

Visegrad Countries and Africa

Security, Resilience, and Cultural Diplomacy in a Changing World¹

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Abstract:

The scenario of great international uncertainty and insecurity reconfigures a new and necessary focus on the dynamics between the Visegrad countries and Africa.

Through an evolutionary historical perspective and a focus on the complex and delicate contemporary situation, this contribution aims to explore and deepen the type of relations that have been established over the years between the Visegrad countries and Africa. Specifically, the paper considers the policies developed by Visegrad countries with particular attention to three issues: security, resilience, cultural diplomacy, and cooperation. In accordance with these issues, security is a common ground for both Visegrad countries and Africa as the latter geopolitical reality is in different ways affected by political and economic instability that could be adapted through actions of social resilience and support to the communities involved. The aim of this paper is therefore to understand how the issue of resilience is and has been addressed in the relationship between the Visegrad countries and Africa. In this complex framework influenced by the major events of the Covid-19 pandemic and the conflict between Ukraine and Russia, the instruments of cooperation and cultural diplomacy will be considered to better understand the relationship between the Visegrad countries and Africa.

Keywords:

Visegrad countries;
Africa; security;
resilience; cultural
diplomacy.

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Introduction

The present paper addresses the relevant topic of resilience in international cooperation with a specific focus on cultural diplomacy, considering the experiences of the four Visegrad countries and their relations with Africa.

The current reflection shows and integrates some findings presented at the International Conference (online) "The Visegrad countries and Africa: history and contemporaneity" held on April 27, 2022, and organised by The Jagiellonian Research Center for African Studies together with the Africa Research Institute, Óbudai University and the Centre for Military Studies, Stellenbosch University.

The interesting results that emerged through both theoretical perspectives and research of secondary sources is useful for a variety of reasons.

One of them is that it allows for the systematisation of some work that has already been developed (Lucini, 2019) and which merits further investigation in the area of socio-cultural resilience applied to international relations, crisis management and conflict reduction.

Specifically, a first systematic reflection on the topic of cultural resilience and cultural diplomacy had begun in 2018, but in recent years the world and societies have changed profoundly.

On the one hand, the changes caused by the management of the Covid-19 pandemic and the crisis management measures and models adopted to respond to this event have changed the structure of societies in many ways and also the relationship between citizens and governments at both national and local levels.

In fact, the communication of the pandemic characterised very often by redundant information in the absence of a communication plan, fake news and disinformation of various kinds has produced perceptions in the public that were then translated into behaviours that have shaped what was previously defined as the globalisation process in a different way (Lombardi, 2019).

The point is made clear in the words of Lombardi (2019):

In either case, globalisation is interpreted as a paradigm of the "pre-global", we dream of restoration, i.e. normalisation and return, and not of changing the model in order to understand the world. In this view, globalisation is a positive orientation of the system or, at most, a future state that is inevitable and should be managed to exploit its advantages. But this is mistaken. With our fear of novelty, we anchor ourselves to the customary way of reading the present, as a replica of the past, inebriated with the easy sense of security produced by habit. However, the scenarios change before the cultural models are able to adapt to the new needs for interpreting reality, hence the increase in vulnerability.

Cultural patterns have changed since the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the general view of the world and its phenomena has also changed with them.



Globalisation as a socio-cultural process and phenomenon persists not so much in the forms with which it has been known, but in its characteristics of complexity, global interdependencies, and interconnections.

The latter, however, need to be contextualised in an international scenario pervaded by a very high level of political and social tension, uncertainty and insecurity combined with other complex events of major impact such as:

- conflict between Russia and Ukraine;
- global energy crisis;
- climate change.

In this changed and changing scenario, it is useful to reflect on the role of cultural resilience in cultural diplomacy with a focus on the relationship in this area between the Visegrad countries and Africa.

Moreover, the main aim of this contribution is to focus on this relationship from a sociological perspective and to reflect on the concepts of security, resilience and cultural diplomacy.

Specifically, the primary aim is to understand how the issue of resilience – societal and cultural resilience – is and has been addressed in the relationship between Visegrad countries and Africa according to the concept of cultural diplomacy within the wider development cooperation approach.

International and development cooperation is one of the fundamental pillars of the European Union policies. Therefore, delving into the orientations and actions undertaken by the Visegrad countries in Africa from a sociological perspective is an interesting example to systematise some theoretical and methodological reflections on the role of cultural resilience in international cooperation, crisis management, conflict reduction and conflict management.

According to this peculiar framework three main issues and their interdependences will be explored considering adequate methodological approach:

- security;
- resilience;
- cultural diplomacy and cooperation.

These three topics will be analysed considering the relationship between the Visegrad countries and Africa taking into account the peculiar international scenario. In particular, the international scenario and its dynamics is also relevant to the relationship between the Visegrad countries and Africa considering their individual national uncertainties and instabilities.

The presented results of this analysis may be beneficial for future comparative or in-depth analyses.

Theoretical Perspectives

The reflection that we want to advance with this paper concerns the role of resilience, in particular cultural resilience, in the possible actions of cultural diplomacy established within the broader framework of international cooperation and with a particular focus on these aspects in the relationship between Visegrad countries and Africa.

From a historical perspective it is useful to consider the advent of Visegrad countries as specific actors in the context of the European Union.

An aspect to be made clear concerns the role and type of aid that the Visegrad countries have promoted over the years and considering the framework of European policies for international cooperation, as Chmiel (2018) recalls in his analysis: *“the post-Cotonou mandate negotiations; the southern dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy; the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa; and the European Development Fund.”*

The approach and policies of the Visegrad countries towards the international cooperation programmes of the European Union has a cultural component of particular relevance and that can be considered as a legacy of the previous socio-political structures of the Visegrad countries:

“The Visegrad countries, which were part of the Eastern Bloc controlled by the USSR, had to subordinate their development aid to the Soviet interests and were thus supportive of decolonisation and some African states to prompt their adoption of Socialist ideology. Under the ideological considerations of solidarity, the V4 had provided development assistance, expertise, military equipment, and academic exchanges to their African partners.” (Chmiel, 2018)

With regard to the involvement of the Visegrad countries in international cooperation actions, it is useful to underline that the relations between the European Union and the Visegrad countries has given an important impulse in their involvement and in the implementation of cooperation interventions:

“It is worth noting that the EU, along with its well-established political, legal, and economic ties with Africa, could serve as an important point of departure for the V4 re-engagement in this region. In fact, while the V4 generally did not seem interested in Africa prior to the EU accession, it may have been their membership in this organisation that provided some incentives to direct their attention towards this region sporadically.” (Chmiel, 2018)

This therefore traces a historical line that allows us to better understand the agendas of the individual countries belonging to the Visegrad group and their priorities in terms of security and humanitarian operations in relation to the broader international cooperation programmes of the European Union.

Having outlined in general the components and the most general characteristics of the Visegrad countries with respect to the European policies of international cooperation, for the



purposes of this paper it becomes useful to present two other concepts such as resilience declined in its cultural meaning and cultural diplomacy.

From a theoretical perspective, resilience is a multidimensional concept (Lucini, 2014), multifaceted, very underestimated scientifically even if abused through the media.

Resilience is a characteristic trait of both entire societies and individuals and its components are as follows according to Böschchen et al. (2019):

- continuity of existence
- preservation of core properties
- event that acts or is interpreted as a disturbance
- situation-related management reaction, further development, and reorganisation to create new options

Note in this regard the aspects of conservation of typical elements of a person or of a social system, as well as the possibilities of managing situations of crisis and stress to create a new context and different, more effective, relational modalities.

Resilience is therefore an essential element of every crisis management and conflict management action, including in this context also the possible activities of international cooperation that can be developed in countries affected by natural crises or deriving from wars and conflicts of various origins that cause social, political, and economic instability.

For these reasons, wanting to bring resilience back to the broader context of international cooperation actions, including for example crisis management activities, it is useful to recall what Voss (2019) proposes: *“Resilience cannot be understood independently of the references and practices from which and into which it is discursively rendered. Resilience is, on a very fundamental level, first of all meaning.”*

Resilience therefore represents a specific meaning in a context of given practices and that by its nature can only be shared and reproduced: resilience translates into a series of cultural practices (Lombardi, 2019).

Deepening the role of resilience as a mutually recognized meaning of shared cultural practices it becomes essential to report two definitions of cultural resilience that make some of its characteristics evident.

The first definition is the one proposed by Holtorf (2018):

“I define cultural resilience as the capability of a cultural system (consisting of cultural processes in relevant communities) to absorb adversity, deal with change and continue to develop. Cultural resilience thus implies both continuity and change: disturbances that can be absorbed are not an enemy to be avoided but a partner in the dance of cultural sustainability.” (Adapted from Thiele [2016, 36]).

In particular, Holtorf highlights two characteristics of cultural resilience: on the one hand, the continuum that is created between change and continuity through adaptation practices; on the other hand, it is defined as cultural as it intervenes as a skill of a cultural system that refers to more or less shared meanings, however, to be negotiated especially in the interventions of international cooperation.

The second definition of cultural resilience considered is the one proposed by Bousquet and Mathevet (2019):

Cultural resource expressed as an identity can benefit the resilience of the individual. "Ethnic identity search refers to the individual's willingness to engage in a process of learning more about his or her ethnicity. This can involve taking time to learn about the history, traditions, and customs of one's group; being active in social groups that include members of one's ethnic group; talking to others about one's ethnic group; and participating in the cultural practices of one's ethnic group. It is thought that ethnic identity search is significantly related to resilience in a positive direction because the above activities suggest that the individual is actively involved in a community of people that further his or her understanding and, as such, act as buffers against stress. Thus, not only does the individual benefit from greater learning about one's ethnic identity, he or she is surrounded by a support network that may also promote resilience." (Clauss-Ehlers et al. 2006)

This definition has the merit of emphasizing two other essential aspects of cultural resilience: the role of individual identity, including ethnic identity, as a resource for the broader cultural system of reference and the fundamental role played by learning processes that are as mutual and continuous as possible over time.

Therefore, by promoting the concept of cultural resilience in the context of international cooperation and international crisis management, it is useful to recall, given the European perspective of this reflection, the definition of resilience proposed by Wagner and Anholt (2016):

In similar fashion, 'resilience' seems to bring actors together, which historically have been institutionally and philosophically segregated, such as military/security and development actors (development–security nexus); as well as actors from humanitarian aid and development assistance (humanitarian–development nexus). In the Action Plan for Resilience in Crisis Prone Countries, the EU asserts that achieving resilience 'requires all EU actors (humanitarian, development, political) to work differently and more effectively together. (European Commission, 2013)

In this wide-ranging field of possible international cooperation, it is useful to consider the role of cultural diplomacy combined with the instrument of cultural resilience as identified above.

The approach of cultural diplomacy is part of a relatively young course of years in the framework of broader public diplomacy and its actions in the field of foreign relations.



Ang et al. (2015) recall that cultural diplomacy: *“it was originally used to refer to the processes occurring when diplomats serving national governments took recourse to cultural exchanges and flow or sought to channel them for the advancement of their perceived national interests.”*

Moreover, Mark (2009) points out that:

“Cummings defines cultural diplomacy as the exchange of ideas, information, art and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples in order to foster mutual understanding’ which ‘can also be more of a one-way street than a two-way exchange, as when one nation concentrates its efforts on promoting the national language, explaining its policies and point of view, or ‘telling its story’ to the rest of the world.”

Cultural diplomacy therefore pertains to the set of mutual practices and actions useful for mutual knowledge and the possibility of mutual recognition based on cultural narratives and discourses that promote individual national identities.

Like cultural resilience, cultural diplomacy can also translate into operations and actions of international cooperation, crisis management and conflict management, recognizing these characteristics:

“Cultural Diplomacy may best be described as a course of actions, which are based on and utilize the exchange of ideas, values, traditions and other aspects of culture or identity, whether to strengthen relationships, enhance socio-cultural cooperation, promote national interests and beyond; Cultural diplomacy can be practiced by either the public sector, private sector or civil society.” and “Cultural Diplomacy becomes the specific methodology (it overcomes Public Diplomacy) to develop cooperation in crisis areas.” (Lombardi, 2018)

Cultural diplomacy is a fundamental methodology for developing programs and actions of international cooperation in crisis areas and in which the intervention of crisis management and / or conflict management operations is required.

Over the years, especially in reference to the international tensions of recent years, promoted by multisystemic crises such as the Covid-19 pandemic, the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, climate change and the general lack or reduction of energy resources, the contribution of cultural diplomacy and related cultural resilience is fundamental:

The contribution of Cultural Diplomacy consists of enhancing the cooperative and strategic importance of culture by means of cooperation between States, peoples and individuals and of the implementation of cultural and diplomatic projects in different areas. In summary, although it carries a diplomatic dimension that is missing in the traditional international cooperation, Cultural Diplomacy shares the constituent parts of the development cooperation, which are the necessary and sufficient condition for its implementation as a cooperative strategy. (Visioli, 2019)

In the broader framework of the aims of international cooperation activities, it is recalled to promote aspects of democratic participation, inclusion and mutual recognition as underlined by Pantea and Stoica (2014): *“Expanding the democratic space through cultural diplomacy will [...] replace the old type of relationship based solely on military force and economic pressure, creating democratic mechanisms for dialogue and strengthening cooperation between the political and civil society, [...].”*

Finally, cultural resilience and cultural diplomacy are two concepts with important methodological and operational implications that translate into practical operations in the context of international cooperation in crisis areas, with particular reference to aspects related to the mutual knowledge of cultural systems, the need to promote, respect and preserve them over time by adapting these cultural models to the needs of security and socio-political- economic stability.

Materials and methods

To achieve the main purpose of this reflection and research, which is to understand how the issue of resilience – societal and cultural resilience – is and has been addressed in the relationship between Visegrad countries and Africa two activities were carried out.

In particular from a theoretical perspective, three specific topics and their interdependencies were considered which are fundamental for a reflection on the relations between Visegrad countries and Africa, namely security, resilience and cultural diplomacy as a different way to develop traditional international cooperation.

These concepts and their relationships were explored through the following research actions:

1. Open-source collection regarding the topics identified according to the following keywords and their combination: Visegrad countries; Africa; security; resilience; cultural diplomacy.

The time range for the collection was from 01 January 2016 to 01 March 2022.

About 15 relevant sources were collected whose typology was public documents, scientific papers on the selected topics, policy brief, research report.

This research activity was particularly helpful in orienting the theoretical framework and responding appropriately to descriptive and interpretative intentions.

2. Another tool used to better understand the role and activities carried out by the four Visegrad countries in the field of international cooperation and development is the Commitment to Development Index. (CGDEV, n.d.)

The description and intentions according to the website presentation are as follows:



We work to reduce global poverty and improve lives through innovative economic research that drives better policy and practice by the world's top decision makers. We strive for excellence and intellectual rigor and believe global prosperity starts with smart policy based on evidence. Our work is nonpartisan and our recommendations are not influenced by our funders. We are willing to challenge powerful institutions and the status quo for better development practices. [...]

CGD is currently focused on the following areas critical to development progress:

- *global health policy;*
- *migration, displacement, and humanitarian policy;*
- *sustainable development finance;*
- *education;*
- *governments and development.*

This tool has been useful to deepen the areas of cooperation and development in which the four Visegrad countries are involved and also to understand which geographical areas are considered.

3. Another activity was to collect information on the four Visegrad countries from the Team Europe Initiative & Joint Programming Tracker (Capacity4dev, n.d.) and the developed tracker tool.

Specifically, as the website reports, this initiative is as follows:

Capacity4dev is the European Commission's online knowledge-sharing platform that connects development professionals, where you can share, learn and collaborate with colleagues and relevant stakeholders. Members include EU staff, as well as development professionals from EU member states, partner governments, civil society, NGOs, international organisations, and the private sector.

Created in 2009 and managed by the Directorate General for International Partnerships (INTPA), Capacity4dev aims to improve capacity development through knowledge sharing by:

- *Facilitating collaboration and engagement among peers*
- *Enabling cross learning among practitioners from EU institutions and other organisations*
- *Supporting thematic expertise, share lessons learnt and exchange innovation*
- *Consolidating knowledge sharing tools and communities of practice in a common environment*
- *Improving the efficiency, effectiveness, and quality of EU development cooperation*

From this tool, it was possible to collect and analyse useful information for understanding the international development approach of the four Visegrad countries.

4. The last activity was to create according to a cumulative knowledge approach the knowledge maps through the machine-learning tool and artificial intelligence platform Yewno discover with the access provided by the Catholic University of Milan where the author of the paper collaborates. Through this platform it was possible to create

knowledge maps indicating conceptual connections between different topics, understanding tendencies and relations.

The knowledge maps that have been created are as follows and proceed in an order of increasing depth and complexity:

- Visegrad countries and their relationships;
- Visegrad countries and Africa;
- Visegrad countries, Africa and security;
- Visegrad countries, Africa and crisis management;
- Visegrad countries and cultural diplomacy;
- Visegrad countries, Africa, and cultural diplomacy

Results and Discussion

The results come from the four activities carried out for this reflection. As regards to those related to the open-source collection, they are mainly translated into the theoretical scenario described above and in the interpretations of the findings emerged from the subsequent activities.

The consideration of the latest Commitment to Development Index of 2021 (CGD, n. d.) yields interesting results for the individual Visegrad countries and their commitment to development.

The following table summarizes these values in relation to the areas covered by investments:

Visegrad Countries

Areas	Hungary	Czech Republic	Poland	Slovak Republic
Development finance	40%	45%	44%	45%
Investment	42%	47%	33%	43%
Migration	10%	14%	9%	4%
Trade	58%	76%	52%	60%
Environment	89%	81%	80%	87%
Health	56%	55%	18%	69%
Security	95%	85%	71%	96%
Technology	27%	42%	11%	18%

Tab. 1. Visegrad countries and Commitment Development Index – 2021

According to Chmiel (2018): *“The four Visegrad countries exhibit similar approaches in their development cooperation programmes, especially because of their common perception of their “transition experience” which is seen as a comparative advantage in comparison to other donors, and which can be shared in relations with their partners.”*

In fact, considering the data from the Commitment to Development Index - 2021 relating to the four Visegrad countries, it is possible to note some similar trends:

- increased investment in the security and environment sectors;
- medium-sized investments for the development finance, investment, trade, technology sectors;
- lower investments for the migration sector

This trend is also confirmed considering the trends for each country for which Hungary, the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic confirm the general trend of higher investments in security and environment. Poland, on the other hand, puts the environment first and security second.

A cultural aspect to consider concerns the different perceptions of security by the individual Visegrad countries that translate into different lines of policy and activities in the field of international cooperation: *Nowadays, all V4 countries are involved in major missions of the UN, EU, and NATO. Nevertheless, there are certain differences in the perception of some security issues among the V4, especially given their slightly different geographic locations and historical experiences (Jandova, 2016) Chmiel (2018).*

Considering the specific case of relations between Visegrad countries and Africa, a trend already in place previously emerges (Chmiel, 2018) namely that the issue of security is understood not specifically in terms of political stabilization of crisis areas, conflict resolution and post-conflict activities as well as in connection with terrorist dynamics and migration processes: *Also, security matters, combating terrorism and addressing the root causes of migration crisis are among the factors that prompted the Visegrad countries to strengthen their contributions to operations in Africa (Chmiel, 2018).*

The Commitment to Development Index provides a generic initial perspective on the type of investments that individual countries make in the field of international cooperation.

Together with this Index it is useful to consider the results of another tool such as Team Europe Initiatives and Joint Programming Tracker.

It provides some perspectives for international cooperation and development allowing some special interpretations of the relationship between the Visegrad countries and Africa.

The trends previously illustrated are confirmed and the active role of greater investment and engagement is underlined also in the transversal areas of Czech Republic and Hungary.

The following is the information that emerged for Czech Republic (Capacity4dev, n.d.) divided between regional, global and country levels:

Regional and global TEIs:

- Afghan displacement situation
- Central Mediterranean migration route
- manufacturing and access to vaccines, medicines and health technology products in Africa
- Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) in Sub-Saharan Africa
- Team Europe Democracy (TED)
- transboundary water management in Africa
- Western Mediterranean migration route

Country TEIs:

- KHCambodia - Natural Resources
- GEGeorgia - Economic Development
- GHGhana - Smart, Green and Digital Recovery
- MLMali - Peace and Security
- MLMali - Youth
- MNMongolia - Green Economy
- TNTunisia - Water
- ZMZambia - Human Development
- ZMZambia - Inclusive Green Growth

As it is possible to note, Czech Republic has a transversality of investments and engagement from health to peace and security especially in the areas of sub-Saharan and Western Mediterranean. In this regard and in line with previous trends, it is interesting to underline how the peace and security program has reference in Mali. Moreover, the two activities of Human Development and Inclusive Green Growth developed in Zambia are interesting.

As far as Hungary (Capacity4dev, n.d.) is concerned, this is its overview:

Regional and global TEIs:

- Amazon Basin
- Green transition - EUROCLIMA Latin America and the Caribbean

Country TEIs:

- ECEcuador - Sustainable Economy
- GHGhana - Smart, Green and Digital Recovery
- KEKenya - Digital
- LALaos - Green Deal
- PKPakistan - Green Economy & Jobs
- TNTunisia – Water



As far as Hungary is concerned, it is useful to consider the development of programmes related to digital technologies in particular in Ghana and Kenya together with greater attention to the environment in Ghana and Tunisia where a programme for solving the water problem is active.

The case of Poland (Capacity4dev, n.d.) is interesting because it focuses on Africa as a region on health-related programmes and specifically in Morocco with active programs for greater awareness of gender equality and post-crisis recovery:

Regional and global TEIs:

- health in the Eastern Neighbourhood
- manufacturing and access to vaccines, medicines and health technology products in Africa
- Team Europe Democracy (TED)

Country TEIs:

- MAMorocco - Gender equality
- MAMorocco - Post-crisis recover

In conclusion, the case of Slovak Republic (Capacity4dev, n.d.) has an active Green Transition programme to be implemented in Kenya. This is in line with its overall commitment to environmental issues as demonstrated in the previous Commitment Development Index:

Regional and global TEIs:

- Team Europe Democracy (TED)

Country TEIs:

- KEKenya - Green Transition

As for the findings that emerged from the development of knowledge maps provided by Yewno - Unicatt, it is possible to show the following arguments and interpretations.

The first map is based around the relationships that the Visegrad countries have



Fig. 1 Visegrad countries and their relationships provided by Yewno - Unicatt

The map focuses on the concepts and entities of Visegrad countries, underlines the circle of internal, often bilateral relations that characterise the four countries and also highlights two external relations to them, namely those with the concept of globalisation, which turns out to be an important process in defining the Visegrad countries in the European and international scenario, and those with the BRICS bloc Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

Other aspects concern the economy and the historical perspective in relation to the Visegrad countries and their typical relations with the European Union (Chmiel, 2018).

The second map focuses on the relationship between Visegrad countries and Africa.

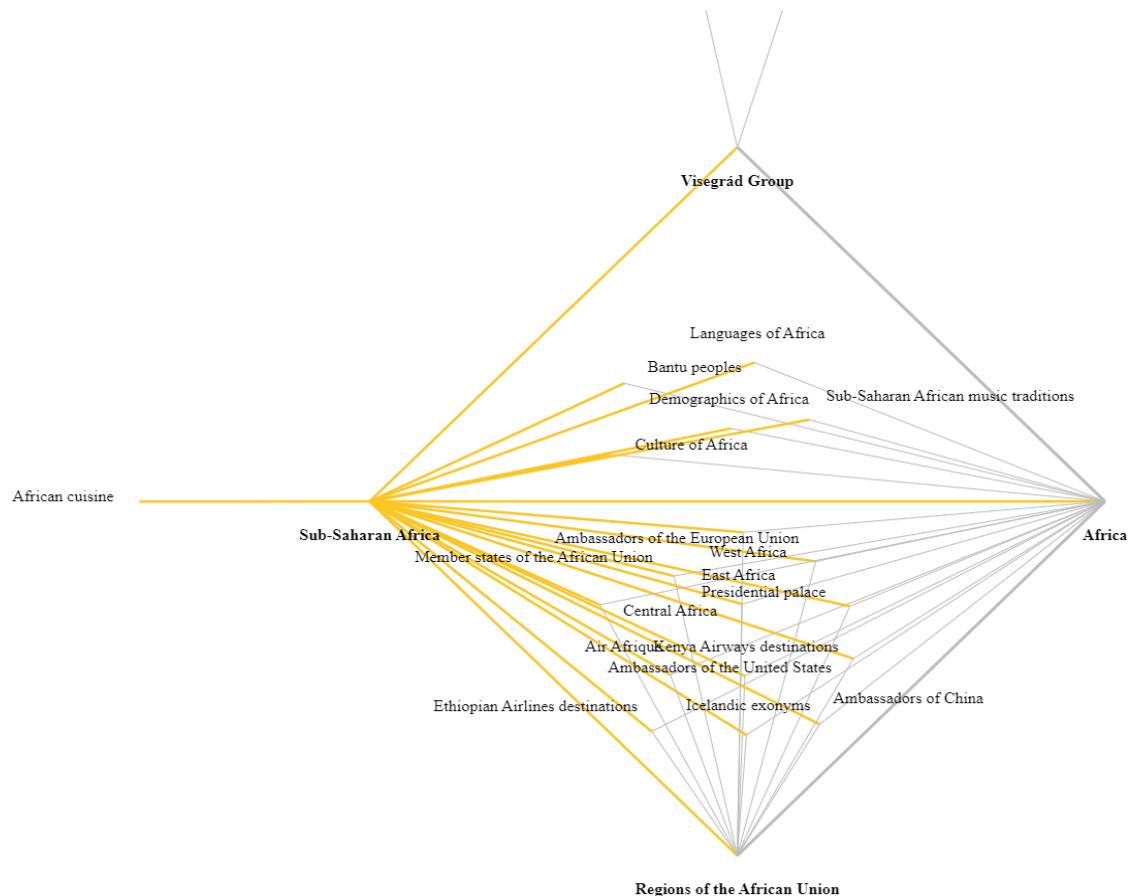


Fig. 2 Visegrad countries and Africa provided by Yewno – Unicatt

As far as the relationship between the Visegrad countries and Africa is concerned, there are two points of focus, both of which represent geographical and historical dimensions.

The two key points are: Sub-Saharan Africa and regions of the African Union.

The area of sub-Saharan Africa according to the previous analysis is where some cooperation programmes in cooperation with Czech Republic are concentrated. Mali in particular is where Czech Republic has activated a Peace and Security program in view of the security threats posed by terrorist groups present on that territory.

It is interesting to note how culture-related concepts such as language of Africa and culture of Africa begin to emerge from this relationship: for example, Bantu People which refers to sub-Saharan Africa and African cuisine which are all fundamental identity and cultural aspects for the approach of cultural diplomacy and cultural resilience.

The third map concentrates on the relations among Visegrad countries, Africa, and security:

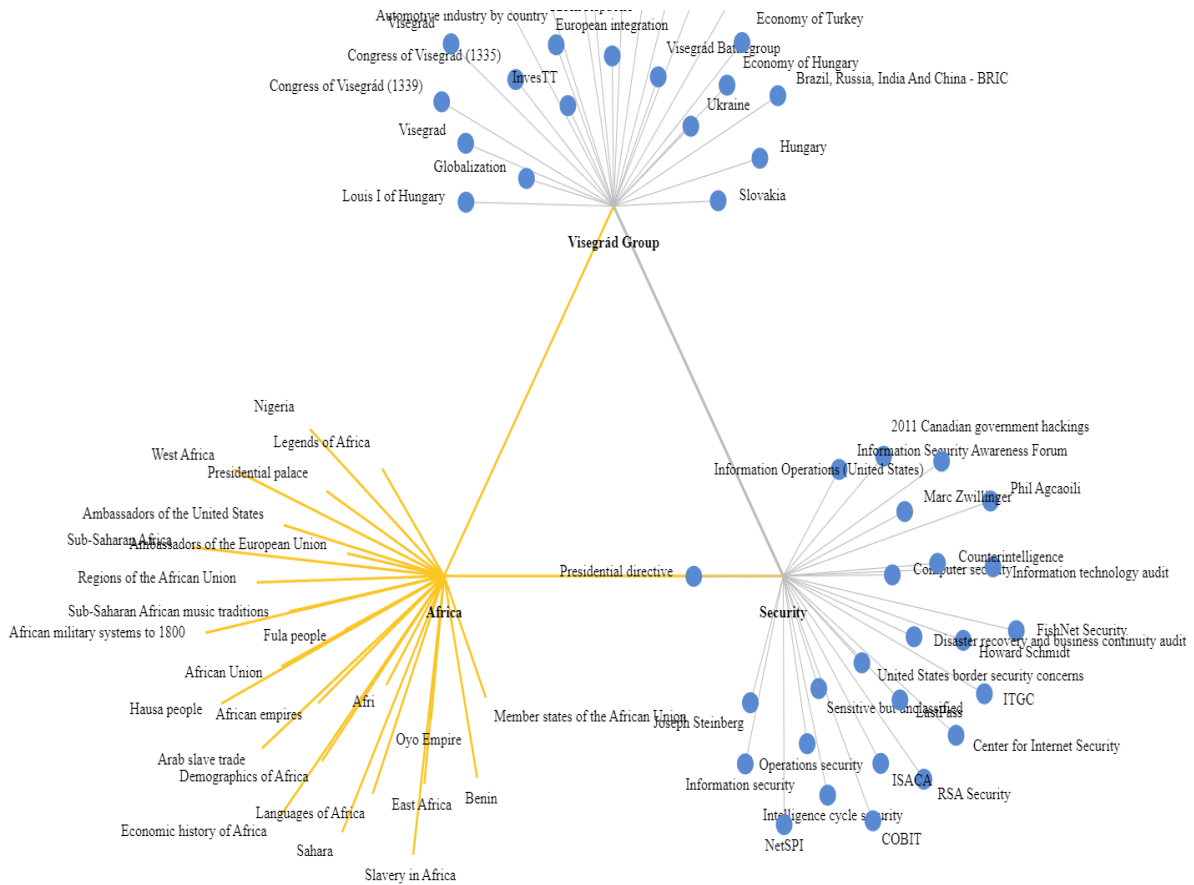


Fig. 3 Visegrad countries, Africa and security provided by Yewno – Unicatt

Looking deeper into the relationship between Visegrad countries and Africa in connection with the topic of security (in particular the concept of national security), some interesting common and crossing areas emerge such as disaster recovery, information security, counter intelligence, business continuity, intelligence cycle security, operation security, computer security and internet security.

In relation to the issue of security there is the topic of Nigeria and the terrorist threat on terror and also a historical reference to African military systems.

In addition, topics related to identity and cultural aspects persist such as: music tradition, Fula people, Oyo empire Hausa people, legends of Africa.

In particular, what emerges from this analysis is the multidimensional relationship between the areas of security with reference to the situation of terrorism in Nigeria and the cultural aspects related to Nigeria.

The fourth map shows the relations among Visegrad countries, Africa, and crisis management.

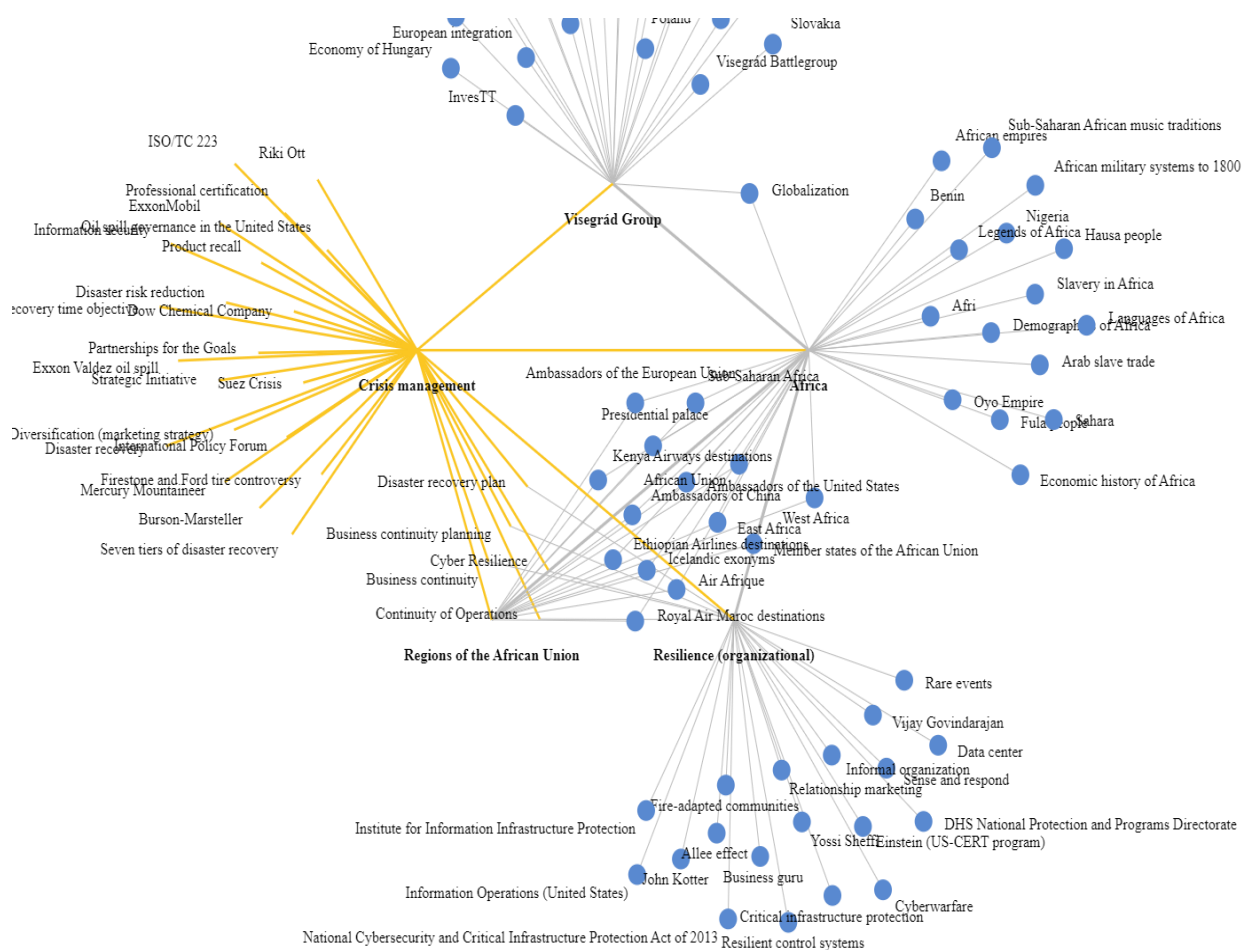


Fig. 4 Visegrad countries, Africa and crisis management provided by Yewno – Unicatt

The themes of crisis and disaster management are clarified in the connections with disaster recovery plans, business continuity, profession certificate, critical infrastructure protection, resilient control systems, cyber resilience.

A particular focus was on organisational resilience and its communication and information management aspects which are related to the areas of technology as previously stated by the Commitment Development Index.

This is an interesting aspect because it poses a different field of development such as that of cooperation in the technological - digital field with specific reference to security aspects.

The fifth map is about the relation between Visegrad countries and cultural diplomacy.

Looking at this relationship, it is interesting to note that conflictual and polarised attitudes emerge such as music and political warfare, war of ideas and agent of influence.

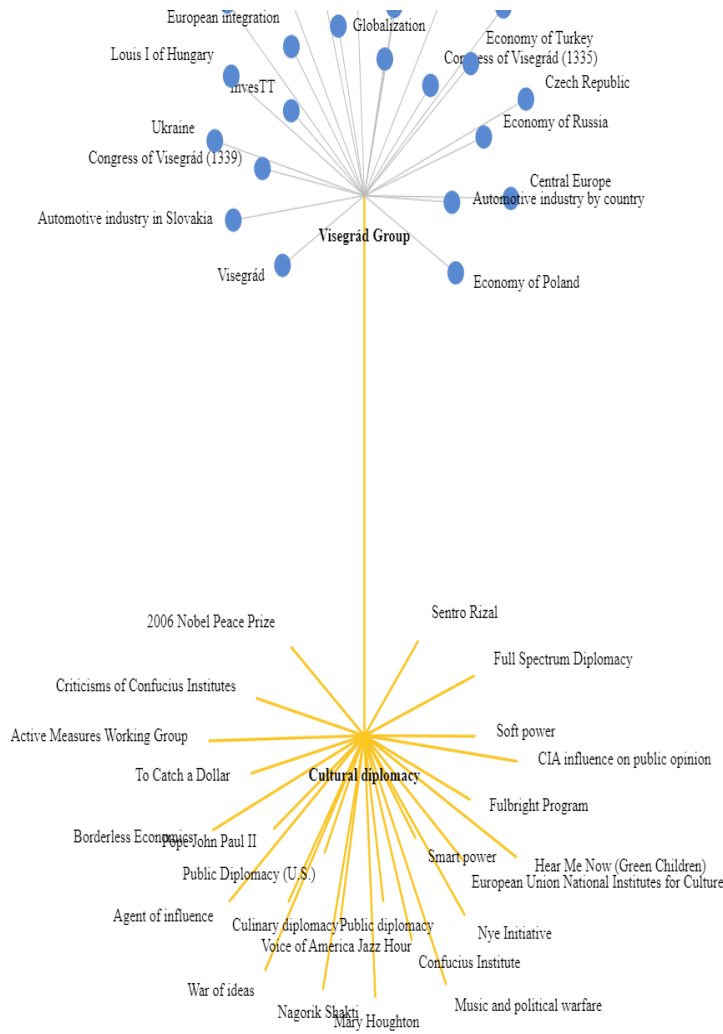


Fig. 5 Visegrad countries and cultural diplomacy provided by Yewno - Unicatt

These three topics are relevant because they highlight the need to develop and associate cultural diplomacy with a field of international cooperation for crisis resolution, while taking into due consideration that cultural and identity aspects of a conflictual nature (Ramsbotham et al., 2016) have emerged and that they need to be adequately considered to manage any possible tensions.

The last map concerns the relations among Visegrad countries, Africa, and cultural diplomacy.

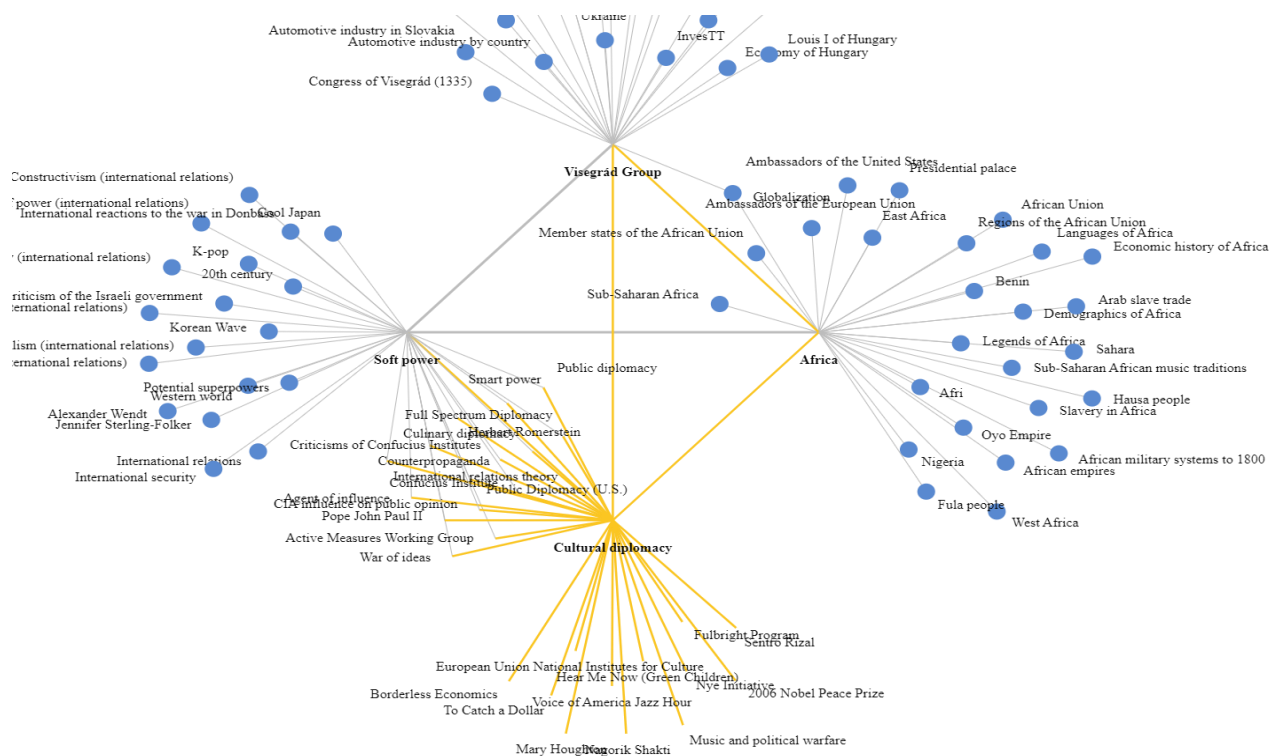


Fig. 6 Visegrad countries, Africa, and cultural diplomacy

According to the findings provided by the map, the following themes develop: international reaction to the war in Donbass; international security; European Union National Institutes for Culture; music and political warfare; potential superpower Western world; soft power. The latter appears as an element under discussion even among scholars but in this context, it has the value of promoting alternative responses, less polarized to crisis situations.

In general terms, it is possible to summarize some central points from the presentation of this analysis:

- the role of the Visegrad countries in Africa emerges as specific in some regions and very oriented to the field of security even in its most current declination related to the digital world;
- the role of international cooperation programmes that focus on areas related to health, disaster recovery and business continuity remains;
- identity and cultural aspects emerge that need to be adequately considered in the programs to be developed such as attention to typical cultural forms (such as art and music) but also the language and aspects related to typical cuisine.

Finally, the role of cultural resilience emerges with less specificity even if the issues related to music and political warfare as well as the war of ideas presage the strategic importance and stabilization of international relations of this approach together with systematized actions and methodologies of cultural diplomacy (Lombardi, 2019).

Conclusion

The analysis that has been conducted on the role of cultural resilience and cultural diplomacy actions in relations between Visegrad countries and Africa has produced very interesting insights for future insights.

A first aspect concerns the phenomenon of globalization which has been an important historical element in the definition of relations between the Visegrad countries and the European Union. In the current situation, however, given the impact of both the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, the globalization process seems to be changing and redefining. The global scenario appears increasingly fragmented and polarized with the emergence of new actors and new alliances that will certainly also have an impact on international cooperation actions and programs.

A second interesting point relates to the fact that the Visegrad countries present similarities in their cooperation programmes, especially with regard to investment areas, but considering the change in the international scenario, it becomes interesting to consider bilateral relations for future analysis and investigation. This is also relevant in view of the bilateralism already highlighted (Polus, 2020) and for a greater awareness of the geopolitical strategic priorities of the individual Visegrad countries, which are well shown by the OECD Development Cooperation Profiles tool and maps (OECD).

With regard to the role of cultural resilience and cultural diplomacy between Visegrad countries and Africa, elements such as music and political warfare and the war of ideas have emerged that indicate the need to work in this direction with specific international cooperation programmes aimed at ensuring national priorities by also promoting crisis management and conflict management actions.

In this context, the relevance emerges of better investigating the characteristics of cultural resilience as defined above, considering the possibility to use what can be defined as geopolitical ethnography understood both as a strategy and as a study to deepen key elements of relations between countries, considering geographical, identity and cultural aspects as promoters of resilient strategies of international cooperation and cultural diplomacy.

The latter can be considered as an effective method within the field of international cooperation to specifically address cultural, social, political differences between Visegrad countries and Africa, in order to support cultural resilient strategies and actions of cultural diplomacy.

According to the analysis carried out, it is possible to identify in the relations between Visegrad countries and Africa, the role and practices of cultural resilience through the method of cultural diplomacy according to some future trends (Lucini, 2019):

- *developing a methodological framework – geopolitical ethnography – to enhance cultural resilience through cultural diplomacy (Thomas, 2016) in areas of the world*



affected by multiple situations of socio-political instabilities, growing as deep an awareness of context and intercultural communication as possible;

- *developing resilient identities in those countries affected by various threats and instability at an individual, community, societal and even national level, creating what could be defined as a country profile of cultural resilience – promoting the development of a tool to assess cultural resilience from a double perspective: that of geopolitics and that of diplomacy. This roadmap for further development of this research area benefits from the bidirectional nature of resilience, which is on the one hand a key element to support cultural diplomacy action and on the other the goal of those very actions. Finally, the two new essential contributions – geopolitical ethnography and a country profile of cultural resilience – are the leading elements to develop the deep connection between cultural resilience and cultural diplomacy.*

The country profile on cultural resilience is an essential element for future international cooperation and governance actions in crisis areas that aim to take into account bilateral relations between countries, cultural specificities, social identities, current geopolitical criticalities, but also positive development spaces for effective international cooperation and development practices. From a methodological perspective, it is estimated that geopolitical ethnography could be a useful tool to operationally translate this approach: *“Geopolitical ethnography, where the three key elements of geographies, identities and cultures prevails over local and international instability management”* (Lucini, 2019).

In conclusion, cultural resilience (Thomas et al., 2016), developed in the context of cultural diplomacy is a useful tool and method for the advancement of international cooperation programmes that are as useful and effective in strengthening international relations focused more on the management of and response to contextual humanitarian, social, ecological, and security crises.

Conflict of Interest

The authors hereby declare that no competing financial interest exists for this manuscript.

Notes on Contributor

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