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ARTICLES

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Paweł Leszczyński[★]

The Rule of Law Crisis in Poland and "Normative Power EU" Thesis: Challenges and Implications

Abstract

Against the backdrop of the "normative power Europe" (Manners, 2002) thesis, this paper investigates the rule of law crisis in Poland and its implications on private companies' performance and investment decisions. The rule of law plays a crucial role in companies' investment activity, while at the same time is also a central category in the EU's legal and political edifice. These two problems are rarely analysed together as inter-linked realities, which, in fact, they are. The central question of this paper is how the rule of law's deterioration in Poland influences the private investment level in the country's economy and what it might mean for the further political integration of the EU. Among the theories applied were those linked to the institutional approach, i.e., new institutional economics, while among the methods themselves, it was qualitative methods which were used over quantitative methods. It is argued that the political and legal crisis, which has placed Poland in an adversarial position towards the EU, may result in a long-term deterioration of the investment climate in Poland. It may also induce political instability and legal disintegration in the EU.

Keywords: Poland, European Union, Normative Power, Europe, Rule of Law, Investment

Introduction

The rule of law crisis in Poland can be considered in many dimensions and, in the hitherto debate, most voices have been articulated by scientists dealing mainly with the legal aspects of the crisis (Wyrzykowski, 2019;

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Kelemen, Pech, 2019; Wiącek, 2021). While this perspective is necessary and valuable, it is equally important to focus on the broader context of the interlinkage between the legal and the political factors underlying the crisis as well as its economic aspects. To outline the universal meaning of the rule of law in this context, it ought to be mentioned that the principle is not only the institutional cornerstone of the EU and the subject of current legal and political dispute between EU and Poland, but is also an essential factor in determining the private investment level in the economy. All these dimensions have been taken under consideration in this paper.

Although the principles of democracy, the rule of law, social justice, and respect for human rights were first made explicit in the 1973 Copenhagen declaration on European identity (Declaration on European Identity, 1973), the centrality of many of these norms was only institutionalised in the Treaty on European Union signed in 1992 (Consolidated Version of Treaty on European Union, 2012). In political reality, the challenge of creating the legal framework encompassing the diverse institutional systems of 28 countries (in the apogee) emerged during the accession process of the post-Soviet states of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). It is crucial to note that, although the criteria outlined in Copenhagen in 1993 specifying what a given state wishing to join the EU must fulfil were created mainly to pave the way for the CEE states' inclusion, one of the most intensive conflicts on the scope of the EU's institutions' competences in recent years is the one involving the biggest of the CEE states.

This dispute is of particular importance in terms of the long-term integrity of the bloc, socioeconomic convergence, and the EU's ability to be regarded as normative power. To this end, it is to define where the legal dispute between the European Commission, the European Court of Justice, and the Polish government supported by the Constitutional Tribunal's judgements can be placed regarding the rule of law principle at the EU level. Secondly, an attempt to investigate what the current state of development of the rule of law principle may mean to the private sector and investment level is undertaken. Finally, the author tries to present what political and economic consequences the continuation of Poland's dispute with European institutions regarding the rule of law may have.

The argument is structured as follows; after providing the theoretical foundations of the institutional approach in the second section, a review of the literature and the historical and conceptual framework for the role of the rule of law as defined in the 1993 Copenhagen criteria and treaties in the context of the "normative power EU debate" (Manners, 2002) are presented in the third section, while in the fourth section, the issue of how the rule of law crisis in Poland – caused in the first place by

a constitutional crisis – may affect the investment activity of companies is raised. Conclusions follow.

The Theoretical Foundations: Institutionalism

To provide a concrete and as concise a description as possible of new institutional economics and new economic sociology as the main theoretical engines of this paper, it should be noted that the institutional approach has basically been shaped since the dawn of the social sciences. One can firstly make mention here of an analysis that considers historical and institutional aspects, as proposed by representatives of classical economics led by Adam Smith. Although during the development of the economy itself there has been a shift towards methods and tools aimed at the mathematisation and universalisation of this discipline, John Stuart Mill and Alfred Marshall used not only formal methods based on deduction, but also on historical analysis (Landreth, Colander, 2002).

To narrow down the considerations, it is worth recalling two subtypes of the institutional approach, which, although sometimes used in economic reflection, are much more often located on the periphery of the economic mainstream, in which, if institutionalism appears, is primarily the institutionalism of rational choice. Meanwhile, as proposed by Hall and Taylor (1996), apart from the institutionalism of rational choice, there is also the institutionalism of history and sociology. Historical institutionalism refers to classical institutional trends, including the concept of *path dependence* and defining institutions in the category of formal and informal procedures, norms, and conventions rooted in the entire structure of the political and economic system (Arrow, 2000).

On the other hand, in the case of the sociological institutionalism that underlies new economic sociology, there is a belief that the *homo economicus* paradigm is burdened with certain fundamental shortcomings. It is mainly about the limited rationality of individuals and economic entities, in addition to the fact that the behaviour of market participants is determined not only by the search for maximum utility in economic terms, but also by the presence of social and cultural factors and the resulting character of a given individual. In this approach, institutions are rules, norms, and symbols that shape the image of society at the macro level, and the identity of individuals at the micro level. Importantly, sociological institutionalism argues that institutions are a more active factor in influencing the social order than individuals (Hall, Taylor, 1996). The authors of the publication on patchwork capitalism, as represented by Poland, argue about the importance of the institutional order in the

context of economic development. Patchwork capitalism is a unique type of institutional architecture found in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, characterised by an incoherent coexistence of institutions from different institutional orders, partly inherited and partly taken over. The result is, among others, a deficit of institutional complementarity and an insufficient social rooting of formal institutions (Rapacki et al., 2019).

It can be said that the new institutionalism is closer to the economic approach and the old institutionalism to the sociological approach. The same differentiation goes for the new economic sociology and new institutional economics. The former has been shaped mainly thanks to the works of Karl Polanyi. This approach grew out of a criticism of utilitarianism as the basis for explaining the functioning of the individual in the economic system (Polanyi, 2010). In turn, at the meeting point of economics and economic history, a new institutional economy and a new political economy emerged, also referred to as analytical institutionalism (in some opposition to historical institutionalism). The revival of institutionalism also resulted in the reappearance of economic sociology which, from the mid-1980s, was close to considerations based on the new institutional economy, and both disciplines began to interact with each other (Nee, Swedberg, 2005).

As regards the new institutional economy, Oliver Williamson is considered its father, and the emergence of this trend dates back to the mid-1970s. The research program of new institutional economics (NIE) at the macro-level primarily includes the interaction of state institutions, legal order, and institutions regulating and influencing the shape of the market and the behaviour of companies. NIE also deals with the micro level, especially state-business relations, contract economics, and organisation theory (Williamson, 1985). An important problem for NIE is also the emergence, evolution, and disappearance of institutions. Representatives of the new institutional economy accept the assumption of limited rationality, which, moreover, implies the need to create institutions as vehicles reducing the risk and transaction costs of functioning on the market (Nee, Swedberg, 2005). At the same time, NIE is highly internally diversified in terms of detailed research topics. While Williamson and Coase are pioneers in the economy of transaction costs, and Demsetz a pioneer in the economics of property rights, with Posner that of the legal system, Olson focused on the study of collective aspects, and North has already become famous for the practical use of NIE methods to study the impact of institutions on development and economic growth and studied institutional change, and, additionally, while Schotter applied the theory of games to analyse the evolution

of institutions and their functioning, some researchers also include Hayek and his achievements as well as Schumpeter in the sphere of new institutional economics (Rutherford, 1996).

However, North provided evidence on the role of institutions in economic development in his work, and it seems that it is this perspective that can be termed the "missing link" of neoclassical economics. At this point, it is important to distinguish between organisations and institutions. The former are divided into that of the political, economic, social, and educational. But it is institutions that structure reality and set the rules of the game. To use the popular sports metaphor, the organisations are the players, and the institutions are the rules of the game (North, 1990). In other words, how organisations arise and evolve depends on the institutional framework. This can be translated into an informal rooting of formal institutions and adapting them to how society functions.

Where are the problems with the rule of law rooted in the case of Poland, using the institutional analytical matrix? Establishing a democratic state and market economy was a challenge for several reasons. Visvizi and Tokarski (2014) mention here: 1) a command-rule economy and the non-existence of private property with no stress on the effective usage of resources; 2) the need for reinstating democracy and a market economy at the same time, and; 3) the lack of reference points regarding how the transition from a totalitarian dictatorship to a market economy and democracy should be made. In this context, the usefulness of historical institutionalism is quite easy to present, as "institutional choices taken in the past can persist, or become 'locked in', thereby shaping and constraining actors later in time" (Pollack, 2004, p. 139). If this is the case, it would be useful to look at how deeply embedded the rule of law is in the EU's formal structure, and how long the evolution shaping the role of the principle had been ongoing before Poland joined the European family.

Conceptual Framework of the Rule of Law as a Principle Constituting the European Union's Normative Power: A Selected Literature Review

As was presented in the second chapter, so as to streamline the analytical process conducted for the needs of this paper, institutionalism has been selected. It is important to refer to the basic definition of institutionalism, which, as the key element to analyse, sees institutions understood as values and norms serving as a reflection of social thinking, customs, and behaviour sanctioned by legal or moral norms respected in each society

(North, 1990). As new institutionalists underline, it is crucial to capitalise also on other theories' legacy (i.e., behaviouralism, rational choice theory) and to revise institutional analysis in a way to make a methodological shift allowing researchers to discover what is happening in the relationship between institutions and individuals (Lowndes, 2002). To this end, the rule of law should be seen as an essential institution and structural factor enabling the European Union to function as an internally-integrated and externally-credible political and economic bloc, and its presence or lack thereof might also serve as a useful indicator of economic actors' preferences and propensities.

Moreover, considering the EU in terms of which approach enables one to set the stage for both political and economic analyses of the rule of law's place within the whole construction, one of the most interesting and accurate effort has been provided by a normative-power Europe discussion (Manners, 2002). It is precisely within this discussion that the problem of the EU as a third kind of power (civilian and military power aside), namely a normative power, is a central issue. Being a normative power requires one to set a common catalogue of norms and to be able to execute them, while at the same time spreading them effectively in the outer political sphere (Rosecrance, 1998). In this context, the rule of law is on the list of values and norms as well as institutions constituting the normative power of the EU.

The very first step in investigating the issue of the rule of law's place in the EU's legal edifice is to identify what the role of this principle in the legal and political evolution of today's EU is. Although the rule of law principle was not enshrined into the EEC's founding treaty signed in Rome in 1957 and did not emerge in treaties until Maastricht, it is argued that it has been an engine of European integration and, together with democracy, constituted an "organic combination" (Kochenov, 2008). One of the first pieces of evidence of the rule of law's meaning for an integrating Europe was the emergence of the term as a part of the effort to build an identity which would allow the EEC to be a more integrated and recognisable bloc:

"(…) Sharing as they do the same attitudes to life, based on a determination to build a society which measures up to the needs of the individual, they are determined to defend the principles of representative democracy, of the rule of law, of social justice – which is the ultimate goal of economic progress – and of respect for human rights" (Declaration on European Identity, 1973).

An important step in the process of incorporating the rule of law into the European Communities' legal infrastructure, especially for the economic dimension of further integration, was the Single European Act

(SEA) from 1986. This act was particularly meaningful as it was the first successful major attempt to modify the Treaty of Rome by strengthening both political and economic cooperation between Member States by introducing the single market (McCorquodale, 2010).

This process of introducing the rule of law incrementally accelerated in the 1990s. The explicit reference to the rule of law was placed into the Treaty on European Union in 1992. In the preamble of the TEU, the "attachment to the principles of liberty, democracy, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and of the rule of law" (TEU, 2012, p. 3) was declared. To strengthen the Treaty provisions, the Copenhagen Criteria was adopted by the European Council (1993), a key document that can be used as an evident element of the EU's attachment to the rule of law principle in the enlargement process (Kochenov, 2004). The Criterion of Democracy and Rule of Law was divided into five main categories: elections; the functioning of the legislature; the functioning of the judiciary; the functioning of the executive; and anti-corruption measures. Without fulfilling these criteria, a state should not be able to join the EU. Moreover, the rule of law principle was included in the EU's legal foundations as it was enumerated as one of its core principles within Treaty of Amsterdam (1997).

The next stage of bolstering the rule of law principle as a legal and political engine of the European Union was the Treaty of Lisbon amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community, which can also be referred to as the Treaty of Lisbon (2007). The rule of law is enshrined in the Article 2, which reads:

"The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity, and equality between women and men prevail".

To foster the role of the rule of law and its applicability as a foundational value of the EU, there was a provision created to ensure compliance with the content of Article 2 of the TEU. It is placed in Article 7 of the TEU via preventive and sanctioning mechanisms (Magen, Pech, 2018). The former, first used against Poland in December 2017, foresees an activation in a case of a "clear risk of a serious breach" of Article 2's values, whereas the sanctioning mechanism allows the Council of the EU to adopt sanctions (e.g., the suspension of voting rights in the Council) against any EU country breaching the rules and values mentioned in Article 2 of the TEU (Halmai, 2018).

Why is the process of the systematic strengthening of the rule of law principle within the EU so important? One of the most important reasons revolves around the debate considering the current shape, future, and the very nature of the European Union. What are (or may be) the sources of the EU's power, integrity, and economic prosperity, and how effective in the rule of law's execution could the bloc be? Among the current concepts put forward on this issue, the proposal of classifying the EU as a mainly normative power seems to, thanks to its complexity, be the most adequate (Manners, 2002).

While civilian power is being defined by factors such as the central role of economic affairs in attaining goals and favouring diplomatic tools while settling international matters including conflicts and support for multilateral institutions setting standards and overseeing socioeconomic and political progress (Twitchett, 1976; Maull, 1990), military power can be exercised not only on a real battlefield, but also via the effective deterrence of potential enemies (Duchene, 1973; Bull, 1982). However, civilian and military dimensions do not exhaust the existing power matrix, as there is at least one more which can enable organisms such as the EU not only to exist in peace, but also to exert influence on other political actors. The very roots of the concept of normative power can be traced back to Carr's claims about power over opinion or Galtung's ideological power, but in a systemic way and with reference to the EU was it formulated by Manners (2002).

Table 1. Civilian, Military, and Normative Powers – Comparison

	Civilian	***Military***	***Normative***
Carr	Economic	Military	Opinion
Galtung	Remunerative	Punitive	Ideological
Manners	The ability to use civilian instruments	The ability to use military instruments	The ability to shape conceptions of "normal"

Source: Manners, 2002, pp. 235–258.

In the context of the normative power concept, the distinctive nature of the EU is embedded in its transgression of legal and political hybridity as seen in post-Westphalian sovereign states which has been functioning under the umbrella of principles common to all of them as Member States (King, 1999). Among these values constituting the catalogue of the EU's common identity and feeding its normative power are democracy, the

rule of law, social justice, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms (TEU, art. 6, art. 11; TEC, art. 177). Based on the normative power concept, as Manners argues, the combination of historical context, hybrid polity, and legal constitution fostered the process of establishing these universal norms in the central place of relations not only within the EU, but also in its relations with other actors of world politics (Merlingen et al., 2001). Consequently, the rule of law can be used and seen as an internal regulator of the functioning of the EU and one of the main components of its external power. On the other hand, any derogation in this area weakens both the integrity of the bloc and its ability to advocate for democracy and the rule of law in international politics.

Similar considerations have been conducted by Nowak-Far (2021). He argues that the Rule of Law Framework is a tool adopted to reflect the processes of political (and legal constitutional) developments in the European Union Member States and allows one to check whether these developments are in line with the fundamental standards envisaged by the EU Treaties. In the external sphere, the rule of law is part of the promotion of the civilisational model rooted in the European Enlightenment with individual freedoms and rights inextricably tied to this model and all spheres of social life.

When trying to translate the concept of a so-called "normative power Europe" into the economic dimension, one should refer to one of the fundamental institutions of the European Union in the economic dimension, namely the common market. The aim of this part of the analysis is to answer the following question – what effects on the economic development of the EU may a potential divergence in the rule of law have, understood as a permanent questioning of the primacy of European law over national law, in the long term? Already in 2012, the OECD indicated that for the common market to be a space of progressing economic integration and for this process to continue, it is necessary to strive to create principles and regulations describing it, close to a single rule book, which would significantly reduce existing information barriers (Pelkmans, Correira de Brito, 2012).

Looking at the EU through the lens of normative power concept helps one to better understand the relation between the rule of law and economic growth in the EU. However, the rule of law is much more than just a catalogue of detailed rules that potential Member States which aspire to join the bloc have to fulfil. The principle of the rule of law is one of the most fundamental values of the EU, not only a part of its legal system. As sharing values is somehow different from being subjected to legal rules, below there is a comparison of the three main definitions of the

rule of law principle, as provided by the Council of Europe, the European Commission, and the European Parliament and Council.

Table 2. The Rule of Law Definitions

Council of Europe	European Commission	European Parliament and Council's definition
Legality, including a transparent, accountable, and democratic process for enacting law Legal certainty The prohibition of arbitrariness Access to justice before independent and impartial courts, including judicial review of administrative acts Respect for human rights Non-discrimination and equality before the law	"Under the rule of law, all public powers always act within the constraints set out by law, in accordance with the values of democracy and fundamental rights, and under the control of independent and impartial courts. The rule of law includes principles such as legality, implying a transparent, accountable, democratic, and pluralistic process for enacting laws; legal certainty; prohibiting the arbitrary exercise of executive power; effective judicial protection by independent and impartial courts; effective judicial review including respect for fundamental rights; separation of powers; and equality before the law"	The rule of law "includes the principles of legality implying a transparent, accountable, democratic, and pluralistic law-making process; legal certainty; the prohibition of arbitrariness of the executive powers; effective judicial protection, including access to justice, by independent and impartial courts, also as regards fundamental rights; separation of powers; and non-discrimination and equality before the law. The rule of law shall be understood having regard to the other Union values and principles enshrined in Article 2 TEU"

Source: European Commission, 2022, p. 61.

The rule of law principle has been at the heart of furthering the integration process. The concept of integration through law is, in many ways, similar to a normative power Europe in terms of its conclusions. The law has been the main engine of creating a functioning legal community within the EU and the basic reason for this was the role which the law played in preserving foundational European values (Voßkuhle, 2017). At the same time, it is hard to imagine any other force which will effectively streamline the integration of nearly 30 different countries in terms of history, culture, economy, and social habits. In such a diverse bloc, the law provides direction, reduces conflict, and helps to establish procedures for assigning competences between multiple institutions as well as for

political decision-making. In other words, the law enables the European idea to be fulfilled and developed.

In the same manner, the constitutive role of law for the European political community has been accentuated. As Cappelletti, Seccombe, and Weiler stated (1986, p. 4): "the law has a vital role to play in the process. It defines many of the political actors and the framework within which they operate, controlling and limiting their actions and relations… At the same time, it performs a role in ordering social life, translating the highly visible political acts into more mundane daily applications and, through this implementation, it determines the implications of political decisions."

The fact that the rule of law is a fundamental, institutional vehicle of a political nature for the EU is also evidenced by specific examples of disputes around this principle, and there were at least a couple of them before the ongoing, long-lasting disputes between Hungary and Poland. After a provision which later become Art. 7 was entered into the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997), authorising the European Council to suspend (by qualified majority) a Member State in the event of a serious breach of fundamental EU principles including, among others, threats to the rule of law, several such cases occurred. In 2000, Austria was accused of a threat to the rule of law, due to the participation of the Austrian Freedom Party, considered to be of the far-right, in the ruling coalition. The Member States decided to limit diplomatic contact with this country, and announced that there would be no support for any candidates for EU positions put forward by Austria. It should be noted that these activities went beyond the legal framework of the EU, which strengthens the theory about the political and normative nature of the rule of law principle (Bugarić, 2014).

To summarise this part of reasoning, it should be noted that the rule of law has been built into the history of today's European Union. Among the main challenges before which the EU as a bloc is standing is how to effectively manage the institutional, political, and socioeconomic gap between Member States for the needs of preserving the bloc's credibility in its external manoeuvers as well as its internal cohesion. As those two are related, and because internal cohesion is the cornerstone of the EU's clout and its perception in the outer political world and paves the way for the community's socioeconomic prosperity, one of the most spectacular examples posing a threat to this fragile construction is the rule of law's deterioration in Poland. In the context of economic dimension, the following section shows how the rule of law and investment are intertwined.

Institutionalism at Work: How May the Rule of Law Deficit Affect Investment Levels?

The main premise of this section is to create a link between theoretical approaches, from a legal perspective to new institutional economic efforts, to macroeconomic input and empirical cases supplying evidence that a lower level of investment activity is a more probable phenomenon to emerge under the institutional regimes where the rule of law is relatively weaker. To have this issue properly addressed, it is important to define what components may constitute the rule of law in an economic context.

Basically, the rule of law complex consists of the following categories: property rights and security of contract; private capture of the state and corruption; and the design of legal and judicial institutions (Haggard et al., 2008). There are indicators presenting the rule of law as a sum of the following elements: perceptions of the incidence of both violent and non-violent crime; the effectiveness and predictability of the judiciary; and the enforcement of contracts (Trebilcock, Daniels, 2008). There are also some broader classifications capturing the rule of law. Looking at the legal approach, Fuller's 1964 proposal consisted of the following elements: 1) generality – the general applicability of laws; 2) publicity – public accessibility of laws to ensure that citizens know what the law requires; 3) non-retroactivity – laws prospective in application; 4) clarity – law clarity and understandability; 5) non-contradictory – laws must be non-contradictory; 6) laws must not make demands that are beyond the powers of the parties affected; 7) constancy – laws must be constant and not subject to frequent changes; and 8) congruity – laws must reflect a congruence between the rules as announced and their actual administration and enforcement.

The challenge of establishing a classification of the rule of law's fundamental elements have been also taken by researchers in the field of new institutional economics. This stream of scientific interest underlined the role of the rule of law as one of the core institutions affecting economic growth. In this realm, institutions may have a positive influence on growth if they decrease transaction costs incurred by entrepreneurs. In this context, the following components of the rule of law can be presented: 1) separation and balance of powers; 2) the independent judiciary; 3) legal certainty; 4) economic freedom; 5) property rights; 6) anti-corruption regulations; 7) free media; and 8) items of general relevance, among them non-discrimination, state liability etc. (Acemoglu et al., 2005).

As regards the broader sense of the rule of law's role within the investment process and decisions undertaken by companies, it can

be inferred from various investigations conducted in the field of new institutional economics. Whereas the traditional, neoclassical growth theory accentuated the different paths of production factors (mainly capital), accumulation and exogenous technological transfer as well as savings rates (Solow, 1956), preferences (Cass, 1965; Koopmans, 1965), and newer neoclassical endogenous models included the physical and human capital (Romer, 1986; Lucas, 1988), it was not until representatives of new institutional economics appeared that the case for the role of institutions had been made.

As North (1990) claimed, the fundamental differences in comparative growth theory are placed in institutions, understood as "the rules of the game in a society or, more formally, are the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction". To what extent institutions may act as vehicles of long-term growth can be seen in the examples of North and South Korea, which shared the same history, the same cultural roots, as well as ethnic, linguistic, geographic, and economic homogeneity. Despite starting from the same level, by the year 2000, annual GDP PPP per capita in South Korea was $16,100, while in North Korea it was only $1,000, near the same amount as an average sub-Saharan African country (Acemoglu et al., 2005).

There is a cluster of economic institutions influencing long-run growth consisting mainly of the rule of law and the enforcement of property rights. However, it is nearly impossible to provide any kind of handbook pertaining to the rule of law. Indeed, it is true that if investors believe that their property rights are protected, they tend to invest more, yet it is less clear which concrete form of defending property rights should be applied to secure such results (Ramanujam et al., 2012).

Chemin (2020) argues that aspects such as the quality of, the speed of, and access to the judiciary improve productivity and economic development. Introducing reforms aimed at increasing the public service in this regard allowed for a rise of 22% in productivity in sectors requiring relationship-specific investments. As for judicial efficiency alone, the examples from emerging markets indicate that the productivity gains from a reduction in input tariffs are highest among companies in economies with the most efficient courts (Ahsan, 2013).

Voices supporting the major role of the rule of law as one of determinants of economic growth and investment were also expressed by the representatives of macroeconomics (Barro, 2000). There has been a vivid discussion on how consecutive components of the entire entity that is the rule of law affect those macroeconomic figures. We can distinguish that there are two main channels through which the rule of

law influences growth and investments, one of them being the effects of property rights on investments and, secondly, the effects of contract enforcement on trade (Haggard et al., 2008). These arguments are also shared by other researchers, who claim that the protection of property rights plays a significant role in supporting long-term growth, investment, and financial development (Acemoglu, Johnson, 2005).

Building on Barro's attempts, Haggard and Tiede (2011) constructed and aggregated an index encompassing real GDP growth data in the 1985–2004 period, consisting of a World Bank rule of law indicator, judicial independence measurements, and Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index observing that there had been a positive impact of aggregate rule of law measure on growth in the given period.

However, not all scientific efforts aimed at capturing the relation between the rule of law and investments show that the former conditions the latter. As was indicated in a study examining the relationship between the rule of law and investment in Turkey between 1984 and 2008 (Arslan, 2010), there was short-term causality from investment to the rule of law, meaning that there had been a positively significant effect of investment on the rule of law. This can be interpreted as a sign of the role which can be played by economic growth regarding the increase of law and institutional architecture quality in less developed countries. It is less applicable to the organisations such as the EU, consisted of well-developed and more similar countries.

To step back from the macro level for a moment, it is worth recalling research aimed at determining the impact of the rule of law on the decisions of companies from specific sectors. Such an undertaking was carried out by Henisz (2000), who studied the influence of the government system on the level of infrastructure investment in 100 countries between the years 1880–1998, creating an index measuring the power with which public institutions limit the power to change the rules of regulations. It turned out that the system of government is an important factor determining the development of infrastructure markets, and that includes investment decisions made by entities operating on these markets and the consumption of goods offered by them.

It is also worth evoking a comparative study in which Polish and German companies were researched. The most consequential difference might be noted in the sociological perception of the rule of law by entrepreneurs in both of those countries. It is worth underlining that while Polish companies identify the rule of law more as a formal responsibility before the state with the obedience of certain rules in the first place, German business entities are closer to picturing the rule of law as a part of a social

contract and institutional device serving the society, with economic aspects of this service such as transaction-cost-reduction included (Głowacki et al., 2018). Moreover, the authors calculated that the shift from 2020's level of the rule of law to its maximum from the 2009–2010 period in the case of Poland would bring in USD 3,216 (in 1990's constant USD) of additional income-based capital per worker. It means that the deterioration in the rule of law has not only immediate, but also substantial consequences in the form of foregone investments.

From the point of view of institutional analysis, both focused on macroeconomic modelling and more qualitative ones, the importance of the rule of law as a factor that businesses include in their investment decisions process cannot be understated.

The Rule of Law as a Building Block of the EU's Normative Power and What This Has to Do with Investments

As shown in the analysis presented in the previous sections, the rule of law has highly important implications for the political and economic dimensions of the EU. What is the applicability of the findings in Poland's case? Firstly, it needs to be underscored that the deterioration in the rule of law and democratic standards during the last couple of years has been tangible and commonly noted. Secondly, in the light of the normative power concept, it is crucial to present how the European Commission toolkit has been evolving toward incorporating the rule of law principle into economic governance. Finally, it is essential to present that the worsening institutional conditions and rule-of-law standards might be a so-called "deteriorating package" when it comes to horizons for private investment in Poland in the coming years.

Starting with the deterioration, it should be noticed that in the World Justice Project Rule of Law Index (2020), Poland scored 0.66, achieved 28th place globally (compared to 0.71 and 21st place in 2015), and has experienced a significant downturn across all indicators in recent years. The most spectacular turn of events was that the country suffered a 25% drop in the constraints on the government power indicator between 2015 and 2019, which can be translated into the largest decrease of the 126 countries in the study. Further deterioration was also observed in 2021's edition of the index, when Poland suffered a decline in the form of scoring 0.64, and achieving 36th place globally. Also, the European Commission indicates several problematic issues in the Polish justice system: "In Poland, the reforms, including new developments, continue to be a source of serious concern as referred to in 2020. In particular, the

independence of the Disciplinary Chamber of the Supreme Court cannot be guaranteed, but it continues to take decisions with a direct impact on judges and the way they exercise their function, creating a 'chilling effect' for judges. In addition, concerns over the independence and legitimacy of the Constitutional Tribunal have still not been resolved, as confirmed by the European Court of Human Rights finding that the composition of a bench of the Constitutional Tribunal did not meet the requirement of a tribunal established by law" (Communication from the Commission, 2021). In addition, when it comes to the economic dimension of the rule of law, another two international rankings provide data for further concern. Poland slipped from 33rd place in 2019 to 40th place globally, mostly due to a deterioration in registering property in the Doing Business ranking (2020). Also, in the Heritage Foundation's Index of Economic Freedom (2018), after the so-called judicial reforms referring to the Constitutional Tribunal, the Supreme Court, and also to the National Council of the Judiciary as well as acts regulating the new organisation of common courts, Poland noted a massive decline of 24% in judicial effectiveness. In a recent edition of the ranking (2021), Poland's economic freedom score was 69.7, meaning its economy is the 41st freest in world. The overall score for Poland has increased by 0.6 points. However, the country still ranked 25th among 45 European countries, while its overall score was below the regional average. Prominently, reforming and strengthening the judicial system has been indicated as a priority area to increase economic freedom in Poland.

It is also important to pay attention to societal opinion on the justice system in Poland. CBOS survey results (Dąbrowska, 2021) suggest that the public's perception regarding the rule of law's level has worsened. The independence of the judiciary was indicated by the largest group (56.1%) as a foundational element of the rule of law while at the same time, only 7.8% declared that this independence is the element that functions best in Poland. Moreover, other important indicators of the rule of law and trust in the state and its institutions polled similarly weakly, not to mention the "transparency of government decision-making processes" (3.5%), "accessibility of courts due to costs and time-consumption" (5%), and "compliance with the law and court judgments by the government and other authorities" at the level of 6.2%. Strikingly, while in 2014 more than half (52%) of the respondents declared their trust in the judiciary, as of 2021, it was only at 38%.

The backsliding of the rule of law as an element of democratic backsliding, or precisely, of moving away from the liberal-democratic political regime, is a central point of considerations for some researchers

(Sadurski, 2019). For the needs of this paper, it is useful to adopt such an approach as the EU's institutional system, with its individual rights and freedoms as well as checks and balances and the rule of law, resembles the liberal-democratic vision of polity. In this thread, the rule-of-law backsliding, especially as regards judiciary reforms introduced by the ruling coalition, has been among the main reasons for the radical decline in democratic standards in Poland. In the *Liberal Democracy Index*, a ranking provided by the V-Dem Institute (2021), Poland suffered the biggest collapse between 2010 and 2020 and, throughout that decade, was the leader of the Top 10 fastest autocratising countries.

Table 3. Top 10 Autocratising Countries in the World in 2010–2020

	Change	LDI 2010	LDI 2020	Regime type 2010	Regime type 2020
Poland	-0.34	0.83	0.49	Liberal Democracy	Electoral Democracy
Hungary	-0.32	0.68	0.37	Electoral Democracy	Electoral Autocracy
Turkey	-0.29	0.40	0.11	Electoral Democracy	Electoral Autocracy
Brazil	-0.28	0.79	0.51	Electoral Democracy	Electoral Democracy
Serbia	-0.27	0.51	0.24	Electoral Democracy	Electoral Autocracy
Benin	-0.26	0.55	0.29	Electoral Democracy	Electoral Autocracy
India	-0.23	0.57	0.34	Electoral Democracy	Electoral Autocracy
Mauri-tius	-0.23	0.73	0.50	Liberal Democracy	Electoral Democracy
Bolivia	-0.18	0.41	0.231	Electoral Democracy	Electoral Autocracy
Thailand	-0.17	0.34	0.17	Electoral Autocracy	Closed Autocracy

Source: V-Dem Institute, 2021, p. 38.

The weak institutional ecosystem for investment activity and decline in this area has been reflected in the business perception. As can be observed in surveys which include entrepreneurs' conclusions and postulates towards the state, as well as rankings classifying the climate for investments in Poland, the instability of the law and the lack of political neutrality of the state's institutions are major problems from a business entity point of view (Union of Entrepreneurs and Employers, 2018). If so,

a further weakening of institutional foundations and public trust in the institutions *per se* can only contribute to a constant decline in perceived conditions for investing.

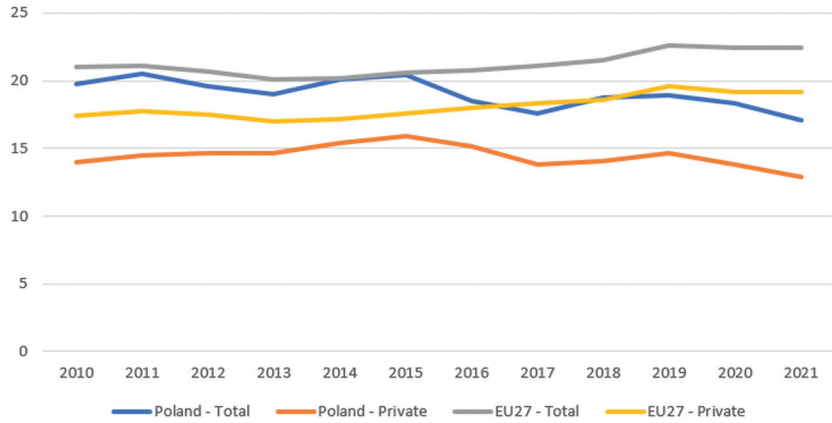
In a report issued by the TMF Group in July (2022) encompassing 77 jurisdictions which account for 92% of the world's total GDP and 95% of net global FDI flows, and which compares 292 annually tracked indicators measuring conditions for doing business, Poland is in 10th position. This means that Poland is the tenth most complex jurisdiction for setting up and running a business in the world. The level of complexity has increased month-on-month during the previous 12 months due to central government activity in terms of measures implemented during COVID-19. A similar situation has occurred in France, Italy, and Greece, if EU Member States are taken into account (TMF Group, 2022). Although COVID-19 could have contributed to the worsening, the investment climate in Poland had been perceived poorly by companies in some categories long before the pandemic struck.

In the Business Survey of the Polish-German Chamber of Commerce and Industry, in 2019, Poland ranked third in the ranking of investment attractiveness out of the CEE region countries and the Baltic states, trailing Estonia and Czechia. It meant that Poland fell from the second position held in 2016–2018 and from 1st place in the 2013–2015 period. As can be read in the conclusions of the report: "Membership in the EU and the quality of staff (qualifications of employees, their motivation and commitment) as well as good availability of local sub-suppliers has built a positive image of Poland in the last few editions of the survey (…) The lowest marks are traditionally awarded to the regulatory sphere, i.e., the level of predictability of economic policy and political and social stability, as well as the tax system and institutions and tax burdens. Economic policy predictability is estimated at 2.3 points (out of the five available), and it is in last place on the list of 21 investment factors included in the survey for the first time" (Polish-German Chamber of Industry and Commerce, 2019).

The effects of the rule of law's deterioration are seen not only in the perception of the investment climate, but also in the data. One of the most visible phenomena coinciding with the rule of law's deterioration has been the reduced amount of private investment in Poland. The investment rate in Poland is lower than the investment rate in the EU and CEE3, and has shown a downward trend in the last 5 years (Hagemejer et al., 2021). The decline in the private investment rate is the main reason for the decline in overall investment in Poland, as public investment remains relatively stable. In the chart below, 2015 seems to be the turning point in terms of

private investments. At the same time, the deterioration in terms of the rule of law in Poland began.

Chart 1. Total and Private Investment Level in EU and Poland in Years 2010–2020 as a % of GDP



Source: the author's own study based on Eurostat data.

As the Civil Development Forum (2020) estimates, between 2015 and 2018, due to the attack on the rule of law and the package of unclear measures aimed at combating tax evasion (including high penalties), investments by Polish companies dropped by 4% and investments by foreign companies increased by 22%.

Considering now an aspect of the European institutions, i.e., the European Commission toolkit in terms of strengthening the role of the rule of law principle including with the economic governance of the EU, it is worth remembering that the EC has been under pressure to bolster the real presence of the rule of law in the EU and Member States' everyday functioning. As a result, the European Commission in the communication "A new EU framework to strengthen the rule of law", presented the basic assumption of the rule of law as: "legality, which means a transparent, accountable, democratic, and pluralist law-making process; legal certainty; the prohibition of arbitrariness in the actions of executive authorities; independent and impartial courts; effective judicial control, including the control of respect for fundamental rights and equality before the law" (Communication from the Commission, 2014, p. 1).

Consequently, within recent years, new tools have emerged and existing tools have been enhanced. In 2020, the European Commission launched

the Annual Rule of Law Report within the European Rule of Law Mechanism. The former plays the role of a new, preventive tool while the latter is a process for dialogue. The Annual Rule of Law Report is based on four pillars: 1) national justice systems, 2) national anti-corruption frameworks, 3) media pluralism, and 4) other institutional checks and balances (Pech, Bard, Braudel, 2022).

In the Rule of Law Report's 2022 edition, key aspects of the rule of law and its meaning for the conditions for investment activity are raised. I would like to underline three of them as follows: 1) The differences in the perception of judiciary independence. In Finland, Denmark, Austria, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and Germany, the perceived independence among the general public is at 75%, whereas in Poland, Slovakia, and Croatia it remains at the level of 30%, 2) The main concerns on the independence of the judiciary in Poland remain intact, despite a collection of rulings of the CJEU, 3) Finally, a statement that the EC gives priority to reforms of the judiciary, anti-corruption frameworks, and public administration with financial sources coming from the Recovery and Resilience Facility as these areas are seen as essential to the investment climate (Communication from the Commission, 2022).

In the RLR 2022, it is also underlined that several elements related directly to the rule of law, among them the effectiveness of justice systems, anti-corruption policies as well as the quality of the law-making process, are a part of the Economic Semester because of the importance for macroeconomic factors including economic growth, the investment level, and the investment climate (Communication from the Commission, 2022).

Another tool which has undergone a noticeable evolution is the European Commission's annual Justice Scoreboard, introduced in 2013 as an auxiliary tool to the European Semester, which is the EU's process of economic policy coordination which has been in place since 2010. At the beginning, the Justice Scoreboard was limited to providing efficiency indicators and data about the length of judicial proceedings, clearance rates or the number of pending non-criminal cases (Pech, Bard, Braudel, 2022). However, 2021's edition of the Justice Scoreboard consisted of 64 pages (in 2013 it was 26) and included such indicators as the appointment and dismissal of national prosecutors, the independence of national Supreme Court judges, along with the autonomy of prosecution services as well as the independence of lawyers. The scope of recommendations included in the European Semester has broadened, too. Originally confined to monitor fiscal, economic, and social policies, in 2018, the first country-specific recommendations encompassing the judicial system and any

violations of its independence were adopted towards Slovakia (Pech, Bard, Braudel, 2022). A year later, in 2019's edition, Poland and Hungary received detailed criticism of the changes which had been introduced in the judicial and legal systems of both countries. The issue of judicial independence was also raised in 2020 when Poland was recommended to "enhance the investment climate, in particular by safeguarding judicial independence" (Council Recommendation, 2020).

The big reason behind the unprecedented zealousness of the European institutions with the particular role of the European Commission is that in the EU system, the law is the main vehicle of deepening the process of integration. As a consequence, the independent judicial system which functions in line with rules of EU law is a *sine qua non* condition for minimising the number of legal black holes and for making legal and institutional integration possible (Centre for European Reform, 2020).

Conclusions

What follows is a drawing upon of the previous arguments and an attempt to present the main risk which could become reality should Poland's situation in terms of the rule of law and EU policy do not improve. What may the continuation of the current trend mean for the EU's future if the legal systems of the Member States diverge and the role of the rule of law as a basic principle for all of them is weakened? Here, the author would look toward the regulation adopted along the Recovery and Resilience Facility, the financial vehicle aimed at combating the post-COVID-19 economic crisis in Europe. For the first time, the disbursement of EU funds was tied directly to rule-of-law standards, as the Regulation 2021/241 was designed specifically to block the inappropriate using of funds from the Recovery and Resilience Facility, disbursed after adopting the National Recovery Plan by the European Council (Regulation 2021/241, 2021). Although Regulation 2021/241 did not specify that the Commission should consider the recipient's rule of law record, the Commission may nonetheless interpret its mandate in the light of the Union's fundamental values set forth in Article 2 TEU (European Court of Justice, 2022). Moreover, the Commission may, under Regulation 2020/2092, withhold funds (including those from the EU's regular budget) from Member States that do not observe the rule of law (Regulation 2021/241, 2020).

As the Polish Economic Institute calculated, the approval of the National Recovery Plan (KPO) would mean an increase in public investments in 2023, as 66% of funds would be allocated directly

to investments. The emergence of these funds would also increase Polish GDP in 2023 by about 1 p.p. (Polish Economic Institute, 2022). Considering that funds from the Recovery and Resilience Fund are to be allocated, among other things, to the accelerating of the energy transition and investments in modern transport, and that the one of the aims of the funds is to mobilise additional private investment, losing access to them would mean another step back in terms of investment levels in the Polish economy.

In the light of the theoretical framework and the data presented in this paper, the conclusion is that the rule-of-law crisis and private-investment crisis in Poland are closely linked. Bolstering the political component of integration means that any rule of law/democratic backsliding in one country impacts upon other Member States as well as the EU. Moreover, as the rule of law has become not only of central value and an engine of further integration, but also one of the conditions of shared economic prosperity within the EU, the only possible way to overcome the long-term deficit of any rule-of-law/private-investment decline would be to strengthen them simultaneously, which would mean improving conditions for businesses while abiding by the EU's rules at the same time. Such a strategy could be translated into better outlooks for private companies as well as the EU's normative power status. Staying within the interpretational matrix offered by institutionalism, Polish deterioration in the area of the rule of law poses risks both for the EU's normative power as well as for the country's economic power, delineated to a large extent by the private-investment dynamic. Poland might suffer political and economic ravagings, including a decrease in the country's political weight inside the bloc, as well as a permanently worse climate for private investment, both foreign and internal. Deriving from the comparative political economics and economic sociology, this situation has more to do with the peripheral status of the Polish state in terms of institutional development in relation to the better-developed apparatus of richer, Western EU Member States (Rapacki, 2019).

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Opposition Discourse About National Recovery and Resilience Plans. Poland and Hungary Compared

Abstract

Although the governments of Poland and Hungary seem to similarly contest the conditionality mechanism that requires one to respect the rule of law when using EU funds, there are differences between these countries. They become visible in the framing of political communication as regards the opposition parties. This article seeks to identify the grounds of the competition from parliamentary opposition of the governments in relation to the EU Recovery and Resilience Fund.

An analysis of 2021's parliamentary debates on national recovery and resilience plans revealed three communication frameworks: the financial frame (the policy dimension), the quality of governance frame (the politics dimension), and the European integration frame which shaped domestic political rivalry (the polity dimension). Differences within these framings between the narrative of the Polish and Hungarian opposition resulted from different institutional and structural contexts.

The study confirms the importance of national opposition parties for the analysis of the process of European integration. The existence of a liberal opposition may promote the salience of the topic of European integration in domestic political debate.

Keywords: Recovery and Resilience Facility, National Recovery and Resilience Plans, European Integration, Conditionality Mechanism, Rule of Law, Intergovernmentalism, Poland, Hungary

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Introduction

The populist governments of Poland and Hungary have long been regarded as *enfants terribles* in the European family (Bakke, Sitter, 2022). This became particularly visible after the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union adopted the regulation on a general regime of conditionality for the protection of the Union budget which had introduced the rule of law conditionality in 2020 (Regulation, 2020). However, placing both countries in the same frame has been a subject of discussion for some time (Karolewski, Benedikter, 2016; Tosiek, 2019). Despite shared concerns about the rule of law and seemingly-friendly relations, policy towards Russia and regional ambitions in the Eastern Bloc have always been different. Previous research has also identified different political opportunities and constraints in political developments in general (Csehi, Zgut, 2021) and in opposition behaviour in particular (Ilonszki, Dudzińska, 2021).

While the governments' activities at the EU level are well known, the role of the domestic opposition actors tends to be overlooked – this in spite of the fact that they wield the ability to replace governments, and that their attitudes and behaviour are closely related to government actions. This was evident, for example, in the final votes on the ratification of the decision of the Council of the European Union (Council Decision, 2020) that had established the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), a key part of the EU post-pandemic Recovery Fund (Next Generation EU), which followed different patterns in the two countries. As opposed to the split and differentiated opposition vote in Poland, the vote in Hungary was unanimous; both government and opposition parties voted in favour. Anticipating such patterns prompted governments to be more inclusive (in Poland's case) or less so (in Hungary's) as regards of other actors in the development of national plans.

Our contribution might add to the ongoing analysis of EU integrity. The increased attention paid to the new intergovernmentalism (Bickerton, Hodson, Puetter, 2015; Hodson, Puetter, 2019) as arguably the most pertinent development at the EU level, requires a more careful analysis of the processes at the national level. Since 2008, EU integration has been driven by intergovernmental bargaining under supreme emergency conditions, which is a major institutional change (Tesche, 2022). Such a perspective makes it necessary to include national actors who can challenge the government by promoting an alternative vision of relations with the EU, thus providing an empirical contribution to new intergovernmentalism.

Our analysis specifically addresses new intergovernmentalism's claim as regards the existing consensus on closer policy coordination at the EU level among the governments of the EU Member States and on the gap between integrationist elites and an increasingly sceptical public. The elite consensus on transnationalism is waning and a new split within the EU is becoming apparent between governments that accept the existing integration consensus and a new kind of so-called "challenger governments", critical of the current trajectory of integration (Hooghe, Marks, 2018; Hodson, Puetter, 2019). These challenger governments are likely to mobilise opposition parties around the issue of European integration.

This article aims to analyse how the opposition parties behave and, particularly, how they speak in relation to the Recovery and Resilience Facility. We expect to fill a hiatus in this regard as discourses receive limited attention in EU studies in the CEE (Dawson, Hanley, 2019). The aforementioned RRF would offer substantial resources for the Member States' recovery after the coronavirus crisis.[1] To benefit from the Facility, each country had to submit a national recovery and resilience plan (NRRP), indicating the reforms and investments to be implemented.

We took into consideration those parties which had their parliamentary representation and had voted against a confidence vote on a new prime minister (or boycotted the vote in the case of Hungary) in 2018 for Hungary and in 2019 for Poland. Our main research question was, on what grounds do the government and opposition actors compete in this particular case in relation to the RRF in Poland and in Hungary?

We expect that differences between the two countries will come to the fore, exceeding the diverging parliamentary voting pattern. The differences would concern the polity, politics, and policy dimensions.

Firstly, the transparency of decision making, political competition, and previous experiences with EU funds, as well as public participation and media freedom are measures of the general state of polity structure. How the governments have incorporated a variety of actors in the preparation of the NRRP and how they have relied on the opposition in forming

[1] At the time of writing this analysis (January 2023), neither Poland nor Hungary were yet able to apply for funds from the RRF. The Polish National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) was endorsed by the European Commission on June 1st, 2022, and the Council of the EU approved its assessment on June 17th, 2022. On December 9th, 2022, Poland and the European Commission signed the Operational Arrangements necessary to submit the first payment claim. Hungary's plan was endorsed by the European Commission on November 30th, 2022 and the Council of the EU approved it on December 15th, 2022. Both countries faced serious rule-of-law concerns from the EU that blocked the release of EU funds, including the RRF.

its content can also be regarded as a polity feature. Due to the fact that the Hungarian government has gone further in the mismanagement of former resources and in non-transparent decision-making, we can expect more vehement opposition action in Hungary than in Poland. The autocratisation of Hungary seems to be limited only by EU safeguards (Bozóki, Hegedűs, 2018).

Secondly, we expect that because the RRF is focused on policies, pragmatic considerations should rule both that of government and opposition narrative. Due to existing differences in the extent of democratic regression between the two countries, policy-related debate should be livelier in the discourse of opposition parties in Poland than in Hungary, where the opposition might focus more on the quality of institutions as a key state problem.

Thirdly, Poland and Hungary differ in a number of institutional aspects that structure opposition (and government) behaviour, so we expect differences in the dimension of politics. Previous research has shown substantial differences between opposition behaviour in Poland and Hungary, due to the greater number of institutional actors in Poland as opposed to the fragmented and polarised opposition party frame in Hungary, resulting in greater opposition activity and more effective action in Poland's case (Ilonszki, Dudzińska, 2021). Furthermore, the dynamics of non-party agents have also been found to be different in the two countries. A richer, non-party opposition scene prevails in Poland with well-working interaction between opposition-party and opposition-non-party actors, while these types of cooperative activities have developed more slowly and with lesser force in Hungary. We can expect some transformation of these previous findings. Firstly, in face of the nature of the RRF – that is, its strong, policy-related component – non-partisan actors might have an extended role in the process. In addition, the implementation of cooperative strategies among the opposition parties in Hungary[2] might point towards more prominent activity as compared to our previous results, while in Poland, opposition parties behave more ambivalently and the internal opposition within the ruling coalition came to the fore. The parliamentary majority in Poland (the Law and Justice party, in Polish, "PiS") was not only smaller in share than their Hungarian counterpart, but is, in addition, composed of the main party PiS and some small allies who emphasised their own ideological identity.

[2] By the time of the parliamentary debate, the Hungarian opposition parties decided on a joint electoral strategy and planned joint primary in bid to unseat Prime Minister Orbán in 2022. Ultimately, however, partly due to an amendment to the electoral law, this strategy failed in the 2022 elections.

As a contrast, the governing Fidesz and its satellite KDNP enjoyed a two-thirds majority.

We first introduce the context of the parliamentary debates in the two countries, and then the history of developing the NRRP in Poland and Hungary, followed by an analysis of the debates. In the conclusion, we highlight the differences and similarities of the opposition discourse reflecting on the three potential explanatory dimensions.

The Context – Politics in the EU Frame

There was a difference in balance between the government and the opposition in Poland and Hungary. In Poland, the government had only a small majority and there was a real opposition rival, while in Hungary the government had two-thirds majority in parliament, and the opposition was more evenly dispersed. Table 1 below presents a comparison of the distribution of power in the parliaments of both countries after the last elections preceding the discussed debate.

Table 1. The Parliaments' Party Composition – Directly After the Elections Relevant from the Perspective of the NRRP Debates

Party	Poland post 2019*	Share of seats as a %	Hungary post 2018	Share of seats as a %
Government	PiS (incl. SP)	51.1	Fidesz	59.0
			KDNP	8.0
Opposition	KO	29.1	Jobbik	13.0
	SLD	10.7	MSzP	7.5
	PSL	6.5	DK	4.5
	Konfederacja	2.4	LMP	4.5
	German Minority	0.2	P	2.5

* The party composition of the Sejm has changed several times within the term. At the moment of the debate, there were eight formal groups. The table presents the distribution of seats immediately after the election.

Party acronyms for Poland: PiS = Law and Justice, SP = Solidary Poland, KO = Civic Coalition, SLD = Democratic Left Alliance, PSL = Polish Peasant Party, Konfederacja = Confederation Freedom and Independence; for Hungary: Fidesz = Hungarian Civic Alliance, KDNP = Christian Democratic People's Party, MSzP = Hungarian Socialist Party, DK = Democratic Coalition, LMP = Politics Can Be Different, P = Dialogue

In Hungary, the governing Fidesz-KDNP belonged to the Eurosceptic parties. This has become more explicit in its governing period since 2010 – turning from soft to hard Euroscepticism. As Szczerbiak and Taggart

(Szczerbiak, Taggart, 2008) argue, soft Euroscepticism is based on pragmatic aspects, rooted in the interests, benefits or drawbacks of integration that might change according to the conditions, while hard Euroscepticism is mostly value, ideology or identity-based. This transformation has been confirmed by former analyses (Lengyel, 2011; Göncz, Lengyel, 2016).

This turnaround became explicit in the past decade as early as at the Fidesz XVIth Congress on December 7th, 2002 when the word "Brusselite" (paraphrasing Moscovite) was used by V. Orbán. Ever since, double talk features Fidesz party and government politics, and the EU card is played out in the domestic party competition with a strong nationalist-sovereignist agenda. Until more recently, however, in terms of the EU general policy agenda, the Hungarian government followed suite, although the national slogans in parallel with a turn towards the East (Russia and China) became more explicit. There was a clear turn in the EU/Fidesz relationship when Fidesz found itself suspended from the European People's Party (EPP) in spring 2019, and went on to leave it two years later. As an illustration of the party's transformation, one should note that the number 1 party card holder of Fidesz and Speaker of Parliament said in an interview that if an EU referendum were to be held now, he would vote no (*Index*, 2021).

Poland's PiS never belonged to the EPP. Its affiliation to the Eurosceptic group of European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) made the party more vulnerable to the criticism from the European institutions. The positions on European issues between the two government coalition partners diverged: while the PiS position from the very beginning has been pro-European (Master, 2014), its minor partner Solidary Poland (SP) was more Eurosceptic. The leader of SP, Zbigniew Ziobro, was the minister of justice, and the main concern of the European Commission regarding the rule of law situation in Poland was exactly the reform of the judiciary, for which he was responsible. In December 2021, in an interview for the German daily "Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung", he declared that he wanted Poland in the EU, but then went on to say that "an independent Poland that will not be relegated to the status of a federal state". He stressed that "sovereignty was not for sale" (Gnauck, 2021). The leader of PiS, Jarosław Kaczyński, five years earlier had expressed his disappointment with Brexit: "Brexit is not a good event. I would like to strongly emphasise that Poland's place is in the European Union, regardless of the result of the vote in Great Britain" (Interia.pl, 2016). In an interview for "Rzeczpospolita" at that time he declared: "Europe should be a superpower and nation states should have more internal sovereignty, which is very limited today. Of course, this is truer of the new Member

States" (Szułdrzyński, 2016), the last sentence following the concept of differentiated integration (Bellamy, Kröger, Lorimer, 2022).

The PiS electoral program from 2019 (at that time, PiS offered SP politicians places on its lists) included the concept of "Eurorealism", as opposed to "colonialism" and "clientelism" in foreign policy. The program declared: "Law and Justice is a Euro-realist party", "Poland is the heart of Europe" but also "membership in any international organisation should not be detrimental to Polish statehood". They emphasised that Europe's strength lay in its cultural diversity and criticised both the pursuit of the unification of cultures and the domination of a single state's culture. PiS politicians often pointed to Germany as a country trying to subordinate other EU members.

On the side of the opposition, two aspects in Hungary need reflecting upon from the perspective of our analysis. Firstly, except for Jobbik, all opposition parties are pro-EU. Jobbik used to be strongly Eurosceptic but, in parallel with its move from the extreme right towards the centre, it began to occupy a softer Eurosceptic stance. Secondly, in face of the authoritarianisation of the Hungarian polity and while being aware of the fact that a single party alone would not be able to challenge the Orbán regime, the opposition parties built up a common strategy. Referring in a sense to the experience of the communist period followed by democratic transition, in 2021 this "cognitive change" (Bermeo, 1992) made them agree to join forces and talk together in all important political matters. This became apparent in the NRRP debate, as we shall see below.

Similarly to Hungary, the left and centrist opposition parties in Poland are pro-European, which should be understood as support for integration. In 2019, PSL even proposed codifying the EU-membership in the Constitution. This idea was developed in 2021 by the leader of PO, Donald Tusk, who proposed changes to the Constitution, stipulating that only by referendum or by a two-thirds majority in both houses of parliament could a decision be made to leave the EU, as the PO attributes to right-wing politicians the eagerness to Polexit.[3] The opposition party on the right wing of the political party scene, Konfederacja, is Eurosceptic, although does not call to leave the EU. Their electoral program from 2019 included the EU membership among the issues of national security and declared: "We will not allow our sovereignty to be lost further (sic) to the benefit of the European Union. The current model of its functioning has run out. We

[3] After the analysed period of the article (in January 2022), the unified opposition in Hungary in fear of HUxit also proposed a change to their Constitution so that only a referendum could decide on leaving the EU. The amendment was rejected and the Constitution still does not allow for referendums on international treaties.

stand for the voluntary cooperation of European countries instead of the current dictatorship" (Konfederacja Wolność i Niepodległość, 2019, p. 16).

The clear division of the opposition parties' attitudes towards European integration corresponds to the evidence from the Chapel Hill expert surveys pointing to a positive relationship between opting for European integration and being a GAL (green/alternative/libertarian) party and a negative relationship in the case of a TAN (traditional/authority/national) party (Hooghe, Marks, 2018).

At the same time, both Hungary and Poland belong to the countries with high levels of public support for EU membership. The attitudes of voters towards the EU were measured in an Eurobarometer survey in December 2021 (European Parliament, 2022): 79% of Hungarians and 82% of Poles said that their country had, on balance, benefited from being a member of EU while the European average was 72%. The main reasons were that the EU brought people new work opportunities, contributed to the economic growth of the country and improved people's standards of living.

In another study (a post-election survey conducted in all 28 EU Member States after the elections to the European Parliament between 23rd–26th May 2019; Schmitt, Hobolt, Wolter van der, 2022), a question on preferences towards leaving the EU or remaining was asked (see Table 2a and Table 2b). Both in Hungary and in Poland, the "remain" option prevailed, albeit with Poles being slightly more in favour of membership. The level of support for remaining depended on which party a respondent had supported in the last parliamentary election. In both countries, the electorates of the ruling party were most likely to leave, as well as their right-wing opposition: Jobbik in Hungary and Kukiz'15 in Poland (the politicians of this group were later on the lists of today's Confederation). In Hungary, both a polarisation of electorates in this respect and the preference for leaving were stronger than in Poland.

Table 2a. "Imagine there was a referendum in Hungary tomorrow about the membership of the European Union. Would you vote for Hungary to remain a member of the European Union or to leave the European Union?" (only those who had an opinion)

Party voters in parliamentary elections 2018	Remain (%)	Leave (%)
DK	99	1
MSZP-P	97	3
JOBBIK	79	21
Fidesz-KDNP	76	24
Average	86	14

Source: European Parliament Election Studies, Voter Study 2019.

Table 2b. "Imagine there was a referendum in Poland tomorrow about the membership of the European Union. Would you vote for Poland to remain a member of the European Union or to leave the European Union?" (only those who had an opinion)

Party voters in parliamentary elections 2015	Remain (%)	Leave (%)
PO	97	3
United Left	96	4
Kukiz'15	86	14
PiS	85	15
Average	90	10

Source: European Election Studies, Voter Study 2019.

More recent academic research warns that although polls show that Hungarians are still generally in favour of EU membership, political polarisation may undermine the stability of this support, and the pragmatic component (benefits) outweighs the identity component in explaining it. This may be a warning sign that support for membership may wane in the face of limited fund allocations for Hungary (Bíró-Nagy, Szászi, Varga, 2022).

Developing the Hungarian and Polish Recovery and Resilience Plans

In both countries, due to the requirement of ratification of the Council's decision, parliamentary debates were held in which parliamentarians also referred to the NRRP. Nevertheless, neither the Polish nor the Hungarian government held a dedicated debate in parliament before sending the plans to the European Commission. Before going into the details of the debates, Table 3 below provides some basic information on them.

In Poland, the debate on NRRP took place on the occasion of the formal proceedings of the ratification act (Sejm, 2021): the first during the meeting of joint committees and then at the plenary session of the Sejm, followed by the final vote. The latter debate was the subject of analysis.

As for the Polish NRRP, its first assumptions were sent to the European Commission in early March 2021, and then the government consulted the Commission on individual provisions. The deadline for submitting the final version was April 30th, 2021 (Regulation, 2021, Article 20). The document was adopted by the government on April 27th, 2021 after postponing several times due to the position of the minor coalition partner, the radical, right-wing Solidarity Poland, opposing the ratification. The adoption of the bill by the government became possible only after securing additional votes from the Left. During the debate, the

Table 3. Overview of the Debates

	Poland		Hungary	
Date	May 4, 2021 (committees)	May 4, 2021 (plenary session)	March 22, 2021 (plenary session)	April 8, 2021 (plenary session)
Length of the debate	5 hours 5 minutes	4 hours 50 minutes	8 hours	2 hours 10 minutes
Number of speeches (incl. government officials)	48	50	56	16 (incl. 2-minute remarks)
"Yes" in the final vote; party	53; no record on party	290 PiS, Left, KP, Polska 2050, single others	no vote	vote on May 26, 2021*: 170 yes votes Fidesz, KDNP, Jobbik, DK
"No" vote; party	3; no record on party	33 a fraction of PiS (SP), Konfederacja, single others	no vote	0
Abstained; party	25; no record on party	133 KO, PS, single others	no vote	0
Did not vote; party	unknown	4 PiS, PO	no vote	29 (abstained at the session) MSzP, LMP, P

Additional party acronyms for Poland: KP = Polish Coalition (led by PSL), PS = Polish Affairs.
*The formal vote occurred at a seperate formal occasion without debate.

leader of the Eurosceptic coalition partner Solidarna Polska, Zbigniew Ziobro, who was also a member of the government, was not allowed to speak despite making several attempts.

According to the government, public consultations of the plan lasted from February 26th to April 2nd, 2021. Public bodies, local governments, entrepreneurs, academicians and experts as well as civil society were invited to participate. The draft document was available online, accompanied by an on-line form for submitting comments. In total, over 750 subjects submitted more than 5,500 comments via the form on the website, and many were additionally submitted beyond the online form. According to the government, all the comments were analysed, including some which were sent after the deadline.

As part of the consultations, online debates with experts were also organised, during which questions could be asked and comments sent (three debates on individual components of the plan were held between March 2nd-9th, 2021). Another form of consultations were the public hearings, convened at the request of NGOs (five hearings were held between 24th–30th March 2021, one for each of the five components of the NRRP) and then five so-called "reverse hearings" in July 2021, during which representatives of public administration responded to the demands submitted during public hearings. The NRRP also consulted with the Joint Commission of the Government and Local Government (five meetings) and with the Entrepreneurship Council to the President of the Republic of Poland, the Council for Social Dialogue and the Council for Public Benefit Activities.

Detailed reports on the course of consultation are available on the government website (Serwis Rzeczpospolitej Polskiej, 2021). About half of the comments were signed by the new political movement Polska 2050, registered at the time (March 26, 2021) as a political party.

In Hungary, the NRRP was discussed in two different debates. As the government did not initiate a proper consultation of the plan, the opposition proposed a so-called "parliamentary debate day" for March 22nd, 2021.[4] Parliamentary debate days can be initiated by the government, by government MPs, or opposition MPs – if supported by one-fifth of their fellow MPs – and they tend to occur around a dozen times within a four-year parliamentary cycle. Formally, the suggested title of the debate referred to EU funds in general but, in effect, its main subject was the RRF and the national plan. We decided to analyse this debate due to its scope. It began with a statement from a government representative within the allotted 40 minutes, followed by a speech by the keynote speakers of each political group in 15 minutes. Finally, a representative of the government responded in 20 minutes to what had been said in the debate.

The official debate, on April 8th, 2021, served to prepare for the required vote on the ratification of the Council's decision. It included only eight substantive contributions as the others were just two-minute remarks. Significantly, on both occasions, only state secretaries were present; not a single minister nor the Prime Minister appeared, while in Poland, the ratification debate was initiated by a long speech from the Prime Minister and was concluded by a secretary of state responsible for the NRRP preparation and by the minister of the European affairs. The two Hungarian debates were the only occasions when NRRP was on the parliamentary agenda – the attempts of the opposition to place the RRF

[4] Motion for a political debate V / 15298.

planning on the agenda of committees remained futile as the government MPs did not attend the committee meetings.

Overall, the MPs were underinformed about the planning process and the text itself. The Hungarian government published the first 13-page-long document in December 2020, followed by short drafts of some of the components in March and April 2021. The full plan was published on April 13th (432 pages). The government claimed they had approached 467 organisations for consultation, but it was not made clear which ones exactly or even when this happened. The full plan also stated that 59 organisations had provided opinion. A government website was set up wherein public comments on the NRRP could be placed. Altogether, 88 opinions appeared on the website, many of them substantial, critical, and policy related. The government was "answering" them with a single summary response each week. Altogether, five such documents with "answers" were issued (Palyazat, N.D.). We can rightly call this a fake consultation platform.

Poland submitted its NRRP to the European Commission on May 3rd, 2021, with Hungary following suit on May 12th, 2021 (European Commission, 2022).

Before the vote on the ratification of the Council's decision, the Polish government had to appeal to other parties for support, due to its uncertain majority. Finally, a part of the opposition (the Left) backed the government in exchange for a promise to introduce amendments. The Polish People's Party also voted for it, although it criticised the Left for breaking the unity of the opposition. The ratification was also supported by the small PPG of Polska 2050, a new centrist party. Radical right-wing MPs voted against, including not only the opposition party Confederation, but also MPs from the coalition partner Solidary Poland (formally members of the PiS PPG). The main opposition party group, the centrist Civic Coalition, abstained, as well as the small PPG Polish Affairs and three individual MPs from different PPGs.

In the Hungarian parliament, the law was adopted unanimously. At first glance, this seems to be a perverse decision in the face of the deep, dividing lines between government and opposition parties and polarised politics.

Parliamentary Discourse

The research material comprised of the full transcripts from the Hungarian parliamentary debate from March 22nd, 2021 and the Polish debate from May 4th, 2021. The Hungarian debate contained 56 speech acts, and the Polish debate 50 (see Table 3 above). The texts have been coded using the MAXQDA software. The original deductive coding

scheme has been modified several times in the course of the analysis. The frequency analysis was approached with caution due to the different formal structure of the debates. The main method was therefore the qualitative interpretation of statements taking into account their context. The parliamentary debates were analysed as a tool of political communication addressed to a wider audience, not as a real debate with political rivals.

The discourse analysis revealed three distinct but interrelated communication frames shaping the debates. We discuss them in relation to our initial expectations.

Policy

The first and obvious frame of discourse, due to the subject of the debate, related to money and consisted of the complex evaluation of redistributive policy issues; an exceptionally high amount of funds and a unique, historically new way of collecting it, as well as its allocation on specific policies. The intensity of the use of this framework in parliamentary communication on RRF funds confirmed our initial expectation that the debate would be policy related and pragmatic. This framework was developed around the process of negotiating the amount of funds for the country, their allocation, and the previous performance in spending European funds. The debate in Poland concerned the ratification of the Council Decision establishing a partly loan-based Recovery Fund, so the framework of the debate also included a loan mechanism, the risks related to the repayment of loans by the country, and the fears of the commonality of the debt, expressed typically by the right-wing opposition (Konfederacja):

"The Sejm wants to give up the power to indebtedness to the European Union. The British vetoed it 10 years ago, as there was a crisis in the eurozone, and it did not pass. Now it will pass. A conditionality mechanism will come in. Brussels will keep track of what it will give this and future governments money for. We will spend the funds for 7 years and give back for 37 years. We will pay it back for 35 years after this man ceases to be prime minister. There will be new EU taxes that no one has mentioned: plastic, carbon footprint, digital, financial transactions. PiS has betrayed Polish patriots, it strengthens the European Union, not Poland". (PL Krzysztof Bosak, Konfederacja)

Money as a means of implementing policy involved a big discussion on its allocation on specific policies and target groups. Even if in the context of the NRRP, the goals had to be limited to the six pillars of the European Recovery and Resilience Facility.

As might be expected, the subject of money was useful for the governments to present their visions of spending funds while the

opposition primarily reacted to the governments' plans. In Poland, the opposition submitted its own proposals although, in most cases, it was too late to include them in the NRRP.

In both countries, the opposition parties were recalling past spendings, and pointing to money-related abuses. Although the track records were criticised in both countries, it is in Hungary that this issue was particularly rich in examples of abuse, corruption, nepotism, and theft mentioned by all parties of the opposition, as in this example by Jobbik:

"Where is this money? Who knows? It is there in the concrete of the stadiums, on the decks of luxury cars and luxury yachts, it is in the Lőrinc Mészáros hotel and his new woman's diamond ring, it is in the Fidesz palaces and Fidesz's wallets" (HU Péter Jakab, Jobbik).

Governance

The second frame of discourse was the quality of governance, strongly related to the political dimension. There were two main aspects within it: the current quality of governance and past performance. The subject was built primarily around the issue of the rule of law, described on a continuum between the logic of protecting the Union budget from misuse and the alleged ideologisation of the rule of law. This framework was strengthened by the new conditionality mechanism concerning the respect for fundamental values of the European Union, which in the meantime, as a result of negotiations, was reduced to aspects that could potentially jeopardise the EU budget. The quality of governance was particularly important for the liberal opposition.

"The European Union only pays these subsidies to countries where the rule of law applies. Although Fidesz is trying to present the criteria for the rule of law as some kind of obscure attack, this is easy to refute. We just need to clarify what the rule of law is and not some abstract concept. These questions are very specific and mundane. For example, the rule of law means that the spending of EU funds is controlled by independent authorities. The rule of law means that everyone is equal before the authorities. And that the Attorney General is launching an investigation into a minister or even prime minister involved in a suspicion of corruption. The rule of law is that they do not attack the courts but enforce their sentences. The rule of law is that independent newspapers and radio stations will not be abolished. The rule of law is that universities do not lose their independence. The rule of law is where the labour code does not make workers vulnerable. The rule of law is when no one must photograph how he voted for in a vote". (HU Dr. Bertalan Tóth, MSzP)

The quality of governance comprised the transparency and inclusiveness of the process of policymaking which reflected the constitutional role of opposition: to control the government and to fairly compete for power. This required access to information on public matters, so the issues of public participation and consultation of the NRRP were also included in this issue. In this regard, the opposition parties were indicating that local governments and civil society organisations had been left out of the consultation process and were stressing the role of national parliaments in EU decisions. Since, as expected, non-parliamentary actors (civil society and local governments) were more involved in the process of developing the plan in Poland, criticism from Polish opposition was general and limited to the insufficient scope of public consultation and the lack of a regular parliamentary debate on the NRRP:

"NGOs have done a tremendous job of carrying out public consultations, actually conducting a public hearing that the government should have done. Now they are asking for a week or two more to arrange a reverse hearing for the government to answer questions" (PL Agnieszka Ścigaj, Polskie Sprawy, former Polish Peasant Party).

"The fact that you did not organise a debate in the Sejm on the final shape of the National Recovery Plan before sending it to Brussels is proof of your littleness and partyism. The place of the debate on the National Recovery Plan is here, in the Sejm, in the plenary hall, and not in the PPGs' or ministerial offices" (PL Paulina Hennig-Kloska, Polska 2050, former KO).

The main Polish parliamentary opposition party, KO, was also pointing to the unequal treatment of partners through a government's agreement with the Left on voting, which gave the Left better access to the government's plan:

"It is the parliament that is the place where you need to talk about principles and values, but most of all to look for a consensus. We rejected your behind-the-scenes games, we rejected getting along behind the backs of other opposition partners. The National Recovery Plan could not share the fate of the Local Investment Fund, but unfortunately it did. It happened because my colleagues from the Left took your word for it" (PL Borys Budka, KO).

In Hungary, the problem of the lack of consultation and keeping the plan secret from the public and even from the parliament was much more intensely articulated by the opposition:

"We can no longer express our opinion because it is not possible to know this plan itself. The only thing that was made public is a 13-page summary from last December. So once again: 13 pages on how they would spend HUF 6,000 billion, between HUF 3,000 and 4,000 million a day" (HU Bence Tordai, P).

"Ladies and gentlemen! This parliamentary debate is about the shame of Fidesz. In a normally functioning, democratic country, it is not the opposition that initiates the debate on EU funds, but the governing parties, after extensive social dialogue on the country's plans. Such a dialogue, Secretary of State, no matter what it refers to, does not exist" (HU Bertalan Tóth, MSzP).

"We know that the government must submit a plan for the use of the money to Brussels before 30th April, which must be preceded by a social consultation. However, I would like to point out that this social consultation has been rather superficial and quiet, precisely because the government has only published an outline plan (…). That is why we expect the government to publish its detailed plans, because a meaningful debate can only take place in the knowledge of these detailed plans, and we also expect the government to provide a real opportunity for people to participate" (HU Erzsébet Schmuck, LMP).

The frame of the quality of governance also comprised past performance i.e., previous actions taken by the government – or governments, because the perspective of the past concerned earlier periods of budgeting of European funds, too. Past performance not only served as an indicator of the credibility of the government, but also of the credibility of the opposition, and thus naturally included mutual references of speakers in the debate. Since the Hungarian government was fully responsible for the previous budgetary term of the EU, the government MPs were praising their performance and promising a continuation.

"It is important for us that the distribution of EU funds for the period 2021–2027 is as efficient as in the previous period, 2014–20. The figures show that Hungary is one of the most dynamically developing countries in Europe. We are working to ensure that the upward path continues in the future, so that Hungary can be in the most prominent place among the European Union Member States". (HU Erik Bánki, Fidesz)

The response on the side of opposition was sharp and forceful, and the arguments often cited empirical evidence.

"Ladies and gentlemen! After such a background, we can rightly think that the EU and the people of the European Union would not want the EU subsidies to be stolen in the coming years, but that the Fidesz regime will want to steal it as it has done so far" (HU Bertalan Tóth, MSzP).

"The way the blatter and nonsense has been weighed down here regarding the support provided to small entreprises and micro-entreprises in the framework of the EIDHR could even be appreciated but nobody could even understand what it was all about. And it is true, Mr Secretary of State, that when you refer to the TOP program you certainly know that

the Fidesz members who were pushing and scuffling in the distribution process are in fact walking towards prison for exactly what and how they did it. This is what you want to build upon and continue". (HU László Varju, DK)

"What are the sins that should not be committed? Yes, corruption, the defrauding of EU funds. Secretary of State Dömötör readily spoke about the period before 2010, apparently burdened by the corruption of these funds. The defrauding of EU funds has become industrial under the Orbán government". (HU Zoltán Balczó, Jobbik)

In Poland, the government and its MPs were referring rather to the past consensus on the EU accession, and also emphasised historical continuity and appealed for similar unity in the vote.

"We have the experience of three full financial perspectives of the European Union. These funds have always been spent in accordance with their intended purpose, and settled in accordance with the law". (PL Teresa Wargocka, PiS)

The opposition in Poland criticised the past allocation of funds and its arbitrary nature. They submitted amendments aimed at fairness and transparency of spending.

"There is a chance, thanks to these amendments, to guarantee an honest recovery plan, guarantee funds for local governments, a monitoring committee, but above all, to guarantee transparency and fairness in relation to these funds. They cannot divide the fate of the funds that have been thrown down the drain, for your investments in Ostrołęka, for the Central Communication Port, for propaganda on state television, for the purchase of private media for propaganda purposes". (PL Borys Budka, KO)

"We are also proposing amendments so that the Supreme Chamber of Control controls the National Recovery Plan every year, so that a report is submitted to the Sejm so that we join the European Public Prosecutor's Office. These are guarantees of the fairness of spending these funds and they should be included in the act, not only remain as verbal declarations". (PL Władysław Kosiniak-Kamysz, Koalicja Polska, led by PSL)

The European Union

The third frame of discourse during the debates was European integration (although the term itself was rarely used). It raised concerns among some parties that it would be a one-way process towards ever deeper integration, aimed at federalising Europe. This issue was shaped by state-related concepts such as sovereignty, raison d'état or national interest, along with EU-related concepts of superstate, federation or the general

term "Brussels" (just as names of state capitals are used as a synonym for the governments of these states). The subject of European integration revealed controversies regarding the scope of state competences that could be delegated to the European Union under the treaties and the general principle of subsidiarity.

Table 4. Framing the Discourse During the Parliamentary Debates by Party

	Money/Policy	Quality of governance/Politics	EU integration
Hungary			
Government (Fidesz, KDNP)	Successfully fought for, mutual advantages and serving the Hungarian people	Rule of law perceived as mere EU ideology, past performance highly rated for the period since 2010, criticized for the period before 2010	Eurosceptic
Opposition			
Jobbik	Risky loans still to be accepted and reduced with time	Rule of law acceptable requirement if reduced to a budgetary threat, past performance criticised	Soft Eurosceptic
MSzP	Beneficial for Hungary	Rule of law acceptable requirement, past performance criticised for the period since 2010	Integrationist
DK	Beneficial for Hungary	Rule of law acceptable requirement, past performance criticised for the period since 2010	Integrationist
LMP	Beneficial for Hungary	Rule of law acceptable requirement, past performance criticised for the period since 2010	Integrationist
P	Beneficial for Hungary	Rule of law acceptable requirement, past performance criticised for the period since 2010	Integrationist
Poland			
Government	Mixed: Beneficial for Poland – PiS, risky – SP	Ambivalent towards rule of law (SP: EU ideology), past performance highly rated, with some reservations for the pre-2015 period	Mixed: PiS – soft Eurosceptic, SP – Eurosceptic
Opposition			
Konfederacja	Risky	Rule of law perceived as EU ideology, past performance irrelevant	Eurosceptic

The Left	Beneficial for Poland	Rule of law acceptable requirement, past performance irrelevant	Integrationist
PO	Beneficial for Poland	Rule of law acceptable requirement, past performance criticised for the period since 2015	Irrelevant in the debate
PSL	Beneficial for Poland	Rule of law acceptable requirement, past performance criticised for the period since 2015	Integrationist

Source: the authors' own study.

The attitude to European integration polarises both politicians and voters. It can be argued that it has become a political issue and an element of ideological identity (Taggart, 2020). The difference between Poland and Hungary in this respect is connected with differences at the level of politics, i.e., the political system, institutions, extra parliamentary political actors and media freedom. As a result, while the Hungarian government is a typical, so-called "challenger government" in the sense of contesting the normative foundations of the EU (Hudson, Puetter, 2019), the Polish government has not gone as far and is less Eurosceptic, delegating the role of contestants to its coalition partner SP and the radical right-wing opposition. The arguments of the liberal opposition parties in Poland sometimes turned against the Left that was accused of collaborating not with PiS as such, but specifically with the Eurosceptic Solidary Poland and its leader Ziobro – even if the latter became a tactical opposition of PiS in this vote.

"You said here today on behalf of the Left that this is a push for Poland to deepen European integration. Thanks to your vote, today, next week, they would push Poland's integration with the European Union (…) the other way. You said it was a train to Europe. Sir, this is a kibitka,[5] not a train. You have mistaken a kibitka for a train". (PL Sławomir Nitras, KO)

The Left explicitly distanced itself from Solidary Poland while supporting the government in the vote:

"I heard that Minister Ziobro said today in the Sejm that he will vote against, because this fund is the federalisation of Europe, it is a step towards a European superstate. I reply to Minister Ziobro; you are right, Minister. This is a deepening of European integration. And it is very good that it is so, because the new joint public investments will bind us more strongly with Europe and the European rule of law mechanism will make

[5] Kibitkas – wagons used by Russian invaders in the 19th century to deport Poles to Siberia.

it difficult for you, Minister, to destroy Polish courts with impunity". (PL Adrian Zandberg, Left)

The right wing opposition in Poland proved its hard Euroscepticism:

"Mrs. Marshal! High – but ever lower – Chamber! Today's session is Poland's partition Sejm. Today we will decide whether Poland will surrender itself to an even deeper slavery to Brussels; whether it will sell another piece of its sovereignty for beads". (PL Dobromir Sośnierz, Konfederacja)

Conclusions

The aim of this study was to explore on which grounds the governments and opposition parties competed in relation to the RRF in Poland and in Hungary.

The qualitative framing analysis of the parliamentary debates revealed three interrelated frames structuring the political discourse: money (the policy frame), the quality of governance (the politics frame) including the evaluation of past performance as well as the system's democratic credentials, and a third frame that we identified as the parties' political views on European integration beyond national politics (the polity frame). Political parties made different use of those frames. Referring to our initial expectations and our previous analysis, we found significant differences between Poland and Hungary in the discourse on National Recovery and Resilience Plans.

The money frame appeared substantively in both countries, albeit unsurprisingly as the debates concerned the funds and important redistributive issues. This confirmed our expectation that the debate would be pragmatic and policy related. And yet, we still observed differences. In Poland, opposition parties submitted their own policy proposals, effectively (in the case of the Left) using their bargaining position. In the Hungarian debate, the policy dimension was limited to the fierce criticism of the abuses related to the formerly arbitrary allocation of funds and which favoured entities associated with the government, and the opposition focused less on their own policy proposals. However, it should be kept in mind that in Hungary the opposition had no opportunity to influence the plan. The consensus of the opposition and the government in Hungary during the vote on the ratification of the Council's decision, although surprising, can be interpreted as an attempt to unite around the strategic goals of the state, although this was obviously just a token gesture due to the fact that the opposition had zero chance of having any influence on political decisions.

The quality-of-governance frame corresponded to the politics dimension. It concerned the rule of law and the conditionality mechanism, forcing the Member States to follow fundamental EU values and norms, as well as the transparency of decision making and inclusiveness. It also referred to the past performance of governments, and the opposition criticised the results of the past actions of government, especially in Hungary. In Poland, the opposition parties criticised the very process of creating the plan, becoming spokesmen of non-party actors and promoting greater participation, while in Hungary the opposition's criticism was focused more on state capture and corruption.

The European integration frame was shaped by arguments concerning the relationship between the state and the European Union. The tension between deeper integration and protecting state sovereignty led to a polarisation between parties. Some differences between the two countries could be observed in this respect. In the case of Hungary, the Fidesz government was the most Eurosceptic, while the right-wing opposition Jobbik was inclined to compromise based on the instrumental use of EU membership. In Poland, the ruling PiS was soft Eurosceptic (they called it Eurorealism), but there was an internal hard Eurosceptic opposition within the coalition, regardless of the fact that there was another Eurosceptic party on the side of the opposition – Konfederacja. This corresponds to the thesis of Hooghe and Marks which states that conservative parties may be prone to internal dissent over the issue of European integration (Hooghe, Marks, 2018).

The attitude to European integration became an element of the ideological identity of political parties in Poland and Hungary. As expected, this dimension differentiated the Polish and Hungarian opposition due to a different balance of power among political actors. Polish opposition parties had a stronger position in the political structure, as well as a stronger relationship with civil society and local governments. Opposition parties in Hungary were deprived of influence on domestic politics, not only because of their proportionally smaller share of seats in the parliament, but also because of the elimination of independent media and weakening civil society organisations. These institutional and structural differences became even more visible in the debate on the National Recovery and Resilience Plans.

The Hungarian government has gone much further than its Polish counterpart in distancing itself from the EU due to foreign policy reasons and also due to power considerations at the national level. At the same time it badly needs EU resources – as was put forth in the debate by a Jobbik MP; to feed the clientele. EU funding has, in fact, been a resource

of feeding national oligarchies in several backsliding countries (Sitter, Bakke, 2019). While Kaczyński's project seems to be driven primarily by populist, anti-EU ideology, Orbán's regime is based on pragmatic-and-power-based considerations. The discourse frames of the opposition clearly highlighted this.

In Poland, the internal Eurosceptic opposition within the government made a radical decision to vote against its own government's position. PiS, the main ruling party, was soft Eurosceptic but focused on winning a majority in the vote, and therefore inclined to be conciliatory. The liberal, and especially the left-wing opposition in Poland was pro-integrationist, but the main parliamentary opposition party, the Civic Coalition, did not refer directly in the debate to the issue of integration or sovereignty, focusing on criticising the tactical alliance between the Left and PiS on the vote on ratification. In Hungary, the supporting vote both on the government and the opposition side was built on different grounds. The pro-EU opposition supported the new EU initiative on substantive grounds while the national sovereigntist government could not vote against it as this resource (and EU resources in general) would provide the basis of its domestic political dominance. To sum up, the differences between Poland and Hungary could be explained on the one hand by the governments' performance and, on the other hand, by the persisting institutional and social differences between the two countries.

Despite polarisation, the gap between the elite and popular EU support seemed to be small both in Poland and Hungary. On the people's side, one of the reasons might be the still-appreciated, tangible benefits of membership (Szczerbiak, 2021). The European Union has been long perceived as the embodiment and the guarantee of the values of democracy and a free market, in direct contrast to the communist system. This would suggest that the Eurosceptic narrative would rather be generated by the elite and their communication framework, not necessarily responding to the popular spirit, at least as long as both countries are net beneficiaries of European funds.

The analysis confirmed the need to take the domestic opposition parties into account when analysing the process of European integration. The existence of the liberal opposition in Poland opens a scenario of a change in government that will not separate the national interest from European integration. In Hungary, this type of a scenario seems unlikely in face of the 2022 elections that again brought about a 2/3 majority to the populist-right government. And yet, opposition behaviour can be a warning sign to international actors in the forms of a larger number of policy fields under EU authority, a crisis ridden context, not to mention conditionality

concerns requiring that EU authorities consider the behaviour of non-governing domestic actors in decision-making.

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The EU Eastern Enlargement Policy Under the Pressure of Geopolitics. The Bulgarian Case (Russia's Little Brother)

Abstract

The Bulgarian case is symptomatic of the susceptibility of the EU enlargement policy under geopolitical pressure. The aim of this text is to add arguments to the statement that the dynamic of Bulgaria's accession to the EU has been strongly influenced by external factors – mainly Yugoslavia's disintegration and the subsequential Kososvo crisis. This crisis brought up the issue of the huge Russian influence over Bulgarian politics and societies and, as a result, predetermined the perception of Bulgaria as a high security risk for EU. In this situation, Bulgaria was an object of de-securitisation by the EU's enlargement policy, but at the same time its main instrument, namely, the conditionality policy, was neglected. From this point of view, the Bulgarian case is important because: it illustrates the effects of this discrepancy to date; it is instructive in the context of EU enlargement policy towards the Western Balkans with huge Russian influence; and also in the context of the acceleration of the EU's eastern enlargement policy toward Ukraine and Moldova because of the pressure of the ongoing Russian military invasion. The opportunity for accelerating the pre-accession process under the influence of unpredicted external events created prerequisites for politicising the whole process, including the political use of the conditionality and the consequently unfinished pre-accession preparation of the newcomers. The research task is fulfilled by a synthesis of primary and secondary sources organised around three main questions – Which external circumstances? Why? and, How? The results of a discourse analysis of interviews with key participants in Bulgaria's EU integration process are used as a starting point.

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Introduction

The Eastern Enlargement of the European Union (EU), when ten post-communist countries from Eastern Europe acquired full membership of the Union, is an exceptional success story with undeniable historical significance. The achievement of this result has premised the transformation of the enlargement policy into a central foreign policy instrument of the EU (Smith, 2011, p. 300; Sedelmeier, 2010, pp. 401–405; Dinan, 2010, p. 483). Meanwhile, from today's point of view, the effects of the enlargement do not seem unambiguously positive. The Europeanisation of part of the newly-acceded Central and Eastern Europe countries (CEECs) seems to be, in fact, unstable and even reversible (Dimitrov, 2019, pp. 28–29; Agh, 2016, pp. 26–27). The European Commission (EC) started penalty procedures against Poland and Hungary in December 2017 and September 2018 respectively, despite those countries being considered as excellent performers as regards accession preparations. For the laggards – Bulgaria and Romania – the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism (CVM) was introduced, through which the deficits of their pre-accession preparation were to be overcome – this, however, wasn't achieved for more than ten years.[1] These effects testify to the presence of disadvantages in the EU enlargement policy. Their discovery and subsequent quashing acquired critical importance in the context not only of the European perspective of the countries from the Western Balkans, but also of the new membership applications of Ukraine and Moldova.

Some researchers of the EU's enlargement policy look for the reasons for its deficits – inconsistency, insecurity, lack of coordination – in the content and application of conditionality policy (Maniokas, 2004, pp. 23–24; Kochenov, 2004, p. 23; Grabbe, 2017, pp. 126–128; Elezi, 2013, pp. 250–251). Others pay attention to the huge geopolitical issues which stimulate and, at the same time, make it difficult for the policy's application (O'Brennan, 2006, pp. 13–15; Skalnes, 2005, pp. 213–214; Smith, 2011, p. 300; Vachudova, 2014, pp. 123–124).[2] The first of the aforementioned

[1] In September 2020, EC Vice President Vera Jourova, in an interview for Bulgarian National Television, stated that: "As you know, there were plans for it to be terminated. However, there is still unfinished work, especially on the part of the authorities".

[2] The receiving of "candidate status" by Ukraine and Moldova in the face of Russia's military aggression is an illustrative example for the reasonableness of this geopolitical argumentation to date.

researchers ignored the reasons for the limits of the conditionality policy outside of its own content, while the second one ignored the concrete effects of the geopolitical factor's influence. But it is exactly this connection between external issues including, *inter alia*, the disintegration of Yugoslavia, and conditionality policy *and* the susceptibility of this policy to political influence which are the prerequisites for the unpredicted results of the EU's Eastern Enlargement policy.

O'Brennan examined the connection between geopolitical issues and eastern enlargement in general terms. Firstly, he would "analyse the most important geopolitical issues that eastern enlargement has brought to the fore" (thus answering the "which" question). Secondly, he argues that "constructivist imagery best explains the way in which EU actors interpreted key geopolitical issues within the enlargement framework" (the "why"). Thirdly, he would "present enlargement as the expansion of the existing European security community, wherein geopolitical issues were subject to a process of securitisation and desecuritisation" by subjecting them to the pre-accession process" (the "how") (O'Brennan, 2006a, pp. 155–156).

The Bulgarian case is clear example for the above statement. Bulgaria was a candidate country that had a distinctly uneven pace as regards its progression to full membership. From a country consistently lagging behind in the first few years of the enlargement policy's implementation, within several days it had caught up with the more advanced countries with regard to their pre-accession preparation. This acceleration can be explained via the influence of external threats on the enlargement policy, because of the unprecedented nature of the relations between Bulgaria and Russia among the other CEECs, but not with the acceleration of the fulfilment of the criteria for membership. In this way, it illustrates the discrepancy between the declared principles of the enlargement policy and the method of its implementation. And the effects of this discrepancy to date – systematic problems with the rule of law and corruption and, as a consequence, the sustainability of Russian influence on politics and society which made Bulgaria a weak place – made for a Russian trojan horse in the EU (Eurobarometer, 2022).[3] The Bulgarian case stands out in the context of EU enlargement policy toward the Western Balkans dealing with huge Russian influence – Serbia makes for a good example

[3] Bulgarians represent a significant exception from the average results of the EU citizens because of the high levels of the positive evaluation for Russia after its military aggression in Ukraine this year and the negative evaluation for the USA, as well as with low levels of support for priority of the European values at the expense of prices and living expenses.

(Euroactiv, 2022) – and illustrates that there is a high risk for EU security if the Bulgarian path is taken again; the vast majority of Bulgarian society actually professes their allegiance to the Russians in the ongoing war in Ukraine. It is definite also in the context of the acceleration of EU eastern enlargement policy toward Ukraine and Moldova in the face of the huge external threat that is the Russian military invasion.

The aim of the text is to add arguments to the statement that the dynamic of Bulgarian accession to the EU has been strongly influenced by external factors, and because of the special Bulgarian-Russian relationship. This relationship transformed Bulgaria into an external threat in the context of the Kosovo conflict because of the possibility of political destabilisation and the deviation from the EU orbit towards an Eurasian orbit under Russian pressure. For this reason, Bulgaria was the subject of desecuritisation by inclusion in the negotiation process but without clear evidence of the fulfilment of the criteria for membership (conditionality). Therefore, the Bulgarian case is clear evidence of a discrepancy between the declared principles of enlargement policy for the objective application of membership criteria and political instrumentalisation of conditionality in the face of geopolitical circumstances. Following the argumentative logic of an article by O'Brennan in which the Bulgarian case is, on one hand, an additional argument and, on the other hand, a more detailed examination of the third part (how exactly desecuritisation works), the text is organised in three main parts, answering the three research questions. *Which* were the geopolitical powers/circumstances that influenced the pre-accession process in Bulgaria? *Why* (due to which reasons) did they have influence? *How* did they have influence?

The answers are derived from a synthesis of primary and secondary sources. As a starting point, the results from a discourse analysis of the 33 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with key participants in Bulgaria's EU integration process (high-ranking politicians, diplomats, and experts) on one of the sixteen questions of the questionnaire is used – *Do you remember whether any geopolitical circumstances or powers had a great influence on the pre-accession process?*[1] The answers are organised around the above three research questions – which, why, and how. The results are put in a broad context of the secondary sources of the same questions. This cumulative discourse supplements and verifies the research thesis.

[1] They were collected in a documentary archive of memories within the Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence project of the European Studies Department at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridsky" (2016–2019) http://jeanmonnetexcellence.bg/ and were published in 2020, https://bdi.bg/data/paper/LA1.pdf/.

Part One – Which?

According to the respondents' answers, the geopolitical powers/circumstances that had considerable influence on Bulgaria's accession to the EU were – *the disintegration of Yugoslavia, the war in Yugoslavia, the disintegration of the USSR, the conflict in Kosovo, the Stability Pact, the accession to NATO, the USSR, and Russia*.

The content diversity of the received answers is striking. Some of them are related to certain states – the USA, Russia, whereas others are processes – the disintegration of Yugoslavia, the disintegration of the USSR, accession to NATO; the latter being the nature of events – the conflict in Kosovo, and the Stability Pact among others. This diversity, however, can be organised around one common historical parallel – all these powers/circumstances/processes have been evoked by the disintegration of the Communist camp and the subsequent, massive political destabilisation in Eastern Europe.

Defining these external factors confirms one of the main conclusions in academic literature as regards the Eastern Enlargement (Skalnes, 2005, pp. 213–214; O'Brennan, 2006a, pp. 155–156; Bindi, 2011, pp. 84–85), in that it is mostly an instrument for achieving security for the Union. The formation of the EU enlargement policy which, hitherto, did not exist, is a result of the shocking collapse of Communism and is intended to overcome the unprecedented risks that it causes. Moreover, the very creation of the EU with its own Common Foreign and Security Policy is a result of a protective reflex to this massive geopolitical change. It brings two considerable foreign policy threats to the European Economic Community (EEC). On the one hand, there arises instability in Central and Eastern European countries (CEECs) as a result of the massive process of redrawing the State borders in the region. The emergence of new States and the concomitant redrawing of borders created a potential for conflicts, as was the case with the Yugoslavian civil war. It provides unambiguous evidence of the high risk of such cases arising in a region where historical heritage has predetermined the explosive combination of: a) considerable minorities in neighbouring countries; b) their special treatment by the governments of these countries; and c) the weakness of the emerging State structures of the new democracies. This unfavourable historical heritage is combined with a set of problems concerning so-called "soft security" – transborder crime, the trafficking of people and drugs, and potential, considerable emigration due to deteriorating social conditions in the post-communist countries.

On the other hand, considerable problems for the EEC's security ensued from the fragmentation and the internal political instability in

Russia immediately after the disintegration of the USSR, along with unclear Russian reactions to the Westernisation of the CEEC, but also with the dependence of a great number of the EU Member States on Russian energy supplies. Meanwhile, the political elites in the Member States feared that Russia could try to restore its control over the CEECs. It was considered as a potentially aggressive power, but at the same time and because of this, and also because of economic interests, it was imperative to establish partnership relations with it. Acceding CEECs seemed to be a reliable strategy, through which the threat of Russian aggression in the region could be rejected, and, simultaneously, the development of a new, Russia-EU strategic partnership could be guaranteed (De Bardeleben, 2013, pp. 50–51).

In a summary of the analysis in answer to the first research question – which are the geopolitical powers/circumstances that influenced the pre-accession process in Bulgaria?: 1) as in the general case with the other CEECs, these are powers and circumstances provoked by the disintegration of the Communist camp; 2) in the Bulgarian case – with the dangerous combination of its geographical proximity to the Yugoslavian war, domestic political instability, and massive Russian influence on politics and society – the Kosovo conflict was a geopolitical factor of decisive influence over its EU accession (see below).

Part Two – Why?

The result of the analysis of the respondents' answers shows that most of them explain the influence of the external powers/circumstances on the process of Bulgaria's accession to the EU with geopolitical interests. The interests are defined with a different degree of specificity – "to guarantee peace and stability"; "the EU enlargement is one geopolitical problem and process"; "Russia's ambitions for control over the Kosovo events convinced them that the Balkan countries need more guarantees for security, not fewer"; "increasing the risk of destabilisation in the region"; "not to leave it [Eastern Europe – author's note] to the Russians"; "competition for East-West spheres of influence"; "Russia's ambitions as regards the region are not clear"; "they considered us a political satellite of Russia"; "strengthening the geopolitical influence of the Euro-Atlantic community in South-East Europe"; "as a means for deterring Russian imperial policy as renewed by Putin"; and "guaranteeing stability in our region".

Despite the considerable differences in the specificity of the answers, they lead to one and the same main conclusion. Firstly, according to

most of the respondents, the reasons for the influence of external powers/ circumstances on the EU's enlargement policy are geopolitical interests and, secondly, in relation to these interests, Bulgaria creating a specific problem. This conclusion has its explanation and can respectively be justified in each one of its two parts.

Bulgaria's territory was of strategic significance for the EU. It was in close proximity to the region of a military conflict and was potentially vulnerable to a penetration of destructive powers which would have increased the risk for the Union's external borders. The outlet on the Black Sea created the potential for commercial relations with Asia, but, at the same time, it also created a risk of suspending relations between the Member States of Hungary and Greece (Chiva, Phinnemore, 2012, pp. 150–151). This risk of isolating Greece became particularly distinct during moments of destabilisation for the former Yugoslavian Federation. Bulgaria's territory was also an important prerequisite for the diversification of energy supplies of Russia, but at the same time, due to its strong dependence on them, the Bulgarian state itself could have turned into a risk factor during the international crisis in the immediate vicinity of the Union (European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs, 2018, pp. 4–6). The issues with so-called "soft security" are also important. The high levels of corruption (state capture) and the related organised crime created prerequisites for the export of the criminal contingent, the stimulation of the illegal trafficking of people, drugs, and guns to EU Member States, which would threaten their internal order (Conley et al., 2018, pp. 18–20).

The destabilisation in South-East Europe premised increasing the competition between the USA and Russia over the strengthening and spreading of their influence in the region. In this context, Bulgaria was strategically significant, but, at the same time, it was a particularly vulnerable territory due to the specifics of Bulgarian-Russian relations. The combination between the stable-through-the-centuries Russophile ideological tradition and the Bulgarian satellite-like condition during the Cold War has no parallel in the other candidate countries from Eastern Europe (Veleva-Eftimova, 2017, pp. 203–204).

Assiduously and systematically cultivated by imperial Russia ever since the 16th century, Bulgarian Russophilia was affirmed as a leading political idea during the struggles for national liberation. It turned into a forming base for the Bulgarian foreign policy perspective during the building of the Third Bulgarian state in 1879. A central conceptual emphasis was the maintenance of special close relations with Russia, based on unconditional gratitude and trust. The communisation of the

Bulgarian state after the Second World War led to a peculiar apotheosis of the ideological formulations of Russophilia, as well as of its practical political events. The Bulgarian-Soviet friendship was presented as a natural law – it is "like the sun and the air for every living creature"[2], due to which, along with persistent and repeated requests by the Bulgarian government, the Bulgarian state turning into a sixteenth republic of the USSR seemed natural.[3] In this context, during the communist period, Bulgaria acquired its own distinction of the most faithful Soviet satellite among the other satellites from Eastern Europe.

The Russophile ideological tradition cemented the special Bulgarian-Russian relations, and the Bulgarian foreign policy orientation was set in accordance with the Russian/Soviet policy for long periods of time from the history of the Third Bulgarian state. This historical legacy exerted considerable influence on the Bulgarian geopolitical transition after the end of the Cold War.[4] Firstly, this transition was relatively belated – it did not start not until the ruling of the first government that wasn't dominated by the former Communist Party (that of Philip Dimitrov) in 1991. Secondly, it was marked by the limited internal institutional integrity of the bodies called upon to make foreign policy – the National Assembly and the Council of Ministers, which was also reflected in the effective accomplishment of this foreign policy priority. Thirdly, although there was a high degree of continuity between the Bulgarian post-communist governments as regards goal setting and the accomplishment of the reorientation to European integration, it occurred in parallel with maintaining close relations with Russia, and was with an increased intensity with the governments dominated by the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) (Katsikas, 2012, pp. 46–47). This particular dual position of the Bulgarian rulers created the impression that Bulgaria was susceptible to Russian influence and of limited reliability as a strategic partner of the EU, and therefore was a high risk of deviating from the EU's orbit.

The Kosovo crisis brought this risk to the fore and led to a change in the position of the leading countries in the Union – Great Britain, Germany, and France – as regards Bulgaria's application for membership. Up to that moment, Bulgaria hadn't received any active and steady support of EU Member States; it didn't even have its own patron per the example of

[2] A phrase from the first leader of the Bulgarian Communist Party, Georgi Dimitrov, turned into a slogan of the Communist regime.

[3] In Bulgarian historiography, is a well-known fact that the Bulgarian state proposed to be accepted as the sixteenth republic of the Soviet Socialist state via a merger between Bulgaria and the USSR (1963, 1965, 1973).

[4] About the actual representation of Russophile ideology, see Decheva, 2023.

the rest of the CEE candidates (Veleva-Eftimova, 2021, pp. 275–276). But when the geopolitical interests turned out to be under threat in the context of the Kosovo conflict, the leading countries united around the view that the situation in Bulgaria was dangerous. The pro-Western government in Bulgaria was under massive internal pressure. The Russophile public's opinion didn't approve of the decisions of Ivan Kostov's government as regards logistic support for NATO's military intervention in Serbia and the rejection of a Russian request for an air corridor. There were mass anti-government and pro-Russian street demonstrations which were supported by one of the main political parties in the form of the Bulgarian Socialist Party (a former Communist Party) (Kalinova, 2010, p. 312).

This situation made the potential fall of the pro-Western government very realistic. Such a change, however, could have provoked the political and economic destabilisation of Bulgaria in the short term (Boev, 2021, p. 428)[5] and in the long term – it could have diverted the country from the EU's orbit under Russian control. In this way, by the Kosovo conflict, Bulgaria became a high external risk with the capacity to continuously undermine the interests of the Western countries in the region (Marsh, Rees, 2012, p. 114; Gateva, 2015, p. 108).

By that moment, Great Britain actively and steadily supported the accession of all the ten CEECs to the EU, but without the Bulgarian application being a concrete recipient of support. The global nature of the British interests to the EU's enlargement – stabilisation through democratisation and reducing the federal perspective – predetermined the relative lack of patronage in its relationship with the candidates (as per the example of Germany's support for Poland or Sweden's support for Estonia). The United Kingdom didn't favour any of them in absolute terms.

The Kosovo crisis and the behaviour of Bulgaria's and Romania's governments changed the British position towards Bulgaria not so much in content, but rather in intensity and specificity. Considering the risks of Kostov's cabinet, Tony Blair's government, in unison with the then American administration, declared its unconditional support for the inclusion of Bulgaria as well as Romania into the negotiation process. In May 1999, the British Prime Minister visited Sofia and Bucharest and declared that he would work for their inclusion in the negotiation process (Debati, 2019). Unlike the British case, Germany's interests were much more specific and differentiated. As the most powerful export economy in the Union, Germany would have considerable benefits from the accession

[5] The Bulgarian government has information from the Bulgarian intelligence services about operation Podkova as regards mass ethnic cleaning in Kosovo.

of the former communist states to the common market, because of, *inter alia*, the inevitable reduction of the costs for maintaining its external border. It is this specificity of interests, however, that predetermined the limited attention towards Bulgaria as a candidate country, both because of its geographic remoteness and because of the market capacity, including the Yugo-embargo, at the expense of favouritism towards the immediate neighbours – Poland, Czechia, and Hungary.

Until the Kosovo crisis in 1999, the German government supported a strategy for enlargement in two so-called "waves", as in the first wave there would be the abovementioned three advanced countries included in the transition reforms. The escalation of the conflict and, respectively, the increasing of the risk of regional destabilisation led the German government to conclusions similar to those of the British government. From this point of view, the German Chancellor also motivated the need for covering the Kosovo events by the enlargement policy. In April 1999, Schröder made a statement in which he related these events with the enlargement, as, according to him, they illustrated the fact that political stability was not possible without economic stability (Milzow, 2012, pp. 84–86).

Unlike Great Britain and Germany, France was generally skeptical towards the EU's enlargement to the East, with Paris believing that it didn't have any immediate economic benefits. The French leaders' opinion was indeed rather to the contrary – their thinking being that the accession of a large number of net beneficiaries within the CAP and regional policy, as were the candidate countries, would lead to budget losses. Moreover, in the long term, the newcomers would undermine the opportunities for a deepening of the integration process, considered by Paris as a significant interest. Meanwhile, the global policy for the stabilisation of Eastern Europe was moving in parallel with the risks of increasing Germany's influence at the expense of the indisputable, dominating French position in the European integration project, but also of reducing the opportunities for effective control over its powerful neighbour (Veleva-Eftimova, 2019, p. 92).

From this point of view, the Bulgarian application was not of particular interest to France. Indeed, Paris actually favoured Romania. Due to its size and geographic position, this "Latin sister" (Papadimitriou, 2002, p. 104) had the potential to be a counterweight of the Northern dimension of the Eastern Enlargement and, respectively, of the German influence. On the other hand, the problematic pre-accession preparation of Bucharest could have slowed down the pace of the whole process when it would be possible to accede to it (Papadimitriou, 2002, p. 89).

As was mentioned above, the Kosovo crisis provoked interest in Romania's application, and this premised the French support for including Bulgaria in the negotiation process. Put simply, in order to receive Romania's inclusion, France also supported Bulgaria's inclusion.

Greece and Italy, being directly affected by the regional risks, supported the change of the leading EU Member States' approach to Bulgaria and Romania. Austria and the Scandinavian countries, after their accession to the Union in 1995, also actively supported the initiatives for stimulating the process of enlargement to the East. This high degree of support among the EU countries predetermined the acceleration of the Bulgarian accession process.

In summary: 1) the Kosovo crisis in 1999 increased the risks of regional destabilisation of the Union's external borders and brought to the fore the geopolitical interests of the Member States; 2) in this situation, Bulgaria was simultaneously strategically important, yet unreliable as a strategic partner, furthermore it became an external threat because of the Russian influence in the country; 3) this high external risk changed the positions of the leading EU Member States towards the Bulgarian application (see below).

Part Three – How?

As a result of the analysis of the respondents' answers, it can be claimed that the way in which the geopolitical powers/events (the Kososvo conflict) influenced the enlargement process was its resultant acceleration, along with the Yugoslavia war and the USA which also led to the acceleration of the Bulgarian accession.

The respondents talked about: "accelerating Europe's unification"; "the war in Yugoslavia as a strong political factor which opened this window for faster advancement in the negotiation process for us"; "after this, the negotiations opened a little bit after Operation 'Allied Force', that is, and this was something extremely important"; "the EU was stimulated also by the USA to commit itself and in this way [for the process – author's note] to end quickly"; "it absolutely [influenced the speed – author's note]; "... Well, the fact that you prove as a state that you are politically ready to accept risks (…) to undertake actions that are in unison with the club you are striving for – indisputable!".

This result has its explanation. Bulgaria lagged behind the group of candidates preferred for opening negotiations. Together with Lithuania, Latvia, and Romania, according to the EC Report from 1996, it didn't have a functioning market economy and was unable to withstand the pressure

of the internal market. Due to the non-fulfilment of the economic criteria, the country was left in the second group.

As of early 1999, among the EU States, there was a high degree of consensus about the inclusion of three more of the candidate countries in the negotiation process – Latvia, Lithuania, and Slovakia. Unlike them, Bulgaria and Romania continued to be without sufficient progress in their pre-accession preparations and without considerable support from the EU States. The Kosovo war, which started at the end of March 1999, brought about a new context for debating the strategic approach towards Bulgaria – the desecuritisation by inclusion in negotiation process.

In October 1999, EC President Romano Prodi, in unison with the changed position of the EU Member States on Bulgaria's and Romania's applications, called for "a fundamental change" in the EU's enlargement strategy. He also proposed opening negotiations with the rest of the CEE countries in the second group. This new vision on the enlargement strategy was reflected in the main conclusions of the EC's combined report from 1999 on the overall outlook of the progress of the negotiation process. The Commission proposed to the Council a new approach to the process, which contained several fundamental elements. The first was the inclusion of all the candidates in the accession negotiations, which meant opening negotiations with Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, and Slovakia. The second was an increase of conditionality to overcome the risk of slowing the progress in accession preparations and of unacceptable extensions of the negotiation process. This proposal was made exactly with the cases of Bulgaria and Romania in mind, wherein progress on membership preparation was limited. The European Council in Helsinki in December 1999 accepted the Commission's proposals for opening negotiations with Bulgaria, Romania, Lithuania, Latvia, and Slovakia in December 1999 (European Parliament, 1999). This decision demonstrated possibilities for the neglecting (or the political use of conditionality) under the pressure of external threats. At the same time, conditionality was a central element of the pre-accession preparation process, based on the objective standards of assessment and, therefore, on the principal of differentiation. This internal contradiction predicted the relatively low level of implementation of the pre-accession programmes (Papadimitriou, Gateva, 2012, pp. 5–7).

The Bulgarian government's cooperation with NATO on the Kosovo conflict was an important prerequisite for Bulgarian accession in the North Atlantic Pact (Boev, 2021, p. 428). NATO membership is directly linked with EU enlargement policy. This was a necessary precondition for membership in the EU, but it has become such a significant prerequisite

due to the presence of a reliable perspective for acquiring membership in the Union (Lundestad, 2004, pp. 258–260; Baeva, 2019, p. 68). In this way, membership in NATO, in combination with the previous decision for an accession date for Bulgaria (2007), legitimised the commitment to the West.[6] Therefore, it seems to be the guarantee for accession to the EU, even if the reforms in the country did not provide the required conditions for accession. In this situation, the probability of delaying the reforms increased due to a decreasing of the risk of cancelling the accession (Giatzidis, 2004, p. 455).

In conclusion: 1) the Kosovo crisis accelerated Bulgaria's accession to the EU by opening a negotiation process despite insufficient evidence for pre-accession reform progress; 2) Bulgaria's accession to NATO guaranteed its membership of the EU. In this situation, it seemed that the path towards EU membership was clear and guaranteed. This viewpoint very likely led to the introduction of the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism (CVM) after accession. The aim of this institutional innovation was to overcome the deficits of the Bulgarian pre-accession preparation. In this way, CVM is illustrative evidence of the acquisition of EU membership of an insufficiently-prepared candidate country.

Conclusions

The geopolitical powers and circumstances provoked by the destabilisation of Eastern Europe because of the Communist system's collapse exerted an influence on the Eastern Enlargement process. They predetermined not only the formulation of the geopolitical powers' own enlargement policy, but also a change of the strategic approach for its implementation, and also the positioning of the candidate countries to each other, i.e., their differentiation. Increasing the security risks because of the destabilisation served to accelerate the process. Due to its particularities in terms of geopolitical risks, the Bulgarian case illustrated this connection. Bulgaria was a potentially weak link in Western Europe's security, due to which the Kosovo crisis from 1999 increased interest towards Bulgaria's application for membership. Furthermore, Bulgaria was simultaneously strategically important, but also unreliable as a strategic partner, and it furthermore became an external threat because of the special relationships with Russia and, as a consequence, there came intense Russian influence over the country. This external risk changed the positions of the leading EU Member States as regards the Bulgarian application. Subsequently,

[6] Bulgaria received a date for accession via the decision of European Council in Helsinki in December 2002.

it was included in the negotiation process. Thus, the crisis accelerated its pre-accession process despite the unsatisfactory fulfilment of the Copenhagen criteria. The country's accession to NATO, as an external factor, guaranteed its membership of the EU and, as a cumulative result, Bulgarian Europeanisation slowed down and was left unfinished.

The pace of the Bulgarian pre-accession process illustrates the discrepancy between the declared principles of the enlargement policy and the methods of its implementation. On the one hand, its central political instrument is conditionality, which is an objective standard for measuring the progress towards membership by the EC. On the other hand, this principle is neither of general validity, nor sustainable. Due to the pressure of external circumstances which brought Bulgarian vulnerability to Russian influence to the fore, and not of the accomplishment of the conditions, negotiations for membership were opened with Bulgaria, and again under the influence of external circumstances (NATO membership) – EU membership seemed to be guaranteed.

The opportunity for the acceleration of the pre-accession process and predetermination of Bulgaria's EU accession under the influence of external factors created enough prerequisites for politicising the whole process, including the conditionality policy. This situation could compromise the application of the principle of differentiation/competition among the candidates on which conditionality is based, and, due to that, its efficiency is also restricted. From this point of view, the policy of EU's Eastern Enlargement contains the potential to reproduce previous disadvantages if, at the goal-setting stage, its action is not placed in a wider global context. This is of critical importance from today's point of view, when the acceleration in Ukraine acquiring the status of a candidate for membership can be defined as an effect of placing the enlargement policy under geopolitical-circumstance pressure. In such a situation, the external security risks for the EU could be transformed into internal integrity risks for the EU if future newcomers' pre-accession preparation is incomplete, echoing Bulgaria's case.

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Is the Spanish Army's Experimental Brigade 2035 a Result of Civil-military Relations? A Historical Overview (1923–2021)

Abstract

This article analyses the evolution of civil-military relations in Spain from 1923 to 2021. The research defines the role of the military organisation during two authoritarian regimes in the 20th century along with the country's democratic transition. After a historical overview, the military change process known as Experimental Brigade 2035 is selected as a case study to determine whether its origin is civilian or military in nature. The results of the research evidence the civilian influence in budgetary issues and limits in performance. At the same time, the military has a certain autonomy to implement modernisation plans in the framework of assigned competences.

Keywords: Military Change, Spain, Civil-Military Relations, Spanish Army

Introduction

Civil-military relations in democratic systems are based on the military's subordination to civil power (Huntington, 1957; Janowitz, 1971). Armies are public organisations able to use legitimate violence, but they are obliged to present accountability as regards the use of force. A huge part of the scientific literature about political influence over military change is focused on political systems which have not experienced military interventionism in their past (Posen, 1984). Due to this fact, the historical

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dependence and evolution of armies' tasks and functions should be taken into account in some cases.

Despite the fact that, currently, civil-military relations in Spain are consolidated, the evolution of military organisation in the 20th century must be analysed to cover explicative voids related to military change. This article develops an analysis of the military's role in Spain's political system from 1923 to 2021, combining historical research with 22 personal interviews.[1] This study focuses on the military's transformation from an autonomous actor to a fully-integrated institution in the democratic system. The historical background led the researcher to choose a current military change initiative, denominated as Experimental Brigade 2035,[2] which has continued during the context of political change in Spain, to define whether it is the result of civil-military relations.

Previous research about military change in the Spanish Army during the Moroccan War evidenced explicative shortcomings in the civil-military paradigm in Spain (López-Rodríguez, 2019). With regard to the results, the lack of civilian input in military transformations during authoritarian spells was clear. From this, this research seeks to answer the following questions: (I) How did civil-military relations evolved in Spain during the 20th century? (II) Over which dimensions of military change do civilian decision-makers have influence? In addition, as regards the current process of military change in the Spanish Army, (III) is BRIEX 2035 a result of civil-military relations in Spain? To answer these research questions, the main objective is to analyse the evolution of civil-military relations in Spain, the specific objectives being: (I) to study the evolution of the military's role in the Spanish political system, (II) to analyse the current state of civil-military relations in Spain, and (III) to determine the source which prompted the BRIEX 2035 initiative.

This article exposes a historical approach to military change and the role of armies in political processes. The theoretical background focuses on the civil-military relations paradigm and its inherent debates regarding authoritarian regimes. The results paint a picture of the authoritarian regimes of General Primo de Rivera (1923–1930) and General Franco (1939–1975), followed by the political transformation of the Armed Forces during the country's Democratic Transition and consolidation (1975–1981). After the historical overview, the analysis is developed by studying the military change process known as BRIEX 2035 which has taken place in the context of political alternation.

[1] 22 personal interviews were conducted (2019–2021). The interviews were anonymous, so the names have been withheld and changed by EP code.

[2] Known hereafter as BRIEX 2035.

Military Change and Political Processes

Civil-military relations have shown that military changes come from the political/civilian level (Posen, 1984). This implies a top-down process in which civilian decision-makers design programs of change which the military then implement (Jordán, 2017). In the US military, there is a balanced relationship between political power, responsibility over the use of force, and a subordination of military organisation (Huntington, 1957; Janowitz, 1971; Andreski, 1971). Academic research has often remarked upon a divergence between political directives and the use of military force due to the fact that, sometimes, civilians lack tactical and operational knowledge over the administration of violence (Nielsen, 1999; Rapp, 2015).

The specifications of the use of force lead one to understand civil-military relations as a balance and not just as a dependence and submission of military power (Albright, 1980). The civil-military relations paradigm defends the military as a source of authority in operational planning in which relationships must be fluent (Bienen, 1981). The inclusion of a civilian perspective in military planning can also prevent military stagnation, thus providing new perspectives (Buley, 2007). Relation-building between both sectors can be more easily built by personal relationships, configured around the comprehension of the use of force and the degree of political interference at operational levels (Smith, 2008; Rapp, 2015).

In an authoritarian context with precarious power balances, civilian interference in military affairs can not only be dangerous, but can also be lethal to those civilians involved (Bukkvoll, 2015). The civil-military relations in authoritarian regimes are conditioned by the presence or not of other security institutions to balance military power (Brooks, 1998; Bou-Nassif, 2015). The prevention of military intervention in politics is defined as *coup-proofing*, often based on ties of loyalty with officers due to ethnic, religious, political or personal links, or also by guaranteeing economic, professional or social privileges (Brooks, 1998; Belkin, Schofer, 2005). The debate around civil-military relations in authoritarian contexts gains complexity in political systems ruled by militaries, or where there is a tradition of military intervention in politics such as Spain during the 19th and 20th centuries (Chehabi, Linz, 1998; Tsbelis, 2001; Lewis, 2002).

Multiple classifications of non-democratic regimes identified hybridations related to the relevance of military, personalist, and unique-party influence (Geddes, 1999; Szmolka, 2011; 2013; 2014). In those in

which the military plays a key role, some can include features related to Sultanism (Chehabi, Linz, 1998) or Pretorianism (Haddad, 2014). The military's role varies depending on each case-study, but the lower tendency of military regimes to enter into conflict with other States due to their internal orientation of the use of force has been remarked upon (Andreski, 1980; Miller, 1995; Debs, 2010; Svolikim, 2013). In authoritarian regimes, military organisations are a key actor against political subversion (Brooks, 1998; Albrecht, 2015; Bou-Nassif, 2015).

Especially after long-lasting authoritarian regimes, the transition to democracy can be conditioned by authoritarian legacies from the previous political system. Indicators point to a higher likelihood of the military to maintain the status quo rather than create political upset. This can imply that the military can abandon formal power positions but keep effective power, thereby making transference to civilian authorities superficial (Penecy, Butler, 2004). In other cases, it has been stated that militaries have more interest in obtaining new spaces of power in the democratic system, focusing on professional pride and integration with other bureaucratic institutions rather than the political domination (Pion-Berlin, 1992).

Civil-military Relations in Spain (1923–2021)

A Historical Background of Civil-military Relations in Spain

The Dictatorship of General Primo de Rivera (1923–1930)

The *pronunciamento militar*[3] of Primo de Rivera in 1923 was a corporative intervention of the Spanish Army in the political process. The institution established a military regime, creating a political mindset by the transference of military values to civilian life (González-Martínez, 2000). This particular form of military intervention was a consequence of Spanish political, social, and economic instability at the beginning of the 20th century. The security situation was not only worsened by constant strikes and demonstrations, but also due to the fighting in industrial areas between anarchists and gunslingers hired by businessmen and organised in the so-called "Sindicatos Libres". Violence in the streets also affected politicians, as experienced by President Eduardo Dato who was killed in 1921 by three anarchists. The generalised situation of violence led to the need for military intervention in order to restore public security.

[3] Spanish original: It refers to non-violent military intervention in politics. It was the norm in Spain during the 19th century; the military took political power by having high-ranking officers appointed as Ministers or Prime Ministers.

Military organisations had been central to the political system, as the Spanish Constitution of 1876 defined public security as an exclusive competence of the Guardia Civil and the Army. This turned both into responsible institutions of internal stability, additionally increasing their power in the political system. Another key element of civil-military relations was the Moroccan War, whose only solution was direct military intervention (Sueiro, 1998; López-Rodríguez, 2019). As regards public security on the Iberian Peninsula and military operations in the Moroccan Protectorate, there was a favourable attitude from King Alfonso XIII towards the military which allowed for the *pronunciamiento* in 1923. The militarism of the early 20th century was not just a unique feature of Spain; it was also a common choice as regards other kings and emperors such as those who led pre-WWI Germany, Russia, and England, all of which gave European militaries a higher degree of freedom.

The contexts of the political and social also affected relationships within military organisations. Since the beginning of the Moroccan War, there were constant corporative tensions within the army. Officers deployed in Morocco were obtaining faster professional promotions, higher economic benefits, and more political influence than those on the Iberian Peninsula. This led to division within the Spanish Army, embodied between the *Junteros* (Officers in the Iberian Peninsula) and *Africanistas* (Officers in the Moroccan Protectorate). The first group organised the *Juntas de Defensa* to influence civilian power so as to obtain the same economic and corporative benefits as those militaries deployed in Africa. Despite the internal tensions, the intra-military conflict was not as intense as the rivalry between the civilian and military powers. Conflicts arising as a result of inefficient civilian crisis-management in the Moroccan War led to almost full support for Primo de Rivera's coup in 1923 (Cruz, 2001; González-Martínez, 2000).

Spain's military victory in the Moroccan War solved the crisis in the Protectorate (López-Rodríguez, 2019), contributing to an improvement and consolidation of the public image of the dictator. Despite the victory, Primo de Rivera didn't succeed in turning his military regime into a fascist entity similar to that of Italy or Portugal. He also failed in the creation of a Corporative Workers' Union, in addition to the fact that his political party, *Unión Patriótica*, was not particularly stable. The same happened when he tried to create a party militia, which was spoiled by internal military pressures. During this political period, the Spanish Army was a key actor which allowed the dictator to gain power, but which also forced him to abandon it in 1930. This period saw the direct participation of militaries in the political process. This was due to the fact that they were

the capstone of the regime and their power was superior even to that of the leader. Despite the inclusion of civilian decision-makers in 1926, the military had given itself a unilateral ability to influence transformation and change.

The Dictatorship of General Franco (1939–1975)

The military institution also had a core role in the consolidation and stabilisation of Franco's regime (Preston, 1967; Reniú, 2018). Experiences lived by Franco during the Moroccan War allowed him to establish solid personal and professional relationships with other *Africanistas*. This enabled him to obtain the support of the main part of the military officers during the failed *coup d'etat* in 1936 which derived into the Civil War. Despite political internal support (which varied depending both on the Spanish and international context), the military provided full support to the regime (Mir, 1982; Lewis, 2002). In contrast with other authoritarian regimes which required coup-proof institutions (Bou-Nassif, 2015), during the dictatorship in Spain, the process was quite different. Instead of creating separate organisations, Franco erased the police corps such as *Guardia de Asalto,* and militarised all security institutions, and achieved the military's support by identifying the idea of Spain with the regime itself. At the same time, the political organisation of the regime led to the establishing of three separate military ministries (the Army, Air Force, and Navy).

Francoism also achieved popular and military loyalty by building a hegemonic concept as regards the idea of Spain. According to theories of populism, there was a link built over the meaning and significance (Laclau, 2016) between Spain as a State and nation with the moral and ideological body of the regime. The identification between Spain and the moral of the regime increased the difficulty to determine the adscription of the army with the State, the political regime, and its degree of compromise with society (Gaub, 2014). In Spain's case, an initial identification between regime and State led to an implication of the Armed Forces with Spain and the Spanish people, which was a key factor during the democratic transition and the later support of the Armed Forces as regards the Spanish Monarchy.

During Francoism, the use of military force was designated to internal control. This had been present in other dictatorships (Andreski, 1980), in that the use of violence as a political tool was conditioned during Francoism by the political characteristics of each phase of the regime (Debs, 2010; Svolikim, 2013). In Spain, the use of military force was more

present during the post-war period, developing military operations in non-peninsular territories such as Ifni (1956–1958), Ecuatorial Guinea (1968), and the Spanish Sahara (1973–1975). Military deployments abroad were almost non-existent, and those which did occur were just to fulfil certain international agreements, as was the deployment of Spanish military doctors in the Vietnam War (Santamarta del Pozo, 2017; Criado Gutiérrez, 2016).

The Spanish Military During the Democratic Transition and Consolidation (1975–1981)

The transformation of military's role in the political system is an essential condition to guarantee peaceful and stable democratic transitions (Martínez et al., 2013). When studying the Spanish case, it is not unusual to find comparisons with Portugal as both have experienced democratic transitions in the same time frame, and the respective militaries were key actors in those processes. One of the first differences found is the disruptive position of the Portuguese military in 1974 in contrast to the sustainable approach adopted by the Spanish Military in 1975 (Olivas Osuna, 2019).

Regarding the relationship between militaries and regimes, Portugal's military was once subordinated to authoritarian civilian power. There were also security institutions that provided protection against coups as a security-based service, and there was a feeling of resentment in the military towards the regime due to the hard conditions of the African wars which led them to support the Carnation Revolution (Lewis, 2002). However, military power was core in the Spanish regime, and despite the negative predisposition of the military to abandon the Sahara, officers were loyal to high-ranking decision-makers, and there were not enough officers against the policies of the regime to create a similar situation as in Portugal. This was evidenced in the TV coverage of the withdrawal of Spanish troops from the Sahara in 1975, when the last Legionary Officer there was interviewed in the military base:

Journalist: "Is this the way out you would have liked for your soldiers, captain?"

Spanish Captain: "My men go fully proud and with their honour untouched, even raised, as they have achieved their duty. Our duty was what we were ordered [to do]. Maybe I personally would have rather [had] other solutions, but my men go out from here with the highest honour they can find" (20th December 1975, Spanish National TV).

Military loyalty to the regime led Transitional Prime Minister Adolfo Suarez to consider the army a relevant political actor in the democratic

transition. Understanding the context, Suarez appointed General Gutierrez Mellado, a high-ranking officer of repute since the Civil War, as Deputy Prime Minister (1976–1981) and later as the first Minister of Defense (1977–1979). His appointment led to a unifying of former military ministries and the beginning of the transformation of Spanish Armed Forces. General Gutierrez Mellado focused on transforming and modernising the Spanish military, guaranteeing military support for his decisions through his military rank. Administrative and organisational reforms allowed for the building of civil-military relations, and the legal framework was flexible and permissive enough with military freedom of action as it allowed ambiguous interpretations of the rules in the command chain (Puell de la Villa, 2005; Martinez, 2011).

Nevertheless, tensions between military and civilian decision-makers were constant during the country's transition and the first phase of its democracy. Between some cases, a first trial of a military *coup d'état* was avoided in 1978, known as *Operacion Galaxia*. Despite Spanish intelligence aborting it, a relevant number of military officers knew about it yet did not report it. That evidenced higher levels of officer loyalty to the military organisation than to the recent civilian government of Adolfo Suarez (Balbé, 1983). It was not until the *coup d'état* in 1981 did the Spanish Armed Forces remain loyal to the monarchy and democracy by not joining most of its officers in the coup, thereby avoiding it (Olivas Osuna, 2019).

The Current State of Civil-military Relations in Spain

The Spanish Armed Forces have experienced core transformations since the beginning of the country's democracy. During the 1980s, Spain joined NATO, the EU, and adopted a professional approach, building an expeditionary culture (López-Rodríguez, 2022a). These elements contribute towards developing the military as a tool of the State's power, increasing political influence over military change. This epigraph analyses the dimensions of civilian influence, to later study the origin of military change initiative BRIEX 2035, developed during a period of political alternation (2017–2021).

Political Influence over Strategic Scenarios and Budgetary Policy

This study shows that all military members interviewed stated that military change must be approved by political power. As was remarked at the theoretical level, civilian influence over military change can happen at

diverse levels (Posen, 1984). In the Spanish Army, the military remarked, as a key dimension, the work-life balance (EP02, EP13), and budgetary assignation (EP01, EP02, EP03, EP07, EP09, EP13, EP18, EP21). Budgetary assignation conditions the ability to acquire and modernise military equipment and doctrine (EP02, EP13).

> "Logically, political power is the one which distribute means, credit, and budgets. So it has great power, right? Because bringing about change or innovation without having the money or investment is difficult. Yes, I think that true change has to come from the top. It is true that in the Spanish Army, competences are the proposals of improvement and to mark the direction of the Army's evolution" (EP01, 2019).

> "They are also trying to make the armed forces, within the nation's capabilities, to be as efficient as possible (…). That's basically the case, in some parameters or in almost all of them, but mainly in terms of expenditure. So we're gonna (sic) try to ensure that the spending we can afford with regard to Defense is as efficient as possible so that we have have a modern armed forces" (EP02, 2019).

Related to military performance, the political level defines operational frameworks and strategic scenarios (EP06, EP07, EP10, EP11, EP12, EP14, EP15, EP16), seeking to use the military as a tool in State policy. Despite civilian influence over operations and budgetary policy, politicians usually require the support of military decision-makers with technical knowledge (EP18, EP05, EP12, EP15). This has been stated in the theoretical approaches to civil-military relations, military advisors being necessary to guide civilian power (Nielsen, 1999; Rapp, 2015).

> "The political level defines the operational frame and any missions assigned to its armed forces, but it also has to know the limitations, possibilities, and capabilities of the armed forces to assign them those missions. So I think that it is effectively a top-down process, by which I mean, from the political level to the military level or the military-strategic level and purely military level and in the opposite direction, too" (EP06, 2019).

> "The political level is fundamental because it is the one which provides the frameworks. The Chiefs of Staff logically have a lot to say, but it's always according to that which is established by the political level" (EP07, 2019).

During ongoing military operations, military decisions could be constrained by political power, as civilians establish the acceptable limits of risk (EP10). This can imply that flexible leadership and command styles could lead to a transcending of conventional limits of risk and create

friction between politicians and the military (Ben-Shalom, Shamir, 2010). In contrast to other cases (Jordán, 2017), in Spain there is a low tendency to modify organisational military structures from the political level. The most remarkable case would be the creation of the Military Emergency Unit in 2005 as a result of the direct proposal of the then Prime Minister (López-Rodríguez, 2022b). Military participants remarked that due to its performance in health/natural crises, social perceptions to the military in Spain have substantially improved.

> "As regards structures, I don't think that politicians intervene in organisational structure issues. I can say that the most relevant case I've seen was the creation of the UME (…), which today could be the most accepted army unit. That's because it works for the population. If there's a flood, there is the UME. If there's a fire, there is the UME. In that sense, it has provided us with a good perception of the army. That is because they are not firefighters, they are military" (EP18, 2019).

Military Change During Political Uncertainty: Experimental Brigade 2035

After identifying the areas of political influence, BRIEX 2035 was selected as a case study to test the applicability of the civil-military relations paradigm in Spain. As was previously mentioned, this change process seeks to transform the Spanish Army's doctrine, structure, and procedures until 2035. The modernisation project has been implemented in coordination with Defense Industry companies such as General Dynamics or Indra, as well in cooperation with public Spanish Universities to design Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) and high-tech weaponry (Blanco-Rodríguez, 2019). Within other technological elements, one of the most remarkable has been the inclusion of the new infantry vehicle *Dragon 8x8*, and, for the Spanish Defense Establishment, its manufacture by Spanish companies would be desirable. The relevance of BRIEX 2035 for civil-military relations is that it began during the last People's Party government (2016–2018), continued by the Socialist Party (2018–2020), and maintained during the coalition government of the Socialist Party and Podemos (2020).

This transformation process involves two main military units; Training and Doctrine Command designed and developed the Future Land Operating environment since its conceptual phase (EP02, EP04), while some units of the Spanish Legion were selected to experiment with new procedures (EP02, EP09). One of the initial questions related to this research was the criteria that led to choosing the Spanish Legion as the experimental unit. It was not possible to obtain a definite answer to this question, as some of the participants in this study remarked upon the

impossibility to answer objectively due to an emotional bond with the unit, but indicating that maybe its organisational culture was the main reason (EP10, EP18).

In addition to modernising and increasing the efficiency of the Spanish Army, EP15 pointed that it also allows the Spanish Army to adapt to another kind of armed conflict. His contribution showed that NATO's armies had been focused on counterinsurgency, while other militaries had decided upon procedures regarding conventional conflict. Interviewees from the doctrine community and the Spanish Legion stated that it was a military initiative with approval from the political level (EP05, EP06, EP07, EP09, EP13, and EP15). Some of the participants declared directly that it was quite probable that the initiative originated from the Spanish Army's Chief of Staff (EP07, EP09, EP10, EP14, EP18), seeking to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of their land forces.

> "This change process of BRIEX 2035 has been promoted by the Spanish Army. Specifically by JEME, a.k.a. the General of the Army. He has been the fundamental engine of this process. Of course, he has the approval of the political authorities. The Defense Minister views it most favourably, and it is a process which is receiving the support of other superior levels of the Spanish Army from the Ministerial level" (EP09, 2019).

> "I think that it is on both sides. Without efforts from both parties, nothing is possible. I mean, I think that, effectively, it is a military impulse, logically supported by politicians" (EP13, 2019).

> "I think that it comes from the Army's Chief of Staff, he is the one who has promoted a future plan. Well, moreover, it defines what we have now, but also what we would like to have in the mid-term, right? Let's say, as regards the mid-term, twenty years from now" (EP18, 2019).

The analysis shows the relevance of military decision-makers in the planning, designing, and implementation of BRIEX 2035. According to theoretical paradigms, we can determine that is not fully in accordance with the explicative paradigm of civil-military relations, in which politicians decide the implementation of the change process (Posen, 1984). In contrast, it would be a military initiative from high, decision-making levels, more according to the military's top-down model (Rosen, 1991). In accordance with that which was stated by the interviewees during this research, it is a military initiative with political support. The initiative is in the frame of military competences, so it would not be a political initiative. It was relevant to determine the source of change, as it happened during a period of political alternation in government.

The selected case allows one to identify the influence of other theoretical explanations as regards the source of military change, seeing a tendency to emulate other armies (Horowitz, 2010), as was stated in other research about military change in Spain (López-Rodríguez, 2022a). This fact is present in the conceptual phase of the future land operating environment, in which the Spanish Army took an analysis developed by other countries including the UK, the US, Canada, France, and New Zealand as a reference (EP02, EP03, EP04, EP07). The process is conformed also by an effective system of lessons learned (Nagl, 2002; Davidson, 2010) on the conceptual level, but also in the later implementation phase. The Spanish Army's own lessons in international operations ease the correction of procedural and operative failures (Lopez-Rodriguez, 2022a). Finally, it would be too early to determine structural and doctrinal changes from the inclusion of new technology (Van Creveld, 1991). Despite the fact that one of the core elements is the inclusion of new technological and weapons systems, we cannot determine their influence over military change until they are tested in a combat environment.

Conclusions

This research provides an additional study about civil-military relations in Spain. A historical analysis has been developed in two under-analysed periods from a civil-military relations perspective. However, this article presents limitations related to primary data production, especially during Primo de Rivera's and Franco's dictatorships. It has not been possible to obtain military perceptions from both periods, which could have been relevant in a comparison with current data. The Spanish Army has substantially changed during the last century, turning from a conscription-style army into an expeditionary force able to deploy overseas. In addition to its internal organisational dimension, the role of the Spanish Army in the political process and system has also substantially changed; it is currently an organisation which serves the State and the people.

This analysis evidences the evolution of military's role in Spain over the last century. The Spanish Army has changed from an independent actor with influence over the political process into an organisation which serves the State and Spanish society. Historical analysis identifies key points in its relations with the political sphere. Through data compilation, we can determine the degree of civilian influence over military change. Interviewees coincided on how politicians define general frames of operations, budgetary limits, and instructions related to the use of force. At the same time, and within the frame of its competences and budget,

are high-ranking, HQ-based, military personnel who design and define operational and tactical performances, being able to propose improvements to the political level.

In addition to it being stated in other research, political decision-makers require military support to implement organisational change. Despite its previous historical background, in Spain there is a balance between military and civilian power. Political decision-makers do not usually modify military structures and doctrine, it being the military responsible for such things within its competences. Taking BRIEX 2035 as a reference, the initiative continued between 2017 and 2021. In addition to its prevalence, participants in this study remarked that it was the brainchild of high-ranking military commanders, being explained by a top-down impulse.

Once the military's perspective about civil-military relations has been obtained, it would be relevant to incorporate a political or social perspective in the debate. Future lines of research could be developed around the civilian perspective of military change, both politically and socially. Social perceptions about military organisation in Spain is a field especially interesting to investigate, in an attempt to determine the degree of social acceptance, as well as whether the socio-demographic factor has any influence over them.

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War and Food (In)security – A Lesson from the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict

Abstract

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has implemented legitimate fears of a global crisis and further and inevitably aggravating existing food-security challenges. The international community is being called upon to take targeted action to address the rapidly-evolving, resultant scenarios, making it essential to go beyond immediate interim measures and to re-examine the agricultural and energy policies that underpin our global economy.
This article, without any claim to exhaustiveness, examines the inevitable link between war and the dynamics related to food security. In the first instance, a theoretical-interpretative key of the logics of violent conflicts that generate a relevant impact on global food supplies and food (in)security is provided, within the broader framework of the dynamics related to the instability of international relations which hinder the supply of energy resources and determine the volatility of general price levels. In the concluding section, there is reflection crossed reference to the ongoing Russia/Ukraine conflict as well as the devastating consequences on global food systems, already put under stress by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: Food Security, War, Crisis, Russia, Ukraine, Energy Instability, European Union

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War and Food Security. Introductory Notes

The correlation between food security and stability has always given rise to the idea of a bond prompting great peace of mind (Brucket et al., 2016). Whereas, to the contrary, armed conflicts, especially in a highly globalised context, generating upheaval and becoming the maximum expression of an emergency (Fenucci, 2014), appear to be a determining factor in the food insecurity that also affects regions located outside the battlefield (Behnassi, El Haiba, 2022). As is well known, food security pursues the ambitious goal of achieving free access to food, both in terms of quantity and quality; *rectius*, food security comes true only when "every person, at all times, has physical, social and economic access to sufficient, healthy, and nutritious food capable of satisfying the needs and food preferences necessary for an active and healthy life" (Rodotà, 2014). If this definition, consolidated by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), declines food security in such terms, then it is easy to understand how the extent of food insecurity - measured by the levels of malnutrition, or by the number and share of the population that consumes inadequate quantities and insufficient nutritious food to meet one's dietary need – essentially depends on the availability and accessibility of food; availability and accessibility that, in contexts marked by conflict, creates many obstacles: "In fact, conflict is the main driver of hunger in most of the world's food crises. Conflict breeds hunger. It can displace farmers and destroy agricultural assets and food stocks. Or it can disrupt markets, driving up prices and damaging livelihoods. In this vicious circle, conflict and lack of food break down the very fabric of society, and all too often lead to violence" (Haga, 2021). Food insecurity, the main source of geopolitical tensions and social unrest (Bellemare, 2015), exacerbates existing frustrations, upsets the social order, and pushes states towards political instability (Soffiantini, 2020).

The current Russia-Ukraine war has, in fact, generated new uncertainty, revealing the systemic weaknesses extant in the structures connected to international food security. In fact, since 2020, global average monthly food prices have generally been higher than in previous years for a variety of reasons linked primarily to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has generated obstacles in the global food supply chain. The droughts that have hit the agricultural production of various countries, natural disasters and environmental changes, along with the many conflicts in progress in the world, are added to "structural phenomena in recent decades such as the spread of poverty, the unequal distribution of resources in the face of rapid demographic growth, periodic economic crises, and political

instability contribute to food insecurity all over the world" (Zupi, 2022). The conflict also resulted in,[1] given that the entire sector of the agri-food system is now subjected to a growing level of internationalisation. In fact, the procurement of raw materials takes place on international markets, multinational companies control a large part of the distribution chain, and many countries are dependent on imports to satisfy domestic food consumption. These aspects characterise the entire agri-food chain as being highly global and complex, with evident repercussions also in terms of the minimum standards and guarantees necessary to protect the safety, health, and quality of food. Moreover, if agri-food activities are among the most vulnerable to climate change, then the need to guarantee access to healthy food must be combined with the sustainability of production, distribution, and consumption processes. In this sense, "food security is therefore increasingly becoming a global issue that is affected by the internal dynamics of individual countries or economic areas" (Giannelli et al., 2021, p. 47).

The triggered upheaval, with all the human-based security implications that it could entail, crept into the sheaf of pre-existing challenges that had already put pressure on prices and supply chains in addition to the fact that dependencies on international trade were already at the centre of attention before the Russian invasion of Ukraine, due to the unprecedented shock caused by the disruption of food systems caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, amplifying the level of alert either on strategic dependencies and the resilience of supply chains global, or on their ability to cope with vulnerabilities (Hellegers, 2022). Thus, the food crisis that is spreading is certainly not happening in a vacuum, but is grafted onto a context that is already strongly and dramatically marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, an energy crisis, maritime constraints, and recent climate-induced events (Nicas, 2022). In this sense, the war is part of a context characterised by the consequences of the pandemic, highlighting the criticalities of global supply chains, causing the increase in the price of raw materials that worsen and amplify a worsening of food security. This war involves Ukraine, one of the world's granaries, from which 34% of the wheat, 27% of the barley, 18% of the corn, as well as 73% of the sunflower oil products come, are exported via Black Sea ports, and which reach many countries of the Mediterranean, the Middle East, and sub-Saharan Africa. For its

[1] An information note from the FAO highlighted that Ukraine and Russia are among the most important producers of agricultural products in the world, FAO, 2022. *The importance of Ukraine and the Russian Federation for global agricultural markets and the risks associated with the current conflict*, 25th March 2022, https://www.fao.org/3/cb9236en/cb9236en.pdf.

part, Russia is among the world's largest producers of potash (17%) and nitrogen fertilisers (15%). The shock of the agricultural commodity and fertiliser supply chains, as well as the energy crisis linked to sanctions against Russia and the evident logistical limitations due to the war reduce the availability of these products on the markets with an effect also in the medium term. Additionally, at the global-offer level, there are the export bans imposed by some countries such as Argentina and Hungary.

However, global food insecurity caused by the conflict in Ukraine reflects a problematic issue, indeed it is a wicked problem; complex, unpredictable, indefinite and, in some ways, intractable by its nature: "The war ushered in a period of higher food prices and reduced fiscal budgets, owing to previous bouts with COVID-19. Governments are thus less capable of providing income support to mitigate the impacts of rising food prices. A further risk is that hunger can feed into further conflict, raising the potential for further social instability driven by poorer segments of society with limited food access, especially should this coincide with climate disruptions in importing countries" (Montescaloros-Sembiring, 2022). After a period of decline in the last decade, the hunger issue shows once again its alarming and worrying face; the UN foresees a sort of so-called "hurricane of hunger" in the least developed countries of the world. "Hunger is on the rise globally for many reasons, including climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, and internal conflicts. But with blocked ports and exports limits from both Russia and Ukraine, countries that rely on them for staple foods are at a loss. Shortages of fertiliser and fuel are also making it difficult to produce crops such as wheat, corn, sunflower, and safflower, complicating a critical planting season that starts in April in Ukraine. The lack of ability to plant this year could lead to fewer crops and an even worse outlook for food security" (Diaz, 2022).

The forecasts, therefore, are not optimistic; the ongoing war will increase this trend and this will undermine, (Berlinger, 2022).[2] *sine, dubio*, the results achieved in the food safety sector during the last decade, including those pursued through the Sustainable Development Goals. In short, it is a war which, by intercepting a global food system that is tired and under stress due to further conflicts – including the unequal distribution of resources, the spread of poverty, a health and environmental crisis, political instability – risks drastically aggravating the spread of general food insecurity, and to complicate the pursuit of goal 2 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – Zero Hunger – a goal which aims to end hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition and

[2] Experts estimate that 7.6 to 13.1 million people are threatened.

promote sustainable agriculture, and that, of course, greatly depends on the progress made under SDG 16 – Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions – which aims at promoting inclusive societies. This means that, in addition to the quantitative objective of eliminating hunger (so-called "Zero Hunger"), objective 2 also includes a sub-objective relating to the quality of food, aiming to eradicate malnutrition in all its forms, and an objective of economic transformation aimed at increasing agricultural productivity and the income of small farmers by guaranteeing a model of sustainable agriculture (Zupi, 2022). In this regard, it is worth remembering that "(Civil) wars and violent conflicts are a drastic setback for every type of sustainable development. Conflict-affected countries are far from reaching the milestones of all SDG targets such as food security, including SDG 1 – 'No Poverty', or SDG 10 – 'Reduced Inequalities', in the first place. Food security, in turn, is necessary to achieve progress on SDG 16" (Kemmerling et al., 2022).

Undoubtedly, all armed conflicts weaken the ability of nations, families, and individuals to meet their food needs and can also hinder the cultivation, harvesting, processing, transport, and marketing of food. "There is no doubt that conflict exacerbates food insecurity. Conflict can reduce the amount of food available, disrupt people's access to food, limits families' access to food preparation facilities and health care, and increase uncertainty about satisfying future needs for food and nutrition" (Simmons, 2013). In particular, conflict can affect the ability of food systems and supply chains to function properly; production decreases due to producers being engaged in war operations, being unable to produce or even fleeing the country, agricultural inputs suffer a substantial interruption in foreign markets, and agricultural yields and water infrastructure are destroyed by military operations (Behnassi, El Haiba, 2022). Increasingly, armed conflicts can affect consumers' ability to access sufficiently adequate food due to their declining purchasing power or the problem of food availability, they also involve an increase in food prices on local and international markets with negative effects on the import of food products in low-income countries, and, finally, they affect the ability of international food aid to meet growing food needs in times of crisis. Therefore, at present, the set of food risks, as a worrying outcome of armed conflicts, deserves to be considered, albeit briefly.

There is no doubt, as already pointed out, that many of today's food crises are linked to wars and violent conflicts. Equally indubitable are the impacts of clashes and displacements (Gerlach, Ryndzak, 2022) on food security in the form of the destruction of agricultural land, irrigation systems and infrastructure, and chronic food insecurity, in turn, can

become a key factor in prolonging or intensifying conflicts, instigating a vicious cycle of violence and hunger (Martin-Shields, Stojetz, 2019). Therefore, there are many interconnections between food insecurity and violent conflicts; these correlations are often characterised by a high degree of complexity and contextualisation which, just as often, coincide with multi-layered crises which, in turn, contemplate the proliferation of terrorist groups and criminal networks, also implementing the fragility of the state (Kemmerling, 2022). It is rather peculiar, and at times surprising, to note that (Brück et al., 2016), conceptually, the encounter between the two thematic fields has scarcely been targeted analytically. In terms of food and nutrition research, the criteria for determining the state of food insecurity have been identified on the basis of four dimensions – availability, access, stability, and safety – which also include a series of variables referring to the sectors of health, food, and agricultural production prices. Constant analytical monitoring, which assesses global, regional, and national food security, in order to implement knowledge and identify needs, identifies the presence of conflicts as one of the drivers of food insecurity.[3] On the other hand, on the side of conflict studies, the research identifies and distinguishes between the duration and intensity of violent conflicts, the causes, the key factors and the methods of mobilisation, but although there are numerous investigations, a categorisation of conflicts is still missing, which includes food insecurity as a qualifying indicator.

Recently, in order to overcome this gap, the web of relations between wars and food insecurity has been a subject of reflection which is worth mentioning; regarding the impact generated, four dimensions have been identified – destruction, conflict-induced displacement, food control, and "hunger" (United Nations Security Council, 2018) as a weapon of war – which are key amplifiers of a sort of vicious circle that occurs between the two poles. The unfolding of these dimensions determines the inevitable implementation of food insecurity, contributing to increasing structural vulnerability within the affected societies; rising food prices and social inequalities, exclusion from political decision-making and the (prosperous) fragility of the state are, in turn, potential triggers of violent conflicts. Increasingly, this vicious circle is directly or indirectly influenced by external influencing factors such as pandemics, economic shocks, natural hazards, and climate change (Kemmerling et al., 2022).

With regard to the first intercepted dimension – destruction – it should be emphasised that violent clashes generate, to use the metaphor, a destructive mass that first of all exploits the vulnerability of human

[3] See the annual reports produced by the FAO, IFAD, Unicef, WFP, and WHO on the state of food and nutrition security in the world.

beings in various ways, causing vicious circles of violence and hunger, and particularly affecting the agricultural sector, which suffers more damage compared to other economic sectors. Most of the battles and fights, which take place in rural areas, where, incidentally, it is easier to hide (Fearon, Laitin, 2003), deal severe blows to small-scale agriculture and livestock – commodities which we know play an important role in the production of subsistence economies – by exposing them to the destructive effects of war. The destruction (due to bombing) or contamination (due to land mines and chemical weapons) of agricultural areas, as well as the decimation of infrastructure (irrigation systems, roads, bridges, and buildings) not only entail massive agricultural production losses, but could also force farmers to abandon the sector because they are no longer able to cultivate the fields due to a lack of access to seeds, fertilisers, credit, and capital, all caused by the uncertainty of access to buyers and markets (Bauman, Kuemmerle, 2016). Added to this are the dynamics associated with the reconstruction of war-torn countries, whose rehabilitation of areas for food production and supply requires quite a long time; cleaning up the battlefields, rebuilding the physical infrastructure, and establishing operational governance structures. It takes both years and resources, not to mention that post-conflict reconstruction phases are often complicated by bitter disputes over access and ownership issues (Van Leeuwenn, Van Der Haar, 2016).

Of course, war-based devastation and degradation of agricultural land and its related infrastructure provokes the second dimension; conflict-induced, large-scale displacements that not only result in the collapse of agricultural production and infrastructural degradation, but also abruptly disrupt the chains of local and regional supply by increasing the prices of food on local markets. At the same time, displaced people have to give up their livelihoods as food producers, and are thus exposed to food insecurity themselves, especially if they cannot eventually resume agricultural activities (Bruck et al., 2016).

With regard to the third dimension identified – the control of food – it should be noted that during violent wars, the supplying of food acquires strategic economic importance for any armed group. The presence and governance of armed groups have a direct impact on local food security and the control of production areas. Historically, the supply of food to large armies went hand in hand with the plundering of food supplies *and* the plundering of families and civilian markets. Although looting is still a common strategy for armed groups, the links between the presence of armed groups and food security are not necessarily destructive; armed groups often show a strong interest in increasing local food production.

Fighters can take direct control of agricultural resources and livestock for sustenance or impose taxes on these products. Consequently, people in conflict-affected contexts also adapt their practices to political changes and (local) political actors. To protect their livelihoods and food security, people (voluntarily or forcibly) cooperate with armed groups (Martin-Schields, Stojetz, 2019). Individuals can support armed groups to take advantage of a conflict through better economic opportunities, and access to food, farmland or livestock. Moreover, the way in which armed groups deal with food production is a significant indicator of their relationship with local communities (Oberschall, Seidman, 2005).

Finally, with regard to the fourth dimension – hunger as a weapon of war – we note how, in cases of violent conflicts directed against specific social segments (that of the ethnic, religious or political), food insecurity can even become a weapon of war (Messer, Cohen, 2015) and turn into a real intentional military strategy that includes cutting food supplies to harm hostile armed groups and those who support them, and, in some cases, the creation of humanitarian access barriers for the distribution of aid. Blocking access to food and destroying food infrastructure – filling wells and canals with concrete, destroying arable land (the so-called "scorched earth" policy) – represent violent techniques calculated not only to spark mass hunger, malnutrition, and hunger among the population, but also to encourage displacement and erase the memory of those who once lived there (Wimme, Schetter, 2003).

Indeed, to the critical consequences generated by wars and suffered by the social sphere can we add a worsening of diplomatic relations between countries; the balance of power is regulated through drastic measures, as well as through spurious uses of one's resources, up to and including dramatically resorting to the use of arms, nullifying any geopolitical stability.

International Stability Under Siege

The international order is made up of a set of extremely unstable relationships, as the mathematician René Thom prophesied it would be during the 1950s. With regard to the main causes, the scholar identified them in a series of vectors, such as the cyclical nature of various crises, the wearing down of some institutions, but, above all, war. The start of the era of extreme uncertainty was also marked by the establishment of new alliances, such as that of BRICS, in Southeast Asia. The strategies of these new actors are developed through the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative, which in fact rewrote the geopolitical routes against the rubble of liberal

globalisation (Di Lucia, 2022). The role of the hegemonic powers appears to be fundamental for reordering the directives of the global establishment through the establishment of diplomatic plots.

The concept of hegemony translates into a combination of so-called "hard" and "soft" power. The first interpretation is purely of a military nature, with the USA and the Russian Federation being the main exponents, as holders of atomic weapons; the second interpretation, on the other hand, is of a financial and charismatic nature, as represented by the Popular Republic of China, and due to the fact that it possesses US public debt securities, raw materials, and an extensive production chain (Gruppi, 1977). The extreme variety of these international actors and the security nihilism that prevails in foreign policy do not always allow diplomacy to fulfill the role for which it was designated, and relations between states can lead to exhausting power relations. The medium powers often adopt an illiberal logic that turns into an aggressive foreign line, while the great powers usually assume a democratic and liberal attitude; therefore the proliferation of invasions and conflicts is on the agenda. The need to curb this shock has been identified by international law, which has criminalised any practical implementation of the *jus ad bellum*. Indeed, the new system repudiates the use of force as a crime against peace, as history taught us to do during the Eichmann, Pinochet and other dictators' trials (Dogliani, 2022). For this reason, the European Council decided to adopt policies against the Russian Federation and its invasion of Ukraine. In this regard, the EU institution has adopted five packages of sanctions against Putin's state. The first prohibits marketing, especially export through the Donetsk and Lugansk channels and the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline. The second package is aimed at sanctioning measures mainly against President Putin, Duma members, and, in particular, Minister of Foreign Affairs Lavrov. The third, on the other hand, refers to logistical sanctions. For example, it is linked to the aviation sector, but also to the main banks, such as Bank *Otkritie* and Bank *Rossiya*. The fourth package affects the privileged class of oligarchs, and due to the fact that the business lobbies that have retained great patrimonial advantages, it is no coincidence that the G7 excluded Russia from the "most favoured nation" clause in the World Trade Organization. The fifth package is aimed at diversifying sources of gas supply, so it tends to block coal imports and freeze assets, including wood and vodka, to the European Union. Finally, a series of precautionary measures was also adopted against the media, including the information centers Sputnik and RT/Russia Today (Ali, 2022).

The evolution of so-called "defensive alliances" and blocks opposed to the use of force also derives from the modification of the constitutive

features of a conflict. In this way, it appears that a valid geopolitical interpretation is undoubtedly needed to analyse how wars have undergone structural change over the years.

In the first place, the projections have changed. From 1990 to 2014, conflict dynamics were oriented in a regional context, rather than in an international context. The conflict of territorial annexation has given way to the war of space fragmentation, with a strong involvement of civilians, and whose focus lies in sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East (Baliki, Brück, Stojetz, 2018).[4] In this regard, an analytical unit has been set up, namely, the World Governance Indicators Government Effectiveness Score, to indicate the adequacy of governments and the stability of peacekeeping policies (Baliki, Brück, 2017). Specifically, the indicator is aimed at identifying that which can be described as so-called "fragile states", stigmatised for the failure to carry out the nation-building process, as well as being characterised by an unfinished transition to democracy and security. The re-ordering of the conflictual dynamics at the regional level has intensified heterogeneity and local peculiarities, both as regards food products (influenced by the geopolitics of the place) and for the welfare state policies implemented by governments (depending on the territorial characteristics).

To reach the present day, the current Russian-Ukrainian conflict has shifted the centre of gravity of directives back to Europe. The "military operation", as announced by Vladimir Putin, was intended to "de-nazify" the government of Kiev. Nevertheless, the "operation" has undergone a dramatic transformation, passing from a blitzkrieg to a war of attrition. The military aggression against Ukraine has upset all the balance between powers in a year already heavily marked by the legacy of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as by the death of a valid mediator, namely, Gorbachev. The generational transition from the former Secretary General of the CPSU to the current government was the trigger for a series of determining elements in the internal and global scenario. Gorbachev, the father of *perestroika* and *glasnost*, conferred negotiating flexibility on his executive, ushering in the end of the cold war through the logic of escalate to de-escalate. The current president instead re-established escalation domination, thereby re-proposing the despotic tsarist doctrine (Risi, 2022). Furthermore, political authoritarianism has favoured the expansion of the middle classes, which have expanded their power through the privatisation of entities. The economic monopoly and the oligarchy have

[4] On this point, Baliki G., Brück T., Stojetz. From 2014 to 2016, the number of deaths in violent conflicts rose from 4900 to 102,000, while in 2017 the number of victims amounted to over 9000 in Sudan, Nigeria, Yemen, and Somalia.

facilitated the "vertical" setting of power, above all through corruption and the control of information (Rosso, 2022).

Secondly, the globalisation of the economy has centralised the role of resources and the arms market. The "military-industrial complex" of the former US president, Dwight Eisenhower, was realised from the moment in which General Dynamics and Raytheon Boeing actively participated in foreign policy, as indeed the energy organisations already do, as observed in the development of the so-called "OGAM complex" (oil, gas, mining). It is no coincidence that in the foreign sphere, Putin is playing on highly-strategic negotiating tables, as seen during a meeting chaired by the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Samarkand in September 2022, in which Iran and Pakistan also took part. Russia and the People's Republic of China are backing each other over the annexation of Taiwan and Ukraine, among other things, and links are also facilitated by a gas pipeline that connects the two countries (Cangelosi, 2022). Now, it is possible to understand how the holding of resources is closely related to the outcome of the wars, determining the first constitutive feature of the new conflicts. In this new scenario, the participation of corporations proves to be fundamental and a substitute for that of democracies, as legal entities take relevant decisions. An example of this would be when the Federal Energy Regulation cancelled the climate control plan to revitalise production (Grande, 2022).

Thirdly, the new military strategies are characterised by a lack of morale, and, in fact, do not exclude targets such as civilians. The risks that the inhabitants face are extremely high, which is why internally-displaced persons can easily end up in the clutches of organised crime. In this regard, the Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Trafficking (GRETA) has raised the alarm, appealing to the need to apply adequate regulatory protection (Viviani, 2022).[5] Among the various instruments, there is decision 2022/382, which in article 1 establishes temporary protection for stateless persons, for their families, and citizens of third countries; article 2 indicates protection for displaced persons from the same geographical area; the third category, on the other hand, covers irregular stateless persons in Ukraine (Scissa, 2022).

To sum up, the current Russian-Ukrainian conflict embodies all the peculiarities of new conflicts. Moreover, it has settled outside the border, highlighting a series of distortions along with the results of globalisation, first of all making evident the structural defects of the production and

[5] Approximately 3.9 million Ukrainians left their country, 92% of them moving to neighbouring countries, such as Poland, Romania, and Hungary, while 271,000 refugees moved to Russia from Donetsk and Lugansk.

storage chains of resources, and then highlighting the close dependence of many countries on the export of some rural resources. (Kemmerling, Schetter, Wirkus, 2022). In fact, the two states engaged in the conflict export 30% of the global demand for rice, corn, barley, along with fertilisers and other products used in bucolic activities. The data confirm Russia's role as a major stakeholder in the international arena. As examples, it exports 18% of global coal, 11% of oil, and 10% of gas (FAO, 2022). In total, the value of global exports of agricultural products amounts to €19.4 billion for Ukraine, €24.8 billion for Russia and €5 billion for Belarus (Bergevoet, Jukema, Verhoog, 2022). However, the increase in the prices of these products was significant; in March they increased by about 50% compared to the previous month and by 80% compared to last year. The rise mainly affected the economy of dependent countries such as Egypt ($6.6 million in imported wheat), Turkey ($4 million), Bangladesh ($4 million) and Iran ($1.1 million) (World Bank, 2022). As regards our context, Italy bases 63% of its needs on soft wheat and 39% on hard wheat. Therefore, the excessive dependence on an import-led model has made us bound by other international actors, determining the need to diversify procurement markets and turn elsewhere, specifically France and Germany (Scopece, 2022). Not surprisingly, some countries have decided to launch a policy program aimed at agricultural independence, as in the case of Indonesia and India, which are negotiating access to the rural economy of Egypt, Turkey, and Libya, and which are initiating diplomatic meetings with the Nigerian, Iranian, and Romanian Ministries of Commerce (European Commission, 2022).

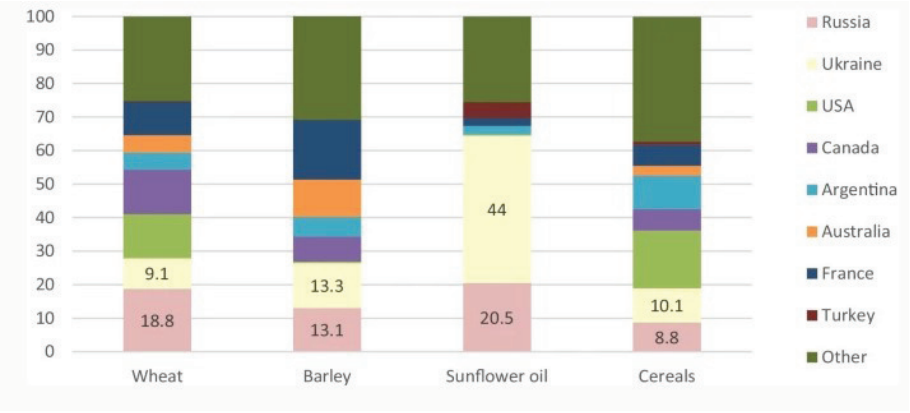

Figure 1. World Exports of Agricultural Resources in 2020

Source: FAOSTAT, March 2022, *https://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data*.

On balance, the excessive European dependence implies the absence of a mere process of autonomy of territorial programs. In this way, it is natural that farmers are forced to take advantage of surplus silos, and therefore to raise the general price levels of their products. The influence on the global South is dramatic, with the number of people threatened by hunger increasing significantly from 7.6 to 13.1 million, against any forecast of European development goals (Nicas, 2022). The tragic social conditions add up to that of the institutions, for example the World Food Program, dependent on 50% of Ukrainian rice, is heavily threatened (Lederer, 2022). Therefore, Europe is trying to launch multidisciplinary programs aimed at a so-called 'green revolution', that can compete with food and economic challenges. The strategies implemented by mediation must respond to logistical challenges in such a way as to unblock the stalemate of the European agricultural market. In this regard, the United Nations World Food Program highlighted the emergency for 205 million people, double in number as compared to 2016, and especially in the Middle East. The adoption of effective solutions to facilitate foreign trade is a necessary solution and, as an example, a number of solidarity corridors have been built since summer 2022 to facilitate the transit of 61% of exports from Kiev. The Black Sea Grain Initiative allowed the transit of 3.5 million agricultural products in September 2022 (European Council, 2022). Multilateral coordination must remove trade barriers, which is why the FARM (Food and Agricultural Resilience Mission) has been established, and ties with the African Union strengthened. The global approach to food security is to adopt mitigation packages for third countries, so as to foster self-sufficiency and trade integration, as well as transparency and dialogue (Hellegers, 2022).

The tragic effects unleashed by the conflict have spilled over more so onto the food market, hence the considerable problem of food insecurity (van Meijl et al., 2022). The definition of "food security" emblematically connoted by the FAO, opens up to a complex and dynamic interpretation: four keywords, namely, availability (sufficient quantity of food); access (resources to obtain food); use (that is, nutritious, safe diets, and clean water); and stability (permanence). Access to food interpreted as purchasing power by food consumers has reached critical figures, between 8% and 10%. Specifically, the production of food goods that accesses international trade is 30% (Barazza, Cingolani, 2022).[6] The considerable

[6] 70% of food production comes from small businesses and generally exports only to local markets. 25% of global production comes from large Russian and Ukrainian private companies, of which 7% is exported internationally.

increase in the costs of agricultural resources of around 10% is also due to the excessive consumption of fossil energy by farmers. Those farmers employ large quantities of chemical production factors, such as herbicides and pesticides, as well as transporting products by truck or ship, with incisive effects on oil prices (Barazza, Cingolani, 2022). As a consequence, domestic consumers have adopted price fluctuation protection practices (FAO, 2022), for example, on March 5th, the Ukrainian government introduced a "zero quota" for a substantial component of its products, including salt and sugar.

Naturally, the food crisis depends on a series of economic aspects, for example, the "inventory/use" ratio is undermined by the shortage of available stocks (Bobenrieth, Wright, Zeng, 2012). This economic strangulation also derives from an excessive financialisation of the food market, the liberalisation of which intensified between 1999 and 2000, following the elimination of futures contracts capable of managing price volatility and preventing financial speculation (McKeon, 2019).

Food insecurity and the failure to adequately implement the right to food in terms of collectability provoke anti-social attitudes, confirming the anthropological difficulty of accumulating resources to survive an economic shock (Brück, 2016). Recently, the effects of the war on the international trade in food products are quantifiable and measurable through the use of a very broad and versatile economic model in the form of the so-called MAGNET (van Meijl et al., 2022). This is an analytical unit, whose main purpose is to contemplate and include the economic variables of all countries, divided according to the economic sectors; it also considers bilateral relations and also trade in food products, such as cereals and seed oil. In this way, it is possible to carry out a neoclassical interpretation of a country's economy, both for macroeconomic variables (GDP) and for the attitude of national consumers. Such a model intercepts and evaluates the effects of war not only in the international scenario, but also in economic and social areas.

Among the many economic indicators, the volatility of the Food Price Index confirms a critical trend. Starting from March 2022, it has maintained an average of 159.3 points, having an influence on about 40% on the income of consumers and more than 80% of the countries that suffer from so-called "food inflation". According to the United Nations, around 69 countries (of a total of 1.2 billion people) are exposed to conditions of high inflation and rising energy prices. The FAO claims that there are between 8 and 13 million malnourished people. Considering Africa individually, the data are shocking, with about 33.4 million people in West Africa, 22 million between Nigeria and Sierra Leone and about

20 million in Kenya, Ethiopia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, all contending with malnourishment (Fao, 2022).

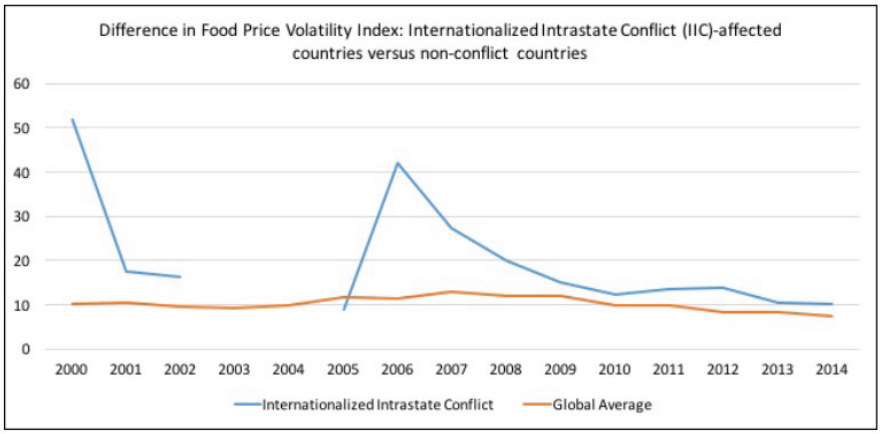

Figure 2. The Difference in the Volatility of the Food Price Index in Countries in a State of War and Those Not

Source: Brück, 2016, p. 42.

The multi-commodity crises demonstrate a strong logistical-productive instability, which is why there have been implemented strategies to combat (above all) the problems related to infrastructure, railways, and the social consequences that derive from them. The lack of access to drinking water for 1.4 million people has intensified the migratory flow; in fact, today there are about 4 million refugees who have left Ukraine due to a lack of such resources. The crisis also derives from transport difficulties both in the air sector (following the declaration of the no-fly zone), and in the energy sector. The *Henry Hub Natural Gas* pipeline manages the widespread diffusion of gas between Poland, Ukraine, and the Black Sea, which is currently experiencing a 160% price increase. *United Company Rusal*, the world's second largest producer of nickel and light metal for the automotive industry, has experienced a cost increase of $3,200 per tonne. Another industry under attack is *Nornickel*, the world's largest exporter of mineral resources which produces stainless steel and batteries for electric cars. However, the malfunctioning of its production chain determines consumer preference for petrol cars, increasing the negative effects on the environment and ecology (Ippolito, 2022).

Finally, the causes of the energy suffocation certainly include the bombings that the various forms of infrastructure continue to suffer, the port of Odessa was the principal target for the Russians, as it plays

a crucial role for grain exports (Guidi, 2022). Further targets included civilian buildings such as the *Vorzel* orphanage and an apartment building in Chuhuiv, near the airport (Coluzzi, 2022). The attacks also continue in digital form, and are an example of how conflicts are changing shape and taking on the characteristics of a cyber war. The State Special Communications Service has indicated that there have been over three thousand digital attacks compromising the proper functioning of power plants (Rubini, 2022).

As regards the decisive aspect, it is necessary to stimulate communication and dialogue within the community. First of all, the establishment of an energy union such as the common agricultural policy should be among the priority objectives so as to achieve independence on the resource front (Corazza, 2022). Europe should raise awareness as regards national rural programs through the planning of a new model of integration (Battistoni, 2022) so that cooperation can be replaced with competition, as well as making adequate use of the PNRR in logistics. With regard to institutions such as Confagricoltura, the Future Food Institute, and Federalimentare, they must adopt food policy programs and also raise awareness of direct dialogue with supply chains, associations, and research institutes (Giansanti, 2022). Of course, delegations should also make their presence felt more by organising meetings not only in Belarus, but also at the General Assembly and the United Nations Security Council (Gianmarinaro, 2022). A valid alternative would be to exploit the prominence of city diplomacy, such as that in Rome, London or Paris, where delegations can meet (Baccin, 2022) to find solutions and conduct mediations (Ferrajoli, 2022).

To conclude, it is necessary to be hopeful of a possible realignment of international relations. Should one take into account the etymology of the word 'crisis', it derives from the Greek *krisis*, or "choice/decision". The present, therefore, is a watershed moment, decisive for the resolution of global intrigues and problems.

The Global Impact of the Russia – Ukraine War on Food Systems: The Role of the EU

On February 24th, 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine. Since that time, the European Council and the Council of the European Union have met to discuss the situation and condemn the unprovoked and unjustified Russian military aggression. On March 2nd, EU Agriculture Ministers, meeting by video conference, discussed possible measures to be taken, including the activation of crisis monitoring tools and the introduction of

exceptional measures under the CMO for sectors affected by the increase in production costs, in order to cope with the terrible events taking place in Ukraine which have had negative repercussions on the agricultural and agri-food sectors (Council of the EU, 2022). These measures were discussed at a subsequent meeting of the Agriculture and Fisheries Council, held in Brussels on March 21st, with an invitation from the Council for the Ukrainian Minister of Agriculture Roman Leshchenko to participate. During the meeting, the Ukrainian minister asked for support for the Ukrainian people and for Ukraine; the European Commission presented concrete proposals to guarantee protection and the European Commissioner for Agriculture, Janusz Wojciechowski, first of all announced an executive regulation on private storage for the pig sector; he communicated the release of the CAP crisis reserves and, finally, announced the temporary derogation that allows the use of the land set aside. On March 23rd, the Commission presented the communication: "Protecting food security and strengthening the resilience of food systems", which contained measures to address the consequences of the war as regards food security; "Overall, ministers welcomed the communication and measures put in place to support farmers, discussed at the March Council meeting. They agreed that, thanks to the common agricultural policy (CAP), the food supply in the EU is not at risk" (Goitre, 2022).

During the extraordinary meeting of the European Council on 24th May 2022, the 27 EU leaders strongly condemned the Russian military aggression in Ukraine for hindering the food supply of 750 million people worldwide; the European commission, for its part, informed the EU agriculture ministers on the solidarity channels between the EU and Ukraine, identified as "alternative land routes" (Consilium, 2022), useful for facilitating the exports of Ukrainian agricultural products and to simplify customs operations and other controls. Within days of the creation of these channels, about 10 million tons of Ukrainian products were exported. With the extraordinary meeting held in Brussels between 30th and 31st May 2022, the European Council drew a series of conclusions on Ukraine and food safety. During the first day, the Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, participated in a videoconference. On the first point discussed, namely Ukraine, the Council reaffirmed the unity of the European Union's action to rescue Ukraine and condemned Putin's actions, urging the Russian leader to withdraw the Russian military forces present in Ukraine and to respect its independence. The European Council also called for compliance with international humanitarian law and welcomed Ukraine's application for EU membership (it would revisit this issue at its June meeting). Regarding the second point, the European

Council condemned the destruction and illicit appropriation of Ukrainian agricultural production by Russia and called on the latter to unblock Ukrainian ports on the Black Sea and allow exports from Odessa. Finally, the Member States accelerated the work on the solidarity corridors, as proposed by the European Commission. In general, this is a very difficult and important military, diplomatic, and logistical effort.

At the subsequent meeting of the European Council held between 23rd and 24th June 2022, Russia was recognised as the sole party responsible for the global food crisis, conclusions were adopted on Greater Europe and Ukraine, Moldova's applications for EU membership, and Georgia (Chamber of Deputies, 2022). The European Council has subsequently granted the status of 'EU candidate country' to Ukraine and Moldova, and is ready to grant the very same to Georgia since the future of these countries and their citizens lies in the European Union. The current conflict has greatly increased concerns about food supplies to Europe and the rest of the world. Food Security as an issue, according to the results of the FAO, is not new for the countries of the Middle East and North Africa since, even before the pandemic, estimates as regards the degree of the issue were dramatic in Syria and Yemen, but, to date, the situation seems to have deteriorated even further due to the blockade of Ukrainian food supplies (Lovotti, 2022).[7]

On May 19th, 2022, during the meeting on food security and conflicts, in the hall of the United Nations Security Council, the head of the UN said that most undernourished peoples live in areas affected by conflicts, and that the rising food prices moreover threaten the countries of the Middle East and Africa. Russian military aggression has caused a global grain crisis, and, according to US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, the responsibility for the entirety of this disaster rests with Russia, as blocking the Black Sea ports inevitably triggered a global supply crisis of wheat. However, "Vladimir Putin's man at the UN does not think so. Speaking with straight face during the meeting, Ambassador Nebenzia accused the Ukrainians of repaying the West for its arms supply with wheat. As always, for Moscow, Western politicians and media would manipulate information" (Loiero, 2022). In this regard, while France, Ireland, United Kingdom, Albania, Canada, Luxembourg, Lithuania, Japan, Guatemala, Sweden, and Norway follow the US line of thinking in that Russia is solely responsible, the Russian ambassador has accused the Ukrainians

[7] Egypt imported 85% of its wheat from Ukraine and Russia; Israel between 60% and 70%; Morocco about 35%; Somalia even 100%; Sudan 75%; Tunisia, Lebanon, and the United Arab Emirates about half of their total supply; and Turkey imported about 78%".

and the United States of playing incomprehensible geopolitical games. Italy too, as represented by Ambassador Maurizio Massari, intervened at the Security Council, hinting at the creation of humanitarian corridors for blocked raw materials, reiterating how much "food security remains a fundamental priority and a key objective of Italian foreign policy" (Loiero, 2022).

Overcoming the global food security crisis is one of the top priorities not only of the United Nations, but also of the European Union. EU countries are collaborating with their respective international partners to ensure free world trade in food products. On 20th September, President of the European Council Charles Michel co-chaired a summit on global food security and spoke by affirming the importance of effective international coordination to ensure a global response to the world food crisis: "We need more coordination, we need more money, and in the European Union, we are stepping up our efforts. With our Member States, we have put forward a comprehensive Global Food Security Response of nearly 8 billion euros until 2024 to provide humanitarian relief along with short-term and longer-term solutions, especially to countries most in need, particularly in Africa" (Michel, 2022). Concerning support for EU agri-food production, the Council formally adopted a new, fairer, and greener common agricultural policy, which will apply in 2023. At the meeting of the Agriculture and Fisheries Council, held on 18th July 2022, ministers discussed the impact of the Russian-Ukrainian war on the implementation of the new CAP, the economic situation of the agricultural sector, the shortage of raw materials, the high prices of inputs, and it was stated that "Europe faces many challenges, and it is more important than ever to ensure stability for European citizens, and that includes our farmers. EU agriculture ministers today demonstrated their commitment to stabilising markets and contributing to food security. I hope that we will be able to obtain timely approval of the CAP strategic plans, which are one of the most important tools. Our farmers need our support as they provide quality and healthy food for all EU citizens and many others outside the EU. We must find a balance between all the objectives of the CAP, including food production, biodiversity and the climate, as well as social and economic aspects" (Nekula, 2022).

The consequences of the war have manifested themselves above all on the markets and prices of agricultural products. The World Food Program,[8]

[8] In this regard, WFP Staff, *Il WFP at G7: 'Agire ora o i livelli record di fame continueranno ad aumentare e milioni di persone in più rischieranno la vita'*, in a World Food Program, https://it.wfp.org/storie/il-wfp-esorta-il-g7-agire-ora-oi-livelli-record-di-fame-continuerà-ad-aumentare-e. "WFP's funding needs are increasing day by day. By

the main humanitarian organisation and agency of the United Nations which deals with food assistance, said that cereal prices reached a new all-time high due to the restrictions on Ukrainian exports, and asked, in this regard, to clear the port of Odessa so as to allow the passage of tons of foodstuffs blocked in ports, and which are threatened by underwater mines. One of the direct consequences of the non-reopening of ports will be the lack of space for Ukrainian farmers to store subsequent crops; "We need to open these ports so that food can enter and leave Ukraine. The world is asking, because hundreds of millions of people around the planet depend on these supplies. There is no more time, and the cost of inaction will be higher than you can imagine. I urge all parties involved to allow this food to flow out of Ukraine so that it gets to where it is desperately needed so that the looming threat of famine can be averted" (Beasley, 2022).

Globally, the Russian-Ukrainian war has led to an increase in the prices of food products and people exposed to the risk of food insecurity, already steadily increasing since 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has jeopardised the chains' global supply, human health, and the world food system; in this regard, the "FAO's comprehensive and holistic COVID-19 response and recovery program is designed to proactively and sustainably address the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic. In line with the United Nations approach to 'rebuild better' and in the pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals, it aims to mitigate the immediate impacts of the pandemic while strengthening the long-term resilience of food systems and livelihoods" (FAO, 2022). The agricultural system is also being badly hit by a severe climate crisis, with drought and a reduction in rainfall, along with adverse weather events and sudden heat waves and frozen snaps which limit the ability to satisfy global food needs. Although they contribute less to climate change, the poorest countries will suffer the most; these are countries in which extreme climatic events are frequent but which are structurally unable to manage such phenomena, moreover, "climate change will cause a reduction of resources that will prevent the poorest from migrating in other countries, further increasing the economic damage suffered by the poorest that will no longer be compensated by remittances from abroad" (Sabelli, 2022).

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early 2022, global inflation had already raised the price WFP paid for its operations by $42 million a month. Then the conflict broke out in Ukraine, which caused the prices of food, fuel, and fertiliser to soar, exacerbating the difficulties of global supply chains and driving up shipping costs. Today, we are forced to pay 73.6 million dollars more per month for our operations compared to 2019, an increase of 44 percent: a figure that would be enough to feed 4 million people for a month."

According to the UN, sustainable agricultural practices must be applied to remedy this situation and combat climate change, given that 31% of global greenhouse gas emissions come from agri-food systems. In a world so unstable in terms of climate and international relations, and in which food systems are interconnected and fragile, it would be useful to invest in local production as well, rather than only favouring food aid which is "historically a controversial form of cooperation development, which is also the subject of radical criticism of their effectiveness as an element favourable to development itself. International food aid can create disincentives that penalise the agricultural sector of the beneficiary countries, allowing governments to neglect agricultural production and investment and to postpone, if not avoid, difficult political reforms. Furthermore, in the literature, there is often talk of the possibility that food aid induces a change in consumer preferences from local to imported products, creating economic and political dependence" (Zupi, 2022) and measures against the humanitarian emergency must go hand-in-hand with long-term measures for resilient food systems everywhere. It should accelerate, at a global level, the transition of the agri-food system towards sustainability, and resilience should be accelerated, creating, especially in developing countries, decent conditions for agricultural production systems. Good quality of life and health are the objectives of the European Green Deal (a European climate pact that intends to make the European economy sustainable and make Europe the first zero-emission continent in the world by 2050) and should all be considered tools to tackle the problem of energy dependence by keeping global trade in food and fertilisers open; finding new suppliers (especially for countries that are heavily dependent on imports from Russia and Ukraine) and re-launching multilateral cooperation to limit any undesirable effects. Massive humanitarian assistance for Ukrainian refugees and social assistance are also needed to mitigate the consequences of rising food and energy costs.

Conclusions

To conclude, the news regarding the terrible decision of the Russian Federation to indefinitely suspend its participation in the agreement on the export of Ukrainian wheat is very recent. The agreement was reached in July in the presence of President Erdogan and United Nations Secretary General Guterres. The Kremlin's stance is in response to a false pretext linked to explosions 220 km away from the so-called "grain corridor" and to the worsening of relations caused by a drone attack on the Sebastopoli bay. In this way, the condition of food

insecurity is worsened, as about 2 million tons of wheat on 176 ships have been blocked, resulting in a serious supply problem for about 7 million consumers. The agreement, now denied, had fostered not only a climate of dialogue thanks to some military security clauses, but had also re-established the crucial role of Ukrainian ports, such as that of Odessa, Chernomorsk, and Yuzhny which despatched over 8 million of tons of wheat from August to the end of October (Ipal/Ansa, 2022). Naturally, diplomacy reserved strongly critical words, and, for its part, the Kremlin indicated that it would review the agreement only "after a thorough investigation into what happened in Sebastopoli", while the foreign minister of Kiev, Dmytro Kuleba, accused the interlocutors of having planned the attack "well in advance". More and more there is a terrible consequence at the financial level, as pointed out by the general director of SovEcon, Andrey Sizov, who prophesied the "worst possible scenario" (Tempesta, 2022).

With regard to future conditions, one hopes that valid, workable solutions can be identified as soon as possible. However, it is necessary to indicate how this conflict has underlined global interconnection. The blockade of the Russian Federation is, in fact, triggering multiple consequences in the international arena, whether they are of a financial nature in the West, or health care in Africa and the Middle East; in any case, this concatenation of effects confirms the transversal nature of food security, and how it is a right that we must all enjoy indistinctly.

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In-betweenness and Migration Interdependence: Lessons from Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine

Abstract

In this paper, we draw on the concepts of in-betweenness and migration interdependence in order to investigate the vulnerability of Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine due to their conflicting relations with Russia and the exposure of their economies to remittance flows from the latter. To achieve this goal, we explore whether and how migrant flows and remittance flows have diverged since 2014, when the three states signed their Association Agreements with the EU and their economic relations with Russia deteriorated. In this respect, we examine how interstate relations impact upon migration and remittances flows. After discussing in-betweenness and migration interdependence, we investigate the origin of the remittance inflows in Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine and the destination of the migration outflows. We map the development of remittances from the World, Europe, and Russia and relate it with the development of their GDP using longitudinal data. A comparative analysis of our findings suggest that the three cases differ from each other, but, in all three cases, Russia has not used migration interdependence as leverage. We conclude that remittance flows in the three in-between states are more affected by the state of the global economy, the economic situation of Russia, and domestic circumstances rather than from interstate relations.

Keywords: Migration Interdependence, Remittances, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, Russia

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Introduction

In-betweenness is the new norm for small states such as Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. The three states have been the objects of conflicting integration projects in a region where both the West, namely the European Union (EU) and the United States (US), and Russia compete for influence, and the three lesser states struggle for autonomy (Ademmer, Delcour, Wolczuk, 2016; Cadier, 2014; Dembińska, Smith, 2021; Pedi, 2020; Torbakov, 2013). The Western and Russian competing strategies in the region impact upon the in-between states and the latter have reacted in various ways (Ademmer, Delcour, Wolczuk, 2016; Grigas, 2016; Gnedina, 2015; Morar, Dembińska, 2021; Nizhnikau, 2016; Wivel, 2016). The in-betweenness status has produced interdependencies in the areas of trade, security, energy, and migration, and opened the road for competing alternatives between Russian and EU policies (Całus et al., 2018). To this background, given the importance of the remittance flows for the economies of Moldova, Georgia, and Ukraine (Peković, 2017; World Bank Group, 2020) in this paper we investigate migration interdependence between the three in-between states and Russia and the EU respectively.

We focus on the issue of remittances and migration interdependence in order to explore how in-betweenness affects migration and remittances flows. To this end, we examine whether and how migrant flows and remittances flows have diverged since 2014, when the three states signed their Association Agreements with the EU and their economic relations with Russia deteriorated (Cenusa et al., 2014). In this respect, we examine how interstate relations impact upon migration and remittances flows. We are particularly interested in two questions; firstly, whether the in-between states are vulnerable to Russian influence due to their dependence on the remittances flows and in this case whether the in-betweenness constitutes a source of vulnerability. Secondly, we examine whether the three states see in-betweenness as a source of resilience and precisely whether they have followed a policy of diversification, as the Association Agreements with the EU brought them closer to the West and provided opportunities to decrease their dependence on Russia.

In doing so, we rely on the concept of migration interdependence which suggests that remittances, as well as migration, produce interdependence between the involved states. Such interdependence can be used as political leverage by host countries especially in the case of small states (Tsourapas, 2018; Gazizullin, Delcour, Jaroszewicz, 2018). Our approach is one of an interdisciplinary nature, and combines insights from the International

Relations discipline and from the Economics of International Migration field. We rely on longitudinal data retrieved from the World Bank Group (2017; 2020) for the period from 2003 to 2017 to investigate the origin of remittances, map their development, and relate it to GDP growth in Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. Furthermore, we follow the evolution of the three states' migrant outflows towards Europe and Russia and the remittance-inflow counterparts with respect to developments in their relations with Russia. In this respect, our study constitutes a systematic and comparative overview of migration interdependence in the region. Our findings indicate that migrants and remittance flows can be affected by multiple variables of both domestic and international natures, beyond the leverage that migration interdependence offers to a hosting state.

In what follows, we first look at migration interdependence in the context of the three in-between states. Next, we look at the contribution of remittances to each one of the three economies. Our analysis of the remittance flows and migrant flows towards Russia and the EU then follows. Finally, based on our analysis in our conclusion, we discuss the factors that influence the migrants and remittance flows regarding the three in-between states, and we assess the relationship between the state of in-betweenness and migration interdependence. The analytical process we followed presents several limitations. First and foremost, there is no single theory on migration (Castles, 2010; De Haas, 2014; Massey et al., 1998). The available data on remittances in the countries under examination are incomplete and unreliable (Shelburne, Palacin, 2007). In addition to that, data on remittances include only official financial flows, while unofficial ones are believed to be 50% larger (Ratha, 2017). To overcome this issue, we have used data available from the World Bank as one single and reliable source and base our analysis on them only.

The Three In-Between States and Migration Interdependence

Russia perceives Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine as parts of its own sphere of interest and any competing vision for the region, coming from the West or the in-between states themselves, is considered a sign of disrespect to the status of Russia as a great power and a threat against its interests (Bloomfield, Kirkup, 2008; Buzan, Wæver, 2003; Trenin, 2009). To safeguard its influence in the region, Russia employs traditional strategies, such as soft power exercise in the context of the Russian World doctrine (Feklyunina, 2016; Rotaru, 2018), as well as unorthodox methods such as: russification, separatism, passportisation, disinformation campaigns,

the weaponisation of gas prices and even the use of violence as in the case of Crimea's annexation (Grigas, 2016). The European orientation of the three in-between states is securitised by the Russian side; issue linkage and punitive economic measures are employed in order to put Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine under both economic and social pressure (Cenusa et al., 2014; Gazizullin, Delcour, Jaroszewicz, 2018). The three in-between states respond with a reorientation of their policies and turn to the EU (when they are able to do so), in order to decrease their dependence on Russia (Cenusa et al., 2014; Delcour, Całus 2018; Dragneva, Wolczuk, 2016; Gazizullin, Delcour, Jaroszewicz, 2018). Despite their importance, interdependencies among the three in-between states Russia and the EU have not been the object of much scholarly attention in a systematic and comparative way, with the exception of the work of Całus et al. in 2018. Such a lack of research is especially evident in the case of migration interdependence.

Tsourapas (2018, p. 386) defines migration interdependence as "the reciprocal political economy effects arising from cross-border flows of people between a sending and a host state". In this context, according to Tsourapas, the host state holds the ability to exercise coercive migration diplomacy in order to force the sending state to conform with its preferences. Empirical examples show that coercive migration diplomacy can take two forms: a) the host state can restrict the flow of migrant remittances or of the migrants themselves and b) the host state can order the expulsion of citizens of the sending state. As in other cases of interdependence (Keohane, Nye, 1973), sensitivity is a sine qua non to migration interdependence; the level of vulnerability of the sending state, however, is determined by its ability to bear the economic and/or social costs at the domestic level and/or find alternatives (Tsourapas, 2018).

Migration dependence in the three in-between states is high. Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine experienced massive outflows of migrants after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Their international migrant stock in 2017 reached 875,753, 1,024,551 and 5,995,314 respectively (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs Population Division, 2017). Given that the total population of these countries was 3,728,004, 2,755,158 and 44,831,135 (World Bank Group, 2020) respectively, the migrant stock as a percentage of the total population reached 23.5%, 37.2% and 13.4% respectively (the authors' own calculations). Moldova has been among the top remittance receivers in the world in 2017 (World Bank Group, 2018b). Ukraine is among the largest recipient countries of remittances in Europe and Central Asia (World Bank Group, 2018b). One way to assess the importance of remittances to a migrant's country of origin is to look

at the ration of remittances to the international reserves (Bracking, 2003). Remittances amount to 61.8% of the total reserves in Georgia, 61.4% of the total reserves in Moldova, and 74.14% of the total reserves in Ukraine (World Bank Group, 2020).[1] Migration interdependence with Russia is heavy. The Russian Federation has been the top destination country for the emigrants from these countries. It hosts 51.4% of the Georgian migrant stock, 28.7% of the Moldavian stock, and 54.6% of the Ukrainian stock (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs Population Division, 2017; the authors' own calculations).[2] Ukraine was one of the top five countries of origin of international migrants in the Russian Federation in 2019. Remittances sent from Russia to Georgia made up 59% of all remittances received in Georgia in 2014 (Ademmer, Delcour, 2016).

Russia is among the top destination countries for international migrants and migrant flows come from the post-soviet space (Chudinovskikh, Denisenko, 2017). The Russian migration legal framework has undergone significant changes from focusing on Russian population abroad, to a more liberal framework, and from there to policing; the changes reflect issues of repatriation and national identity, the country's economic needs, as well as social circumstances (Urinboyev, 2021). In 2014 and 2015, due to the consequences of an economic crisis and rising anti-immigrant sentiment in society, Russia introduced new migration policies aimed at restricting migrant flows (Chudinovskikh, Denisenko, 2017; Chawryło, 2014). Such measures, despite their economic, social, and political roots, have also been perceived as being punitive measures against the aforementioned in-between countries, as their timing coincides with the process of signing the Association Agreements with the EU (Delcour, Całus 2018). Remittances' value equals 11.8% of GDP in Georgia, 20.2% in Moldova, and 10.8% in Ukraine (World Bank Group, 2020). This is indicative of the high level of their dependence on remittances. Therefore, a restriction strategy in the remittances could negatively affect the economic security of the three small in-between states. The systemic insecurity can impact on their structures, shorten planning horizons, inhibit investment, and dampen growth perspectives (Griffiths, 2014). With this in mind, in the following section we examine whether and how remittances and migrants flows have been influenced since the signing of the Association Agreements with the EU. Following the migration interdependence logic presented above, a rational hypothesis would be that interstate relations

[1] World Bank Group and the authors' own calculations.

[2] United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Population Division, 2017 and the authors' own calculations.

would impact upon the migrants and remittances flows; Russia would use its leverage to exert pressure upon the in-between states, while the latter would try to diversify their options in order to find alternatives and decrease their vulnerability.

Remittances in the In-between States

Georgia

Georgia's economy has been steadily growing during the last decade, poverty has declined by almost 50%, and household welfare has improved. In fact, Georgia has the reputation of that of a "star reformer" (World Bank Group, 2018a). Part of the growth is owed to the large capital inflows in the form of remittances, foreign direct investment, and government spending. However, the economy suffered various shocks especially in the period of 2008–2009, affecting capital inflows which haven't yet returned to their pre-crisis levels (CIA, 2020). Due to the economic situation, the remittance spending pattern in Georgia includes covering basic necessities such as food, paying communal fees, health and education expenditures, and using remittances to pay for special occasions, with weddings and funerals as the most common reported uses rather than saving those remittances or investing them in businesses (State Commission on Migration Issues, 2016; Tukhashvili, Shelia, 2012). Apart from increasing the household income and alleviating the recipients from poverty, according to Gerber and Torosyan (2010), remittances also enhance the formation of social capital when they are donated by the recipient households to other households or to the local community, contributing to collective well-being and reinforcing the ties of mutual obligation.

Moldova

Moldova faced a sustained recession during the 1990s when poverty, unemployment, corruption, and underdevelopment pushed people to emigrate. The 1998 Russian financial crisis and the conflicts with the separatist province of Transnistria deeply affected the economy (Pantiru et al., 2007, p. 4; Munteanu, 2005, p. 41). In 1998, 80% of Moldovans lived below the poverty threshold (Pantiru et al., 2007, p. 5). By the late 1990s, it was clear that remittances were the main, if not the only, mechanism for poverty alleviation in the country (Marandici, 2008, p. 1). Moldova relies on the annual remittance inflows which exceeded 34% of its GDP in 2006 (World Bank Group, 2019). Due to an inappropriate investment and business environment, most of the amounts of remittances have been

spent on consumption expenditures. According to Luecke et al. (2007, p. 10), the Moldovan remittances' recipients use this income to cover the expenses of their daily needs and buy consumer durables. Moreover, they spend considerable parts of these amounts on their children's education and even on luxury goods and on health (Hristev et al., 2009, pp. 32–33). However, part of the remittances inflows is channelled to investments, especially in the retail and wholesale sectors to cover the increased aggregate demand (Stratan et al., 2013).

Ukraine

Ukraine used to be the most important economic part of the former Soviet Union. However, from 1991 to 1999, there was a 60% reduction in the country's output. From 2000 to 2013, albeit excluding 2009, there was positive GDP growth, but later on, the annexation of Crimea deeply hurt the Ukrainian economy (CIA, 2019). As a result of the economic situation in Ukraine, remittance inflows have been mainly directed towards covering the daily subsistence needs of the recipients and the purchase of durable goods (Kupets, 2012). According to Kupets (2012), remittances have also been spent on improving the housing conditions of the recipient families who have bought a house or have repaired their properties. In accordance with the aforementioned potential impact of these private inflows, remittances have been used to cover the expenses for the education of the family members of the emigrants. The accumulation of savings or the repayment of debt haven't been the first priorities of those recipients' spending plans. Additionally, business investments haven't attracted the interest of the recipients nor the return migrants due not only to the indispensable character of consumption-based needs, but also to the unfavourable investment environment. All in all, remittances in Ukraine have contributed to the development of several economic sectors (construction, real estate, trade, the food industry, and financial insurance), increased the financial literacy and the welfare of the recipients, and have helped the financial development along with the reduction of poverty.

Data Analysis

As the first step of the empirical analysis, we estimated the value of the remittances sent to Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine by the Russian Federation and by the EU Member States as a percentage of their GDP to identify a pattern. Figures 1, 2, and 3 present our findings. Since all the three countries signed the Association Agreement with the EU in

2014, we used data from 2013 to 2017 in order to identify any changes in the flows signalling either increasing pressure from the Russian side or a diversification of migration policies of the in-between states towards the EU, a reaction that could increase their resilience.

It is worth mentioning that the values of the total remittances received by Ukraine as a percentage of its GDP kept growing through this time period. While in 2013 personal remittances received in Ukraine used to be 5.3% of its GDP, they subsequently increased to 10.8% of the country's GDP as at 2017. Russia's share is twice as much as the EU's. The difference is even bigger in the case of Georgia where, in 2013, personal remittances received in the country from the EU were estimated to be 2.02% of its GDP, while those from Russia reached 7.12% of GDP. However, in Moldova's case, although the values were lower in 2017 than they had been in 2013, it is interesting to consider that remittances originated from the EU were worth more than those received from Russia as a percentage of the Moldavian GDP. Specifically, personal remittances received from the EU in 2014 were estimated to be 9.62% of the Moldavian GDP and, in 2017, that percentage changed to 7.67%, while those originating from Russia went from 8.67% to 6.56% accordingly.

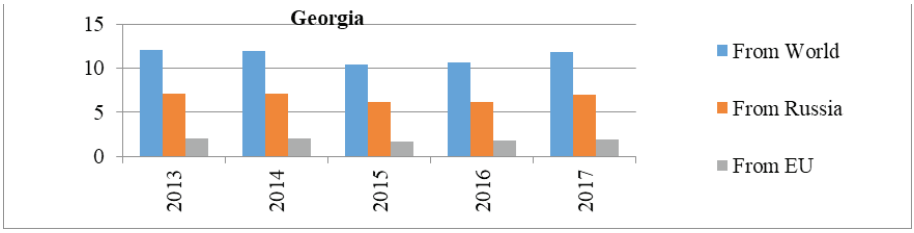

Figure 1. Personal Remittances Received by Georgia from the World, from Russia and from the EU (% of GDP)

Source: World Bank Group, 2017; 2020; the authors' own calculations.

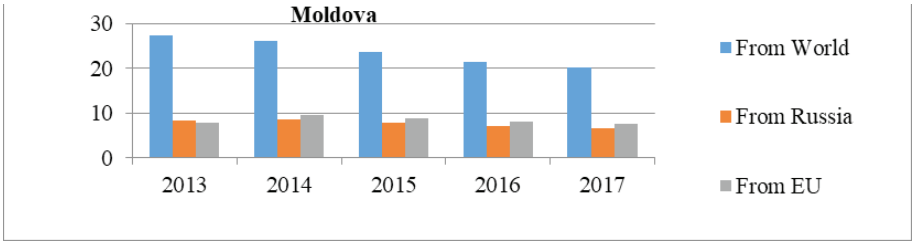

Figure 2. Personal Remittances Received by Moldova from the World, from Russia and from the EU (% of GDP)

Source: World Bank Group, 2017; 2020; the authors' own calculations.

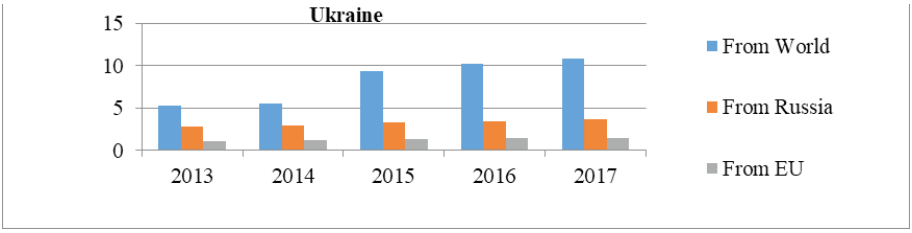

Figure 3. Personal Remittances Received by Ukraine from the World, from Russia and from the EU (% of GDP)

Source: World Bank Group, 2017; 2020; the authors' own calculations.

After having a quantitative indication of the significance of remittances for the examining economies classified by origin, we proceed with the empirical analysis by spotting the major sources of the remittances inflows in absolute terms in 2013 and 2017. Moreover, we investigate whether the destination countries of the migration outflows have changed. That is, whether emigrants from Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova prefer to migrate to the West after the singing of the Association Agreements with the EU and the turbulence in Ukraine instead of Russia.

The Russian Federation, being the top destination of migrants from these countries, has a leading role as a source of remittances for them. In particular, in 2013, 59.2% of the total remittances received by Georgia were of Russian origin. Russia remained as the majority remittance sender through 2017 when the percentage was 58.7%. Accordingly, it is enumerated in Figure 4 below. The EU's share follows the stable pattern of Russia's share. In 2013, the remittances from EU Member States made up 16.74% of the total remittances received in Georgia and in 2017, this share stood at 16.42%. However, there is a decrease in the migrant stock of Georgia in Russia (Fig. 5). Although it used to make up 58.44% of Georgia's migrant stock in 2013, it changed to 51.44% in 2017. Migrant flows were directed towards EU Member States and other countries as well. As a result, the EU's share in the Georgian migrant stock went from 15.52% to 19.27%, and the share of the rest of the world went from 26.02% to 29.28%. Taking into consideration that Russia's share of Georgian migrant stock has been reduced but its share in the remittance flows remains almost stable, it could be assumed that the migrants in Russia remit larger amounts.

With regard to Moldova, Russia has also been established as a significant source of remittances. In fact, Russia's share has slightly increased since 2013. While the remittances coming from Russia made up almost 30% of the total amount Moldova received in 2013, the percentage of remittances from Russia translated into 32.5% of the total inflows in Moldova in

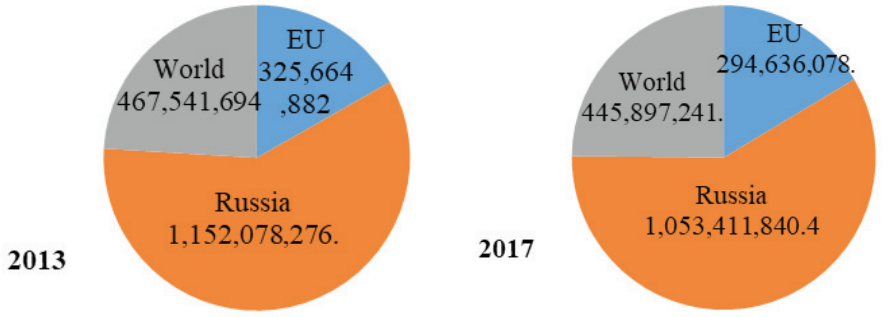

Figure 4. Origin of Remittances Received by Georgia in 2013 and 2017

Source: World Bank Group, 2017; the authors' own calculations.

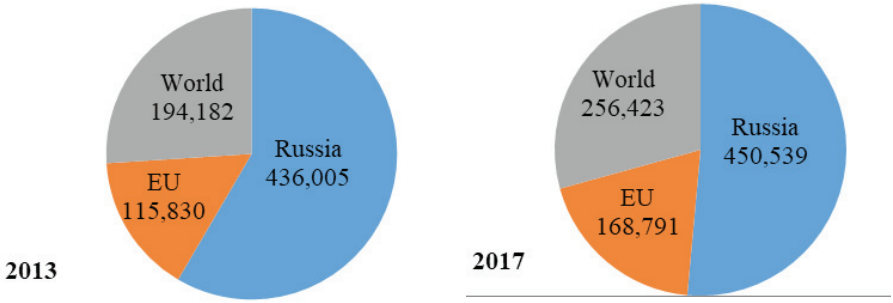

Figure 5. Bilateral Migration Matrix Between Georgia and Russia/EU in 2013 and 2017

Source: World Bank Group, 2017; the authors' own calculations.

2017 (Fig. 6). However, Russia's share in the Moldavian migrant stock decreased from 33.16% to 28.74% (Fig. 7). A bigger change happened as regards the flows originating from the EU and from the World. The flows from the EU Member States increased from 28.76% to 37.75% of the total amounts received following the increase in the migrant stock of Moldova in the EU countries from 34.92% to 43.16%. The remittance flows from the rest of the world decreased from 41.26% to 29.75% of the total remittances received in Moldova and the Moldavian migrant stock in other countries dropped from 31.9% to 28%. The absolute amounts of remittances received by origin and by year are portrayed in Figure 6.

The findings regarding Ukraine reveal that the latter constitutes a different case. Both Russia's and the EU's share in the amount of

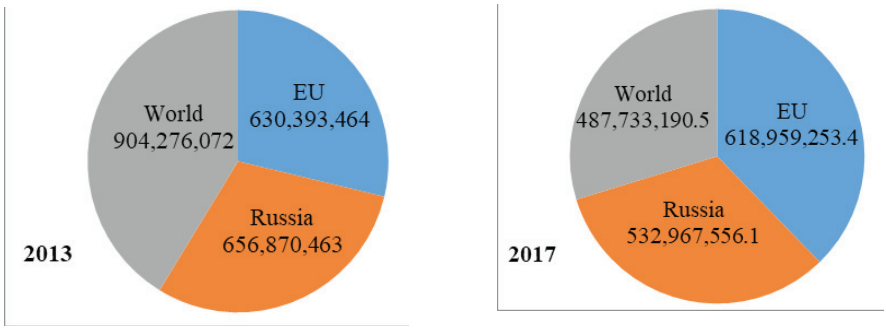

Figure 6. Origin of Remittances Received by Moldova in 2013 and 2017

Source: World Bank Group, 2017; the authors' own calculations.

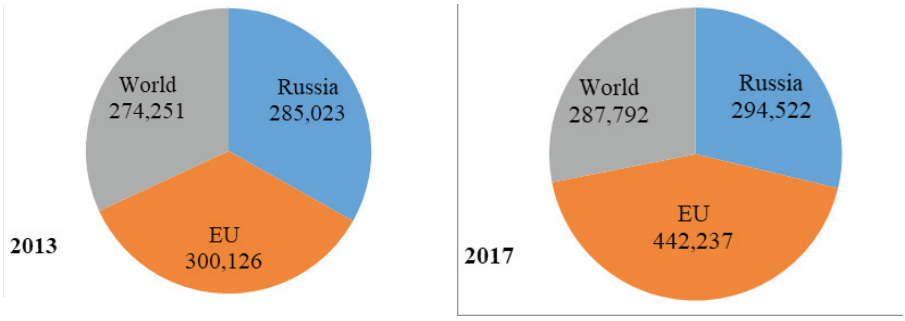

Figure 7. Bilateral Migration Matrix Between Moldova and Russia/EU

Source: World Bank Group, 2017; the authors' own calculations.

remittances received by Ukraine have been considerably diminished. Russia used to send 51.87% of the total amount of remittances received by Ukraine in 2013 and the EU 21.31% respectively. These percentages have been shrunk to cover only 33.32% and 13.85% of the total remittances inflows in Ukraine in 2017. Conversely, the share of remittances originating from the rest of the world increased from 26.82% in 2013 to 52.83% in 2017. Figure 8 illustrates these changes. However, Russia remains the main destination for Ukrainian migrants. Its share in the total migrant stock increased from 52.64% to 54.58% while the EU's share diminished from 20.8% to 20.2% (Fig. 9). That being said, migrants in Russia remit much less than they used to, while those headed to other regions of the world send more significant amounts of money.

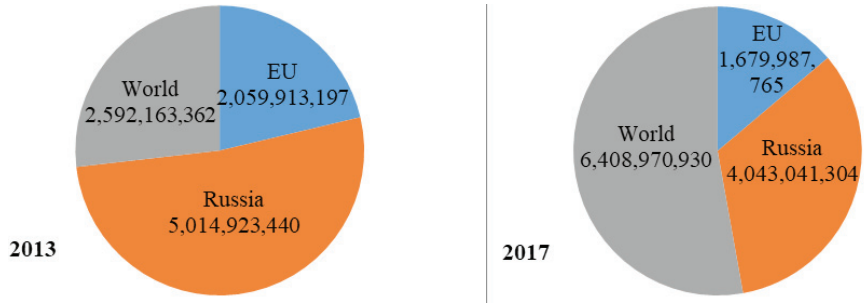

Figure 8. Origin of Remittances Received by Ukraine in 2013 and 2017

Source: World Bank Group, 2017; the authors' own calculations.

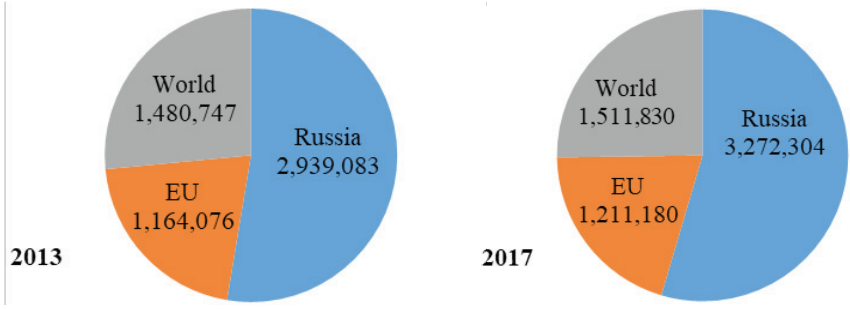

Figure 9. Bilateral Migration Matrix Between Ukraine and Russia/EU

Source: World Bank Group, 2017; the authors' own calculations.

To further explore migration interdependence among the three in-between states, Russia, and the EU, the progress of the remittances is mapped for a time period between 2003 and 2017. Specifically, we followed the growth of remittances received in total by each of the three countries, those received from Russia, and those from the EU in order to compare and juxtapose them.

The remittances flows in Georgia tend to grow. However, the growth rate of remittances slowed down in 2009 and 2010 and even more dramatically in 2015 (Fig. 10). The former could be attributed to the instability provoked by the 2008 Russo-Georgian conflict over the South Ossetia and Abkhazia regions. Additionally, the negative effects of the global financial crisis on the remittances flows could also have impacted upon the Georgian case. Mohaparta and Ratha (2010) noted that developing countries in Europe and Central Asia experienced the largest decline in remittance flows in 2009 partly due to the depreciation

of the Russian rouble. The latter could be considered a side effect of the Russian financial crisis of 2014–2015. The leading role Russia keeps as a remittances sender (Fig. 4) as well as the concurrence between the trend of the remittances inflows from Russia with the total amounts received in Georgia (Fig. 10) support the aforementioned argument. Additionally, the remitters could have been influenced by the intense political climate in Georgia in 2015 and economic downturns. That is, in August 2015, the internal border in South Ossetia was shifted by Russian forces 1.5 km further inside Georgia territory threatening the main route linking the west and the east of the country (BBC News, 2019). In December of the same year, then-Prime Minister Garibashvili resigned and was replaced by his foreign minister, Giorgi Kvirikashvili (BBC News, 2019). Georgian GDP declined by 18% in 2015. In this case, it is the procyclical nature of the remittances that affected the flows and their positive correlation with the cyclical components of real output (Ruiz, Vargas-Silva, 2013). As portrayed in Figure 10, the growth of remittances in Georgia from the EU follows a similar pattern with that of Russia and the total remittances inflows.

With regard to Moldova, remittances grew constantly until 2008, were reduced in 2009, continued to grow until 2013, and afterwards they decreased until 2016 (Fig. 11). The outcome of the global financial crisis could, as mentioned in the case of Georgia, be responsible for 2009's sharp reduction. A survey by ILO and IOM (25th May, 2009) revealed that 20%

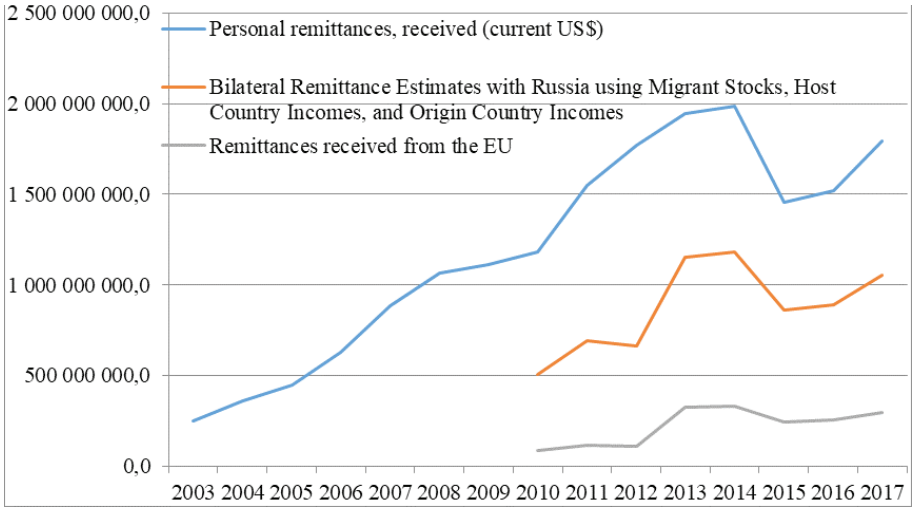

Figure 10. Remittances Received in Georgia

Source: World Bank Group, 2017; 2020; the authors' own calculations.

of the 2008 Moldovan recipients of remittances stopped receiving money flows in 2009. The downward slope from 2014 to 2016 (Fig. 11) could be attributed either to the effect of the Russian financial crisis or, since the remittances coming from the EU are also affected, to the procyclicality of remittances. Moreover, a Moldovan banking scandal in 2015 raised local concerns over high-level corruption and poor living standards (BBC News, 2019).

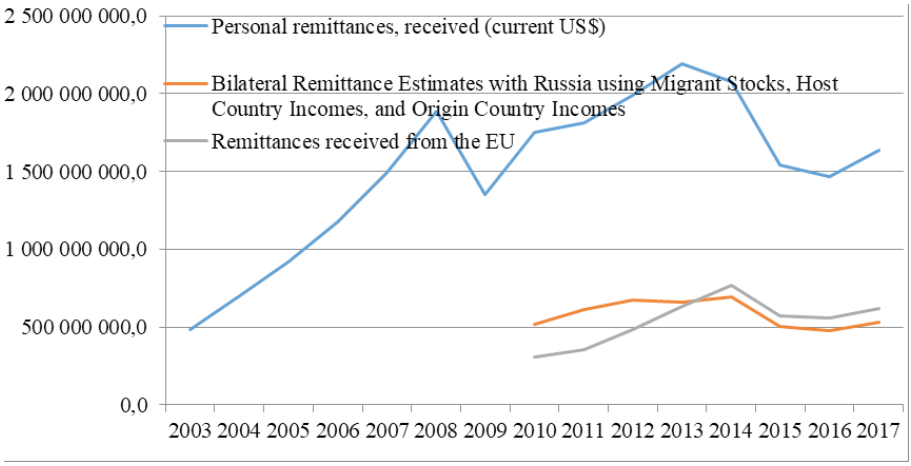

Figure 11. Remittances Received in Moldova

Source: World Bank Group, 2017; 2020; the authors' own calculations.

In the case of Ukraine, there are two time periods when the remittances inflows decreased. The first one happened in 2009 and the second one occurred in 2014 (Fig. 12). The 2009 reduction in the remittances is a common feature for three countries under examination and could be the outcome of the global financial crisis. It could also be an effect of the Russian aggression in the region after the MAP offered by NATO to Georgia and Ukraine in 2008 (NATO, 2008) and the Russo-Ukrainian gas dispute. The 2014 reduction for the remittances originated from Russia and, for the total amounts, coincides with the Russian financial crisis. However, considering the procyclicality case, it could have been the result of the worsening economic situation in Ukraine. The annexation of Crimea by Russia and the War in Donbas severely damaged Ukraine's economy, shrinking by a 12% decline in GDP in 2015 as a result (Mykhnenko, 2020). The total inflows, however, recovered in 2015, while those from Russia and the EU started to increase one year later.

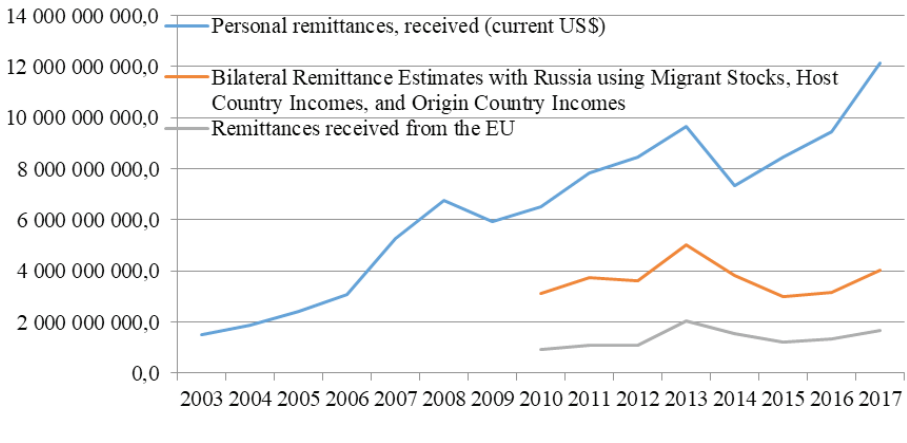

Figure 12. Remittances Received in Ukraine

Source: World Bank Group, 2017; 2020; the authors' own calculations.

A comparative analysis of the data presented above for the years 2013 and 2017 reveals that the state of remittances and migrants flows in the three cases differs markedly. In the case of Georgia, the levels of remittance flows from Russia and the EU respectively remain relatively stable, despite the fact that migrant flows towards Russia decreased by 7% in 2017, the very same percentage of migrants that was absorbed by the EU (3.75%) and the rest of the world (3.25%). In the case of Moldova, the amount of remittances received from Russia increased by 2.5% in comparison to 2013, despite the fact that the flow of migrants decreased by 4.86%. In contrast, Moldova experienced a dramatic increase of almost 9% in remittance flows from the EU, following a rise of 8.24% in migrant flows towards the EU. The picture is totally different with regard to Ukraine, where remittance flows from both Russia and the EU dropped dramatically by 30.56% and 19.47% respectively. At the same time, remittances from the rest of the world rose by 25.82%. Concerning migrant flows, those towards Russia have slightly increased (1.94%), despite the conflict between the two countries, in contrast with those towards the EU that have decreased by 0.6%. For all the differences among the three countries, the data indicate a trend for the years when remittance flows from both Russia and the EU suffered a considerable drop, namely in 2009–2010 and 2014–2015. The divergence can be attributed to the status of the global economy as the global economic crisis was evolving, to the economic turbulence in Russia in 2014 as well as to instability arising in each country for different reasons, either due to conflict with Russia or due to domestic scandals, corruption, etc. In this regard, our hypothesis

that Russia would use migration interdependence as leverage upon the three in-between states is not confirmed. Interstate relations do not seem to impact upon remittance and migrant flows. However, the above data show that all the three in-between states remain vulnerable to the state of the Russian economy and it is in this way that they are influenced by migration interdependence. Figure 13 supports the above argument, as it shows that all the personal remittances paid by Russia follow the trend of personal remittances paid by Russia in the three countries and are closely related to its financial situation. That said, the fact that Russia has not used migration interdependence as leverage in the period under examination in this paper does not mean that it will not do so in the future.

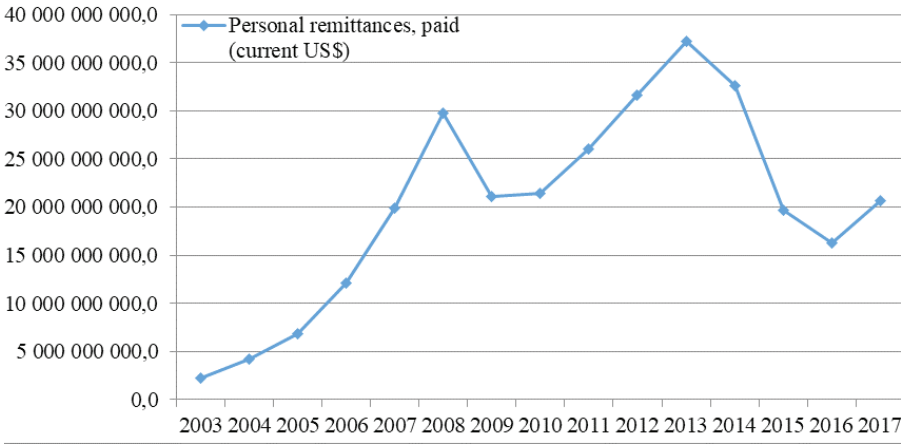

Figure 13. Personal Remittances, Paid by Russia (current US$)

Source: World Bank Group, 2020.

Regarding the EU, in-betweenness encouraged migration interdependence between Georgia, Moldova, and the EU; migrant flows towards the EU grew in both countries, while remittance flows rose considerably only in Moldova's case. As regards the latter, the EU surpassed Russia as the primary source of remittances and the primary destination for migrants, thus providing an alternative for Moldova's economy and society. It seems that for Ukraine, this alternative is offered from remittances coming from the rest of the world. Given Ukraine's firm pro-EU stance and the intensifying cooperation between the two sides in many sectors (Vošta Musiyenko, Abrhám, 2016), the decline in remittance and migrant flows supports our suggestion that remittance and migrant flows are not affected by interstate relations.

Conclusions

In this paper, we have built upon the concepts of in-betweenness and migration interdependence in order to examine the vulnerability of Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine due to their conflicting relations with Russia and the exposure of their economies to remittance flows from the latter. Based on migration interdependence logic, we introduced the hypothesis that Russia would use migration interdependence as leverage and that interstate relations would impact upon remittance and migrant flows. We investigated the origin of the remittances inflows in Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine and the destination of the migration outflows. We mapped the development of remittances from the World, from Europe, and from Russia and relate it with the development of their GDP using longitudinal data. Our findings suggest that the three cases differ from each other, but, in all three, Russia has not used migration interdependence as leverage. At the same time, at least for Moldova, the EU has been a viable alternative to Russia as the former experienced a considerable rise in personal remittances paid from the latter as well as an impressive increase in migrant outflows towards EU countries. In any case, the above analysis suggests that remittance flows in the three in-between states are more affected by the state of the global economy, the economic situation of Russia and domestic circumstances rather than from interstate relations. In this sense, this paper sheds some new light on migration interdependence of the three in-between states, and also contributes to the literature on remittances.

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EU Involvement in the Financing of the Blue Economy

Abstract

The prospect of implementing the concept of the Blue Economy is currently still at a relatively early stage of achieving its full potential. The purpose of this paper is to present the idea of the ocean economy and selected aspects of its financing, including initiatives undertaken in this area by the European Union. Part I characterises the Blue Economy, part II discusses selected aspects of financing a sustainable ocean economy, and part III analyses the institutional approach, particularly within the EU, to the financing process of this type of economy. The descriptive method was used to conduct this study, and the available literature on and legal acts related to the subject of the article has been analysed. The undertakings made so far, especially by the EU, are impressive and, moreover, are driving global activity towards the sustainable financing of the Blue Economy. It is becoming a fundamental priority to realise the governments' and international organisations' aspirations to make economies independent from excessive carbon emissions, to counteract water degradation, overfishing, and shrinking drinking water resources. In the long term, it is important to develop coherence between the actions of national entities and the sources and methods of international funding. This is in order to develop a mutual, global good of innovative financing of coastal projects for sustainable development.

Keywords: Blue Economy, Ocean Economy, European Union, Climate Neutrality, Blue Bonds, BlueInvest

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Introduction

Water is the most common substance on Earth, occupying 71% of the planet's surface (Zintegrowana Platforma Edukacyjna, 2023). It is the foundation of life itself, it influences economic growth and constitutes the basis for maintaining healthy ecosystems. Directly and indirectly, e.g., through fisheries, it provides jobs for more than 200 million people worldwide. At the same time, more than 4.2 billion people are deprived of safely-monitored sanitation services, 3 billion lack the basic conditions to wash their hands, and approximately 2.2 billion of the world's population lack working technologies to provide drinking water. Growing populations, increasing rainfall, the overexploitation of carbon dioxide, water-intensive industrial solutions, and lacks of access to running resources make the issue of water one of the culminating threats to sustainable development. Climate change is successively affecting hydrological cycles, making water resources even more unpredictable and, at the same time, increasing the occurrences of droughts and floods. More than 1 billion people living in monsoon basins and another 500 million living in river deltas are at constant risk of disaster (World Bank, 2022).

Since the 1990s, awareness of sustainable initiatives has been growing, initiatives which, in recent years, have proven to be some of the most effective ways to deal with the economic and social challenges that countries around the world have been facing. There is a need for ground-breaking action, tangible decisions, and, most importantly, time is needed to mitigate the negative effects of advancing climate change and unexpected natural disasters, including those affecting oceans and seas. The uncertainty of tomorrow, due to the failures to date to compile and identify the problems that international organisations have to deal with, is becoming a challenge. A World Bank study shows that the effects of climate change seem to be fundamentally underestimated, so it is paramount at this point in time to initiate and finance initiatives that aim to minimise any negative impacts on the environment, including on the oceans and seas (Holsti, 1983, pp. 145–148).

L. Wenhai of the National Marine Data and Information Service in China, C. Cusack of the Marine Institute in Ireland, and M. Baker of the University of Southampton in the UK have conducted research on the Blue Economy. In the article *Successful Blue Economy Examples With an Emphasis on International Perspectives* (Wenhai, Cusack, Baker, 2019), the positive aspects of implementing the Blue Economy from the perspective of international cooperation are pointed out. It is stated that so-called "blue finance" is based on a macroeconomic concept, covering every

aspect of global and national governance. The researchers highlighted the importance of planning and coordinated development between the coastal and ocean economic system and the comprehensive development of marine ecosystems. In contrast, researchers from the University of Wollongong in Australia, namely M. Voyer, G. Quirk, A. Mcllgorm, and K. Azmi have identified the conceptual values and interpretations of the Blue Economy. They have provided examples of marine industries included in or excluded from various conceptualisations. They also highlighted the growing trend towards valuing nature, spatial boundaries in the oceans, and the strengthened securitisation of the world's oceans (Voyer et al., 2018).

The main objective of this paper is to present selected ways of financing the Blue Economy, including initiatives undertaken by the European Union. This paper consists of an introduction, three parts, and a conclusion. Part I presents the idea of the Blue Economy, part II presents selected aspects of financing a sustainable ocean economy, and part III analyses the institutional approach to the development of financing this type of economy. The focus is on the main endeavours for financing the ocean economy. The descriptive method was used to conduct this study, and the dynamisation of ocean economy in financial terms was analysed. The aspect of expanding environmental safeguards through restraining carbon emissions was also taken into consideration.

The Characterisation of the Blue Economy

As early as 2007, a report by the United Nations agency showed the undeniable impact of human activity on the increase of global warming. In the same year, a group of pension funds approached the World Bank for the first time to help finance a project that favoured the environment. The idea proved to be a breakthrough in a collaboration of development experts, scientists, investors, and policy makers. Ultimately, it has been recognised as a cornerstone in the search for a solution to environmental problems and the deepening of cooperation between banks, development agencies, rating agencies, and investors as regards nature conservation.

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in 2012, among other things defined the Blue Economy as an ocean economy. At the time, improving human wellbeing while reducing increasing ecosystem threats was identified as its overarching goal. It should be noted that optimising the use of natural resources and ocean efficiency within the accepted ecological framework had already become an important aspect of the Blue Economy at that time (European Environment Agency, 2021).

The ocean economy, also known as the Blue Economy, encompasses all sectors of the economy that show a direct or indirect connection to the ocean. This creates numerous economic and social development opportunities for countries, as well as a diversification of business profiles for coastal companies. The opportunities created are a result of the traditional activities of natural reservoir development, nature conservation and tourism projects, and expansion in the areas of ocean information and science (Stefanakis, 2021).

The Blue Economy accounts for integration in the development of the ocean economy. It also accounts for the values of incorporating environmental sustainability and social governance along with innovative and dynamic business models. Such a pattern is seen as a compatible decoupling of economic and social activity and development from the optimisation of the benefits derived from accumulated water resources. Blue growth means making full use of marine and water resources while ensuring the integrity of the entire ecosystem. This presupposes a situation where all economic activities are carried out consistently with scientific recommendations in the realm of ecological safety and feasibility (Cheung, 2021). The improvement of living standards should always be balanced with maintaining a healthy ecosystem. Oceanic economic activity is still in its early stages, and in recent years has been referred to as an economic frontier. The physical context of the ocean highlights this barrier. A three-dimensional environment exists in which resources such as fisheries are subject to multiple jurisdictions and political limits.

Life in the oceans accounts for more than 95% of the entire biosphere. Water and oceans support the life of thousands of marine and terrestrial organisms by, among other things, absorbing carbon dioxide, producing oxygen, regulating global temperature and climate, and processing nutrients (Cheung, 2022). Ocean economy supplies a significant proportion of the global population with food and constitutes the mode of transport for more than 82% of global trade. Coastal and ocean fronts provide essential resources for the development of the tourism industry. 32% of the global supply of hydrocarbons is provided by the seabed, and exploration in search of these is moving towards the depths of the ocean. Significant technological advances are spurring new frontiers in the development of ocean resources, including the extraction of minerals from the seabed and bio-ecological exploration. Ocean waters hold great potential for the development of renewable blue energy production using tides, thermal sources, waves, and biomass (Scipioni, 2023).

Nowadays, the annual economic value generated by the oceans is close to US 3 trillion, representing 2.5% of global GDP. Some of the tasks of

the ocean economy include: providing minerals and food, neutralising greenhouse gases, producing oxygen, setting weather standards and fulfilling the role of sea lanes in international trade (UNCTAD, 2023). The ocean economy can already now be called the fifth largest market in the world.

Financing the Ocean Economy and the Sustainable Development Goals

Almost every aspect of the global economy development outlined in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals depends on water resources. Catalysing investments that lead to environmental outcomes and targets is particularly facilitated by Goal 14 – Life Under Water (UN Global Compact, 2023). In its stipulations, it can be seen that the proper management of irreplaceable ocean resources is a fundamental element leading to a sustainable future. The area of surface water from the shoreline is subject to eutrophication and significant pollution. It is predicted that by 2050, 20% of large marine ecosystems will be affected by this phenomenon, and the oceans constitute 97% of the world's water and account for almost 99% of the Earth's total living space (UNIC Warsaw, 2023). Due to the littering of the oceans and seas, overfishing, the effects of climate change, and the rapid increase in the diversity and intensity of ocean usage, the aquatic environment is being driven to irreversible degradation. The biodiversity of the oceans is being subjected to the adverse effects of human activity and climate change. Millions of tonnes of plastic waste and oil spills are a small part of what the Blue Economy is currently facing.

Therefore, governments and international organisations and institutions should become active and invest in a plan to rebuild a sustainable ocean economy. At the same time, coastal and island countries should strongly demand the protection of the waters belonging to them, however, they are often unable to afford a prioritisation of the Blue Economy due to other development issues. Until now, most countries have relied solely on philanthropic support for funding their oceans and seas. It now seems fundamental to integrate the activities of international organisations, financial institutions, and environmental programmes to finance the protection of ocean ecosystems.

The preservation of coastal resources, along with ensuring their protection and wellbeing is possible in particular through the transformation of ocean economies, as financed by financial instruments including the issuance of so-called "blue bonds". These bonds demonstrate a transformative impact on ocean economies through capital support in the form

of the financing of ocean initiatives. Such solutions signal an opportunity to mobilise the resources of public and private actors to strengthen ocean economies. The financial support provided to ocean industries and coastal states is proving to be the most significant factor in stimulating economic transformation. In addition, it potentially contributes to increasing the volume of publicly available financing options or developing more favourable terms for their acquisition. As with a single investment, in order to motivate and attract institutional investors to invest in blue debt securities, they must provide transparency with regard to the use of the proceeds, the environmental objectives completed, and, most importantly, offer positive returns on invested capital (Obiegło, 2020).

Another reason why blue financial instruments are becoming tools to stimulate oceanic transformation are the economic and social benefits achieved in the process. Unconventional ocean finance instruments are commonly used to invest in spheres of the ocean economy so as to provide assistance in creating sustainable ecosystems, to guarantee the protection of their livelihoods, and enhance food security in the most crisis-affected areas. A comparative area for achieving economic benefits and conversion in terms of ocean transformation is the adaptation of the strategic Sustainable Development Goals by countries and international organisations. This adds value to both public and private issuers in conceptualising investment projects and adapting to commitments resulting from an issuing of blue bonds. The decision of the issuer to take its debt instruments to the public market is linked to the increasing scale of visibility and recognition among financial investors. The publicity generated by the issuance of blue bonds is able to generate further economic capital, and the resulting funding can stimulate ocean initiatives in other related areas, including social development and tourism (Gates, 2022).

The crucial element of financing sustainable investments for the ocean economy is that the inflow of capital can occur at the early stages of development or when upgrading already undertaken projects. Therefore, the Sustainable Development Goals motivate groups of countries as well as international organisations and institutions to initiate alternative treatments to decompose global trade in the near future, as well as to reduce excessive carbon emissions (Jacson, 2002). There is a great need for instruments that prioritise initiatives that promote the implementation of the initiatives set out in the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Blue Economy vs. EU Projects

The ocean economy is presently guided by the comprehensive actions of public and private actors with an approach of flexibility and prudence. Cross-sectoral, sectoral or long-term actions constitute the substitutes for effects. To date, the European Union's decisions on this issue have mainly been based on assessing the value and costs to society, as well as the impact on other cross-border activities (Sozosfera, 2021).

According to the World Ocean Council (WOC), the sustainability of ocean waters occurs when their activity corresponds to the long-term recovery capacity of aquatic ecosystems. It seems that the essential aim of the aforementioned interpretation is to take into account existing environmental constraints. Currently, many international documents addressing this issue focus on the quantification of benefits as well as the development of future growth projections. In the European Commission's approach, marine spatial planning plays an important role, as it provides a guarantee for a faster resolution of natural resource issues (European Commission, 2021). The European Commission's communication details the Blue Economy's sustainability agenda. It sets out to achieve the goals of zero pollution and climate neutrality by greening ports and decarbonising maritime transport. With such solutions, it would be possible to guarantee the generation of a quarter of the electricity generated in the European Union as early as 2050. Ports for trans-land connections used as energy storage will therefore be crucial in the future (World Resources Institute, 2021).

Reducing pollution and converting to a circular economy is another priority for the EC and its action on sustainable ocean management. The Commission envisages updating standards that specify the design of fishing methods, the decommissioning of offshore platforms, and the recycling of ships, thereby reducing pollution from microplastics and other plastics (Janik, 2020). Over 30% of the EU's marine area is already capable of reversing biodiversity loss, thereby contributing to significant social and financial benefits. The EC also envisages adaptation measures that strengthen coastal resilience through the protection of coastlines against the increasing risks of flooding and erosion (benefits for the coastal economy and tourism) (Social Watch, 2022).

Standards to ensure sustainable food production will also be developed in the EU. The regulations will apply to trade in algae, sea grass and seafood, and fishing will also be subject to stringent controls. On the upside, seafood produced on the basis of unconventional solutions will help protect European waters and develop innovation (United Nations,

2022). The issue of improving the management of marine space has additionally been considered. The Blue Forum is going to lead and coordinate dialogue between stakeholders, actors, and scientists in areas such as tourism, shipping, renewable energy, and aquaculture. All of the abovementioned activities are going to stimulate an exchange of views in the context of the rules of cooperation for the sustainable use of the ocean environment.

As early as 2005, the Commission took necessary measures to extend the European Emissions Trading Scheme (EU-ETS), which, in the coming years, is to also include maritime transport, which accounts for more than 80% of the planet's resource handling. Its functioning and principles of cooperation with key stakeholders are based on the concept of The Poseidon Principles, which describe the global framework and tenets of responsible ship financing (Global Maritime Forum, 2023). Their premise is to promote the decarbonisation of international shipping. The principles integrate climate considerations into the lending decisions and financial resources of banking institutions. The Universal Definition of Principles for Responsible Banking for Ocean Shipping (Rousseau, 2020) has already been accepted and implemented by no fewer than 185 banks.

The EC's actions were followed by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), which unexpectedly changed the existing net content limits for ships' exhaust gases. Their operation outside control zones was reduced from 3.5% to 0.5%, while standards in control zones were set at 0.1%. This stringent approach implies that ships not meeting these standards will be barred from entering seaports. EC research shows that ships are responsible for just over 940 million tonnes of carbon dioxide entering the atmosphere each year, which represents around 2.5% of all greenhouse gas emissions (Romanowska, Madrjas, 2019).

In 2017, industry organisations succeeded in excluding shipping from the emissions trading scheme. This was the result of actions led by, among others, the International Maritime Organisation, which prioritised more advanced global strategies. The major maritime players of Liberia, Panama, and the EU Member State of Malta all advocated for stipulations counteracting climate change (Jurdzinski, 2017). Shortly thereafter, IMO member countries endorsed the introduction of shipping restrictions as the decarbonisation process progressed. Milestones were set, including the previously-mentioned designation of global sulphur emission control zones and the reduction of overall sulphur oxides emitted from the combustion of marine fuels. The scrapping of obsolete marine vessels unfit for further use has also proven to be a necessity. Generally, a ship sails for 25–30 years, but, unfortunately, investments in such capital-

intensive vessels are not able to amortise in that time. Thus far, everything has taken place under strict legislative supervision, while investment decisions were being relegated to the sidelines. Shipyards around the world are trying to adapt production to the required use of existing low-sulphur solutions (Janik, 2020). The use of conventional fuels is allowed, but with the assumption that ships have special systems called scrubbers to stop sulphur from being emitted.

Thus, the biggest challenge facing maritime transport is the availability and development of innovative and alternative green technologies. The European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) defines alternative fuels as energy sources that serve – at least to a small degree – as substitutes for fossil fuels (Now Environment, 2017). Thus, LNG is the current cure-all on the way towards a technological upgrade. Experts at the Oxford Energy Centre conclude that this is going to be the biggest revolution since the transition from sail to steam power was made. What is more, they argue that low-carbon natural gas is not only a cleaner fuel, but also a cheaper fuel, especially when one considers emission expenditure, which accounts for between 60–80% of a unit's total operating costs (The Oxford Institute for Energy Studies, 2018).

There is a real need for the EU's activities to reconstruct the policy frameworks, behaviours, and institutional models that, at the present time, pose barriers to achieving the goals of a blue, sustainable economy. Ensuring adequate skills and qualifications for those in control of water initiatives is another important area, followed by the issue of financing and optimal pricing. When initiatives are implemented, suppliers should ensure that they have the capacity to fully cover maintenance and operational costs, as well as being given full access to investment funds to improve leverage (Word Bank, 2022a).

The European Commission is strengthening cooperation within a sustainable Blue Economy with the European Investment Bank Group. Investments in the bio economy and so-called "blue innovation" are supported. The European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund, through the BlueInvest Fund, promote sustainable value chains based on coastal, ocean, and marine activities. In 2022, this accelerator and platform supporting investment in sustainable technologies announced another capital initiative fully dedicated to the Blue Economy. It aims to mobilise an additional EUR 500 million of EU funding. Over the past three years, BlueInvest's initiatives in sustainable oceans, fisheries, and the environment have included the signing of a large number of financing agreements and raising investor awareness while helping to bridge the financing gap. BlueInvest's achievements to date include (European Commission, 2022):

- 2,400 online projects from 300 reputable companies;
- 24 Blue Economy project deals signed;
- 25 deals concluded with private investors;
- 200 SMEs guaranteed individual coaching support;
- and EUR 100 million of EU funding received through the EIF BlueInvest Fund.

Moreover, in order to finance the transformation of the ocean economy in the long term, the EC has called for blue investments to be included in the operational programmes for the EU Structural Funds until 2027 in the national recovery plans (European Commission, 2021a).

Conclusions

At present, it seems fundamental to integrate the activities of international organisations (including within the EU), financial institutions, and environmental programmes with local economies and their complex ecosystems. The health of the ocean economy is fundamentally linked to the overall state of the oceans. Challenges such as pollution, climate change or simply the lack of awareness in the context of sustainable ocean management and governance techniques are an unprecedented threat to water resources. They are successively reducing the potential economic and social benefits of the globe.

The success of ocean-sustainability initiatives depends mainly on the coherent coordination of project financing, design, and implementation of the Blue Economy at the macro, micro, and local levels. This is because it is assumed that it will come from the issuance of sustainable blue assets, public funding, and philanthropy from global international and state partners. The growing popularity of debt instruments issued to raise funds for specific climate and environmental goals has led to the design of blue assets. Blue bonds provide capital to issuers, who repay a set amount of debt with interest over time. In turn, they finance the funds raised towards a sustainable ocean economy.

Countries and international organisations and institutions, particularly the EU, are increasing the issuance of blue assets with the intention of moving towards a zero-carbon economy. Blue debt instruments are a pioneering transaction that represents another source of green capital. Their concept identifies the fundamental undertakings required for an effective financing of coastal resilience, outlines its premise, and defines the status of blue bonds in the rapidly evolving scheme of sustainable finance (Blue Natural Capital, 2021).

An effective transformation of the Blue Economy into something more sustainable requires investment financing that will provide significant

guarantees of environmental benefits. The investment concept of blue bonds, however, is not limited to raising and accumulating capital. It also addresses reputational considerations, pricing advantages, building a reliable investor base and an established institutional position, including that of the EU.

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European Green Deal: The Transformation of Consumer Behaviour and Business Marketing Communication as Opportunities to Increase Consumer Involvement in the Sorting of Waste in Latvia

Abstract

The European Green Deal is the European Union's latest expression of its ambition to become a world leader in addressing climate change (Kleinberga, 2020). Adaptation to climate change (CCh) is a key priority of the European Union (EU), exemplified by the EU's efforts to become "the first climate-neutral continent" (European Union, 2019) in the world by 2050. This article aims to analyse opportunities to increase consumer involvement in the context of waste sorting and climate change in Latvia, based on theoretical knowledge about consumer behaviour and empirical data analysis, to develop recommendations for marketing communication and consumer behaviour in the context of climate change content for waste management companies. There is a necessity to understand how to increase consumer involvement in waste-sorting due to the increasing amount of waste both in Latvia and the rest of the world. The following research methods have been used: the monographic method, secondary data analysis, the discourse analysis/coding method, the graphical method, and the qualitative method – a focus group interview. The most significant barriers that discourage consumers from sorting waste are the lack of infrastructure, the lack of information on how to sort waste properly and waste's environmental impact, as well as the complex system that allows for differences in waste-sorting between municipalities and even neighbourhoods in the same city. Recommendations were developed

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as a result of the research for waste management companies in terms of communication, NGOs on education, and information for consumers, businesses, and waste management companies.

Keywords: Climate Change, Latvia, Consumer Behaviour, Waste Sorting, Marketing Communication

Introduction

Consumer behaviour in the context of marketing is a topic that is constantly being researched because, by understanding consumer reactions, companies are able to improve their marketing campaigns, make them more successful and achieve their desired goals. The challenge today is to influence the consumer in such a way that the consumer's response is to purchase a specified product or perform a desired action (Stankevich, 2017). The more clearly the factors that influence the consumer and in what way are understood, the more precisely will marketers be able to apply communication for the appropriate purposes.

Climate change is a critical issue worldwide. The European Union (EU) implements extensive domestic policies aimed at reducing the potential threats of climate change. The goal of the EU is to become the first climate-neutral continent by 2050. This goal is part of the European Green Deal – a set of measures to ensure a fair, healthy, and prosperous society for future generations (European Union, N.D). The aim of the research was to analyse opportunities to increase consumer involvement in the context of waste-sorting and climate change in Latvia, based on theoretical knowledge about consumer behaviour and empirical data analysis, and to develop recommendations for marketing communication and consumer behaviour in the context of climate change content for waste management companies. There is a need to understand how to increase consumer involvement in waste-sorting due to the increasing amount of waste not only in Latvia, but the rest of the world also. The following research methods were used: the monographic method, secondary data analysis, the discourse analysis/coding method, the graphical method, and the qualitative method – a focus group interview. The circular economy is also implemented within the framework of the European Green Deal. The circular economy is defined as a development model promoting sustainability, the essence of which is to keep the value of products, materials, and resources in the economy for as long as possible, while reducing both the consumption of raw materials and the volume of waste, as well as the impact on the environment. Unsorted waste contains a significant amount of economically valuable materials – ferrous and

non-ferrous metals, glass, plastic, and paper – and their reuse in product production would reduce the costs of both product production *and* raw material transportation, as raw materials can be obtained locally due to waste sorting and processing. Therefore, the introduction of the circular economy is not only environmentally friendly, but also economically beneficial. The percentage of unsorted waste in Latvia is higher than in other European averages, or in other words – in 2020, the amount of sorted waste in relation to the total amount of waste was 39.6% (47.8% on average in Europe, respectively). Compared to 2019, the amount of sorted waste has decreased, not following the growing trend in other European countries (Eurostat, 2023). The rapid increase in profits in the waste management industry indicate both the size of the industry as well as its development. The first part of the research examines the factors influencing consumer behaviour as well as analyses of consumer behaviour and sustainable consumer behaviour. The second part contains a description of the waste management industry in Latvia, a more detailed description of the sampling waste management companies and an analysis of existing communication and a focus group discussion.

The initiatives and objectives of the European Green Deal cannot be achieved without consumer involvement. Consumers have a lot of power; they can change their daily consumption, and they can engage in activities related to the environment, climate change, and the green course. Informing consumers and, more importantly, educating them about the content of the European Green Course is the key to achieving the aforementioned objectives, since it is only education that can contribute to raising consumer awareness and engagement. Direct involvement is one of the main determinants in the area of waste sorting, and it is important to not only study consumers' motivation to sort waste, but also to educate consumers in order to raise awareness of the importance of waste-sorting in the context of sustainable development and the circular economy.

The Concept of Consumer Behaviour and the Process of the Formation of Consumer Habits

Consumer behaviour is an important subject of research because it is the consumer who buys goods or services. The more companies and marketers understand consumer behaviour, the more potential there is of achieving higher sales and revenue by building marketing, sales, and brand development strategies based on one's knowledge of consumer behaviour. Consumer decisions are influenced by their behaviour and can be viewed from either a micro or macro perspective. The micro perspective includes

understanding the consumer with the goal of helping the company or organisation achieve its objectives. The macro perspective exploits the fact that consumers collectively influence ecological and social conditions in society, consumers significantly influence what will be produced, what resources will be used, and this affects the market situation and also standards of living (Khan, 2006). Therefore, in order to successfully achieve changes in the context of consumer behaviour, it is necessary to focus not only on the micro perspective, or the achievement of the sales goals of one's organisation, but moreover on the situation in society as one that is able to influence the market more significantly. However, this requires a longer period of time. Robert East states that consumer behaviour provides answers to questions such as "How do people buy and use goods and services?", "What are their reactions to prices, advertising, and layout?", and "How do these reactions come about and what are their causative factors?'. Consumer behaviour is not only applicable in marketing in order to sell more successfully, but also, if legislative authorities have answers to these questions, then they can, for example, create better legal norms (East, Wright, Vanhuele, 2008). On the other hand, according to Philip Kotler's definition, consumer behaviour or "output" depends on the "input" that consumers have received and which have influenced their actions (Kotler, Keller, 2012). Marketing professor Rajeev Kumra, on the concept of consumer behaviour, argues that consumer behaviour includes the psychological processes that consumers go through in recognising needs, looking for ways to satisfy those needs, gathering and interpreting information, planning and implementing these plans (for example, purchasing a product), when making purchase decisions (for example, whether to buy a product, and, if so, which brand and where), and also the processes gone through after purchase. The professor defines consumer behaviour as the study of how people or organisations behave in acquiring, using, and disposing of products (and services) (Kumra, 2006). Researchers David L. Mothersbaugh and Delbert I. Hawkins define consumer behaviour as the science of individuals, groups, or organisations and the processes they use to select, use, and dispose of goods, services, experiences, or ideas to meet their needs, as well as the effects these processes have on the consumer and society as a whole (Del et al., 2009). It is possible to observe that the definitions put forward by the scientists are very similar, and with only minor nuances. One of the differences is whether the scientists view consumer behaviour primarily as a science that studies consumer behaviour and the factors that influence it, or whether consumer behaviour is the process and its effects that a consumer goes through when purchasing a product

or service or receiving other types of benefits. Most sources show that the scientists attribute consumer behaviour to buying something, but consumer behaviour can also be attributed to habits. In the context of waste-sorting, the definitions that also mention getting rid of the product directly refer to the consumer's actions, and how they get rid of what they no longer need.

Attempts to change the everyday habitual behaviour of consumers are attempts to change people's beliefs and intentions. It is often difficult or even impossible to change behaviour that has already become a habit (Prochaska, DiClemente, Norcross, 1992). Habits that have a factor that is based on another factor are easier and faster to implement than those that have no basis. Also, when motivation comes from the consumer, the introduction of the habit has a potentially greater chance of success than when the change of a habit is forced in some way. Each stage of behavioural change has a correspondingly different intervention or incentive strategies. In the pre-conception phase, it is education and information, setting rewards and creating cognitive dissonance, and/or internal dialogue and contradictions. In the design phase, education and awareness should continue, as should the setting of rewards and the promotion of cognitive dissonance, but it is possible to add an analysis of current behaviours (what and why is being done wrong, and why the current behaviour needs to change). Also, in the preparation stage, information and education, rewards, and cognitive dissonance are still important, adding insistent visual feedback to promote an understanding of existing behavioural habits. In the action stage, the provision of visual feedback is effective in order to motivate the maintenance of action and social influence from others. On the other hand, when the consumer has reached the maintenance stage, praise for the actions and results achieved are an effective form of social influence, as well as motivation by other means, which promote the continuation and non-discontinuation of the habit (Ferron, Massa, 2013). Using this proposed model of behaviour change, it is possible to influence the consumer more successfully, that is, in order to promote behavioural change for a wider group of society, it is necessary to act on all the above-mentioned stages in order to cover the consumers who are going through each of them, as well as to motivate those who have (temporarily) stopped a stage return to the behaviour-change process. From this research, it can be concluded that it is necessary not only to educate about the necessity of sorting waste, but also to emphasise the possibility of reuse and sorting, to reduce stereotypes in order to change the attitude of consumers towards sorting waste and, in the most successful case, their habits.

Sustainable Consumer Behaviour

Solving sustainability issues is often thought to be linked to product innovation. If products and services became environmentally friendly, sustainability would no longer be an issue. However, there are several problems with this view. For example, environmentally friendly products often require large investments, political support, consumer acceptance, and a willingness to pay for them. Given the high number of product innovation failures, research on consumer behaviour seems crucial to guide various interventions aimed at promoting sustainable behaviour. Sustainable consumer behaviour can be viewed from a variety of perspectives, including those of policy makers, marketing, consumer interests, and ethics (Antonides, 2017). It follows that sustainable consumer behaviour is largely influenced by entrepreneurs, but entrepreneurs must also have an incentive to change their actions. At this point, it becomes natural that consumers are the ones who can influence the actions of entrepreneurs, but entrepreneurs, by the same token, can influence the actions of consumers. It is necessary to insert a factor that affects both sides, thus promoting action and fulfilling the regularity, resulting in more sustainable solutions. Researchers Marianna Gilli, Francesco Nicolli, and Paola Farinelli (Marianna Gilli, Francesco Nicolli, Paola Fainelli), by surveying 618 households in Italy, have studied the following regularities. There are three different types of motivation – intrinsic, extrinsic, and pressure. Internal motivation works in a situation when the consumer themselves experiences positive emotions about work and decides, for example, to change a habit. In the case of intrinsic motivation, the consumer rewards themselves only with the feeling of accomplishment. On the other hand, extrinsic motivation is that wherein the stimulus comes from someone else – that is, receiving some kind of benefit in return. The benefit can be material, financial, or social. The motivation of pressure occurs when people around a consumer perform an action, which may be a socially (or otherwise) more responsible action, and this creates pressure for that particular individual to change their behaviour in order to fit in and not place themselves, in a social sense, in a lower position. A correlation was observed between the level of education and involvement in waste-sorting – in the group that sorted waste due to pressure-based motivation, the number of people who had completed basic education was lower, while in the groups where the motivation was formed by internal or external factors, the proportion of higher education among the respondents was higher (Gilli, Nicolli, Farinelli, 2018). There are several barriers (Euromonitor International, 2022) to sustainable consumption

which are listed in no particular order as follows. The level of education – society's understanding of sustainability, and the binding processes of the topic; actions, effects: the more knowledgeable the consumer, the more responsible purchases and actions are taken; consumer age (skepticism) – the younger generation is more open to more innovative solutions than older generations in that younger consumers follow trends more and are not afraid try a product obtained in a different way, for example from recycled materials; fast fashion – clothing collections on store shelves regularly change, and significantly reduced sustainable clothing consumption is possible; price – one of the most powerful factors that determine consumer actions – the lower the salary, the more advantageous/cheaper products the consumer will choose, and, in this variant, the impact of sustainability is not considered; the level of well-being – as the level of well-being in the country and the world improves, consumers will be able to do more to allocate funds for responsible purchases; information paucity – governmental and non-governmental organisations, as well as brands and companies themselves, must actively inform the public about sustainability, as well as about its positive benefits for the environment and the economy. Communication is the key to change. And, finally, the lack of motivation – there is no motivation to act responsibly, which is also facilitated by the previously-mentioned disinformation. By understanding these barriers, brands can inform consumers about a solution or a response to existing barriers by helping consumers understand the value and necessity of the industry. The correlation between education level and waste-sorting habits is a significant factor that prompts understanding as regards whether the weak link is the lack of information reaching consumers or other factors that influence it. In this case, pressure motivation is also potentially less likely to occur if the consumer's social circle includes consumers without a higher education, as well as those who do not sort waste.

Marketing Communication Analysis of Sample Waste Management Enterprises in the Context of Climate Change

Marketing communication was analysed by monitoring the content of company websites, as well as the content of social networks such as Instagram and Facebook (provided that the company communicates using them). The following combination of digital channels has been chosen to look at, because content on social networks reaches a wider audience and

is easier to consume, but it is possible to place more informative, voluminous materials for educating and informing consumers on company websites. The content of the companies' websites has been analysed in the period from January 1st, 2020 to November 26th, 2021, accordingly, social network communication has also been examined within this time frame. To be able to evaluate the website-based communication, the discourse analysis/coding method was used, and the articles were analysed according to certain criteria. In total, 46 questions were answered per article, so that in the end it would be possible to compare, group, and analyse the articles in a structured way. The following are the criteria according to which the articles were selected and analysed: the use of key words; source language; title; author and narrator analysis; information channels and sources; sub-topics; sub-topics analysed in more detail; how the meaning of climate change is reflected; how climate change is evaluated and framed; on what scale climate change is addressed; who is the "hero", "villain", and "victim"; which narrative is created through the writing; what the 'hero's goal' is; what is at the heart of the conflict and what its solution is when action is required; the use of conceptual metaphors; and, finally, the analysis of multimedia tools. Evaluating the content of company websites, out of a total of 600 articles, 71 were selected as being valid for the study. Those 71 articles were written in the context of environmental change or were related thereto, while the rest are other types of posts on non-environmental topics. The most frequently used keywords in the articles of waste management companies related to the environmental topic were – environmental protection; environmental preservation; environmental pollution or environmental disaster, and which of those were used most regularly in the context of waste management, i.e., in 27 articles. Waste is called "environmental pollution", and the reduction of the amount of unprocessed waste is called "environmental conservation". The next most popular group of keywords is: green energy; green course; and green transition or green transformation, all of which are mentioned mostly to justify changes in waste management processes or tariffs. Also used repeatedly, but not significantly, are keyword groups such as climate change; climate neutrality; emissions; greenhouse gas emissions; CO_2 emissions; emissions; nature protection; nature conservation; natural pollution or natural disaster; circular economy; environmental sustainability and waste reduction. "Circular economy" is a term that is particularly characteristic of the waste management industry, as the result involves the reduction of waste through various techniques, including recycling. From the sub-topics, it can be seen that waste-sorting and replanting are the most talked about, followed by infrastructure,

prevention, and reuse. In the context of this issue, it can be concluded that although most of the communication related to the environment is made directly about sorting and recycling, the amount is either insufficient or there are other factors regarding why residents indicated in the conducted studies that they do not sort because they do not know how to do it. In the context of sorting, waste-sorting guides are created. However, most of the sources contain statistical data, as well as tariff changes. Emphasis is placed on the sorting of compostable waste and the sorting of electronics, but none of the analysed articles contain a universal guide or tips that could make the sorting process easier for consumers. It is a positive thing that more than 20 articles address how or why waste should be prevented, which include sections on not creating packaging waste during the production and marketing processes, as well as on how the consumer can influence their own waste generation and reduce it. In more than 30 articles, the sub-topic is infrastructure, which include information on landfills, landfill gas recovery and use in cogeneration plants, waste incineration with or without energy recovery, waste processing plants in Latvia, and the availability of separate sorting for households (waste bins, squares). Mostly, the infrastructure aspect addresses the availability of separate sorting for households. The subtopic of waste sorting and recycling is dominated by biological waste sorting or composting, packaging waste sorting and recycling, as well as other waste (bulky waste, construction waste, electrical engineering, tires, etc.). In the context of reuse, there is communication about the transition from single to reusable goods, the repair of goods, processing into other materials, as well as the secondary market of goods. In addition to the recommendations on waste prevention, the main action scenarios are described as the non-generation of waste, sharing and rental options, as well as considering purchases both due to the necessity of the product, as well as evaluating which of the similar products generates more waste. Wastewater management is discussed very little; only in 3 articles are wastewater treatment and infiltrates mentioned. 10 articles mention State or EU financial support for the development of waste management infrastructure. In order to analyse how climate change is integrated into the content of company websites, the articles were also evaluated according to the criterion. 58 articles were selected due to their validity, but climate change is not mentioned in those articles. Activities are seen in their context, but this may not be understood by the consumer. In a small number of articles, climate change and related measures are secondary topics or that of minor topics. None of the articles emphasise the impact of waste-sorting on climate change. The current consumer behaviour trends for 2022 were

clarified, one of which was climate change specifically. Consumers are said to be interested in how they can affect climate change. If the results of the analysis are viewed in the direction of trends, then it can be concluded that communication should be structured in a different content, emphasising the actualities of climate change. Companies have established financial benefits as the main driver of sorting waste, for example, in the case of compostable waste, it is possible to reduce waste disposal costs, and they have also conveyed the message that sorting waste is necessary, but without explaining exactly why and what the impact of not sorting waste is. It can be concluded that climate change is mostly not evaluated in the articles at all or is evaluated rather negatively. On the other hand, if you look at how climate change is framed, there are articles where climate change is described as an opportunity for the economy/entrepreneurs/ innovation, as an issue of sustainability and corporate social responsibility, but also as a threat or risk to humanity, nature, etc. In 12 of the articles, climate change is framed as an inevitable reality, or a phenomenon that is happening and which has little chance of being affected. The climate change assessment is analysed to determine the overall attitude in which companies are currently communicating about climate change and then to find out whether the attitude towards climate change is important in the eyes of the consumer, or whether it is being paid attention to. In order to classify which scenarios are most often reflected in articles on home pages, a separate criterion on narratives was also examined, which allows for an analysis of how content-based companies communicate in the environmental aspect. Next follows the narrative where the Latvian business environment is changing; entrepreneurs are now striving to be corporately responsible. Regarding the corporate responsibility of companies, the scenario was formed mostly in articles announcing the beginning or end of a campaign. As an example, there was an initiative in which textile waste-sorting containers were placed in the stores of a certain supermarket chain for a month. The next largest group of narratives, which included more than 10 articles, are supposedly about the fact that Latvia must fulfil the requirements set by the European Union – this narrative was reflected both positively and negatively. In the positive sense, they talk about the way that the European Union aims to create a greener environment and reduce the impact of climate change on the world with changes in regulations, and that companies have to make changes in their work, but in the name of good goals, on the other hand and in the negative sense, that European Union regulations force companies to raise prices or otherwise change their actions, portraying the initiatives as an unnecessary burden on society. Looking at the results

of the analysis in the context of climate change, it can be seen that climate change and its potential impact on society is rarely mentioned.

Conclusions

Entrepreneur-oriented recommendations can be used both for the transformation of an existing company into an enterprise with the principles of sustainability, and for the creation of a new business focused on sustainability. For the sustainable development of a company, it is necessary to draw consumers' attention to the impact and consequences of choosing sustainable products, thus emotionally creating consumer awareness and the desire to reduce any negative environmental and social impact, and provide consumers with information about the impact of such a purchase decision (Blumfelde-Rutka, 2021). In marketing communications, mention is made of climate change and the impact of sorting or not sorting waste on the environment. Consumers in the focus group indicated that they were not aware of the possible impact, and if a direct link to climate change and a potential threat to society with waste management was made, it could encourage consumers to consider partaking in waste-sorting. Also, based on the consumer behaviour trends of 2022, which include care for the environment and climate, such communication would have the potential to be effective. Analysing the current communication of waste management companies, a lack of such content was observed, and this was also mentioned by consumers during the focus group discussion. This type of information could also be stored by the consumer on their mobile devices for reference when needed. A unified sorting system for Latvia should be created. In the context of waste management, companies have different rules, containers of different colours, all of which unnecessarily confuses the consumer. Waste sorting would be significantly better facilitated by a set of regulations or guidelines that would create the same sorting measures throughout Latvia, so that waste containers do not differ, as well as information on what can and cannot be placed in those containers. Marketing communication should be based on the cycle of consumption-habit formation in order to understand the consumers who are in each of the stages and thereby reach out to them more successfully. At the same time, content and marketing efforts must be planned in such a way that consumers are educated, praised, an internal dialogue is formed about existing and desired habits, and feedback is formed about progress or regression in the context of waste-sorting. Since one of the nuances in the context of consumer behaviour trends 2022 is green thinking and building relationships with brands,

it is recommended for companies to create engaging communication so that the consumer feels important and valued. Engaging communication is also a way to better understand social-network followers, which would allow for more accurate targeting and more appropriate content creation. Sustainable consumer behaviour can be viewed from a variety of perspectives, including policy makers, marketing, consumer interests, and ethics (Antonides, 2017). Engagement that predicts comments and likes or other reactions also works well for the social networks' rotation algorithms which predict that the more people engage with the content you create, the more people it will be shown to. Environmental non-governmental organisations need to evaluate their opportunities not only in educating consumers and entrepreneurs, but also in providing waste management companies with the most up-to-date facts and statistical data on waste sorting, which companies could use in their communication, adapting to their own style. By doing this, waste management companies would include current environmental issues in their communication. In addition, the facts and statistical data used would not differ, which would reduce consumer confusion.

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