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EUROVISION SONG CONTEST: A TOOL FOR EUROPEAN INTEGRATION?

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Eurovision Song Contest: A tool for European integration?

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INTRODUCTION

As the world-renowned motto says, "unity is strength". This has been the cornerstone of international relations for the past eighty years, not only in the political or economic field, but also in the more recreational areas of society, such as sports and art and, of course, music.

As it could also be applied to the origins and evolution of the Eurovision Song Contest, which emerged in the post-war period, after the Second World War, among other reasons, to build an element of union between European countries under cultural bases.

Originally created in 1956 as "*Le Concours de la Chanson Europeenne*", the Eurovision Song Contest has evolved from being a pioneer television program to be considered one of the largest audio-visual shows worldwide. To this day, it still maintains the essence of its origins: transmitting the idea of unity between European countries through culture. But music is not the only concern of the contest. Each year, each participating country, through its public television member of the European Broadcasting Union, presents an unpublished and original song. All countries vote for the best European song of the edition, being able to vote for anyone except their own theme.

And this voting has brought all along the years a broader significance. Nowadays, it is not only a musical show, but a program whose outcome comes to be relevant in other aspects, such as cultural, sociological or geopolitical. In the present dissertation, the focus will be put on that last aspect: how geopolitics have contributed to shape the Eurovision Song Contest in Europe and beyond Europe from the transcendence of its results.

Geopolitics, as understood by academia, is "*the study of the effects of geography (human and physical) on international politics.*"¹ According to this approach, the relationships among the different states at the international stage are shaped by both human and physical geography. As author Klaus Dodds considers "[...] *Geopolitics involves three qualities. First, it is concerned with questions of influence and power over space and territory. Second, it uses geographical frames to make sense of world affairs. [...] Third, geopolitics is future-oriented*"², what means it also shapes the future.

It is thus very interesting to make a deep and wide analysis of the impact in the geopolitics as an International Relations concept. For achieving this objective, we will analyse essentially the Eurovision Song Contest by looking at the final results and ranking in each edition, especially the "televote" or public vote, the socio-political disputes around the show, and the soft power applied by European countries at that level.

The first part of the dissertation will analyse the origins of the Eurovision Song Contest, in the context of the history of television by looking at its chronological evolution and its implications and role on the European integration process. In addition, we will understand how the evolution of both Eurovision and the European integration feed each other. In the Eurovision Song Contest (ESC), it is not the countries (Spain, United Kingdom, Sweden, etc.) that participate, but their public television channels (RTVE, BBC, SVT, respectively). Therefore, the songs and artists do not represent their countries *per se*, but the state public broadcasters. However, it is commonly said that they represent the country to simplify. For this very reason,

¹ Devetak, R., Burke, A., George, J. (2007). *An Introduction to International Relations*. Oxford. Page 492.

² Doods, K. (2014). *Geopolitics. A very short introduction*. OUP Oxford. Page 3.

in this document the different candidacies and related data will be referred to by the country they represent and not by their public entity.

On the second section, we will consider and analyse a key element such as the voting method and its incidence on the results. A wide differentiation will be made among the current-times professional juries and televoting voting system, in which the audience is able to vote by SMS or phone call for the country whose song they liked the most. An aspect that yields interesting data at the geopolitical level, both at a European level and beyond, because Eurovision includes some non-European countries (such as Israel or Australia), which bring an interesting reflection: is the Eurovision Song Contest a tool for European integration?

In order to answer this question, the focus in the second section will be also put on some interesting voting facts. How the former Yugoslav and Soviet countries vote for each other comes to be relevant, especially in the first case due to the Balkan Wars in the 90s and consequent scenario in the region. Then, the focus will be put on Brexit, the main stone in the way of European integration and the current War in Ukraine, and a further analysis will conclude whether these two events have had an influence on the Eurovision Song Contest.

EUROVISION SONG CONTEST AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATION: PARALLELISMS.

I. The Origins of the television and the European Broadcasting Union

In the beginning of the 20th century, the appearance of television became a revolutionary element of global communications. Over time, television became a powerful instrument of communication for millions of households in Europe. At first, public broadcasting companies were able to launch any type of official communication, for example a Royal or presidential speech, through the newly created television system, which could broadcast in real life what was happening at the same time in a different location. As we will explain later, the first types of programmes that appeared were mainly news programs, so that people could be informed.

The origins of television are usually framed in the 1880s, when the student of German origin, Paul Gottlieb Nipkow, created and patented the so-called "Nipkow scanning disk"(Nipkow, 1884), the very first artefact of mechanic television. According to Engineering and Technology History Wiki organization, "the disk had a spiral of holes bored into it. When the disk rotated, the holes would sweep over the whole image from top to bottom, slicing the image into 18 columns of information." ³. However, electric television did not appear until sometime later, mainly due to the contribution, among others, of Vladimir K. Zworykin, who created a television system which had cathode-ray tubes, which were use for images transmission and reception, and invented the iconoscope, the antecedent of television cameras⁴.

But it was not until 1932 that the first television channel appeared under scope of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). The BBC, established in 1927 by Royal Decree, appeared as the public broadcasting group in the United Kingdom. Firstly, they broadcasted radio programs, while it launched its first sporadic television transmissions in 1932, and its regular transmission in 1936⁵.

As the appearance of the British broadcasts represented a great advance in terms of communication, little by little, other public state broadcasters emerged in other European countries, such as *Radiotelevisione Italiana* (Rai)⁶, the *Société Suisse de radiodiffusion et télévision* (SRG SSR) or the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft der öffentlich-rechtlichen Rundfunkanstalten der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (ARD). In Spain we had to wait until 1956 for the appearance of *Televisión Española* (TVE). The establishment of new broadcasters inside European countries was progressive and reached the whole continent. At the beginning, channels were mainly managed by states themselves, achieving a major relevance for them, since they were able to launch any type of content which they wanted people to see. Therefore, it soon became a tool for governmental marketing and propaganda, and even today there are claims that public broadcasters are biased towards governments' official narratives.

³ Engineering and Technology History Wiki. *Nipkow Scanning Disk*. Retrieved from https://ethw.org/Nipkow_Scanning_Disk on 6th May 2023.

⁴ Britannica. *Vladimir Zworykin*. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Vladimir-Zworykin> on 6th May 2022.

⁵ BBC. *The history of the BBC. 1930s. The birth of television and the opening of the iconic Broadcasting House*. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/historyofthebbc/timelines/1930s/> on 7th March 2023.

⁶ Rai. *La storia. Date ed avvenimenti che hanno segnato la storia della rai*. Retrieved from <https://www.rai.it/dl/rai/text/ContentItem-20844e48-74d8-44fe-a6f4-7c224c96e8e4.html> on March 7th, 2023.

Under that new reality, public broadcasting corporations around Europe decided to join efforts and create the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), or *Union Européenne de Radio-télévision (UER)*. It is an international organization established in order to achieve a higher quality of radio and television system, solving international broadcasting problems, promoting a more conscious public service or broadcasting big events to all countries simultaneously. The character of this organization is strictly technical, what means that it just focus on radio and television contents, or any other technical functions, and is not a political or economic organization as the EU or OCDE. It was established on 11th February 1950, in Torquay, United Kingdom, by 23 founding public broadcasting corporations from the European region⁷.

Although its name is “European”, this term does not refer to the European continent as such, but to the so-called European broadcasting area. This area has shifted with the pass of time, having recently included countries in the Caucasus region⁸. The first public broadcasters to join the EBU included those from countries such as Egypt, Israel or Turkey.

But what was the utility of television at that time? As mentioned before, the television communication system has two main branches: news services and entertainment programs that television channels usually alternate in their programming. On the one hand, it is the desire of corporations to keep the public informed of the most important events, such as the formation of a government, the development of general elections, a terrorist attack or the most relevant sports results. In addition, the news section also usually contains a space for public denunciation of certain social injustices, such as the wage gap or, in the international arena, the lack of humanitarian aid in conflict zones. On the other hand, public entities found it necessary to broadcast entertainment content to attract viewers, and so, have bigger audience rates. For this, the first television series and musical or cultural contests begin to emerge. Let us take a look to each of these two branches more widely:

a) News.

Informing is the obligation, by nature, of the media, including radio and television. Likewise, being informed can be considered a right of the spectator. For this reason, a fundamental pillar of television communications is precisely the daily news space. Unlike leisure or entertainment spaces, the vast majority of which have a limited duration, the newscasts have been and are the oldest programs, since every day, sometimes several times, they inform the population of what happens around you. However, there are other spaces that fall into this category, such as interviews, which can offer a different approach to the matter in question, documentaries or special programs for the broadcasting of an important event.

The main news service came in the same decade of the 1950s, when a change in the head of state took place in the United Kingdom after the premature death of King George VI. His successor, Queen Elizabeth II, ascended the throne in a coronation ceremony broadcasted, for the first time and at the request of the Duke of Edinburgh, on the BBC. This event was a turning point both at the level of telecommunications and at the level of rapprochement of the

⁷ European Broadcasting Union. History. Retrieved from <https://www.ebu.ch/about/history> on March 7th, 2023.

⁸ The International Union of Telecommunications defined in 2012 the European Broadcasting Union as that “bounded on the west by the western boundary of Region 1, on the east by the meridian 40° East of Greenwich and on the south by the parallel 30° North so as to include the northern part of Saudi Arabia and that part of those countries bordering the Mediterranean within these limits. In addition, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and those parts of the territories of Iraq, Jordan, Syrian Arab Republic, Turkey and Ukraine lying outside the above limits are included in the European Broadcasting Area”. (ITU-R Radio Regulations 2012-2015, Article 5.14.)

British crown to her people, as it was a pilot test of the use of television in political and state terms to get closer to the citizenry⁹. It was the first broadcast of these characteristics, and it was retransmitted by the entire EBU signal to the member countries. Verifying the success of the Coronation on television, numerous subsequent events began to be broadcast. Just to name a few examples, on May 6, 2023, the coronation of Charles III of the United Kingdom was broadcast, and during the existence of television, numerous royal weddings and funerals, investiture sessions for a new head of state or government, the Olympic Games every four years, or the arrival of man on the moon in 1969.

b) Entertainment.

On the other side, television device and systems opened up a range of opportunities for entertainment programs adapted to the small screen. During the following decades, the different television companies created entertainment in the form of series or contests. Concerning the latest, in Italy the public television Rai decided to launch a music talent show, in order to promote the culture and unity of the country in post-war times. Firstly, the composer and newspaper editor Aldo Vallorani and Sergio Bernardini took the initiative by proposing to Rai in 1947 the creation of a music festival with a summer atmosphere¹⁰. For this, the city of Viareggio is selected as the venue. Two editions (1948 and 1949) of the Italian Song Festival are held in that city, with success. However, the economic impossibility of its organizers to continue with this event means that it cannot be held there. Since 1950 the *Festival della canzone italiana* has been hosted by the coastal city of Sanremo, in the Liguria region. Since then, it has been held annually, and has become a musical and cultural benchmark for Italian society at an international level. Internally, the high audiences of this festival on television allow us to deduce the support of the Italian people for its music festival par excellence.

This music festival, commonly known as Sanremo Festival, was a pioneer in terms of music festivals and live original songs. Its dynamics have consisted since then, with different nuances and rules regulating it, in the presentation of completely original songs in Italian language. The ultimate goal of the contest is to choose the best original Italian song of the year. The structure, to this day, is one gala per night five days of the same week, from Tuesday to Saturday. On each of the first two days, half the songs are performed. On the third day all the participants perform, while on the fourth night they perform a famous song. Finally, on the last day they all perform again, and a winner is chosen. As for its voting system, this is quite particular, since new votes are added every night, and it works by means of "rankings". In the first two nights the press votes. In the third, the public vote, that is, the audience, and a survey panel, that is, a group of people chosen as representatives of Italian society, do it. On the fourth night, a professional jury, the public vote and the demoscopic panel vote. Finally, these three groups vote again on the last day.

Sanremo Festival has provided some music global hits, such as “*Nel blu di pinto di blu*”, by Domenico Modugno¹¹, “*Non ho l'età*”, by Gigliola Cinquetti, or, more recently,” *Zitti e Buoni*”, by Måneskin. In addition, other renowned artists have won the festival, such as Roberto

⁹BBC. History of the BBC. *The coronation of Queen Elizabeth II*. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/historyofthebbc/anniversaries/june/coronation-of-queen-elizabeth-ii/> on March 7th, 2023.

¹⁰Facci S., Soddu P. (2011). *Il Festival di Sanremo. Parole e suoni raccontano la nazione*. Carocci Editore.

¹¹ Ídem.

Carlos, Al Bano & Romina Power, Eros Ramazzotti, Nicola di Bari, Laura Pausini, Gianni Morandi, Massimo Ranieri, Toto Cutugno, or Iva Zanicchi.

The broadcasting group that created the Sanremo festival, Rai, was a founding member of the aforementioned European Broadcasting Union. This body, in its eagerness to apply the concept of "union" to the maximum, began to devise a program with a similar style of that of the Italian festival but at the European level. From that idea the acclaimed Eurovision Song Contest was conceived.

II. Evolution of the European integration process: European Union and Eurovision Song Contest.

In the following sections, we will analyse the process of European integration from two perspectives. On the one hand, its economic and political aspect, materialized in the European Communities and, later, in the European Union, and on the other, its cultural aspect, through the Eurovision Song Contest, the largest musical event held year after year on European soil.

In analysis, it focuses on different periods of time, to facilitate the understanding of the parallels between both concepts. For this, the period of time 1950-2023 will be divided into various stages, according to criteria of time and eventualities.

On the one hand, the evolution of the European Communities and the current European Union leaves the following approximate stages: the creation and consolidation of the Communities (1951-1972), expansion in Western Europe (1973-1992), creation of the European Union, and Treaties, and expansion in Eastern Europe (1993-present)

In the case of the Eurovision Song Contest, following an objective criterion of expansion, one can speak of three periods: creation and consolidation (1956-1970), expansion in the Mediterranean (1970-1992) and inclusion of Eastern Europe.

Taking these stages into account, and considering their parallels, the following sections will consider a first stage in the 50s and 60s, a second in the 70s and 80s, and a third from the 90s.

1. The post-war period: two different ways of uniting Europe

The first half of the 20th century left a bleak outlook for the old continent, which had to face two world wars and two post-war periods. It was time for reconstruction, and television became a very powerful instrument. At that time, digital television appeared, as well as the first European broadcasters. In 1950, the European Broadcasting Union was established, and became the perfect vehicle for the telecommunications approach to integration. Like other international organizations, the EBU also maintained a European unity in its objectives, in this case around telecommunications.

Soon the responsible for the organization saw in the format based on the Sanremo Festival a great opportunity to bring European unity, at least on a symbolic level. Marcel Bezençon, general director of the Swiss SSR and member of the EBU, proposed the realization of the *Grand Prix de la Chanson Européenne*, to be first held the following year, to be broadcasted through the EBU common broadcasting channel. The show took already established musical festivals as references, such as the Sanremo Festival, since 1950, the

Neapolitan Song Festival, since 1952 or the Venice Festival, since 1955. All of them focused on offering a variety of songs with the in order to choose which of them was the best of all. That is to say, the origins of Eurovision are based on strictly musical competitions, but at the European level.

The symbolism of Eurovision, as a musical and cultural element in relation to the European integration process, was clear from the outset, since its main focus was that the whole of Europe was watching the same stage, the same live program, the final results of each edition. In other words, it was intended, and was achieved, that Europe would have a point of union that was very different from any European political or economic institution.

Its first edition was held on 24th May 1956, in Lugano, Switzerland. At that time, a large part of Europe already had its own public entity, with the notable exception of TVE (public television in Spain), which was only founded at the end of that same year. Seven countries participated in the first contest and, thenceforth, they are known as its founders: Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands and Switzerland. From this data, which a priori may seem banal, two clear conclusions can be drawn:

1. The Eurovision Song Contest (1956) arose before the Treaty of Rome (1957).
2. The founders of Eurovision were exactly the same as those of the European Steel and Coal Community plus Switzerland, a politically neutral country that, not being the contest, originally politically significant, had no problem in participating in this incarnation of European integration.

As we will see in the next paragraphs, the evolution of Eurovision and European integration is full of parallels. The dates of its beginnings is one of them. While the EBU was created in 1950, in the same year that the French foreign minister, Robert Schuman, pronounced the acclaimed Schuman Declaration, which professes his country's interest in European cooperation in terms of steel and coal production and states that *“Europe will not be made all at once, or according to a single plan. It will be built through concrete achievements which first create a de facto solidarity.”*¹² Eurovision is perfectly one of those achievements of the European integration process, outside the strictly political sphere.

In 1951, France, Germany, The Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and Italy signed the treaty which established the European Steel and Coal Community. All of them will later be founders of Eurovision. The community, as the name suggests, only focused on issues related to steel and coal. However, it became necessary to broaden the range of action of the integration. That is why the negotiations for the signing of two new constitutive treaties of new European communities begin. The Treaties of Rome establish the European Economic Community and the European Atomic Energy Community.

The first of them focused on the economy. After the human and infrastructure disaster caused by the Second World War, the need arose to collaborate with other nations in order to progress economically. Among its objectives, to establish a customs union, with common customs tariffs and the elimination of quantitative restrictions among member states. In addition, it also dealt with the free movement of people, services and capital. In addition, it also established a parliamentary assembly for decision-making, in force since 1958¹³. All member

¹² Schuman Declaration, 1950. Robert Schuman on 9th May 1950.

¹³ Treaty establishing the European Economic Community, 1957. Article 138.

countries would be represented in it and, from 1979, parliamentarians would be directly elected by citizens through democratic elections.

For its part, Euratom was conceived for the development of research in this field and the dissemination of technical knowledge, the imposition of standards to maintain atomic safety, and prevent civilian nuclear elements from reaching the hands of military bodies¹⁴.

Returning to the Eurovision Song Contest, its first edition was launched as a pilot program, being a mainly radiophonic event. This edition is special, not only because it is not available on video, as the rest of the editions are (except 1964), but also because it had rules that were never implemented again and others that have evolved since then.

The rules of the contest have been very changeable in its history. In 1956, as there were only seven participating countries, each one of them could present two proposals, which could be sung by the same singer (only Switzerland and Luxembourg chose this option) or different ones. As of 1957, each country only participates with one candidacy. As we will have the opportunity to comment in more depth, up to 52 different countries have taken part in this contest. The great interest of the different countries in participating managed to knock down the rule that limited the number of participating countries to 22 per edition (now it is 44), and currently two semi-finals are included in the competition as a sieve for participation in the Grand Final. As we will see later, this is one of the best examples of Eurovision as an integrating element of the European continent, especially taking into account that practically all of Europe shows an interest in it as they do not show in other cases. As is to be expected, there are many more countries that participate in the European contest than those that are members of the European Union, which is the great European integrating element.

On a strictly musical level, during the first editions the songs should not have a specific duration (today they have to last about 3 minutes), and it was understood that the different European countries should participate with songs in their official languages, as part of the cultural diversity of the continent. Regarding the choice of the winning song, there are no accurate data on the scoring system for the ESC 1956, nor its actual results, except that the winner was Switzerland (*Refrain* by Lys Assia). According to the information available, each participating country had two people who acted as judges, and who travelled to Lugano to see the performances live. In addition, there is evidence that the Luxembourg jury, unable to travel there, requested permission to EBU for the Swiss jury to vote for them. That year was the only one in which a country could vote for itself. Adding these factors and bearing in mind that the winning country was precisely Switzerland, the first controversy of the contest appeared.

In order to make the format more attractive, the EBU decided that gradually revealing the scores awarded by each national jury could capture the viewer's attention, while also functioning as an element of tension and intrigue to find out the winner of each edition. Over time, the disclosure of the points awarded by each national jury has become a fundamental part of Eurovision. Not only does it allow the tension of who will be the winner to be maintained until the end, but it also reveals the feelings of one people towards another's candidacy. However, it would seem that the passage of time has given greater importance to voting than to what is strictly musical. That is why most of the controversies derived from the ESC arise from

¹⁴ Treaty establishing the European Atomic Energy Community, 1957. Article 2.

the exchange of points, especially due to the so-called "neighbourhood", which is still a type of geopolitical vote.

For example, at the ESC London 1963, during the voting at the end of the night, the Norwegian jury, as we can see in the broadcast courtesy of its organizer, the BBC, was contacted twice. In the second call they gave some scores that turned out to be different from those of the first, officially because they had not had enough time to count their votes correctly. Interestingly, the change of votes made it possible for Denmark, which had received 2 points and now 4, to be above Switzerland, which finally received 1 point compared to the previous 3. In this way, the change in the Norwegian vote gave its neighbour Denmark the victory.

During the late fifties and early sixties, the first hits from the festival appeared, such as "*Nel blu di pinto di blu (Volare)*", by Domenico Modugno (Italy, 1958), "*Danseuse*", by Grette & Jørgen Ingmann (Denmark, 1963), "*Non ho l'età*", by Gigliola Cinquetti (Italy, 1964), "*Poupée de Cire, Poupée de Son*", by France Gall (Luxembourg, 1965), "*Puppet on a string*", by Sandie Shaw (United Kingdom, 1967) or "*Congratulations*", by Cliff Richards (United Kingdom, 1968). The fact that some of the songs that appeared in the contest became hits meant a consolidation to the program, translated into an increase in participating countries: Austria, Denmark and the United Kingdom in 1957, Sweden in 1958, Monaco in 1959, Norway in 1960, Finland, Spain and Yugoslavia in 1961, Portugal in 1964 and Ireland in 1965¹⁵. By the end of the 1960s, eighteen countries had ever participated in Eurovision, what we would name the first expansion wave.

The progressive expansion of the contest shows its ability to capture the attention of the European public, which at that time showed interest in the contest, mainly due to the high quality of the songs, the number of successes of the first 25 years of Eurovision history caused the festival to become a worldwide benchmark not only for European music, but also as a symbol of the regional integration process. The quality of the songs is clearly an incentive to watch the show in front of the television year after year. However, the passage of time has made it clear that more and more importance is given to the visual question than to the musical one, with performances that, beyond a better or worse vocal quality, try to impact the viewer and the juries. professionals, to capture their votes.

The reception in the EBU and, later, in the Eurovision Song Contest, also meant the inclusion of non-democratic countries. Among them we find the cases of Yugoslavia, Spain and Portugal. This inclusion responds, mainly, to the fact that the organization does not intend to have a political nature, as shown by the express prohibition of songs with political claims in the contest, but rather a strictly communicative and cultural nature. However, some disagreement with this decisions came. In 1964, during the broadcasting of the contest, an unknown man appeared on the stage, claiming against the authoritarian regimes in Spain and Portugal, respectively. The official Eurovision Song Contest explains this fact in this way¹⁶:

"The 1964 Eurovision Song Contest took place in the famous Tivoli Concert Hall in Copenhagen. The event became highly politicised with demands that right-wing dictatorships in Spain and Portugal should be excluded from the contest. There was even some trouble during

¹⁵ ESCToday. How many countries have participated in Eurovision? When did they debut? Retrieved from <https://esctoday.com/178067/how-many-countries-have-participated-in-eurovision-when-did-they-debut/> on March 13th, 2023.

¹⁶ Eurovision. Copenhagen 1964. Retrieved from <https://eurovision.tv/event/copenhagen-1964> on March 15th, 2023.

the contest as just before the Belgian entry, a man entered the stage holding a banner saying "Boycott Franco and Salazar". He was quickly removed from the stage."

For these countries, participating in an international event, such as the Olympic Games, world sports championships or Eurovision, is a starting point to put their "soft diplomacy" into practice. This approach implies that a state uses all means that are not considered "hard", that is, the use of force, mainly, to try to influence the international scene. Eurovision is, without a doubt, a meeting point in which this type of diplomacy has its place.

Let us take Spain as an example. This country suffered from 1936 to 1939 a Civil War, between the Republican government and the rebel side, with General Franco at the head. After the victory of this side, Franco imposed an authoritarian government of the extreme right, under which there were no political or social rights and in which, of course, free and democratic elections were not held. Spain debuted in Eurovision in 1961, trying to show itself as a modern country on a par with other European nations, thus trying to hide the lack of freedoms of their fellow citizens. As a symbol, the Spanish representative Massiel wore a short dress, a garment that was not yet widespread in Spain socially, and that was not well regarded within the Spanish society of that time either. This fact, which may seem small, has the importance we are discussing, especially if we understand that a short dress symbolizes what is "modern" and "free" against the reality of the regime. Massiel, with her song "*La, la, la*", won the ESC in 1968. Spain, therefore, was the first country with an authoritarian regime to win Eurovision. What is more, they won twice in a row (1968 and 1969). The Spanish victory in 1968 by a single point against the United Kingdom, and the subsequent celebration of the contest in Spanish territory in 1969, caused the withdrawal of Austria, which refused to send a singer where there was a dictatorial regime¹⁷.

If we focus on the importance that hosting the Eurovision Song Contest had for Spain, the deployment of technical means that took place there is clearly notorious. For the 1969 edition, held at the Teatro Real in Madrid, the Franco government arranged that the festival would be used as a platform to demonstrate to Europe that Spain was on a par with other neighbouring countries in terms of technology and communications. Among the functions of the public channel TVE, were to produce a program at the level of previous editions, including technical specifications such as retransmission of the event in colour to other countries, since colour television had not yet reached Spain¹⁸. Regarding the geopolitical sphere, demonstrating that a country with practically no resources and with a not very buoyant economic situation could hold the event was a great step towards European openness and, to a lesser extent, worldwide.

The gala held in Madrid was a success for Spain on the technical level. However, an unexpected event took place: a four-way tie between France, the Netherlands, Spain and the United Kingdom. this tie to 18 points was not foreseen in the rules of the Eurovision Song Contest. Since they claimed that the winner would be the one who received the most points. Following this line, the four tied songs were proclaimed winners of the ESC 1969¹⁹. This

¹⁷ Wiwibloggs. *LIST: When Eurovision plus international politics equals withdrawal*. Muldoon, P. Retrieved from <https://wiiwibloggs.com/2017/03/24/eurovision-withdrawals-international-politics/182428/> on March 15th, 2023.

¹⁸ RTVE. *La final de Eurovisión 1969: por primera vez a todo color y con los comentarios de Uribarri*. Retrieved from <https://www.rtve.es/television/20190329/final-eurovision-1969-primera-vez-todo-color-comentarios-uribarri/1912900.shtml> on March 18th, 2023.

¹⁹ For further details, watch the Eurovision Song Contest 1969.

unforeseen event and, above all, the fact that it was never foreseen that a draw could occur in the contest, was the trigger for its first great crisis. Austria decided to extend its absence for another year due to lack of foresight, a withdrawing which was also joined by Finland, Norway, Portugal and Sweden, with just twelve participants in the 1970 show.

At the level of European integration, the 1960s had several milestones: the first common agricultural policy was promoted, the Fusion Treaty was signed in 1965, thus merging the executive powers of the three European communities, and the customs union began in 1968. Obviously, these agreements promoted greater European integration, in order to improve the economic and social situation of the region, such as the CAP, which, although it had consequences in the form of overproduction, brought benefits to the agricultural sector.

Parallel to the European Economic Community, an organization of countries emerged that also tried to implement integrating economic measures: the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), founded in 1960 by Switzerland, Austria, Denmark, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Norway and Portugal²⁰. In that same year, all the countries participating in Eurovision, except Monaco, were members of either the EEC or EFTA.

2. The 1970s and 1980s: European integration consolidates in Western Europe

In this second stage, the European integration of the Communities began to consolidate, with the first expansions in their memberships. As for Eurovision, it could be said that these two decades are very different, both in terms of musical quality and popularity.

At Eurovision, the 1970s and 1980s also brought great hits to not only European but the global-level music. From "*Après Toi*" by Vicky Leandros (Luxembourg, 1973) to "*Ne partez pas sans moi*" by Céline Dion (Switzerland, 1988), going through "*Save you kisses for me*" by Brotherhood of Man (United Kingdom, 1977) or "*A-ba-ni-bi*" by Izhar Cohen & Alphabeta (Israel, 1978). But among them "*Waterloo*" stands out, a song by the Swedish group ABBA, who after achieving first place in Eurovision would manage to conquer the charts in the following years with their world-renowned songs such as "*Mamma Mia*" "*The winner takes it all*" or "*Dancing Queen*". They were not the only ones to achieve fame after their participation in a Eurovision Song Contest, but well-known artists such as Julio Iglesias, Olivia Newton-John and Céline Dion did the same, the latter winning the 1988 edition representing Switzerland several years before to give voice to the soundtrack of the movie "Titanic".

The example of Céline Dion, a practically unknown singer when she took the Eurovision stage, is probably the most illustrative of the contest. On the one hand, the artist is Canadian by nationality, specifically from the Quebec area. Her mother tongue, French, influenced the choice of her by Swiss television to represent that country in the ESC 1988. In this way it is shown that Eurovision not only enters Europe, but also leaves its borders. Beyond the participation of Israel, Australia, Azerbaijan, Armenia or Morocco, non-European countries (although some are from the European broadcasting area), artists of the highest level have performed at Eurovision. That is the case of Justin Timberlake in 2016, Madonna in 2019 or Laura Pausini in 2022. On the other hand, the cases of ABBA, Céline Dion o Julio Iglesias

²⁰ European Union. The History of the European Union 1960-1969. Retrieved from https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/history-eu/1960-69_es.

demonstrate that Eurovision might be the trampoline towards global fame, and that the contest has something to say when it comes to global music.

While in the 1960s, for the first time, a country won twice in a row (Spain in 1968 and 1969), in the 1970s this happened twice (Luxembourg in 1973 and 1974 and Israel in 1978 and 1979). For the first time ever, a singer, Johnny Logan won a Eurovision Song Contest for a second time, in 1980 and 1987, representing Ireland.

After the voting controversies, a definitive voting system was settled in the 1970s. It entailed that each country awarded the same number of points, divided in 1-8, 10, 12 points, a sum of 58 points to be awarded. Thus, the famous "twelve points" (or "*douze points*", in French), awarded to the most voted song by each country, one of the main symbols and characteristics of the Eurovision Song Contest at the present time, appeared.

These two decades, the 70s and 80s, saw the second period of Eurovision's expansion, mainly in the Mediterranean region. There were the debuts of Malta in 1971, Israel in 1973, Greece in 1974, Turkey in 1975, Morocco in 1980, Cyprus in 1981 and Iceland in 1986.

Among them, Israel and Morocco were the first non-European countries to participate. Thus, Eurovision expanded abroad Europe for the first time. Their participation have given rise to various theories on how it is possible that they are able to participate, although the simplest explanation is that both are within the European broadcasting area discussed in the introduction to this dissertation. But why would a non-European country want to participate in a European-focused event? The main reason we might find is that they are seeking for some international recognition. Both states had been independent since very recently, after decolonization. But both of them took part on different conflicts. While Israel has the Palestinian question, Morocco has the Western Sahara question.

In addition, the rapprochement with Europe can also be seen symbolically as a rapprochement with the political and economic structure that is the European continent. In the case of Israel, it could also be argued that its participation is due to Israel's closer alignment with European states than with its neighbours, because of the long-running bellicose conflict between Israel and Palestine. As is known worldwide, in the Middle East region Israel is the only country with a distinct majority religion, the Jewish religion, while its neighbours are Muslim, both Shiite and Shia, including Palestine, whose territory Israel has claimed and partially annexed by force²¹.

This conflict could have reached the ESC in three different times. First, in 1977 Tunisia had the idea to participate, and was even given a running order. However, they decided to withdraw without explanation. This withdrawal is often blamed on Israel's simultaneous participation. Second, Israel decided to withdraw in 1980, despite having won in 1979, because the competition coincided with the Jewish Holocaust Remembrance Day²². Taking advantage of Israel's non-participation, Morocco submitted an entry, the only Moroccan participation to date. Again, the fact that these two countries have not participated in Eurovision at the same time, may be due to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.²³ Finally, two and a half decades later, Lebanon proposed to participate in the competition. However, Lebanese law prohibited Israeli

²¹ Matthews, E., Newman, D., Dajani, M. *The Israel-Palestine Conflict. Parallel Discourses*. New York, 2011.

²² Eurovision. The Hague 1980. Retrieved from <https://eurovision.tv/event/the-hague-1980> on March 20th, 2023.

²³ Antón, S. *Heredarán el viento: Apuntes sobre conflictividad interna en un contexto internacional*, p. 75-141. Valladolid, 2018.

content. According to the BBC News, Lebanese laws “*made it nearly impossible to broadcast the Israeli performance*”²⁴. Considering the rules and format of the Eurovision Song Contest, all performances must have been broadcast to be judged by the European public, since in those years (since 1997) the voting system was the public vote or “televote”. Lebanon therefore withdrew, never to consider participating officially again.

In parallel to the Eurovision Song Contest held in so-called Western Europe, it was decided to reshape the Sopot International Song Contest in Poland, creating the Intervision Song Contest to compete with the former. Its format is clearly based on its counterpart festival, even using the same points system. This contest, which was broadcasted between 1965 and 1968, in Czechoslovakia, and between 1977 and 1980 in Poland²⁵ (with an extra edition in 2008), had as participants mainly countries from the communist sphere, although it also included countries from the Western sphere, such as Spain, Portugal and Canada²⁶.

This is another example of how culture and music can be used to deliver a message that can be interpreted politically. On the one hand, Western Europe, that group of free and democratic countries that organize a festival to celebrate the union of the continent. On the other hand, Eastern Europe, that sphere that includes countries where communism is the main ideology. The fact that Intervision also included countries outside the sphere of communist influence, some as close to the United States as Canada, demonstrates the use of the contest to try to bring countries from that sphere closer together.

That is a faithful reflection of what was seen during the Cold War. The two powers of the moment, the United States and the Soviet Union, tried in those four decades to attract new countries to their sphere of influence, each supporting a different side in Civil Wars, for example. Academically, the term “bipolar” is often used to talk about the historical moments in which two superpowers are the ones that pull the strings on the international scene. We also see this bipolarity between Eurovision and Intervision, each one a cultural symbol of its own block.

If we spoke before the arrival of the second expansion period of Eurovision between 1971 and 1986, at that time the first expansions of the European Communities also took place. In 1973, the United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark joined the EEC. At the level of geopolitical relevance, it is interesting to analyse the entry of the United Kingdom into the organization. On the one hand, it is noteworthy that the three great historical European powers (France, the United Kingdom and Germany) shared membership in the same international institution. Moreover, they share economic and social policies, which would have been unthinkable in other contexts. On the other hand, entry into the European Communities means for a member country the partial transfer of its sovereignty, especially in the application of community and national law. This is precisely one of the reasons for the future departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union (Brexit).

²⁴ BBC News. Lebanon withdraws from Eurovision. 18th March 2005. Retrieved from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/4362373.stm> on March 21st, 2023.

²⁵ Pajala, Mari (2013) *Intervision Song Contests and Finnish Television between East and West*. Teoksessa Alexander Badenoch, Andreas Fickers & Christian Henrich-Franke (toim.) *Airy Curtains in the European Ether: Broadcasting and the Cold War*. Baden-Baden: Nomos-Verlag, 215–239.

²⁶ Vuletic, Dean. “The Intervision Song Contest: Popular Music and Political Liberalization in the Eastern Bloc”. *Music and Democracy: Participatory Approaches*, edited by Marko Kölbl and Fritz Trümpi, Wien: mdwPress, 2021, pp. 141-156. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783839456576-006>

The Communities expansion continued in the next decade when Greece joined in 1981 and Portugal and Spain joined the organization in 1986. For the European Communities, these three countries in the Western Mediterranean region and Southern Europe, posed a challenge. These three countries had traditionally belonged to the group of developing countries, that is, states whose economies were not as large as those of the other neighbours of the integrating organization. In this way, as would also be seen in future enlargements, one of the European principles was put into practice: solidarity. Unions of this type are designed to be supportive, that is, the richer countries make an effort to help the less wealthy countries. In addition, it is worth mentioning the French veto to the incorporation of Spain in matters such as fishing or agriculture, since it would have repercussions for the French economy²⁷.

The fall of the Berlin Wall in September 1989 was one of the great events of the 20th century. Above all, because it means the end of the communist regimes and the Soviet sphere of influence. The fall of the wall also symbolizes the fall of the Iron Curtain that in practice separated the two sides of Europe. From then on, the European integration process would live its climax in terms of expansion, which we will talk about in the next section.

3. From the 90s to the 21st century: Eastern Europe joins Eurovision and the EU.

In the 1990s, as had been the case in the 1980s, the general interest in Eurovision suffered a crisis. Despite the fact that hits such as “*Insieme: 1992*”, by Toto Cutugno (Italy, 1990) or “*Diva*”, by Dana International (Israel, 1998), appeared on Eurovision in that decade, it seemed to be a lack of interest of the participating countries in organizing the next edition of the contest. This is one of the hypotheses to explain the supposed lower quality of the songs or weaker performances, so that they would not achieve the highest scores. The great exception to this rumour is Ireland. Five of the country's seven victories to date have come in ten years, between 1987 and 1996, including its three consecutive victories between 1992 and 1994. It is commonly said that Ireland would have had a great interest in hosting Eurovision, largely part thanks to the economic injection that it supposes. In that period of time, Dublin hosted the contest, in 1987, 1994, 1995, 1997, while the small town of Millstreet, in Cork and with around 1,500 inhabitants, hosted the ESC in 1993.

If the talk about a decline in the ESC in the last decade of the 20th century it is, in opposition, of great importance for the European integration process, especially due to the Maastricht and Amsterdam treaties. The first of these, the Maastricht Treaty of 1992, formalized the establishment of the European Union. This institution arises from the union of the three European communities and is based on three fundamental pillars: the treaties that establish the three European communities, as basic elements of Community Law; common foreign and security policy (CFSP), to give rise to a common regulation of these areas; and the justice and interior pillar (JI)²⁸. The Maastricht Treaty and the establishment of the EU were referred to in the 1990 ESC winner song, *Insieme: 1992* by Toto Cutugno²⁹.

²⁷ El País. *Francia impone un nuevo veto en integración española en la CEE* (in Spanish). 28th April 1983. Retrieved from: https://elpais.com/diario/1983/09/28/economia/433551601_850215.html

²⁸ Treaty of Maastricht, 1992. Article B.

²⁹ “*Insieme*” means “Together” in Italian. Its lyrics pray: *Sempre più liberi noi// Non è più un sogno e non sei più da solo// Sempre più in alto noi// Dammi una mano che prendiamo il volo// L'Europa non è lontana// C'è una canzone italiana per voi// Insieme, unite, unite, Europe.*

The Amsterdam Treaty (signed in 1997) was the first reform Maastricht Treaty. It included some changes to the UE. Among them, it established the High Representative of the Union for Common Foreign and Security Policy office, whose head leads the EU in terms of foreign affairs. In addition, Europol (European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation) was created, and the Schengen Agreement (which gradually abolished checks in borders for goods, services and persons), was included. Two more treaties have reformed the Maastricht Treaty: Niza Treaty in 2001 and Lisbon Treaty in 2007, which gave the UE a more democratic and integrated framework.

If in the periods 1956-1965 and 1971-1986 we were talking about the first two waves of Eurovision debuts, the third comes in 1993 and lasts until 2008. In 1993, and from then on, mainly as a result of the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, there was a "boom" of applications to join both the EBU and the Eurovision Song Contest. So much so that in 1993, seven countries from the former eastern sphere, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Estonia, Hungary, Romania, Slovenia and Slovakia, participated in a preliminary qualifying round for the Eurovision final, called "*Kvalifikacija za Millstreet*". As the three countries with the most points in that gala, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia made their debut at Eurovision 1993. Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Russia and Slovakia did so in 1994, North Macedonia (as "Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia") in 1996, Latvia in 2000 and Ukraine in 2003. On the other side of the coin, however, Luxembourg withdrew in 1994, not participating again to date, and Italy withdrew in 1998 for more than a decade.

In this way, 1993 became a really important year both for European political integration and for Eurovision, since the Maastricht Treaty came into force and, with it, the European Union was established, and the first countries of the former sphere oriental make their first appearance at the Eurovision Song Contest, giving rise to another parallel between the two.

The large number of countries wishing to participate prompted a semi-final in 1996, not televised, where a panel of jurors decided which songs were worthy of a place at Eurovision Oslo 1996. In the following editions, the Top 10 from the previous edition participated, as well as the countries with the best average places in recent years and the countries that could not participate in the previous edition. All states could not qualify for the following ESC.

In 1997, the public vote or "televote" was tested for the first time. In this way, it was the viewers who decided the voting ranking of their country by means of phone calls and, subsequently, SMS. This voting system was only used by a handful of countries but was progressively applied to the rest of the continent.

By having televote for all countries, the professional jury disappeared from Eurovision. This led, in the eyes of some of the audience, to excessive voting for "neighbouring countries", especially in the ex-Yugoslav and ex-Soviet spheres. The example that best illustrates this phenomenon is the results of the Eurovision Song Contest 2007, whose top 10 only two countries had debuted before 1993, Turkey and Greece. That is to say, the contest would have suffered a degeneration in the last decades.

The English translation would be the following: *We're more and more free// It's no longer a dream and you're no longer alone// We're higher and higher// Give me your hand, so we can fly// Europe is not far away// This is an Italian song for you// Together, unite, unite, Europe.*

Translation retrieved from Eurovision World (<https://eurovisionworld.com/eurovision/1990/italy>).

In 1999 the “Big Four” group (“Big Five” since Italy came back in 2011) was established, meaning that France, Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom were automatically qualifying in every contest since then, mainly due to their economic contribution. Precisely the EBU chose these countries because they are the ones that contribute the most financially to the organization of Eurovision. In this way, while these countries make sure they participate in all the ESC finals, the EBU ensures the financing of the festival. It was in the same year that the first euro coins were minted. The single currency is the biggest step in European integration, as it unifies a large part of the old European currencies into a single currency and is a clear symbol of European unity³⁰

Although the single currency is a symbol of the sought-after European union, not all countries acquired the euro as their official currency. Among the big absentees are Poland, Hungary, Denmark, Sweden and the United Kingdom, since for these countries, exchanging their currency for a common one would mean ceding part of their financial sovereignty. As of today, a total of 20 EU member countries, as well as four non-EU countries, Andorra, Monaco, San Marino and Vatican City, have adopted the euro as their official currency³¹.

The introduction of the euro as the single European currency was the last step in European economic integration, pending further integration at the political level. In this respect, the European Union sought to bring to its legal system a common Magna Carta for the whole Union: the Constitution of the European Union. In order for this constitution to be approved and thus enter into force throughout the European Union, each individual country had to approve it. During 2005, several countries proposed to their citizens a referendum for the approval of the European Constitution. Through this consultation, it was approved in Spain, Luxembourg and Belgium, but rejected by France and the Netherlands. Since unanimity was necessary for its final approval and ratification, the project of a common constitution failed with these two defeats at the ballot box³².

In contrast to the failure of the European constitution, the Eurovision Song Contest, as an element of union and integration, had its greatest splendour in that decade, at least in terms of territorial expansion. While the number of requests to participate continued to grow, a broadcasted semi-final was held in 2004 to choose 10 songs that would qualify for the Grand Final. These 10 countries were joined each year by the Top 10 of the previous edition, the Big Four and the host country. Finally, since 2008, two semi-finals have been held, with the Top 10 of each qualifying for the final. The system of two semi-finals has been applied until the last edition, 2023, and is to be applied in subsequent years. Qualifying is not easy for countries, and some of them have more success than others. The following map (Map 1) shows the number of

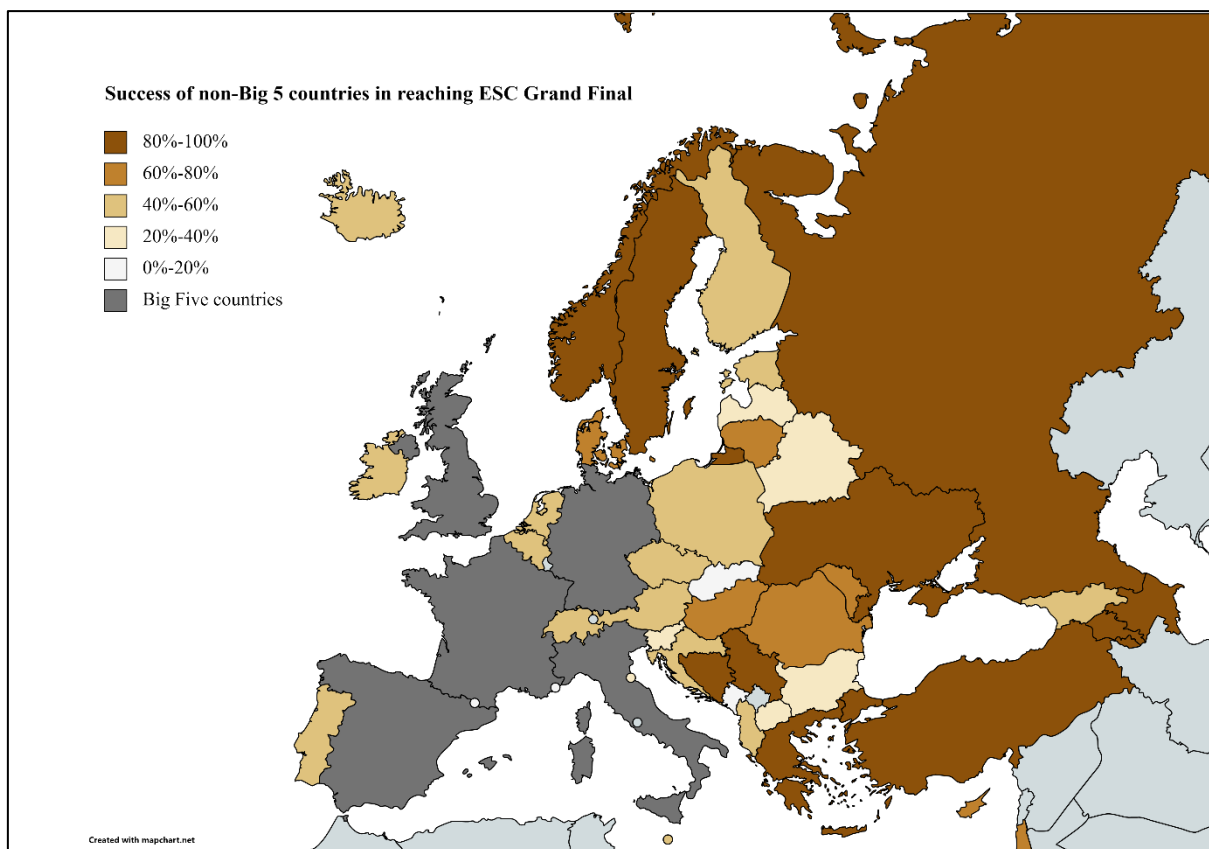
³⁰European Central Bank. The euro. Retrieved on 14th June 2023, from <https://www.ecb.europa.eu/euro/html/index.en.html>.

³¹European Union. Countries using the euro. Retrieved on June 14th 2023 from https://european-union.europa.eu/institutions-law-budget/euro/countries-using-euro_en.

³² European Parliament. Draft Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe. Retrieved on 30th June 2023 from <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/about-parliament/en/in-the-past/the-parliament-and-the-treaties/draft-treaty-establishing-a-constitution-for-europe>

finals reached by European countries from 2004, when the semi-finals were established, until 2023.

Since the appearance of the semi-finals, Albania, Andorra, Belarus and Serbia and



Map 1: Success of non-Big 5 countries in reaching ESC Grand Final (2004-2023).

Montenegro made their debut in 2004, Bulgaria and Moldova in 2005, Armenia and 2006, Georgia, Montenegro, Czech Republic and Serbia in 2007 and Azerbaijan San Marino in 2008. The most surprising debut comes in 2015, when the EBU announced that Australia would make its debut and automatically qualify for the final. The participation of this country, which is not only outside Europe but also outside the European broadcasting area, is officially since its public television broadcasts the ESC since the 1980s.

While we mentioned in the previous paragraph the territorial expansion of Eurovision in the 2000s, the following decade would be marked by several "traumatic" withdrawals. In these two decades there were withdrawals from Monaco, which had returned for three editions, Slovakia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, starting in 2016. Although the most notorious withdrawal was that of Turkey (Türkiye) starting in 2013, alleging its disagreement with the system of voting (50% jury and 50% televoting) and a direct pass to the final of the Big 5. However, the most plausible reason for this withdrawal would be that the Eurovision Song Contest would have become, in his opinion, an *oasis* for the collective LGBT+. The Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee in the Turkish Parliament, Volakin Bozkir, who would later become President of the United Nations General Assembly, declared: "*Thank God we do no longer participate in Eurovision*" after Conchita Wurst's 2014 victory, "the bearded woman", a character played by the Austrian Thomas Neuwirth and who became an LGBT icon as a result of her participation and victory in Eurovision. Afterwards, Türkiye established "Turkivision",

a contest with a similar format in which states, regions or cities with Turkish population participated.

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The 2010s have also been a complex decade for the EU at withdrawal terms. In this case, the UK government proposed a referendum on leaving the European Union, popularly known as "Brexit". The withdrawal option won in June 2016, provoking an unusual situation within the European Union. For the first time a member state asked to leave; for the first time a negotiated agreement between both parties became indispensable so that the exit would not be economically abrupt; and, moreover, the doors were opened to possible future exits by other member states, especially veteran ones such as France or Italy, whose hypothetical exits are supported by parties of extreme sensibilities³³.

The United Kingdom, following the aforementioned referendum, invoked Article 50 of the Treaty establishing the European Union in March 2017. In this way, talks began to try to affect the member states as little as possible. In order for the exit not to be immediate, due to the damage that this could entail, the United Kingdom's membership was made possible for a period of time, until it finally withdrew definitively on 31 January 2020, remaining in the single market for a few more months.

Eurovision's "*annus horribilis*" came in 2020, when the SARS COV-2 (Covid-19) pandemic forced the cancellation of the 2020 Eurovision Song Contest, which was to be held in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. Instead, the special "Europe Shine a Light" was broadcast, referencing the 1997 winning song, "Love Shine a Light" by Katrina & The Waves (UK, 1997). The festival resumes in 2021³⁴. Russia's invasion and aggression against Ukraine and subsequent war since February 2022 immediately came to the Eurovision Song Contest. Russian broadcasters were forced to leave the EBU, after so that that country could no longer participate in Eurovision. Precisely that year, Ukraine, with the song "*Stefania*" by the Kalush

³³ Gastinger, M. (2021). *Introducing the EU exit index measuring each member state's propensity to leave the European Union. European Union Politics*, 22(3), 566–585. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14651165211000138>.

³⁴Eurovision. Eurovision 2020 in Rotterdam is cancelled. Retrieved from <https://eurovision.tv/story/eurovision-2020-in-rotterdam-is-cancelled> on 2nd April, 2023.

Orchestra, was the winner of the ESC, with an overwhelming televote. Due to the war in Ukraine, the European Broadcasting Union decided that the Contest would be held in Liverpool, the United Kingdom, on behalf of Ukraine.

The musical styles heard at the Contest in the 21st century were adapted to the new era. Up-tempo songs established themselves at the festival, with hits such as "*Dime*" by "Beth" (Spain, 2003), "*Everyway that I can*" by Sertab Erener, "*Wild Dances*" by Ruslana (Ukraine, 2004), "*My Number One*" by Helena Paparizou (Greece, 2005), "Fuego" by Eleni Foureira (Cyprus, 2018) or "SloMo" by Chanel (Spain, 2022). However, other styles have also been successful, such as the rock of "Hard Rock Hallelujah" (Finland 2007) or "*Zuotti e Buoni*" by Måneskin (Ital, 2021), or folk styles, such as Jamala's "*1944*" (Ukraine, 2016) or "*Amar pelos dois*" by Salvador Sobral (Portugal, 2017). On the other hand, the first victory of several participating countries takes place, some veterans and other rookies: Estonia (2001), Latvia (2002), Turkey (2003), Ukraine (2004), Greece (2005), Finland (2006), Serbia (2007, in its debut), Russia (2008), Azerbaijan (2011), Portugal (2017). In addition, the hits "Fairytale" by Alexander Rybak (Norway, 2009), "Euphoria" by Loreen (Sweden, 2012) or "Arcade" by Duncan Lawrence (The Netherlands, 2019) also took the stage.

III. Eurovision Song Contest: more than a contest.

After Ukraine's victory in 2022 and, due to the war between Russia and that country, the EBU decided that Ukraine could not host the 2023 Competition. Therefore, it was decided to give the opportunity to the second ranked country, the Kingdom of Ukraine. Kingdom, who agreed to take him in. Liverpool, in England, was selected, on behalf of Ukraine.

The 2023 season in terms of Eurovision had several aspects that we could consider relevant in terms of geopolitics. The first of them is precisely the role of Eurovision in the Ukrainian War and vice versa. Since the contest was raised with a double host (Ukraine and the United Kingdom), the show took elements from both cultures. However, how the War in the Ukraine was going to be treated during the galas had its interest. On the one hand, Ukraine tried to get Ukrainian President Volodimir Zelensky to make a remote appearance during the event. In contrast, the organization decided that allowing this would go against the principles of political neutrality, an issue that, for obvious reasons, had been called into question in the previous edition. Following the EBU's refusal, there were not only complaints from the Ukrainian government, but also from the British Prime Minister himself, Sunak.

Analysing these facts, it is not difficult to deduce that Eurovision is not only relevant at a cultural and musical level, but that it can become a promotional element for the country itself, and that it is an event of some importance, considering the interest of the Ukrainian government in appear on the stage.

A second notable aspect of the current political scene was the general elections in Turkey, held in 2023. In it, the Erdogan government, with more than twenty years as president, faced the most difficult elections of its term since the Opposition has probably never been so great before. As already mentioned, a few lines ago, Turkey decided to withdraw from 2013 due to discrepancies, officially, with the voting system and with the figure of the Big 5. However, over time the refusal to participate in Eurovision again, and homophobic comments against people around the contest, suggest that the real reason is its social diversity. Erdogan's government had rejected Turkey's return to Eurovision before the elections. In contrast, the

Turkish opposition decided to include a return to the event in its program. Therefore, Eurovision was during that time, an element of political confrontation in that country.

Eurovision 2023 was held in May of that year in Liverpool, United Kingdom. Beyond the victory of Sweden in jury, Finland in televoting and Sweden as overall winner, there is a question that arises from the results: why did they vote in 2022 in support of an attacked country and in 2023 they voted for a country aggressor, Israel?

Despite not being an easy question to answer, conjectures can be made, beyond the hypothesis of "hypocrisy" that can be thought. On one hand, we could chalk it up to the quality of the Israeli song and performance. If we were to reason in a geopolitical key, despite the fact that Ukraine is considered attacked and Israel the aggressor in the conflict with Palestine, the geopolitical approach of European countries and, especially, of those that belong to the European Union, is quite different.

On the one hand we have Ukraine, a country invaded by Russia, considered an aggressor by Europe and which for half a century maintained a distant position with the European Communities. On the other hand, Israel, despite being considered by many as an aggressor country, enjoys the sympathies of most Western States, including the United States and the European Union. That is, if we consider the vote for Israel in geopolitical terms, we should consider that Europe has held this country in high esteem, even supporting it, in recent decades, which is consistent with what was voted in Eurovision.

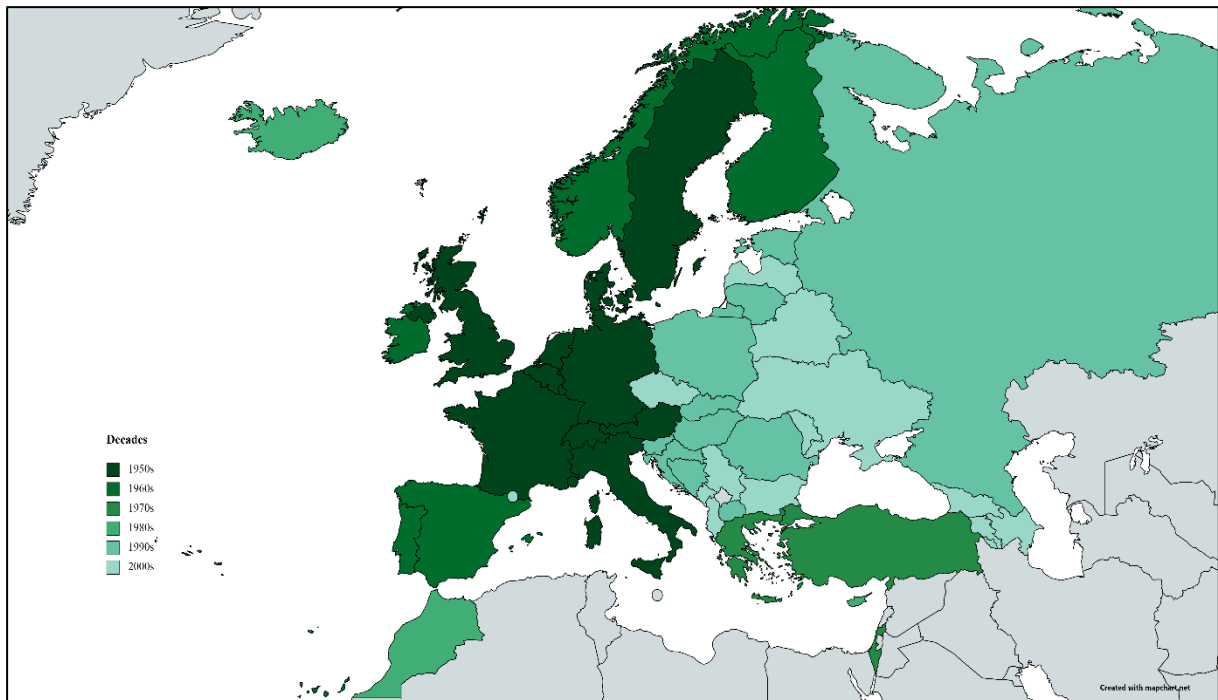
All these considerations demonstrate that Eurovision, as an element of integration, is a reality. What is more, it is a more cohesive element than any other institution, as the European Union, due to the easiness of becoming a member of EBU and, afterwards, ESC, since it does not include any political or economic requests or chains. Just for taking an example, for being a member of the EU, a large number of requirements are asked to candidates. In order to illustrate how Eurovision Song Contest is a more integrative element than the European Union, the following figure shows the EU's members accession into the Union and their first appearance at Eurovision. Before the establishment of the EU, we consider EEC for these statistics, especially for the Founders.

At a glance, we can see that, of the countries of the European Union, only the Czech Republic was a member of the organization rather than a participant in Eurovision.

EU Members' accession to the Union and their debuts at ESC					
COUNTRY	ACCESSION TO THE EU	DEBUT AT EUROVISION	COUNTRY	ACCESSION TO THE EU	DEBUT AT EUROVISION
Austria	1995	1957	Italy	1958	1956
Belgium	1958	1956	Latvia	2004	2000
Bulgaria	2007	2005	Lithuania	2004	1994
Croatia	2013	1993	Luxembourg	1958	1956
Cyprus	2004	1981	Malta	2004	1971
Czechia	2004	2007	Netherlands	1958	1956
Denmark	1973	1957	Poland	2004	1994
Estonia	2004	1994	Portugal	1986	1964
Finland	1995	1961	Romania	2007	1994
France	1958	1956	Slovakia	2004	1994
Germany	1958	1956	Slovenia	2004	1993
Greece	1981	1974	Spain	1986	1995
Hungary	2004	1994	Sweden	1995	1958
Ireland	1973	1965	United Kingdom	1973	1957

Figure 1: EU Members' EU Accession and their debuts at ESC.

Below there is a map showing the first appearance of each European country in the history of the Eurovision Song Contest. It includes all European countries, with the exception of Liechtenstein, the Holy See and Kosovo, which for the last decade has tried unsuccessfully to debut, due to the refusal of several countries, with Serbia leading the way.



Map 2: Debuts in the ESC by country and decade.

As can be seen in the previous map, not only European countries have participated in Eurovision, but also countries from three other continents: Morocco (Africa), Cyprus, Israel, Azerbaijan (Asia) and Australia (Oceania). In this way and, above all, with the debut of Australia in 2015, the expansion of the contest outside of Europe is taken for granted. From this last debut, the question arose among the European public as to why a country from the other side of the world can appear in Eurovision. To answer this question, it is necessary to consider two types of cases. On the one hand, Morocco and Israel and, on the other, Australia.

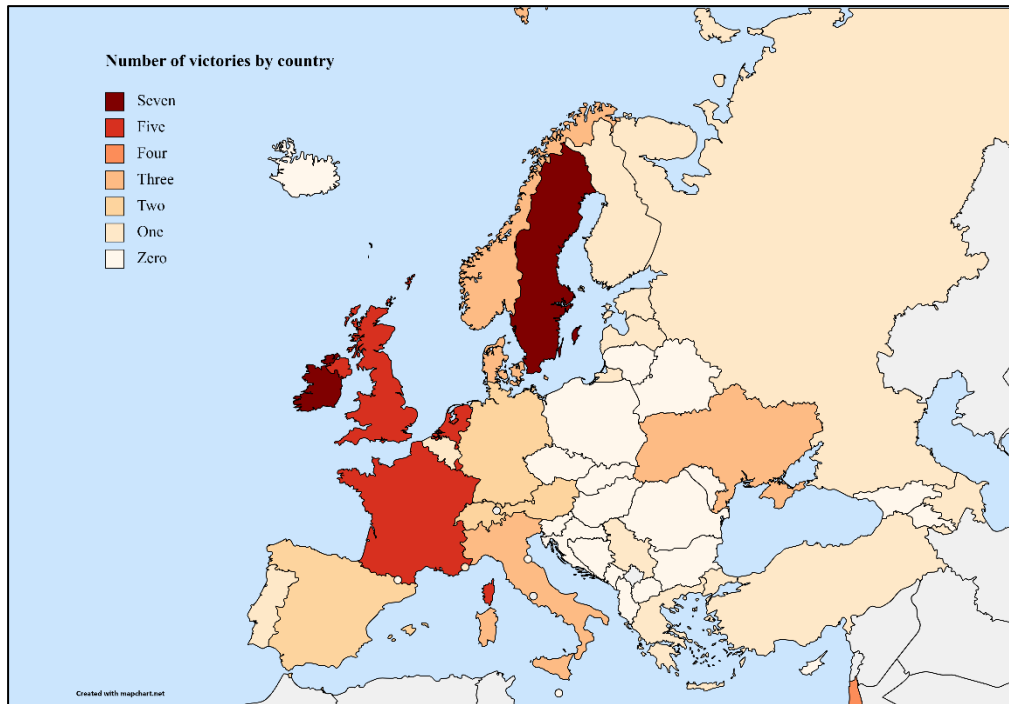
The first of them includes any country whose public television is an active member of the EBU and which, therefore, is within the European broadcast area. According to the contest rules, these countries are free to participate in Eurovision if they wish. That is to say, that Lebanon, Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt or Jordan, as Morocco or Israel have already done, could appear in Eurovision without any problem.

The second case is that of those countries that are outside the European diffusion area, which includes, for example, the United States, Canada, New Zealand or South Africa, among others. This group of countries, to participate, would have to receive a formal invitation from the EBU to participate in Eurovision. In 2015, the EBU formally invited Australia to participate in the event, to celebrate its 60th anniversary and in recognition of having broadcast it for over thirty years.

In conclusion, the participations of non-European countries do not respond to political issues *per se*, but to the application of the competition rules in particular cases.

IV. Eurovision Song Contest up to date.

As a global resume of countries' success in the Eurovision Song Contest from 1956 to 2022, the following map shows the number of victories by country, excluding the Yugoslavian victory in 1989.



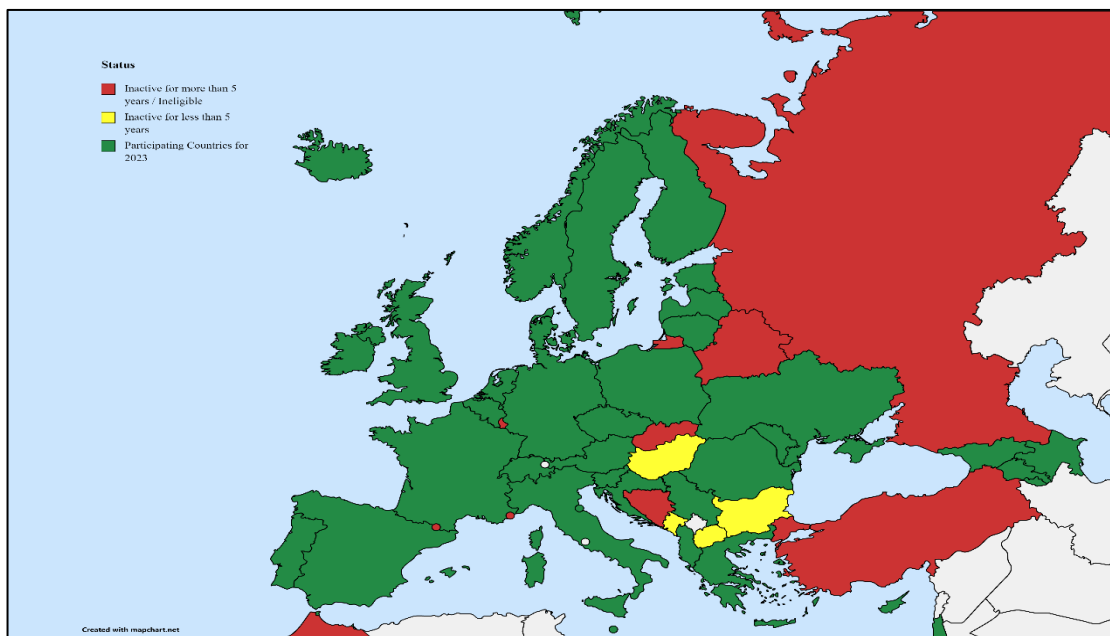
Map 3: Number of victories by country.

Victories in Eurovision by country (1956-2023)							
COUNTRY	NUMBER OF VICTORIES	YEARS	LANGUAGES	COUNTRY	NUMBER OF VICTORIES	YEARS	LANGUAGES
IRELAND	7	1970, 1980, 1987, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1996	English	GERMANY	2	1982, 2010	German, English
SWEDEN	7	1974, 1984, 1991, 1999, 2012, 2015, 2023	English, Swedish	MONACO	1	1971	French
NETHERLANDS	5	1957, 1959, 1969, 1975, 2019	Dutch, English	BELGIUM	1	1986	French
FRANCE	5	1958, 1960, 1962, 1969, 1977	French	YUGOSLAVIA	1	1989	Croatian
LUXEMBOURG	5	1961, 1965, 1972, 1973, 1983	French	ESTONIA	1	2001	English
UNITED KINGDOM	5	1967, 1969, 1976, 1981, 1997	English	LATVIA	1	2002	English
ISRAEL	4	1978, 1979, 1998, 2018	Hebrew, English	TURKEY	1	2003	English
DENMARK	3	1963, 2000, 2013	Danish, English	GREECE	1	2005	English
ITALY	3	1964, 1990, 2021	Italian	FINLAND	1	2006	English
NORWAY	3	1985, 1995, 2010	Norwegian	SERBIA	1	2007	Serbian
UKRAINE	3	2004, 2016, 2022	Ukrainian, English, Crimean Tatar	RUSSIA	1	2008	English
SWITZERLAND	2	1956, 1988	French	AZERBAIJAN	1	2011	English
AUSTRIA	2	1966, 2014	German, English	PORTUGAL	1	2017	Portuguese
SPAIN	2	1968, 1969	Spanish				

Figure 2: Victories by country at Eurovision Song Contest (1956-2023).

Eurovision was conceived, among other reasons, to be a cultural element of union between European countries. Part of its success has been that a good part of those countries has won the contest in its different editions, as we can see in the previous figure. What is completely remarkable is the fact that several languages have won at least one ESC. Bearing in mind that official language was compulsory during the first decades of contest, since around two decades ago, it became not a rule anymore, so English became to be the most popular language heard at Eurovision, especially from Nordic and Western countries, which tend not to use their official languages. Previous figure (Figure 2) shows the languages of the winner songs at ESC and as can be seen, a total of sixteen languages have won the contest at least once.

So as to show the impact that the Eurovision Song Contest has in the current era, the following map shows the participating countries for ESC Liverpool 2023 in green colour, the ones in yellow are those which have participated recently, but not in 2023, while the countries in red colour are the countries that have been inactive for more than five years or are ineligible to participate (Russia and Belarus, since they are no longer members of the EBU).



Map 4: Status of Ever-participating countries up to May 2023.

V. Conclusions:

As it has been possible to verify through this dissertation, there are a series of parallels between the Eurovision Song Contest and the process of European integration of the European Communities and the European Union.

In the first place, both processes, the cultural and the economic and political, had similar origins, in time and space, as they were elements designed to alleviate the effects of the Second World War in terms of diplomacy, international relations, regional economy or coexistence. Although the Eurovision Song Contest was held for the first time five years after the creation of the ECAC, it is noteworthy that its founders were precisely the same as those of the ECAC, that is, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, joined by Switzerland.

The fact that Switzerland, a traditionally neutral country, co-founded Eurovision, gives us an idea that, as happened over time, the Contest would bring together more countries and faster than the European Communities, above all due to its theoretically apolitical nature. And it is precisely this "speed" that gave rise to European countries becoming members of Eurovision before members of the EC in most cases. Although the ESC enlargements came about 10/15 years before those of the EU, geographically they were similar. First, an expansion through Western Europe and the Mediterranean and, after the fall of the communist bloc, through Central and Eastern Europe.

If the 1950s marked the origin of both elements, their turning point was the 1990s. For both, as has already been commented, the year 1993 marked a before and after. For political and economic integration, the entry into force of the Maastricht Treaty and the consequent establishment of the European Union, led to an acceleration in integration, complemented by the Treaties of Amsterdam (1997), Nice (1999) and Lisbon (2009).), with the establishment of a single European currency, the euro, from 1999, and with the entry into the EU of part of Central and Eastern Europe in 2004.

In the case of the Eurovision Song Contest, after the fall of the bipolar world at the beginning of the 90s, and the division of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union into different countries, in 1993 three countries from Central and Eastern Europe made their first appearance, giving rise to an expansion of the contest throughout the rest of the continent and the incorporation in 2004 of a televised qualifying semifinal and two semifinals in 2008, and the creation, in 1999, of the Big 5, the group of countries directly classified for the Grand Final of Eurovision.

In this way, it can be said that both integration processes have undergone a parallel evolution, with their differences but with clear coincidences. In addition, it cannot be ignored that the Eurovision element has been useful to achieve greater communion on the European continent, in this case through music and the soft diplomacy of its voting process, clearly exemplified in the victory of Ukraine in the Festival. Eurovision Song Contest 2022, just as the country was at war with Russia after the invasion. In addition, the Eurovision Song Contest is also currently used as an element of political confrontation in countries like Turkey or Hungary, where the visibility of the LGBT+ community by the Eurovision Song Contest (which, on the other hand, could be said to also be part of the ideals and values of the European Union), allegedly caused the withdrawal of those countries from the competition.

VOTING IN EUROVISION: THE GEOPOLITICAL SIDE OF THE CONTEST.

I. The evolution of the distribution of points in Eurovision.

While in the first part we have jointly analysed the history of Eurovision, on the one hand, and that of European integration, on the other, in this second chapter we will focus on the analysis of the results and, especially, of the voting in the contest.

1. Points' distribution

The Eurovision shows are made up of two distinct parts: the presentation of the entries and the voting. It is precisely the latter that has given the contest a point of tension and emotion that is recognised by the public, who tend to be most interested in this part of the show. As mentioned in the first part of this dissertation, the first edition of Eurovision has no official results to date beyond the victory of the host country, Switzerland. From 1957 onwards, voting was included at the end of the programme. For several decades, the points were presented by telephone, in English or French. Over the years, and especially with the development of television media, the telephone connection with the national juries changed to a real-time video connection, usually with a monument or landscape from that country behind the spokesperson.

In 1957 the points of the juries were given openly for the first time. These, made up of ten people per country, awarded from 1957 to 1961 and from 1967 to 1970 one point per individual jury, a set of 3, 2 and 1 points to three countries, in 1962, a set of 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 points to five countries in 1963, a set of 5, 3 and 1 points to three countries in 1964, 1965 (being able to distribute 6 and 3 to two countries) and 1966. Each national jury was completely free to cast their votes for the candidacy they considered the most suitable, except their own.

Between 1971 and 1973, two people per country served as jury members. Each one of them, according to the rules, one over 25 years of age and another under that age, was awarding a minimum of 1 point and a maximum of 5 to each song, so that no country was left with zero point. This system enabled countries to award different sums of points, so that a country which wanted to win could award less points to the rest of contestants. In 1974 the scoring system of one point per jury returned momentarily. At the ESC Stockholm 1975, a new points distribution system was implemented. This shift came from a need to integrate a fairer voting system. It would last until 2015, although with great nuances, especially when it comes to voting methods. In this way, each participating country awarded a set of 1-8, 10 and 12 points to their ten favourite songs, a sum of 58 points. In this way, all countries awarded the same number of points, what was revindicated in previous years.

The following figure graphically explains the points distribution in the period 1956-2023.

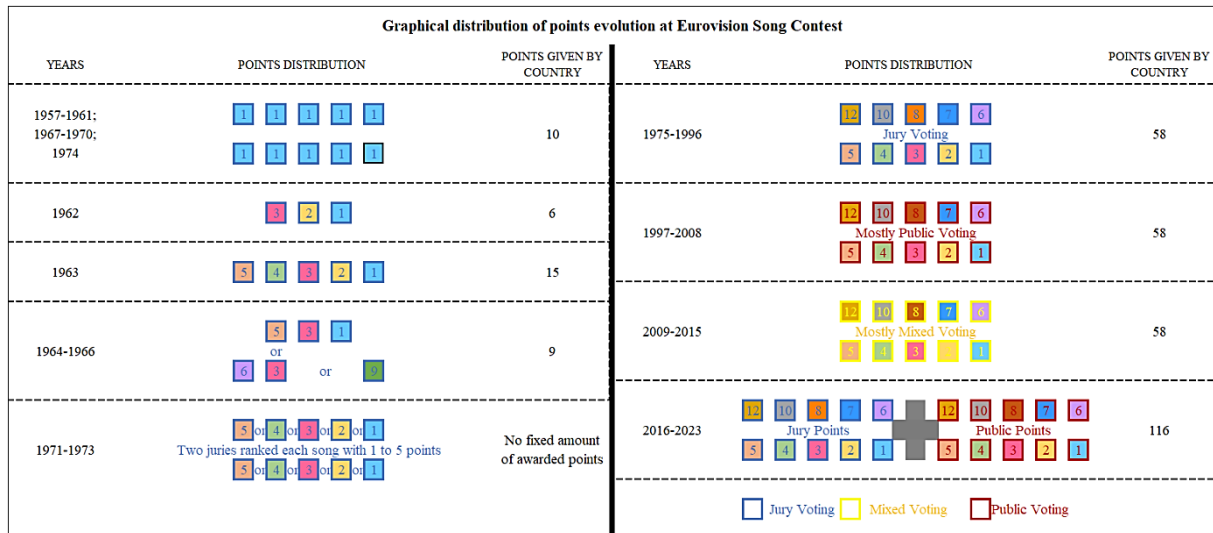


Figure 3: Graphical distribution of points evolution at Eurovision Song Contest.

2. The voting methods: from juries to televoting

As it has been mentioned, countries award a set of points. However, those points need to be given based on some established criteria. It is the country that give their points, but someone need to be the chooser.

For more than forty years, it was the national juries exclusively who awarded their country's points. These national juries were made up of unknown people and personalities from each nation with no connection to music, to give the voting a more "popular" character. Famous people from different fields, such as actors and actresses, TV presenters or sportsmen and women, were chosen to be members of the national jury.

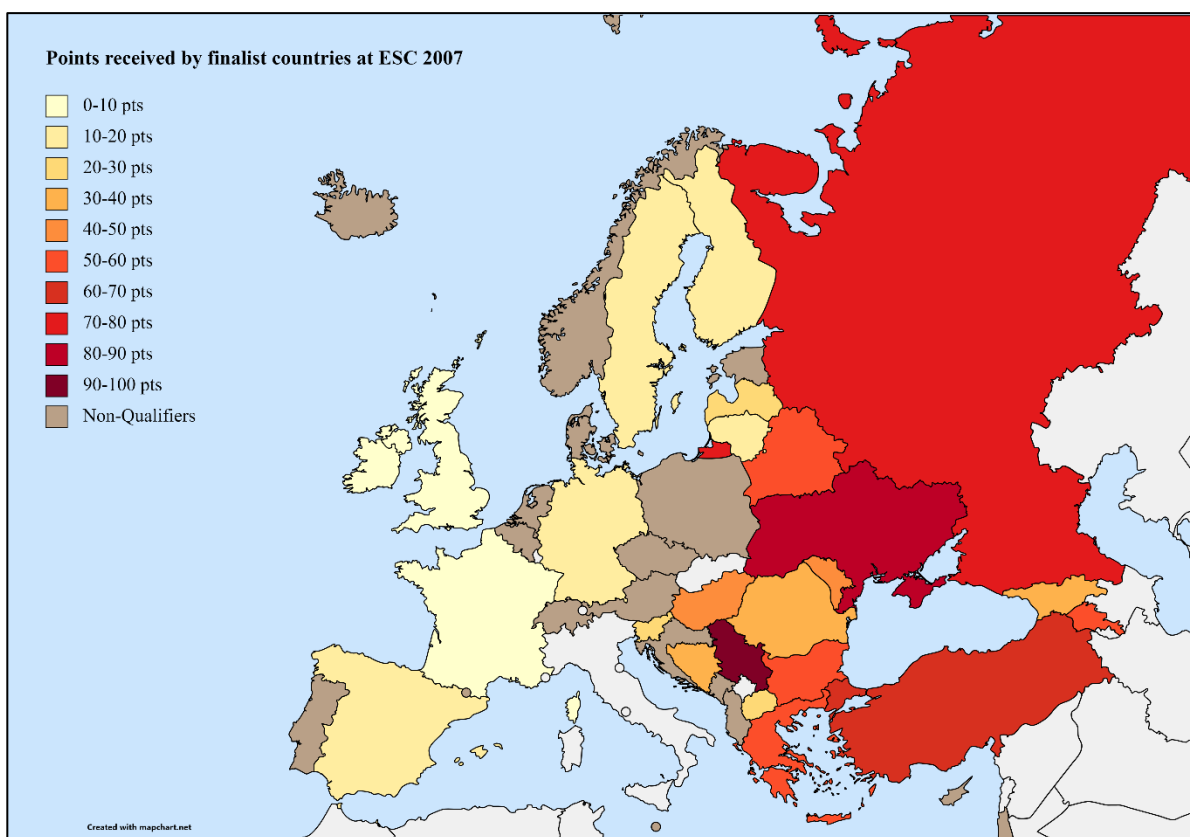
Starting in 1997, a new voting system began to be implemented: televoting or public voting. As it could not be otherwise, this system began to be implemented in countries with greater technological and telecommunications capacity. The public vote has been collected since then at the country level from calls and SMS to a specific candidacy. In this way, it is possible to open to the general public the possibility of casting their vote to make their favourite song the winner. In the short-medium term, the Eurovision televoting system has become the largest non-political election at a European and world level, since the "electorate" is made up of the population of the participating countries. In 2023, this "electorate" goes from being exclusively participating countries, and a new televoting "voter" "Rest of the World" is created, thus culminating the "expansion" of the Eurovision Song Contest.

Although the public vote was applied occasionally in the United Kingdom, Sweden, Austria, Switzerland and Germany and in a general way in 1998, some countries continued to use a national jury to decide their distribution of points. Such are the cases of Albania, Bosnia and Hercegovina, Romania and Russia, which took several years to implement televoting. Another group of countries, the so-called "microstates", have not been able to implement effective televoting every year. Andorra, for example, had enough votes in its televote for some years to be able to award its sets of points under this system, but on some occasions, it was forced to resort to the reserve jury. For its part, San Marino has never had a televote of its own, for various reasons. The most obvious is its low population, about 30,000 inhabitants. Another

reason is that the San Marino telephone network is the same as the Italian one, which would make it very difficult to "separate" the votes coming from Italy from the Serenissima's votes.

From 1997 to 2008, each country was free to choose its voting method among the three possible ones: national jury, public vote, and a mixture of both. The latter was imposed from 2009, being the norm. Of course, this did not exclude the possibility of using only televoting or national jury in case of need or error in any of them.

The use of televoting as a voting modality led to accusations of a biased vote between countries of the former Eastern sphere. The most notable example of this question are the results of the Grand Final of the ESC 2007. In the following map we can see the number of points obtained by each country in the final, in relation with Serbia (the winner) received points, on a Serbia=100 points scale). On it, we can appreciate that eastern countries clearly stand out, especially Serbia, Ukraine and Russia (they ended up in first and second place, respectively).



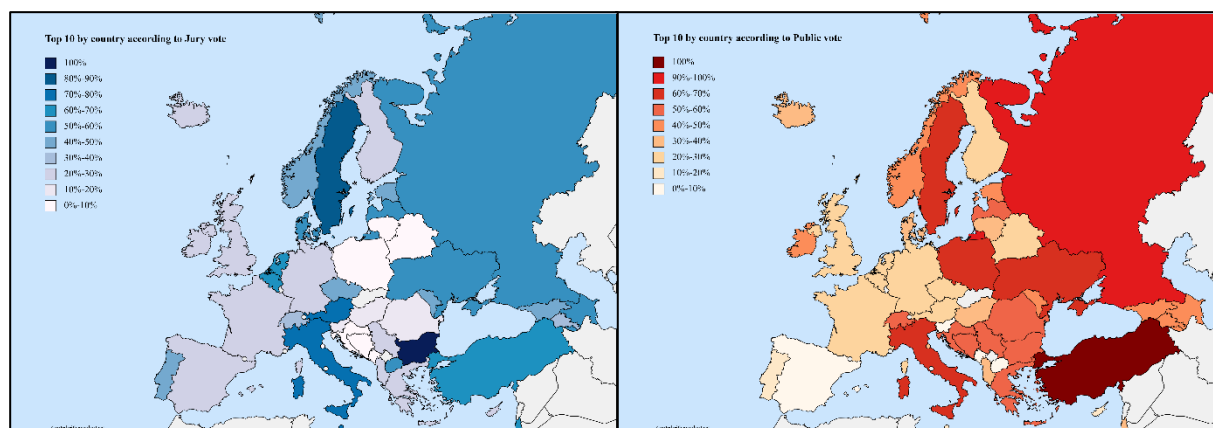
Map 4: ESC 2007 Grand Final. Points received by country on a 100 points scale (Serbia= 100 points).

Finally, since 2016 "double" votes have been awarded, that is, a set of jury points and another set of televoting points. Thus, both systems were generally maintained. However, going back to the case of San Marino, which cannot organize its own televote, it does award televoting points, although not directly. According to the information provided by the EBU, to obtain the Sammarinese televote vote, they average the televote results of countries with a voting pattern similar to the small state. This situation provoked anger in the San Marino delegation, since that country's own decision would have half the weight it had previously.

Voting in Eurovision has created controversy, mainly due to the loss of musical "objectivity" both by national juries and by televoting. The biggest point of disagreement in relation to the result comes from the exchange of points between neighbouring countries, which

is popularly called "neighbours vote". This fact is more pronounced since the appearance of televoting, especially because it allows to vote for its neighbouring country. However, the national jury is also accused of neighbourhood votes. Although it is true that both are different voting modalities, it goes without saying that a professional jury must be more objective, while televoting, which may be driven by audience preferences rather than musical excellence, could be considered more subjective. That is why the jury's vote is not without controversy either.

Considering the votes of the professional jury and the televote separately, there are notable differences between them, in terms of the positions obtained by certain countries in each category. This discrepancy is reflected in the following figure.



Map 5: Top 10 results by country according to Jury and Public vote (2009-2023).

3. A brief analysis of televoting: its elements.

An in-depth analysis of the televoting in Eurovision shows different elements within this modality. The first one, and most evident due to the change in positions of each country year after year, is the strictly musical one. In this sense, the vote of the jury and the televoting are clearly different, as shown by the fact that since the vote split in 2016, only in 2017 has the winner of the jury coincided with that of the televoting.

The second element is the "neighbours vote" that has already been mentioned. This implies that countries from the same region and orbit vote among themselves. This is the case in the duo of Greece-Cyprus Portugal-Spain, Moldova-Romania, Belgium-Netherlands, and the axes Baltic, Caucasian, and Nordic, ex-Soviet and ex-Yugoslav regions.

The third element of televoting is the diaspora vote. In this category, we include the vote of the Iberian axis for Romania in the 2000s; the vote of the German-speaking countries (Germany, Austria and Switzerland) for Balkan countries, especially visible in the exchange of votes between Switzerland and Serbia, and the vote to Turkey coming from some Western countries. The following figure shows the points awarded by four Western European countries to Turkey in the period 2003-2012. Since Turkey did not qualify for ESC 2011 Gran Final, no points were awarded, and just nine sets are included in the figure.

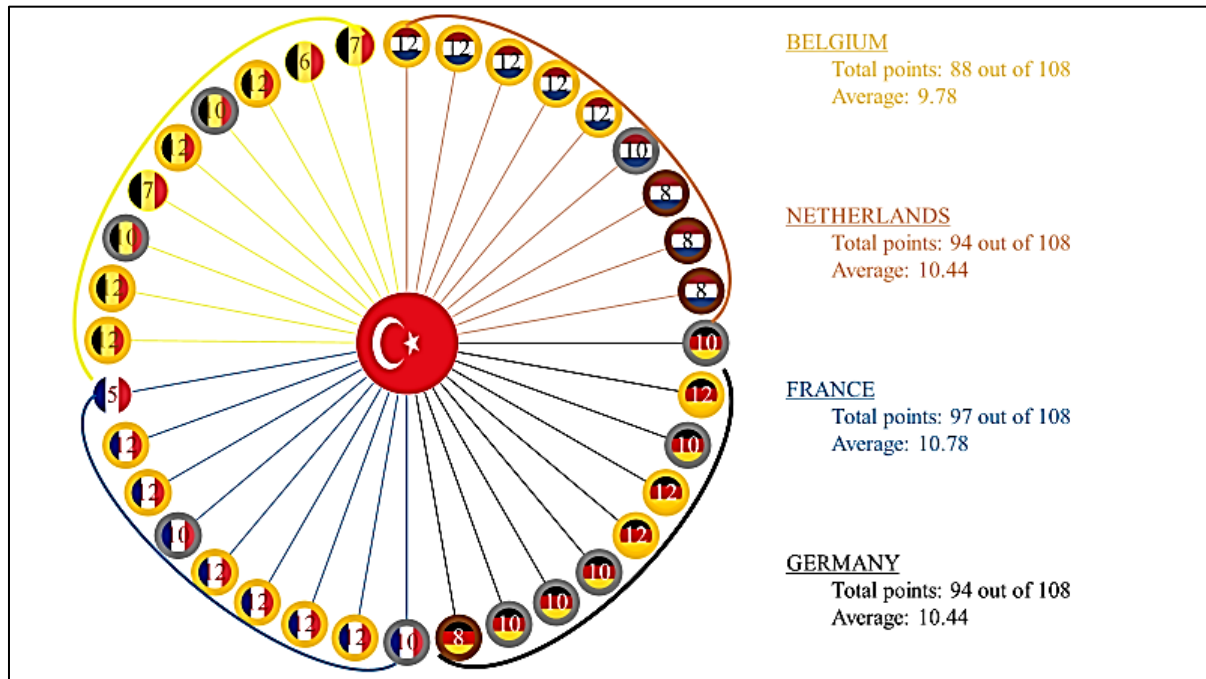


Figure 4: Points given to Turkey by the Western countries with the highest Turkish diaspora rates (2003-2012).

Looking at this figure, a clear influence of the Turkish diaspora of these four countries is seen in the points issued by them, which provides clear evidence that the diasporas are a relevant element for the public vote in Eurovision.

The fourth and last element is the strictly political vote. While the neighbourhood and diaspora vote can also be considered geopolitical, the political element involves a vote for a country outside of those frameworks. The victory of Germany in 2010 could be included in this category, although in this case both the jury and the televote placed the country in first position, since its victory coincided with the economic crisis of 2008 and Germany emerged as the leader of the recovery of the European economy. However, the most striking case is the victory of Ukraine in 2022, during Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and the ensuing war. In this case, the public vote for Ukraine achieved a record number of points.

Also included in this category is the low exchange of points between Cyprus and Turkey, which have an open front in relation to the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus; from Greece to North Macedonia, with whom they had a diplomatic conflict on account of the name of the latter; and, notably, between Armenia and Azerbaijan. In the latter case, while Armenia has awarded one point in the ESC finals to Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan has awarded its neighbour zero points. Obviously, these results reflect quite well the real relationship between the two countries, which have been in an open war since before their independence from the USSR. In fact, neither Armenia participated in the Baku 2012 contest nor in 2021, coinciding with the Nagorno-Karabakh War of that year.

In the next pages, we will analyse the role of Eurovision in European integration through the official results of the votes, taking into account different specific facts. First, we will check the voting pattern of the ex-Yugoslav and ex-Soviet blocks, to check at what level their union is at the Eurovision level as an integrating element. After that, we will analyse the possible impact of the departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union, Brexit and if the results of this country reflect some type of reaction from the rest of the countries. Finally, we

will analyse the victory of Ukraine in Eurovision 2022, coinciding in time with the Ukrainian War, which could give a boost to European integration and the EU.

II. The former unions in the Balkans and Eastern Europe come together again.

Looking back at the history of Europe in the last 50 years, the fall of the Eastern bloc was the biggest turning point. For half a century, the Soviet Union had influenced the countries of the Slavic region, that is, the Eastern Balkans, the current Visegrad group and Yugoslavia. Both the Soviet Union itself and the former Yugoslavia were two totalitarian states, in which different nations were united, each with its own language, customs, traditions and, ultimately, its own culture.

1. Former Yugoslav Republics

In the case of Yugoslavia, it was divided into Republics: Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia and Macedonia. It is also worth noting the status of Vojvodina and Kosovo, established as Socialist Autonomous Provinces in 1963 and 1974, respectively. The latter, as already mentioned, is currently considered an independent state by a good number of countries, although it does not have the recognition of countries such as Serbia or Spain.

Starting in 1990, the so-called Balkan Wars took place, which confronted the different Socialist Republics with the purpose of achieving their independence. This was the first war on European soil since World War II. The main cause of these wars was the cultural difference between territories. On the one hand, Slovenia and Croatia have mostly Catholic populations, Bosnia and Herzegovina have Orthodox and Muslim populations, and Serbia and Macedonia are Orthodox. In addition, it should be noted that while the latter two use the Cyrillic alphabet, the rest use the Latin alphabet, which is also relevant. Another notable aspect is the ethnic difference between the different territories and peoples, demonstrated in the Srebrenica genocide.

These wars resulted in many casualties and resulted in the current territorial distribution in the following countries: Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and North Macedonia, to which we could add Kosovo if it had a recognition full international. All these countries, except for Kosovo, as we have already mentioned, have participated in Eurovision. Since the first independences, the "new countries" showed their interest in participating in the contest. For this reason, Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina participated in the pre-selection to participate in Eurovision 1993. It is noteworthy the participation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, considering that they were at war in their territory. Later, they would be joined by North Macedonia in 1998 and Serbia & Montenegro, as one country in 2004 and as two separate countries in 2007.

Although one might expect a certain reluctance to vote among themselves due to the wars, the ex-Yugoslav countries maintain a voting pattern in which the exchange of points within the group stands out. In fact, this is the region in which the biggest exchange of points takes place. The following figure shows the average number of points awarded from one country (rows) to another country (columns) in the Grand Finals since the Yugoslavia collapse. It should be noted, in the data collected, that Montenegro has only participated in a Eurovision Grand Final twice, since it has not achieved its classification on the other occasions. For this reason, both Bosnia & Herzegovina and Croatia could not give them points and, in their average, only the votes of Slovenia, Serbia and North Macedonia are taken into account.

Points exchange among former Yugoslav countries (1993-2023)							
	Bosnia & Herzegovina	Croatia	Montenegro	North Macedonia	Serbia	Slovenia	Average
Bosnia & Herzegovina		8,00	8,75	6,60	10,17	5,88	7,25
Croatia	7,19		5,50	6,42	4,38	6,85	6,38
Montenegro	-	-		8,00	12,00	8,50	9,00
North Macedonia	7,17	7,40	7,75		11,50	5,78	7,45
Slovenia	6,10	5,78	4,29	3,30	6,44		5,37
Serbia	10,86	8,35	11,50	9,38		7,50	9,16
Average	7,56	7,28	8,09	6,84	7,57	6,68	7,22

Figure 5: Average of points exchanged among former Yugoslav countries (1993-2023).

As can be seen in Figure 5, the points exchanged between the countries of the former Yugoslavia far exceed the average, which stands at approximately 2.5 points (taking into account all countries and all Eurovision grand finals). A clear conclusion can be drawn from the table presented: the bloc is really united, especially if we compare it with other regional blocs.

Although the position of the governments of these countries has not always gone hand in hand and there have been discrepancies, this exchange of votes in Eurovision denotes, on the one hand, that these countries consider themselves "twinning" and, on the other, that their population, through the public voting system, expresses high support for neighbouring countries that, in other times, fought wars with each other.

That is why we could say that the Eurovision Song Contest and the results of the block from the former Yugoslavia reflect a union that still exists between their peoples, in general, without rancour for what happened three decades ago.

If we take into account the biggest conflicts in the Balkans in the 1990s, the clearest ones are the Bosnian War and the Croatian War, which pitted those countries against the still existing Yugoslavia. Analysing these cases and starting with the relationship between Bosnia & Herzegovina and Serbia in Eurovision, the data on the exchange of votes between them is very positive, since more than 10 points are exchanged in both directions. In the case of Croatia, however, while this country awards more than 8 points, on average, to Serbia, it returns less

than 5, which is a notable difference, even though we are talking about high figures compared to other countries.

Traditionally, Serbia has been considered as the "heart" of the former Yugoslavia, that is, the territory that controlled the politics of that country, and that was the centre of it. The results that we have seen clearly reflect a tendency towards a greater exchange of scores with Serbia & Montenegro (2004-2006) and Serbia (2007-2023) than with the rest of the countries in the group. In conclusion, Serbia could be considered as the regional capital.

Considering this point, it is interesting to graphically check and analyse the scores concerning Serbia within the region, expressed in the following figure.

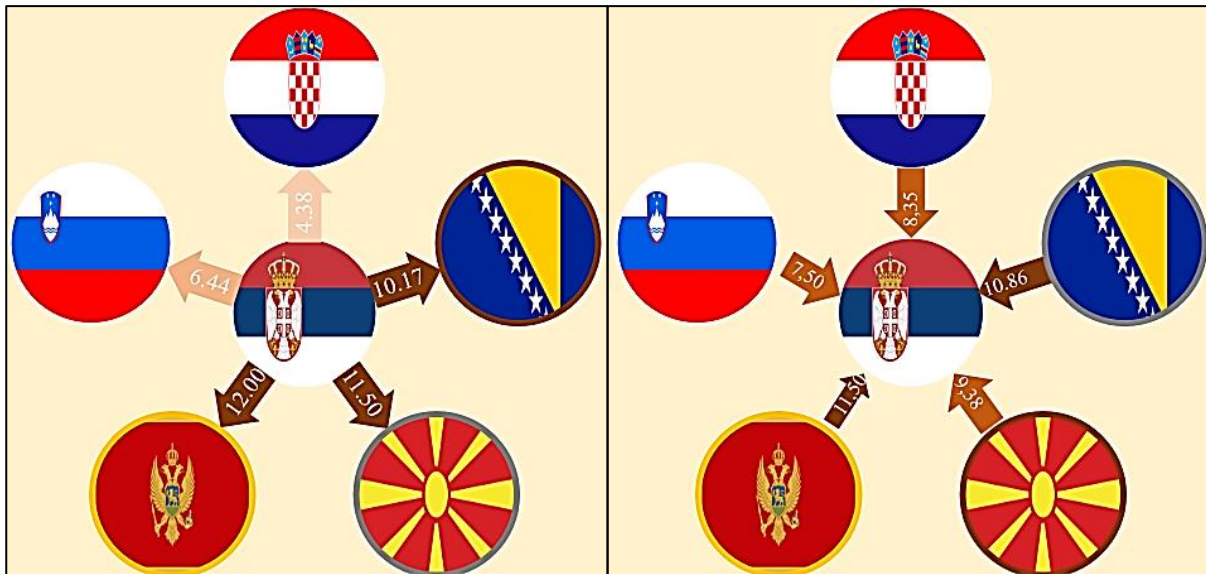


Figure 6: Exchange of votes from and to Serbia inside former Yugoslav countries (1993-2023).

In this figure, you can see a clear difference between what was given and what was received by Serbia. However, these differences may be due to the fact that, while the vote of the rest of the surrounding countries is mostly biased towards it as the first exponent, Serbia has to distribute its votes without, generally, having an initial preference.

Visually, it is interesting to see how Slovenia and Croatia receive the fewest points from Serbia. On the one hand, as we have already commented, ethnic and cultural differences exist between them. On the other hand, there are also political and international differences, since while Slovenia has been a member of the EU since 2004 and Croatia since 2014, Serbia is still a candidate country. In addition, these two countries are the ones that give the least points to Serbia, which denotes less unity than with the others, although the ratios are quite high.

It is also noteworthy that both Serbia and Montenegro, which were politically united for a decade and a half longer than the rest of the countries, have exchanged very high scores, with Montenegro being the country that has given and received the most from Serbia.

2. Former Soviet Republics Space

In the case of the former ex-Soviet bloc, internal dynamics were also dominated by differences between republics. The Socialist Republics of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan were part of the USSR. All of them with their own ethnic,

linguistic, religious and cultural characteristics. Although all of them maintained the same status within the Soviet Union, it should be noted, on the one hand, the status of Belarus and Ukraine as members of the United Nations, separately from the rest of the Soviet Union, holding a seat at its Security Council on several occasions and, on the other hand, the fact that what today is Russia had the control over the rest of territories.

In the 80s of the last century, a clear political change towards a more economically and politically open USSR began to take shape, especially due to the exercise of power by Mikhail Gorbachev, who promoted Perestroika and Glasnost, which they introduced in the Soviet Union. a moderate free market and a cultural, social and political openness, respectively. The Soviet Union maintained during the five decades following the Second World War a supreme influence over other countries around it, such as Poland, Czechoslovakia or Hungary and, therefore, the instability in the USSR immediately transferred to the Eastern bloc as a whole, being the fall of the Berlin Wall the most symbolic event of the collapse of the bloc.

In this way, a period of independence of the Soviet Republics began parallel to the one that we have already commented on in the former Yugoslavia. Although the independence of former Soviet countries was not so bloody in comparison at that time war conflicts did arise later. Thus, the wars among Armenia and Azerbaijan, Georgia and Russia and Ukraine and Russia have been taking place in the last three decades.

Just as war conflicts have had political consequences at the international level, they have also affected the Eurovision Song Contest on different occasions. Regarding the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, for example, Armenia did not participate in the 2012 edition held in the Azeri capital, nor in 2021, when the Nagorno-Karabakh War broke out. The participation of Georgia in ESC Moscow 2009 was vetoed for containing the chosen song, "*We don't wanna Put In*", a reference understood as opposing the Russian President Vladimir Putin, according to the organization. Finally, Ukraine won in 2022, while the War in Ukraine was taking place.

Out of the fifteen former Soviet republics into which the world map was divided, ten of them have participated in Eurovision, the ten westernmost countries, while Kazakhstan has done so in Junior Eurovision. Their participation has not had a specific geographical evolution, with the exception of the Caucasian republics, which have been the last ones to make their debuts.

Regarding the success of these countries in the contest, five of them have won at least one edition: Estonia in 2001, Latvia in 2002, Ukraine in 2004, 2016 and 2022, Russia in 2008 and Azerbaijan in 2011. In other words, it is bloc has been quite successful, with Russia and Ukraine among the most successful in all of Europe. Much of the success is due to televoting. As we could see in the comparison between jury and televoting, the difference in the cases of Ukraine and Russia is quite remarkable.

As we did in the case of former Yugoslav countries, now we will analyse the voting patrons in former USSR countries according to their points exchange average.

Average of points exchanged among former USSR countries (1993-2023)											
	Armenia	Azerbaijan	Belarus	Estonia	Georgia	Latvia	Lithuania	Moldova	Rusia	Ukraine	Average
Armenia		-	4,33	0,50	8,93	1,13	0,56	2,69	9,10	3,53	3,09
Azerbaijan	0,07		5,07	1,33	7,00	1,56	3,39	5,72	8,86	6,60	4,29
Belarus	3,00	4,57		1,25	3,88	2,00	1,50	3,25	6,83	8,33	3,61
Estonia	1,42	0,92	1,67		1,92	7,71	5,29	3,92	2,73	1,91	3,36
Georgia	9,38	6,14	4,25	2,75		2,00	8,63	3,38	4,88	7,29	5,37
Latvia	0,33	1,25	2,29	8,00	3,80		10,11	2,14	2,09	2,57	4,13
Lithuania	0,14	0,87	3,27	3,71	5,00	7,16		1,06	1,94	3,56	3,11
Moldova	2,57	4,07	4,25	0,94	1,67	1,72	1,72		6,58	4,61	2,96
Russia	9,69	8,64	10,38	7,79	4,50	7,95	6,14	8,71		7,50	7,87
Ukraine	5,00	7,84	7,41	4,25	6,95	6,00	6,00	7,68	6,00		6,29
Average	3,45	4,04	5,35	3,62	5,14	4,63	4,57	4,80	5,25	4,97	4,56

Figure 7: Average exchange of points among former USSR countries (1993-2023).

The data provided by this statistic is quite consistent with reality outside the scope of Eurovision. As we are talking about 10 different countries, located on different axes of the European geographical area, we can declare that there are three geographical groups based on the voting pattern, from which we exclude Russia because it is the "alma mater" of the former USSR. The first of these is that of the Baltic Republics, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, which not only receive and give fewer points to countries in this region, but their voting pattern is closer to the Nordic region, that is, Iceland, Norway, Denmark, Sweden and Finland, that of the ex-Soviet.

Beyond being geographically closer to the Nordic area than the rest of the countries, the fact that Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are members of the EU and NATO also influences this categorization, so they have distanced themselves from the rest of the bloc in terms of international politics is concerned. Notably, the exchange of points between this subgroup and its neighbours is much lower, which is why the total average exchange between former Soviet republics is much lower.

The second group is made up of Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine. Although there are considerable international differences between them today, such as Belarus' unconditional support for Russia in the invasion of Ukraine, their geographical situation has favoured a greater exchange of points between them. It is noteworthy that the unconditional support of Belarusians for Russia also occurs in Eurovision, since it is the country within this group that has given Russia the most points in the last 30 years.

Finally, the geographical situation of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan favours that these countries make up the Caucasian subgroup, which is characterized by the constant tension between Armenia and Azerbaijan, which is also reflected in Eurovision, shown in the previous figure. However, Georgia serves as a "friend" for both of them and gives and receives a fair number of votes from its two Caucasian neighbours.

As was done in the analysis of the former Yugoslav bloc, below we will take into account the exchange of points between the link between the former Soviet bloc and the rest of the countries. In this case, there is no doubt that the current Russia, as we saw in the figure, is the one that has had the greatest exchange of points in the last thirty years, thanks to its former status as the main Soviet republic, just like Serbia in Yugoslavia.

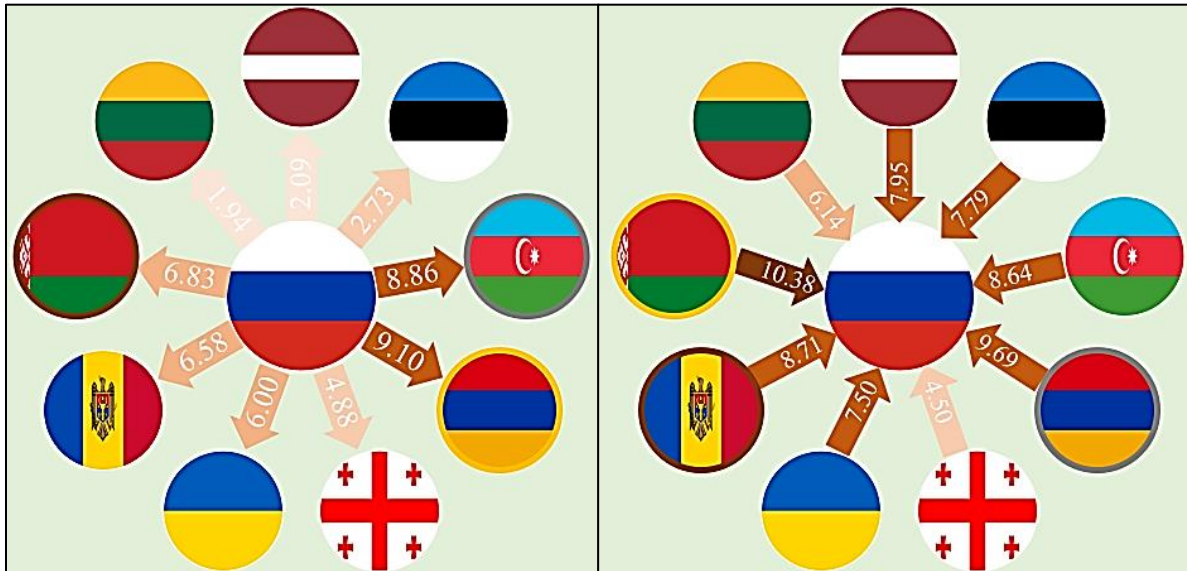


Figure 8: Average of points from and to Russia inside the former Soviet space (1993-2023).

A first look at these graphs reveals a clear difference between what was given and what was received by Russia, as was already the case with Serbia. Again, it is probably because, while the rest of the countries have Russia as the main voting option, Russia has to distribute theirs among all its neighbours.

A relatively deeper analysis allows us to draw conclusions based on the geographic distribution of those votes. If we focus first on the vote granted by Russia, we observe that those who receive the least, and by far, with the three Baltic countries, with much lower ratios than the rest, and of which only Estonia exceeds the average score. The group of central countries receives a similar average number of points from Russia, while Armenia and Azerbaijan stand out as countries that Russia supports the most in Eurovision. It is also worth mentioning that Georgia receives half the points of its neighbours, precisely the country with which Russia had a territorial conflict a few years ago.

III. Brexit: a setback for the process of European integration.

If, during the thirty years since the re-founding of the European Union, one had to highlight the element that has most disturbed its consolidation with respect to the political integration of Europe, that would be Brexit. Although this sociopolitical phenomenon has several analysable aspects, probably the most interesting is that of sovereignty which, as in any integration process, is a key element for the proper functioning of the process. David Cameron, British Prime Minister, proposed for the 2016 general elections a referendum for the United Kingdom to leave the European Union, which was finally held in June 2016³⁵. Various analyses

³⁵ : Hobolt, Sara (2016). *The Brexit vote: a divided nation, a divided continent*. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 23 (9). pp. 1259-1277. ISSN 1466-4429 DOI: 10.1080/13501763.2016.1225785.

were obtained from this referendum. On the one hand, the most forceful, the British population decided to leave the Union. On the other, he reflected that the will of England (and Wales) as a member country of the United Kingdom prevailed in the rest of the countries. The clear example is Scotland, which voted "no" to Brexit, but had to leave with the rest of the United Kingdom.

Opinion on Brexit within the United Kingdom has been quite unstable in recent years, especially since the British population has not perceived improvements or advantages in leaving the Union. However, it is interesting to look at the opinion of European countries on Brexit.

Most of the members of the European Union do not share this exit, mainly because they consider it to be of little or no benefit to the United Kingdom, as well as signifying a certain setback in the process of economic and political integration on the continent. For this reason, the European Union agreed to sign a series of agreements within the framework of Brexit, so as not to cloud the British and Community economies. Among the aspects dealt with are the situation of Gibraltar, an autonomous British territory on the Iberian Peninsula, adjacent to Spain; and the land border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland (British country), which remained with a different status from the rest of the United Kingdom. The difficulties of the negotiation are reflected in the fact that Brexit did not become effective until January 2020, that is, three and a half years after the referendum.

In order to try to elucidate whether the UK's exit from the EU affected the UK in any way in the years following Brexit at Eurovision, its performance in the Grand Final between 2017 and 2023 can be taken into account. The following figure considers, by year, the number of points and the position obtained by the British candidates in that period of time:

Based on the points and positions achieved by the UK in the 2017-2023, which has five wins and sixteen second places (including 2022), the data in Figure 1 reflects the poor support in Europe for the UK after Brexit (except for 2022), although it is true that the music factor may have played a large part in this. Generally, televote support has been lower or equal to that of the jury, which seems significant.

While these results are poor for the UK, we cannot lightly attach geopolitical significance to them, since, as mentioned in this dissertation, musical criteria weigh the most when casting a vote. Therefore, although the poor results of the United Kingdom in the last six years coincide with the post-Brexit period, it cannot be ventured that the low vote for that country is due to political reasons.

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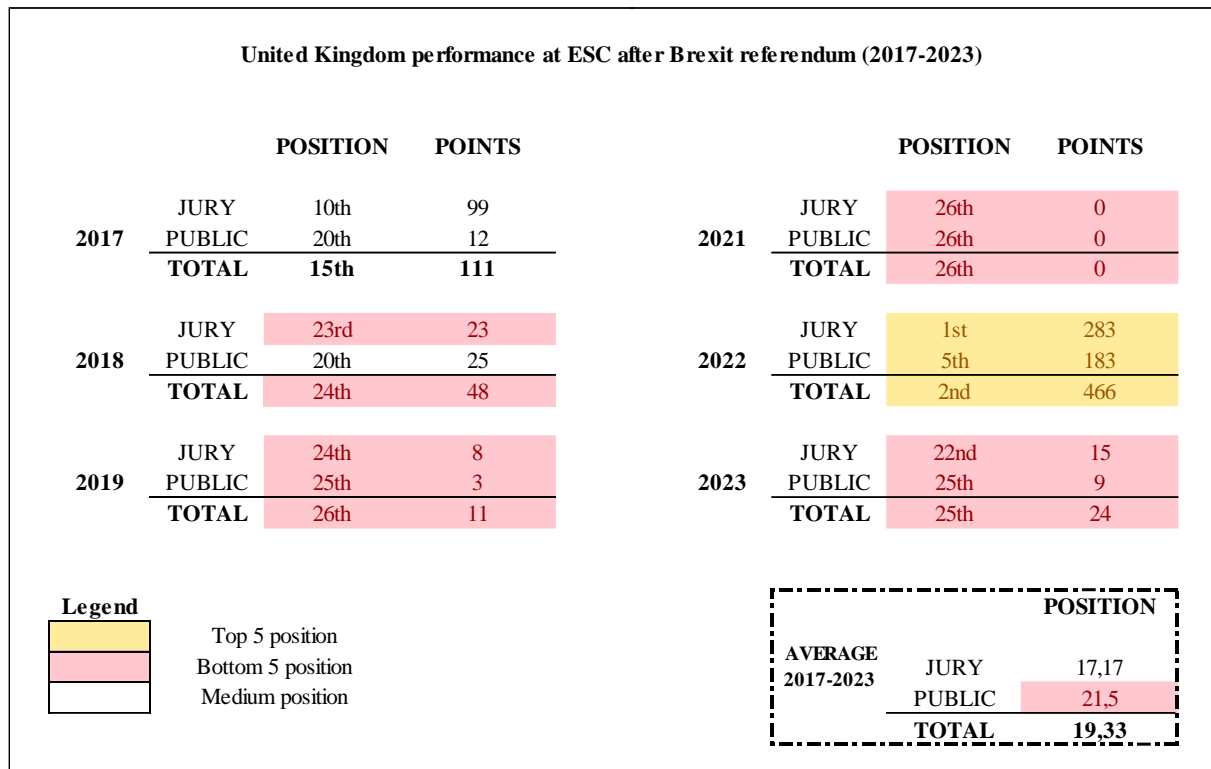


Figure 10: United Kingdom performance at ESC after Brexit referendum (2017-2023).

Brexit is probably the most relevant thing in the 2010s in Europe. As is well known, Eurovision, due to its Euro-Mediterranean configuration, involves both EU and non-EU countries. Below, we can see the breakdown of points obtained by the UK from EU and non-EU countries in total points and points average terms.

Points and points average received by the United Kingdom by EU Members and Non-EU Members after Brexit referendum (2017-2023)									
		EU MEMBERS		NON-EU MEMBERS					
		TOTAL POINTS	POINTS AVERAGE	TOTAL POINTS	POINTS AVERAGE				
2017	JURY	58	2,32	41	2,56	99	2,41		
	PUBLIC	9	0,36	3	0,19	12	0,29		
	TOTAL	67	1,34	44	1,38	111	1,35		
2018	JURY	13	0,52	10	0,59	23	0,55		
	PUBLIC	15	0,60	10	0,59	25	0,60		
	TOTAL	28	0,56	20	0,59	48	0,57		
2019	JURY	2	0,08	6	0,38	8	0,20		
	PUBLIC	3	0,13	0	0,00	3	0,08		
	TOTAL	5	0,10	6	0,19	11	0,15		
2021	JURY	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00		
	PUBLIC	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00		
	TOTAL	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00		
2022	JURY	176	7,33	107	7,13	283	7,26		
	PUBLIC	115	4,79	68	4,53	183	4,69		
	TOTAL	291	6,06	175	5,83	466	5,87		
2023	JURY	11	0,48	4	0,31	15	0,42		
	PUBLIC	4	0,17	5	0,38	9	0,25		
	TOTAL	15	0,33	9	0,35	24	0,33		
AVERAGE	JURY	260	1,79	168	1,85	428	1,81		
	PUBLIC	146	1,01	86	0,95	232	0,98		
	TOTAL	406	1,40	254	1,40	660	1,40		

Figure 9: Points and points average received by the United Kingdom by EU Members and Non-EU Members after Brexit referendum (2017-2023).

These results do not reveal any concrete trend since the voting patterns of EU member countries and non-member countries are similar. Therefore, it could not be said that there are differences between the vote of these two groups of countries.

IV. The War in Ukraine: a single European voice.

On 24th February 2022, the first war on European soil since the Balkan Wars of the 1990s began. The Russian Federation troops began an incursion (a *de facto* invasion) into the territory of neighbouring Ukraine. Since then, the war in Ukraine has been the main news focus of the past year, as well as the biggest threat to global security, as condemned, for example, by the United Nations General Assembly³⁶. An in-depth analysis of this conflict, especially its historical, socio-cultural and war-related aspects, is essential to understand Ukraine's landslide victory in the Eurovision 2022 Grand Final, just three months after the start of the war. This analysis will be laid on two aspects: on the one hand, the support of European states to Ukraine at ESC 2022 and, on the other hand, the relationship between Ukraine and Russia at ESC since the former's debut in 2003.

One of the most important aspects of the origin of the conflict is the ethnic group that populates Ukraine. Ukrainians consider themselves "ethnic Ukrainians", while Russia considers them Russians. In fact, the term "Little Russians" was used during the Russian Empire to refer to the Ukrainian people (in fact, it was the name by which the region was known), denying that they were an ethnic group of their own, and even officially banning the Ukrainian language from schools in 1804.

Historically, Ukraine and Russia have been quite close, as they belonged to the same state for centuries, although it is worth mentioning that Ukraine was not on the same "level" as Russia. The Russian Empire, which has already been mentioned, gradually annexed Ukrainian territory (among others), which until then had belonged to the Republic of the Two Nations (or Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth). This process was part of the so-called Partitions of Poland, which involved Russia, Prussia and Austria from 1772 to 1795.

The Russian Revolution of 1917 is the great opportunity for the annexed territories to become independent. Ukraine tried to become independent, but internal disagreements led to a civil war between various factions. The main ones were the Ukrainian People's Republic and the Ukrainian Soviet Republic. The latter finally established itself as a state in Ukraine and became the founder of the USSR in 1922. During the almost seventy years that it belonged to the USSR, Ukraine had relative autonomy, seen, for example, in the fact that it had an independent seat (as did Belarus) in the United Nations, being a member of the organization's Security Council on several occasions, although its vote was superimposed by the USSR.

The independence of Ukraine occurs in 1991, after its approval by the Supreme Soviet and by the Ukrainian people in a popular referendum³⁷, with 92.6% of the votes³⁸. Since independence, the relationship between Ukraine and Russia has experienced several ups and downs. On the one hand, during the 2000s, different disputes arose over the distribution of Russian gas through Ukraine. On the other hand, Ukraine publicly showed its support for Georgia during the Russo-Georgian war of 2008.

³⁶ The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) passed on March 2023 a set of resolutions condemning the Russian aggression against Ukraine, during the special session which was convoked for dealing with this issue.

³⁷ Vidomosti Verkhovnoyi Rady (VVR) 1991, #38, p. 502.

³⁸ Soviet History. The end of the Soviet Union. Ukrainian Independence Declaration. Retrieved from <https://soviethistory.msu.edu/1991-2/the-end-of-the-soviet-union/the-end-of-the-soviet-union-texts/ukrainian-independence-declaration/> 18th April, 2023.

But the great crisis between these countries (before the current Ukrainian War, of course), was the question of Crimea. This peninsula, located in the south of Ukraine, in the Black Sea, is of great geopolitical importance, since it allows access to this sea, as well as the control of maritime traffic in it. According to estimates, the Ukrainian population in 2014 was ethnically 67.9% Russian, 15.7% Ukrainian, and 10.6% Crimean Tatar³⁹. These socio-cultural differences are also evident in the independence referendum, in which Crimea voted "yes" much less than in the rest of the Oblasts. The Russian Federation made the decision, in 2014, to annex Crimea, claiming a "threat to lives of Crimean civilians" and danger of "takeover of Russian military infrastructure by extremists", after a referendum, with no guarantees, was held in the peninsula. This annexation sparked outrage from the international community.

It even caused Russia to receive *boos* at the 2015 Eurovision Song Contest when its spokesperson gave the Russian votes. Ukraine did not take part in the competition that year, but returned in 2016, scoring its second victory with a song sung partly in the Crimean Tatar language. The organization of the ESC 2017, held in Kiev, prevented the selected Russian singer Julia Samoylova from participating, since she had entered Crimea illegally in 2015. Russia, not willing to be humiliated, finally withdrew for that year.

A similar argument has been recurrent in the selection of the Ukrainian candidacy for Eurovision, *Vidbir*. In 2019, they selected Maruv, who had performed in Russia in recent years. Therefore, Ukrainian television did not allow her to participate in the European festival. Faced with the rejection of the second and third ranked in the national team to participate in Eurovision, Ukraine withdrew. In 2022, Alina Pasha, winner of *Vidbir* 2022, was accused of having entered Crimea illegally, for which she was disqualified and not allowed to participate in ESC 2022. The runners-up agreed to be the Ukrainian representatives, and won ESC for Ukraine, just three months after the beginning of the Russian invasion and the Ukrainian War.

The war began on February 24, 2022, when Russian troops advanced into Ukrainian territory. This aggression is illegal according to International Law since the borders of a country are assumed impregnable since they are one of the elements of state sovereignty. The War has developed throughout the country and has included bombardments of both small, medium and large cities, including Lviv or Kyiv. The conflict has caused a wave of Ukrainian refugees to flee their cities, which have been devastated by bombs.

Since the start of the war, the sympathies of a large part of the international community have been on Ukraine's side, except for countries like China, officially neutral. Although no other actor has directly participated in the war, the countries of the European sphere and NATO have sent aid to the invaded country, especially weapons and military vehicles. The aggression has also sparked greater interest from Eastern European countries in becoming members of the European Union, including Ukraine itself, which achieved candidate country status in record time. In addition, interest in joining the Atlantic Alliance was also expressed in Sweden, Finland and the Ukraine. Finland got a NATO seat in 2023, and the other two countries have applied for accession. In conclusion, the War in Ukraine has been a real turning point in various aspects of international relations.

On the course of this war, beyond the heavy loss of life and numerous civilian and military injuries, there is a key aspect to highlight: public opinion. Since the start of the war, the Ukrainian president has been able to keep European countries aligned around Ukraine as a

³⁹ According to the 2014 Census.

bulwark of the democratic and social values of Europe and the European Union, although this is contradictory to some laws and perspectives of that country.

Zelensky has managed to rally the entire European population around the idea that supporting Ukraine against the Russian invasion is preserving Europe as we know it against an invader. In this way, it could be said that Ukraine won the battle of public opinion, at least on European soil. The feeling of sympathy towards Ukraine was evident in Eurovision 2022, especially in the Televote. The following graph shows the number of votes received both by jury (blue line) and by televoting (red line) by the countries according to the position they occupied in the ranking. While most positions received a similar number of points in both one vote and the other, Ukraine's televote stands out considerably, which achieved 439 points out of 468 possible, a 93.8% of possible points. The difference with the second place in the televote, Moldova, was 200 points, which reflects the great polarization of the vote towards the Ukrainian candidacy.

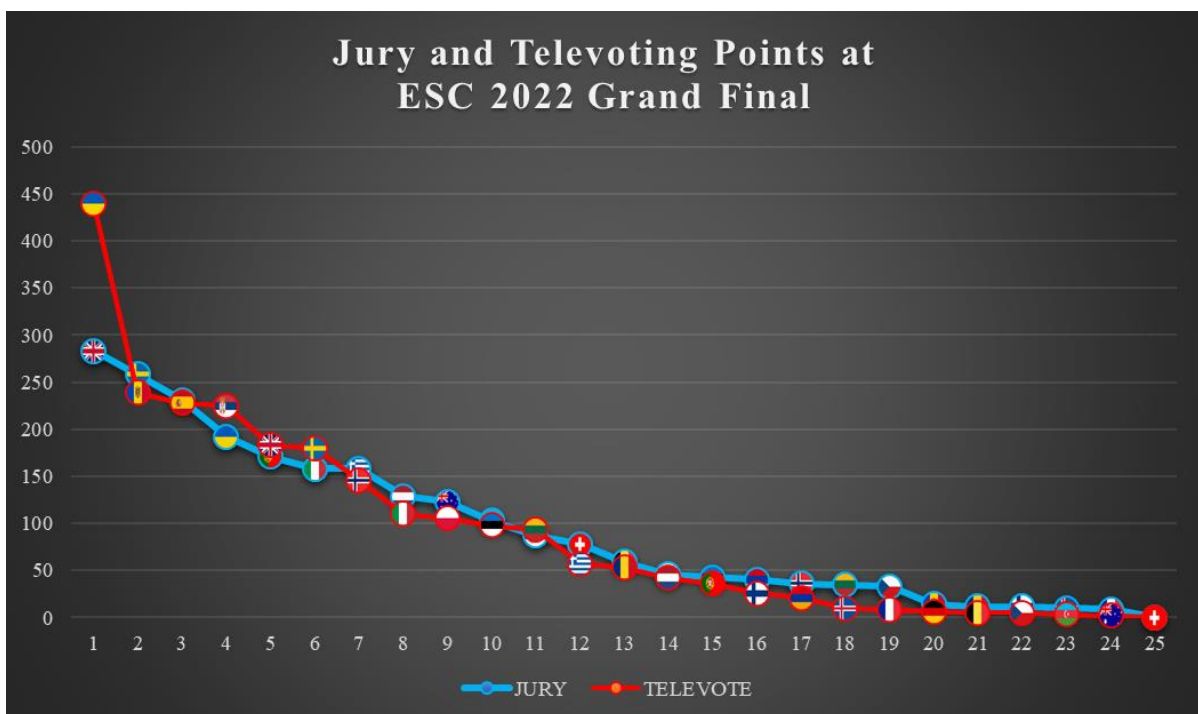
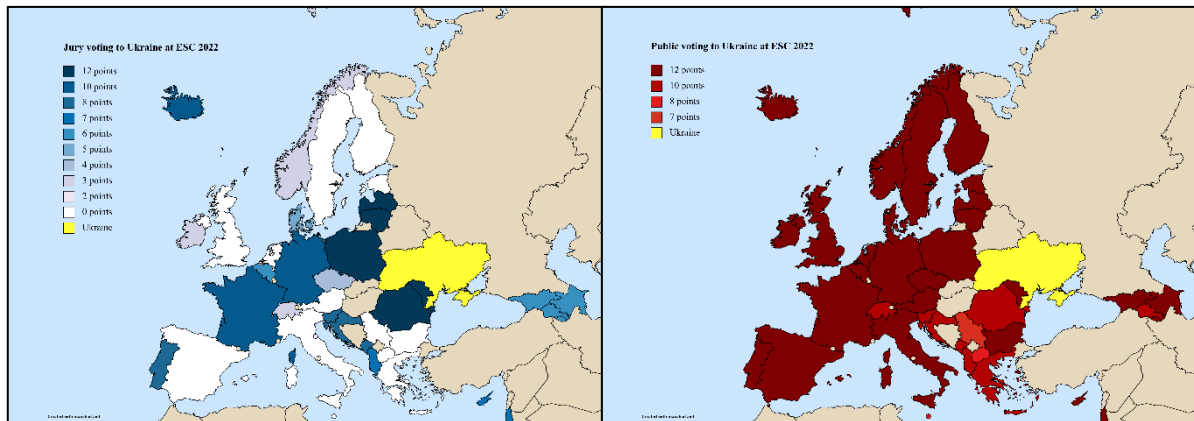


Figure 11: Jury and Televoting points at ESC 2022 Grand Final.

After looking at this astonishing result, the geopolitical reasons seem to be strong, in this case seen through the support for Ukraine against the invader. It is interesting to note that the professional jury placed Ukraine in fourth position, but also took some biased results, especially since that country received the 12 points from Poland, Moldova, Romania, Latvia and Lithuania, the closest countries to Ukraine. Equally significant is that the country that gave Ukraine the less public points was Serbia (it awarded Ukraine 7 points), one of Russia's greatest allies on European soil.

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By plotting the scores on a heat map for both televoting and jury voting, as in the figure below, the voting patterns can be seen in both systems.



Map 6: Jury and Public votes to Ukraine at ESC 2022 by country.

It is clear the large difference of points given to Ukraine by jury voting and public voting, as we mentioned before. While juries gave some “0 points”, public gave, at least, seven points.

The previous analysis of ESC 2022 results clearly reflects the European population feeling towards the War in Ukraine and the side that they support. However, the analysis of the televote relationship between Ukraine and Russia in the last 20 years yields clearly different data from reality, at least when compared to the diplomatic and political relationship, based on the following points exchanged:

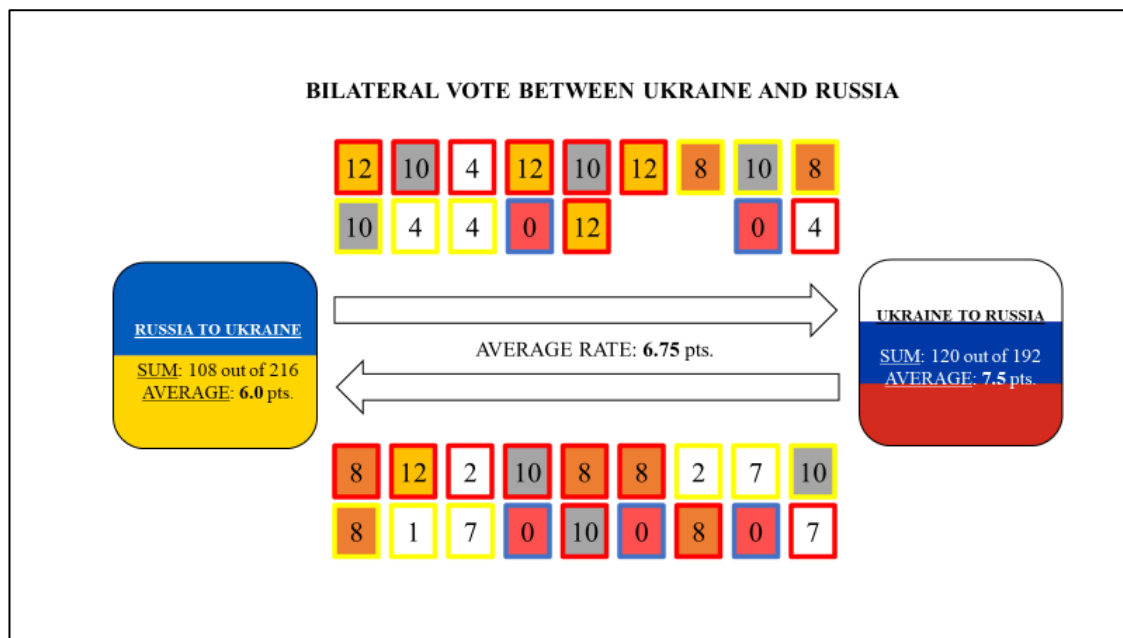


Figure 12: Ukraine and Russia exchange of points at Eurovision (2003-2021).

What is most striking when looking at this databank is that both Russia and Ukraine have given a high number of points to the other state. Interestingly, all “0 points” that they have awarded each other came from the jury voting, meaning that for televoting, the one country has always been in the other's top 10 songs. According to the data, there is a clear difference

between televoting and jury voting, what could mean that public voting is more biased in this case.

If we consider the average number of points awarded, we get the result that this relationship is "strong", which is far from the current real situation between Ukraine and Russia. On the one hand, it is understandable that the televote is not a true reflection of the popular sentiment of one country towards the other while this sentiment could be reflected in jury voting. On the other hand, it is true that the data predates the Ukrainian war and therefore it is not possible to know what effect the war would have had on the televote. We need to consider that the current relationship among the two states is not the same that it was before and, in addition, that governmental position probably is not the public opinion, which is the televoting *per se*.

Since Russia is not able to participate at Eurovision in the short and medium term, we will not be able to analyse whether the War in Ukraine would influence Ukraine and Russia public voting at the contest. However, it is possible to analyse, to some extent, whether there was any change in the televote or jury voting after the Russian annexation of Crimea. In general, none of them changed their voting patrons after 2015, and even gave high scores to each other. However, for the first time both countries took a single jury voting set that did not give points to each other. Therefore, we could understand that the annexation of Crimea did not affect the relationship between Ukraine and Russia at the Eurovision level. This fact could be another element revealing that the social view of the other country was not the same as the official governmental position. Another justification for this question is just that the annexation of Crimea was not that important for those countries as the War in Ukraine is. This idea of less importance is shown, for example, when the War in Ukraine became the turning point for Ukraine's candidacy to the EU, or the fact that Ukrainian governments seemed to become more aware of the conflict.

V. Conclusions.

In the current section, we have made an exhaustive analysis of the voting in the Eurovision Song Contest, to verify the voting patterns between neighbouring countries. In this way, we have been able to demonstrate in a practical way whether the Eurovision Song Contest has been and is an instrument of European political integration. For this, the analyses have been divided into two types: regional and fact.

Within the first type, the cases of the ex-Yugoslav and ex-Soviet region have been analysed. In the Yugoslav case, the main conclusion is that Serbia is the group that receives the most points, this being consistent with having been the nerve centre of the former Yugoslavia. In other words, in this case the premise of the regional vote or vote for neighbouring countries is fulfilled.

Similarly, Russia remains the top recipient of points from the ex-Soviet bloc. As in the previous case, it confirms the premise of voting for countries in the immediate environment. However, in this specific case we see that there are three countries whose points exchange ratios within the group are lower: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

For the cases in which to analyse specific facts, both Brexit and the Ukrainian War have been taken as a reference. The first of them, Brexit, as we have seen, does not reflect a

significant change in the positions of the United Kingdom in Eurovision after Brexit (mostly low), especially since before leaving the EU their positions in Eurovision were not good either. Therefore, we cannot affirm that Eurovision Song Contest was influenced by Brexit, but we can affirm that non-EU members gave more points to the United Kingdom than EU members.

The case of the Ukraine War, as an example of the influence of geopolitics in the Contest, reflected practically unanimous support for Ukraine months after the start of the Russian invasion and the subsequent war. As has been verified, this influence led to Ukraine's victory in Eurovision 2022, thus reinforcing the country's ability to obtain European support, not only from governments and institutions, but from the people per se, who are the ones who vote in the televote.

In conclusion, the Eurovision voting analysis sheds some clarity on Eurovision's position as an integrating element. On the one hand, in the regional analysis it has been concluded that Eurovision works as a reunifying element of the regions that a few decades ago formed Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. Although, obviously, this does not imply a politically effective reunification for obvious reasons, it does confirm that, rather than dividing these neighbouring countries, Eurovision has an integrating role, although not in terms of Yugoslavia or the Soviet Union, but rather the Balkans and the East and, in the longer term, European.

Regarding the analysis of Brexit and the Ukrainian War and Eurovision, the last case clearly reflects that the ESC has managed to unify the European continent under the umbrella of the Ukrainian victory and its support through voting. In the case of Brexit, since no clear conclusions can be drawn, we cannot mention whether the possible influence on Eurovision has had consequences for integration, although it can be deduced that if Brexit has not had a negative influence on Eurovision, countries would have kept their way in voting for the UK, or even ignored it. In other words, if we consider that there have been no changes in their positions in the Eurovision framework, European integration would not have suffered wear and tear as the EU itself did. On the other hand, the United Kingdom, since Eurovision encompasses the entire continent, has not stopped participating in the Contest or belonging to the Big 5, that group of countries that contribute the most financially and have certain privileges in Eurovision.

Therefore, it can be reliably concluded that the Eurovision Song Contest has functioned as an instrument of European integration that, although not essential, has largely collaborated to make possible a communion between European countries.

Eurovision and the European Integration process: conclusions.

In this written document, the relationship of the Eurovision Song Contest with respect to the process of economic and political integration, embodied in the former European Communities and the current European Union, has been analysed. The analysis has been carried out in two sections. The first one, an in-depth historical analysis of both Eurovision and European integration, highlighting the characteristics, facts and stages that both elements have in common. On the other hand, the second section has been based on a casuistic analysis of the relations between countries of certain blocks, as well as the behaviour of the participating states in the Eurovision Song Contest before international events and their influence on the program.

Among the main conclusions obtained from the retrospective analysis, comparing the integration processes of the ESC with the Communities and the European Union, it stands out that there are certain parallels between them. To begin with, both have a common origin and purpose: the creation of an institutional framework for an effective union between European countries after the devastation of World War II.

Although each of them has a different field of action (while Eurovision arises from the European Broadcasting Union and integrates in the fields of culture and communications, community integration influences the economic, social and political fields), the aim is the same: to reach the union of the European countries.

The origins of both elements have a common origin in post-war Europe, specifically in the 1950s. The ECSC, the EEC and the CEEA represented a great step towards the integration of the continent, shaping the relations between its members in terms of coal, steel, the economy in general, and atomic energy, respectively. In those years, the EBU and its Eurovision Song Contest were also created, which, as its name suggests, involves a cultural demonstration of each country in the form of a song, which culminates with the election of the best European song of the year.

A proof of the parallelism between the two is that they share their founding members, being Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands founders of both, and Switzerland, a country with a neutral tradition, founder only of Eurovision.

Precisely, which countries are members of the Communities or participants in Eurovision at each stage since 1950 is another of the parallels that we find. The corresponding expansions follow these patterns: 1. Founding countries (Western Europe); 2. Western Europe, Nordic countries and the Mediterranean area. 3. Central and Eastern Europe, including countries of the former Yugoslavia and the former Soviet Union. In other words, another conclusion from the comparison between Eurovision and the European Communities is that its expansions and member countries have followed the same pattern, although in the case of the ESC it has been much more complete in terms of participants.

Precisely the fact that 47 of the 49 countries (50 if we count Kosovo, not officially recognized) have participated in Eurovision, in addition to other countries such as Morocco, Israel and Australia, show that Eurovision is an element of European integration that goes beyond than the European Union, mainly because of its lack of political aspect, at least at a theoretical level. In addition, Eurovision has been a success at the enduring level, since it has taken place every year since 1956 except for 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, overcoming various adversities both exclusive to the contest and a decline in popularity over the years. 80

and 90, as international, such as the fall of Yugoslavia (countries that participated in Eurovision from 1961 to 1992) or the Balkan Wars of the 1990s. Despite the pandemic, the Eurovision Song Contest returned in 2021 returning to be on the air annually.

It should also be noted that, just as the United Kingdom left the European Union recently, some countries participating in ESC have withdrawn, such as Morocco, Monaco, Luxembourg⁴⁰, Slovakia, Turkey or Hungary, which are inactive. In addition, after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Russian Federation and Belarus were expelled from the EBU and are therefore ineligible to participate in Eurovision.

The relevance and popularity of Eurovision as a mass phenomenon has also reinforced the image of this television program, which is not only known in Europe, but in more parts of the world. In terms of musical relevance, great hits have emerged from the Eurovision Song Contest, such as *"Nel blu di pinto di blue (Volare)"* by Domenico Modugno, *"Waterloo"* by ABBA, *"Euphoria"* by Loreen or *"Arcade"* by Duncan Lawrence, which does not stop breaking records. In addition, Julio Iglesias, ABBA, Olivia Newton-John or Céline Dion, world-famous artists, took their first steps at the Eurovision Song Contest. Therefore, in the strictly musical aspect, the ESC has been an element of relevance at a global level, which has been helping the contest to consolidate and, therefore, to reinforce the integrative element that we have talked about.

In the second section of the dissertation, the votes in the Eurovision Song Contest have been considered, which are the ones that form the final ranking of the best songs of each edition. During the more than sixty-five years of the contest's history, numerous voting systems have been implemented, although the most interesting thing is to know the method of voting and its geopolitical implications. As previously indicated, we distinguish three voting modalities in the Eurovision Song Contest: the professional jury, the televote or public vote, and the mixed method (50% professional jury and 50% televote).

After having analysed the different scores awarded and received from one country to another, several voting patterns are clear, especially regarding televoting (due to its condition of popular vote, that is, the entire population of a country is invited to cast their vote), but which are also received in the professional vote.

The voting patterns of the public, as already explained, could be established within several criteria: the musical, the vote for neighbouring countries, the geopolitical vote and the vote for diasporas, as seen in the case of the points received by Turkey in 2003-2012. However, these patterns are best demonstrated through concrete examples.

Analysing the exchange of points between countries of the former Yugoslavia since 1993, it is Serbia that has received the most points within that region, thus exercising its former role as the political "heart" of Yugoslavia. In addition, the rest of the neighbouring countries also have a high exchange of points, being the region that has exchanged the most points in the Eurovision Song Contest in the last three decades.

A similar case is that of the former Soviet Union and the countries that comprised it, analysed previously. In that case, the dominance of Russia as the core of the region at the voting pattern level is clear. Although other countries, such as Ukraine (which has won the Contest

⁴⁰ Luxembourg is returning to the Eurovision Song Contest for 2024 edition, as it was announced during the ESC Liverpool 2023 Grand Final. It can be watched at <https://www.youtube.com/live/yinCSFz8PfU?feature=share>.

three times, the last one in 2022), Armenia or Azerbaijan have also obtained a good ratio of points from their neighbours, Russia has been the first option for most of its countries. around.

In the analysis of the exchange of points within the ex-Soviet sphere, it is remarkable and notorious that those who have given the least points within the region have been the countries with which they had some diplomatic or geopolitical conflict before their last appearance in Eurovision in 2022: the Baltic countries and Georgia. The Baltic Republics not only vote less for Russia and vice versa, but it also happens with the Caucasian and Central Eastern countries. Considering that these three countries (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) have a voting pattern that is closer to the Nordic region, it is a fact that these countries are the most detached from the Eastern European region.

From these two regional analyses, it is concluded that even today there is a communion between countries of the former Yugoslavia and the former Soviet Union at the Eurovision level. This, of course, does not imply that these countries intend to come together as one once again, especially since in the last three decades each of them has taken a different political and international course, and geopolitical differences would make it impossible. However, it does reflect the reality that they were united for a long time in the same country, whereas countries that have been separated or have never been united do not have that level of confluence in voting.

Therefore, two conclusions can be drawn from the above analysis. The first, that the greater the union between countries in the past and present, the greater the exchange of points between them. The second, that the regional factor and "neighbourhood" are of great influence in the Eurovision voting. In addition, although it has not been analysed in depth in this document, the language and cultural elements also exert their influence.

The second part of the analysis of voting patterns focused on two specific historical events of importance for European integration. Brexit, or the departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union, was an obstacle in that process. Its influence in Eurovision, which we could see in the results of that country from 2017 to 2023, reflects low positions and scores in all editions except in 2022, when the United Kingdom obtained second place.

Although it is true that the country obtained dismal results in that period, it is not demonstrable that it was a consequence of Brexit, especially since in previous years the positions obtained by the country were not better either and, therefore, no true conclusions can be drawn. If the United Kingdom had obtained good positions (Top 5, for example) in the years prior to Brexit (2010-2016), we could affirm, in a more conclusive way, that Brexit would have affected the participation of the United Kingdom at Eurovision.

On the other hand, since both EU member countries and non-member countries participate in Eurovision, a breakdown between these two groups was proposed, from which it was concluded that non-member countries award a slightly higher number of points to the United Kingdom, especially coming from Ukraine.

The last case we have analysed was the victory of Ukraine in 2022, after being invaded by Russia three months earlier. This case is the one that most reflects the influence of geopolitics in Eurovision. The jury vote and, above all, the European televote, were a demonstration of Europe's unanimous support for Ukraine in the war. With a massive, record-breaking televote, Ukraine was crowned the winner, thus seeing its image reinforced as a country that a continent supports almost entirely, compared to a Russia whose explicit

international support is negligible. In addition, Ukraine's victory in Eurovision 2022 significantly reflected that this country is the winner of the media battle and has won the sympathy of most of the European population.

Since Russia could not participate in Eurovision 2022 since it had been expelled from the EBU, we cannot know how the war would have influenced its results, that is, if the countries around it would have given them a high number of points again or if, on the contrary, Russia would have fallen in the semifinals due to lack of support. What we can conclude, having seen the scores for that year, is that all of Europe and all its regions supported Ukraine.

As discussed, Ukraine's neighbouring countries gave not only their "twelve points" of public vote to this country, but also their professional juries.

Therefore, from the analysis of the case of the Ukrainian War in Eurovision several conclusions are obtained. First, that Eurovision is a speaker for the participating countries and also a platform in which to give visibility to issues of international importance, such as the Ukrainian War, feminist messages, anti-bullying, in favour of diversity on other occasions. Second, Eurovision can become a geopolitical symbolic instrument of international importance, since Ukraine's victory, for example, reinforced the Ukrainian narrative and sent a message of European unity. Eurovision was a setback for Russia, which saw how European countries and, more importantly, its own traditional allies, turned their backs on it. In addition, it is worth noting the attack during the Eurovision 2023 broadcast to the city of Ternopil, the hometown of the Ukrainian representatives.

Although it is true that the Eurovision Song Contest was conceived as an apolitical event, some facts that affect Eurovision from the field of international politics cannot be ignored. Among the main international issues, the Ukrainian War, the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, the lack of human rights in States around the world or the Palestinian-Israeli conflict or the climate change stand out.

As already mentioned, the Ukrainian War has affected Eurovision with a victory awarded by the vote of the European public to Ukraine in the year of its invasion (2022), in addition to the expulsions of Belarus and Russia from the EBU and from participating in the ESC.

The conflicts between Armenia and Azerbaijan and Palestine and Israel have been present in various ways. The first of them, in the refusal of both Caucasian countries to exchange points with each other and the withdrawal of Armenia in 2013 to be held in Baku and in 2021 for the Nagorno-Karabakh War. In the second case, Israel has participated and won four Eurovision festivals, while Palestine, not recognized by several European countries, has never participated. Israel's neighbouring Arab countries, which are members of the EBU and therefore could participate, ultimately have not done so largely because of the conflict in question.

It is also significant to remark that, while Russia was immediately expelled from EBU and Eurovision after they invaded Ukraine, the organisers have not done the same with Israel, who has used force against Palestine and Palestinian people in the last decades. The most feasible explanation is that these decisions are based on European and, more specifically, EU geopolitical criteria, since it supports Ukraine and thus turns its back on the Russian Federation, while it gives considerable support to Israel. It is these provisions that have been complied with at Eurovision.

Eurovision is also a platform to launch protest messages, such as support for basic human rights or the fight against climate change. In terms of human rights, in addition, the Eurovision Song Contest is nourished by the demonstration of "European values", which include equality between men and women and support for the LGBTI+ collective. The contest's support for these demands meant, in large part, the withdrawal of Turkey and Hungary.

To finally conclude, the Eurovision Song Contest continues to be an instrument of European cultural integration, which has not lost the unifying essence of its origins. Moreover, the case of the War in Ukraine and Eurovision reflects that the Contest is also, in some cases, an instrument of European political policy in terms of European integration.

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