández and Menéndez 2009). Geopolitical dynamics in a unipolar world, particularly in the context of American hegemonic foreign policy and its impact on international stability since the 1990s, are especially pertinent regarding the promotion of democratic values. However, some scholars have argued that the foundation of democracy promotion and support may be traced to the writings of the famous German philosopher Immanuel Kant rather than originating in the second half of the twentieth century and intensified in the twenty-first century, when we see the proliferation of nascent nation-states trying to democratise. Kant's essay on Perpetual Peace provides a utilitarian explanation for why democracy promotion is essential to achieving peace, a phenomenon often called democratic peace. Democratic peace suggests that as democracy spreads, there will be more peace, since the cost of settling disputes through war is usually high and imposes new responsibilities on the victors toward the vanquished (Kant, 1795). Peace in democracies stems from the behaviour and inherent preference of individuals to coexist peacefully with one another (Mello 2014). Hence, he optimises the idea that in

international relations the most fundamental level of analysis – the individual – holds prominence for democratic development.

Prior to the twenty-first century, scholarly investigation provided limited attention to the conceptualisation of democracy promotion on a global scale, especially concerning its effects on international peace within the developing countries of the Global South. In the late 1980s and 1990s, discussions centred on clarifying the concepts of "democracy" and "peace" in the African context, which was experiencing various forms of civil conflict. The objective was to examine these concepts by investigating how democratic governance can reduce the likelihood of conflict and promote peaceful international relations (Amirah-Fernández and Menéndez 2009).

Other scholars, such as Wolff and Wurm (2011), have highlighted that a critical yet underexplored aspect of international relations is understanding democracy promotion not only as a normative objective but also as a foreign policy instrument, particularly when employed by established democracies. They underscore the need to go beyond domestic political debates by integrating empirical research on democracy promotion into broader theoretical frameworks of global politics. Smith (2000) supports this view by highlighting the absence of a robust international democratic theory, which hampers our under-standing of the connections between democracy, democratisation, and global governance. However, any serious theoretical inquiry must consider the underlying mechanisms – such as the logic, targets, and pathways of influence – through which external democracy promotion efforts affect domestic political trajectories in recipient states (Wolff and Wurm 2011). Furthermore, emerging studies have called for a theory that explains the reversal of the new democratic wave, due to the insecurity and socioeconomic plights that accompanied the third wave of democratisation, despite international efforts to consolidate democratic gains (Diamond 1996; Waldner and Lust 2018).

In examining the impact of democracy promotion, scholars have focused on development aid, especially since the early twenty-first century. This period witnessed a shift in development assistance, driven by an emphasis on good governance as recommended in the structural adjustment policies by international financial institutions (IFIs) such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Development agencies consistently recognise the importance of good governance and neoliberal institutions in their operations in developing countries.

At the same time, institutions focused on democratic governance and organisations tackle the challenge of ensuring that democracy meets citizens' socioeconomic needs (Carothers 2010).

Carothers (2009 and 2010) identifies two existing approaches to democratisation: political and developmental. The political strategy, particularly linked to US democracy assistance, is based on a limited understanding of democracy that emphasises elections and political and civil rights. Democratisation is conceptualised as a political struggle wherein democrats strive to surpass nondemocrats within society (Carothers 2009). In contrast, the developmental approach, which is linked primarily to European democracy assistance, adopts a more expansive definition of democracy that takes into context the integral component of development priorities in the emergence, reinforcement, and consolidation of democracy (Gisselquist et al. 2021). This perspective encompasses the relationship between development assistance and the promotion of democratic governance, recognising their growing interdependence. As modernisation theorists who advance the development–democracy nexus argue, democracy is most likely to emerge in societies that have certain sociocultural and economic conditions in place (Inglehart and Welzel 2009). Aside from the EU encouraging a culture of self-expression in foreign countries through its leverage of international NGOs, such as Human Rights Watch, and bilateral engagements, economic statecraft – such as the removal of trade embargoes – would serve to promote economic development and foster social engagement with and other connections to the world. Through the developmental aspect, the EU's promotion of democracy in Nigeria is perceived as a slow, iterative process of transformation that involves a nuanced interaction between political and socioeconomic development. It takes place alongside the debate over which competing priorities should take precedence: the political goals of democracy or the economic aims of development (Young 2003; Carothers 2010).

It is essential to understand that the political and developmental dimensions of democracy promotion in Nigeria employed by the US and EU are not accidental. Two distinct cultural–historical bases guide them. Democracy in the US can be traced to the foundations of the country in its struggle for independence from Britain, guided by the political logic that centralises the inalienable rights of Americans. The US constitutional preamble, which became a fundamental basis for modern state constitutionalism, places individual–collective

political rights on the people by highlighting other personal and social prerogatives, such as unionism, justice, tranquillity, defence, general welfare, and liberty, which are predicated on the conscious awareness of the people's willingness. Politics precedes development. The EU's cultural–historical basis, on the other hand, builds on many years of developmental struggles, such as tax administration and its impact on public administration, and intra- and extraterritorial conflicts that shaped social class and development in Europe. Works by Tilly Charles and Immanuel Wallerstein provide the basis for understanding the developmental trajectory of European states, which is impacting their efforts at both consolidating their internal democracy and promoting democracy beyond their borders.

Despite the promises of democracy promotion, it remains a challenging endeavour in which the geopolitical context is delicately balanced between the interests of the aid-sender and the aid-recipient. One challenge with external democracy promotion is the inability to draw broad conclusions on its exact effect on the receiving countries, even though one of the crucial effects of externalising democracy is to socialise political elites to act utilising the principles of democratic ethos to avoid conflict with one another and achieve peace (Mello 2014; Layne 2014). Nonetheless, scholars have highlighted that democracy promotion is a pivotal international political phenomenon that a state should prioritise (Wolff and Wurm 2011). Priority will depend on the level of demand for democracy or its lack within a receiving state. It echoes not just state influence as progress begins, but also that of foreign nongovernmental organisations (FNGOs), interest groups, and public opinion.

Another challenge is how foreign actors promote democracy in regions entrenched in conflict. In regions where civil conflicts threaten state stability, such as sub-Saharan Africa, research suggests that countries experiencing tumultuous and violent conflicts adopt a minimalist approach during their transition to peace (Watts 2016). An approach to advancing democratic principles in conflict regions can be supported through the peace-building assistance provided by foreign actors to a nation in conflict. This support, characterised by political assistance, may encompass technical assistance in executing electoral processes and formulating a constitution or comparable regulatory documents during the transition to a post-conflict period, in addition to shaping institutional authority and designing inclusive

70

power-sharing arrangements to promote and maintain enduring peace.

Foreign policymakers often employ the concept of global (or international) peace to divide the world into opposing blocs based on democratic and non-democratic characteristics as part of a hegemonic agenda to promote democracy and create a "safer" global environment (Parmar 2013, 231). A review of the literature on international democracy promotion suggests that policymakers in advanced countries pursue this agenda not only out of ideological commitment but also as a strategic instrument. This often involves applying coercive pressure on countries labelled as "nondemocracies" or "undemocratic" to adopt democratic principles, despite the potential for significant internal challenges (Gisselquist et al. 2021).

The military interventions in Libya and Iraq serve as clear examples supporting this argument. Experiences in the Middle East, acknowledged as the least democratic region worldwide, have negatively influenced the perception of later international initiatives aimed at fostering democracy, as they are frequently viewed as resulting in societal destruction. The profound implications of the rationale behind military interventionism on the promotion of democracy in Libya and Iraq perplex both citizens in donor and recipient countries, along with international political analysts. For instance, research findings show that although the George W. Bush administration highlighted democracy promotion as the rationale for the war in Iraq, perceived as a beneficial shift "to free its people", i.e., Iraqis, and "restore control of that country to its people" (Office of the Press Secretary 2003, para. 1–6), the disastrous aftermath of the war continues to affect the region.[2] The policy of regime change in Iraq to promote democracy, find weapons of mass destruction, and provide peace became more contentious on the global stage (Latif and Abbas 2011). The US invasion of Iraq and the accompanying portrayal of removing Saddam Hussein, who was once a Western protégé in the region, as a democratising mission have hindered successful pro-democracy efforts in several countries and raised questions about how democracy promotion can gradually fail (Young 2024).

Connecting the "war on terror" to democracy – which ostensibly supports the exploration of the relationship between democracy, peace, and security – plays a role in the current

---

[2] For the full speech of the former US President during the Iraq invasion, see the Operation Iraqi Freedom website: https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/iraq/news/20030319-17.html

debates regarding the challenges to the dominant liberal internationalism spearheaded by the US and EU, and the potential for other countries and organisations to redefine global political landscape (Latif and Abbas 2011; Young 2024). However, the nature of the conduct, strategy, and approach to foreign policy on democracy promotion may differ based on temporal and regime-specific conditions, which is evident in Donald Trump's first term in office, which has been characterised by far less interest in promoting democratic norms abroad than those of the Obama, Clinton, or Bush administrations.

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN EU AND US DEMOCRACY PROMOTION STRATEGIES IN NIGERIA

In this section, I argue that the EU and the US share common objectives in their democracy promotion efforts in Nigeria, reflecting a convergence of normative objectives. Their approaches are, to an extent, rhetorically and practically rooted in liberal democratic values, emphasising the importance of free and fair elections, respect for human rights, the rule of law, and accountable governance. In practice, both actors utilise a combination of diplomatic engagement (the use of foreign policies and international agreements), geostrategic interests in key resources, electoral assistance, civil society support, and political dialogue to promote democracy in Nigeria. This section highlights the overlapping priorities and instruments that characterise EU and US democracy promotion strategies within the Nigerian context.

1. THE USE OF FOREIGN POLICY AND INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS

One important similarity in approach is that the EU and the US both prioritised the promotion of democracy as a critical aspect of their foreign policy goals and international agreements with Nigeria. Even though there may be some variations in perception, I contend that the foreign policies and strategies regarding democracy in Nigeria, the US, and the EU reveal more similarities than differences.

In the case of the US, the 2022–2026 US Integrated Country Strategy (ICS) for Nigeria, which builds off the Joint Regional

Strategy (JRS) for Africa, supports this idea through its strategic objectives of enhancing democracy, upholding universal values, and promoting human dignity. The document indicates that the strategies are designed to create strong, accountable, and democratic institutions in Nigeria, motivated by a firm commitment to human rights, to promote peace and minimal development. In the same vein, the 2002 US National Security Strategy suggests a connection between promoting democratic principles abroad and countering global terrorism, particularly to external security threats to US interests (The White House 2002). The George W. Bush administration articulated a narrative emphasising the country's unparalleled military strength, alongside significant economic and political clout, showcasing America's capacity to address terrorism at its origin, as evidenced by the invasion of Afghanistan, framed with the argument that the "path to peace and security is the path of action" (The White House 2002). This assertion became the basis for the subsequent revisions by various administrations of the National Security Strategy, which overwhelmingly posits that the US's strategy for confronting ideological threats posed by terrorists, including their exploitation of technology, involves promoting democratic principles in regions, such as West Africa, where these groups operate actively. Furthermore, this approach aims to weaken the underlying factors of extremism that jeopardise US interests, both in terms of security and trade, on the domestic and international fronts. A policy narrative of this nature emphasises the responsibility of preserving the heritage and principles of global democracy, while also advocating for unilateral advantages for the US through multilateral engagement in global governance, especially in strategic nations such as Nigeria. However, the US tends to adopts a unilateral approach, which is perceived as neocolonial in intent, especially in a country with a colonial past like Nigeria, resulting in a decline in its popularity (Aka 2002; Enemuwe 2024a). Today, more countries and multilateral organisations, such as the AU and the UN, advocate for a multilateral strategy not only in promoting democracy but also in the global governance of transnational issues.

Similarly, in the 2007 Nigeria–EU Joint Way Forward and the 2000 Cotonou Agreement between the EU and the Organization for African Unity (known as the AU since 2002), the EU recognises, akin to the US, that Nigeria and the EU share values and beliefs in peace, security, equality, democracy, and tolerance to promote prosperous and benevolent societies (European Union 2008;

European Union 2000). As the EU's primary institutional framework for managing relationships with sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific (ACP) states, the Cotonou Agreement aimed to create a comprehensive development agenda and regional democratic governance that combines bilateral cooperation with individual ACP states, such as Nigeria, with multilateral collaboration involving the broader African continent through regional and continent-wide communities.

While the agreement did not emanate from the 2020 European Security Strategy, like the ICS in the US case, it is essential to note that some of its components (Article 9) provide a forward-looking approach to the EU's global governance on development assistance, placing normative conditionality on aid. The agreement addresses regional challenges by focusing on socioeconomic development and political cooperation while emphasising political conditionality through democratic principles, human rights, and the rule of law (European Union 2000). Subsection 2 of Article 9 of the Cotonou Agreement asserts that the "Respect for human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law, which underpin the ACP-EU Partnership, shall underpin the domestic and international policies of the Parties and constitute the essential elements of this Agreement" (European Union 2000, 14).

Conversely, the European Security Strategy emphasises the importance of democracy, asserting that security extends beyond personal safety to encompass a regional approach that protects fundamental rights both within and outside EU borders (European Commission 2020). Human security and fundamental political norms are interconnected. The Commission focuses on ensuring that security policy is rooted in shared European values – upholding the rule of law, equality, and fundamental rights – while promoting transparency, accountability, and democratic oversight to establish a strong basis of trust for policies. These principles are central to the EU's democracy promotion efforts in Nigeria, where its electoral assistance and governance support are framed not only as technical interventions but as part of a broader normative agenda that seeks to reinforce democratic institutions and practices in line with the EU's value-based approach to security and development.

2. BALANCING INTERESTS AND VALUES IN US – EU POLICY ON NIGERIA

Democracy promotion by the EU and the US is most evident in the way they negotiate the balance between values and material interests in Nigeria. For the EU, the significance of promoting democracy is apparent in the bloc's readiness to implement stringent measures, including sanctions against unconstitutional governmental changes, exemplified by the regime of Sani Abacha, which was notorious for its human rights abuses. Before the European Development Fund aid destined for Nigeria was suspended in 1995 due to democratic and human rights violations during General Sani Abacha's regime, the allocated funds between 1992 and 1995 amounted to €210.2 million (European Commission 2008). It was significantly reduced thereafter. However, it is worth noting that these measures primarily affected political ties between the EU and Nigeria rather than economic interests (Kenyon 2018), highlighting the dilemma of choosing between interest-based objectives and value-based principles.

Although the US adopted a similar strategy of imposing sanctions during the Sani Abacha regime, it encountered a dilemma: balancing diplomatic and economic benefits against its value-driven principles. This struggle was exemplified by Nigerian diasporans and Black Americans' advocacy for the US government to pursue diplomatic isolation and economic sanctions similar to those used against South Africa's white-minority regime (Lippman 1995; Lopez and Cortright 1996). A report from the *New York Times*, titled "U.S. Seeking Tougher Sanctions to Press Nigeria for Democracy", accurately reflects the challenge faced by Bill Clinton's administration in balancing economic interests with values. It concludes that:

> The Administration has ruled out, for the time being, any embargo against Nigeria's oil exports, currently running at about 1.8 million barrels a day, which provide the Government with 90% of its foreign exchange earnings. About 40% of Nigeria's prized low-sulfur crude is bought by American companies. Just yesterday, Royal Dutch/Shell confirmed it had made a potentially significant oil discovery off the Nigerian coast. (Lewis 1996, para. 3)

Another report from *The New York Times* contended that by imposing sanctions on undemocratic regions, international actors

such as the EU would risk losing competitiveness in Nigeria's market, as other countries seldom follow suit with such trade-restrictive actions (Uchitelle 1996). The problem lies in unilateral sanctions imposed on oil-rich countries at the time, including Iran, Libya, and Nigeria. Any trade sanctions enacted would effectively bar American companies; consequently, foreign suppliers would take the place of American ones.

Recently, this development has been illustrated by Washington's response to the Gabon coup, compared to the Niger coup, both of which occurred in 2023. The Biden administration – working alongside its European allies, including the EU and France – called on ECOWAS, led by President Tinubu of Nigeria, to deploy troops to restore the civilian government of President Mohammed Bazoum. Furthermore, the US has shown little concern for Nigeria's democratic situation since the 2023 elections, despite numerous public protests occurring within a few months of the election. Nigerian author Chimamanda Adichie penned an open letter expressing her criticism of the election, even as President Biden acknowledged Tinubu's presidency following the assessment of election observers, including the EU Election Observation Mission (EOM), which found the elections unfair.[3] It is crucial to recognise that, despite its initial criticisms of the electoral process through its observer mission, the EU took minimal action regarding concrete follow-up, including trade or aid sanctions or diplomatic pressure. The opposite was in fact evident.[4] A similar conclusion was found when, despite international observers and local election monitors ruling the 2007 general elections in Nigeria to be "deeply flawed," they were upheld by the government without any international sanctions or reprisals (Obi 2008a, 69). This also reflects both actors' evident focus on policy pragmatism and strategic alliances rather than democratic accountability. The tepid international reaction from these actors, who are recognised for their rhetorical support of liberal internationalism and democratic values, highlights a broader trend of selective engagement, where the dissemination of liberal political and economic norms and values is considered appropriate. It illustrates how geopolitical interests and security alliances – particularly in combating terrorism and instability in the

---

[3] For a look at the letter written by renowned Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Adichie (2023); Additionally, the link to the 2023 EU EOM report can be found in the reference section.

[4] See: State House of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. (2023).

Sahel – often take precedence over steady support for democratic ideals.

The US has a long-standing tradition of adopting a selective position on numerous critical international issues globally; therefore, its interest-driven approach to Nigeria is not unprecedented. It is noteworthy that the EU, which portrays itself as a normative power, exhibits a similar pattern to the US with regards to Nigeria, wherein the rhetoric issued by its Election Observation Mission does not correspond with the actions undertaken by Brussels concerning political conditionality, as prescribed in the Cotonou Agreement against electoral misconduct in Nigeria. Although one might argue that sanctions or trade restrictions would have represented foreign interference and a violation of Nigeria's sovereignty by the US and EU, I argue that, on the contrary, this would have instead functioned as a form of external accountability mechanism, aimed at encouraging adherence to democratic norms and good governance. Rather than undermining sovereignty, such measures can serve to protect the democratic will of the Nigerian people by deterring democratic backsliding and promoting political reforms in line with international democratic standards.

The US, together with the EU, following the resurgence of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict in 2022, integrates its democratic principles with the strategic need for dependable and cost-effective energy, especially from non-Middle Eastern origins. Brussels is on track with the Trans-Saharan Gas Pipeline (TSGP) project (Enemuwe 2024b). As Ayam (2008) noted, US policy towards Nigeria in the Cold War was guided by three key issues: the containment of communist expansion, the provision of aid, and the strengthening of bilateral economic ties. Nonetheless, the events of 9/11 in New York and the subsequent rise of global terrorism prompted a transition towards a more stringent understanding of security and development, as articulated in the 2002 National Security Strategy. In this framework, the promotion of democracy emerged as a geostrategic goal, influencing policymakers in Washington DC, and culminating in military interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya (Van Hüllen and Stahn 2009). A series of counterterrorism initiatives included the establishment of military bases, such as the $110 million base for unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) known as Niger Air Base 201, which operated alongside Air Base 101 before the 2023 coup in Niamey; both served as joint mission sites for US and French forces (Arslan 2023). The troops stationed in N'Djamena are exemplars of the US

conceptual security–democracy discourse in West Africa and, by extension, Nigeria.

In the West African sphere of influence, where Nigeria plays a key role, the US, the collective EU, and EU member states have partnered with Nigeria and other countries, including Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Chad, in the fight against insurgency. A recent debate has emerged over the attraction of the US and France to engage with Nigeria as a potential security partner following their eviction from those countries. Like the strategies employed by the US and EU member states in the Middle East, research and policymakers argue that they seek to address Islamist political movements not as an inherent issue within Islamic culture, but as a result of poor social and economic conditions worsened by prolonged periods of authoritarian rule (Amirah-Fernández and Menéndez 2009; Ploch 2013). However, this geostrategic focus on security, expressed through authoritarian governance language, leads to societal issues that are covertly linked to activities promoting democracy, such as CSOs, election support, monitoring, projects, and initiatives for civil education.

3. POLITICAL DIALOGUE AND DIPLOMACY

Diplomacy and political dialogue play a crucial role in shaping international efforts to promote democracy. They facilitate consensus-building, encourage reforms through persuasion rather than coercion, and foster cooperative relationships that help legitimise democratic norms and practices across borders. Even in the process of implementing political conditionalities or enforcing sanctions, state or multilateral actors employ dialogic communications as a strategic forum for ensuring cohesive commitments. As Rodiles (2017) argues, the interaction between UN sanctions committees and informal arrangements increasingly shapes the design and evolution of UN sanctions. Foreign actors, including the EU and the US, strategically utilise political conditionality in their interactions with ACP nations, such as Nigeria. They engage in top-down high-level summits and political dialogue to influence governance, human rights, and democratic processes (Enemuwe 2024b).

Both the US and the EU emphasise intensified government-to-government political dialogue as a valuable factor in anchoring their relations with Nigeria, highlighting a top-down approach to the question of democracy and democratic governance. Political dialogue and diplomacy are essential elements in both actors'

repertoire for discussing progress and challenges and forging the pathway forward to democracy in their countries. Both actors employ diplomacy and political dialogue to promote democracy in Nigeria by engaging with government officials, civil society, and electoral bodies through high-level visits, diplomatic pressure, election observation missions, and support for institutional reforms – emphasising dialogue over sanctions to encourage adherence to democratic principles and improve electoral transparency (Enemuwe 2024a; Enemuwe 2024b).

On the EU side, the 2008 Nigeria–EU Joint Way Forward guidelines follow the principles and objectives enunciated in the revised Cotonou Agreement and are reiterated in the Joint Africa–EU Strategy (JAES) adopted at the Lisbon Summit in December 2007 (European Union 2008).[5] The broader development framework utilised by the EU, the Cotonou Agreement, is explicit about the importance of political dialogue and diplomacy.

During the late 1990s and early 2000s, the interactions between the EU and African nations, along with regional organisations, experienced a significant transformation in policy negotiations, institutional relationships, and communication, marked by a notable increase in the agency of African actors (European Council 2022; Haastrup et al. 2021). Given the direct involvement of heads of state and senior government officials, these summits are often seen as the pinnacle of modern diplomacy (van Wyk 2020), with the EU using its material resources to reinforce its agenda-setting power in its relations with Africa.

Article 15, which outlines the structural composition of the EU–ACP Council of Ministers, emphasises the importance of political dialogue in Article 9. According to the last paragraph of Article 9, the promotion of human rights, processes of democratisation, consolidation of the rule of law, and good governance represent "an important subject for the political dialogue. In the context of this dialogue, the Parties shall attach particular importance to the changes underway and to the continuity of the progress achieved. This regular assessment shall take into account each country's economic, social, cultural, and historical context" (European Union 2000).

The US is not so different, as its political engagement with Nigeria is also broadly reflected in its summit-level diplomatic engagement with the continent of Africa, such as the 2022 US–

---

[5] The report outlines the modalities of the political dialogue in the Nigeria–EU Joint Way Forward.

Africa Leaders' Summit. However, the US has a special commission with Nigeria, which conducts bilateral meetings between the two countries, known as the US–Nigeria Binational Commission. This commission was established by the Obama administration in 2010 as a premier platform of official engagement between the US and Nigerian governments to expand cooperation and advance shared goals and democratic values (US Department of State 2024).

The use of political dialogue to promote democratic ideals springs from the recognition and self-designation of US and EU ownership of normative ideals as global actors who attempt the socialisation (norm diffusion) of foreign governments that might hold the promise of similar normative ideals or are open to learning and accepting such ideals (Checkel 2005; Schimmelfennig 2005a; Young 2024). Norm diffusion remains significant even within the EU, the US, and their immediate geographical neighbourhoods and spheres of influence, reflecting the ongoing internalisation and contestation of democratic values and practices across varying political contexts. Schimmelfennig (2005b) noted that with the EU, for example, socialisation efforts primarily target governments, providing material rewards such as assistance and the advantages of EU membership contingent upon adherence to liberal democratic norms. If compliance is not achieved, the EU withholds the reward, refraining from imposing additional penalties on noncompliant countries or providing extra assistance to alter their cost–benefit dynamics.

In the context of Nigeria, both the EU and the US appeared to downplay the contentious election outcomes, despite critical assessments from their election observation missions regarding the credibility of the process. Nonetheless, the dynamics of political relations, illustrated by diplomatic engagements (including congratulatory messages and delegations from EU member states and Washington DC present at Bola Ahmed Tinubu's inauguration) persisted without interruption, alongside ongoing aid support. The US approached this with a strategic delegation that included a blend of business, security, and development officials from different sectors of the government (Arise News 2023). In the case of the EU state of France, Chrysoula Zacharopoulou, Minister of State for Development, Francophonie and International Partnerships, attended. This ambivalence reflects a strategic recalibration of US and EU normative agendas to consider and include pressing geostrategic interests, such as development, regional security, trade, and investment. Moreover, such

diplomatic engagement positions Nigeria as a crucial player in influencing political developments within its West African vicinity. This is evidenced by Tinubu's administration, just a month in, warning that they planned to invade Niger, with the encouragement of EU nations such as France, and subsequently the US, with the aim of reinstating democracy following a series of coups in the Sahel region.

4. SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY STAKEHOLDERS

Both in top-down and bottom-up approaches, EU and US institutions such as EOM, USAID, and others offer capacity-building training to Nigerian agencies – including Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the police, legislature, and the judiciary – to facilitate credible elections (Del Biondo 2011; Khakee 2007; European Commission 2023; Leonardo 2023). Government-to-government interaction on political and economic developments, a crucial component of top-down political dialogue (as outlined in Article 8 of the Cotonou Agreement and Section 4 of the US-Nigeria Bi-Commission Framework), is now bolstered by the presence of civil society bodies. The participation of CSOs in discussions on the development of democratic ideals and strategies for addressing governance challenges serves as a critical mechanism for fostering inclusive, accountable, and participatory democracy. It captures the shift at the global level, where more civil society participation is viewed as a panacea for inclusivity within global governance.

On the other hand, from the bottom-up perspective, policymakers commonly believe that democratic assistance should be kept useful to the public but within a limited, definite boundary. It should serve as a symbolic external source of funding, skills, and protection for NGOs operating in Nigeria's challenging domestic environments (Youngs 2001; US Mission Nigeria 2024). As such, the Cotonou Agreement emphasised the importance of civil society and other non-state actors in realising the agreement's objectives, including those in Articles 8 and 9.

The EU's Support to Democratic Governance in Nigeria (EU–SDGN) Phase I program (shown in Table 1) represents a strategic and normative investment in broader stakeholder engagement as a foundational pillar of international democracy promotion. Argumentatively, the rationale behind this stakeholder support approach lies in the recognition that sustainable democracy cannot be externally imposed but must be locally owned, socially

embedded, and driven by credible domestic actors. By adopting a bottom-up model, the EU aims to strengthen the democratic ecosystem through targeted support to electoral bodies, political institutions, civil society, media, and youth leadership – entities that are crucial for deepening democratic resilience in Nigeria.

Table 1. EU Support for Democratic Governance in Nigeria, Phase I (2016–2021)

Component Area	Key Partners	Amount Allocated	Model
Component 1: Support to the Independent National Electoral Commission	European Centre for Electoral Support (ECES)	€13 million with an additional contribution of €650,000 (5% of the total funding to Component 1) from ECES core funds	Top-down
Component 2: Support to the National Assembly	Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC) and Youth Initiative for Advocacy, Growth and Advancement (YIAGA)	3 million Euros	Top-down with bottom-up elements
Component 3: Support to Political Parties	Political Party Leadership and Policy Development Centre of the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS)	€2.7 million	Top-down

Component 4: Support to Media	Institute for Media and Society and the International Press Centre	€2.6 million	Bottom-up
Component 5: Support to Civil Society Organisations	BBC Media Action, CLEEN Foundation, Westminster Foundation for Democracy, and the Albino Foundation	€3 million	Bottom-up

Source: European Centre for Electoral Support, n.d.

The EU understands that democracy is not merely about elections, but about the broader participatory infrastructure that enables citizens to influence governance beyond the ballot box. Supporting stakeholders – including CSOs, media, political parties, and the legislature – is a way to institutionalise democratic norms, expand civic spaces, and build the capacity of local actors to demand accountability, transparency, and representation. Such an approach is both pragmatic and strategic as it seeks to mitigate the risk of elite capture and democratic stagnation by cultivating democratic agency at the grassroots level. Furthermore, stakeholder engagement through the SDGN program reflects a strategic hedging against Nigeria's complex political and security dynamics. By investing in broad-based institutions, the EU is attempting to diversify its democracy promotion instruments and reduce over-reliance on executive cooperation, which can be volatile or politically constrained. This pluralised engagement also aligns with the EU's self-image as a normative power that favours consensus-building, inclusivity, and multilateralism in contrast to top-down or coercive methods of regime change, mostly articulated in its and US-led efforts in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

On the US side, according to USAID (2018), the concentration, while broad, has been to the advantage of empowering CSOs more. Such an approach reflects a strategic emphasis on grassroots democratisation, where bolstering local advocacy, civic engagement, and institutional accountability are seen as critical pathways for promoting democratic norms and

holding government structures to account. This somehow represents a shift in US strategic thinking about how to promote democracy, stemming from its failed experiences in the MENA region. USAID officials have even argued that their assistance has enabled Nigerians to demand accountability from the government during elections, thereby validating the financial and technical support extended by the US government (USAID 2018). An example is the current US Embassy Abuja Public Diplomacy Section (PDS) Annual Program for the 2024 fiscal year. Offering grants of up to $50,000 each, totalling $450,000, the fund is focused explicitly on NGOs operating in the Northern Niger Region, with priority given to the states of Adamawa, Jigawa, Katsina, Kebbi, Kogi, Kwara, Niger, Taraba, Yobe, Sokoto, and Zamfara. The primary objectives of this grant are to promote the empowerment of women, girls, and youth; encourage civic participation; and support programs and initiatives of NGOs, such as YIAGA and PLAC, that advocate for good governance, including transparency and accountability in government (US Mission Nigeria 2024).

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN EU AND US DEMOCRACY PROMOTION IN NIGERIA

1. FUNDING INSTRUMENTS

Since the EU and the US are actors in their own right in international relations, backed by the principle of sovereignty within international law, it is expected that they will possess distinct resources for achieving their foreign policy objectives in Nigeria. The EU utilises the Neighbourhood, Development, and International Cooperation – Global Europe Instrument (NDICI) along with the European Development Fund, which was previously employed during the Cotonou Agreement, to enhance efforts in promoting democracy in Nigeria. However, the US offers moral and financial support, which is channelled to the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), which in turn supports the International Republican Institute (IRI) and the National Democratic Institute (NDI) for their election observation work and other related activities in Nigeria. The IRI and the NDI host workshops and press briefings during electoral seasons, and USAID directly funds CSOs.

While the US articulates lofty ideals regarding democracy in Nigeria, the allocation of resources required to substantiate such rhetoric remains markedly insufficient. The Strengthening Advocacy and Civil Engagement (SACE) project represented a substantial investment of $19.2 million, funded by USAID and executed by Chemonics International from 2014 to 2019 (USAID 2018). The World Bank's population estimate for Nigeria in 2014 was approximately 179.3 million people, indicating that the per capita allocation for the project amounted to just 10.7 cents. Moreover, one would expect some improvement in democracy-related funding in recent years; however, among the top five USAID support sources, the government and civil society receive the least support.[6] A comparable situation is documented in the EU funding initiative, exemplified by the SDGN phase one, which allocated a mere 13 Euro cents per capita to support democracy projects, calculated based on the 2016 population estimate of 188.6 million individuals. This juxtaposition of lofty rhetoric and diminishing financial resources significantly hampers the potential for substantive democratic advancement, particularly as direct democracy initiatives remain inadequately funded (see Crawford 2005 for the Ghana case study).

2. GEOSTRATEGIC IMPERATIVES

The EU's efforts to enhance democracy and good governance in Nigeria via electoral policy reforms are shaped by multiple factors, including migration and socioeconomic development (Khakee 2007). Its approach sought to address the complex relationships between these issues, recognising the need for comprehensive measures to address the root causes of migration, alleviate socioeconomic decline, and foster improved governance practices in Nigeria. However, the US support for policy reforms in Nigeria has mainly been motivated by different geostrategic interests, specifically aimed at maximising economic benefits and countering terrorist groups (Amirah-Fernández and Menéndez 2009; Aka 2002). Appreciating the significance of Nigeria's role as a regional power and its promising economic prospects, the US

---

[6] The USAID's top five sectors funded in Nigeria are humanitarian emergency response ($327 million), basic health ($163 million), HIV/AIDS ($98 million), maternal and child health ($92 million), and government and civil participation ($35 million). All the data can be obtained from the USAID result database, available at: <https://results.usaid.gov/results>.

prioritised democracy initiatives to enhance economic cooperation and trade relations with Nigeria. In addition, considering the existence of different terrorist organisations in the Sahel, the US placed great importance on assisting Nigeria in combating these dangers and fostering stability in the region.

The linkage between security and democracy is integral to both the US and the EU's strategies, emphasising that security is essential for maintaining democratic norms and vice versa. In the 1990s, Western reform policies, influenced by post-Cold War security theories, incorporated ethical and pragmatic considerations – including political, social, economic, and environmental factors – to address the multifaceted nature of security (Amirah-Fernández and Menéndez 2009). The EU and US international agreements, as well as bilateral policies towards Nigeria, reflect this approach by highlighting the interdependence of democracy and security. However, while they stress collaboration and strategic stability, they differ in their geostrategic concerns in addressing migration and poverty (for the EU) and terrorism and trade (US), issues that drive individuals toward non-state actors and transnational networks that threaten both US and EU interests. Both actors recognise a significant geostrategic alignment in Nigeria that is crucial in advancing democracy, particularly concerning oil and natural gas supply, especially considering the Russo-Ukrainian war and the sanctions hindering oil trade with the Kremlin.

While migration is perceived as one of the utmost security concerns for the EU in promoting democratic norms, since most Nigerians use the Saharan desert route to reach the Mediterranean Sea in northern Africa and the southern border of the EU, US policymakers take a more kinetic approach through increasing military cooperation as an important appendix to support and promote democracy. During a press briefing, US President Joe Biden reiterated his unwavering commitment to Nigeria, emphasising the areas of economic development, security, and human rights protection (The White House 2023). These areas have been recurring areas of importance in US foreign policy over the last two decades (Ploch 2013). This reaffirmation of commitment highlights the enduring nature of the bilateral engagement between the US and Nigeria, in contrast to the more multilateral approach adopted by the EU. The process of securitising democracy through bilateral military arrangements between African and foreign states, also found in the European Security Strategy, involves examining the neorealist perspective on

the competition between state and non-state actors striving for control over Nigerian territory. Power dynamics, both on a global scale and within regional contexts in West Africa, significantly influence the outcomes of democratic success or failure. Terrorism in the northern part of Nigeria, which spreads across the Sahel, is an obvious predicament here. The activities of terrorist groups have threatened Nigeria's democracy. Additionally, the failure to consolidate past democratic dispensations into practical benefits – in terms of good governance that improves the lives of the population – exposes youths to ideologies and recruitment by terrorist groups that threaten the Western geostrategic interests (primarily economic and political) against China and Russia in Africa (Onuoha 2014). The post-9/11 declaration of war on terrorism worldwide reinforced this thinking among US and EU policy stakeholders saddled with the responsibility of monitoring changes in Nigeria and executing policy directions.

Furthermore, policymakers in several European capitals, as demonstrated by the French delegation at the 2023 presidential inauguration in Abuja, believe that improving relations through acknowledging governance in Nigeria is fundamentally linked to increasing development cooperation and addressing issues related to job creation and economic growth – all of which are vital for promoting human rights and embedding democracy. Additionally, recognising and cautiously improving relations without strict sanctions, through cordiality, is beneficial and essential in tackling the underlying factors that contribute to migratory pressures (Van Wyk 2020; Ezemenaka 2019). Moreover, this approach is suggested to strengthen commitment to human rights and democratic values in regions where such commitment is notably weak, while also consolidating the progress already achieved.

Democratic consolidation, human rights, and governance serve as key strategic conditionalities in the EU's policies towards Nigeria. At the same time, the US does not have a clear-cut political conditionality embedded in its bilateral policy and thus remains flexible in its approach. However, it can invoke sanctions to restore democratic governance in the case of a serious breach, as it did in General Ibrahim Babangida's annulment of the 1993 election (Nwokedi 1994). However, this is hard to come by, as civil society bodies and human rights groups have often sounded the alarm to pressure the US government to adopt measures that were counter to its geostrategic interests in continued security, oil, and other economic trades.

Despite claims that the US and EU's influence on development cooperation has diminished in the second Trump administration, Nigeria still values its relationship and shows signs of maintaining aid flow. Some argue that ACP states, such as Nigeria, may prioritise development aid over democratic norms by turning to donors such as China, which have less stringent requirements regarding human rights and democratic governance. However, policymakers in Abuja cannot throw away years of relations with these Western actors.

CONCLUSION

A comparison of EU and US democracy promotion initiatives in Nigeria reveals notable similarities in the strategies and tools employed by both actors. While emphasising the impact of Nigeria's political environment on the progress of these strategies and tools, the geostrategic necessities of migration control, security, trade, and development significantly influence the EU and the US's efforts to design and implement their democracy promotion strategies in Nigeria. Both actors regard promoting democracy as a fundamental objective of foreign policy and international agreements, striking a balance between strategic material goals and value-based ideals. Given the complex challenges of balancing economic and security interests with democratic principles, both the EU and the US, in similar ways, continue to demonstrate their commitment to strengthening Nigeria's democratic frameworks through political rhetoric of their foreign policy positions, political dialogue and diplomacy, support to electoral stakeholders, and efforts to balance material interests with political values.

Nonetheless, this dedication is moderated by a limited guarantee of complete collaboration between both sovereign actors, who work independently due to the divergences in their economic and geostrategic interests in Nigeria. While both the EU and the US promote democracy in Nigeria by linking it to security frameworks, their strategies diverge significantly. The EU emphasises multilateral development cooperation, trade, and migration control through normative and institutional partnerships. In contrast, the US prioritises counterterrorism and economic interests, adopting a more flexible, national security-driven, and strategic approach.

Following the tepid response from Brussels and Washington's hastened congratulatory message after the troubled 2023 elections – despite both actors' election observers expressing doubts regarding the results – the high rhetoric of being normative powers could not balance reality. This is particularly relevant in the case of the EU, as migrants from nations like Nigeria, grappling with socioeconomic and security challenges, are seen as a multifaceted issue that can be managed with a friendly government in Abuja that can navigate and even externalise EU migration policy without diplomatic hiccups. US geopolitical competition with Russia and China over interests in Nigeria's economic and security relations might be the logic that guided its response. Whatever the case, the affirmation by EU and US officials regarding the critical role of robust institutional frameworks, such as electoral governance, in promoting democratic governance in Nigeria is, therefore, questioned, as rhetoric is selectively applied as a form of pragmatism. This reliance on a cautious approach to managing stability in Nigeria, which is divided along ethno-religious cleavages, can lead to the further troubling endorsement of fraudulently elected candidates, driven by geostrategic priorities.

Furthermore, it is crucial to highlight that for democracy promotion to achieve its purpose, domestic agency by Nigerian actors must be central focus of any strategy and tool used. This alignment prompts an inquiry into agency among political stakeholders in Nigeria (ranging from the government to civil society), indicating that the domestic political landscape significantly influences external actors' adoption of cooperative or adversarial strategies. Although both actors – the US and EU – prioritise cooperation with the Nigerian democratic stakeholders, their tactics exhibit subtle variances shaped by their distinct geostrategic priorities and funding mechanisms.

REFERENCES

1. Adejumobi, S. (2010). "Democracy and Governance in Nigeria: Between Consolidation and Reversal." In: Adejumobi, S. (ed.) *Governance and Politics in Post-Military Nigeria*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 3–26. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230 115453_1

2. Adichie, C. (2023). "Nigeria's Hollow Democracy." *The Atlantic*. Available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/

2023/04/nigerias-hollow-democracy/673647> (accessed July 2025).

3. Ajayi, A. T. and Ojo, E. O. (2014). "Democracy in Nigeria: Practice, Problems and Prospects." *Developing Country Studies* 4 (2), 107–125.

4. Aka, P. C. (2002). "The Dividend of Democracy: Analyzing US Support for Nigerian Democratization." *BC Third World Law Journal* 22, 225–267.

5. Akinola, A. O. (ed.). (2024). *The Resurgence of Military Coups and Democratic Relapse in Africa*. Palgrave Macmillan Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-51019-9

6. Amirah-Fernández, H. and Menéndez, I. (2009). "Reform in Comparative Perspective: US and EU Strategies of Democracy Promotion in the MENA Region after 9/11." *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 17 (3), 325–338.

7. Arise News. (2023). "Biden's Delegation to Tinubu's Inauguration Arrives Nigeria." *Arise News*, 29 May. Available at: <https://www.arise.tv/bidens-delegation-to-tinubus-inauguration-arrives-nigeria/> (accessed July 2025).

8. Arslan, F. E. (2023). "Western Military Presence in Niger Faces Uncertainty Following the Coup." *Anadolu Ajansı*, 2 August. Available at: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/western-military-presence-in-niger-faces-uncertainty-following-coup/2959863#> (accessed September 2024).

9. Ayam, J. A. (2008). "The Development of Nigeria-US Relations." *Journal of Third World Studies* 25 (2), 117–132.

10. Burnell, P. (2004). "Democracy Promotion: The Elusive Quest for Grand Strategies." *International Politics and Society* 3, 100–116.

11. Burnell, P. (2011). *Lessons of Experience in International Democracy Support: Implications for Supporting Democratic Change in North Africa*, no. 84. WIDER Working Paper.

12. Burnell, P. (2013). "Promoting Democracy." *Government and Opposition* 48 (2), 265–287.

13. Carothers, T. (1999). *Aiding Democracy Abroad: The Learning Curve*. Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

14. Carothers, T. (2009). "Democracy Assistance: Political vs. Developmental?" *Journal of Democracy* 20 (1), 5-19.

15. Carothers, T. (2010). "Democracy Support and Development Aid: The Elusive Synthesis." *Journal of Democracy* 21 (4), 12–26.

16. Carothers, T. and De Gramont, D. (2013*). Development Aid Confronts Politics: The Almost Revolution*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

17. Checkel, J. T. (2005). "International Institutions and Socialisation in Europe: Introduction and Framework." *International Organisation* 59 (4), 801–826.

18. Crawford, G. (2001). *Foreign Aid and Political Reform: A Comparative Analysis of Democracy Assistance and Political Conditionality*. Springer.

19. Crawford, G. (2005). "The European Union and Democracy Promotion in Africa: The Case of Ghana." *The European Journal of Development Research* 17, 571–600.

20. Del Biondo, K. (2011). "EU Aid Conditionality in ACP Countries: Explaining Inconsistency in EU Sanctions Practice." *Journal of Contemporary European Research* 7 (3), 380–395.

21. Diamond, L. J. (1992). "Promoting Democracy." *Foreign Policy* 87, 25–46.

22. Diamond, L. J. (1995). *Promoting Democracy in the 1990s: Actors and Instruments, Issues and Imperatives*. Washington DC: Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict.

23. Diamond, L. J. (1996). "Is the Third Wave Over?" *Journal of Democracy* 7 (3), 20–37. https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/jod.1996.0047

24. Diamond, L. J. (1999). *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation*. Johns Hopkins University Press.

25. Diamond, L. J. (2008). *The Spirit of Democracy: The Struggle to Build Free Societies throughout the World*. Henry Holt and Company.

26. Economic Intelligence Unit. (2024). "Democracy Index 2024: What is Wrong with Representative Democracy?" *Economic Intelligence Unit*. Available at: <https://www.eiu.com/n/campaigns/democracy-index-2024/> (accessed September 2024).

27. Enemuwe, C. A. (2024a). "Enhancing Democracy in Nigeria: Exploring the Strategies of US Democracy Promotion and the New Approach of Democratic Socialisation." *Ghana Social Science Journal* 21 (2), 17–40.

28. Enemuwe, C. A. (2024b). "The European Union's Promotion of Democracy in Africa: The Case of Nigeria." *Africa Insight* 54 (1), 75–96.

29. Erameh, N. I., Oni, E. O., and Ojakorotu, V. (2021). "International Election Observation and the Democratization Process in Nigeria." *Taiwan Journal of Democracy* 17 (2), 125–147.

30. Ethier, D. (2003). "Is Democracy Promotion Effective? Comparing Conditionality and Incentives." *Democratisation* 10 (1), 99–120.

31. European Centre for Electoral Support. (n.d.). *European Union Support to Democratic Governance in Nigeria*. Available at: <https://www.eces.eu/en/posts/eusdg-nigeria> (accessed September 2024).

32. European Commission. (2008). *European Community-Federal Republic of Nigeria: Country Strategy Paper and National Indicative Program for the Period 2008–2013*. European Commission. Available at: <https://www.gfmd.org/sites/g/files/tmzbdl1801/files/pfp/mp/scanned_ng_csp10_en.pdf> (accessed September 2024).

33. European Commission. (2020). *Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: Towards a Comprehensive Strategy with Africa*. European Commission. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52020JC0004> (accessed September 2024).

34. European Commission. (2023). *The European Union Election Observation Mission presented its Final Report with 23 Recommendations; the EU Stands Ready to Support Nigeria in their Implementation*. European Commission, 1–92. Available at: <https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/2023/EU%20EOM%20NGA%202023%20FR.pdf> (accessed September 2024).

35. European Council. (2022). *European Union – African Union Summit*, 17-18 February. Available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/international-summit/2022/02/17-18/> (accessed September 2024).

36. European Union. (2000). "Partnership Agreement between the Members of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States of the One Part, and the European Community and Its Member States, of the Other Part, Signed in Cotonou on 23 June 2000 (Cotonou

Agreement).” *Official Journal of the European Communities*. Available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A22000A1215%2801%29 (accessed September 2024).

37. European Union. (2008). *Nigeria–EU Joint Way Forward*. Available at: <https://www.eeas.europa.eu/node/3935_en> (accessed September 2024).

38. Ezemenaka, K. E. (2019). “Unregulated Migration and Nigeria-EU Relations.” *Central European Journal of International & Security Studies* 13 (3), 64–87.

39. Fahner, J. H. (2017). “Revisiting the Human Right to Democracy: A Positivist Analysis.” *The International Journal of Human Rights* 21 (3), 321–341. doi:10.1080/13642987.2017.1298735

40. Gat, A. (2005). “The Democratic Peace Theory Reframed: The Impact of Modernity.” *World Politics* 58 (1), 73–100.

41. Freedom House. (n.d.). “Countries and Territories.” *Freedom House*. Available at: <https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-world/scores> (accessed October 2025).

42. Gisselquist, R. M., Niño-Zarazúa, M., and Samarin, M. (2021). “Does Aid Support Democracy? A Systematic Review of the Literature.” *WIDER Working Paper 2021/14*. Helsinki: UNU-WIDER. https://doi.org/10.35188/UNU-WIDER/2021/948-8

43. Gillespie, R. and Youngs, R. (2002). “Themes in European Democracy Promotion.” *Democratisation* 9 (1), 1–16.

44. Gillin, J. L. (1919). “The Origin of Democracy.” *American Journal of Sociology* 24 (6), 704–714.

45. Goldgeier, J. M. and McFaul, M. (2003). *Power and Purpose: US Policy towards Russia after the Cold War*. Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press.

46. Haastrup, T., Mah, L., and Duggan, N. (2021). “Introduction.” In: Haastrup, T., Mah, L., and Duggan, N. (eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of EU-Africa Relations*. Routledge, 1–6.

47. Hambleton, R., Savitch, H. V., and Stewart, M. (2003). “Globalism and Local Democracy” In: Hambleton, R., Savitch, H. V., Stewart, M. (eds.) *Globalism and Local Democracy*. Palgrave Macmillan, London, 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230502741_1

48. Huntington, S. P. (1991). “Democracy’s Third Wave.” *Journal of Democracy* 2 (2), 12–34.

49. Huntington, S. P. (1997). "After Twenty Years: The Future of the Third Wave." *Journal of Democracy* 8 (4), 3–12. https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/jod.1997.0059

50. Inglehart, R. and Welzel, C. (2009). *How Development Leads to Democracy: What We Know about Modernization*. Foreign Affairs, 33–48.

51. Kahl, C. H. (1998). "Constructing a Separate Peace: Constructivism, Collective Liberal Identity, and Democratic Peace." *Security Studies* 8 (2–3), 94–144. doi:10.1080/09636419808429376

52. Kant, I. (1795) *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Essay* (Translated by Campbell Smith). MacMillan Company.

53. Kenyon, P. (2018). *Dictatorland: The Men who Stole Africa*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

54. Khadiagala, G. M. and Nganje, F. (2016). "The Evolution of South Africa's Democracy Promotion in Africa: From Idealism to Pragmatism." *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 29 (4), 1561–1581.

55. Khakee, A. (2007). "EU Democracy Promotion in Nigeria: between Realpolitik and Idealism." *Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior (FRIDE)* 47, 1–28.

56. Latif, M. I. and Abbas, H. (2011). "US Democracy Promotion and Popular Revolutions in the Middle East: Challenges and Opportunities." *Pakistan Horizon* 64 (3), 25–42.

57. Layne, C. (2014). "Kant or Cant: The Myth of the Democratic Peace." In: Elman, C. and Jensen, M. (eds.) *The Realism Reader* (1st ed.). Routledge, 301–310.

58. Legler, T. and Tieku, T. K. (2010). "What Difference Can a Path Make? Regional Democracy Promotion Regimes in the Americas and Africa." *Democratisation* 17 (3), 465–491.

59. Leininger, J. (2022). *International Democracy Promotion in Times of Autocratization: From Supporting to Protecting Democracy* (IDOS Discussion Paper 21). Bonn: German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS). https://doi.org/10.23661/idp21.2022

60. Leonardo, B. M. (2023). *Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue on Nigeria's Elections: Fostering Youth Action for Peace and Stability*. US Embassy and Consulate in Nigeria. Available at: <https://ng.usembassy.gov/ambassador-leonards-remarks-for-the-

multi-stakeholder-dialogue-on-nigerias-elections-fostering-youth-action-for-peace-and-stability/> (accessed September 2024).

61. Lewis, P. (1996). "US Seeking Tougher Sanctions to Press Nigeria for Democracy." *The New York Times*, March 12, Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/1996/03/12/world/us-seeking-tougher-sanctions-to-press-nigeria-for-democracy.html> (accessed September 2024).

62. Lippman, T. W. (1995). "Secret US Diplomacy Fails to Nudge Nigeria: Five Back-channel Trips to Urge African Nation toward Democracy, Better Relations Produce No Results." *The Washington Post*, July 19, Available at: <https://www.washington post.com/ archive/politics/1995/07/20/secret-us-diplomacy-fails-to-nudge-nigeria> (accessed September 2024).

63. Lopez, G. A. and Cortright, D. (1996). "'Smart' Sanctions on Nigeria." *Global Policy Forum*, January 10, Available at: <https://archive.globalpolicy.org/security/sanction/smartnig.htm> (accessed September 2024).

64. McFaul, M. (2004). "Democracy Promotion as a World Value." *The Washington Quarterly* 28 (1), 147–163.

65. Mello, P. A. (2014). *Democratic Participation in Armed Conflict: Military Involvement in Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

66. Moravcsik, A. (1997). "Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics." *International Organisation* 51 (4), 513–553.

67. Nwokedi, E. (1994). "Nigeria's Democratic Transition: Explaining the Annulled 1993 Presidential Election." *The Round Table* 83 (330), 189–204. https://doi.org/10.1080/003585394084 54202

68. Nyinevi, C. and Fosu, R. (2023). "The African Union's Prohibition of Unconstitutional Changes of Government: An Uneasy Choice between Fidelity to Principle and Pragmatism." *African Security* 16 (1), 95–119.

69. Obi, C. (2004). *Nigeria: Democracy on Trial*. Nordiska Afrikainstitutet.

70. Obi, C. I. (2008a). "International Election Observer Missions and the Promotion of Democracy: Some Lessons from Nigeria's 2007 Elections." *Politikon* 35 (1), 69–86. https://doi.org/10. 1080/02589340802113089

71. Obi, C. I. (2008b). *No Choice, but Democracy: Prising the People out of Politics in Africa?* Nordiska Afrikainstitutet.

72. Office of the Press Secretary. (2003). "President Bush Addresses the Nation: The Oval Office." *Operation Iraqi Freedom*. Available at: <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/iraq/news/20030319-17.html> (accessed September 2024).

73. Oladipo, T. D. (2016). "The Crisis of Democracy in Nigeria: An Examination of Two Determining Factors." *Journal of Psychology and Behavioural Science* 4 (2), 115–121.

74. Omotola, J. S. (2010). "Elections and Democratic Transition in Nigeria under the Fourth Republic." *African Affairs* 109 (437), 535–553. https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adq040

75. Omotola, J. S. (2011). "Electoral Reform and the Prospects of Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria: Democratisation in Nigeria." *Journal of African Elections* 10 (1), 187–207.

76. Oni E. O. (2014). "Democracy and the Challenges of Consolidation in Nigeria's Fourth Republic." *Ibadan Journal of Social Sciences* 12 (2), 183–200.

77. Onuoha, F. C. (2014). *Why do Youth Join Boko Haram?* Vol. 5. Washington DC: US Institute of Peace.

78. Parmar, I. (2013). "The Knowledge Politics of Democratic Peace Theory." *International Politics* 50, 231–256. https://doi.org/10.1057/ip.2013.4

79. Placek, K. (2012). "The Democratic Peace Theory." *E-International Relations*. Available at: <https://www.e-ir. Info/2012/02/18/the-democratic-peace-theory> (accessed September 2024).

80. Ploch, L. (2013). *Nigeria: Current Issues and US Policy*. Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service.

81. Rodiles, A. (2017). "The Design of UN Sanctions through the Interplay with Informal Arrangements." In: van den Herik, L. (ed.) *Research Handbook on UN Sanctions and International Law*. Edward Elgar Publishing, 177–193.

82. Russett, B. (2019). "Politics and Alternative Security: Toward a More Democratic, Therefore More Peaceful, World." In: Weston, H. B. (ed.) *Alternative Security: Living without Nuclear Deterrence*, Routledge, 107–136.

83. Saka, L., Aluko, O., Ifejika, S. I., and Amusan, L. (2015). "International Donors and Democracy Promotion in Africa:

Insights from the Activities of the Department for International Development (DFID) in Nigeria.*" Nigerian Journal for International Affairs* 41 (1 & 2), 21–44.

84. Schimmelfennig, F. (2005a). "Transnational Socialisation: Community-building in an Integrated Europe." In: Kaiser, W. and Starie, P. (eds.) *Transnational European Union: Towards a Common Political Space*. Routledge, 77–98.

85. Schimmelfennig, F. (2005b). "The EU: Promoting Liberal Democracy through Membership Conditionality." In: Flockhart, T. (eds.) *Socialising Democratic Norms: The Role of International Organisations for the Construction of Europe.* London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 106–126.

86. Smith, H. (2000). "Why Is There No International Democratic Theory?" In: Smith H. (ed.) *Democracy and International Relations: Critical Theories/Problematic Practices*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1–30.

87. State House of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. (2023). *President Tinubu Calls for Strengthening of EU–Nigeria Relations: Receives EU Energy and International Partnership Delegation*, 19 October. Available at: <https://statehouse.gov.ng/news/president-tinubu-calls-for-strengthening-of-eu-nigeria-relations-receives-eu-energy-and-intl-partnership-delegation/> (accessed July 2024).

88. Stauss, K. and Tertsakian, C. (2004). *Nigeria's 2003 Elections: The Unacknowledged Violence. Human Rights Watch.* Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2004/06/01/nigerias-2003-elections/unacknowledged-violence> (accessed July 2024).

89. The White House. (2002). *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. Available at: <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/nsc/nssall.html> (accessed July 2024).

90. The White House. (2023). "Statement from President Joe Biden Sending Warm Wishes on President Tinubu's Inauguration in Nigeria." *The White House*. Available at: <https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/05/29/statement-from-president-joe-biden-sending-warm-wishes-on-the-occasion-of-president-tinubus-inauguration-in-nigeria/> (accessed July 2024).

91. Thornton, A. L. (2001). "Does the Internet Create Democracy?" *Ecquid Novi* 22 (2), 126–147.

92. Uchitelle, L. (1996). "Trade Bans Are Boomerangs, U.S. Companies Say." *The New York Times*, September 11, Available

at: <https://www.nytimes.com/1996/09/11/business/trade-bans-are-boomerangs-us-companies-say.html> (accessed September 2024).

93. United Nations. (1945). "United Nations Charter." *United Nations*. Available at: <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter> (accessed July 2024).

94. USAID (US Agency for International Development). (2018). "Strengthening Advocacy and Civic Engagement in Nigeria." *USAID*. Available at: <https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/s 3.sourceafrica.net/documents/120593/SACE-Final-Report.pdf> (accessed July 2024).

95. US Department of State. (2024). "2024 U.S.-Nigeria Binational Commission Concludes in Abuja." *US Department of State*. Available at: <https://2021-2025.state.gov/2024-u-s-nigeria-binational-commission-concludes-in-abuja> (accessed July 2024).

96. US Mission Nigeria. (2024). "The United States and Nigeria: Partnering for prosperity." *US Embassy and Consulate in Nigeria*. Available at: <https://ng.usembassy.gov/the-united-states-and-nigeria-partnering-for-prosperity/> (accessed July 2024).

97. Uwazuruike, A. R. (2020). "#EndSARS: The Movement against Police Brutality in Nigeria." *Harvard Human Rights Journal,* November 12. Available at: <https://journals.law.harvard.edu/hrj/2020/11/endsars-the-movement-against-police-brutality-in-nigeria/> (accessed July 2024).

98. Van Hüllen, V. and Stahn, A. (2009). "Comparing EU and US Democracy Promotion in the Mediterranean and the Newly Independent States." In: *Promoting Democracy and the Rule of Law: American and European strategies*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 118–149.

99. Van Wyk, J. A. (2020). "Sanctions and Summits: Sanctioned African Leaders and EU–Africa Summits." In: Mattheis, F. and Kotsopoulos, J. *Broadening the Debate on EU–Africa Relations* Routledge, 53–71.

100. Waldner, D. and Lust, E. (2018). "Unwelcome Change: Coming to Terms with Democratic Backsliding." *Annual Review of Political Science* 21 (1), 93–113.

101. Watts, I. P. (2016). "From War to Peace: When Democracy Prevails." *Saint Louis University Public Law Review* 35(2), 351–390. https://scholarship.law.slu.edu/plr/vol35/iss2/9

102. Wolff, J. and Wurm, I. (2011). "Towards a Theory of External Democracy Promotion: A Proposal for Theoretical Classification." *Security Dialogue* 42 (1), 77–96.

103. Young, J. (2024). *The Poisoned Chalice of US Democracy: Studies from the Horn of Africa*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

104. Youngs, R. (2001). *Democracy Promotion: The Case of European Union Strategy*. Vol. 167. Brussels, Belgium: Centre for European Policy Studies.

THE EMOTIONAL VALUES AUCTION: A NEW ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING METHODOLOGY, WHERE SKILLS MEET EMOTIONS

STEVEN SCHUIT

ADRIANE HERMAN

Steven Schuit, BS, MEd, CAGS
English Language Fellow
Daugavpils University, Latvia
e-mail: schuitstephen33@gmail.com
https://orcid.org/0009-0005-1757-4478

Adriane Herman, BA, MFA
Professor of the MFA and Chair of Printmaking,
Coordinator of Public Engagement and Art and
Entrepreneurship Minors
Maine College of Art and Design, USA
e-mail: aherman@meca.edu

Steven Schuit, BS Boston University, MEd Texas Tech University, CAGS Boston University, recently served as an English Language Fellow at Daugavpils University in Daugavpils, Latvia. He has held academic positions at the University of Southern Maine Business School and at the Foreign Language Institute at Yeungnam University, Gyeongsan, South Korea. He has served as a U.S. Peace Corps Volunteer teaching at Keimyung University in Daegu, South Korea, and as a resident native

language teacher at Egressy-Gabor High School in Budapest, Hungary. As a business consultant, he led workshops globally on Management Development and Leadership in Europe, the Middle East, Asia, and the United States. He developed and led a program for new business entrepreneurs in Syktyvkar. Steven also served as a facilitator with Seeds of Peace, an international peace-building organization. He has conducted research on Self-Access Centers at universities in South Korea resulting in the publication of "Self-Access Centers in Korean Universities: A Status Report" (Schuit and Thwaites 2015), and on a model for faculty development at a large private university in South Korea resulting in "The Importance of Professional Development: Preaching to the Choir?" (Schuit et al. 2016). He is currently conducting research on the new teaching methodology discussed here, the Emotional Values Auction (Schuit 2025).

Adriane Herman, BA, Smith College, MFA University of Wisconsin-Madison, Level III Certificate in the Wilton Method of Cake Decoration, currently teaches at Maine College of Art and Design, Portland, Maine. Adriane Herman has led printmaking at the Kansas City Art Institute. She has also taught in low-residency MFA programs through Vermont College of Fine Arts and the Pacific Northwest College of Art. She facilitates arts workshops in Maine prisons and has co-curated exhibitions of works by artists incarcerated in Maine that provide opportunities to sell artwork and learn about creative self-employment. Adriane conceived the original art project known as the Emotional Value Auction.

ABSTRACT

Many teachers face common challenges, including limited resources, low student motivation, and classroom management issues. Teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) is a rewarding profession, but it also presents its own fair share of challenges (Azarov 2025). Effective responses include the professional development of ESL teachers (Schuit et al. 2016), making learning relevant, engaging and fun for students, and incorporating lesson materials that align with student needs. A recently developed technique, the Emotional Values Auction (EVA), may provide ESL teachers with a tool that students find not only interesting, but also emotionally relevant.

This research posed the question: if piloted and formally evaluated, would the EVA process, as indicated by students, demonstrate a significant level of learning and satisfaction? Would the EVA method prove to be an innovative interdisciplinary approach that blends social–emotional learning (SEL) with language skills development? The methodology aims to bridge art-based practices and ESL pedagogy, introducing a novel approach for engaging students both emotionally and linguistically. The piloting of the technique in two different ESL contexts (community members and university staff) provides real-world application evidence. The EVA process incorporates several characteristics of an actual auction: high energy, pressure, intensity, and excitement. It offers teachers in an ESL environment the opportunity to combine emotional subject matter content such as happiness, loss, and generosity with language skill development in the areas of writing, reading, listening, speaking and making presentations. It is a new pedagogic tool ESL teachers can use to make their curricula and classrooms more successful, and lessons more engaging for students.

Keywords: ESL, emotional values auction, social–emotional learning, pedagogic, milieu, comfort zone

INTRODUCTION

The idea of an Emotional Value Auction (EVA) originated as an art concept by Professor Adriane Herman (Herman). Through her lens of artistic observation, she noticed the difficulty people had "letting go" of objects they possessed, people in their lives who had passed, or relationships that had ended. Some people could not part with items in their lives, others resisted throwing things away or, in terms of terminated relationships, "moving on". Giving things up – the concept of "loss" – is a challenge for many people (Spencer 2016; Ellison and Alexander 2022). In response, she designed an artistic process where people could offer their used items, or symbolic items of relationships that had ended, putting them on display in an art gallery, accompanied by a written statement describing what the item meant to them and why it was time to "let it go". People attending the gallery who wanted a particular item could place a "bid" for that item. The "bids" – written descriptions of why a person wanted to receive the item – were collected and given to the owner who, after reading them, decided who would receive the item. An art show, in this context, becomes an auction where people can "release" their items to others.

AUCTION THEORY AND PROCESS

An EVA generally follows an actual auction process and, analogous to an auction, highly engages participants. Research suggests that auctions may be interpreted as economic games that basically have two aspects: 1) format or process and 2) information (Kumar and Feldman 1998). The auction process itself includes six basic activities that create an action-oriented trading environment:

1. an initial buyer and seller request;
2. setting up the auction event;
3. scheduling and advertising;
4. a bidding step;
5. the evaluation of bids;
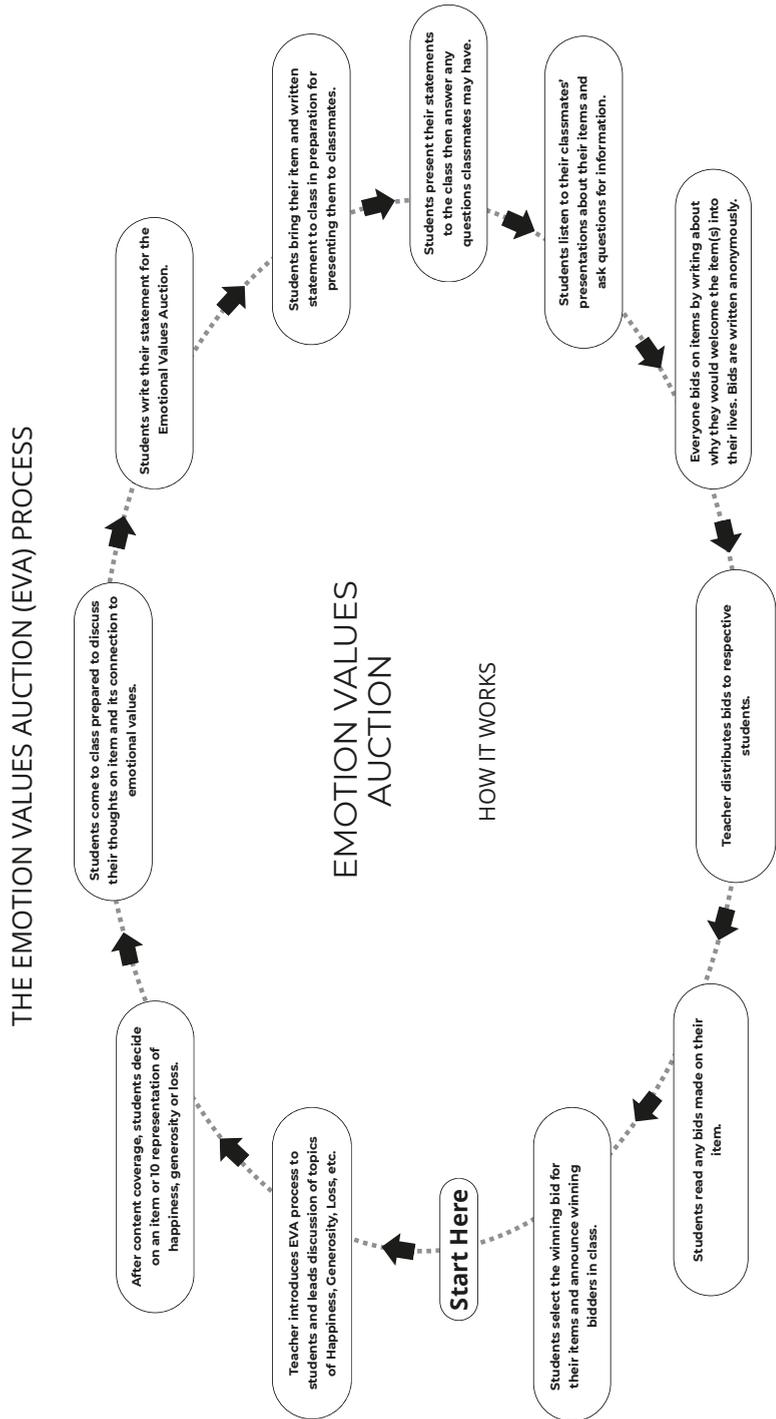6. the trade settlement, that is, the transfer of goods.

These common auction activities are both transferable to the ESL classroom and contributory to a learning environment that may

prove more interactive and stimulating than the "typical" ESL learning environment.

FROM ART CONTEXT TO EDUCATIONAL METHODOLOGY

The authors, after analyzing the six basic components identified in both traditional auctions and their artistic counterpart, the EVA, theorized that the model had valuable implications for the ESL teaching environment. Where "loss" was the underlying consideration (emotion) in the EVA, the authors believed other emotions could be inserted in an educational application. For example, they worked with "happiness" as a subject in their ESL classrooms. The World Happiness Report (Helliwell et al. 2025) provided a plethora of information for ESL students that prompted rich discussions, comparisons of different happiness ratings amongst and between countries, and extensive opportunities for new vocabulary acquisition. Similarly, the emotion of "generosity" became a potential topic for the new educational version of the auction. They identified a relevant video that focused on "generosity" which, along with a set of guiding discussion questions, created a further platform that could be used in the new model. Using these resources, ESL students could now study happiness, generosity, and loss, and begin to consider their personal thoughts and views about those emotions. The EVA process, in this new ESL educational context, readies the students for the next step: the instructor guides students' identification of what items might reflect "happiness", "generosity", or "loss" in their lives – in other words, guides the selection of the item they might consider donating or contributing to the auction. Figure 1 outlines the EVA process as implemented in the pilot program described and discussed here.

Figure 1.

THE EMOTION VALUES AUCTION (EVA) PROCESS

EMOTION VALUES AUCTION

HOW IT WORKS

Start Here

Teacher introduces EVA process to students and leads discussion of topics of Happiness, Generosity, Loss, etc.

After content coverage, students decide on an item or 10 representation of happiness, generosity or loss.

Students come to class prepared to discuss their thoughts on item and its connection to emotional values.

Students write their statement for the Emotional Values Auction.

Students bring their item and written statement to class in preparation for presenting them to classmates.

Students present their statements to the class then answer any questions classmates may have.

Students listen to their classmates' presentations about their items and ask questions for information.

Everyone bids on items by writing about why they would welcome the item(s) into their lives. Bids are written anonymously.

Teacher distributes bids to respective students.

Students read any bids made on their item.

Students select the winning bid for their items and announce winning bidders in class.

The clockface numbers of 9, 12, 3 and 6 have been added to the model for discussion purposes. Referring to Figure 1, the teaching process commences at 9 o'clock and continues clockwise. That is, the model is presented to students and teachers introduce emotional topical content appropriate for their student audiences, such as happiness, loss, generosity, and other content choices. Students choose items that represent their interests, write about their connections to the selected objects, and then participate in the EVA. As with all learning activities, appropriate discussions and evaluations of the learning process should be undertaken by the teacher.

FROM EMOTIONAL VALUE TO EMOTIONAL VALUES AUCTION

Realizing that the process created thoughtful opportunities for ESL skill development in the areas of writing, listening, reading, speaking, and presenting, the authors designed the new educational model. The context becomes both cognitive and emotional. Students present their items to the class and expand on their experiences by writing about the items and presenting their stories to their classmates. Other students, listening to the presentations, can then "bid" on the items that they feel a connection to. Bids are made by writing about why they think they would be good stewards for receiving the items that are up for auction. The submitted bids, which are written anonymously, are reviewed by the student donating the item, and that person selects the final recipient. No money is exchanged. The "currency" is shared experience and learning. Students report positive levels of satisfaction with the process based on several factors.

The EVA might well have antecedents in social–emotional learning (SEL). SEL is an educational process that helps students develop and apply skills needed to understand their emotions, achieve positive goals, understand and show empathy, build positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (Ashkanasy and Humphrey 2011).

Throughout the EVA, these five broad interrelated social–emotional competencies can be observed coming into play. During the process, students build positive relations with their classmates while achieving goals, experiencing empathy for their classmates' experience, and making decisions about what personal

items they want to enter into the auction and also which items they want to bid on.

Many teachers know that high levels of student engagement, student self-initiative, and learning that is experiential rather than passive help foster learning in their classrooms. The EVA process provides a platform for activating these attributes for learning.

PILOTING THE EMOTIONAL VALUES AUCTION PROCESS IN LATVIAN UNIVERSITY CLASSROOMS

The EVA process was incorporated within the curriculum of two different classes during the Fall 2024 academic semester at Daugavpils University, in Daugavpils, Latvia. The emotional values incorporated as subject matter content were happiness, generosity, and loss. Students had no previous experience with the EVA methodology. Use of the model spanned six class sessions of 95-minutes each during classes held in November and December. All students in both pilot classes participated willingly.

Speaking, writing, reading, presenting, and listening activities were included as part of the methodology. For example, students were asked to write about the items they were choosing to place into the auction. Their assignment was to identify an item, describe the role it had played in their lives, and discuss which emotion – happiness, generosity or loss – was most relevant in making their donation.

Presentation skills were required, as students had to stand in front of the class to present and discuss their items with the other students. Speaking and listening skills were used throughout the process, as students discussed their ideas and perspectives about the emotional subject matter of happiness, generosity and loss. For example, students were asked to discuss their opinion about the validity of the criteria used in the *World Happiness Report* to assess a country's happiness rating. They were also asked to assess and discuss their own happiness ratings using a scale of 1-10. The content, in conjunction with the EVA process, provided a plethora of opportunities for ESL skill development.

The completion of the EVA process was marked by the students receiving the items they had "bid" on. In the two classes in which the process was piloted, most students received an item after placing their written bids. Students were eligible to bid on more than one item, but they had to write a bid for each item they

were interested in acquiring. Examples of items placed into the auction were quite varied. They reflected the values of the respective students, as well as which emotional content area was of particular interest to them. For example, one student entered his favorite English novel into the auction, reflecting the loss of his youth. Another student placed several handmade Christmas tree ornaments into the auction (happiness). A third donated two holiday cards she had made (generosity). Yet another student placed a wooden Finnish hiking cup into the auction, demonstrating the emotional value of generosity. Items placed into auction did not have to be physical objects. For example, they could be services such as English lessons or receiving a massage.

RESEARCH RESULTS

At the conclusion of the six-class process, a brief survey was administered to the students who had completed the activity. The EVA was undertaken in two different classes: the "community class" of adult residents of the general Daugavpils area and the "Daugavpils University class" comprised of faculty and staff from the university. A four-point scale was employed to ask the students to compare the Emotional Values Auction activity to the other English classes they had experienced during the semester. Students were asked to make comparative evaluations in terms of the chance to practice English, learning new vocabulary, taking risks and stepping out of their comfort zones, and having fun. Mean scores are shown for each class, as well as a mean score totals for both classes. In terms of participating in the Emotional Values Auction, each class rated "having fun" highest (3.65). "Practicing English" came second (3.35), with "taking risks and stepping out of your comfort zone" ranked a very close third (3.32), followed by "learning new vocabulary" (3.09). For the community class, taking risks (3.62) and practicing English (3.25) were rated second highest, while learning new vocabulary (2.75) was rated lowest, relatively speaking.

For the Daugavpils University faculty and staff class, practicing English and learning new vocabulary were rated second highest (tied at 3.44), while taking risks and stepping out of your comfort zone (3.01) was evaluated lowest on a relative basis.

Table 1. Emotional Values Auction Student Survey
Scale 1–4: 1=Much worse than, 2=Worse than, 3=Better than, 4=Much better than

Question	Community English Class (*n*=8)	Daugavpils University Class- Faculty and Staff (*n*=9)	Mean of Both Classes (*n*=17)
1. In terms of practicing your English, how did the EVA Activity compare to our other classes this semester?	3.25	3.44	3.35
2. In terms of learning new vocabulary, how did the EVA Activity compare to our other classes this semester?	2.75	3.44	3.09
3. In terms of taking risks and stepping out of your comfort zone, how did the EVA Activity compare to our other classes this semester?	3.62	3.01	3.32
4. In terms of having fun, how did the EVA Activity compare to our other classes this semester?	3.75	3.55	3.65
Class overall mean scores	3.34	3.36	3.35

DISCUSSION

These results, in conjunction with additional comments from the students who took part in the EVA learning process, demonstrate the outcomes suggested by SEL advocates: better understanding of emotions, demonstrating empathy, building positive relations, making responsible decisions, and developing healthy relations with others. The written (anonymous) comments received from students on the post-activity survey are included here in their entirety:

> I liked the several steps in the process.

> It's the first time in English when I needed to explain my English. It is simple, interesting, and brought me closer to other people. It's a story about us.

> This was interesting. I had no experience with this.

> In this auction we had to remember good and bad things from our past. I felt good and sad. We need to think about what we can bring to the auction. It was very hard for me. Choosing generosity was easier for me, rather than loss. At the same time, we had fun. We got something and gave something.

> There were some additional benefits, I learned the interests and skills of my classmates and there was the element of surprise. The items were very different.

> This was very unusual. I'd like to repeat it somewhere else.

> It was something new for me. I never before participated in something like this in English or anywhere. I thought it would be hard, but in reality, it wasn't hard. It was interesting.

> Speaking about generosity was easier to speak about than loss. I got some new vocabulary. We now know new facts about each other.

> It would be interesting to use other emotions and adapt this for other audiences.

It forced my imagination to work, choosing items to represent my emotions.

Overall, these statistical results, in tandem with written comments from the students in the two pilot classes, suggest there was a significant level of learning and satisfaction. Students found the marriage of the emotional content with the highly engaging and interactive auction format to be an interesting and beneficial process to develop their skills in listening, reading, writing, and speaking. Additionally, they indicated that this learning process brought them closer to the other students.

ENGLISH TEACHER TRAINING IN LATVIA AND BEYOND

Though not part of the research presented here, the EVA process was also introduced to local European English teachers at four locations during the Spring 2025 semester. The in-service workshops provided an introduction to the EVA methodology. The workshops were offered to English language educators in Poland (Wroclaw) and Estonia (Tartu), as well as those from Riga and Daugavpils in Latvia. The interactive workshops were approximately 70 minutes in duration and part of teacher training conferences sponsored by local universities or city municipal English teacher training programs. Approximately 200 educators participated in the four workshops. Teaching Guides for the EVA methodology were offered to interested participants if they contacted the lead author following the workshop and made a request.

In addition to the positive feedback received during the teacher training workshops, post-workshop requests for the Teaching Guides suggested that the EVA methodology struck chords of both interest and enthusiasm with participants. An English teacher from Estonia commented, "I found the method both creative and deeply meaningful and it offered a refreshing perspective on how emotional values can be integrated into language teaching. Your approach to teaching emotions, particularly loss, as a pathway to growth and positive transformation, really stood out to me."

An English teacher from Poland said, "It was a pure pleasure to participate in your workshop. I think it is very engaging for

students and, as a lesson, goes way beyond language learning itself."

A Turkish student studying at Daugavpils University in Latvia and training to be an English teacher, commented:

> The Emotional Values Auction was unlike any traditional language activity I had encountered before. I found this approach fascinating as it blends reading, writing, speaking and listening skills in a highly personal and emotional way. It encourages students to be vulnerable, emotional and expressive, qualities that are often underutilized in language classrooms.

These comments are representative of the reactions received from participants in our English teacher training workshops. This non-solicited feedback may suggest broader applicability for the EVA methodology extending both beyond Latvia and the adult audiences studied in a university setting.

CONCLUSION

The EVA was adapted from an artistic venture, an idea originally conceived by artist, Adriane Herman. It was reinterpreted by the authors and developed as a new ESL teaching method. The purpose of the EVA, in this pedagogic context, is to combine emotionally based content such as happiness, generosity, loss, pride, and other emotional content subjects identified by teachers with the cognitive ESL skill development areas of writing, reading, presenting, speaking, and listening.

The EVA process was piloted in Daugavpils, Latvia, at Daugavpils University, a public university in eastern Europe. Opportunities for additional research into the EVA methodology are warranted. For example, how appropriate is the methodology for younger students, including those at the middle school and high school levels? The research presented here has focused on adult students participating in English language classes at the university level.

Additionally, what emotional content areas beyond those considered here might provide enhancements to the EVA process? For example, during one workshop, a participating English teacher suggested the relevance of "gratitude" as a potential emotional content topic. It is reasonable to assume there are many more

content areas that teachers could include in their implementation of the EVA process. Decision criteria might include the age and maturity of the students, as well as the relevance of specific emotional content topics to the curriculum.

Additionally, as the EVA model was piloted and evaluated in Latvian ESL classrooms, would these outcomes be consistent with those in ESL classrooms in other countries and cultures? Would the EVA process be appropriate in its current configuration for students in Africa, Asia, or other regions?

Class size is another consideration. Would the EVA method be adaptable in larger classrooms? Finally, given the broader relevance of remote teaching, can the EVA process be adapted to online teaching applications?

These questions suggest both the importance of, and opportunities for, further research on the EVA process. The EVA methodology, a new tool for teachers and their students, provides fresh opportunities to effectively combine both emotions and skills in ESL classrooms.

REFERENCES

1. Ashkanasy, N. and Humphrey, R. H. (2011). "What is Social Emotional Learning? Why It Matters." *Emotion Review* 3 (2). (April).

2. Azarov, M. (2025). "Challenges Faced by ESL Teachers-and How to Overcome Them." *CPD News* (January 3). Available at: <https://www.cpduk.co.uk/news/challenges-faced-by-esl-teachers-and-how-to-overcome-them> (accessed September 2025).

3. Ellison, B. and Alexander, D. (2022). "Kansas City Auction Way for Owners to Emotionally Let Go of Possessions." *NPR, BBC World Service* (July 15). Available at: <https://www.kcur.org/pod cast/up-to-date/2022-07-15/kansas-city-auction-way-for-owners-to-emotionally-let-go-of-possessions> (accessed September 2025).

4. Helliwell, J. F., Layard, R., Sachs, J. D., De Neve, J.-E., Aknin, L. B., and Wang, S. (eds.). (2025). *World Happiness Report 2025*. University of Oxford: Wellbeing Research Centre.

5. Herman, A. "Slightly Broken Umbrella." *Adriane Herman Website.* Available at: <https://adriane-herman.format.com/12033306-2023-emotional-value-auction-speedwell-projects> (accessed September 2025).

6. Kumar, M. and Feldman, S. (1998). "Internet Auctions." *USENIX Technical Program – Paper – Proceedings of the 3rd USENIX Workshop on Electronic Commerce,* 1998, 49–60. Available at: <https://www.usenix.org/legacy/event/ec98/full_papers/kumar_auctions/kumar_html/kumar.html> (accessed September 2025).

7. Schuit, S. (2025). "The Emotional Values Auction." *Short Talks Through a Wide World* (June 3). Available at: <https://shorttalksworld.com/2025/06/03/the-emotional-values-auction/> (accessed September 2025).

8. Schuit, S., Healy, J., and Connors, K. (2016). "The Importance of Professional Development: Preaching to the Choir?" *The English Connection. KOTESOL* 20 (2), 20–22. Available at: <https://koreatesol.org/sites/default/files/pdf_publications/TECv20n2Summer2016web.pdf> (accessed September 2025).

9. Schuit, S. and Thwaites, P. (2015). "Self-Access Centers in Korean Universities: A Status Report." *The English Connection. KOTESOL* 19 (2), 24–29. Available at: <https://koreatesol.org/sites/default/files/pdf_publications/TECv19n2Summer2015web.pdf> (accessed September 2025).

10. Spencer, L. (2016). "Artists Encourage Kansas City Residents to Ride a Bus and 'Let It Go!'." *NPR, BBC World Service* (May 20). Available at: <https://www.kcur.org/arts-life/2016-05-20/artists-encourage-kansas-city-residents-to-ride-a-bus-and-let-it-go> (accessed September 2025).

IMPLEMENTATION OF APPROACHES FROM DAUGAVPILS UNIVERSITY (LATVIA) IN THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESSES OF T. H. SHEVCHENKO NATIONAL UNIVERSITY "CHERNIHIV COLEHIUM" (UKRAINE)

IRYNA KULYK

NATALIIA TSYPLIAK

TAMARA YANCHENKO

Iryna Kulyk, PhD, Associate Professor
Department of Pedagogy and Methods
of Teaching History and Social Disciplines
T. H. Shevchenko National University "Chernihiv Colehium"
Chernihiv, Ukraine
e-mail: 22Kulik@gmail.com
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9898-0064

Nataliia Tsypliak, PhD, Associate Professor
Department of World History and International Relations
T. H. Shevchenko National University "Chernihiv Colehium"
Chernihiv, Ukraine
e-mail: nata.tsyplyak@gmail.com
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7874-1277

Tamara Yanchenko, PhD, Professor,
Head of the Department of Pedagogy and Methods of Teaching
History and Social Disciplines,
T. H. Shevchenko National University "Chernihiv Collehium"
Chernihiv, Ukraine
e-mail: tamyanchenko@gmail.com
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2967-0695

Iryna Kulyk is Associate Professor in the Department of Pedagogy and Methods of Teaching History and Social Disciplines at T. H. Shevchenko National University "Chernihiv Colehium" in Chernihiv, Ukraine. Her research interests focus on education for sustainable development, the use of oral history in education, and transdisciplinary approaches to teaching and learning. She explores innovative strategies for integrating these fields into teacher training and contemporary pedagogical practices. She teaches courses in the history of pedagogy, didactics, museum pedagogy, and higher education pedagogy. She has published articles on this topic in Ukrainian and European publications.

Nataliia Tsypliak is Associate Professor in the Department of World History and International Relations at T. H. Shevchenko National University "Chernihiv Colehium" in Chernihiv, Ukraine. Her scholarly interests focus on the study of the formation and development of the system of spiritual education in Ukraine in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. She is also interested in the implementation of digital technologies and microlearning in the educational process. In her teaching activities, she leads courses related to the adoption of digital technologies and has some of published studies in both domestic and international journals.

Tamara Yanchenko is Professor and Head of the Department of Pedagogy and Methods of Teaching History and Social Disciplines at T. H. Shevchenko National University "Chernihiv Colehium" in Chernihiv, Ukraine. Her research interests include the history of education and childhood, and the use of modern methods and tools in research. She is also interested in innovative technologies for teaching students. As a university professor, she teaches courses related to the history of education and the methodology of scientific research in pedagogy. She has published articles on this topic in Ukrainian and European publications.

ABSTRACT

This article examines the unique aspects of applying approaches used in Daugavpils University (Latvia) into the educational process of T. H. Shevchenko National University "Chernihiv Colehium" (Ukraine). The paper discusses practices of education for sustainable development, the use of microlearning technology, and the use of oral history as a method in the training of future educators and in scientific research. The study of Daugavpils University's approach in Ukraine was made possible through the participation of Ukrainian lecturers in the European Union programme Erasmus+ (KA 171) which facilitated staff mobility for training at Daugavpils University. In 2017, 2021, and 2025, the authors of the article conducted a survey of lecturers at T. H. Shevchenko National University "Chernihiv Colehium" regarding the use of international approaches, particularly the innovative practices of Daugavpils University, in their professional activities. The survey results showed a significant increase in the role of European education for the development of education in Ukraine over recent years, as well as a growing awareness among Ukrainian lecturers of the innovative educational approaches of European countries, including Latvia. The authors conclude that cooperation with Daugavpils University contributed to the modernization of educational processes at T. H. Shevchenko National University "Chernihiv Colehium".

Keywords: education for sustainable development, microlearning technology, oral history method, innovative technologies

INTRODUCTION

Under the current conditions of educational reform in Ukraine (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine 2016), the implementation of innovative approaches aimed at achieving the goals of sustainable development while fostering critical thinking, interdisciplinary collaboration, and an active civic stance among learners is gaining particular relevance. In this context, international cooperation is crucial as it facilitates the exchange of best educational practices, methodological tools, and research approaches. The collaboration between T. H. Shevchenko National University "Chernihiv Colehium" (Ukraine) and Daugavpils University (Latvia) has proven especially fruitful, as the latter is a key centre for research in the field of education for sustainable development and pedagogical innovations.

The purpose of this article is to analyse the implementation of Daugavpils University's approaches in the educational processes of T. H. Shevchenko National University "Chernihiv Colehium".

The article examines issues related to education for sustainable development, the use of microlearning technology, and the use of oral history as a methodology through the prism of European educational approaches.

The European academic community is actively exploring the issues of education for sustainable development. The goals, principles, and tools for implementing sustainable development in education are the subject of research by experts such as I. Salīte et al. (2016; 2023), M. Deksne and A. Strode (2021), S. Šapale et al. (2021). Among Ukrainian scholars conducting research in the field of sustainable development in education, V. Boholiubov et al. (2012), O. Hrebeniuk (2019), O. Savchenko (2009), and others should be highlighted.

The concept of microlearning has its origins in the mid-twentieth century, emerging from the theory of programmed instruction developed by American psychologist B. F. Skinner. Today, this technology is actively researched both abroad and in Ukraine. Among foreign scholars working in this field, T. Hag, C. Weber, F. J. Gou, J. Kim, and R. Rubin are notable. In Ukraine, microlearning is actively studied by V. Velychko, O. Fedorenko, S. Lytvynova, O. Glazunova, V. Kravchenko, T. Sayapina, T. Voloshyna and V. Korolchuk.

Oral history as a method and source for the history of education and childhood remains under-researched in Ukrainian

scholarship. At the same time, significant achievements in using the oral history method for studying military, social, and political events and processes have been made by Ukrainian historians (H. Hrinchenko, L. Males, V. Sereda and others) and those from other countries (D. K. Dunaway, W. K. Baum, I. Saleniece, L. Passerini, A. Portelli, A. Thomson, and others).

Within the framework of joint educational and scientific initiatives, particularly in the context of the Erasmus+ projects (staff mobility for training at Daugavpils University from May 20, 2024 to May 26, 2024 and from May 12, 2025 to May 18, 2025) innovative ideas were actively implemented in the training of future educators at T. H. Shevchenko National University "Chernihiv Colehium". European approaches in education for sustainable development were also shared at the "Transdisciplinary Approach in the Context of Sustainable Development of Education" Summer School for PhD students, which took place at Daugavpils University's "Ilgas" Research Centre from August 15–21, 2017.

EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Daugavpils University, as an innovative educational centre, actively integrates the principles of sustainable development into its educational and scientific activities. The university hosts international conferences, summer schools, scientific seminars, and internships where approaches to solving problems in education for sustainable development are formulated.

The implementation of sustainable development principles into the educational process at Daugavpils University is a tangible practice that ensures the training of a new generation of specialists capable of seeing a holistic picture of the world, acting in complex and constantly transforming conditions and taking responsibility for the sustainable development of society. This approach aligns with the goals of the European Higher Education Area and UNESCO principles regarding the global education of the future.

Daugavpils University is a partner in European ecological and pedagogical projects (for example, "Education for Sustainable Development" and the "Baltic University Programme"). The theme of sustainable development is integrated as a cross-cutting competency in educational programs. The university cooperates with local governments, schools, and non-governmental

organizations. Academic programs at Daugavpils University are oriented toward developing the general and professional competencies necessary for working in a complex, changing environment, particularly in the fields of education, management, innovation, and sustainable development.

The educational process at Daugavpils University applies a methodology focused on problem-based, project-based, and research-based learning. It involves students working in groups and synthesizing knowledge from several disciplines. Students work on real-world cases regarding, for example, biodiversity conservation, rational resource consumption, and local development in the Latgale region. Lecturers and students are actively involved in scientific projects that solve complex problems with the participation of representatives from various fields of knowledge. For instance, a study on sustainable development in the Latgale region would combine a complex of aspects, taking in economics, ecology, sociology, pedagogy, and more.

In our opinion, integrating the principles of education for sustainable development into the content of academic disciplines is an important task for modern higher pedagogical education as it contributes to the formation of students' systemic thinking, ecological culture, social responsibility, and the ability to act for the benefit of a sustainable future.

The strategy for training future educators in Ukraine must correspond to the modern requirements of Ukrainian society and European standards for teacher training. Therefore, lecturers are actively integrating European approaches used in education for sustainable development into the educational process of T. H. Shevchenko National University "Chernihiv Colehium".

The concept of education for sustainable development is interpreted as "a process that gives people the knowledge, skills and values needed to live in a world of change, make responsible decisions and act for the benefit of an environmentally safe, economically efficient and socially just future" (Savchenko 2009, p. 6). The main task of the concept of sustainable development can be defined as "the preservation of man as a biological species and his progressive development as a person" (Boholiubov et al. 2012, p. 15).

Education for sustainable development is an educational paradigm that shapes the values, knowledge, skills, and behavioural patterns necessary to ensure a balance between economic growth, social well-being, and environmental preservation (Hrebeniuk 2019).

The exchange of teaching techniques and cooperation between the two universities discussed in this study has contributed to the educational programs of T. H. Shevchenko National University "Chernihiv Colehium" being updated, bringing them into alignment with European standards. For example, the educational program for unit A4 "Secondary Education: History and Civic Education" takes into account the goals of education for sustainable development.

The purpose of the educational program is to train highly qualified specialists in the field of education who are capable of performing professional pedagogical activities in general secondary education institutions, implementing a competency-based approach to teaching history and civic education; to introduce innovative educational technologies; and to form civic values based on respect for people, nature, and cultural diversity. The goal is to train specialists capable of solving complex pedagogical tasks and problems in the process of professional activity in educational institutions. The program is focused on developing students' ability to implement the principles of education for sustainable development in educational institutions.

In our opinion, to achieve these goals it is necessary to develop key competencies for sustainable development in students. These include systemic and critical thinking, the ability for interdisciplinary analysis, value-oriented choice, civic responsibility, and communicative and ethical competence.

Academic courses such as "Current Issues in Pedagogy" and "The History of European Education" include the study of the sustainable development's conceptual foundations: its principles, tasks, and methods of implementation. They also involve the analysis of international documents such as the Rio Declaration, UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030, UNESCO declarations; understanding the interconnection between education and sustainable development in global and local contexts; and analysing practices for implementing education for sustainable development in domestic and foreign education.

Pedagogical interaction is conducted with regard to the following principles:

- **knowledge integration**, which ensures the combination of concepts, methods and approaches from various scientific disciplines to create a holistic vision of a problem;
- **contextuality**, which takes into account the social, cultural, environmental, military (since the 2022 start of

the Russian–Ukrainian war), political and economic
context in the process of learning and teaching;
- **problem-based learning**, where knowledge is formed
  through researching and solving real-world tasks;
- **cooperation and dialogue**, which involves collaborating
  to create new solutions, concepts, and ideas; and
- **reflectivity**, which ensures a constant re-evaluation of
  one's own position, learning methods, results and values.

Pedagogical practice is a key tool for implementing the
principles of education for sustainable development as it ensures
their realization in a real educational environment. Practical
training includes internships in general secondary education
institutions which helps future history and civic education teachers
develop their professional competencies. Pedagogical practice
also allows for the integration of sustainable development aspects
into teaching methods and content. During the implementation of
the A4 "Secondary Education: History and Civic Education"
educational programme, practical training accounts for 22 credits
(24.4%) of the educational program's total of 90 credits.
Strengthening the practical component of students' professional
training ensures the connection between the student's theoretical
preparation and school curricula.

We use active teaching methods such as the case study
method, project-based learning, and the portfolio method to
implement the principles of education for sustainable
development. For instance, we use the portfolio method during
pedagogical practice. Students are tasked with keeping a
pedagogical practice diary in which they record the results of their
active interaction with the lecturer, students, and pupils, followed
by an analysis of their own achievements and the causes of any
shortcomings. Students also create and systematically supplement
a methodological file with lesson plans, differentiated assignments,
and handouts for students' research work in history and civic
education classes.

The case study method involves examining a specific
pedagogical situation to find a rational solution to a problem. Case
studies require a comprehensive analysis and the preparation of a
joint result such as a presentation, a mind map, or a lesson plan.

To help students analyse current pedagogical issues through
the lens of sustainable development and to foster critical thinking,
social responsibility, and the ability to act in the interests of a
sustainable society, we offer analytical case studies within

programme components including "Current Issues in Pedagogy", "Foundations of Critical Thinking", and "Museum Pedagogy: Education for Sustainable Development as a Pedagogical Innovation". Practical case studies, individual assignments, and group work are used to stimulate creativity and communication skills.

During practical classes, instructors divide students into groups to solve complex tasks. For example, for the topic "Education as a factor of sustainable social development", students are tasked with analysing the role of education in achieving the sustainable development goals and asked to provide examples of educational initiatives or projects in Ukraine or elsewhere that help achieve these goals. Another example is the topic "Competencies for sustainable development in teacher training", where students are asked to compile a list of competencies that modern teachers need in order to implement the principles of education for sustainable development and to conduct a mini-survey among students or faculty.

Students are also given project-based assignments. Examples include analysing any school textbook in history or civic education for the implementation of sustainable development principles, drawing conclusions and providing recommendations; analysing the extent to which the school curriculum integrates sustainable development themes; or developing an initiative to popularize sustainable development among the student community.

Thus, the application of teaching methods from Daugavpils University in the educational processes of the T. H. Shevchenko National University "Chernihiv Colehium" contributes to the modernization of the latter institution's content and pedagogical approach, bringing them into accordance with European educational standards.

MICROLEARNING TECHNOLOGY

As part of the academic mobility programme, teachers from the T. H. Shevchenko National University "Chernihiv Colehium" also learned about introducing microlearning in the educational space.

Microlearning refers to technology for organizing the educational process that involves dividing the educational material into small topics and tasks that students can master in a short period of time (Weber 2003). Microlearning has three key

characteristics: short content units focused on specific learning outcomes, multi-format and multi-platform capabilities.

The relevance of creating and implementing new educational technologies and teaching methods is determined by society's need for high-quality training of specialists. Today, we are seeing a decrease in attention span. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century the average time of maximum concentration has decreased from 12 to 8 minutes. The development of digital technologies has caused difficulties in selecting educational content, leading to students being overloaded with information. In some cases, content is transferred from paper to the digital environment without using the broad possibilities of online learning. In this regard, microlearning technology is becoming relevant as a way of teaching and providing content in small, very specific portions of learning that contain only the necessary amount of information. This allows students to achieve a specific didactic goal (Hug 2010).

The basis for the development of microlearning is the theory of programmed learning, which was widespread in the second half of the twentieth century. The concept of programmed learning was developed by American psychologist B. F. Skinner, based on the principles of behaviourism (Skinner 1954). As Skinner noted, in order to help a child master learning material it is necessary to make this assimilation gradual, in the form of small steps, each of which differs so little from the previous one that it does not cause difficulties for students and can be performed without error. The concept of a "step" in programmed learning theory includes a "portion" of material that is learned by students and the actions and operations – including mental ones – that they perform. The main criterion for the optimal size of a step is the correctness of the student's answer. If they made a mistake, it means that the size of the step was larger than optimal. In such cases, according to Skinner, it is necessary to review the programme and reduce the size of the step.

Skinner saw a number of benefits to this approach. Firstly, none of the questions in the teaching material remain unclear to the student. Secondly, student activity is ensured. Thirdly, thanks to successful activity, the incentives for further learning are significantly increased. Fourth, students do not experience unpleasant feelings caused by external control of the quality of their knowledge (Skinner 1954, 91).

A key element of microlearning is its conciseness and strictly limited duration. This characteristic helps to reduce cognitive load, ensures maximum maintenance of student attention, and leads to

more effective long-term knowledge retention, especially under time constraints (Guo et al. 2014). Microlearning features an activity-based approach under which the active involvement of students and their completion of specific tasks for the purpose of developing relevant skills and practical competencies are mandatory.

Microlearning combines various approaches to knowledge acquisition and has specific characteristics:

1. **Short duration**: 5 to 15 minutes
2. **Conciseness**: the learning block is as short as possible
3. **Content**: small or very small units of learning information, narrow topics
4. **Autonomy**: the module is self-sufficient and independent; although it is part of the course, there is no need to access additional materials
5. **Variety**: various work formats are used to increase students' interest in learning
6. **Interactivity**: includes as many exercises as possible that directly involve students in the work process
7. **Flexibility**: suitable for blended learning, where the microcourse becomes part of a larger course

Quite often, microlearning is used to obtain snippets of information while watching a video lesson followed by a discussion. The advantages of microlearning using video lessons/webinars include concentration, accessibility, mobility, modularity, and flexibility (Lytvynova 2021).

Microlearning creates positive conditions for individualized learning: students themselves determine the time, pace, and sequence of studying a particular topic. Furthermore, the simple and understandable content of the material does not cause information overload. It is also possible to return and repeat the necessary topic at any time, which contributes to better assimilation of knowledge and the formation of skills and competencies.

V. Velychko and O. Fedorenko, analysing statistical data on the duration of educational activities, concluded that a teaching session led by a teacher can exceed 20 minutes, while independent study of educational material ranges from 5 to 10 minutes (Velychko and Fedorenko 2020). Under such conditions microlearning is particularly effective.

The outputs of all forms of student assessment are sent to the teacher, allowing them to analyse students' answers and adjust the educational content, change the assessment elements, and update the micromodules (Glazunova et al. 2024). Thus, the study of each topic is aimed at achieving specific learning outcomes that shape the student's professional competence.

Microlearning, for instance, can be applied effectively when addressing the topic "Artificial Intelligence as a Tool to Support Teachers and Students" in the "Interactive Technologies of Blended Learning" course. Instead of one large lecture, the material can be presented in a series of micromodules. Each micromodule is developed with a focus on one specific learning objective/skill, is short in duration (5–15 minutes), and has a high level of interactivity.

Micromodule 1: "What is Artificial Intelligence?"

Objective: To define AI and its main features.

Theoretical part: A 2 minute animated video (created, for example, using Canva) explaining the essence of AI in simple terms, using metaphors. The video is accompanied by a short text (up to 200 words) with key definitions.

Practical work: Interactive survey ("Name one example of AI that you use every day").

Expected outcome: Students can formulate a definition of AI.

Micromodule 2: "AI in education: personalized learning and intelligent assistants"

Objective: To familiarize students with specific examples of AI applications in educational technologies related to blended learning.

Theoretical part: A short video case study (5–7 minutes) demonstrating the work of an AI-based intelligent learning system or learning personalization tool. Focus on "showing" and "doing" rather than "talking".

Practical work: Mini-case study (up to 5 minutes): Students are given a blended lesson scenario and asked to suggest how AI could improve its effectiveness.

Expected outcome: Students can name and explain at least two ways in which AI can be used in the educational process.

Micromodule 3: "Ethical Challenges of AI in the Educational Environment"

Objective: To develop an understanding of the basic ethical issues related to the introduction of AI in education (e.g., data bias, privacy).

Theoretical part: A short article (up to 400 words) with infographics (Canva) highlighting key ethical dilemmas. Use stories and associations to hold attention.

Practical work: Interactive discussion or survey (e.g., Slido, Mentimeter) with questions such as: "Can AI be biased in assessing knowledge? If so, why?"

Expected outcome: Students can identify at least one ethical issue related to AI in education.

For greater learning efficiency all micromodules are placed on a single platform (at T. H. Shevchenko National University "Chernihiv Collehium" this is Moodle) to create microcourses. This allows students to track progress and access learning analytics. Another important feature is that it allows students to review content and choose their own pace of study.

The approach laid out above allows students to explore the complex topic of AI gradually, in small doses, which is in line with the basic principles of microlearning, ensures constant activity and feedback, and takes into account short attention spans. It also allows complex and voluminous material to be transformed into structured, accessible, and interesting learning blocks.

Microlearning is a modern didactic technology. Our experience with its application was actualized thanks to cooperation with Daugavpils University within the framework of the academic mobility programme for teachers.

ORAL HISTORY METHOD

T. H. Shevchenko National University "Chernihiv Collehium" runs a doctoral training programme in "Educational and Pedagogical Sciences" that is similar to Daugavpils University's doctoral programme in "Educational Sciences". An analysis of the latter's programme influenced the formulation of the objectives and mandatory content of the Ukrainian university's programme.

One of the mandatory components of the educational and scientific programme implemented at "Chernihiv Collehium" is "Methodology of Research in Educational and Pedagogical Sciences". Approaches from Daugavpils University are used when teaching students how to use the oral history method when studying historical and pedagogical phenomena and processes.

Oral history refers to biographical or thematic interviews with witnesses who participated in an event or events. Oral history is a narrative in which respondents, in interaction with the interviewer, reflect on their individual experiences and relate them to official historical discourses and macrosocial processes (Sereda and Males 2007).

The task of oral history is not merely to study the experiences of ordinary people against the backdrop of macro-historical processes and official models of the national/regional past, but to try to understand and recreate them in new historical reconstructions (Dunaway and Baum 1996).

In historical science, there is a well-founded opinion (Passerini 1998; Porteili 2010) that oral history is, first and foremost, a source for research into military and revolutionary events and other "cataclysms" and challenges that Ukraine has experienced and continues to experience. However, there is no doubt that today it is necessary to expand the thematic spectrum of oral history studies to cover the life stories of representatives of different generations of Ukrainians, including stories about their childhood, schooling, and other educational institutions. Such studies are a valuable source of information on the history of childhood and education, as evidenced by the Centre of Oral History Centre, founded in 2003 at Daugavpils University, headed by professor Irēna Saleniece, a well-known researcher of education history in the country. The Oral History Centre provides a catalogue of recorded life stories (circa 1,400 records) of local residents which includes basic data about respondents and their interviews, allowing researchers to make an initial selection of respondents before starting a case study. The catalogue is

organized chronologically in accordance with the interview date. An important element of the catalogues is that it identifies certain keywords from the content of each interview. This makes it easier for researchers who come to the Centre, which operates like a library or archive, to find the information they need. The Centre's materials also include photographs and personal documents (or copies thereof) provided by interviewees during oral history expeditions and study practices. Methodologically, the Centre uses Paul Thompson's approach, which he describes in *the Voice of the Past* (1978), involving chronological and topical storytelling and minimal involvement by the interviewer, as the author of the questions. All respondents are encouraged to tell their life story from childhood to the present day, providing their own view on historical events and political, economic, and cultural circumstances.

Speaking about the value of oral history as a method of studying the history of education and childhood, we would like to quote Ukrainian researcher Helinada Hrinchenko:

> Of course, the memories of one person do not provide grounds for a well-founded generalization about many, and every story told is as unique as the unique and unrepeatable life of each person. However, given the inextricable link between individual experience and the socio-historical context, the main merit of oral history lies in studying the interdependent distance and connection between them, between official and everyday discourse, between the truth that is meaningful to the narrator and the account of how it really was, usurped by traditional historiography. (Hrinchenko n.d., 40)

The theoretical basis for the topic of oral history as taught to graduate students at T. H. Shevchenko National University "Chernihiv Collehium" is the concept of the "lifeworld" of an individual, the primary element that is studied using this method. The concept was introduced by the German philosopher and sociologist, J. Habermas. It has its origins in phenomenological sociology. Habermas describes the lifeworld as a view from within an individual subject which consists of "three interrelated and equivalent components" – culture, society, and personality – which "form complex semantic connections that communicate with each other". A person's lifeworld is a holistic, constructed personal experience that has passed through the prism of social

events. Therefore, "the foundations of the lifeworld are not at our disposal at will"; it is directly related to the objective events experienced by the individual (Habermas 1999, 309–310). Oral history is precisely designed to examine the lifeworld of an individual in terms of its "foundations, foregrounds, and fragments" (Habermas 1999, 317).

J. Habermas complements the concept of lifeworld with another concept related to the oral history method and serving as its theoretical basis: "communicative action". Graduate students learn that in it, the actors of communication are considered to be subjects who speak and listen, because they are closely connected with the objective or subjective social world and defend the significance of what they say, think, and believe in. Participation in communicative action and achieving mutual understanding from the point of view of each of the positions specified in the concept of the lifeworld (culture, society, and personality) contribute to the reproduction of the lifeworld through the integration of society and the formation of personality (Habermas 1996).

In practical classes in "Methodology of Research in Educational and Pedagogical Sciences" devoted to the oral history method, graduate students are required to conduct surveys and collect information about one of the following topics:

1. Educational practices in Ukrainian schools in the second half of the twentieth century
2. Educational traditions of Ukrainian families

They may also specify a particular sub-area they wish to research within the above topics, or determine their own subject for a small study using the oral history method.

Students' oral history-based studies on research on educational practices in Ukrainian schools in the second half of the twentieth century have revealed that there were both positive and negative educational practices in Ukrainian schools during the Soviet period. The positive practices identified include the experience of schoolchildren working in groups (in a collective), labour education, the involvement of students in public life, and the relatively high quality of knowledge provided by the school. Negative practices included the ideologization, unification, and Russification of the educational process, insufficient consideration of children's individual characteristics, and demands for conformity, among others.

In our opinion, such educational practices were also characteristic of schools in Latvia during the Soviet period (Koķe and Saleniece 2015), as these were times of shared history between the two countries.

Graduate students using oral histories to study educational traditions in Ukrainian families found that parents' greatest efforts were directed toward preserving their children's health and shaping their values, moral qualities, work skills, respect for work, and understanding of the value of family and care for relatives. Parents also focused on passing on universal cultural experience to the next generation and the intellectual and physical development of the individual child. Negative factors affecting the upbringing of children in Ukrainian families included war, forced emigration of women and children, and a deterioration in quality of life.

In this context, it should be noted that researchers from Daugavpils University A. Stašulāne, I. Kačāne, A. Romanovska, I. Saleniece participated in the project "Cultural Heritage and Identities of Europe's Future" (CHIEF) under the EU's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme. As part of this project, a survey was conducted "to determine how young people acquire knowledge of cultural heritage in all its diverse forms and contexts (at educational institutions, in non-formal settings, in the family, among peers, and in heritage institutions) and whether the acquired knowledge enhances youth participation in cultural activities" (Stašulāne et al. 2021, 177).

Intergenerational qualitative research carried out in families was aimed at identifying mechanisms of inheriting traditions and behavioural patterns, as well as at identifying the factors that encourage families to gain knowledge of cultural heritage or discourage them from doing so (Stašulāne et al. 2021, 178).

The survey revealed that universal and Christian values, as well as experience of the traditional culture inherited from ancestors – including the virtue of work, care for relatives, and responsibility for the next generations – are important for families in Latvia. Deteriorating quality of life, emigration, and difficulties reconciling work and family life were found to widen the gap between generations and reduce young people's opportunities to inherit values and virtues, as well as to take over traditions and acquire new cultural skills (Stašulāne et al. 2021, 179).

The results of similar studies are highlighted in other works by scientists from Daugavpils University (Kačāne 2020).

A comparison of the results of surveys conducted in Latvia and Ukraine showed that both countries share common traditions in understanding the role of the family in raising children and shaping the cultural identity of young people.

The oral history method correlates with contemporary approaches in educational research methodology. For Ukraine, the use of the oral history method to shed light on processes, phenomena, and facts from the history of education is quite new, so the opportunity to study the methodologies used in oral history studies at Daugavpils University has proven highly beneficial to lecturers in Ukraine.

TEACHERS' SURVEY

In order to determine the specifics of using international, primarily European, approaches professional activities, we conducted surveys of teachers at the T. H. Shevchenko National University "Chernihiv Collehium" in 2017, 2021, and 2025. The questionnaire contained the following questions:

1. Do you understand the importance of international educational approaches for your professional activities?
2. Have you participated in academic mobility programmes?
3. Are you aware of the approaches used in Daugavpils University (Latvia)?
4. Do you understand the goals of education for sustainable development?
5. Do you use microlearning technology in your professional activities?
6. Do you use the oral history method in your research and teaching work?

Fifty-three teachers participated in the survey in 2017, 49 teachers in 2021, and 44 teachers in 2025.

Figure 1. Responses of teachers at T. H. Shevchenko National University "Chernihiv Collehium" when asked the questions listed above
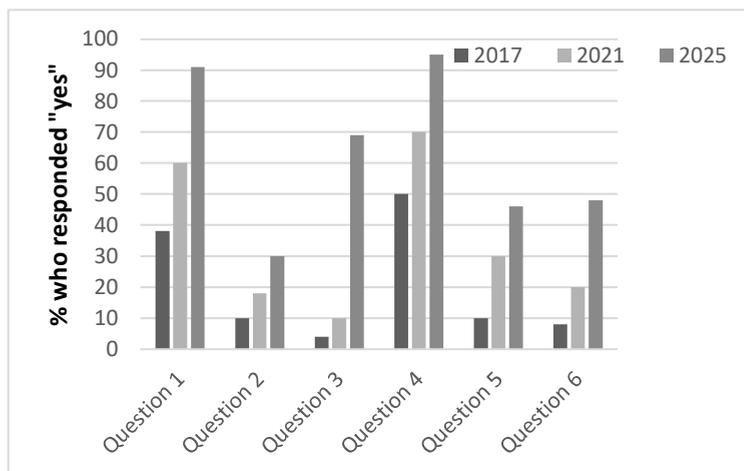
RESEARCH RESULT

Between 2017 and 2025, three surveys were conducted among the teaching staff of the T. H. Shevchenko National University "Chernihiv Colehium" to study their level of awareness, perceptions, and practical application of approaches from Daugavpils University in teaching education for sustainable development and organizing the educational environment.

The longitudinal data reflects how approaches from Daugavpils University were implemented over this period, allowing us to trace the increasing interest in and awareness of all the topics covered in the questions, as well as a rising level of professional training among the Ukrainian teaching staff.

The survey results demonstrate a stable growth in the awareness of the role of international educational approaches in professional development. While in 2017 only 38% of respondents said that they understood the importance of international approaches for improving pedagogical skills, this figure increased to 60% in 2021 and to 90% in 2025.

The increase in awareness level of the teaching staff is, in our opinion, closely related to the intensification of the Ukrainian university's international cooperation, its participation in joint events with Daugavpils University, and the implementation of academic mobility programmes and inter-university research

projects. A significant portion of respondents noted that familiarization with European educational practices contributes to updating the content of academic disciplines and developing intercultural communication in the educational process. The results indicate a transition over eight years from situational interest to systemic understanding of international educational approaches as a necessary component of a lecturer's professional competencies. The lecturers reported using specific elements of international approaches in their own pedagogical activities – specifically, critical thinking, development technologies, and research-based learning – in the development of educational programmes. This reflects the trend towards internationalization of the educational process in T. H. Shevchenko National University "Chernihiv Colehium" and the increasing role of the university environment as a space for academic mobility, cultural dialogue, and sustainable development. An important outcome of this process is a stronger pedagogical and research culture, greater readiness for international cooperation, and the adaptation of successful practices from partner universities.

Another positive trend is the growing interest in international projects and academic mobility. While in 2017 only 10% of lecturers participated in academic mobility programmes, this figure rose to 18% in 2021 and to 30% in 2025. Respondents noted that international educational approaches help improve the content of academic courses, develop the pedagogical culture, and implement innovative teaching technologies. The increase in indicators is explained by active partnership with European universities, particularly with Daugavpils University. A particularly important achievement, in our opinion, is the increased number of lecturers who, after participating in academic mobility programmes, began to actively implement European approaches to organizing the educational process, specifically with regard to forming sustainable development competencies and introducing research-based learning methods.

The survey results show a clear positive dynamic in the level of understanding and integration of Daugavpils University's approaches into the educational process at T. H. Shevchenko National University "Chernihiv Colehium". While at the initial stage of cooperation (2017) only 4% of lecturers were familiar with Daugavpils University's approach, by 2021, this figure had increased to approximately 10%, and in 2025 the majority of respondents (69%) were familiar with Daugavpils University's innovative approaches. This growth in awareness can be explained

by several factors, including the activation of inter-university partnerships within the framework of joint Erasmus+ projects, the participation of lecturers in international conferences organized by Latvian partners, and publications by Ukrainian lecturers in Daugavpils University's scientific journals. A clear trend can be observed from the stage of familiarization with Latvian techniques to their targeted use in the educational process. A significant proportion of Ukrainian lecturers emphasized the need for further exchanges, including conducting joint trainings and seminars. Respondents demonstrated a high level of interest in developing cooperation, readiness for interdisciplinary interaction, and the desire to build international academic partnerships.

The survey results showed a positive dynamic in the level of lecturers' understanding of the goals of education for sustainable development over the studied period. In 2017 approximately 50% could clearly define the essence and main directions of education for sustainable development. By 2019 this figure had risen to 70%, and in 2025 it was 95%. Such changes indicate increasing awareness among lecturers of the strategic role of education in ensuring the sustainable development of society.

Such trends indicate the gradual integration of the principles of education for sustainable development learned in Latvia into the academic and pedagogical activities of the teaching staff in Ukraine. This, in turn, contributes to the formation of an open European educational space focused on innovation, intercultural dialogue, and high-quality training of students. Important outcomes of this process include raising the level of pedagogical and research culture, laying the foundation for increased international cooperation, and facilitating the adaptation of successful practices from partner universities.

Lecturers' responses regarding their use of microlearning technology in the educational process showed that in 2017 only about 10% of respondents knew about microlearning and used this technology in the educational process. By 2021 this had increased to 30%, and in 2025 to 46%. This growth is due to various factors: the dissemination of information about microlearning in pedagogical literature; the implementation of European approaches in organizing education, including approaches used at Daugavpils University into Ukrainian higher education; and Ukrainian lecturers' search for modern methods of distance learning that can increase student motivation and ensure the quality of education.

Regarding the use of the oral history method in respondents' research and teaching, in 2017 it was used by 8% of respondents, in 2021 by 20%, and in 2025 by 48%. It is worth emphasizing that the majority of respondents were history lecturers. It is likely that the dynamics of the responses were influenced by the renewal of methodological approaches and research tools in Ukrainian science and education. First of all, this is associated with Ukraine's entry into the European educational space and, consequently, the use of European science and education approaches in the professional activities of lecturers at Ukrainian universities.

In summary, the results of the three surveys described above indicate not only a growing interest in international cooperation but also the gradual adoption of modern pedagogical approaches focused on innovation and sustainable development.

The chart shows a consistent increase in the level of awareness regarding the importance of international educational approaches, as well as the expansion of practical application of this knowledge in the professional activities of the teaching staff took place during 2017–2025. The most noticeable positive changes were observed in Ukrainian lecturers' awareness of Daugavpils University's activities (an increase from 4% to 69%) and the understanding of the goals of education for sustainable development (from 50% to 95%).

At the same time, a more active implementation of such innovative approaches as microlearning and the oral history method was noted, which is evidence of the development of pedagogical culture, greater readiness for intercultural dialogue, and lecturers' aspirations to improve their own educational practices.

Overall, the survey results demonstrate a gradual transformation of the university's educational environment towards strengthening its European dimension, which corresponds to the strategic guidelines for the modernization of higher education in Ukraine.

CONCLUSION

Fruitful cooperation with Daugavpils University has opened up new opportunities for modernizing the educational process at T. H. Shevchenko National University "Chernihiv Collehium" in Ukraine. Educational processes in the Ukrainian institute now actively include European approaches to teaching sustainable development, which requires a comprehensive analysis of

directions, criteria, and institutional strategies. Knowledge gained from Daugavpils University has allowed Ukrainian lecturers to identify a set of pedagogical conditions that contribute to improving the professional training of future teachers of history and civic education with regard to teaching sustainable development by:

- updating and creating new educational programmes, teaching aids, and textbooks for the professional training of history and civic education teachers, developed with the goals of sustainable education in mind;
- creating conditions for effective pedagogical interaction between teachers and students where both teachers and students are subjects of learning;
- fostering an active civic stance and responsibility for sustainable development in society among students for the development of Ukraine, Europe, and the world, involving students in volunteer initiatives and municipal or regional sustainable development projects;
- strengthening the practical component of student training;
- involving teachers in professional development in accordance with international standards; participation via EU programmes such as Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020; and the formation of strategic partnerships with European universities; and
- supporting for student research on current issues in sustainable development education.

In modern conditions, microlearning is becoming particularly important as an advanced teaching technology. Its use has been introduced thanks to the academic mobility programme for teachers with Daugavpils University. Integration of the latest educational approaches is important for improving the quality of higher education and meeting the requirements of the modern educational space.

The introduction of oral history techniques in educational research based on Daugavpils University's model provides a humanistic approach to the coverage of historical and pedagogical events and phenomena. The Ukrainian university has used these techniques in practical classes for students to highlight the experience of schooling and the influence of the family environment and social surroundings on children during the Soviet era in Ukraine.

Thus, we can conclude that the implementation of approaches from Daugavpils University into the educational process of the T. H. Shevchenko National University "Chernihiv Colehium" is not only an example of effective international academic cooperation but also an effective factor in the modernization of the content and forms of the educational process in Ukrainian higher education.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

REFERENCES

1. Boholiubov, V. M., Klymenko, M. O., Melnyk, L. H., Prylypko, V. A., and Klymenko, L. V. (2012). *Stratehiia staloho rozvytku* [Strategy of Sustainable Development]. Kherson: Oldi-Plus (in Ukrainian).

2. Daugavpils University webpage. (n.d.). *Educational Sciences*. Available at: <https://du.lv/en/studies/study-programmes/doctoral-study-programmes/educational-sciences/> (accessed October 2025).

3. Dunaway, D. K. and Baum, W. K. (1996). *Introduction. The Interdisciplinarity of Oral History. Oral history: An Interdisciplinary Anthology*. California: Alta Mira Press.

4. Glazunova, O., Korolchuk, V., Voloshyna, T., and Sayapina, T. (2024). "The Procedure for Implementing Microlearning Technology in Higher Education Institutions." *Physics and Mathematics Education* 39 (2), 29–34. https://doi.org/10.31110/fmo2024.v39i2-04

5. Glazunova, O. G., Kravchenko, V. M., Sayapina, T. P., Voloshyna, T. V., and Korolchuk, V. I. (2024). "The Impact of Micro-Learning Technology on the Motivation and Academic

Achievements of Higher Education Students." *Open Educational E-environment of a Modern University* 17, 30–41. https://doi.org/10.28925/2414-0325.2024.173

6. Government of Ukraine. (2019). *On the Sustainable Development Goals of Ukraine for the period up to 2030. Presidential Decree No. 722/2019 of 30 September 2019*. Available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/722/2019> (accessed October 2025).

7. Guo, P. J., Kim, J., and Rubin, R. (2014). "How Video Production Affects Student Engagement: An Empirical Study of MOOC Videos." *MIT Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory* (10), 41–50. https://doi.org/10.1145/2556325.2566239

8. Habermas, J. (1996). *Komunikatyvna diia i dyskurs* [Communicative Action and Discourse – Two Forms of Everyday Communication]. In: Sytnychenko, L. (ed.) *Primary Sources of Communicative Philosophy*. Kyiv: Lybid, 84–90. Available at: <https://shron1.chtyvo.org.ua/Habermas_Jurgen/Komunikatyvna_dia_i_dyskurs.pdf> (accessed October 2025) (in Ukrainian).

9. Habermas, J. (1999). *Dii, movlennievi akty, movlennievi interaktsii ta zhyttievyi svit* [Actions, Speech Acts, Speech Interactions, and the Lifeworld]. In: *Communicative Practical Philosophy*. Kyiv: Libra, 231–324. Available at: <https://shron1.chtyvo.org.ua/Habermas_Jurgen/Dii_movlennievi_akty_movlennievi_iteraktsii.pdf?> (accessed October 2025) (in Ukrainian).

10. Hrebeniuk, O. P. (2019). *Formuvannia kultury staloho rozvytku v universytetskomu seredovyshch*. [Formation of a Culture of Sustainable Development in the University Environment]. Kropyvnytskyi: Ekskliuzyv-SYSTEM (in Ukrainian).

11. Hrinchenko, H. (n.d.). *Usna istoriia yak metod i dzherelo doslidzhennia* [Oral History as a Method and Source of Research]. Available at: <http://history.org.ua/LiberUA/Book/OST/3.pdf?> (accessed October 2025) (in Ukrainian).

12. Hug, T. (2010). "Mobile Learning as 'Microlearning': Conceptual Considerations towards Enhancements of Didactic Thinking." *International Journal of Mobile and Blended Learning*, 2 (4), 47–57. https://doi.org/10.4018/jmbl.2010100104

13. Kačāne, I. (2020). "Family Settings as Educational and Socio-cultural Context for Youth Cultural Identities and Practices: A Narrative Case Study in Latvia." *INTED2020 Proceedings*, 1145–1152. doi: 10.21125/inted.2020.0402

14. Koķe, T. and Saleniece, I. (2015) "Education Policy in the Republic of Latvia: Lessons from Experience." *Paedagogica Historica*, 51 (1–2), 45–63. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00309230.2014.997755

15. Leal Filho, W. (ed.). (2015). *Transformative Approaches to Sustainable Development at Universities*. Cham: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-08837-2

16. Lytvynova, S. G. (2021). *Mikronavchannia IK-tekhnolohii pedahohiv v umovakh onlainovoho marafonu yak paradyhma tsyfrovoi transformatsii osvity* [Educators' Microlearning of ICT via Online Marathon as a Paradigm of Education Digital Transformation]. *Bulletin of the National Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of Ukraine*, 3(1), 1–6. (in Ukrainian). https://doi.org/10.37472/2707-305X-2021-3-1-10-1

17. Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine. (2024). *Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine until 2027: Approved by Order No. 276 dated March 7, 2024.* Kyiv. Available at: <https://mon.gov.ua/static-objects/mon/sites/1/Strateh.plan.diyalnosti.MON.do.2027.roku.pdf> (accessed October 2025).

18. O. M. Lazarevsky National Research Institute of History and Socio-Humanitarian Disciplines webpage. (2024). "Osvitni, pedahohichni nauky" [Educational, Pedagogical Sciences]. Available at: <https://inst-hist.chnpu.edu.ua/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/op-011-2024-r.pdf> (accessed October 2025) (in Ukrainian).

19. Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine. (2016). *The New Ukrainian School. Conceptual Principles of Secondary School Reform*. Available at: <https://mon.gov.ua/static-objects/mon/sites/1/zagalna%20serednya/Book-ENG.pdf> (accessed October 2025).

20. Passerini, L. (1998). *Autobiography of a Generation*. London: Wesleyan University Press.

21. Porteili, A. (2010). *They Say in Harlan County: An Oral History*. New York: Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417511000533

22. Salīte, I., Drelinga, E., Iliško, D., Oļehnoviča, E. and Zariņa, S. (2016). "Sustainability from the Transdisciplinary Perspective: An Action Research Strategy for Continuing Education Program Development." *Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability* 18 (2), 135–152. https://doi.org/10.1515/jtes-2016-0020

23. Salīte, I., Fjodorova, I., and Ivanova, O. (2023). "Editorial: How do Teachers Promote the Viability of Education?" *Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability* 25 (2), 1–4. https://doi.org/10.2478/jtes-2023-0012

24. Šapale, S., Iliško, D., and Badjanova, J. (2021). "Sustainable Career Guidance during the Pandemic: Building Pathways into a 'New Normal'." *Discourse and Communication for Sustainable Education* 12 (1), 140–150. https://doi.org/10.2478/dcse-2021-0010

25. Savchenko, O. V. (ed.). (2009). *Prohrama rozvytku OON v Ukraini. Kontseptsiia osvity dlia staloho rozvytku v Ukraini* [United Nations Development Programme in Ukraine. Concept of Education for Sustainable Development in Ukraine]. Kyiv: RVP "Foliant" (in Ukrainian).

26. Sereda, V. and Males, L. (2007). *Usna istoriia yak metod i metodolohiia: deiaki problemy stvorennia ta interpretatsii usnoistorychnykh dzherel* [Oral History as a Method and Methodology: Some Problems of Creating and Interpreting Oral History Sources.]. *Modern Ukraine* 11, 159–165. Available at: <https://uamoderna.com/images/archiv/11/11_UM_11_Komentari_Sereda_Males.pdf> (accessed October 20025) (in Ukrainian).

27. Skinner, B. F. (1954). "The Science of Learning and Art of Teaching." *Harvard Education Review* 24, 86–97.

28. Stašulāne, A., Kačāne, I., Romanovska, A. Saleniece, I. (2021). "The Research on Culture, Youth and Knowledge Sharing in Latvia." *Journal of Comparative Studies* 14 (43), 174–180. https://doi.org/10.59893/jcs.14(43).008

29. Strode, A. and Deksne, M. (2021). "Promoting Sustainable Development in Higher Education: Interdisciplinary and Local Community Approaches." *Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability* 23 (2), 22–35. https://doi.org/10.2478/jtes-2021-0011

30. Thomson, P. (1978). *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

31. UNESCO. (2017). *Education for Sustainable Development Goals: Learning Objectives*. Paris: UNESCO. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000247444

32. United Nations. (n.d.). *Transforming Our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. United Nations. Available at: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals> (accessed October 2025).

33. Velychko, V. E. and Fedorenko, O. G. (2020). "Orhanizatsiia navchalnoi diialnosti za tekhnolohiieiu mikronavchannia pid chas pandemii COVID-19" [Organization of Educational Activities Using Microlearning Technology during the COVID-19 Pandemic]. *E-Learning Technologies* 4, 67–75. https://doi.org/10.31865/2709-840002020222557 (in Ukrainian).

34. Weber, Ch. M. (2003). *Rapid Learning in High Velocity Environments*. PhD dissertation. MIT.