

STUDIA EUROPEJSKIE
STUDIES IN
EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

Centre for Europe, University of Warsaw

Volume 27 • Number 4 • 2023

ISSN 1428-149X

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EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

Centre for Europe, University of Warsaw

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ISSN 1428-149X

Warsaw 2023

The Peer-reviewed Quarterly
“**Studia Europejskie – Studies in European Affairs**”

published by:

Centre for Europe, University of Warsaw

Al. Niepodległości 22, 02-653 Warszawa

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Language and stylistic correction:

Joanna Roderick, Michael Roderick

Technical correction:

Studio Poligraficzne Edytorka

© Centre for Europe, University of Warsaw 2023

ISSN 1428-149X

e-ISSN 2719-3780

Printing House:

Oficyna Wydawnicza ASPRA-JR

e-mail: sekretariat@aspra.pl

www.aspra.pl



Publication co-financed by Ministry of Education and Science

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ARTICLES





*Krzysztof Śliwiński**

Is Geopolitics Still Relevant? Halford Mackinder and the War in Ukraine

Abstract

This paper starts with an assumption that geopolitics, understood as one of the great schools of international relations, is not only still relevant but, indeed, should be one of the essential items in the toolkit of any student or policymaker who peruses the challenging and ever-eluding realm of international security. It draws chiefly on Sir Halford Mackinder's Heartland theory in order to explain the dynamics of contemporary European security in general, and the ongoing war in Ukraine in particular.

The analysis, which relies heavily on a historical examination of the geopolitical realities of Central and Eastern Europe, leads the author to a pair of conclusions. Firstly, the conflict in Ukraine is likely to linger on albeit with unpredictable intensity and, secondly perhaps more importantly, the outcome of the war will only be one of many steps leading to the emergence of a new, possibly multipolar, international system and consequently, and more obviously, a new security system in Europe, which will be strongly influenced by Germany rather than by the United States as before.

Keywords: Geopolitics, Heartland, Halford Mackinder, Europe, Security, Ukraine

Introduction

On Thursday 24th February, 2022, the Russian Federation commenced its invasion of Ukraine, officially referred to by Moscow as a “special military operation” against Ukraine (Osborn, 2022). The offensive caught

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many by surprise, especially considering the severity of Russia's military actions, such as targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure. During the first weeks of the war, the Ukrainian army and society impressed the world with their bravery and commitment to preserving territorial integrity and sovereignty.

Members of the European Union agreed on an extensive package of sanctions against various Russian entities and individuals connected to Vladimir Putin, the president of Russia. Until the attack against Ukraine, the EU had been muddling through with numerous countries pursuing their national interests, shaping their individual foreign and security policies, notably *vis-à-vis* Russia. The attack reinvigorated calls of EU bureaucrats for more unity and an actual common defence. The EU's chief diplomat, Joseph Borrel, during an extraordinary plenary session of the European Parliament on 1st March 2022, urged the European Parliament's MPs to "think about the instruments of coercion, retaliation, and counterattack in the face of reckless adversaries. (...) This is a moment in which geopolitical Europe is being born", he stressed (Brzozowski, 2022).

Heartland Theory – Geopolitics 101

As an analytical tool, geopolitics has been used since the 19th century. Its reputation, however, was tarnished as a consequence of the policies of the Third Reich before and during World War II (WWII). Yet, it is considered a worthy approach that allows for explanations that specifically look at the nexus between states' foreign and security policies and their geographical location in a historical context. Geopolitics is one of the grand theories of international relations (Sloan, 2017). Fundamentally, rather than treating states as separate, alienated geographical organisms, geopolitics allows us to look at a broader picture, including regions or even the whole globe, thus making it possible to account for interactions between many states functioning in particular systems defined by geographical criteria.

According to Grygiel, geopolitics exists outside the state; it is the environment within which, and in response to which, the state must act (Grygiel, 2006). Furthermore, two key variables shape this environment in the forms of the location of resources (distribution of power), and the lines of communication linking them (Grygiel, 2006).

Today's war in Ukraine occurs in a vital region for the European continent, i.e., Central and Eastern Europe. One of the founders of the scientific discipline that is geopolitics, Sir Halford Mackinder (a British geographer, Oxford professor, and the founder and director of the London School of

Economics) proposed an enduring model in his seminal publication at the beginning of the 20th century – “The Geographical Pivot of History”. Mackinder starts with the basics; he looks at a physical map. He concludes, looking at Eurasia, that Russia occupied half the continent, juxtaposed by many small European powers to the West. The East is generally flat and low, whereas the West has many complications, such as mountains, valleys, islands, peninsulas, and rivers. Geographical conditions account for the historical developments that could be summarised as a great push of various Asiatic peoples from the East to the West, culminating in the complicated political puzzle on the European continent (Mackinder, 1904, p. 425). Consequently, drawing on the general term used by geographers – “continental” – he posits that the regions of Arctic and Continental drainage measure nearly half of Asia and a quarter of Europe and therefore form a grand “continuous patch in the north and the centre of the continent” (Mackinder, 1919). It is the famous Heartland which is the key geographical area for anyone pursuing a dominant position in Eurasia. “whoever rules the Heartland will rule the World Island, and whoever rules the World Island will rule the world” (Kapo, 2021). Notably, the key to controlling the Heartland area lies in Central and Eastern Europe, as it is an area that borders the Heartland to the West. Heartland itself is protected by mountain ranges from the South and the Sea from the North. The developments of WWII slightly altered this approach, and, by 1943, Mackinder rightly foresaw the potential of the Soviet Union as a land power if it were to emerge victorious from the war (Mackinder, 1943, p. 600). Yet the intellectual seeds that would allow such flexibility had already been planted in 1904; “The actual balance of political power at any given time is, of course, the product, on the one hand, of geographical conditions, both economic and strategic, and, on the other hand, of the relative number, virility, equipment, and organisation of the competing peoples” (Mackinder, 1904, p. 425).

Historical Context of Contemporary European Geopolitics

Before Mackinder’s publications, what we now refer to as Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECs) had been primarily united under the crown dynasty of the House of Jagiellonian as The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, called the Commonwealth of Both Nations. Lasting from 1386 to 1795, at its height in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, the Commonwealth became one of the largest (territorially), the most populous, and, politically, the most influential of the early modern European states, exhibiting democratic and religiously tolerant tendencies. Ultimately, by

1795, the Commonwealth was partitioned between three powerful states: the Russian Empire, the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, and Prussia.

The 19th century was probably the most dynamic era regarding technological developments and consequent socio-economic and political ramifications. The Industrial Revolution was well underway, and Europe's political and military leadership was being competed for between Great Britain, Germany (as united by Prussia), France, the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, and Russia. Against this backdrop, Central and Eastern Europe became vital for European and, later, global politics in the 20th century. The so-called "Eastern Question" emerged as pivotal amidst two related processes: on the one hand, there was the continuing expansion of the Russian Empire – the Third Rome (paralleled by the steady retreat of the Ottoman Empire) and, on the other hand, the growing power and political ambitions of a united Germany – the so-called "late-comer to the colonial world". Germany paid extra attention to Central and Eastern Europe after its unification in 1871 under Prussian Chancellor Otto von Bismarck. Its policy was the one of remorseless *Kulturkampf* (culture war) through which Germans hoped not only to gain an advantage over the Catholic Church in Europe and the Papacy but, in the context of the region, to Germanise its people, which was, after all, a form of imperialism and colonialism (Bideleux, Jeffries, 2007). The policy was, in subsequent years, institutionalised by HAKATA (a pan-German Union established in 1891 to promote German interests in "eastern provinces" which later turned into *Deutscher Ostmarkverein*) and intellectually and morally supported by Friedrich Naumann's works, among which *Mitteleuropa* (published in 1915) stands out as particularly influential. It was later picked up by Nazi Germany, which treated Central and Eastern Europe as ideal geographical circumstances to spread Germanic influence and provide the Aryan race with much-needed *Lebensraum* (living space).

WWII started with an attack on Poland in September 1939 and ended (at least in Europe) with Red Army soldiers seizing Berlin by the end of April 1945. Germany was consequently divided into four different occupation zones, out of which, by 1947, two independent German states were formed. Western Germany was under the political and economic influence of the Western allies, whereas the Eastern half was under the control of the Soviet Union. Most nations shared the same fate in Central and Eastern Europe, which had been pre-approved by the so-called "Big Three" conference in Yalta in 1945. In a nutshell, the region was sacrificed to the USSR and its territorial ambitions in Europe.

Under the Administration of President John F. Kennedy, the United States moved from its massive retaliation (response or deterrence)

strategy, which posited that in case of an attack by the USSR against the US or its allies, Washington would commit itself to retaliating with much greater power, including nuclear weapons (Wells, 1981). As proposed by Secretary of Defence Robert MacNamara, the Strategy of Flexible Response, adopted as early as 1961, introduced an “appropriate” response to potential aggression by the Warsaw Pact (a military alliance led by the USSR) (Pepper, 1990, p. 292). Whereas nuclear weapons were primarily located in the US, conventional weapons were spread around European lands. Washington assumed that an attack with conventional forces would occur in Europe, once again stressing the importance of Central and Eastern Europe. It was considered vital as one of the three options for NATO in case of an actual military operation. The so-called “forward defence” concentrated conventional defence efforts at or around the central European front (Pepper, 1988, p. 165). On the other hand, in its early years, the Warsaw Pact developed a tendency toward conferring privileged status on the northern members of the Pact. This took the form of referring to – in public media – the northern quartet of Poland, the German Democratic Republic, Czechoslovakia, and the Soviet Union as the “first strategic echelon of the Pact” (Wolfe, 1966). The territory of the three Eastern European members of the northern quartet lay directly in line with what in wartime would be the main axis of a central European campaign. Consequently, Central and Eastern Europe had to be controlled again should the USSR seriously consider protecting its core. As Patricia Haigh rightly reminds us: “The Warsaw Pact meant that the countries of Eastern Europe could be bound to the strategic policies of the Soviet Union, and the concept of buffer States against a resurgent Germany realised” (Haigh, 1968, p. 170). This is precisely how historians read the events of 1968 and the application of “The Brezhnev Doctrine”, exemplified by the intervention of the Warsaw Pact in Czechoslovakia the same year.

In 2005, then-Polish Minister for Defence Radosław Sikorski made public some classified Soviet documents that revealed a likely war plan, known as “Seven Days to the Rhine”. It was a possible scenario of World War III based on a 1979 military exercise that assumed NATO would be the aggressor that would nuke a series of twenty-five targets in Poland, including Warsaw and the port of Gdańsk. The cover story of countering aggression was a mere fig leaf for the true nature of the anticipated conflict; a bolt-from-the-blue Soviet attack against NATO (Mizokami, 2016).

Twenty-First Century Geopolitics (Dugin vs Mearsheimer)

The most influential thinker and writer in the Kremlin of recent times is arguably Aleksandr Gel'evich Dugin. Accordingly, his 600-hundred-page book, *Foundations of Geopolitics 2*, published in 1997, has allegedly had an enormous influence on the Russian military, police, and statist foreign policy elites (Dunlop, 1997). In his book, Dugin, drawing on the founder of geopolitics, Karl Haushofer, posits that Russia is uniquely positioned to dominate the Eurasian landmass and that, more importantly, "Eurasianism" will ultimately hold the upper hand in an ongoing conflict with the representatives of so-called "Atlantism", i.e., the US and the UK. Crucially, Dugin does not focus primarily on military means as a way of achieving Russian dominance over Eurasia; instead, he advocates a relatively sophisticated program of subversion, destabilisation, and disinformation spearheaded by the Russian special services, supported by a tough, hard-headed use of Russia's gas, oil, and natural resource riches to pressure and bully other countries into bending to Russia's will (Dunlop, 1997).

The Moscow-Berlin Axis

According to Dugin, the postulated New (Eurasian) Empire has a robust geopolitical foothold, namely, Central Europe. "Central Europe is a natural geopolitical entity, united strategically, culturally, and partly politically. Ethnically, this space includes the peoples of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, Germany, Prussia, and part of the Polish and Western Ukrainian territories. Germany has traditionally been a consolidating force in Central Europe, uniting this geopolitical conglomerate under its control" (Dugin, 1997). Consequently, while the impulse of the creation of the New Empire needs to come from Moscow, Germany needs to be the centre of its western part. Furthermore "only Russia and the Russians will be able to provide Europe with strategic and political independence and resource autarchy. Therefore, the European Empire should be formed around Berlin, which is on a straight and vital axis with Moscow" (Dugin, 1997, p. 127).

Regarding the role of Anglo-Saxons in Central and Eastern Europe, Dugin offers a most straightforward analysis: "The creation of the Berlin-Moscow axis as the western supporting structure of the Eurasian Empire presupposes several serious steps towards the countries of Eastern Europe lying between Russia and Germany. The traditional Atlanticist policy in

this region was based on Mackinder's thesis about the need to create a *cordon sanitaire* here, which would serve as a conflict buffer zone preventing the possibility of a Russian-German alliance, which is incredibly dangerous for the entire Atlanticist bloc. To this end, England and France strove to destabilise the Eastern European peoples in every possible way, to instil in them the idea of the need for *independence* and liberation from German and Russian influences". It follows logically that "Ukraine as an independent state with certain territorial ambitions, represents an enormous danger for all of Eurasia and, without resolving the Ukrainian problem, it is, in general, senseless to speak about continental politics" (Dugin, 1997). "The independent existence of Ukraine (especially within its present borders) can make sense only as a *sanitary cordon*. Importantly, as this can inform us to an extent about the future settlement of the conflict; the absolute imperative of Russian geopolitics on the Black Sea coast is the total and unlimited control of Moscow along its entire length from Ukrainian to Abkhazian territories".

The Tragedy of Great Power Politics

In the preface to the update of his seminal book "The Tragedy of Great Power Politics" (2013 edition), John Mearsheimer acknowledges that his analysis had to be updated with regard to the so-called "peaceful rise" of the People's Republic of China as a significant challenger to the role and position of United States in the international system. Consequently, he envisaged that the process would produce a highly sensitive, if-not-prone-to-local-conflicts environment (Mearsheimer, 2013, p. 10). Following the logic of power balancing, he claimed that, firstly, China had to build formidable military forces and, secondly, to go on to dominate Asia similarly to how the United States dominated the Western Hemisphere. Correspondingly, China would strive to become a regional hegemon to maximise its survival prospects. This would make China's neighbours feel insecure, and prompt counterbalancing by, as one might surmise, strengthening existing bilateral and multilateral alliances and building new ones (AUKUS being a perfect example). Logically speaking, therefore, should one follow Mearsheimer's argumentation, Russia and India, Japan and Australia, and the Philippines and Indonesia should build a solid coalition to counter the ascent of China. Such developments would be in the interests of the United States, and Washington would naturally play a crucial role in such circumstances. Notably, the rise of China was not likely to be peaceful and could potentially prove to be a challenge for US-dominated international trade as well as peace and security. This

was approximately what the Trump administration had in mind when preparing its national security strategy in 2017. The Strategy mentions Russia 25 times, frequently in connection with China as major challengers to the US: “China and Russia challenge American power, influence, and interests, attempting to erode American security and prosperity. They are determined to make economies less free and fair, grow their militaries, and control information and data to repress their societies and expand their influence” (National Security of the United States of America, 2017). Yet, after even a short analysis of the document, one identifies the difference between the two in terms of how the US perceives the challenge that each represents. Regarding Russia, Washington concludes that the Kremlin’s main aim is to: “seek to restore its great power status and establish spheres of influence near its borders”. China seems to be more ambitious in the eyes of the Capitol, as evidenced by such statements as: “Every year, competitors such as China steal US intellectual property valued at hundreds of billions of dollars”, “China seeks to displace the United States in the Indo-Pacific region, expand the reaches of its state-driven economic model, and reorder the region in its favour. China’s infrastructure investments and trade strategies reinforce its geopolitical aspirations. Its efforts to build and militarise outposts in the South China Sea endanger the flow of free trade, threaten other nations’ sovereignty, and undermine regional stability” (National Security of the United States of America, 2017). Given this perception, it is no wonder that under Trump, Washington embarked on a new mission that questioned the processes of globalisation for the first time in many decades. Also under Trump, the USA introduced numerous economic sanctions against China, which sparked a revolution so-named as a “decoupling”. Johnson and Gramer, writing for *foreignpolicy.com* in 2020, questioned this policy: “The threat of a great decoupling is a potentially historical break, an interruption perhaps only comparable to the sudden sundering of the first massive wave of globalisation in 1914, when deeply intertwined economies such as Great Britain and Germany, and, later, the United States, threw themselves into a barrage of self-destruction and economic nationalism that didn’t stop for 30 years. This time, though, decoupling is driven not by war but peacetime populist urges, exacerbated by a global coronavirus pandemic that has shaken decades of faith in the wisdom of international supply chains and the virtues of a global economy” (Johnson, Gramer, 2020).

With the comfort and benefit of hindsight, we should conclude that, perhaps luckily for the Far East and international political economy, Mearsheimer was wrong, at least for the time being. Firstly, no military conflicts exist in the Far East or the Pacific. The most potentially dangerous

issue remains in the form of one of the cross-strait relations, i.e., the PRC vs Taipei. Whether Xi Jinping will risk another diplomatic backlash by an open invasion remains to be seen. The jury is out, and one might claim that with the world being focused on the war in Ukraine, China could get away with an invasion of Taiwan. Then, on the other hand, perhaps there is no need for the People's Republic to unite all territories of China in the imminent future by force.

At the same time, as it appears at least at mid-2023, and contrary to Mearsheimer's predictions, Russia and China seem to be getting closer regarding geopolitics and geoeconomics. On February 4th, Russian President Vladimir Putin met face-to-face with the Chinese President. The leaders convened in Beijing at the start of the Winter Olympics and issued a lengthy statement detailing the two nations' shared positions on a range of global issues (kremlin.ru, 2022). The meeting happened shortly before the Russian invasion, and one could surmise that it was supposed to soften the possible adverse reaction from Beijing to the already prepared military operation by the Kremlin since Putin told Xi that Russia had drawn up a new deal to supply China with an additional 10 billion cubic metres of natural gas. Consequently, China abstained from a U.N. Security Council vote condemning the Russian invasion (Gerson, 2022). Indeed, one cannot but notice that most of the energy transferred to the West before the war in Ukraine has been redirected to the East, mainly China (Soldatkin, Aizhu, 2022). At the same time, Russia has also shifted its imports of high-tech. Instead of the US or Germany/France, it now has developed cooperation with China (Taplin, 2023).

Andrew Krepinevich's Protracted Great-Power War

Andrew Krepinevich's "Protracted Great-Power War – A Preliminary Assessment Work" published by the Centre for a New American Security, informs us about America's posture. Accordingly, "Now, however, with the rise of revisionist China and Russia, the United States is confronted with a strategic choice; conducting contingency planning for a protracted great-power conflict and how to wage it successfully (or, better still, prevent it from occurring), or ignoring the possibility and hoping for the best" (Krepinevich, 2020).

Among many valuable lessons that history can offer, one should remember that no country can wage a systemic war on its own on two fronts and hope to be successful. Suppose both China and Russia were seen as strategic challengers to America's position in the international system. In such case, it follows logically that the US would need to make

one of them at least neutral (i.e., appease them) when in conflict with the other. Given China's technological, economic, military, and population challenges, the most optimal choice would be to make Russia indifferent to American interference in Central Asia or the Middle East *vis-à-vis* China. The price for such indifference also seems logical, that price being the dominance of the Russo-German tandem in Central and Eastern Europe and German dominance in the EU. This would explain at least some developments in Europe regarding energy security, particularly President Biden's administration's position on Nord Stream 2 and the not-overly-enthusiastic help extended to Ukraine from Germany. However, recent developments seem to contrast such logical argumentation. President Biden's administration, as well as the leadership of the US Armed Forces, seem to be committed to continuing the country's financial, technical, and logistical support to Ukrainian President Zelensky's government for "as long as it takes" (the term frequently used in official speeches by Secretary of State Antony Blinken). According to the US Department of Defence information (as at 21st February 2023), the US has provided security assistance to Ukraine in the form of 160 Howitzers, 31 Abrams tanks, 111 million rounds of small arms ammunition and four satellite communication antennas, among others. On top of that, Washington has committed more than 30.4 billion US dollars to the cause (and that is only since the beginning of the Biden Administration) (US Department of Defence, 2023). The US is the leader of a coalition of many nations (54 to be exact) in efforts to counter the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This situation puts Washington in a predicament as, at least in the media sphere, experts and former policymakers such as the former CIA Director and US Defence Secretary Leon Panetta do not shy away from identifying the existing state of affairs as a "proxy war" between the United States and the Russian Federation (Macmillan, 2022).¹

But is Uncle Sam still in a position to effectively challenge either Russia or China on their own? In 2001, the French historian, sociologist, and political scientist Emmanuel Todd claimed that as of the beginning of the 21st century, the United States was no longer a solution to global problems; instead, it had become one of the problems (Todd, 2003). The US had guaranteed political and economic freedoms for half a century. In contrast, today, the Americans seem to be more and more agents of international disorder, causing uncertainty and conflicts wherever they can. They demand the international community support their foreign

¹ Importantly, the Kremlin has been playing the proxy war card for some time in building its narrative regarding the ongoing "Special Military Operation" in Ukraine.

policy goals and join in their actions regardless of cost and benefit analyses. Given the geopolitical changes after 1989, the US took its position in the international system for granted and decided to extend its interests across the globe. Surprisingly, perhaps for Washington, even traditional US allies started to demand more independence (see the case of Germany and its role in southern Europe, or Macron's idea of "strategic autonomy").² According to Todd, given the actual balance of power globally, the US would have to fulfil two conditions to maintain its hegemonic position. Firstly, it would have to continue controlling its protectorates in Europe and Japan. Secondly, it would have to finally eliminate Russia from the elite group of so-called "big powers", which would mean the disintegration of the post-Soviet sphere and the elimination of the nuclear balance of terror. None of these conditions have thus far been satisfied. Not being able to challenge Europe or Japan economically, the US has also been unable to challenge the Russian nuclear position. Consequently, it switched to attacking medium powers such as Iran or Iraq economically, politically, and militarily engaging in "theatrical militarism" (Todd, 2003). In contrast to the aforementioned French historian, American political scientist Joseph Nye Jr claims that "the United States will remain the world's leading military power in the decades to come, and military force will remain an important component of power in global politics" (Nye, 2019, p. 70). He goes on to question whether the rise of China is going to spell the end of the American era, "but, contrary to current conventional wisdom, China is not about to replace the United States as the world's largest economy. Measured in *purchasing power parity* (PPP), the Chinese economy became larger than the US economy in 2014, but PPP is an economist's measure for comparing welfare estimates, not calculating relative power. For example, oil and jet engines are imported at current exchange rates, and, by that measure, China has a 12 trillion US-dollar economy compared to a 20-trillion-dollar US economy (...) Power – the ability to affect others to get what you want – has three aspects: coercion, payment, and attraction. Economic might is just part of the geopolitical equation, and even in economic power, while China may surpass America in total size, it will still lag behind in per capita income (a measure of the sophistication of an economy)" (Ney, 2019, p. 70). And yet, as of 2023, the economic components of America's power seem to be very quickly

² "Emmanuel Macron's comments about Taiwan and his call for European *strategic autonomy* sparked controversy as he advocated for the EU not to become followers of the US and China". This parallels with President de Gaulle's earlier calls for European strategic independence from American influence over European security (Lory, 2023).

eroding. After the 2008 subprime mortgage crisis and the consequent COVID-19 induced economic crisis, there would be several woes on the horizon; indeed, inflation has been rampant (that is one of the effects of federal stimulus after COVID-19), which makes the Federal Reserve continue to increase interest rates, thereby making loans more and more expensive (Goldman, 2022). The stock market has been in the so-called “sell-everything” mode, which means investors are losing a lot of money, so their trust in the economy is decreasing. Thirdly, this time around, investors are not switching to bonds, which seems to confirm the previous point. Fourthly and finally, according to Mr Goldman, “none of this is happening in a vacuum. Russia continues its deadly invasion of Ukraine, which has choked off supply chains and sent energy prices through the roof”. China, on the other hand, remains in semi-locked mode when it comes to some of its biggest cities due to post COVID-19 vulnerability. On top of that, a labour shortage has sent salaries surging and hindered the normal flow of goods worldwide (Goldman, 2022). Worse still, according to the Bureau of Economic Analysis of the US Department of Commerce, some of the key performance indicators regarding international trade are primarily negative (Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2023). As at July 2022, experts debated whether or not the country was technically in recession, whereas at the time of this writing (mid-2023), the actual national debt has surpassed 31.46 trillion US dollars (FiscalData.Treasury.gov, 2023), with states such as California officially defaulting on its debts towards the Federal Government (Gillmore, 2023). Finally, one cannot but notice the latest initiatives by BRICS nations to drop using the US dollar as a means of international payments (Aizhu, 2023). Some economists predict the Ukraine crisis will lead to the end of the dominance of the dollar-euro system, the very backbone of Western military power. With nearly 4 billion people, Asia will develop a parallel financial system and lessen its dependence on the West (Krikke, 2022).

One could also argue that the fact that the war in Ukraine happened in the first place and is continuing proves that the position of the United States and the *Pax Americana* are being effectively challenged.

The German-French Engine of European Federalisation?

The economic and political decrease of the US and the parallel increase of China, with Russia holding its position or even reclaiming its influence *vis-à-vis* NATO countries, offers significant challenges to European powers but also offers some ground-breaking opportunities. In terms of challenges,

especially economically, Germany and France, as mentioned before, find themselves in a predicament. Their idea (albeit more Germany's idea), was to continue in the role of being an economic powerhouse, based chiefly on the export of manufactured goods worldwide, thanks to energy security provided by the Russian Federation. The war in Ukraine has changed these dynamics completely due to the pressure from the US to support Ukraine and economic sanctions against the Russian Federation. Similarly, France, is not very happy with the economic sanctions against Russia and has continually tried to play down the possibility of an all-out EU vs Russia conflict. Should one listen to the speeches of Macron and Scholz, one cannot but hypothesise that Paris and Berlin would be happy with the end of the war as soon as possible at any cost (a cost to be borne by Ukraine, by the way), just to be able to go back to business as usual. Apparently, in an attempt to escape forward, both European powers are proposing further steps to generate even more federal dynamics. To be more exact, they suggest that as far as Foreign and Security Policy is concerned, the still-observed voting pattern based on unanimity, one of the last strongholds of sovereignty, should be abolished, and that decisions should follow qualified-majority voting. Notably, such arguments are made, and invoke potential gains for the EU as a geopolitical actor. In other words, countries such as Poland and Hungary would no longer be able to block Paris and Berlin from imposing their interests on the rest of the EU by presenting them as European. According to this vision, Hungary would no longer be able to "sympathise" with Russia, and Poland would no longer be the so-called "Trojan Horse" of the US interests in Europe in those states' game with Russia. And so, the war in Ukraine presents a perfect circumstance to call for a European federation. Germany has recently publicised such a vision. On 24th August 2022, Chancellor Olaf Scholz presented a speech at Charles University in Prague regarding his vision of the future of the EU at the beginning of the 3rd decade of the 21st century against the backdrop of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Experts, policymakers, and media pundits widely commented on the speech. It started with an assertion that Russia is the biggest threat to the security of Europe. That fact produces two breakthrough consequences. Firstly, Berlin has to pivot from Russia to its European Partners both economically and politically. Secondly, the European Confederation of equal states should morph into a European Federation (The Federal Government, 2022). Scholz's vision includes four of his major "thoughts", the first of which was that given the further enlargement of the European Union of up to 36 states, a transition should be made to majority voting in common foreign or tax policy. Secondly, regarding European sovereignty,

Scholz stated, “we grow more autonomous in all fields; that we assume greater responsibility for our own security; that we work more closely together and stand yet more united in defence of our values and interests around the world”. In practical terms, Scholz singles out the need for one command and control structure of European defence efforts (a European army equipped chiefly by French and German companies?). Thirdly, he believed that the EU should take more responsibility (at the expense of national governments) regarding migration and fiscal policy against the backdrop of the economic crisis induced by the COVID-19 pandemic. This, in practical terms, means, according to Scholz, one set of European debt rules to attain a higher level of economic integration. Finally, some disciplining was put forth. “We, therefore, cannot stand by when the principles of the rule of law is violated, and democratic oversight is dismantled. Just to make this absolutely clear, there must be no tolerance in Europe for racism and antisemitism. That’s why we are supporting the Commission in its work for the rule of law. The European Parliament is also following the subject with close attention. For that I am very grateful (...). We should not shy away from using all the means at our disposal to correct failings. (...) It also seems sensible to consistently tie payments to the maintenance of the rule of law standards – as we have done with the 2021–2027 Financial Framework and the Recovery Fund in the COVID crisis.”

Conclusions

The war in Ukraine is arguably proof of the region’s role in the security and stability of Europe and its economy. Food supplies, myriad crop harvests, energy, but mainly gas, are cases in point. On top of that, the region has a lot of raw materials. Ukraine has large deposits of 21 of 30 such materials critical to Europe’s green transformation (Ukrinform, 2023). In July 2021, before the war in Ukraine had even begun, the EU and Ukraine signed a strategic partnership on raw materials, no less. The partnership includes three areas from the approximation of policy and regulatory mining frameworks, through a partnership that will engage the European Raw Materials Alliance and the European Battery Alliance to closer collaboration in research and innovation along both raw materials and battery value chains using Horizon Europe (European Commission, Press Release, 2021). As for security, in a traditional sense, the US is involved with Ukraine regarding nuclear weapons. In a letter dated 17th March 2023, the director of the Energy Department’s Office of Nonproliferation Policy, Andrea Ferkile, tells Rosatom’s director general

that the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant in Enerhodar “contains US-origin nuclear technical data that is export-controlled by the United States Government” (Bertrand, Lister, 2023; www.state.gov, 2022). Worse still, the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Victoria J. Nuland, admitted in her testimony on Ukraine in the US Congress that, indeed, “Ukraine has biological research facilities, which we are now quite concerned Russian troops, Russian Forces, may be seeking to gain control of, so we are working with the Ukrainians on how they can prevent any of those research materials from falling into the hands of Russian forces should they approach” (C-Span, 2022).

As Scott and Alcenat claim, the analysis of the competitive policies of each great power confirms the Heartland concept’s importance. They project the utility of Mackinder’s analysis to Central Asia, asserting that “it is valid in today’s foreign policy and policy analyses. Each power strives for control of or access to the region’s resources. For China, the primary goal is to maintain regional stability as a means for border security and assurance of stable economic relations. For the European Union, the main goal is to gain economic access while simultaneously promoting the democratisation of those countries that are politically unstable” (Scott, Alcenat, 2008).³

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³ Senior Colonel Zhou Bo (retired) – a senior fellow of the Centre for International Security and Strategy at Tsinghua University and a China Forum expert, and former Director of the Centre for Security Cooperation of the Office for International Military Cooperation of the Ministry of National Defence of China offered a similar evaluation; “the competition between the two giants (the USA and China) will not occur in the Global South, where the US has already lost out to China. At the same time, in the Indo-Pacific, few nations want to take sides. Instead, it will be in Europe, where the US has most of its allies, and China is the largest trading partner” (Bo, 2023).

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*Vadym Zheltovskyy**

From Transaction to Transformation: Explaining the Leadership Shift on EU Sanctions Policy Against Russia

Abstract

The article examines the leadership shift toward the EU sanctions policy against Russia in context of ongoing reconsideration of *status quo* that was caused by full-scale Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The author draws attention to the transformation of the EU political leadership and their vision on the matter of foreign policy-making as a response to Russian aggression. Particular focus is put on the comparative analysis of competition outcomes between transactional and transformational viewpoints on sanction policy against Russia in years 2014–2021 and since February 2022.

Keywords: European Union, Sanctions, Transformational Leadership, Foreign Policy, Structural Power

Introduction

On 24 February 2022 the Russian Federation launched a full-scale illegal invasion of the territory of Ukraine that led to a wide range of implications not only for Ukrainian state but for the world stability and security in future as well. Such unprecedented act of aggression has led to unprecedented response from the Collective West and European Union (EU) in particular. In fact, there have been repeated political declarations and appeals issued by key individual (heads of states and governments) and collective institutional actors (i.e. European Parliament (EP)) on the need to transform Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) of the EU.

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It is the EU sanction policy against Russia that has undergone a significant shift in the aftermath of Russian full-scale aggression. Such shift has vividly illustrated the dominance of transformational approach in the EU response to Russia's war on Ukraine. That came together with the shift in the EU leadership toward the prospects of strengthening the EU structural power in its foreign policy competition with Russia.

Therefore the major purpose of the article is to analyse the impact of the political leadership shift on the revision of the EU sanction policy against Russia as an instrument of CFSP. In order to achieve the stated purpose the article poses a research question referring to the key factors that define the essence of EU leadership in context of declared transformation of common foreign policy. The author puts forward the argument that based on the previous experience in the field of sanction policy against Russia, as well as other entities on which restrictions were imposed, it can be assumed that the effectiveness of such measures will depend not only on their duration but also on the international synchronization of such actions and sustainable character of transformational nature of political leadership.

As for the structure of the article, it goes as follows: the following section briefly explains the methodology and research framework. Furthermore, there is made an attempt to study the impact of factors defining the position of key institutional and individual political actors on the essence of the sanction policy and its purpose. Given part makes an attempt to verify two hypotheses regarding evolution of the EU sanction policy against Russia and its implications for the EU structural potential in the region.

Methodology and Research Framework

Among methods used in the research the article employs the following ones: a case study of Russia's war on Ukraine as a trigger of EU foreign policy transformation; process tracing method and content analysis of selected speeches, resolutions and recommendations on EU sanction policy. To be more precise, the case study method provides an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon of Russian invasion of Ukraine and its impact on the transformational change of the EU member states' and institutional approach toward foreign policy making. It is used to illustrate the essence of political leadership in France and Germany as key EU advocates for the transactional nature of relations with Russia before the full-fledged invasion. On the other hand, the accent on political leadership of such institutions as European Council, European Commission (EC) and European Parliament (EP) is used to summarise the directions of planned revision in the field of CFSP.

Meantime the empirical part of the article is based on two leading methods: process tracing and content-analysis. The methodology of process tracing is employed in order to conduct an interpretative analysis of political developments in the relationship between EU and Ukraine regarding the support of the European integration perspectives for Ukraine and increasing economic pressure on Russian Federation. On the other hand, content analysis was applied in terms of the qualitative research of selected EU parliamentary debates and rhetorical addresses by EU institutional leaders on the broad topic of the EU foreign policy transformation in light of Russia's full-scale invasion.

Conceptually, the paper uses the notion of transformational leadership defined by James MacGregor Burns (1978) and Bernard Bass (1985). In accordance with the leadership concept of Burns (1978), there are two basic types of political leadership: transactional and transformational. The key difference between the two is that transformative leadership is always characterized by complex, long-term political goals and a moral aspect that influences the decision-making process. According to Burns (1978, p. 4), transformational leaders use their influence to establish a long-term vision by challenging the prevailing culture and encouraging their followers to change their minds. In other words, transformational leadership involves structural changes in the beliefs, needs, and values of followers. To this end, transformational leaders appeal to both rational and emotional arguments to win the hearts and minds of their followers. Transactional leadership, in turn, consists in carrying out transactions (i.e. actions taken in a certain way to obtain the desired results in return) with the other party, i.e. international partners, voters, etc. In this context, the analysis of EU foreign policy towards Russia before 24 February 2022 indicates that the EU foreign policy was based on a transactional approach.

In his turn, Bass (1985, p. 7) points out four roles for transformational leadership: 1) inspirational motivation – or an ability to encourage followers to believe in leader's vision and the need of fundamental transformation; 2) idealised influence meaning that a leader is presented as a role model for other followers; 3) individualised consideration of needs and expectations of particular follower or group of followers; 4) intellectual stimulation that is expected to motivate followers to create new ways of thinking about particular situation or about a particular actor (individual or collective).

In this regard, the research focus on the Ukrainian case as a trigger of the EU sanction policy transformation from transactional to transformational in light of full-scale Russian invasion argues for the

need to study the impact of particular institutions as collective actors and their leadership potential. Such focus gives ground to reflect on whether the EU institutions might become a transformative structural power as far as the EU-Russia relations are concerned and how successful the EU structural foreign policy has been in exercising the economic pressure on Russia since 24 February 2022.

Shift of the EU Sanction Policy Against Russia and Its Foreign Policy Implications – Testing Hypotheses

The following section of the article is based on the interpretative analysis of the political dimension of the EU decision-making process on sanction policy against Russia and, particularly, the impact of political leadership on reaching compromise between member states. In fact, the balance of the EU-Russia structural foreign policy competition in the Eastern partnership region before the Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has illustrated the dominance of transactional approach of the EU institutions aimed at keeping status quo in given bilateral relations (Zheltofskiy, 2020, p. 76). Meantime there has been a significant increase of the transformational leadership in the approach of the EU institutions toward their response to growing Russian aggression (Zheltofskiy, 2022, p. 674).

In order to present the coherent comparative perspective of the policy shift, it is necessary to divide the analytical framework into two chronological stages: 2014–2021 and 2022–2023. To be more precise, while analysing the developments in post-February 2022 invasion the following milestones are taken into consideration:

1. 24.02.2022–23.06.2022 – from full-scale Russian military invasion of Ukraine to the decision of the European Council to grant candidate status to Ukraine;
2. 24.06.2022–30.09.2022 – from the decision of the European Council to grant candidate status to Ukraine to its formal application for a fast track NATO membership;
3. 1.10.2022–23.11.2022 – from Ukraine's formal application for a fast track NATO membership to the resolution of the European Parliament designating Russia as a „state sponsor” of terrorism due to its actions in Ukraine.
4. 24.11.2022–17.03.2023 – from the resolution of the European Parliament designating Russia as a „state sponsor” of terrorism due to its actions in Ukraine to warrant arrest against Vladimir Putin issued by the International Criminal Court.

Hypothesis 1. EU Sanction Policy Against Russia in Years 2014–2021 Was Dominated by Transactional Approach Aimed at Maintaining Status Quo With Russia

To start with, given hypothesis has been positively verified. Before the full-scale Russian aggression in 2022, the main problem in maintaining a common position among the Western allies was the desire to maintain their own economic relations with the Kremlin. It is the over-reliance of some European countries on energy or investments from Russia that is considered to be the main impeding factor. In turn, even the illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014 did not contribute to the rapid development of a containment strategy, especially in the sanction policy. On the contrary, it showed the inconsistency of views among EU countries on future cooperation with Russia. Moscow, in turn, successfully sought to tighten ties with selected European governments, thus trying to show not only the fragility of the Western community, but also the superiority of its own alternative system, upholding “conservative values and traditions”. As a result, some countries, relatively heavily dependent on the Russian market, aware of the political and economic costs associated with the expansion of the sanction policy, openly criticized the proposed actions, which made the prospects for their continuation at a critical moment seem far from promising (Portela et al., 2021, p. 684).

Speaking about the reluctance of individual states for taking deeper, more severe sanctions measures, Kanter mentions, among others, the importance of natural gas imports to Germany, the UK’s banking links with Russia, and the significance of the arms sector agreements signed between France and Moscow (Kanter, 2014). Undoubtedly, the decisions taken in Germany and France had the greatest impact on the shape of the EU’s foreign policy, as these are the two largest economies in the region.

The reasons for this passive attitude should be sought in the fear of the catastrophic consequences of the deterioration of relations between Berlin and the Kremlin. Therefore, Germans considered Moscow’s actions partially understandable. Berlin used to take several measures to de-escalate the conflict, realizing that radical political and economic sanctions against Russia will also hit the German economy, which is a measure of prosperity and state stability. An open conflict is also at odds with the German strategy, based on far-reaching “respect for the EU’s most important neighbor and its interests” (Forsberg, 2016, pp. 20–21).

It is indirectly related to the so-called Ostpolitik,¹ founded in the 1970s, assuming “change through rapprochement” (Forsberg, 2016, p. 21), and its later variations, i.e. Neue Ostpolitik or Partnership for Modernization, which was dominated by the slogan “change through connections” (in German: *Annäherung durch Verflechtung*) (Popławski, Kwiatkowska, 2014, p. 2). According to this assumption, Russia was perceived as a key geopolitical partner of the European Union, with whom cooperation, even at the price of far-reaching concessions, was necessary to maintain a stable European security order. One of the main reasons for the ambiguous attitude of Germany was also the lack of knowledge about Ukraine, common not only among the social masses but even among Berlin political circles, think tanks, and institutions.

Meantime, there is no doubt that Russia’s military aggression in Ukraine in 2014 significantly weakened the influence of the Ostpolitik logic. However, German politicians, including former German foreign minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher, even then emphasized the need to get closer to Putin. In an interview with the “*Süddeutsche Zeitung*”, Genscher noted that while the West does not have to agree to the annexation of Crimea, it must continue talks with the other side to “enable a new beginning in East-West relations” (Stadler, 2015). Later on, already in 2018, Heiko Maas, i.e. the German Minister of Foreign Affairs, announced the plan of the New European Ostpolitik, which showed a return to the traditional approach based on continuing dialogue with the Kremlin (Rącz, 2022, p. 3). The new German Chancellor, Olaf Scholz,² despite taking a less conciliatory stance towards Russia, also emphasized that the EU must be united in its decisions and in the process of seeking further dialogue between the parties in conflict. In December 2021, he proposed another concept in the field of Ostpolitik, at the same time warning Russia of the consequences if it decides to violate Ukraine’s territorial integrity in any way (Donahue, Delfs, 2021).

As far as France is concerned, since the end of World War II, its official position was to maintain positive relations with Russia, hoping that this country would be a suitable counterbalance to the United States and slowly rebuilding Germany. Its policy was already based on deep

¹ A strategy based on West Germany’s cooperative approach to the Soviet Union and other Warsaw Pact countries, which has been developed in Germany since 1969. The author of this policy is former Chancellor Willy Brandt. An example confirming this indulgent attitude towards the USSR was Germany’s readiness during the Cold War to become more involved in energy cooperation with Moscow, especially in the field of gas supplies, pipelines and nuclear projects.

² The new German government, led by Mr. Scholz, was sworn in on 8 December 2021.

individualism and self-interest (Menkiszak, 2021, p. 11). De Gaulle, as well as his successors, more or less continued the policy of independence and striving for global stability. Franco-Soviet and later Franco-Russian relations went beyond bilateral issues, seeking to maintain the overall balance on the continent, which was considered an overriding goal.

As a reaction to Russian concerns about NATO's eastward expansion, on 19 March 1995, at a meeting of foreign ministers of the European Union Member States in Carcassonne, France put forward a proposal to conclude an appropriate agreement with the Kremlin in order to maintain mutual, relatively favorable relations. Ultimately, after NATO started actual negotiations with Russia, France sought to take an active role in the talks between the parties in order to work out a compromise final document that would primarily satisfy Paris (Helnarska, 2015, p. 72).

According to the 2013 White Paper on Defense and National Security, Paris considers both the "threat of force" that might be used by military powers and the "risk of weakness" posed by failed states, thereby recognizing that any possible vulnerability threats should be identified as early as possible and then effectively countered before they can wreak the greatest havoc (French Ministry of Defence, 2013, p. 40).

The nature of Russia-Germany and Russia-France bilateral relations had a profound impact on the position of Germany and France toward the scale of support for the European integration processes in such states as Ukraine. As for public opinion towards successive sanctions, in March 2014 (after the annexation of Crimea), only 43% in Germany and France were in favour of the further trade sanctions against Russia. Also over 64% of Germans were against severing diplomatic relations with Russia (YouGov, 2014).

To sum up, despite the ongoing debate on the need to transform the decision-making process of the CFSP (Tosiek, 2020, pp. 154–155) there was continued lack of political will among key European states to finalise given transformation and strengthen the structural potential of the EU in its foreign policy competition with Russia after its illegal annexation of Crimean peninsula. That resulted in dominance of the transactional leadership style in the decision-making on CFSP that was aimed at maintaining business relations with Russia. What is more, it led to the breach of the political-diplomatic sanctions of some member states and thus weakened the credibility of the EU as a collective actor in the eyes of Russia (Secrieru, 2015, pp. 82–83). In all probability, described lack of the unity between member states on sanction policy also was taken into account by Russian authorities while undertaking the decision of launching a barbaric full-scale invasion on 24 February 2022.

Hypothesis 2. EU Sanction Policy Shift is Directly Dependent on Type of Transformational Political Leadership of the EU Decision-Makers

Since February 2022 the European Council and the Council of the European Union have been meeting regularly to discuss the situation in Ukraine from different perspectives. The analysis below makes a chronological attempt to illustrate the economic, political and diplomatic instruments that were implemented to build the EU structural power and transform the strategical framework of foreign policy objectives.

To start with, the attention should be paid to the political signals sent at the meeting of the European Council on 24 of February 2022. The conclusions of the European Council meeting included a clear political message to Russia expressing the following:

- strong condemnation of „Russian Federation’s unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine”;
- demands to immediately cease military actions unconditionally and withdraw all Russian forces and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine;
- strong condemnation of the involvement of Belarus in Russian aggression against Ukraine;
- announcement of the intention of urgent preparation and adoption of sanction policy measures;
- appeal to international community to not recognise the two self-proclaimed separatist entities and respect the internationally recognised borders of Ukraine.

As a result, the EU has imposed first package of sanctions on Russia that covered the financial, energy and transport sectors, dual-use goods as well as export control and export financing, visa policy, additional listings of Russian individuals and new listing criteria and expressed readiness to provide Ukrainian people with additional political, financial, humanitarian and logistical support (European Council, 2022).

Russian invasion of Ukraine served as a trigger for the transformational changes in the attitude of the EU institutions, individual authorities and member states to the sanction program. As Kim B. Olsen and Simon FASTERKJÆR KJELDSØEN emphasize, states previously focused only on the goals of sanctions and the process of designing them. Their further implementation, however, was not always successful, with the states presenting a different scope of application of the sanctions, as well as their intensity. In order to increase the effectiveness of EU actions, it is necessary to move from an individual approach, based on own economic interests, to multidimensional and long-term cooperation of entities

guided by the same moral values, regardless of additional costs (Olsen, FASTERKJÆR, 2022, p. 2). To repeat, according to Burns, these are moral values, transformational vision and long-term planning that are the most important constituents of transformational leadership (Burns, 1978).

The analysis of rhetorical strategies in the context of transformational changes in the EU foreign policy and its prospective structural foreign policy competition with Russia makes it possible to define four main narratives promoted by the EU institutional leadership:

1. EU as an independent actor in geopolitical relations;
2. EU as a transformational power on the international arena;
3. EU as a promotor of European values among member and non-member states;
4. “special responsibility” of the EU toward Ukraine in light of Russia’s military aggression (Zheltovskyy, 2022, p. 673).

The last point seems to be of particular importance when it comes to the transformation of the EU strategic vision and formula of cooperation with Russia. Another step of equal importance is to develop a long-term strategy for the transformation of the Eastern Partnership region and to bring the issue of enlargement back to the table. As far as the analysis of EP transformational leadership is concerned, it is possible to state that there has been a significant evolution of the EP leadership approach to such crucial issue as the eastern dimension of the EU neighbourhood policy. What is more, the text of EP resolutions has brought moral constituent to the core of the decision-making process on the future of the EU enlargement policy. Furthermore, the transformational nature of the EP position toward the Russian aggression against Ukraine served as a motivation factor leading to the advance to a higher level of morale and motivation among political leaders of the EU institutions such as the European Council or European Commission (Zheltovskyy, 2022, p. 676).

The position of the EU institutions summarised above led to a change of perception within the EU and unprecedented challenge of creating one of the most comprehensive sanctions regimes. As it was shown in previous part of given section, the enforcement of sanctions is technically complex and entails additional economic costs and the risk of political destabilization in the system. The European Union, which previously paid most attention only to the process of creating procedures, focused on sanctions as a deterrent and preventive factor, but not a remedy. The lack of effectiveness of actions taken after 2014 was another aggression of Russia against Ukraine. In fact, this argument was repeatedly used by Volodymyr Zelenskyy in his rhetorical campaign on strengthening international sanctions against Russia (Khudoliy, Zheltovskyy, 2023, p. 19).

Meantime, in order to improve the effectiveness of the EU sanction program, it is necessary to make changes also at the level of Member States, and more precisely – in their approach to respecting EU rules. States largely control the flow of particular information to the Commission and they themselves oversee which of their national authorities is responsible for carrying out sanctions-related tasks at national level. The main problem, however, is incoherent, diversified structures that make it difficult for EU institutions to oversee the entire process. Indeed, the Commission launched various reform initiatives after the 2022 aggression to improve its capacity to oversee law enforcement practices in Member States. The example here is the Sanctions Information Exchange Repository, for faster exchange of information directly between countries and the Commission, and the sanctions expert group, which advises states on EU law enforcement.

At this point, it is worth noting a shift in foreign policy of France and Germany. The government led by Chancellor Olaf Scholz decided to move even further away from the old concept of accepting the aggressive policy of a third country. In this way, successive stages and red lines of German foreign policy were slowly crossed. Germany voted for the introduction of severe sanctions against Russia, which automatically affected its economic efficiency, but also opted for the suspension of the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline. In addition, they joined several other NATO members in supporting the Ukrainian side in the fighting by supplying not only defensive weapons but offensive ones as well.

France, due to its military potential and possession of nuclear weapons, perceived Russia through the prism of the security policy of the European continent. After the peace talks between the French president and the Kremlin did not bring many results, Paris seems to be slowly moving away from its previous policy of not rejecting Russia. In his speech to European Parliament on 9 May 2022 President Macron acknowledged that 'new geopolitical context' created by Russia's war on Ukraine requires new approach to political cooperation in Europe (Macron, 2022). In accordance with the proposal of French president the European Political Community as a platform for political coordination was inaugurated on 6 October 2022 in Prague.

As for opponents of strengthening EU sanction policy against Russia, the position of Hungary vividly illustrates the complexity of the decision-making process on foreign policy issue at the forum of European Council. Constant opposition to resigning from the transactional model of relations with Russia that has been repeatedly declared by Viktor Orbán argues for the need to reconsider the application of veto in favour of qualified

majority vote on CFSP. That, however, would require revision of the treaties which is another controversial topic for EU Member States. In the meantime, inability to reach consensus on the forum of European Council may result in the tendency of building alliances aimed at helping Ukraine. That in turn may lead to the creation of multiple centres for solving common problems in Europe and thus may result in individual action and lack of coordination with the EU institutions. Such a scenario is exactly opposite to the mainstream vision of the EU that is able to speak with one voice on crucial foreign policy matters.

Overall, one could have noticed a profound change in the approach of EU member states toward the issue of EU-Russia relations in light of war crimes and atrocities committed by Russian troops in Ukraine. It remains to be seen, however, whether the EU sanction policy shift will result in the long-lasting political compromise on strengthening sanction policy against Russia and impossibility of return to the transactional approach of “business as usual”. In other words, the central question is whether member states will be able to sustain the “commonality of purpose” in context of EU-Russia relations (Maurer et al., 2023, p. 231).

To sum up, the conducted interpretative analysis has demonstrated a direct link between a significant shift in the EU sanction policy and transformational leadership approach to the CFSP reform which gives arguments in favour of positive verification of the second hypothesis. Given approach has been based not only on economic (transactional) effects of foreign-policy making but for the first time – on such features of transformational leadership as moral aspect of undertaken actions and long-term goals of prospective changes.

Conclusions

In summary, as the above analysis of the EU leadership style on sanction policy shift has demonstrated, Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine has led to considerable progress in the transformation of the EU approach to foreign policy-making. By introducing a new strategic vision based on morality issue and long lasting objectives, the EU as a collective body has started the discussion of irreversible changes of its structural potential on the international arena.

Transformational shift of the EU sanction policy against Russia has not been a quick one and was directly linked to the leadership style executed by the EU institutional and state actors. As the conducted study has illustrated, the reluctance of the EU member states to resign from the transactional approach to the EU-Russia relations was primarily caused

by long-lasting tradition of trade with Russia or their dependence on Russian energy resources.

As a matter of fact, the position of the EU institutions, both supranational and intergovernmental, toward the sanction policy has vividly reflected the complexity of the EU foreign policy and prospects of its strategic objectives. Russia's war on Ukraine has shown the weaknesses of the EU position undertaken toward the democratisation processes in its eastern neighbourhood before 2022. Moreover, it triggered the discussion on the need for the EU to set clear foreign policy agenda that would cover issues which for long time were politicised such as the process of the EU enlargement.

In fact, one could have noticed a change of the political discourse on the issue of enlargement and reconsideration of the EU eastern policy in favour of transformational vision that does not prioritise Russian interests over the interests of Ukraine and other neighbours of the EU. In this case, the EU ability to become a proactive actor in the region and a transformative power toward the candidate states will define the future of democratisation processes in given states. For the time being, the basic question, however, is whether member states will manage to achieve long-lasting consensus on maintaining the transformational approach to the prospective EU-Russia relations. In this regard, the future of veto option in the decision-making procedure of CFSP will remain an important factor defining the prospects of the enlargement policy that was brought back to the European political agenda.

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De-bordering and Re-bordering the European Union After the Russian Invasion of Ukraine

Abstract

This article seeks to grasp the current dynamic of the European Union's enlargement policy as shaped by the exogenous shock of the Russian full-scale military invasion of Ukraine. It argues that external pressures matter as windows of opportunity, but the precise nature of the EU's response to this geopolitical push is shaped by internal factors. Building on a recent work by Frank Schimmelfennig (2021), it further argues that the new enlargement dynamic can be usefully illuminated by the concept of bordering. More concretely, this research highlights external de-bordering and re-bordering strategies pursued by the relevant political actors within the EU, as they purposefully seek to use the geopolitical window of opportunity to transform existing bordering constellations in line with their preferences. Empirically, this article sheds light on Europe's border-based games while drawing an analytical line between de-bordering and re-bordering strategies. The analysis reveals the limits of de-bordering, even under geopolitical and security emergency, but also underlines opportunities for agency.

Keywords: European Union, Ukraine, Russia, Enlargement, Neighbourhood, Geopolitics

Introduction

“24th February 2022 marks a turning point (Zeitenwende) in the history of our continent” (Bundesregierung, 2022). “This historic turning point is even more serious than during the fall of communism” (Chancellery of the

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Prime Minister, 2023). “World peace cannot be safeguarded without the making of creative efforts proportionate to the dangers which threaten it” (Élysée, 2022). These words from German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, and French President Emmanuel Macron respectively, citing the famous 1950 speech made by Robert Schuman, certainly reflect and relate to the “geopolitical emergency of re-designing the European Union’s relationship with its neighbourhood” (Mayer et al., 2022, p. 1) in response to the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine. They have also ignited the hope that the European Union (EU) and its Member States will finally stand up to the challenges of the rapidly changing and increasingly hostile international environment, while fostering the transformation of the EU into a “real geopolitical actor” and embracing “enlargement as a geopolitical necessity” (Dionysiou, 2023, p. 15).

Undoubtedly, the war has brought about a mental shift for many European decision-makers along with significant policy change with regard to the EU’s enlargement. One obvious symptom is that the once-pronounced line between enlargement and neighbourhood policies, or between candidate and associated states, has become blurred. Those previously without formal accession prospects have procured them at an unprecedentedly fast pace. Within a few months, the subject of enlargement has returned to the top of the European agenda, and old debates on differentiated integration, staged accession, and widening versus deepening have gained new momentum.

But is this exogenous shock enough to substantially transform the European integration process? Geopolitics and security matter as external push factors, but the actual response to this push is shaped by internal factors. As argued elsewhere, policies are not formulated exclusively in reaction to external challenges, but external challenges rather provide a window of opportunity that allows one to respond to internal needs of the EU at the systemic, institutional, and actor levels (Cianciara, 2020, p. 9). What is clear, however, is that the war highlighted the need to put the EU’s international environment and external borders at the heart of reflection on European integration and European politics.

Building on a recent work by Frank Schimmelfennig (2021), it is argued here that the current dynamics related to the EU’s enlargement can be usefully illuminated by the concepts of external de-bordering and re-bordering. The latter are understood not so much in terms of phases or stages of the European integration process, but rather in terms of strategies used by relevant political actors seeking to shape the EU in line with their own preferences and interests. Accordingly, a major exogenous

shock does not determine a united and uniform de-bordering strategy at the eastern (or southern) borders of Europe, but rather constitutes an important push factor and a window of opportunity for relevant political actors aiming at a transformation of the existing bordering constellations. However, the result – in terms of the extent and scope of de-bordering and re-bordering – is far from certain.

The article proceeds as follows: firstly, the author proposes a re-conceptualisation of EU enlargement policy in terms of de-bordering and re-bordering strategies, while critically drawing on existing theoretical literature. Secondly, the author analyses empirical manifestations of external de-bordering strategies in response to an exogenous shock, as constituted by the Russian full-scale military aggression on Ukraine, but also highlighting that the geopolitical push factor for de-bordering was present even before the invasion, and exploited (rather unsuccessfully) in relation to the Western Balkans. Thirdly, empirical manifestations of external re-bordering strategies in response to exogenous shock are analysed. The analysis is based on both primary (namely, selected official documents and statements) and secondary sources (scholarly literature and think-tank analyses).

Re-conceptualising the EU's Enlargement Policy

This article proposes to both broaden and nuance the recently reinvigorated conversation about European Union enlargement. It does so by conceptualising and theorising European integration in terms of internal and external bordering. It follows and expands on a recent publication authored by Schimmelfennig (2021), who has drawn attention to the processes of external boundary formation that are largely neglected within the mainstream theories of European integration. The latter mainly discuss EU external borders as a side effect of EU internal policies, rather than as a driver of or constraint on integration in its own right. Thus, implicitly, they subscribe to the assumption that the international environment provides a relatively benign and stable external context for European integration. Meanwhile, exogenous pressures and geopolitics have not been included systematically into mainstream theorising on the European Union. Rather, the EU's external environment has been typically framed as a subject of inside-out policy diffusion and Europeanisation, and not as a source of change for European integration. As a result, relations with candidate and associate countries, as well as other neighbours, have been predominantly analysed as part of EU (external) policies (enlargement policy, the European Neighbourhood Policy), and

not as a factor that defines or transforms the integration process itself. This is also reflected in the terminology used by political actors and often reproduced by scholars; enlargement is about absorption (of new members by the existing EU), and not about transformation (change) of the new polity that emerges in the process. The abundant literature on Europeanisation (Cianciara, 2013; Cianciara et al., 2015; Börzel et al., 2017; and Džankić et al., 2019) fits perfectly well in this framework, where, in principle, the EU acts, or fails to act on its external environment, but the environment does not shape or constitute the Union. Accordingly, the environment can only interact to some extent, while eventually affecting the EU's behaviour – this is more and more evident from the emerging literature on de-Europeanisation (Aydın-Düzgüt, Kaliber, 2016), but not the EU's nature.

Meanwhile, recent challenges that the European Union has faced – be it the global financial crisis, the migration crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic or Russian acts of military aggression – originated outside EU borders. The eurozone crisis, migration crisis, Brexit, and the pandemic also put EU internal borders at stake, while threatening Schengen or risking Grexit and a restoration of other national currencies. All this highlights the importance and transformatory impact of exogenous shocks on the European integration process, but also draws attention to two directions of bordering: de-bordering and re-bordering, and to the interplay between the two dimensions of bordering; that of the internal and external. Bordering is defined by closure, or how much the rules for boundary transactions limit exits and entries, and control, i.e., the legal competence and resource-dependent capacity to enforce these rules (Schimmelfennig, 2021, p. 315).

Schimmelfennig frames de-bordering and re-bordering in terms of stages of European integration. In the early years of the European Communities, we could talk about “effective integration”, characterised by internal de-bordering and external re-bordering, with high levels of control and closure, and with enlargement progressing very slowly. But in the post-Cold War period this changed profoundly, and the European Union has embraced “dilutive integration”, characterised by pervasive internal and external de-bordering (Schimmelfennig, 2021, p. 318). Accordingly, the EU removed internal boundaries by establishing the single market, a common currency, and the Schengen free-travel zone (all examples of internal de-bordering). It also expanded its membership considerably, constructed a dense network of graded association arrangements with neighbouring non-members, and lowered external barriers to global trade and capital mobility (i.e., external de-bordering). The process of external

differentiated integration via enlargement and neighbourhood policies (Milenkovic, 2022; Reptova, 2022) thereby constitutes a manifestation of external de-bordering, as do other models of external differentiation, as exemplified by the EU's arrangements with member states of the European Economic Area, Switzerland and/or the (post-Brexit) United Kingdom (Leruth et al., 2019; Trondal, Kuhn, 2020).

As the post-Cold War international order has undergone a profound transformation, it is no longer viable to explain European integration and European politics without putting its international environment and external borders at the heart of reflection. Also, significantly more attention has to be paid to exogenous pressures and geopolitics. What Schimmelfennig studied in his article published in 2021, before the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine which was launched on 24th February 2022, was how the EU responded to the internal and external backlash against its post-Cold War de-bordering; by means of re-bordering. Internal re-bordering is a resurrection of barriers between Member States and their exit from common policies or even the EU altogether. Meanwhile, external re-bordering essentially means an effective stopping of enlargement, but can be also traced in an ever more restrictive asylum policy or unprecedented investment in the control of EU's external borders as well as in Brexit negotiations, where the EU has preserved a rigid and united stance on protecting the integrity of its internal market and regulatory level playing field. Whereas external re-bordering coupled with continuous internal de-bordering implies more consolidated integration, external de-bordering coupled with internal re-bordering equals disintegration. In general, Schimmelfennig claimed that the openness of the EU's external boundaries was decreasing, enlargement has slowed down considerably, and the Union began to strengthen its boundary control capacity (Schimmelfennig, 2021, p. 321).

Building and expanding on the above framework, this article argues that an exogenous systemic shock (i.e., Russia's full-scale military aggression in Europe) leads to major disruptions and uncertainty, but does not necessarily need to result in external re-bordering. It is, in fact, quite to the contrary; we can see that the previously-stalled enlargement process accelerated considerably in 2022. The boundaries drawn between associated neighbours and candidates for accession – that for so many years felt insurmountable – have fallen within the space of just a few months. Scholars have argued that the Russian invasion has already put an end to the EU's strategy of external differentiation, in which the post-Soviet countries of Eastern Europe were to pursue flexible issue-specific integration below the threshold of EU membership. As

a result, the EU engaged in external de-bordering *vis-à-vis* Ukraine, but also in simultaneous re-bordering towards Russia (Freudlsperger and Schimmelfennig, 2023).

But the picture appears to be even more complicated than that. That is why this article conceptualises de-bordering and re-bordering not so much in terms of phases or stages of the European integration process, but rather in terms of strategies pursued by relevant political actors seeking to shape the EU in line with their own preferences and interests. In fact, already prior to the Russian invasion, some European actors had pursued external de-bordering strategies, while seeking to reinvigorate enlargement to the Western Balkans and bringing the trio of Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia closer to the EU, beyond the framework outlined by their association agreements. This was a strategy adopted in response to already-mounting geopolitical pressures posed by external actors such as Russia and China, but also in pursuit of institutional (European Commission) or political and security interests (Poland). Other actors (France) embraced re-bordering strategies, while seeking to hamper external de-bordering. Although France experienced a strategic shift with regard to both EU and NATO enlargement as a result of Russian military aggression (Pedder, 2023), as did many other EU Member States albeit to a varying extent, this major exogenous shock does not determine a united and uniform de-bordering strategy at the eastern borders of Europe. Even in the case of Ukraine, both external de-bordering and re-bordering strategies have been pursued by various actors since February 2022.

What we can thus identify are complex constellations of re-bordering and de-bordering strategies, either coupling or de-coupling the external dimension to/from the internal one. Crucially, the aforementioned exogenous shock constitutes an important push factor and a window of opportunity for relevant political actors willing to transform existing bordering constellations. But the result, in terms of the extent and scope of de-bordering and re-bordering, is far from certain. In the remaining parts of the article, the author outlines the empirical manifestations of external de-bordering and re-bordering strategies, as they have been pursued both before and after the Russian full-scale military aggression on Ukraine.

Strategies of De-bordering in Response to an Exogenous Shock

The geopolitical push for an external de-bordering of the European Union pre-dates the full-scale aggression on Ukraine. In fact, a significant turn in the EU's institutional thinking on enlargement can be traced back

to 2017, when both national leaders and European officials increasingly voiced concerns about the EU's declining influence in the Western Balkans – much to the benefit of Russia, China, and Turkey (Markovic Khaze, Wang, 2021; Jaćimović et al., 2023). In response, the European Commission sought to adopt a more geopolitical approach to enlargement policy in early 2018, while hoping to advance the Western Balkans' accession more decisively (European Commission, 2018). But this transformation in the EU's institutional thinking failed to translate into concrete results, due to a lack of support from EU Member States, which either did not share the Commission's sense of urgency, or were eager to exploit the accession process for national gain (Petrovic, Tzifakis, 2021). Despite positive recommendations from the Commission, the European Council rejected the opening of accession negotiations with Albania and Macedonia in 2018 and again in 2019, even though the long-awaited resolution of the name dispute between Greece and (now) North Macedonia was agreed in June 2018.

The de-bordering strategy of the Commission clashed with re-bordering strategies of some Member States, including France, that has long insisted on “reform before enlargement” (The Economist, 2019). In November 2019, France circulated a non-paper that suggested changes to enlargement methodology, notably the reversibility of the process and grouping of accession chapters into thematic clusters, paving the way for gradual integration (Milenkovic, 2022). In an attempt to pursue de-bordering, the Commission incorporated most of the suggestions from the French non-paper, while also highlighting the non-technical nature of accession negotiations: “It is time to put the political nature of the process front and centre, and ensure stronger steering and high-level engagement from the Member States” (European Commission, 2020, p. 3). As a result, France withdrew its reservations in March 2020 and the European Council endorsed the opening of accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia. The enlargement process might have progressed slightly, but Member States established themselves more firmly within the process, creating ever more room for possible re-bordering.

Nevertheless, since the window of opportunity for both advancing and transforming the accession process was opened, other actors, including think-tanks, proceeded with ideas of de-bordering, notably in the form of a so-called “staged accession” – a regime of progressive participation by states aiming at obtaining full membership, and an alternative to the current binary “in or out” model (Emerson et al., 2021). This proposal featured four stages of accession: initial; intermediate; a new Member State stage; and conventional membership. Accession to each stage was

conditional upon a pre-defined level of progress across thematic clusters of negotiation chapters and was linked to an increasing level of funding, as well as growing institutional participation. For instance, whereas the initial accession stage only offered an observer status within the EU institutions, the intermediate stage already provided speaking (but not voting) rights.

The staged accession model received some attention and became part of the revamped debate, but a resolute push for external de-bordering only came with the exogenous shock of Russia's full-scale military aggression. Indeed, the year 2022 saw unprecedented acceleration in terms of external de-bordering; accession negotiations were opened with North Macedonia and Albania, and candidate status was granted to Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina that were previously qualified as potential candidates, with the same happening to Ukraine and Moldova, countries that had never formally been recognised as candidates for EU membership. Moreover, the decision to grant candidate status to Ukraine and Moldova came within 4 months of their applications for membership. This is in huge contrast to the Western Balkan countries that had to wait between two and six years.

The decision of the European Council to proffer candidate country status to Ukraine and Moldova clearly stems from the geopolitical imperative of firmly anchoring the victims of the Russian aggression within the EU. However, European Council conclusions from June 2022 also show the limits of de-bordering, or more precisely, the continuous struggle between de-bordering and re-bordering, even in the face of a major exogenous shock. Accordingly, once the candidates fulfil the conditions specified in the Commission's opinion on their respective membership applications, "the Council will decide on further steps once all these conditions are fully met" (European Council, 2022). The latter is a disappointingly empty statement that does not even mention the formal opening of accession negotiations as "further steps". What it does very clearly mention is that all conditions must be met and met fully – there will be no shortcuts due to Russian aggression. This is confirmed by yet another traditional formula contained in the conclusions, stipulating that the progress of each country towards the EU will depend on its own merit in meeting the Copenhagen criteria, taking into consideration the EU's capacity to absorb new members.

Still, after years of stasis, a major shift in EU policy-making occurred, thrusting the subject of enlargement back to the top of the EU's agenda. External de-bordering is underway due to the geopolitical push, and there are reasons to believe that ever stricter accession criteria applied to prospective

members could be relaxed slightly. At first sight, the decision to grant candidate status to Ukraine and Moldova might seem somewhat puzzling and unprecedented, but in reality the EU has shown quite a lot of flexibility with its own criteria and benchmarks in the past. The enlargement process has always been a series of reactions to events, security-related events in particular. As the geopolitical imperative for EU enlargement increases, the requirements for entry tend to decrease and the EU may find itself looking the other way on issues it originally deemed important (Anghel, Jones, 2022). Related precedents are quite numerous. A divided Cyprus joined after the failure of the peace process and the EU chose to ignore this frozen conflict. Bulgaria and Romania entered into a special, post-accession conditionality track; they are still undergoing the monitoring process, and still trying to qualify for Schengen. Even post accession, a number of countries have failed miserably to deliver on their treaty-based obligations, with Sweden, Poland, Hungary, and Czechia literally ignoring joining the single currency due to domestic political reasons. Thus, the pattern of European enlargement fails to conform either to the original goals set out by the Member States or to a fixed understanding of what EU membership is. Long transition periods, derogations, permanent safeguard clauses, and other forms of internal differentiated integration constitute the already tried-and-tested toolbox of reconciling externally-driven de-bordering with internally-driven re-bordering.

Strategies of Re-bordering in Response to an Exogenous Shock

The exogenous shock of the Russian full-scale military aggression and the resulting geopolitical push towards external de-bordering of the European Union do not preclude usages of re-bordering strategies aimed at hampering or delaying enlargement. Three distinct strategies of re-bordering can be identified. The first of which is about imposing stringent rule-of-law conditions on candidate states that aim to balance their relatively advanced economic integration and the geopolitical imperative. The second links de-bordering to a prior or simultaneous achievement of greater absorption capacity by the EU via means of institutional reform. Finally, the third strategy is about creating loose pan-European formats of dialogue that should inspire we-feeling among both candidate and Member States, while making the long years in the EU's waiting room somewhat more acceptable to the former.

As regards the rule of law reform, it is worth examining the Ukrainian case, as it is the most likely case in which the geopolitical push factor

can play a role. Ukrainian authorities are conducting reforms and adopting necessary legislation, while being *literally* under fire from the Russian aggressor. When issuing an opinion on Ukraine's membership application in June 2022, the Commission gave the green light to the country's candidacy, but formulated seven recommendations in the rule of law area that are to be addressed before any further steps, or a launch of accession talks, can occur. Initially, Ukraine committed to the fulfilment of all the conditions by the end of 2022, but the matter proved much more complicated.

On 22nd June 2023, the European Commission presented its preliminary oral assessment of the progress Ukraine had made over the previous year. A full report regarding the level of Ukraine's preparedness for the launch of accession talks was foreseen for October 2023, with the decision on further steps to be taken by the European Council possibly in December 2023 (Paul, Taran, 2023). According to the initial assessment, Ukraine has "completed" two out of seven recommendations related to media legislation and the judicial governance bodies, while achieving "good progress" as regards the Constitutional Court reform. Only "some progress" was noted by the Commission on the remaining four recommendations, namely anti-corruption reform, anti-money laundering and law-enforcement-sector reform, anti-oligarchic law, and legislation on national minorities.

Whereas addressing all seven recommendations constitutes a prerequisite for opening accession talks, it is up to the Commission (and the Member States) to determine what exactly qualifies as sufficient reform. It is also their political decision whether to focus on strict rule of law conditionality or follow the geopolitical imperative. Meanwhile, the Ukrainian government is keen to invoke geopolitics and security, while hoping for a more relaxed EU approach under extenuating circumstances. Reform of the legislation on national minorities provides a case in point. Ukrainian decision-makers try to convince their EU partners that the existing provisions are necessary for preventing various forms of separatism, which was one of the reasons behind the Russian invasion. But this issue has clear re-bordering potential, while provoking tensions with Ukraine's neighbours who are EU members, especially Hungary. The latter has, for many years, been demanding changes to Ukrainian legislation and has made its support for Ukraine's accession conditional on Kyiv's decision to grant comprehensive rights to the Hungarian minority in Ukraine (Nieczypor, Całus, 2023).

The formal opening of accession negotiations with Ukraine by the end of 2023 is likely, but not certain. If it happens, the opening could be conditional, but it also constitutes the easy part of the process, while not

guaranteeing swift progress or even any progress at all, as evident from the Turkish case. Subsequent re-bordering during the actual negotiations would be easier if the EU had not committed itself to setting a target date for Ukraine's accession at the December 2023 European Council.

The abovementioned Hungarian example also highlights how re-bordering can be pursued by individual Member States of the EU when unanimity is required. This brings us to the heart of the de-bordering and re-bordering games within the enlargement policy. On the one hand, the veto right has been used as a tool of re-bordering by various Member States, including France, Greece, Bulgaria, and Hungary. But on the other hand, the idea of linking progress in the accession process to prior or simultaneous EU reform (internal de-bordering), including the expansion of qualified majority voting (QMV) to more policy areas, can also result in re-bordering. Compromise on EU institutional reform currently seems difficult to reach, even by means of the *passerelle* clauses and without treaty change, with many EU members remaining sceptical to QMV extension, either in principle or in given policy areas (Koenig, 2022). In particular, the Polish government – a principal supporter of EU enlargement – fervently opposes QMV extension in any area. According to Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, freedom and equality among EU members can only be guaranteed if consensus-based decision-making is preserved and even extended to areas where treaties currently permit the use of QMV. The EU should “accept new countries, but also, in the face of a larger community, limit some of its competencies” (Chancellery of the Prime Minister, 2023). In this vision, external de-bordering should go hand-in-hand with internal re-bordering. This is in contrast with French and German reform vision, where external de-bordering is conditional on securing the EU's absorption capacity, understood as internal de-bordering in the form of QMV extension. It is not entirely clear whether and how the Polish position on QMV might change after the liberal majority seized power in parliamentary elections in October 2023.

Finally, the creation of the European Political Community (EPC), a pan-European dialogue forum invented by the French president Emmanuel Macron in May 2022, can be seen in terms of a re-bordering strategy. It was certainly viewed this way in Poland, and in Central-Eastern Europe more broadly – as an eternal waiting room, where candidates were offered the illusion of being included on an equal footing in a high-level diplomatic shop talk that was, in fact, designed as a low-key substitute for any lack of progress towards membership. According to E. Macron, “we feel in our heart that Ukraine (...) is already today a member of our Europe”, yet “we all know perfectly well that the [accession] process would, in reality, take

several years, and most likely several decades” (Élysée, 2022). As a result, the Polish understanding was that the EPC constituted a yet another attempt to foster relations with EU’s neighbours based on the *status quo* rather than on credible enlargement policy, towards which France remained sceptical (Kozioł, Maślanka, 2022).

Thus in Poland, a proponent of external de-bordering, the EPC was not seen as an adequate nor resolved response to the historic exogenous shock constituted by the full-scale military aggression of the Russian Federation, but rather in terms of traditional French re-bordering – *plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose* (EN: the more things change, the more they stay the same), as the French might say. From the Polish perspective, the EPC aimed at counter-balancing or watering down accessions promise for Ukraine and Moldova, while leaving them in a yet another grey zone between the EU and NATO and an increasingly aggressive Russia. Decisions taken by the June 2022 European Council have not dispelled those doubts. The Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs may have expressed satisfaction with the evolution of the French position on enlargement, especially regarding Ukraine, but distrust persisted as to France’s policy towards Russia and the EPC being designed as an obstruction to enlargement in disguise (Szymanek, 2023). Progressively, a de-coupling of the EPC idea from enlargement is already under way, although this does not mean that some kind of re-coupling, whether in terms of facilitating or hampering accession, could not take place in the future. This is why Polish officials and analysts continuously stressed, even after the EPC’s inaugural summit in Prague, that the decision to grant candidate status to Ukraine and Moldova should not be watered down by other cooperation formats and the EPC should not become a pretext for delaying the start of accession negotiations (Cianciara, 2023). But it remains to be seen whether and to what extent the EPC could be transformed into a tool of de-bordering rather than re-bordering.

Conclusions

In this article, the author attempted to grasp the current dynamic of the EU’s enlargement policy, shaped by the exogenous shock of the Russian full-scale military invasion of Ukraine. It was argued that the invasion might have constituted an important geopolitical push factor towards transformation of the European integration process and its borders, but the precise EU response to these external pressures depends on internal factors. It was further argued that the new enlargement dynamic can be usefully illuminated by concepts of the EU’s de-bordering and re-

bordering. The analysis highlighted external de-bordering and re-bordering strategies pursued by relevant political actors within the EU that seek to exploit the geopolitical window of opportunity to transform existing bordering constellations in line with their preferences.

Empirically, the article shed light on the bordering games being played, while seeking to draw an analytical line between de-bordering and re-bordering strategies. This analysis has shown the limits of de-bordering, even under geopolitical and security emergency, but also opportunities for agency that may transform an initial re-bordering tentative into a de-bordering result and vice-versa. It has also made clear that there is nothing automatic or straightforward about the impact of the radically-changing international environment on EU policies and politics. The EU is not bound to become a geopolitical actor, nor is it bound to significantly expand, either externally or internally.

This research was exploratory in nature; it focused on a new conceptualisation of the enlargement dynamic and identified the main strategies of the relevant political actors that shape this dynamic in terms of de-bordering and re-bordering. This seems to be a promising area of research and a promising conceptual lens. Yet more systematic research is needed in order to better understand the drivers behind external de-bordering and re-bordering strategies and their linkages to internal bordering strategies. Also, it would be useful to relate evolving constellations of de-bordering and re-bordering strategies to changing power relations within the EU.

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Conflict as a Strategic Imperative in Putin’s Political Agenda: A Fundamental Component of Russia’s Strategic Framework

Abstract

This paper delves into the nuanced motivations underpinning Russia’s 2014 invasion of Ukraine, centered on preserving stability for Putin’s regime. Examining the intricate interplay between domestic and foreign concerns, the invasion emerged as a pivotal strategy to bolster domestic support and reinforce Russian leadership. Post-2012, Putin, in consolidating power through internal policies and external assertiveness, responded to catalysts – opposition protests in 2012 and Ukraine’s “Revolution of Dignity” in 2014. State-controlled media played a crucial role in shaping narratives, framing the invasion as a defense against alleged Western “imperialist” threats. The paper scrutinises Putin’s strategic evolution, highlighting the convergence of historical events, opposition dynamics, and media narratives in shaping the rationale behind Russia’s impactful incursion into Ukraine.

Keywords: Ukraine, Russia, Putin’s Russia, Central Europe, EU Eastern Neighbourhood, Security

Introduction

The invasion of Ukraine by Russia in 2014 was influenced by various factors, with one of the primary motivations being the preservation of stability for Vladimir Putin’s regime. Undoubtedly, the Russian incursion into Ukraine sought to garner domestic support and fortify the

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leadership of the state. Russia's foreign policy, historically intertwined with its domestic affairs, has intermittently evolved into a tool for mass mobilisation during certain periods of Russian history.

Since reclaiming the presidency in 2012, Vladimir Putin has sought to consolidate his position domestically through restrictive internal policies and assertive external strategies. Two key factors prompted Putin to fortify his power and propagate the so-called "Russian world" doctrine in the post-Soviet space in a more radical and uncompromising manner. The first factor was the opposition protests in 2012, a citizen-led response to the presidential elections perceived as having been rigged in Putin's favour. Concerns about a potential recurrence of the Orange Revolution in Moscow, even though the Russian protests were unsuccessful, justified Putin's fears. The second factor was the "Revolution of Dignity" in Ukraine in 2014, termed by the Russian media as another "coup," resulting in the removal of the pro-Russian president Viktor Yanukovich, who subsequently sought refuge in Russia.

Simultaneously, state-controlled Russian media propagated narratives emphasising the need to protect ethnic Russians in Ukraine, while underscoring the perceived threat of the West and its "imperialist" policies. Since the annexation of Crimea in 2014, Putin has framed his actions as an attempt to shield ethnic Russians and Russian-speaking Ukrainians from alleged "fascism" and "hybrid warfare" orchestrated by the West. The Kremlin portrayed Ukraine as a Western tool seeking to undermine Russia. Through this narrative, the Kremlin effectively galvanised Russian society around the war in Ukraine, sustaining support for the government (wider: Stepniewski, 2011; 2016; 2021).

According to Levada Centre polls (Levada-Centre, 2023), Putin's popularity reached an impressive 82% in March 2023, with only 15% of respondents expressing an unfavourable opinion of the president. This marked a notable increase from September 2022 when Putin's popularity stood at 77%, with 21% holding a negative view of his actions. The surge in support occurred after the Ukrainian counteroffensive in Kharkov and the announcement of mobilisation in Russia. Subsequently, Putin's popularity further rose to 79% in October and November, stabilising at 81% in December. The current "patriotic surge" mirrors the boost in ratings Putin experienced after the annexation of Crimea in 2014. In the preceding years, from 2020 to 2021, his popularity fluctuated between 61% and 69%, only surpassing the 70% mark when rhetoric intensifying confrontation with the West emerged in early 2022.

In this context, it is evident that Putin's neo-totalitarianism has gained strength through the war in Ukraine and the accompanying propaganda.

The Kremlin strategically utilised the conflict to consolidate power within Russia and enhance its influence over the Russian populace.

The Collapse of the Soviet Union and the New International Situation of the Russian Federation and Other Post-Soviet States

To gain a more profound comprehension of the collapse of the Soviet Union, Serhii Ploky's book, "The Last Empire", proves to be an invaluable resource, providing intricate insights into the multifaceted factors that led to the demise of the Soviet Union, thereby reshaping the trajectory of global history (see: Ploky, 2015). Ploky meticulously underscores the profound economic challenges that besieged the Soviet Union, serving as a pivotal backdrop to its eventual dissolution. The inherent inefficiencies embedded in the planned economy, exacerbated by an overly bureaucratic apparatus and stagnating industrial sectors, rendered the Soviet economic model increasingly unsustainable. Ploky's narrative accentuates the structural weaknesses inherent in the Soviet system, struggling to adapt to the intricacies of the global economic landscape.

Furthermore, Ploky delves into the pivotal role of nationalism and ethnic tensions as potent catalysts for the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Various nationalities within the Soviet Union, long suppressed beneath a veneer of internationalism, began to assert their distinct identities. Ploky's exploration, encompassing events such as the struggle for Baltic independence and the upsurge of nationalism in Ukraine, unveils the intricate tapestry of ethnic aspirations that eroded the unity of the Soviet state. Ploky critically examines the reforms initiated by Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, particularly perestroika (restructuring) and glasnost (openness). Although these reforms aimed to revitalise the Soviet system, they inadvertently expedited its unravelling. Ploky elucidates how Gorbachev's attempts at political openness opened a Pandora's box of social and political forces that ultimately contributed to the disintegration of the centralised Soviet authority.

Navigating the intricate political struggles within the Soviet leadership, Ploky highlights the emergence of Boris Yeltsin as a pivotal figure. Yeltsin's ascendancy marked a paradigm shift in power dynamics, challenging the traditional hierarchies of the Soviet state. Ploky's examination of Yeltsin's role in the dissolution process underscores the agency of key political actors in shaping the course of events. Serhii Ploky's "The Last Empire" provides a nuanced understanding of the collapse of the Soviet Union, intricately weaving

together economic, ethnic, and political threads that unravelled the once-mighty superpower. Through Plokhy's analytical lens, this book illuminates the complexity of historical forces that converged to reshape the geopolitical landscape, leaving an indelible mark on the late 20th-century world order.

In summary, the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 marked a seismic shift in the geopolitical landscape, leading to the emergence of independent states on the post-Soviet terrain. This dissolution was a culmination of various internal and external factors, including economic inefficiencies, political stagnation, and nationalist movements within the constituent republics. The policies of Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, such as perestroika (restructuring) and glasnost (openness), aimed at revitalising the Soviet system, inadvertently catalysed the unraveling of the centralised control that had characterised the Soviet state. The Baltic states – Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania – were among the first to declare independence, triggering a cascade effect as other republics swiftly followed suit. The Belavezha Accords, signed by Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus in December 1991, formalised the dissolution of the Soviet Union, leading to the establishment of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The emergence of these new states brought forth significant challenges, including the need to construct national identities, establish governance structures, and navigate complex economic transitions.

The post-Soviet landscape witnessed the birth of 15 independent countries, each grappling with the complexities of nation-building. These states faced the formidable task of developing their political, economic, and social systems while navigating the legacies of Soviet rule. The newly independent nations embarked on diverse trajectories, with some embracing market-oriented reforms and democratic governance, while others faced protracted periods of political instability and economic hardship. The dissolution also engendered geopolitical tensions, particularly in regions such as the South Caucasus and Central Asia, where territorial disputes and ethnic conflicts erupted. The transition to independence brought about complex relationships with Russia, the successor state to the Soviet Union, ranging from cooperative partnerships to contested assertions of influence. The post-Soviet era thus represents a dynamic and evolving chapter in global history, marked by the resilience and challenges faced by the newly sovereign nations in the aftermath of the Soviet Union's collapse.

Russia's Endeavour to Revise the International Order

The geopolitical landscape, after the collapse of the bipolar system, has witnessed a transformative reconfiguration catalysed by the international revisionism undertaken by the Russian Federation. As posited by Adam D. Rotfeld, the dispersal and polycentrism of power relations in international affairs have become discernible features in this evolving paradigm. Prevailing rules and norms, originating from an antiquated international context, no longer adequately capture the nuanced contemporary state of affairs (Rotfeld, 2014). This necessitates a recalibration of these norms to accommodate emerging powers, thereby addressing the inherent incongruities in the extant international framework. This transformative milieu has engendered a conspicuous vacuum, serving as a focal point for nascent powers seeking to assert themselves on the global stage. Consequently, Russia has embarked on a unilateral endeavour to redefine parameters within the international arena, exemplified by its proposition of two treaties to the United States and NATO in December 2021. These proposals, met with rejection by the Western powers, aimed to delineate Russia's "natural sphere of influence" under international law. The coercive elements of these propositions sought to dissuade NATO expansion eastward, while concurrently categorising NATO members into distinct, "old" and "new" groups, notably including Central and Eastern European countries such as Poland. Despite the Kremlin's ostensible adherence to international legal instruments, the underlying motivations were fundamentally instrumental, viewing the system of international law as a procedural framework devoid of inherent axiology or substantive significance. This apparent, "new game without rules" illustrates Russia's endeavour to subject Ukraine to the principles of the so-called "Russian world".

The genesis of the Ukrainian crisis in the autumn of 2013, marked by the Euromaidan protests (or the "Revolution of Dignity"), heralded geopolitical transformations in Eastern Europe and indirectly led to an armed conflict between Russia and Ukraine. To comprehend the roots of the Ukrainian crisis fully, an examination of the evolution in Russia's foreign policy and its conceptualisation of international relations in recent years is imperative. According to Richard Sakwa, Russia's foreign policy has undergone a discernible shift toward revisionism, resulting in the confrontation witnessed in Ukraine – a confrontation that, as of 2023, has evolved into a broader standoff between Russia and the United States, extending across the Western sphere (Sakwa, 2015). Sakwa identifies four primary factors contributing to this shift in Russia's policy. Firstly, there

was a gradual deterioration of relations with the European Union. Secondly, the progressive dismantling of the pan-European security system deprived Russia of its role as an autonomous partner in cooperation with the West. Thirdly, Russia, alongside rising powers like China, contested American assertions of “exceptionalism” and global leadership. Lastly, Russian revisionism was catalysed by the perceived manipulation of democracy promotion, distinct from the practical implementation of democratic principles. According to Sakwa, Russia contends that the West uses the promotion of democracy as a pretext to advance its strategic objectives. The discord between Russia and the European Union encompasses various domains, such as competition for influence in the immediate neighbourhood, considerations related to energy security, economic cooperation norms, and issues pertaining to democracy, human rights, and civil liberties. The positioning of Ukraine within the competition among superpowers for the future power balance in this region remains a salient point of inquiry. Moreover, the extent to which Russia’s revisionist actions, in collaboration with other powers such as China, through conflicts in Ukraine and Syria, have contributed to the emergence of a post-unipolar international order is a facet that warrants scholarly consideration.

Expanding upon this analysis, several key themes emerge in understanding the dynamics of Russia’s revisionist stance and its repercussions on the international order. These include the impact on regional security, the role of energy geopolitics in shaping alliances and conflicts, the influence of historical narratives on foreign policy decisions, and the evolving strategies of the West in responding to Russia’s revisionism. Each of these dimensions provides a nuanced perspective on the multifaceted nature of the contemporary geopolitical landscape.

The Significance of Ukraine in Shaping the International Positioning of the Russian Federation

The significance of Ukraine in shaping the international positioning of the Russian Federation is underscored by the primary objective of the geostrategic agenda pursued by the Russian Federation under President Putin’s administration – namely, the restoration of influence in its peripheries, which had been diminished following the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Over a span of three decades since the USSR’s dissolution, Russia has persistently sought to maintain a dominant role in Eastern Europe and the broader Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). This pursuit involves diverse means, including military power, exemplified by the Georgian-Russian conflict in August 2008 and the prolonged conflict

with Ukraine since 2014. The overarching ambition guiding these actions is the reintegration of the post-Soviet space and the consolidation of Russia's leadership in the region. This superpower status is envisioned to confer exclusive control over the post-Soviet sphere, positioning Russia as a pivotal global power within the envisioned multipolar international order. Consequently, Eastern Europe emerges as the natural operational domain for Russia, symbolising the historical sphere of vital interests, exclusive influence, and the focal point of the Kremlin's reintegration policy.

Moreover, the Russian Federation advocates a distinct definition of integration, deviating from the Western paradigm. This involves a comprehensive reinstatement of Russian dominance in the CIS region, accompanied by the deepening of strategic dependencies, particularly in economics and regional security. This approach markedly differs from the bottom-up integration observed within the European Union, characterised by shared values, voluntary participation, and reciprocal multilateral benefits. The pronounced emphasis on the post-Soviet space in Russia's foreign policy is rooted not only in geopolitical considerations but also in cultural and historical factors, shared security interests, economic ties, and the imperative to attend to the Russian diaspora. Prestige considerations further underscore Russia's aspiration to serve as a bridge between Asia and Europe. Eastern Europe, as a constant element of Russia's cultural identity, reflects the conviction among Russians regarding the indivisibility of designated territories, encompassing Great, Little, and White Russia, and Transcaucasia – a cultural ecumene distinct from its Western counterpart. The significance of this region thus permeates the core of Russian identity in its evolving spatial context. Ukraine and Belarus, positioned as Russia's natural buffer between the East and the West, are perceived as guarantors of its superpower status, constituting integral components of Greater Russia from linguistic, ethnocultural, and historical perspectives. Consequently, Russia's policy towards the so-called "near abroad" perpetuates the steadfast belief that the independence of these nations is a transient phenomenon.

War as an Inherent Element of Vladimir Putin's Project

The contemporary Russian regime, rather than primarily relying on ideology, is in the process of transforming its propaganda patterns into a cohesive ideological platform. As Sergei Medvedev aptly noted, "In general, war is the basic ontology of Russian society, the optics of Russians." This perspective frames the centuries-long conflict between the repressive colonial state and a population perceived by authorities as

an inexhaustible natural resource, forming the new foundation of Russian identity (Medvedev, 2022).

Under Putin's leadership, war has evolved into a personified Russian concept that lacks a permanent canonical status but is intuitively grasped by the authorities and at least a segment of the population. Aggressive Russian nationalism, coupled with imperialism, Russian messianism, and the notion of a so-called "special way", has been strategically employed to justify Russia's role as a superpower and cultivate a sense of Russian superiority.

Arguably, war and imperialism have been integral components of Putin's vision for the Russian state from its inception. Rooted in the internal dynamics of Putin's system, this imperial drive simultaneously revitalises the enduring patriarchal model of the Russian state. The current manifestation of empire is evident in the seemingly purposeless concept of expansion, serving not only to demonstrate Russia's power but, above all, to maintain the stability of the regime. According to Wladislav Surkov, the export of social entropy to foreign territories is crucial for sustaining this stability. He notes, "the Russian state, with its austere and passive political interior, has survived for centuries only because of its constant striving to transcend its own borders (...) continuous expansion is not just one of the ideas, but the true essence of our historical existence" (Surkov 2021).

The pursuit of expansion and annexation of territories is not in opposition to, but rather supported by, mental isolationism. A characteristic manifestation of this isolationism is the metaphysical concept of "Russian space", as pointed out by Nikolai Plotnikov (Plotnikov, 2023, p. 8; see also: Fridrichová, 2023). Recent trends show a departure from referring to Russia as an empire, with authorities leaning towards describing it as a separate civilisation. In 2012, Vladimir Putin propagated the idea that Russia is "a state form of civilisation in which ethnic groups do not matter, and affiliation is defined by common culture and values". This shared culture revolves around "maintaining the dominance of Russian culture", which purportedly faces opposition from "hostile forces", according to Mr Putin.

History as a Source and Justification for the Russian War in Ukraine

In 1995, Russian historian Alexander Yanov introduced the concept of the "Weimar" syndrome in the context of Russia (Yanov, 1995). Three decades ago, he critiqued the Western approach to post-Soviet Russia, emphasising its focus on introducing a free market without a corresponding plan for democracy. Yanov's warning of a potential "Weimar Russia" highlighted

the risk of Russian revanchism, characterised by authoritarianism, anti-Western sentiment, and an anti-democratic stance, potentially giving rise to an aggressive, so-called “red-brown” state amalgamating communist and fascist forces. Present-day Russian society not only harbors post-Soviet resentment, but also manifests the sacralisation of power and the state in mass consciousness, forming the foundation upon which the Putin regime consolidates its rule. In this context, Joseph Stalin becomes a symbol of a potent state and a societal model where individuality yields to the interests of the state.

The concept of power holds particular significance in Russian society, providing the government with a tool to justify its actions. During the initial phase of his rule, Vladimir Putin sought to portray Russia as a superpower, shaping his interpretation of Russian history to emphasise the necessity of forceful modernisation for the restoration of its superpower status. The 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine has been framed by Russian media and authorities as an unavoidable response to perceived threats to Russia’s security and interests, employing historical analogies and symbolism. Putin described the invasion as a “historical mission”, drawing parallels with the Soviet Union’s role in World War II to evoke national pride and purpose. The defense of Russian citizens in Ukraine was presented as an imperative rooted in a shared ethnic identity and common heritage between Russia and Ukraine.

Russian media further utilised historical references and symbols to depict the invasion of Ukraine. State television RT, for instance, characterised the intervention as the “liberation” of Ukraine, drawing comparisons with the Soviet Union’s liberation of Europe from Nazi Germany. Under Putin’s rule, a militaristic cult gained momentum, extending beyond political propaganda to become a significant aspect of mass culture. The notion of the “religion of victory” found a place in the collective imagination, framing the war as a return to a battlefield where Soviet values confronted the Nazi threat. This cult provided a consistent template for explaining the meaning and goals of Russian aggression in Ukraine.

According to Andrei Kolesnikov, the regime transformed from the cult of victory in 1945 to a cult centered on war itself, with roots and explanations deeply entwined in history. Historical circumstances, including the ongoing collapse of the Soviet empire, and government-created myths about the lack of Ukrainian statehood and the West’s purported desire to destroy Russia, contribute to the narrative surrounding the current war (Kolesnikov, 2022).

The dominant narrative, propagated by both the Kremlin and Putin, asserts that Ukraine is an integral part of Russia’s history. Putin has never

accepted Ukraine's independence and, in 2021, openly questioned its legitimacy as an independent state, revealing Russia's imperial ambitions. This narrative contends that Ukraine's independence is a recent construct and advocates for its reunification with Russia to restore historical justice and foster regional stability. Often associated with Russian nationalism, this perspective aligns with the concept of a "Russian world" encompassing all Russian-speaking areas and nations.

In 2014, Aleksandr Dugin outlined the ideology of the new Russia, stating, "Russia will either be Russian, that is, Eurasian, that is, the core of the great Russian world, or it will disappear. But then it's better to let it all go away. There is simply no reason to live in a world without Russia" (Dugin, 2014; Liik, 2022). Four years later, Putin echoed a similar sentiment during a conversation about the nuclear threat, emphasising the centrality of Russia in the world order, asking, "Why do we need a world if Russia is not in it?".

Conclusions

Russia's aggression against Ukraine has brought about a significant shift in the global perception of Central and Eastern European countries, notably Ukraine, concerning international security. Traditionally, debates tended to sideline smaller European nations such as Ukraine, prioritising the influence of superpowers in shaping global security. France and Germany historically viewed Russia as a security guarantor in Eastern Europe and an essential economic partner. Similarly, the United States prioritised partnerships with key nations including Germany and the UK in European security matters. However, the initiation of aggression against Ukraine altered Western political elites' perspective, recognising Ukraine's vital role in the supply chain, strategic location, and the emerging security challenges posed by Russian neo-imperial ambitions.

Poland has notably risen in importance during this period. Beyond offering substantial support to Ukraine, both in humanitarian aid and military assistance, Poland has elevated its regional profile. This was evident in the resolutions adopted at NATO summits in Madrid (June 2022) and Vilnius (July 2023), where the strategic concept underscored Russia as the primary direct threat, calling for a cessation of aggression against Ukraine by Russia and Belarus (Jankowski, Stępniewski, 2022; Polegkyi, Stępniewski, 2020).

An unmistakable feature of Russia's current war in Ukraine is the lack of a justifiable cause. There was no credible threat to Russia or Putin's

regime. Despite the absence of clear political and economic objectives, domestic policy goals, such as reinforcing Putin's image domestically and enhancing Russia's international standing, are discernible. Putin's speeches have consistently portrayed Russia as a victim, framing the West as an aggressor, indicating a lack of a specific civilisational project beyond negating the West.

In summary, several consequences of Russia's war in Ukraine have emerged: 1) a severe deterioration in Russia-West relations; 2) social and cultural divisions within Russia; 3) the mobilisation of Russian society against the West, maintaining Putin's influence; and 4) an attempt to strengthen Russia's international influence, which backfired by accelerating Western unity, increasing fear among former Soviet states, and diminishing Russia's regional influence. The postmodern totalitarian regime in Russia relies on manipulating symbols and narratives instead of traditional repression or censorship. Internationally, the Kremlin leverages foreign policy to bolster domestic power, blending elements like Stalinism, Orthodoxy, Pan-Slavism, and anti-Americanism. However, the current crisis in Russia stems from its failure to address Soviet-era crimes and reflect on that period. The neo-totalitarian regime lacks a coherent ideology, emphasising the creation of political narratives. Government-controlled media disseminate propaganda, portraying Putin as a defender against Western threats and demonising enemies as the source of problems.

The war in Ukraine has instigated fundamental changes: 1) deepening tensions and a reversal of relations between Russia and the West; 2) the revealing of cultural divisions within Russian society; 3) the Kremlin exploiting the conflict to increase influence and weaken independence domestically; and 4) the simultaneous strengthening and isolating of Russia internationally, particularly in the so-called "global South". In conclusion, Russia's postmodern regime utilises foreign policy to sustain domestic power, yet the absence of a coherent ideology has led to unintended consequences, resulting in increased isolation and internal destabilisation, exemplified by the failed Wagner Group rebellion led by the late Yevgeny Prigozhin.

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The Impact of Russian Aggression Against Ukraine on Estonian Security

Abstract

Historically, Estonia has suffered many years of hostilities inflicted by Russia, with Russia being a constant threat towards the nation's identity and sovereignty, including the loss of its independence and coming under and enduring belligerent Russian occupation. Recently, Moscow's policy escalated by their unilaterally using military power against Ukraine in an attempt to subordinate the nation while harbouring desires to restore their sphere of influence. 2022's aggression came as no surprise to Tallinn, as the nation's leadership had issued warnings about Russia's intentions, based on understanding its nature and being aware of what a so-called "Russian world" means. This article aims to focus on presenting the impact of Russian aggression against Ukraine on Estonia within three domains of understanding; those of the political, public, and military, and the author will use scientific methods including the collection of original data and a systematic review of existing literature and studies, along with analyses, syntheses, and elements of comparative analysis. The case study, of course, concerns Estonia. The research contends that the Russian Federation is and will continue to be considered an existential threat, one which carries out both continuous and decisive non-military and military activities against its neighbours. These activities require Estonia to improve internal security with the need of regional and international support.

Keywords: Estonia, Russian Aggression Against Ukraine, Security Environment, Defence Forces

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Introduction

Throughout its history, Estonia has perceived Russia as an existential threat, having experienced – on numerous occasions in the past – the meaning and implications of the so-called “*Ruski Mir*” ideology, and especially when the country was under Russian occupation for nearly half a century. Understanding the Russian Federation, that which is the heir of the country’s previous system, plays a large role with respect to national security, and is directly related to Moscow’s ongoing imperialist ambitions and their desire to subjugate and control independent nations once again. This state of affairs has been characteristic of Russia for several centuries. Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas stressed that Russia’s military aggression against Ukraine shows “how high the price of freedom is” (Government of Estonia, 2022), highlighting the need for unity and cooperation within NATO, the EU, and regionally, as Estonia may be yet again a target of Russian aggression.

This article aims to review the security situation which will lead to a presentation of the impact of Russian aggression against Ukraine on Estonia. In this endeavour, three major domains will be studied, namely, those of the political, public, and military. Open-source documents as well as academic and journal articles related to security will be studied, implementing a collection of original data and a systematic review of the existing literature, and formal statements and studies utilising analysis, synthesis, and comparative analysis. Estonia is the substance of this research as a case study. The specificity of this paper required the author to make use of current documents from official websites.

The first part will present decisions and actions in the political sphere with a focus on the national level. The next parts will review the threat assessments, decisions supporting resilience, and societal awareness leading to building resistance potential. The armed forces and territorial-defence-unit capabilities will be discussed, and their support for the Ukrainian fight for territorial integrity will be included. The conclusions will summarise the research, reflecting the complexity of the security situation and the challenges faced by the nation. It will allow the author to answer what the major decisions and actions taken or planned are with regard to preparing the nation to face Russian hostility as and when it comes. The paper argues that the decisions taken by Estonia are both a reflection of reality along with the pragmatic approach of this small state based on the internal and international situation offering predictions with regard to possible regional consequences.

The Consolidation of Political Decisions Facing Russian Aggression Against Ukraine

The Russian Federation has posed, is posing, and will continue to pose an existential threat to the sovereignty of Estonia because of Russia's aggressive policy involving its repeated use of a military instrument of power this century (2008, 2014, and 2022 thus far) to forward its foreign policy and attack sovereign nations. Such a perception of Russia was presented by Estonian leaders after gaining independence. In 1994, Lennart Meri, a former President of Estonia, warned about the West's so-called "appeasement" policy toward Russia and Russia's inclination to "solve their country's immense problems by outward expansion and by threatening their neighbours" (Archive of the Office of the President of the Republic, 1994). What is more, in 2014, Toomas Ilves, the then-Estonian President stated, "The annexation of territory, the violation of borders, aggression, and an anti-liberal ideology combined with religious conservatism, with political authoritarianism, and imperialist bravado. It's all back!" (Waylly, 2014). The kidnapping of Estonian security officer Eston Kohver in the same year, was a red flag for Tallinn with regard to "constant, multi-vector Russian pressure, yet, rather than a prelude to kinetic operations, this pressure is part of Moscow's wider so-called "political war" with the West" (Galeotti, 2019; Banka, 2023). Therefore, it was not a surprise for Estonia to learn that "Putin has chosen the path of war" due to his being afraid of progressive democratic values close to Russia's borders (Office of the President of the Republic, 2022).

Estonia decided to close ranks within NATO and the EU as an advocate of a decisive approach, assessing that Russia would remain a major threat, although not yet ready to attack Estonia due to its membership in the Alliance. Therefore, in April 2022, Estonia published a statement of the Riigikogu (State Assembly of Estonia) on the "war crimes and genocide of the Russian Federation in Ukraine" (Riigikogu, 2022a). Next, Estonia recognised Russia as "a terrorist regime, and the Russian Federation as a country which supports terrorism, and whose actions we must confront together" (Riigikogu, 2022b). The adopted resolutions show an explicit position regarding the perception of Russian aggression as actions incompatible with any dimension of international relations and legal regulations constituting the basis for peaceful existence that have been developed in the post-war period. At the same time, Estonia has fully supported the territorial integrity of Ukraine, being aware that the revisionist policy of Russia poses a real threat to the nation's statehood. In this context, the country's accession to NATO and the EU in 2004

proved to be critical for regional security along with its cooperation with the United States, Poland, and the Nordic countries (Galeotti, 2019).

Prime Minister Kallas has repeatedly stressed that Estonia is aware of Moscow's use of hybrid tools, which requires a constant monitoring of these activities and which also requires building Estonia's resilience in every sphere of its functioning (Postimees, 2023). It is linked with the Kremlin's short-term (until 2022), medium-term (2025), and long-term (2030) plans, covering three main domains, the first of which being political, military, and military-technical and security-related aims; the second being trade and economy; and, finally, humanitarian and social objectives. Dan Fried stressed the importance of the Baltic states' membership in NATO, postulating that if their accession had not taken place in 2004, Russia would have committed military aggression toward the Baltics, but now the Russian state is limited only to political intrigues (Postimees, 2023). This justified statement exemplifies why Russia has been so opposed to NATO enlargement to include new states; Russia is afraid of entering into direct conflict with NATO and activating Article V. The 2021 National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation still reiterated the build-up of NATO military infrastructure near Russia's borders as a military threat (Postimees, 2023) (Президент Российской Федерации, 2021, p. 11). For Estonia, Finland's accession to NATO, and Sweden's future accession, is another aspect of strengthening its security; crossing this so-called accession "red line" is a noticeable political and military defeat for Russia.

Tallinn explicitly expressed the requirement for the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court to initiate and continue investigations to prosecute Russian war crimes. Politically, this was expressed through unequivocally positive support for the European Union's sanctions on Russia, even though they affected domestic economies. This was a joint position with other countries being encouraged to implement further sanction packages. An expression of this active approach was the sanctions against Russian citizens associated with the war and their support of it, as well as the transferring frozen assets of Russian oligarchs to Ukraine. Estonia initiated the development of legal bases for such steps in January 2023 (ERR News, 2023a).

Estonia will not cease its multidimensional support for Ukraine. The country's willingness to continue providing support was demonstrated by the signing of the "Joint Statement by Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania on support for Ukraine" document by the Estonian Prime Minister, along with the leadership of the other two signatories. The document, signed on 17th August 2023, emphasised "supporting Ukraine until

victory” and the “steadfast support for Ukraine on its path to join the Alliance” (Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2023). Estonia’s voice within joint statements matters considerably as it is supported by other European nations. Moreover, that document is in line with the “G-7: Joint Declaration of Support for Ukraine” document. Nevertheless, politically, at least one party represented in parliament, in the form of the Conservative People’s Party of Estonia (EKRE), has not expressed clear support for Ukraine in some aspects. The party leader assumes that “there are limits to our ability to help Ukraine”, so it can be interpreted that he believes that accepting Ukrainian refugees should be stopped, which also goes for bringing about lower immigration rates. In the meantime, however, political help and other forms of assistance are to be continued as the war has a direct impact on Estonia due to the fact that war-related tensions could easily escalate (Jarosak, Helme, 2023). Therefore, at least 17 members of parliament (17%) are, through their scepticism, fuelling societal frustrations.

It should be noted that Estonia is relatively small in many respects, but its voice matters based on the country’s clear awareness of threats and its lack of confidence in a peaceful coexistence with Moscow in the future. Estonia has the potential to build coalitions both within NATO and the EU, as well as regionally, e.g., other Baltic states and Poland, which allows the promotion of selected initiatives. This is a bold approach given its geostrategic location and immediate border with Russia, which, as mentioned, questions the sovereignty of Estonia as a historical mistake as expressed by Mr Medvedev. To answer such an aggressive narrative, the Estonian government’s political decisions clearly demonstrate a decisive stand and are decisions of great pragmatism. They are followed by actions to endure international willingness and vigilance, in concert with societal preparation within a comprehensive approach to security, including building both a spirit of resilience and defence capabilities to use if required.

The Threat Perception – News

Since Estonia gained its independence in 1991, the country’s security policy has been focused on the existential threat of being Russia’s neighbour. This is related to NATO and EU membership, a strategic alliance with the United States, collective defence, deterrence, and building national resilience as security pillars. In recent years, Russian intelligence has been intensified, looking to support Russia’s political goals and to create a favourable environment for itself, especially focussing on a dedicated

region of Estonia with a significant Russian majority (the Ida-Viru or Harju counties serve as good examples). The range of interests has been wide, focusing on NATO and EU activities, studying the foreign security policy of states, military potential, domestic politics and economy, the attitude of society, and other aspects. These activities are ongoing and will certainly continue to be with regard to the ongoing state of “hybrid” warfare.

The perception of threats was reflected in a report drawn up by the Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service (EFSI), which indicated the need to observe Russia’s activities in neighbouring countries, where it strives for dominance by threatening their security (Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service, 2021, p. 6). The 2021 report singled out Ukraine and Belarus as priority countries for Moscow. One of the Kremlin’s recognised goals was to build armed forces capable of a “full-scale confrontation with NATO” while trying to undermine NATO’s unity, especially its transatlantic relations (Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service, 2021, pp. 45–47). This goal was to be achieved by comprehensive psychological and information operations, espionage, covert influence operations, and cyber-attacks coordinated by the secret services (FSB, SVR, and GRU) operating in concert.¹ 2022’s EFSI report assessed the Kremlin’s intentions and China’s role in its relations with Russia. The report examined the sequence of Russian preparations for war through large-scale exercises, intelligence activities, and cyber espionage to shape the future environment of operations or conduct military operations. One of the assessed threats was the aggression against Ukraine, as “the linchpin that keeps Russian imperial ambition together” (Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service, 2022, pp. 9–22, 28). The report, presented immediately before the attack, included a review of the capabilities of the Russian forces, considering their concentration on the Ukrainian border as a direct threat to Ukraine and an ultimatum to the West. It was indicated that they would be ready to launch an offensive against Ukraine “if the Russian leadership so decides” (Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service, 2022, p. 9) as early as the second half of February 2022. This was a correct assessment as far as time as an operational factor is concerned, but the potential of the so-called “second army of the world” was significantly overestimated.

In April 2022, the Annual Review of the Estonian Internal Security Service indicated that the day of the invasion, February 24th, coincidentally being the Anniversary of the Republic of Estonia, “did

¹ Federal Security Service (FSB), Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR), The Main Directorate of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation (formerly the Main Intelligence Directorate G.U. or GRU).

not mark the beginning of Putin's aggressive foreign policy but only its continuation with military means" (Estonian Internal Security Service, 2022, p. 4). It quotes Jüri Uluots²: "Due to the primordial nature of its socio-political ideology, the nation of Greater Russia cannot help but continue to invade the living space of other nations, attack them, harm them, and conquer them. At the same time, new reasons and theories for the attacks are found again and again" (Estonian Internal Security Service, 2022, p. 3). It was both prescient, and is an accurate judgement of the current security environment, because the causes do not change, and the military instrument of power is used after other tools do not allow a desired end state to be achieved. Historically, this is the nature of the state, because "Russia wants to be an empire, but it also wants to be autarky – a closed world built on a radical negation of what comes from the West" (Wołodźko, 2023, p. 112).

2023's EFSI report leaves no doubt about Russia's intentions. It was estimated that while an attack on Estonia is not likely in 2023, the threat has increased, and the Russian armed forces still have a large combat potential that can be recreated at the country's border within the next four years (Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service, 2023, p. 10). It is, however, doubtful, and the Shoigu's declarations about creating new units along Estonian and Finnish borders are not realistic because of a lack of resources to do so. This assessment has been an impetus to the ongoing expediting of Estonian-armed-forces development including the procurement of modern weapon systems and a program of intensive exercises with other NATO nations. The close cooperation with our allies has moved to a new level, leading to a shift to the desire to implement the so-called "deterrence by denial" concept as the key to defending the country and population, taking into account Russia's brutality against Ukraine's people and infrastructure (Wojciechowski, Śliwa, 2021; Kuczyńska-Zonik, Sierzputowska, 2023). Such a conceptual change is based on an assessment that there will be no change in Russia's hostile foreign policy, and that includes the Kremlin's utilisation of military power. It requires a close observation of Russia, investigating any developments which could be further used against Estonia and which endanger its national security.

The Populace Dimension of Security

The slowly-changing approach of Russian-speaking persons has been visible since the beginning of the war as some of them have started to

² Jüri Uluots (1890–1945) – a former Prime Minister of Estonia, historian, and statesperson.

consider a change of citizenship. It has not been particularly common, but 291 persons did decide to apply for Estonian citizenship in 2021; in 2022 that number increased to 726 persons (ERR News, 2023b) and 372 persons had followed suit by August 2023 (Eesti Rahvusringhääling, 2023). The advantage is that those people are mostly middle-aged and younger men and women; it demonstrates where they consider their future lies, especially due to the fact that the application process requires some effort needing to be made with regard to a B1-level language exam and a test on Estonia's Constitution. The process slowed down in February 2023 when the Russian Embassy in Tallinn paused procedures as regards people's renouncing of their Russian citizenship. It was a countermeasure move partially connected also with the "expulsion of 21 Russian diplomats and embassy staff in order to "reach parity" between the two nations" diplomatic personnel" (Estonian World Review, 2023).

According to a census from 2022, the major minority language is Russian (382,155 speakers) comprising 22.5% of the population (Statistics Estonia, 2023). What is important, still, is that many Russian-speaking persons hold "grey" passports, i.e., they are citizens neither of Estonia nor of the Russian Federation. In reality, it is a useful travelling document allowing holders cheaper purchases in Russia, the option of avoiding conscription, and which grants access to 42 countries without a visa. The aforementioned language exam is much easier for the younger generation as they already use Estonian, and the process will be sped up, due to the fact that the teaching of the Russian language will soon come to an end in schools. The transition to Estonian will start in preschools and the first and fourth grades in 2024, and the full transition should be completed by the 2029/2030 academic year (European Commission, 2022). So far, however, there have been some challenges, such as the need to generate the required number of teachers to transfer to an Estonian-language-only education, but the process of improving Estonian language skills has already started. The "Amendment Law to the Basic School and Gymnasium Law and Other Laws (Transition to Estonian-Language Education) 722 SE" adopted such a plan in December 2022. A population census completed in December of the same year presented an interesting trend: in the 15–29 age group, 90.9% speak Estonian, 48.7% speak Russian, and 85% speak English; in the 65+ age group, 77.9% speak Estonian 84.6% speak Russian, and 14.4% speak English (Statistics Estonia, 2022). Therefore, Russian language usage will, through there being inevitably fewer and fewer users of the language, diminish in the years to come. This is important, as the Estonian language will enhance better familiarisation with Estonian culture and politics thereby limiting

the impact of Russian propaganda and information operations. The shift to Estonian-language education is a most deliberate step to deny access to Russian language information programmes and platforms in order to negate any disinformation campaigns targeted at selected groups using the Kremlin narrative. Nevertheless, such messages are still crossing borders, albeit those messages having a more limited effect compared to the last three decades. A big challenge in this sense is that many Ukrainian refugees speak Russian, and it causes the need for additional investments to be made in order to assimilate them, investments which are already ongoing.

Estonia is very concerned about those Russian and Belarusian citizens living in Estonia who are under the influence of widely-spread Russian narratives. Therefore, some specific steps have already been taken. The Minister of Justice has proposed an amendment to the law aiming to exclude “citizens of a foreign country recognised as an aggressor state” from the right to vote in local elections. For them, including those “grey” passports holders, voting in local elections has been allowed, but voting in parliamentary elections has not. This is concerning, due to the fact that as many as 67,774 citizens of the Russian Federation and 1,052 citizens of Belarus are persons entitled to vote (a total of almost 69,000 persons as of May 2023) (ERR News, 2023c). The issue is still under discussion as it could require a change of constitution guaranteeing voting rights, but does require the support of as many as 81 out of 101 members of parliament. The decision could affect especially the city of Narva, where, during the times of the Soviet Union, ethnic Russians replaced indigenous Estonians. Out of some 54,000 people, as many as 45,300 are Russians (84.4%), so the new law will affect the outcome of local elections significantly (Invest in Narva, 2023). An example is the case of pro-Russian persons such as Mihhail Stalnuhhin and Aivo Peterson, who have garnered a reasonable number of votes in local elections, proving that Russian-influence agents could win their political battles locally. They are *persona no grata* to whom visas are to be cancelled, as has happened in the case of 55 Russians and 17 Belarusians as at August 2023. In the past, a few cases have even been publicised, such as when Ramil Usmanov (a pro-Kremlin provocateur), Alexey Esakov (an organiser of Russia’s “Immortal Regiment” marches), or Andrey Kornilov (another pro-Kremlin activist) were expelled. Abolishing Schengen visas for Russian citizens further limited their freedom to travel.

There is another security-related decision which has been made because as many as 1,300 Russian and Belarusian citizens residing in Estonia, i.e., stateless “grey” passport owners, have been denied their right to own

firearms (ERR News, 2023d). The decision, namely, “The Weapons Act”, was a preventive measure related to limiting any risk toward security and public order and referred to some 3,000 weapons. Another important decision was to remove all the monuments and memorials related to the Russian occupation and both world wars, which glorified totalitarian regimes. There were suspicions that it could cause significant opposition or even riots, akin to those which were witnessed in 2007, but the impact was very limited, and an example of the very modest protest was the removal of a T-34 located next to Narva, despite initial expectations that it could trigger the aforementioned strong opposition. Such monuments were places for Russian-speaking people to celebrate, for instance, on the 9th of May every year for their “Immortal Regiment” parades. Historically, the end of the Second World War has been seen by Estonians not as the beginning of a second period of independence, but as the beginning of the Soviet occupation. Therefore, removing those symbols of the past was a symbolic representation of the final break from the heritage of Russian control and influence.

The decisions presented above have caused waves of cyber-attacks by Russian-based hacker groups against national entities and attempts to influence critical infrastructure. July 2023 was significant in this respect, because it was when the Estonian Information System Authority (RIA) recorded 269 “impactful” incidents along with finding 529 malware-infected devices (ERR News, 2023e).

Estonia formulates its legal regulations based on not only exclusion, however, and a good example is the Council of Rectors’ appeal to permit Russian nationals already enrolled in Estonian higher education institutions to “conclude their current studies here and then continue with further education in Estonia or to stay and find employment” (ERR News, 2023f). The appeal concerns 342 students exploring their options to stay in Estonia and to start the future in a democratic environment. This, along with investments in the Narva area, are important efforts to engage “and incorporate its Russophone population lest they become a security risk” (Galeotti, 2019). Although, among Russian-speaking populations, the perception of Russia is evolving, it will take at least two generations to observe a significant mental shift. Younger generations are more assimilated within Estonia, compared to older generations living with memories of the past, as those harbour some sentiment about the Soviet period, and remember Russia as a superpower, albeit in a previous global system. The question is, however, whether enough has been done to integrate the Russian-speaking population after three decades of sovereignty. The problem relates to both sides, though, because for Estonians, Russian-

speaking people were not an indigenous part of society and were one of the outcomes of Soviet occupation with all the negative memories of the past. Those Russians decided to stay in their own circles while living with such memories, while being influenced by aggressive Russian propaganda (notably increasing in strength after the year 2000), and while lacking any willingness or need to learn the Estonian language. The older generation thinks in different terms as they were educated the Soviet way, and is extremely unlikely that they will change their perception of the world.

Russian intelligence services have been active in all the Baltic countries, and they will continue to use information operations to preserve influence over target groups (Struberga, 2022, p. 127; Lawrence, 2023, pp. 24–25). The failure of those services, seen in the past as very powerful and effective, when attempting to impact Ukrainian societies is promising, as is an assessment of its military power, but should not be underestimated. Estonia strongly supports Ukrainian war refugees, counting some 100,000 having been welcomed on its territory, but this aspect must be closely observed as the refugee flow has created a window of opportunity for Russian intelligence services to send operatives and deploy agents of influence to destabilise internal security and create pro-Russian/anti-Ukrainian attitudes. It is underpinned by the Compatriots Foundation to forward the Kremlin's influence-operations using Kremlin-controlled media, right-wing extremists, social media, and agents of influence. This could conceivably be part of a long-term plan to activate those agents at some future point; a moment determined by Russian intentions and the desire to destabilise or weaken the cohesion of societies or degrade the nation's position internationally. The Russian aggression was an impetus to make decisions specifically with regards to the social domain, including actions to better integrate the Russian-speaking part of Estonian society. Those actions are valid, even though they do encounter some resistance, but Estonia will reap the rewards only in the years to come; the positive outcomes of such actions do not appear quickly, and Tallinn is fully aware that it is a critical requirement, as the Kremlin will not give up its propaganda drives to divide society and poison the minds of targeted groups.

Implications Within the Military Field

An advantage to be noted is that there is growing support among the Estonian population to contribute to defence efforts. Such a trend is the outcome of the Russian use of the military instrument of power to forward Russia's national interests and the assessment that it is endangering not

only the sovereignty of Ukraine, but also other nations, especially small ones. Estonia's support is important, as is the acceptance of increasing military spending and the necessity to contribute personally to security. A December 2022 survey presented positive answers from reservists, their relatives, and employers with regard to military exercises. The latter are hugely significant; the importance of employers who allow their staff to participate in military matters and who understand how important their staff members' roles are cannot be understated. The survey presented an important link between reservists, units combat readiness, and the value of military training, and was highlighted by the Chief of Staff of the Defence Forces; he was glad that "reservists know the value of the experience gained in conscript service and understand the importance of their role in national defence" (Baltic News Service, 2023). A supporting factor is the presence of Estonian Defence Force (EDF) experts, in uniform, during news programmes, who explain military situations. It involves not only experts from the intelligence department participating in those programmes, but also representatives from academia such as the Estonian Military Academy along with retired officers who possess specific areas of expertise (ERR News, 2023g). It not only provides specific, current intel, but also simultaneously promotes and depicts defence-related entities as security providers, which is rooted in the Estonian spirit of protecting sovereignty.

Estonia supports Kyiv through its military assistance, weapon supplies, and with the training and education of military personnel and is complemented by the provision of humanitarian support, including food, medical supplies, and, for example, power generators, public transport buses, etc. This is a significant effort, because, according to the Institute of World Economy, Estonia allocates 0.85% of its GDP for this purpose. For comparison purposes, Poland allocates just 0.49% of its GDP, yet is one of the leading nations supporting Ukraine as regards GDP (Money.pl, 2022). Estonia has opted for additional military support worth 113 million euros, including howitzers (155 and 122 mm), military vehicles, Javelin anti-tank missiles, personal protective equipment (helmets, etc.), and food rations (Interia.pl, 2023). As a result, all of Estonia's (ongoing) support has reached a total of 370 million euros and counting, which exceeds 1% of its GDP. Other important donations have been in the forms of field hospitals and medical supplies as well as the treating of wounded soldiers and civilians. The transfer of equipment, which, in many categories, is of Soviet origin, allows their immediate use on the battlefield without requiring additional training. At the same time, donations of military equipment result in investments in the

purchase of weapon systems, thereby increasing the Ukrainian forces' combat potential. The advantage is that many Soviet systems are being replaced by systems that meet NATO standards, thereby increasing compatibility within the Alliance, and enabling better cooperation in training, repair, and logistics. Major procurement categories are e.g., short-range air defence systems, anti-tank missiles, long-range self-propelled artillery systems (HIMARS, K-9 Thunder) along with required ammunition, spare parts, etc. However, those donations bring about an urgent need to train reservists familiar with previous, already-donated armaments. There are bilateral projects, too; Latvia and Estonia are considering a joint purchase of medium-range air defence systems. In addition, Latvia plans to purchase Naval Strike Missile (NSM) anti-ship missiles to defend not only its own coastline, but also part of Estonia's coastline. Estonia's decision to purchase "Blue Spear" anti-ship missiles will allow integration with the Finnish MTO 85M (Saab RBS 15), permitting a complete blockade of the Gulf of Finland to the Russian fleet (MilitaryLeak, 2022). Riga and Tallinn have also decided to jointly purchase the German IRIS-T air defence system to integrate the air defence of those countries. Combined defence planning, the exchange of data and information, and the joint procurement of combat systems will enable better interaction on the battlefield through understanding and mutual support at all levels of war (Baltic Defense Review, 2023). It will be underpinned by cross-boundary cooperation which, although limited for now, is critical because of limited operational space, and not to mention the lack of strategic depth. In the event of war, state borders are not barriers, and the conduct of combined joint operations among both armed forces and territorial defence forces is required, along with the development of legal regulations that will enable such activities.

Understanding the role of operational space, time factors, and the support of NATO partners, Estonia has contributed to economic/military projects such as "Rail Baltica" and "Via Baltica" to "accelerate the deployment of heavy equipment" (Papatolios, 2021). Merging them with "Via Carpathia" will increase cargo capacity. Other projects include the "Military Schengen Area" and the EU PESCO "Military Mobility". Exercises such as "Defender Europe" emphasise the importance of the sea and land lines of communication, supporting the deterrence effect in the logistical dimension. This indicates the ability to move and deploy equipment in the short term, which is crucial for the Baltic states (Veebel et al., 2020, p. 375), and is also important for Estonia as, geographically, the nation is at the end of supply chain. This results in investment in *Host Nation Support* and the preparation of infrastructure for the reception

and deployment of NATO forces. Therefore, Estonia is expanding the Nursipal training ground to train national and international units.

The “National Defence Development Plan 2017–2026” emphasises comprehensive defence requirements involving all the national entities that are contributing to specific spheres of security (Ministry of Defence, 2017). Conscription is an important element of the armed forces’ support and enables the continuation of the close bond between society and the military, which ensures a continuing supply of trained reservists. Basic conscription service lasts eight months, with eleven months in selected specialities requiring the handling of certain categories of equipment.

Estonia’s defence budget is about 2.9% of its GDP, which is more than one billion euros for the first time; 30% of which is dedicated to the purchase of combat systems (Parliament of Estonia, 2022). The Armed Forces number some 4,000 soldiers and civilian personnel; rapid response units comprise about 37,000 individuals. Importantly, more than 40,000 reservists have been trained, and the total mobilisation potential is 230,000 people, an estimated 20% of the population (Website. Estonian Defence Forces, 2023). An important security provider is the volunteer Estonian Defence League (EDL, Est. Kaitseliit), subordinated during the war to the Estonian Chief of Defence. It counts 18,000 members and, with affiliated entities, has some 29,000 volunteers (Website. Estonian Defence League, 2023). EDL members are permitted to have weapons at home once they have completed their training and undergone medical check-ups, and membership requires participation in military exercises with regular armed forces. EDL units are certified with “snap mobilisations”, which are currently at a 79% call-up rate (Eesti Uuringukeskus OÜ, 2023, p. 4). In 2022, as many as 9264 reservists took part in training courses across Estonia (Kaitseministeerium, 2023). The six-week long training exercise “Ussisõnad” (Eng. Parseltongue; 28 August – 08 October) with as many as 10,000 reservists will enhance EDL capabilities to support the EDF’s professional units. The limitation is the voluntary nature of territorial defence, resulting in limited capabilities and readiness at the basic level (Szymański, 2015), as they are not comparable to professional soldiers. Estonia promotes the idea of hosting brigade-sized forces within the “enhanced Forward Presence” (eFP); consequently, the development of appropriate infrastructure for permanent deployment is being carried out. Other initiatives are the Baltic Combined Joint Staff Element (B-CJSE) (Latvian Public Broadcasting, 2015), the creation of a division-level headquarters, and the continuity of NATO Air Policing. The challenge is the manning of divisional structures with trained staff and to prepare capabilities at the division level. Subordinating existing

national brigades and closer links with eFP units is only the first step, but overall decisions to expand command and control within the NATO Force Structure are important.

It should be noted that the constitution states: “It is the duty of each citizen of Estonia to be loyal to the constitutional order and to defend the independence of Estonia. In the absence of other means of opposing a forcible attempt to change the constitutional order of Estonia, every citizen of Estonia has the right to resist such an attempt of his or her own initiative” (Riigikogu, 1922 with amendments from 2015, Art. 54). Support for the armed forces and the permanent presence of NATO units has significantly increased thanks to proper and timely decisions promoting security matters. A 2023 survey has provided some promising data; the Defence Forces and the Defence League are among the country’s most trusted institutions, reaching a 77% level of trust. Among the overall risks listed in the same survey, the country’s residents recognised the use of nuclear weapons (selected by 76% of the respondents), Russia’s war in Ukraine (72%), and Russia’s attempts to re-establish its power in neighbouring states (68%). The latter is also recognised as a threat of foreign intervention into Estonian politics and economy (61%) after fake news (84%) and cyberattacks (83%) (Eesti Uuringukeskus OÜ, 2023, pp. 14, 21, 24). An important decision concerns the organisation of a national defence education programme to increase the society’s readiness to protect Estonia’s independence and to promote a patriotic spirit (Baltic News Service, 2021). The EDF and EDL shape the patriotic spirit and forge mindsets of resilience in order to generate resistance in the event of an occupation (Śliwa, Allers, 2022). There are, however, challenges, such as the emigration of people of military age, along with poor physical and mental preparation in some people as regards disciplined service. In this regard, patriotic and military education is one of the important decisions which face Estonia and its future. This type of education’s aim is to foster people’s willingness to participate in defence activities, which has risen to 64% in 2023 “with 80% of male citizens of Estonian ethnicity and 53% of male citizens of other ethnicities showing willing” (Eesti Uuringukeskus OÜ, 2023, pp. 32–34). This trend reminds us that, in 1939, Estonia accepted the Soviet ultimatum without any fight, which cannot be allowed to happen again.

Conclusions

Historical memory is of great importance and is passed down from generation to generation. Several waves of Russification, deportations, and

ruthless treatment by Russia (as is now happening in Ukraine) left Estonia with little illusions about the quality and way of life under Russian rule; past deportations carried out by the Soviets have had a lasting effect on virtually all Estonian families. The Russian Federation, as the successor of the Soviet Union, has not changed the perception of history among society and is seen as a real and present danger principally because it is obvious that Russia will not give up its imperialistic ambitions being an integral part of its strategy and “great power” mentality. It caused decisions to be made with regard to investing Estonia’s defence potential nationally, thereby contributing to security regionally within NATO and the EU. Next, Estonia has been very active on the international fora; being a small state, it has decided to build military capabilities alone and in concert with its Allies. Some decisive steps toward pro-Russian activists have also been made; many Soviet monuments have been removed, and the Russian language is to be limited in the years to come along with prohibiting Russian propaganda’s impact on societal groups. At the same time, some processes are providing opportunities such as the aforementioned options for Russian students to complete their education, free Estonian language education for everyone, and resilience-related decisions which include education in schools. These are important steps in supporting and raising the nation’s visibility as a reliable partner and dedicated nation, although for Russian propaganda it has been recognised as a threat. Such a decisive and continuing approach shows that decisions are followed by real actions toward building comprehensive, whole-of-government capacities supported by society, which also aims at integrating the Russian-speaking population. The current decisions will enhance national resilience and the ability to defend, but it is clear that this can happen only as part of the NATO structure.

Membership in NATO and the EU is crucial for Estonia’s security and is not only linked to the military domain, as Estonia is constantly attacked using non-military means and tools (Praks, 2019, pp. 151–152; Veebel, et al., 2021). NATO provides military capabilities that are supported by the national armed forces and territorial defence units (NATO Article 3 provisions). The European Union also provides stability in other areas. The only danger is that crucial NATO troops might not be deployed in time to Estonia which, even supported by the enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) units, still has limited capabilities to conduct any longer fight an overwhelming Russian offensive were it to come. Therefore, Estonia, as host nation, has decided to allocate funds to create the appropriate conditions and infrastructure to enable an increase in the eFP’s size and capabilities with the aim of establishing a permanent presence. An important factor is the constant enhancement of public support for investment in national

security supported by information policy and pro-defence education, which is already bringing measurably positive effects. As a result, the armed forces' capabilities are growing, especially when one includes the procurement of modern combat platforms fully compatible with other NATO nations' equipment, which is crucial for the effective conduct of combined joint operations. Many decisions are based on the experience of the war in Ukraine, e.g., investment into territorial defence forces and recognising their importance in supporting operational units. Joint regional defence planning with other Baltic nations, although still developing, will enhance defence capabilities while facilitating deployment and interaction with NATO forces. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that Estonia has limited means to fight alone, even with eFP troops factored into the equation. National security is supported by all civilian actors based on a developed legal framework allowing for the training of troops in peacetime along with the use of all necessary instruments of power in times of crisis and war. Estonia assumes that Russia will not change its current aggressive foreign policy through its using of armed forces as its main tool. It highlights an urgency to increase combat potential and prepare societies as deterrence factors which have to be credible enough to convince Russia of Estonia's ability to defend itself. In addition to decisions taken at the national level, another factor is the belief that the security of the state must be interlinked regionally due to a common history, geography, and geopolitical challenges, necessitating direct cooperation combining capabilities in all spheres of statehood. In this context, the statements of the leaders of the Baltic states are important. Kaja Kallas underlined it stating, "We know our neighbours", which requires "sharing knowledge about Russia's actions in order to take action against both direct and indirect attempts to exert influence" (NDR/Tagesschau.de, 2023).

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*Vitalii Lebediuk**

Political Dynamics in Ukraine After Russia's Full-Scale Invasion

Abstract

This study examines the intricate shifts in political competition during the period of martial law in Ukraine, with a focus on alterations in dynamics and their potential implications for the post-war political landscape. Employing data from reputable institutions, parliamentary voting records, and analyses of current events, this study aims to provide insights into the extent of changes in political competition and its influence on the upcoming party system configuration. The analysis reveals noteworthy patterns, such as the shift in legislative focus towards foreign policy and defence post-full-scale invasion, and the increased parliamentary support for the Ukrainian president's initiatives, largely due to personal influence rather than party affiliations. The study also examines the evolving voting dynamics in parliament, characterised by two distinct periods, shedding light on the challenges of securing crucial votes for significant bills. In light of these findings, this study emphasises the importance of a well-thought-out action plan to restore the electoral process in post-war Ukraine, taking into account the challenges posed by the current electoral system and regional variations in voter turnout. The study concludes by highlighting the need for intensive support for Ukraine's military efforts as the primary means of ensuring a quick return to the democratic electoral process.

Keywords: Political Parties, Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, President of Ukraine, Electoral Process, International Cooperation, Russian Invasion of Ukraine

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Introduction

Any political party's primary objective is to attain and wield political power, even during moments of conflict such as war. The onset of the comprehensive Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24th, 2022, resulted in a significant shift in the activities of Ukrainian political parties. Until Ukrainian troops liberated the whole of the Kyiv region between March 30th and April 2nd, 2022, political parties represented in Parliament barely engaged in any form of interparty competition. This was due to the uncertainty of the situation around the capital of Ukraine and the results of negotiations between the Ukrainian delegation and the Russian delegation, which first took place on the border with Belarus near the Prypiat River (February, March 28th, 3rd, and 7th, 2022) and then in Turkey (March 10th, 14–15th, 21st, 29–30th, 2022). Low-intensity political tension resumed due to a conflict over the all-Ukrainian “United News” information telethon.

The aim of this study is to analyse the changes in political competition during martial law in Ukraine. To attain this objective, the following research questions must be addressed: (1) To what degree has political competition been altered under martial law? (2) How will this affect the configuration of the party system in the upcoming elections? The author aimed to answer their research questions by examining the potential factors that influence the dynamics of political competition. These factors can possibly shape future political configurations in post-war Ukraine. The study will be based on the results of opinion polls conducted by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, Internews, and the International Republican Institute, along with voting by members of parliament and an analysis of current events. Based on the data analysis, the author provided answers to their research question.

Resumption of Political Struggle

Following the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, the exclusion of several opposition TV channels from digital broadcasting triggered a Pandora's box for the resumption of political conflict between the government and the opposition. The telethon format known as United News is an exceptional instance of a cooperative effort by state, public, and private Ukrainian media to combat Russian propaganda. The concept of the telethon was initiated by journalists of prominent TV channels (1+1, ICTV/STB, Inter, and Ukraine 24), who collaborated with the state-owned Rada TV channel and the National Public Broadcasting

Company of Ukraine. This media project meets and continues to fulfil the authorities' requirements for a unified source of information on military operations and conveys consistent messages to society. Nevertheless, the United News project's creation in formal circumstances enabled the Office of the President of Ukraine to restructure the Ukrainian media market in its favour (Korba, 2022). Thus, the primary television channels that were integrated into the United News format subsequently lost their political influence, which was intentionally maintained by oligarchs. For instance, oligarch Rinat Akhmetov declared in July 2022 that he was surrendering his media holdings to the state and transferring all terrestrial, satellite, and print media licenses in Ukraine to the state (Perun, 2022). Simultaneously, the legislation concerning oligarchs enacted on 23rd September 2021 (Law of Ukraine, 2021) necessitated the conveyance of Petro Poroshenko's shares in Pryamyi and Channel 5 TV channels to the Free Media holding, which is supervised by Mykola Kniazhytskyi, a representative of the European Solidarity faction. Nevertheless, there remains an unanswered question regarding the possible involvement of the three TV channels, namely Channel 5, Pryamyi, and Espresso, in a singular news marathon. Three entities were involved in this dispute; the Office of the President of Ukraine, the management of the United News telethon, and the Free Media held their respective interests. The Office of the President of Ukraine did not agree to allow media outlets in close proximity to Petro Poroshenko to participate in the telethon to preclude the discussion of sensitive issues. The television channels that had already taken part in the United News programme were uninterested in inviting their peers with low viewer numbers to join the project to prevent any new competitors arising for themselves.

Initially, TV channels affiliated with Petro Poroshenko showed little interest in collaborating, as they believed that the public would eventually seek alternative programming, thereby boosting their ratings (Kravets, 2022). However, following the decision of the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine "On the Implementation of a Unified Information Policy under Martial Law" (Decree of the President of Ukraine, 2022) (18th March 2022), it became apparent that only two options remained: joining the telethon or establishing an alternative project. On April 4th, 2022, the broadcasting of the Channel 5, Pryamyi, and Espresso channels on the T2 digital network was switched off by representatives of the Concern for Radio Broadcasting, Radio Communications, and Television.

During the initial year of the war, a considerable percentage of respondents not only viewed the telethon, but also trusted the news

presented in this format, according to various surveys. In November 2022, Internews, an international organisation, conducted a study that revealed that 32% of respondents had watched the telethon (InMind, 2022). Although trust in national television is declining (in 2015, 61% of the people trusted it, and in 2022, only 48% did so), television remains one of the primary sources of information. A study by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology in January 2023 found that over 60% of respondents learned about daily news from the United News Telethon, and 84% of them trusted this news format (The National Democratic Institute, 2023). During the second year of the war, however, there were significant changes in the level of trust in Telethon. Despite the fact that there is a positive balance between trust and distrust in the Telethon, the proportion of those who trust it has fallen significantly to 48% (October 2023) (Hrushetskyi, 2023). The results of the public opinion poll indicate that, on the one hand, military operations have significantly affected the respondents' need to stay in the information flow for security reasons, and, on the other hand, the telethon has become not only a legitimate means of government communication with society during martial law but also an opportunity to reformat the established media space in Ukraine. At the same time, this format of communication with society about domestic and foreign policy events is losing its potential. Instead, the share of consumers of daily news through Telegram channels has increased significantly (60% of respondents received news from Telegram channels in 2022, while in 2023 the share of consumers of this news format increased to 72%) (InMind, 2023). This, in turn, creates potential risks for both the authorities due to the loss of audience and for the consumers of information themselves through numerous Telegram propaganda channels (Security Service of Ukraine, 2022).

Interaction Between Parliament and the President

Following the imposition of martial law in Ukraine, the interaction between parliament and president changed significantly. Before the full-scale invasion, the head of state introduced bills in various areas (from health care to tax policy), after which legislative initiatives became more focused on areas within the president's competence (national security, defense, and foreign policy). According to the constitution, the president can propose the appointment of the ministers of defense and foreign affairs, the head of the security service, and the attorney general, as well as make decisions on martial law and mobilisation. For example, after the full-scale invasion, 58.2% of the president's legislative initiatives were

related to foreign policy, security, and defense, whereas before the war, the share of such initiatives had been 40%. In terms of support for the president's legislative initiatives, the parliament tends to vote in favour of them. This is evidenced by the fact that the proportion of presidential bills supported by the Parliament is three times higher than that of bills initiated by the government (90.2% compared to 35.3%). Most of these laws and resolutions fall within the constitutional powers of the head of the state. This level of support for the president's legislative initiatives is related to his personal influence rather than the level of support for the ruling Servant of the People's Party.

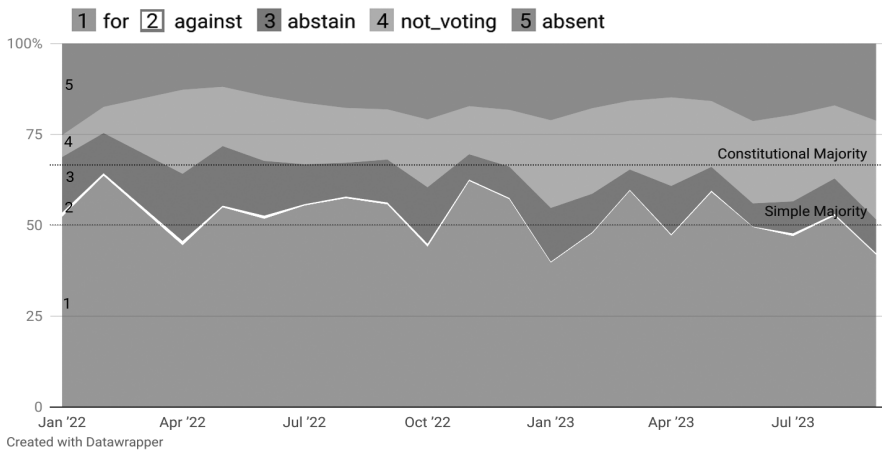


Figure 1. Voting Dynamics in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine in January 2022–September 2023

Note: Aggregated voting results by month.

Source: The authors' own study based on the portal of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine.

Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, parliament has held 73 meetings (as of September 26th, 2023). The first two months of 2022 in parliament were held in the mode of winter holidays and remote work. However, the dynamics of voting in parliament indicates two characteristic periods (Figure 1). During the first period (May–September 2022), there was a certain consensus in parliament to support decisions, but the proportion of abstentions also increased. During this period, the active phase of hostilities and the first counteroffensive of the Ukrainian Armed Forces in the Kharkiv and Kherson directions fell. During the second period (October 2022–September 2023), the share of those who did not vote

and who were absent was growing as regards deputies, which significantly complicates the search for the necessary votes when voting for important bills. When majority votes are insufficient, power rests with other factions or support groups. If, during the first period, the necessary votes were mostly added by pro-Ukrainian opposition parties (European Solidarity, Holos and Batkivshchyna), during the second period, the necessary votes were increasingly added by non-factional people's deputies, the deputy groups "Trust" and "For the Future", as well as deputies of the former opposition pro-Russian faction "Opposition Platform – For Life" (on the basis of which, after its ban, two deputy groups "Platform for Life and Peace" and "Restoration of Ukraine" were formed) (Kontraktovych, 2023). The ruling party "Servant of the People" justifies such cooperation because of the need to find votes for important bills, although such cooperation with deputies from the former pro-Russian party "Opposition Platform – For Life" added decisive votes in only 9% of cases.



Figure 2. Dynamics of the Composition of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine during January 2022–September 2023

Note: According to the Constitution of Ukraine, the Verkhovna Rada consists of 450 deputies, but since Russia's annexation of Crimea and the eastern territories of Ukraine in 2014, the number of deputies has decreased to 423 (early elections were not held in the temporarily occupied territories).

Source: The authors' own study based on the portal of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine.

In Figure 2, we can observe a rapid decrease in the total number of deputies in the Verkhovna Rada, which, in turn, answers the question of why a pro-government political party is looking for the necessary votes among non-factional deputies and other deputy groups. During 2019–2021, a total of 22 deputies left the “Servant of the People” political party. Some deputies went to work with government bodies, and the rest left the faction due to various public revelations. After a full-scale invasion on February 24th, 2022, another wave of mandate losses began. In accordance with the decree of the President of Ukraine on the enactment of the decision of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine of March 18th, 2022, “On the suspension of the activities of certain political parties in Ukraine” (Decree of the President of Ukraine, 2022), the following were suspended: “Opposition Platform – for Life”, “Left Opposition”, “Sharia Party”, “Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine”, “State”, “Union of Left Forces”, “Opposition Bloc”, “Socialist Party of Ukraine”, “Ours”, “Socialists”, and “Bloc Volodymyr Saldo”. However, 11 deputies from the pro-Russian party “Opposition Platform – For Life” resigned at their own request. An additional six MPs were stripped of their mandates because of their losing their Ukrainian citizenship. Concurrently, the Ukrainian parliament enacted a procedure for the exchange of prisoners of war and hostages, which allows for the potential inclusion of Viktor Medvedchuk, who was divested of his Ukrainian citizenship, in exchange for Ukrainian prisoners of war. It is not possible to fill unoccupied positions with other MPs who were elected on their list or to conduct elections in their respective constituencies for two reasons. Martial law does not allow for elections, and the suspension of political parties due to their anti-Ukrainian and pro-Russian stance on Ukrainian territory prevents their reinstatement on the party list and in the majority districts.

The issue of suspending and potentially banning political parties has sparked discussions and controversy. This is because of the legal framework that governs these actions, particularly during martial law, which raises challenging concerns regarding democracy, representation, the rule of law, and national security. The Ministry of Justice in Ukraine has the authority to launch administrative actions that may prohibit political parties if there are indications that they are undermining the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and democratic values of the state. Such a prohibition, however, can only happen if it is deemed legal and follows a relevant court proceeding. In fact, on September 15th, 2022, the Administrative Court of Cassation issued a final ruling that banned the pro-Russian political party “Opposition Platform – For Life” from operating in Ukraine. This approach endeavours to achieve a balance between the necessity for national security

and the protection of democratic institutions. A crucial consideration in this scenario is the accountability of MPs elected by suspended parties. Even though these parties have been suspended, their mandates persist and they can continue to exert their authority within factions without facing any recall procedures initiated by the public. Additionally, the responses of political parties to these suspensions exhibited a range of views. Some political parties have adapted to the changing political landscape by changing their names or by ceasing their factional activities. For instance, “Opposition Platform – For Life” has transformed into parliamentary groups such as “Platform for Life and Peace” and “Restoration of Ukraine.” Nestor Shufrych, a pro-Russian MP, serves as an illustrative example by declining to resign voluntarily from his position as the chairman of the Committee on Freedom of Speech in the Verkhovna Rada.

The organisation of parliamentary activities in Ukraine faced a dilemma. On one hand, there is a growing demand to cleanse the Verkhovna Rada of pro-Russian politicians and corrupt officials, while on the other hand there is the need to ensure the viability of the legislature under martial law. It is precisely because of the danger of losing the capacity of the parliament that the ruling party is delaying the deprivation of mandates of MPs from the banned “Opposition Platform – For Life”. Despite having collected the necessary signatures of MPs to include the issue of depriving former representatives of “Opposition Platform – For Life” on the agenda, the Speaker of the Parliament Ruslan Stefanchuk rejected this idea (Pryshchepa, 2022). That is, if the Verkhovna Rada adopted a bill to terminate the powers of MPs from the banned “Opposition Platform – For Life”, parliament would lose 33 MPs, and if the convictions come into force, another 16 MPs would lose their seats (Agency for Legislative Initiatives, 2023).

Under these circumstances, the composition of parliamentary groups in the legislature could undergo significant changes, as many groups barely meet the minimum number of MPs required. The Parliament’s decision-making ability is presently precarious, given that it has nearly 10% fewer MPs than its constitutional composition, which has a detrimental effect on the quorum of parliamentary committees. Thus, MPs from the former “Opposition Platform – For Life” faction serve as a convenient temporary tool for authorities. A similar issue at the local council level poses an even greater threat; the potential recall of representatives from banned or dissolved parties will impact almost 67% of the local councils, with the majority situated in Ukraine’s frontline regions. Moreover, 91 local councils with a population of more than 10 thousand (11.5% of the total) will no longer have the required competencies (Feshchenko, 2022). Removing a significant number of mandates simultaneously (3,698 local

authority members) may result in centrifugal tendencies and an increase in the number of collaborators, ultimately leading to the formation of quasi-councils at the local level.

The President's inner circle is exploring diverse choices for the future of the pro-presidential party. To be exact, the present Servant of the People's Party could undergo significant alterations, or alternatively, a new political party could be established. It is likely that the latter will be selected for several reasons. The intermittent resurgence of the discourse regarding upcoming elections has catalysed the surge of "dormant" political parties. Since the commencement of the full-scale invasion, 27 political parties have altered their leadership, and 15 political parties have updated their names. As all of these parties are relatively unknown, the reasons behind these substantial changes could be either a rebranding initiative or a so-called 'selling' of the party (which is easiest to formalise through a change of leader) (Maksymova, 2023). These actions may indicate an intention to prepare for upcoming elections, as the option to register a new political party is restricted during martial law. At the commencement of the full-scale war, the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine had registered 378 political parties (Taranenko, 2023). However, registering a new political party involves facing technical hurdles, such as a mandatory constituent assembly and gathering 10,000 signatures from 2/3 of Ukraine's regions. Consequently, political actors frequently turn to acquiring obscure, existing political parties, rebranding them, and including them in the political fray. It is noteworthy that there is high demand for such actions among political actors at the local level. The new electoral system in local elections has merely stimulated this practice by decreasing the threshold for territorial communities, where only political parties are authorised to nominate candidates (Lebediuk, 2022). Open sources have revealed that in 2021, a political party known as "Diya" was registered by an individual who previously led the "Party of Harmonious Development" party (Opendatabot, 2023). This party later became Mikheil Saakashvili's "Movement of New Forces" in 2017. The new pro-presidential political party may adopt a name aligned with the prevalent electronic application of public services in Ukraine, or alternatively, use the official platform of volunteer and public initiatives "SpivDiya" (Khmilevska, 2023).

Elections After (During) Martial Law

The matter of holding elections in Ukraine is a subject periodically discussed in public discourse. Nevertheless, there has been increasing debate on different public platforms since the statement made by Martinus

“Tiny” Kox, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, who stated that Ukraine should seek a means to conduct free and fair elections even under martial law (Stern et al., 2023). In an interview with *The Washington Post*, Volodymyr Zelenskyy stated that if martial law persists in Ukraine, parliamentary elections scheduled for October 2023 would be postponed. Although the President of Ukraine occasionally declares that elections will not take place during martial law, there is an ongoing debate among civil society and parliamentary committees regarding the difficulties of holding elections during martial law.

The legal discussion regarding the feasibility of conducting elections while martial law is in effect is rooted in the interpretation of the constitution and martial law regulations. Although both the law of martial law and the electoral code explicitly forbid holding elections during martial law, the Constitution does not contain an explicit prohibition. Article 83 of the Constitution of Ukraine states that if the term of office of Parliament expires during martial law, its powers are extended until the first meeting of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine is elected after the lifting of martial law. Consequently, the matter of holding elections can be addressed by implementing pertinent procedural and technical aspects into the Electoral Code and martial law. As it becomes more challenging for the parliamentary majority to secure crucial votes for significant bills, enacting the necessary modifications for parliamentary elections proves to be a more formidable task than for presidential elections. This stems from the fact that it could potentially be the final election for several political parties. Following the imposition of martial law, Ukrainian electoral preferences have not been publicly published. This suggests that the war has brought about considerable changes to the established electoral system, leading political actors to seek a new base of support. Consequently, it is probable that current parliamentary parties will either rebrand or simply cease to exist.

Security concerns are the primary challenge in holding elections during or immediately following the termination of martial law. Democratic procedures require impartial and transparent election campaigns. Under such conditions, voting carries more risk than incentives for voters. The public release of polling station addresses and the presence of large voter crowds and vote-counting activities necessitates supplementary security guarantees. Moreover, clear protocols for managing ballot boxes during air raids are required. Another obstacle is the recruitment of election commission members and the establishment of relevant infrastructure in de-occupied and frontline regions. Furthermore, international observers must adhere to relevant security protocols. The second most crucial

concern is guaranteeing the voting rights of military personnel in frontline areas. Omitting this group of voters from the election process who have the highest level of public support (Hrushetskyi, 2023) will not enhance the legitimacy of election outcomes.

Participation in elections by citizens abroad also requires additional effort. Firstly, the exact number of Ukrainian refugees is unknown, and their distribution among the EU countries is uneven. Furthermore, voting outside Ukraine can only occur on the premises of Ukrainian consulates and embassies within that nation, as specified by current legislation. For instance, Poland has over one million Ukrainian residents, with the country hosting a single Ukrainian embassy and four consulates. Clearly, organising voting for such a vast number of people presents a challenge. One viable solution could involve setting up temporary polling stations with the help of election commissions by European nations. Under these circumstances, further human and financial resources will be necessary, but their provision appears unlikely in light of the organisation of the European Parliament elections in June 2024. Likewise, there is an issue with Ukrainian state voter registration, which has not been updated since the outset of Russia's full-scale invasion.

Holding elections in Ukraine amidst the war presents numerous challenges for authorities in organising the campaign, with uncertain consequences. According to opinion polls, 81% of citizens believe that elections should be postponed until after the war (Hrushetskyi, 2023). Furthermore, an overwhelming majority of citizens (approximately 65%) hold pessimistic views on the concept of online voting and are wary of the potential risks of fraud (Hrushetskyi, 2023). To uphold democratic principles, it is necessary to revoke the prohibition of public gatherings, allow for government criticism, and grant different political entities access to online information spaces. This could potentially cause internal destabilisation and polarisation of society, as elections coincide with the time when all resources and public attention are focused on supporting the army and the struggle for its future. Conversely, polls reflecting public opinion indicate a gradual decrease in support for the government, which could prompt unpopular decisions aimed at maintaining a politically favourable situation. In October 2023, the level of trust in the Ukrainian President dropped to 76%, down from 91% in May 2022 (Hrushetskyi, 2023). Additionally, the percentage of respondents who believed it necessary to actively criticise authorities for making mistakes and incorrect actions increased from 26% in May 2022 to 70% in October 2023 (Hrushetskyi, 2023). These developments could make it difficult for current political actors to secure victory in elections after the war.

The public debate should now focus on an action plan to restore the electoral process in post-war Ukraine and consider the challenges that the electoral system will face. For example, according to the current electoral system, the number of seats in a district depends on voter turnout, which significantly affects the number of MPs in the eastern and southern regions of Ukraine. The mere fact that elections are held does not mean that they are legitimate. Therefore, more than 100 civil society organisations signed a joint statement calling on Ukrainian authorities not to hold elections during the war (OPORA, 2023). International organisations or Western partners pressuring the authorities to hold elections should consider that this could lead to internal destabilisation, as Ukrainian society does not support such an initiative, and the risks outweigh the potential benefits. The only guarantee of a quick resumption of the democratic electoral process lies in intensive support for Ukraine's battlefield needs.

Conclusions

This study delves into the intricate landscape of political competition in Ukraine in the shadow of martial law. The analysis unearthed notable shifts in parliamentary dynamics, revealing a nuanced pattern of support for legislative initiatives, particularly those spearheaded by the president in the wake of a full-scale invasion. The evolving collaboration dynamics within parliament, marked by varying degrees of support from different factions and groups, underscores the complex interplay of political forces during times of war.

As the spectrum of elections looms amid the ongoing war, the challenges facing Ukrainian authorities have become increasingly daunting. Public sentiment, as reflected in opinion polls, strongly advocates the postponement of elections, raising concerns about the legitimacy of the electoral process conducted under wartime conditions. The populace's skepticism towards online voting further complicates matters, necessitating a reevaluation of democratic principles, including the restoration of public gatherings, government criticism, and equitable access to online information spaces.

In navigating the delicate balance between international pressure and domestic sentiment, it is imperative for external actors to recognise that premature elections may exacerbate internal destabilisation. This study posits that intensive support for Ukraine's battlefield needs emerges as a linchpin for a swift return to a robust and democratic electoral process.

Since the beginning of the war, the electoral structure of Ukrainian society has dramatically changed. This is due to fundamental changes in

citizens' attitudes towards certain issues (language, church, and foreign policy orientation) and the growth of Ukrainian identity. Therefore, it is likely that significant success in the battlefield will contribute to the consolidation of Ukrainian society and the institutionalisation of political activity; otherwise, it may lead to even greater fragmentation and the emergence of new regional political projects.

Ukraine faces the challenge of preserving the rule of law and democratic values while addressing national security issues under martial law. Instead, pressuring Ukraine to hold elections contributed to the spread of anti-Ukrainian and anti-Western narratives. In any case, if elections are held, Russia will use this to spread the narrative of illegitimate results due to non-compliance with democratic procedures while accusing Western partners of double standards; if the elections are not held, Russia will also appeal to the fact that Western partners are supporting a usurpation of power. Thus, holding elections during an ongoing war could lead to further destabilisation in Europe. Supporting Ukraine in gaining a significant technological edge on the battlefield would not only aid in the swift restoration of regular democratic procedures, but would also ensure security across Europe.

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The Economic Security of Ukraine and the European Union in the Context of a Military Crisis

Abstract

Year 2022 brought increasing uncertainty and new challenges around the world, including in the European Union (EU), mainly related to the Russian aggression against Ukraine and its direct and indirect effects for all EU Member States. Europe finds itself in a difficult situation which provokes reflection on the current shape of the EU's security policy and the need to rethink and structure its stipulations. Faced with Russian aggression against Ukraine, the EU has implemented a number of new foreign policy initiatives and measures to support both the economy of Ukraine and of its member states. This article explores the issue of EU and Ukrainian economic security in the context of the financial and economic intervention measures taken by the Union to maintain sustainable development in the region. The EU support is helping Ukraine to survive, while on the other hand the EU has certain demands regarding Ukrainian reforms and certain aspects of its policies. These sensitive issues regarding the inadequacy of the EU's role in relation to recent challenges are topical in the debate in Ukraine.

Keywords: Economic Security, Sustainable Development, Public Goods, Eastern Partnership

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Introduction

Following Russia's aggression against Ukraine on 24th February 2022, the European Union and its international partners called for unity and full solidarity in responding to the ensuing military conflict. Shortly thereafter, EU Member States felt the direct and indirect effects of the situation and the retaliatory sanctions imposed by Russia on the EU in retaliation to the Union's actions to support the embattled Ukraine. They mainly resulted in a decline in demand in the member states of EU, disruptions in the implementation of contracts and projects leading to turnover loss, disruptions in supply chains or shortages in the supply of strategic raw materials or the economic unviability of implementing other means of production. The increase in electricity and gas prices in the EU has also been significant for production and the development of the EU economy. It is for these reasons, among others, that the European Union has fully committed itself to stabilising the economy and returning it to a path of sustainable development, in which all EU institutions would assume an active role.

The purpose of this article is to indicate what financial and economic intervention measures the EU has undertaken to ensure the economic security of its Member States, and what financial assistance it has provided for the reconstruction and development of the economy of Ukraine.

The research analyses involved in the writing of this article were conducted using scientific research methods, among which the leading ones were the analysis of the literature, the descriptive method and deductive reasoning. The authors of the article used research methods and techniques identified primarily in the disciplines of political and economic sciences. For the most part, analyses were conducted in a systematic and comparative manner.

The article consists of five logically related parts. The first two parts present the concept and the essence of economic security while indicating that economic security is also a global public good. The following parts of the article present the evolution of the relations between Ukraine and the EU between 1994 and 2022, i.e. until Russia's aggression against Ukraine. The last two parts of the article indicate the practical aspects of the actions taken by the EU as an international organisation towards Ukraine for economic support on the one hand, and on the other hand towards the Member States, which are also struggling economically due to the effects of the sanctions imposed by the EU on Russia and the retaliation of Russian sanctions against the EU.

The Concept of Economic Security in a Modern Economy

The scale and accelerating pace of the changes in global economy and politics, resulting in a number of threats to the socio-economic order of the world, countries and regions, make the issue of economic security become increasingly important and take on new meanings. The term “security” is multidimensional, as it refers to almost all spheres of human life and concerns political, military, legal, social, economic and environmental aspects. The concept of “security” is an interdisciplinary phenomenon encompassing several scientific disciplines and specialisations, including security sciences, politics, economics, social sciences and others. Most commonly, the concept of “security” is defined as the state of a country or group of countries, capable of withstanding man-made or nature-induced threats, i.e. crisis events. In the social science literature, the concept of security is presented as independence, identity, ability to develop and ability to survive (Dziekański, 2014, p. 122; Pokruszyński, 2010; Koziej, 2011).

Nowadays, there is no uniform understanding of the concept of economic security. When exploring the nature of economic security, scholars often provide their own definitions using various combinations of the concepts of economic independence, stability, sustainability and economic development.

Economic development, intended to lead to an increase in the security of the population, includes quantitative changes taking place in the economy (i.e. an increase in production, employment, consumption, the stock of capital and other economic quantities), as well as qualitative changes, which may include an increase in the qualifications of the workforce, technical and technological progress, modernisation of the structure of the economy, an increase in the level of economic efficiency, and improvement in the structure of goods and services produced in a given economy (Dziekański, 2014, p. 123). Cooperation of the state at the economic, political, military and social level gives an impulse to development, to the changes that increase the potential and attractiveness of countries, and consequently contributes to economic stability (Niedziółka, 2021, p. 206).

The concept of economic security refers to a real situation in which the economy can develop and citizens can enjoy a decent standard of living through uninterrupted access to resources, markets, capital, modern technology or information. Economic security can also be defined as the ability of a country’s economic system to exploit internal growth factors

and international economic interdependence to guarantee its unthreatened development. Thus, it is a state of undisturbed functioning of economies and, therefore, a situation that allows to maintain basic development indicators and ensure a comparative balance with the economies of other countries (Książopolski, 2004, pp. 39–54; Książopolski, Pronińska, 2012, pp. 175–180).

Maintaining economic security is one of the main objectives of countries' domestic and foreign policies as in today's regional and global contexts they operate in certain systems of dependency, trade links and economic influence. And as a result of constant political, economic, social or cultural transformations, these are changing. For this reason, a range of internal and external factors and determinants are taken into account in economic security research. This approach allows for the estimation and prediction of potential events determining or limiting the attainment of the desired state of economic security in the future (Niedziółka, 2021, pp. 195–196). According to D. Niedziółka, economic security can be described either as a state or as a process. Described as a state, economic security is static in nature, which may allow it to be assessed based on empirical data. On the other hand, when described as a process it is defined as a dynamic concept, i.e. subject to constant change, where the goal is to achieve the desired state of an absence of threats (Niedziółka, 2021, p. 196). Different definitions of economic security provide many cognitive opportunities, i.e. to interpret and verify internal and external factors for the purpose of defining and creating new solutions in the field of economic security. The level of economic security is assessed primarily based on macroeconomic indicators, such as national income, national income per capita, purchasing power and the share in the global purchasing power (Książopolski, 2011, pp. 36–51), unemployment rate, inflation rate, the degree of openness of the economy, foreign and public debt, and the state budget deficit.

V. Hnatenko points out the key role of economic security in achieving the state's economic sovereignty, ensuring economic development, implementing effective social policies, protecting society from environmental disasters, increasing the country's competitiveness in terms of international economic interdependence. He stresses that the creation of an effective system of state economic security makes it possible to identify threats to national economic interests in a timely manner and prevent damage to the entire socio-economic system (Hnatenko, 2020, pp. 97–98).

When presenting definitions of *economic security*, there is a strong emphasis on the international aspect, which, as D. Niedziółka notes, "can play both a stabilising and a destabilising role. However, due to

globalisation, it is becoming an inherent element. Consequently, the concept of economic security is expanding to include the ability to compete internationally. The ability to increase the importance of competition can change the conditions shaping economic security. Economic security can be an aspect of potential or real economic, political and social threats shaped through a system of both international dependencies and internal capabilities. Of which socio-economic stability, the ability to maintain macroeconomic equilibrium, the potential to induce economic development are the expression” (Niedziółka, 2021, p. 197).

When considering the nature and definition of the concept of economic security, we should pay attention to its financial aspect. Economic security is linked to financial security, which refers to the financial sphere of the functioning of countries, organisations and economic entities. In any economy there are internal factors that can affect economic and financial security. These include the already mentioned budget deficit, high unemployment rate or high inflation, and rising internal and external debt. In itself, the occurrence of the abovementioned factors is natural but if an increasing trend is observed (budget deficits, public debt, unemployment and inflation) over a longer time horizon, they may indicate a crisis. Therefore, they can be considered a potential threat to economic security.

V.V. Tretyak and T.M. Gordienko point to a connection between the economic security of a country and the global economy. They point out that the concept of economic security of a country should be understood as a state of a country’s economy that ensures its competitiveness in the global economic system by means of the economic mechanism and guarantees its stable functioning through the use of appropriate measures and instruments (Tretyak, Gordienko, 2010, pp. 6–8).

The literature also points to different perceptions and understandings of the definition of economic security from the perspective of individual states, e.g. the US, the EU, Japan, China or Russia. The definitions formulated with regard to the concept of economic security result from the nature of the economic policy pursued, the political system and economic objectives (Simanavicius, Subonyte, Simanavičienė, 2019). According to C. Murdoch, economic security should fulfil two conditions:

- preserving the economic autonomy of the country, understood as its ability to decide about its own interests in economic development; and
- maintaining the existing standard of living and ensuring its further growth (Murdoch, 2001, p. 867).

In the European Union, on the other hand, the concept of economic security refers to the creation of conditions within the EU for building sustainable economic development and emphasising the importance of European integration in the globalisation process of a competitive world economy.

In the current regional and global environment, it is important for a country's economic security to be present in regional structures, integration groups and international organisations. The last decade has seen an increased role of international organisations in responding to new global and regional challenges related to economic, geopolitical, financial and social changes. Ongoing changes in the world have increased the pressure to build a new global architecture for the 21st century, based on the deepening interdependence of the main actors in international relations, namely international organisations and institutions, as well as countries and non-governmental organisations, in addressing the current challenges identified above.

Economic Security as a Public Good

Interest in the issue of economic security results from the dynamics of changes in the system of international relations, the emergence of new economic powers, the fragmentation of power and the evolution from geopolitics towards geo-economics. In economic studies, economic security is treated as a public good provided by the state (Leszczyński, 2016, pp. 165–166).

A review of the world literature on public sector economics allows to formulate a fairly clear and precise definition of a public good. It is a good serving the general public, universal, social and non-private. The category of public good is of particular relevance to the science of public finances. This is because the need for the existence of such goods and the provision of such goods to the public is the reason for the collection and distribution of public funds. R. Holcombe defines a public good as a good that has two characteristics, i.e. it can be consumed by an additional consumer without incurring additional costs, and individual consumers cannot be excluded from its consumption (Holcombe, 1997, p. 1). These two characteristics are called non-rivalry and non-excludability (Samuelson, Nordhaus, 1989, p. 45). Similarly, the nature of the public good in the provision of public goods is pointed out by R.A. Musgrave (1959) and J. Buchanan (1968, 1965).

Economic security and its financial aspect are a non-competitive good, and it is virtually impossible to exclude anyone from it. Decisions on the

provision of public goods are the result of public choices and political decisions. As a public good, economic security also shares characteristics with other goods in this category (Leszczyński, 2020, p. 112; Stachowiak, 2012). They are listed among the basic functions of a country (region) and are considered a public good providing a rationale for interventionism by public authorities (Żukrowska, 2006, p. 21).

In addition to (simple) public goods, the literature also mentions global public goods, national public goods, regional public goods and transregional public goods (Engerer, 2009, pp. 16–17; Sandler 2007). These goods differ due to, among other things, their providers, which can be the international community, the nation-state, regions, etc., and the beneficiary communities of these goods, e.g. nation-states, regions. Security measures are purely global public goods if everyone can benefit from their provision. They are “mixed” if the benefits are restricted to national or transnational beneficiaries (Dulbecco et al. 2005). Regardless of their pure or mixed nature, the provision of global public goods confronts the countries involved with the problem of collective action on a transnational or even international scale. Governments have an incentive to co-operate and provide transnational or international public goods because collective provision can reduce security risks (Engerer, 2009, p. 17; Bulbecco, LaPorte, 2005, pp. 1201–1214). In this way, the security motive can foster the formation of alliances to reduce or share commonly perceived risks. The provision of security measures as global public goods depends on the participation of all member states of an international organisation adequately involved in the provision of such a good. According to T. Sandler, this means that internationally, the provision of security measures is more difficult if countries have completely different preferences or if incomes differ because a low-income country cannot meet the standard of security desired by a rich country (Sandler, Enders, 2007). N. Birdsall and A. Diofasi point out another problem, namely the financing of public goods. The low level of funding for global public goods is a cause for concern, but their underfunding is not surprising. Like public goods at the local and national level, standard economic theory suggests that global public goods will be underfunded because, in a world of sovereign nations, no single nation can fully exploit the benefits of its own expenditure on a “global” good. Inequalities in global power relations and the lack of effective international governance systems further impede the provision of GPG (Birdsall, Diofasi, p. 4).

In outlining the above, it can be considered that as an international organisation, the European Union is a provider of the public good which is economic security. It is the responsibility of the bodies of the European Union to prepare appropriate legal solutions, to take appropriate plan-

ning and strategic actions, to equip the EU institutions with appropriate instruments that will allow them to perform their functions of providing and ensuring a public good to the EU Member States on the one hand, and on the other hand to take action towards third countries bordering the EU in order to mitigate losses resulting from emerging crisis situations that may disrupt the order and economic security of the EU.

Review of EU-Ukraine Relations Between 1994–2022

The date when the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States and Ukraine (14th June 1994) was signed can be taken as the beginning of the cooperation between the European Union and Ukraine (Verkhovna Rada Ukrainy, 1994). The document set out a framework for cooperation between the two sides in such areas as political, trade and economic relations. At the same time, a year earlier, a resolution of the Verkhovna Rada “On the main directions of Ukraine’s external policy” contained declarations on “Ukraine’s membership of the European Communities” as a long-term goal of Ukrainian foreign policy, to be achieved through the conclusion of a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, the implementation of which was to be the first stage towards the Association Agreement, and then towards full membership (Zheltovsyy, 2021, p. 59). Despite the fact that the Ukrainian Parliament adopted the “Strategy for Ukraine’s Integration into the EU” in June 1998 or the “Law on the Foundations of National Security in Ukraine”, in which accession to the EU and NATO was identified as a foreign policy goal for Ukraine, the necessary reforms identified in the above-mentioned documents were not decided upon. In fact, that policy, known as “declarative Europeanisation”, has not led to a deepening of cooperation between Ukraine and the EU (Zheltovsyy, 2021, p. 59; Dragneva, Wolczuk, 2015, p. 34). It was only in 2004, as a result of the so-called “Orange Revolution”, that the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) was introduced in the European Union (European Parliament, 2023b). The EU offers its neighbours a privileged relationship based on all parties’ commitment to the same values, i.e. democracy and human rights, rule of law, good governance, market economy principles and sustainable development. The instruments for implementing the ENP are the legal agreements concluded between the EU and its partners. These are the Partnership and Cooperation Agreements or Association Agreements. The ENP also has a regional dimension. The Eastern Partnership (EaP) is an example, established to strengthen the EU’s relations with most of its eastern neighbours, i.e.

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. The main objective of the Eastern Partnership is to “accelerate political association and deepen economic integration” between the EU and its eastern neighbours. The level of integration and cooperation is proportionate to the extent to which individual partner countries adhere to European values, standards and structures, and the progress they have made in doing so (European Parliament, 2023b).

The literature offers both positive and negative reflections on the EU’s approach towards Ukraine within the ENP. H. Hallgren and I. Solonenko point to the positive aspects of the EU-Ukraine Action Plan being signed in 2005, which entailed assistance with a comprehensive list of reforms (Hallgren, Solonenko, 2015). This was the first time the EU had been involved in the internal reform process in Ukraine, since until the ENP was launched in 2004, the EU had pursued a policy that could be described as “Russia first” (Solonenko, 2007, pp. 16–20). This means that various tools and political arrangements were offered first to Russia, and only later to Ukraine. The launch of the ENP in 2004 was the moment when the EU attempted to unify its policy towards the entire neighbourhood, including Russia. With the ENP, the EU became an actor in Ukraine’s internal reform process for the first time. With the signing of the EU-Ukraine Action Plan in 2005,¹ the EU offered Ukraine a comprehensive list of reforms, ranging from democracy and the rule of law to technical standards. This was a kind of “homework” for Ukraine to do (Smith, 2005, pp. 757–773). On the other hand, the negative aspects draw attention as well. T. Kuzio points out that the fact that the EU’s approach to Ukraine after the Orange Revolution was based on the ENP showed that the EU treats Ukraine in a similar way to North African countries, Israel or Russia. That is, as countries that were either not part of Europe at all or had never declared a desire to join the EU. Representatives of the Ukrainian parliament also expressed similar criticism of the EU’s uniform approach in implementing the Eastern Partnership policy (Zheltovskyy, 2021, p. 60; Kuzio, 2006, p. 6).

The natural next step after signing the Action Plan in 2005 was to negotiate a qualitatively new international agreement – the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement. The preparation of the agreement was preceded by lengthy negotiations, which were conducted between 2007 and 2011 and concluded in 2012. The failure of President Viktor Yanukovych to sign the agreement at the 2013 EU-Ukraine summit in Vilnius was a direct catalyst for dramatic political change in Ukraine (Bainczyk, 2016, p. 31).

¹ The EU-Ukraine Action Plan was signed at the EU-Ukraine Cooperation Council on 21st February 2005.

The dramatic events that unfolded in Ukraine after November 2013 were largely the aftermath of pro-EU protests against then-President Viktor Yanukovich's decision not to sign an Association Agreement with the EU. These events led to the identification of a strategic choice for Ukraine's development towards European integration (Leszczenko, 2019; Kruglashov, 2018). Euromaidan eventually led to a change of government and to parliamentary elections in October 2014, which brought pro-EU and pro-reform parties to power. The EU-Ukraine Association Agreement was temporarily and partially in force from 1st November 2014, before entering into force on 1st September 2017. An integral part of the agreement is the establishment of a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) between Ukraine and the EU involving not only the liberalisation of tariffs but also the gradual opening of markets to the movement of goods, capital and business. Thanks to it, Ukraine was supposed to gain access to the EU's internal market, including services. In the new agreement both partners agreed to ensure a full integration of Ukraine and EU in the flow of capital and investments as well as full adaptation of Ukraine to the EU public procurement market, the protection of intellectual property rights and combating the practices aimed at hindering or restricting competition on the territory of both the EU and Ukraine. This part of the agreement, which is one of the core elements of the deal, became fully effective on 1st January 2016. The agreement also covers cooperation in the areas of justice, freedom and security. However, it does not include the promise of future accession of Ukraine to the Union. In addition to political support from 2014 until February 2022, the EU and its financial institutions have mobilised more than 17 billion euro in grants and loans to support Ukraine's reform process. As part of its jointly agreed reform agenda, the EU is closely monitoring the progress in a number of priority areas, such as the fight against corruption, judicial reform, constitutional and electoral reforms, energy efficiency, public administration reform and improving the business environment (European Parliament, 2023a).

Following the election of Volodymyr Zelensky as President of Ukraine in April 2019, a series of further measures were initiated indicating the continuation of the pro-European course policy. According to the report on the implementation of the Association Agreement, adopted in December 2019, measures were taken for the development of democracy, human rights and good governance regarding progress in the reform of decentralisation, public administration and the digitalisation programme, the continuation of active measures aimed at involving civil society groups

in the monitoring and implementation of the Association Agreement. At the same time, concerns were raised about the protection of minority groups, the inadequacy of the social benefits system or the protection of the rights of internally displaced persons (Zheltovsyy, 2021, p. 66; Kruglashov, Sabadash, 2022, pp. 22–37).

On 21st February 2022, the Russian State Duma officially recognised the independence of the self-proclaimed people's republics of Donetsk and Lugansk. Three days later, on 24th February 2022, after months of intensive concentration of armed forces along the Ukrainian borders, Russian troops attacked Ukraine on several fronts (European Parliament, 2023a). Faced with this new reality, Ukraine started to change its foreign policy to a more proactive one. This includes new geopolitical initiatives concerning the Black Sea region, among others. In October 2020, the presidents of Ukraine and Turkey agreed on a new, closer format of interaction through bilateral dialogue. In December 2020, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine and the Minister of Defence of Ukraine met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey and the Minister of National Defence of the Republic of Turkey. At that time, they discussed security issues in the Black Sea region and outlined possible directions and areas of further cooperation between the two countries. Another geopolitical initiative launched in 2020 was the Lublin Triangle. This regional configuration was created for political, socio-economic and cultural cooperation between Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine. On 28th July 2020, the Lublin Triangle became a new political reality. The main objectives of the alliance are:

- strengthening the dialogue between the three countries;
- supporting Ukraine in its integration into the EU and NATO;
- joint opposition to Russian aggression in Ukraine.

In May 2020, the mutual challenges and the strategic goal of Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine in European integration became the basis for the establishment of the Trio Association of these countries. This format of the cooperation allows Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine to coordinate joint efforts with regard to their European integration process (Nechaieva-Yuriichuk, 2022, pp. 71–78; 2022a, pp. 141–161; 2022b, pp. 184–195).

Shortly after the start of the war, President Volodymyr Zelenski appealed for Ukraine to be granted the status of a candidate for EU membership without delay.

On 28th February 2022, five days after Russia began its aggression against Ukraine, the latter applied for membership of the European Union. On 7th March 2022 the Council of the European Union asked the Commission

to present its opinion on this application. The EU heads of state and government supported this decision at an informal leaders' meeting in Versailles (European Commission, 2022a, p. 1; European Council, 2022a).

The conclusions and recommendations included in the opinion on Ukraine's application for EU membership show that while the legal framework for modern public administration is in place, it has not yet been fully implemented. The implementation of the decentralisation reform, including fiscal decentralisation, has been positively assessed. The independence of the judiciary has been strengthened and independent anti-corruption bodies have been established, including a well-functioning High Anti-Corruption Court. In contrast, it is emphasised that the accountability and effectiveness of the judiciary and the functioning of law enforcement agencies need to be strengthened, particularly when it comes to combating corruption, which remains a serious challenge throughout the country. While the legal and institutional framework is in place to ensure the respect of fundamental rights, more focus is needed on the implementation of these rights. In conclusion, the Commission recommends that Ukraine should be granted candidate status on condition that steps are taken to address, among others, the following:

- enact and implement legislation regarding the procedure for the selection of judges to the Constitutional Court of Ukraine, including a pre-selection process based on an assessment of their integrity and professional skills, in line with the recommendations of the Venice Commission;
- finalise the verification of the integrity of candidates for members of the Supreme Judicial Council by the Ethics Council and the selection of a candidate for the appointment of the High Qualification Commission of Judges of Ukraine;
- further strengthen the effort to combat corruption, in particular at the high level, through proactive and effective investigations and credible results of criminal prosecutions and convictions; finalise the appointment of the new head of the Specialised Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office by certifying the successful winner of the competition and start and complete the process of selecting and appointing the new director of the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine;
- ensure that anti-money laundering legislation is in line with Financial Action Task Force (FATF) standards; adopt an overarching strategic plan to reform the entire law enforcement sector as part of Ukraine's security environment;

- introduce an anti-oligarchy law to curb the undue influence of oligarchs in economic, political and public life (European Commission, 2022a, pp. 19–22).

European Union Aid to Ukraine Following the Russian Aggression

In the face of the Russian aggression, the European Union and its Member States showed solidarity with those fleeing the war in Ukraine and immediately mobilised support for the Ukrainian government in maintaining its functions. The EU provided assistance to support humanitarian aid, military assistance and other support. The Commission is coordinating its aid through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism for a wide range of support measures, including in the health, energy, food and agriculture sectors, as well as providing shelter, machinery, and medical equipment and evacuation. The Commission also proposed measures to facilitate trade, in particular the suspension of import duties on Ukrainian exports and the establishment of solidarity routes to help Ukraine export agricultural goods. One of the EU's actions was to mobilise assistance, based on a 2001 directive (European Council, 2001) on protection that ensures access to jobs, housing, education and healthcare across the EU (European Commission, 2022c, p. 1).

Between 2014 and 2021, the EU provided significant financial aid to Ukraine, amounting to 1.7 billion euro under the European Neighbourhood Instrument in the form of grants, 5.6 billion euro under five macro-financial assistance programmes in the form of loans, 194 million euro in humanitarian aid and 355 million euro from the Foreign Policy Instrument. Before the war with Russia, the EU worked closely with financial institutions to support Ukraine. Since 2014 the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development have mobilised loans of 9.5 billion euro to Ukraine. The EU also works closely with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, which have been key partners supporting the Ukrainian economy since 2014. Since 2016, Ukraine has also been steadily increasing its participation in EU programmes, partly co-financed by the EU. It participates in Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe, the Euratom research and training programme, COSME, Creative Europe and EU4 Youth. Organisations and individuals from Ukraine can also benefit from some activities of the Erasmus+ programme and the European Solidarity Corps. Ukraine participates in several Interreg programmes and is a member of the EU macro-regional strategy for the Danube region (European Commission, 2022c, pp. 3–4).

Since the start of the war, the European Union and its Member States have made more than 77 billion euro available to support Ukraine and its people in the following ways:

- 38.3 billion euro in economic aid,
- 17 billion euro for EU refugee assistance,
- 21.16 billion euro for military support,
- 70 million euro for the EU Civil Protection Mechanism (European Council, 2023).

Major global financial effort is needed to support Ukraine during the war, as well as to rebuild the country and provide new opportunities for its citizens. It is therefore very important to design the main elements of this undertaking accordingly. The reconstruction effort will be led by the Ukrainian authorities in close partnership with the European Union and other key partners, such as G7 and G20 partners and other third countries, as well as international financial institutions and international organisations (European Commission, 2022c).

On 20th June 2023 the Commission proposed the creation of a new financial instrument to support the reconstruction and modernisation of Ukraine. The Instrument for Ukraine will be a dedicated financial instrument that will provide Ukraine with coherent and predictable support for the period 2024–2027. The amount of up to 50 billion euro from the Instrument in the form of grants and loans is expected to help Ukraine finance efforts to maintain macro-financial stability, promote economic recovery, and rebuild and modernise the country. At the same time, it should enable the implementation of key reforms required for EU accession (European Commission, 2023d).

European Union Aid to Member State Economies Following Russian Aggression Against Ukraine

Following Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the European Union and its international partners immediately responded to this violation of Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence by imposing restrictive measures on Russia. Sanctions were also imposed on Belarus due to its collaboration with Russia and facilitation of Russian military aggression. As early as 23rd February 2022, the Council adopted a package of restrictive measures including:

- targeted sanctions against 351 members of the Russian State Duma and another 27 individuals,
- restrictions on economic relations with non-government-controlled areas in Ukraine's Donetsk and Luhansk regions,

- restrictions on Russian access to EU capital, as well as financial markets and services (European Council, 2022b; 2022c, 2022d; 2022e).

Further sanctions imposed on Russia by the Council on 25th February 2022 covered:

- the financial sector,
- the energy, space and transport (aviation) sectors,
- dual-use items,
- export control and financing,
- visa policy,
- additional sanctions against specific Russians and others (including Belarusians).

The EU has imposed sanctions on several occasions, i.e. 28th February 2022, 1st March 2022, 2nd March 2022, 9th March 2022, 15th March 2022, 8th April 2022, 3rd June 2022, 21st July 2022, 6th October 2022, 16th December 2022, 25th February 2023 and 23rd June 2023 (European Council, 2023). Restrictive measures were also imposed by the EU's international partners, in particular the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Norway, Japan, South Korea, Switzerland and Australia (European Commission, 2022b).

In retaliation, Russia decided to introduce its own economic sanctions, with economic consequences for the entire internal EU market. Companies in EU Member States have felt the direct and indirect effects of these restrictive measures in particular. These mainly manifest as a decline in demand, disruption of ongoing contracts and projects leading to losses in turnover, disruption of supply chains, especially for raw materials and semi-finished goods, or unavailability or economic unviability of other inputs. The disruption of supply chains particularly concerns cereals and vegetable oils imported into the EU from Ukraine, as well as the supply chains of EU exports to Ukraine. As a result of Russia's aggression, there has been an increase in electricity and gas prices in the EU, with a serious impact on the energy market. High energy prices have a direct impact on a number of economic sectors, including some industries that were previously particularly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, i.e. transport and tourism. High energy prices also translate into a sharp increase in production costs. In addition, the rising cost of nitrogen fertilisers² due to the exceptional increase in natural gas prices has contributed to the high production costs in agriculture). The effects of the aggression were also felt in the financial markets, particularly in terms of liquidity and fluctuations

² Russia and Belarus are large producers and exporters of the three most important types of fertiliser (nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium).

in the commodity trading market. Also, it should be noted that with the onset of the aggression, a massive forced migration of Ukrainian citizens was observed, both within Ukraine and to neighbouring countries. This unprecedented influx of refugees into the EU has serious humanitarian and economic consequences for the host countries. In this situation, the Commission has decided to prepare assistance packages for EU Member States (European Commission, 2022b).

The Commission Communication titled *Temporary crisis framework for State aid measures to support the economy following Russia's aggression against Ukraine* of 23rd March 2022 set out the criteria for assessing the compatibility with the internal market, applicable to state aid measures that Member States may introduce to address the economic consequences following the Russian aggression against Ukraine, as well as sanctions imposed by the EU and its economic partners in the context of that aggression and retaliatory measures introduced, for example, by Russia. It outlines the options available to Member States under EU state aid rules. It suggested that in the context of granting aid, Member States shall consider introducing (in a non-discriminatory manner) requirements concerning environmental protection or security of supply. Member States were encouraged to use the possibility of granting aid approved on the basis of the guidelines on state aid for climate and environmental protection and energy targets for 2022, notably for renewable energy, energy efficiency or other decarbonisation measures (European Commission, 2022b).

In particular sections of the Temporary Framework the Commission has set out the conditions under which it will consider measures signalled to it to be compatible with the internal market on the basis of Article 107(3)(b) and (c) TFEU. Member States may notify to the Commission about the aid concerning, for example:

- limited financial amounts of aid,
- liquidity support in the form of guarantees,
- liquidity support in the form of subsidised loans,
- aid for the extra costs associated with exceptionally severe increases in the price of natural gas and electricity,
- aid to speed up the introduction of renewable energy and energy storage relevant in the context of REPowerEU,
- aid for decarbonisation of industrial production processes through electrification or the use of renewable hydrogen or electrolytic hydrogen meeting certain conditions and for energy efficiency measures,
- aid for the additional reduction of electricity consumption,
- aid for accelerating investment in sectors of strategic importance for the transition to a net-zero-emission economy.

The temporary framework has been updated by the Commission on several occasions, including 20th July 2022 (European Commission, 2022d), 28th October 2022 (European Commission, 2022e) and 9th March 2023 (European Commission, 2023a). Aid is to be granted until 31st December 2023. Based on these communications, from 2022 onwards, Member States shall notify the Commission about public aid. Poland has reported 6 aid programmes in 2022 (UOKIK, 2023) (Table 1), including aid in the form of grants or loans from the funds of the 2014–2020 operational programmes to support the Polish economy in connection with the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, or financial instruments and funds from financial engineering instruments subject to re-use to support the Polish economy after the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine. In contrast, there is currently one programme to cover the additional costs related to the exceptionally severe price increases of natural gas and electricity in Poland incurred in 2023, pending a Commission decision.

Table 1. Overview of the Number of State Aid Schemes Notified by the European Commission Under the Temporary Crisis Framework of State Aid Measures 2022–2023

State	Number of State Aid Schemes Notified by the EC in 2022	Number of State Aid Schemes Notified by the EC in 2023
Austria	2	
Belgium	5	4
Bulgaria		1
Cyprus	2	
Czech Republic	3	2
Germany	8	
Denmark	3	
Estonia	3	
Greece	4	
Spain	9	
Finland	5	2
France	10	1
Croatia	5	1
Hungary	6	1
Ireland	7	1
Italy	22	7
Lithuania	6	

Luxembourg	3	
Latvia	3	
Malta	6	
Holland	1	
Poland	6	
Portugal	5	
Romania	4	1
Sweden	2	2
Slovenia	6	2
Slovakia	3	1

Source: Own study based on: European Commission, „List of Member State measures approved under Temporary Crisis Transition Framework”, 24th July 2023.

The Commission’s Spring 2023 Economic Forecast indicates a much improved economic outlook, particularly with regard to energy prices. It notes that gas storage levels are at a satisfactory level. Further diversification of supply and accelerated growth in renewable generation are expected to enable the Union to replace fossil fuel-based sources, including gas. However, there are growing concerns that increased public spending could undermine central banks’ efforts to reduce inflation. In its recent competition policy stocktaking, the Commission published a report on the use by Member States in 2022 of measures approved under the Temporary Crisis Framework and in accordance with its rules. It shows that the EU needs to improve the deployment of renewables and accelerate the decarbonisation of energy supply in line with the targets set out in the RE-PowerEU plan (European Commission, 2023c, p. 3). In the Commission’s view, the economic outlook indicates that the serious disturbances in the economy are receding, and with them the need for an existing exceptional crisis response in terms of state aid control. At this stage, the time horizons foreseen in the different sections of the temporary framework appear to cover the time necessary to meet the objectives as intended. Therefore, the Commission is currently consulting Member States on the need to maintain aid in view of the observed developments in Member States’ economies.

Conclusions

Ukraine and the EU have a long and complicated history of political and economic interaction. Undoubtedly, Ukraine benefits greatly from cooperation with the EU and its Member States. The introduction and implementation of numerous economic reforms and the democratisation of Ukraine

have been made possible by the financial assistance provided by the EU, i. a. under the European Neighbourhood Instrument, the Eastern Partnership, in the form of grants and preferential loans. Since the beginning of cooperation with the EU, it has been Ukraine's aspiration to fully integrate into the EU. This process was initiated with the signing of the Association Agreement in 2013, and on 28th February 2022 Ukraine officially applied for EU membership. This action shows Ukraine's full determination to be part of the democratic world, despite strong opposition from Russia.

As an international organisation, the European Union is responding to any distortion of the internal market that has arisen either directly or indirectly following Russia's aggression against Ukraine. The EU has also been trying to support Ukraine economically and financially since the beginning of the war to enable maintaining its economic development and to support it in the reconstruction of the country despite the war. In this way, as an actor on the international stage the EU ensures economic security within itself by channelling financial aid to Member States and its economic partners. From the Ukrainian side, there are noticeable voices of dissatisfaction with the actions taken by the EU towards Russia's actions and plans. Prompt EU action and decisions are also expected, especially regarding Ukraine's acceptance into the EU and NATO structures. On the one hand, the EU support is helping Ukraine to survive, while on the other hand the EU has certain demands regarding Ukrainian reforms and certain aspects of its policies. These sensitive issues regarding the inadequacy of the EU's role in relation to recent challenges are topical in the debate in Ukraine. Of course, one can consider the actions taken by the EU from a multi-level perspective, taking into account various factors, i.e. political, social, cultural, economic, legal, etc. At the same time, it should be borne in mind that membership in the EU structures is a multi-year adjustment process. In accepting another member into the international organisation, the EU wants to be sure that it is accepting an economically stable state, with a democratic state system and a legal order aligned with the EU *acquis*. Undoubtedly, some work will also be necessary on the EU side, in terms of rethinking the EU security policy and thoroughly revising the Eastern Partnership Programme in the context of preparing for the membership of other eastern European countries.

Acknowledgement

Research presented in this chapter constitutes a part of the implementation of the "European Financial Security in the Global, Regional and National Dimension" (EUSEC) project funded by the European Education

and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) within the framework of the Erasmus+, Jean Monnet Activities: Jean Monnet Modules, no. 620453-EPP-1-2020-1-PL-EPPJMO-MODULE.

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The Transformation of Polish-Ukrainian Relations in the Context of Migration Policy Implementation

Abstract

In 2022, Russia's war against Ukraine shook the world and kickstarted an active humanitarian operation to save war-affected Ukrainians. All the neighbouring countries of Ukraine were forced to react actively. However, the subsequent refugee crisis affected Poland the most. Currently, Poland is playing the most important role among the countries receiving war refugees from Ukraine, which raises obvious questions about future developments and possible future challenges in relations between Ukraine and Poland and, above all, migration policy itself.

The objective of this paper is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of Poland's policy in the field of accepting refugees and to examine the relevant legislation and procedures related to Ukrainian refugees, thereby shedding light on the assistance and support mechanisms put in place by the Polish authorities. Furthermore, this study seeks to draw insightful conclusions regarding the impact of Ukrainian refugees on Poland's economic and social spheres, in addition to exploring the refugees' integration into various aspects of daily life.

A critical aspect of this research involves a comparative analysis to ascertain whether Poland's policy towards Ukrainian refugees has undergone any significant changes since the beginning of the full-scale invasion on February 24th, 2022. This timeline provides a crucial backdrop for understanding how evolving geopolitical dynamics may have influenced Poland's approach.

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This research employs a multidisciplinary approach, utilising a combination of data collection, policy analysis, and an extensive review of relevant literature to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the complex issue at hand.

Keywords: Migration, Migration Policy, War Refugees, Russia, Temporary Protection, Poland, Ukraine

Introduction

The migration of Ukrainian labour to Poland has always been a significant phenomenon. Usually, this type of migration occurs in waves, having been influenced by various factors and circumstances. Since the end of the 20th century, several waves have been distinguished and are detailed as follows.

The first wave began in the 1990s in an already independent Ukraine. By December 1994, about 600,000 Ukrainians had moved to Poland. This wave of migration was characterised by Ukrainians looking for employment and economic opportunities in Poland and seeking escape from the economic challenges and uncertainties that followed the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Many of them found work in various sectors of the Polish economy, such as agriculture, construction, and manufacturing, and often took on less desirable jobs that local workforces were less willing to do, which led to the perception of Ukrainians being essential contributors to Poland's labour market.

The second wave began after Poland's accession to the EU, this event opening new opportunities for Ukrainians on the Polish labour market. Poland's EU membership facilitated legal pathways for Ukrainians to work and reside in Poland, contributing to the country's labour force and helping address labour shortages in certain sectors. This second wave of Ukrainian migration to Poland was a response to the opportunities presented by Poland's EU integration and further deepened economic and social ties between the two states.

The third wave gained momentum in 2008, at the height of the global financial crisis. Thousands of Ukrainians crossed the border to neighbouring Poland in search of a more stable economy. The Polish economy remained comparatively robust in the face of the global economic challenges of that time, and employment opportunities were available in various Polish sectors, making it an appealing choice for those seeking work and economic security. As a result, thousands of Ukrainians made the journey to Poland during that period.

The fourth wave was preceded by the beginning of hostilities in the east of Ukraine. Because of that, many people went to the neighbouring country to the west in search of shelter and employment. This particular wave of migration had a distinctly humanitarian dimension, as many individuals and families fled the battlefield in order to seek safety and stability. Poland, being a neighbouring country with a shared border, became a natural destination for those in search of shelter and opportunities for employment, and the Polish government, along with various humanitarian organisations, extended support to incoming refugees.

The fifth wave is the largest, the reason for which was the military attack of the Russian Federation on Ukraine. Millions of people crossed the border with Poland, with some of them moving on to other countries in Europe and America, but a considerable amount did remain in Poland and found employment in order to be able to continue living their lives as usual.

After 2014, Poland became the most popular destination among Ukrainian workers. The significant increase in the number of migrants from Ukraine was due not only to economic reasons, but also to the military conflict in Eastern Ukraine which had an impact on the geography of migration flows, their gender composition, etc. Incidentally, Poland has always attracted Ukrainians because of its territorial proximity, minor language barrier, and higher salaries. At the same time, Poland was experiencing a shortage of workers amid successful economic development and record low unemployment (Yeleyko, Krayevska, 2020).

The events of recent years are a clear precursor as regards the increase in the flow of migrants. It is also worth noting that wages in Poland are significantly higher than in Ukraine. The flow of Ukrainian labour migrants has had a positive impact on the Polish economy. Once again, and at the same time, Poland is still experiencing a shortage of workers against a background of economic development. This aspect of the relationship between Poland and Ukraine is very important, as migrant workers have a positive impact on both the Ukrainian and Polish economies. Relations between these countries undoubtedly have a long albeit ambiguous history, and when Ukraine needed a helping hand, Poland did not hesitate to extend it.

Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation which has caused massive casualties, utterly destroyed cities, in addition to stoking fear and confusion about what will happen next, millions of Ukrainians have been forced to leave their homes, their relatives, and their entire pasts. They did not go to the West in search of a better life, they went to save their own lives, and those millions

have already crossed the borders into neighbouring states. According to official data of The UN Refugee Agency, more than twenty three million Ukrainians have crossed the Ukrainian border since February 24th, 2022, with Poland becoming the main aid hub for Ukrainians and crossing point to the EU. Six million refugees have passed through the territory of Poland, and more than 950,000 have applied for asylum. In total, those who arrived in Poland after February 24th make up 2.5% of the total population of Poland.

Table 1. Countries Featured in the Refugee Response Plan

Country	Date	Refugees from Ukraine Recorded in Country	Refugees from Ukraine Who Applied for Asylum, TP or Similar National Protection Schemes	Border Crossings from Ukraine Since 24 th February 2022	Border Crossings to Ukraine Since 24 th February 2022
Poland	17.08.23	968.390	1.639.725	14.361.820	12.004.055
Czechia	27.08.23	364.885	551.690	Not applicable	Not applicable
Bulgaria	15.08.23	86.490	166.755	Not applicable	Not applicable
Romania	27.08.23	92.420	141.670	3.282.280	2.699.580
Slovakia	27.08.23	107.415	124.925	1.676.750	1.499.350
Lithuania	21.08.23	43.015	79.905	Not applicable	Not applicable
Estonia	20.08.23	50.555	50.555	Not applicable	Not applicable
Latvia	15.08.23	32.470	49.965	Not applicable	Not applicable
Hungary	29.08.23	52.285	37.565	3.387.325	Data not available
Republic of Moldova	20.08.23	117.160	3.195	905.050	582.900

Source: UNHCR, 2023a.

In January 2022, a trial analysis by digital marketing agency Selectivv was conducted, according to which 1.5 million Ukrainian citizens over the age of 15 resided in Poland. This data was compared to the estimates of the Central Statistical Office based on various registers, which show that at the end of February 2020 there were 1.4 million Ukrainians in Poland.

Given that the number of the Ukrainians temporarily staying in Poland is not recorded in any registry, it was only possible to confirm the reliability of the Selectivv analysis by comparing the data with the Central Statistical Office (Selectivv, 2023).

Aid to Ukrainian Refugees

Since the first day of the conventional war, nine refugee reception points have been operational on the border with Poland, namely in the cities of Dorogusk, Dolgobychiv, Zosyn, and Grebenne in the Lublin Region and near Korchów, Medyka, Budomierz, and Krościenko in Subcarpathia, as well as at the railway station in Przemyśl. They served as first aid points where, *inter alia*, information, food, medical assistance could be obtained. After that, the refugees could go to places of stay in Poland, determined independently or by voivode (Polskie Radio, 2022).

In the second half of April 2023, information appeared on the government website of the Republic of Poland that, on April 12th, the Seimas voted to amend the Special Law on Assistance to Ukrainian Citizens, a law which affects those who emigrated to Poland as a result of the war. After the publication of the new provisions of Art. 2, sections 1 and 2 of the Law on Assistance to Citizens of Ukraine in connection with the armed conflict on the territory of that country, the period of stay for citizens of Ukraine (and individual members of their families) who are considered legal was extended until March 4th, 2024. This date coincides with the end of the extended period during which European Union Member States provide temporary protection to citizens of Ukraine. In some cases, it is until August 31st, 2024 or September 30th, 2024.

In its original form, the act was adopted on March 12th, 2022 and regulated the situation of refugees in Poland since the beginning of the war, including the legality of their stay, the right to education and work, and access to medical care. Previously, the Special Law made changes that regulated, for example, the conditions of doing business in Poland. The innovations, which were introduced in January 2023, related to the general conditions of stay for Ukrainian refugees in Poland and the establishment of new obligations for forced migrants (Act of March 12th, 2022 on assistance to citizens of Ukraine in connection with the armed conflict on the territory of that country). The approved document also provides for the allocation of 2 billion PLN (17 billion UAH) from the Aid Fund in 2023 for education for Ukrainians in Poland (art. 12 of the Act of April 14th, 2023).

Ukrainians in Poland who have been granted asylum or temporary protection have the same rights as Polish citizens (except for the right to vote and to be elected). They are also obliged to comply with all laws and procedures that must be followed by Polish communities (UNHCR, 2022a). In order to make it easier for Ukrainians to adapt to Polish society and to gain access to social benefits, medical services, the education system, and even to start their own business, the Polish authorities granted Ukrainians the right to obtain an identification number for national selection (PESEL). With its help, Ukrainians can obtain a Trusted Profile and a so-called “NIP”, or tax identification number (in Polish, *numer identyfikacji podatkowej*). To date, more than 1.5 million (1,507,461) PESEL UKR numbers have been assigned to Ukrainian citizens, of which fewer than a million (997,932) are still active. The largest number of people with active PESEL UKR numbers are in the Mazovia (211,693), Lower Silesia (112,045) and Silesia (98,625) voivodeships (Polish Government, 2022). According to statistics provided by the article *Miejska Gościnność: Wielki Wzrost, Wyzwania i Szanse – Raport o Uchodźcach z Ukrainy w Największych Polskich Miastach* (Wojdat, Cywiński, 2022), 72% of people who received a PESEL are women and only 22% are men, most of whom have reached the age of 60. It can also be concluded from these statistics that 40% are children, and 60% are adults (15+) (Wojdat, Cywiński, 2022, p. 49).

As Marcin Woidat, director of the UMP Analysis and Research Centre noted, due to the influx of refugees from Ukraine, the population of Poland exceeded 40 million people for the first time in history. The demographic structure of the Ukrainian community in Poland has also changed significantly. Until February 24th, 2022 a significant part of Poland’s demographic consisted of young men who had come to Poland to earn money, then, with the beginning of the conventional war, many of them decided to return to Ukraine to fight, with women with children being the first to come to Poland as a consequence of the war (Wojdat, Cywiński, 2022, p. 15). Citizens of Ukraine can use Diia.pl as a digital identity document after obtaining a PESEL number and activating a Trusted Profile. In order to regulate the movement of Ukrainian citizens within the Schengen area and their crossing of the EU borders, on July 12th, 2022, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration of Poland informed the European Commission that the Diia.pl temporary residence permit can serve as confirmation of the legality of a stay in Poland (Polish Government). In January 2023, Poland updated the rules for re-crossing the border for Ukrainian refugees, and in connection with this, it will be mandatory to present diia.pl at the border, in order not to lose one’s UKR status (Embassy of Ukraine in Poland, 2022). It is noted that in

order to preserve their status, a Ukrainian refugee has the right to leave Poland for a period of no more than 30 days. However, this status can be restored on the condition that the departure for a period of more than 30 days was made to the territory of the Schengen zone or that the reason for returning from Ukraine is justified – active hostilities at a place of residence, for example.

To every Ukrainian refugee, including children, who arrived in Poland after February 24th, 2022, the Polish government undertook to pay 300 PLN in an effort to help. In addition to basic financial assistance, one parent has been able to, and can still (at the time of writing) receive assistance for raising a child in the amount of PLN 12,000 (for 12 or 24 months). Every Ukrainian who was forced to migrate from their homeland to Poland has the right to receive free assistance from the Justice Fund (The Act on Assistance for Ukrainian Citizens, 2023). Ukrainians who arrived in Poland after February 24th, 2022 can also count on several types of financial assistance, such as: financial assistance in the form of the Family 500+ program – it can be received by citizens of Ukraine or spouses from Ukraine who have at least one child under the age of 18; material assistance courtesy of the “Large Family Card” in the form of financial aid to support large families; cash assistance from the “400 Plus” program to pay for children’s stays in kindergarten; the Family Capital Program – this assistance is also intended for young children aged 1 to 3 years; and UNHCR’s financial assistance for persons in need of special protection and persons in a poor economic situation (Visit Ukraine, 2023b). Medical assistance is provided to refugees who crossed the border on or after February 24th, 2022, in connection with the war in Ukraine. Such persons must have a certificate with a stamp from the Border Service of Poland. Among other things, refugees can receive reimbursement for the cost of purchasing medicines, and children who have come to Poland have the opportunity to receive preventive vaccination, which is provided as part of the vaccination calendar (Polish Government, 2022c).

A study by the National Bank states that for 560,000 registered Ukrainian children, Poland provides 2.2 billion euros for education, as well as 1.5 billion euros for medical care. After receiving a personal PESEL code, a citizen of Ukraine with refugee status will be able to manage an internet-based patient account, a so-called “IKP” (in Polish, Internetowe Konto Pacjenta). Access to this application from the Ministry of Health is via the site pactin.gov.pl, and the platform allows a person to remotely receive electronic prescriptions for medications, referrals to doctors, test results for COVID-19, as well as obtain information regarding vaccinations and sick leave.

Residences of Ukrainian Refugees

After Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, modular houses for Ukrainian refugees began to be built in different regions of Poland, with Podlaskie Voivodeship, together with the "Podziel się Pokojem" foundation, building 50 mobile homes for Ukrainians. In these modular houses, 250 people found temporary residence. 19 modular apartments also appeared in the Lesser Poland Voivodeship. The city of Ruda Śląska (in the Silesian Voivodeship) received 1 million euros in European Union funds for the conversion of municipal premises into housing for Ukrainian refugees. With these funds, the city authorities plan to fit out 28 social apartments. For this, 26 residential premises, which are currently in a state of near-disrepair, will be overhauled, and another 3 non-residential premises will be rebuilt into 2 apartments (wspolczesna.pl, 2023).

Starting from June 2022, reception points for Ukrainian refugees began to be closed in Poland. The reason for this decision was the fact that more and more Ukrainian refugees are returning to their homeland. Subcarpathian Voivode Michal Melnichuk confirmed that it is unprofitable to keep so many points on standby, mainly for economic reasons. Currently, the reception and medical points remain in Przemyśl at the railway station, as this is a strategic reception point for citizens of Ukraine. However, the Polish authorities claim that, if necessary, the closed reception points for refugees will reopen and resume their work (Polskie Radio, 2022).

Since the first days of the full-scale invasion, the PTAK Humanitarian Centre for Refugees, located near Warsaw in the city of Nadazyn, has been in operation. Since February 24th, several hundred thousand Ukrainians have passed through this centre. Although the centre is designed for the simultaneous stay of 20 thousand people (its area covers 150,000 m²), only between 4,000–5,000 people stay there at the most at any given moment, since Ukrainians do not stay in the Humanitarian Centre for more than 3–5 days. There is also a bus station on the territory of PTAK, from which Ukrainians could travel to other cities in Poland and Europe for free.

In September 2023, the largest centre for refugees from Ukraine, the so-named PTAK Expo, was closed due to the fact that new people were no longer arriving there. Until recently, only about 300 people had lived in the hub, so it made no sense to keep it open, according to officials. Hundreds of people were forced to seek new shelter (as stated in a telephone statement from Dagmara Zalewska, the press secretary of the Mazovian Voivodeship, on September 4th, 2023).

As reported by the mayor's office, there are currently seven centres operating in Warsaw, in which 1,031 refugees from Ukraine are staying, including 375 children (Gazeta Wyborcza, 2023). In accordance with the amendments to the Special Law, the conditions for aiding Ukrainians living in residential buildings will change. The amendment provides that citizens of Ukraine who arrived in Poland fleeing the war and settled in mass accommodation centres can stay there for free for 120 days. More precisely, since March 1st, 2023, Ukrainian refugees have been obliged to pay the costs of staying in places of collective accommodation. According to the new changes, citizens of Ukraine who live in such places for more than 120 days will have to pay 50% of their own maintenance costs, but no more than 40 PLN per day, from March 2023. Since May 2023, Ukrainians whose stays exceed 180 days have had to cover 75% of their living costs, but no more than 60 PLN per day. At the same time, the obligation to pay does not apply to people with disabilities, children, pregnant women, people of retirement age, and people who take care of at least three children (Sejm. Nr 3133, 2022). Many Ukrainian forced migrants have reached the end of their assistance period provided by the 40+ funding program, which previously offered free housing to Ukrainians. Consequently, they now face the challenge of not only securing housing, but housing at full market rates - a task made difficult by today's real estate market conditions. To address this situation, Ukrainians can now utilise the non-profit French platform EU4UA, a platform designed to assist Ukrainian refugees in finding accommodation in European countries including Poland. The platform contains information about European families willing to host Ukrainians for free. However, these ads are becoming fewer and fewer in number. To enhance housing prospects and reduce rental costs, the platform has introduced a new feature in the form of the ability to find roommates for shared renting. This roommate search function aims to optimise the apartment-sharing experience by considering factors such as preferred location, rental duration, the gender of potential roommates, the presence of children and pets, budgetary considerations, and more (EU4UA, 2023).

The Influence of Ukrainians on the Polish Economy

According to the international employment company Gremi Personal, 739,000 Ukrainians are currently officially employed in Poland. In 2021, according to the Central Statistics Office of Poland, that number had dropped to 325,000, but, according to the National Bank of Poland, the contribution of Ukrainian migration to Poland's GDP growth in 2014–

2018 was as much as 11%. Of course, after the invasion of 2022, refugees joined the flow of movement to Poland in addition to Ukrainian labour migrants. The study additionally showed that only 4% of adults from Ukraine who have moved to Poland are not of working age. More than half of the Ukrainians who are currently in the country's capital have a higher or unfinished higher education, and one in three has a professional and technical education (32%). In addition, slightly more than a third know the Polish language at a good or very good level.

The results of a study conducted by the gaming platform EWL, the EWL Foundation, and the Centre for Eastern Europe of the University of Warsaw showed that 78% of Ukrainian citizens living in Poland are officially employed. Among people who lived in Poland before the full-scale invasion, this figure is 12% higher – 83% against 71% among people who came to Poland after February 24th, 2022. According to the study, only 35% of Ukrainians who work in Poland do jobs appropriate to their qualifications; 43% of those people are people who have been living in Poland since before the full-scale invasion, and 23% of the 35% are people who were forced to move to Poland after the full-scale invasion in order to find refuge there (Platform Migracyjna EWL, Studium Europy Wschodniej Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2023). This is due to the fact that Ukrainians face various barriers when looking for work, such as a lack of knowledge of the local language, a lack of connections, childcare responsibilities, and/or a lack of understanding of how the labour market works in Poland. Refugees who do find employment most often perform relatively low-paid work, very often on a part-time basis. The most common answer to the question about their net income was that they earn between 2,000 to 3,000 PLN per month. In turn, the most common answer to this question among former migrants is 3000–4000 PLN net. Pre-war migrants received relatively higher wages for their work, and were most likely to work in industry, while female refugee workers are more likely to function in sectors such as hospitality and catering. Also, labour migrants who worked in the Polish market even before the war worked much more per week than the average working citizen of Poland.

The increase in the share of women with children among Ukrainians in Poland has become a challenge for the local labour market, and this is due to the fact that employers have been forced to adapt workplaces to such child-based requirements if possible by introducing, for example, more flexible schedules, providing assistance in placing children in educational institutions, and even speeding up automation processes. It is undoubtedly in the interests of the Polish economy to help Ukrainians find work related to their qualifications (Narodowy Bank Polski, 2023).

Ukrainians working in Poland improves the dynamics of production, and also stimulates competition in the local labour market. Thanks to the contribution and efforts of Ukrainian migrants, the output of goods and services in Estonia, Poland, and Czechia in 2026 will be 2.2–2.3% higher than in the base scenario without migration (National Bank of Ukraine, 2023). Even despite the increase in the flow of Ukrainians who were forced to flee the war, Polish companies still lack workers and are actively looking for them and opening new markets. Even in the industrial sector, in logistics, and areas that do not require much work experience or skills, there are still many unfilled job vacancies (EWL, 2023).

Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, Ukrainians have paid 2.14 billion euros in taxes to Poland, while spending 750 million euros on financial aid (National Bank of Ukraine, 2023).

Experts of the Deloitte consulting company have prepared a report on the integration potential of refugees from Ukraine. From this we can conclude that if Poland develops a strategy for the integration of refugees, then the country will get an increase in GDP and employers will also get access to skilled, professional workers. In the long term, the plan for the integration of refugees from Ukraine can help increase Poland's GDP from 0.2% to 3.5% (Monitor Deloitte, 2022). Making the flow of information more efficient, combating misinformation, facilitating the entry of refugees into the Polish labour market and activation of refugees through public policies appear to be crucial both for the integration of refugees from Ukraine into the Polish economy and for their successful integration into Polish society.

Research by the National Bank shows us that Ukrainians actively stimulate consumer demand in Poland. The volume of spending by Ukrainians abroad has increased several times compared to spending in the pre-war period. According to the National Bank of Ukraine, in 2022, the spending of currency via Ukrainian bank cards in the travel category was significantly higher than in 2021 (National Bank of Ukraine, 2023).

The economy of Poland is really gaining momentum, and Ukrainian refugees have made a certain contribution to this. The Telegraph newspaper emphasises that the GDP per capita at purchasing power parity in Poland has already reached \$35,600.

Intentions of Refugees

In June 2022, the UN Refugee Agency conducted a survey among Ukrainians to find out their intentions for the future (UNHCR 2022b). Most refugees want to return to Ukraine as soon as it is safe to do so,

and for the short and medium term they plan to stay in Poland. 63% of refugees intend to stay in Poland only temporarily, and, in most cases, that particular decision was made for security reasons. Those who plan to return (22%) are most often convinced that the situation in Ukraine has improved. 17% of respondents who plan to return only want to embark upon a temporary trip to visit family.

The percentage of people who plan to stay in Poland is higher among refugees travelling with persons who need additional care (70% with children or infants, 71% with elderly people, and 73% with people with special needs). A tenth of respondents plan to move to another country, the most frequently mentioned destinations being Germany, Great Britain, and the Netherlands (UNHCR, 2022b).

In February 2023, the UN Refugee Agency conducted a survey among Ukrainians to find out how their intentions for the future have changed. The majority of the survey's respondents continue to express a desire to return to Ukraine one day (65%), with a large part being still undecided about their return in the medium or long term (18%), and only a small minority reported an unwillingness to return (5%).

Table 2. Intentions of Ukrainian Refugees in February 2023

Want to Return	Haven't Decided Yet	Do not Want to Return
65%	18%	5%

Source: UNHCR, 2023a.

Among the people who plan to return in the near future: elderly people, people from the West of Ukraine, people whose husbands/wives or children are still in Ukraine. Among the people who do not plan to return: men or youths, people with no spouses or children in Ukraine, and people from the North of Ukraine (UNHCR, 2023b).

The migration platform EWL and the Centre for Eastern European Studies of the University of Warsaw published the report entitled "*Z Polski do Niemiec. Nowe trendy ukraińskiej migracji uchodźczej*" (EWL, 2023) which demonstrates the trend of Ukrainian refugees moving from Poland to Germany. This report summarises the results of a survey (of 400 refugees) conducted in August 2023. Several factors influence their desire to move from Poland; social reasons are at the top of the list (as indicated by 43% of the respondents) i.e., refugees being encouraged to move by friends and acquaintances who already live in Germany. Economic issues were also very important, among which, first of all, are more attractive social benefits for refugees from Ukraine in Germany (42%).

Table 3. Factors Influencing Decisions to Return to Ukraine

The final end of the war	51.2%
An absence of hostilities and airstrikes	34.1%
Adequately paid work in Ukraine	28.3%
A higher standard of living in Ukraine	20.7%
The cessation of hostilities in my region	19.1%
The restoration of infrastructure in my region	17.7%
The expiry of temporary protection	17.4%
A lack of affordable housing abroad	11%
The de-occupation of my settlement	10.7%
Financial assistance from Ukraine	9.4%
The cancellation of social payments abroad	8.8%
Restoring my home	7.0%
A prohibition to work remotely	1.1%
None of the above	6.8%
Other	1.9%

Source: Centre for Economic Strategy, 2023.

It is material issues that force Ukrainians to move. In Germany, after living expenses have been covered, Ukrainian refugees have an average of almost 500 Euros, which is four times more than the 826 PLN they have left over after covering the same expenses in Poland. Mikhalina Selevych, Director of International Development at EWL, predicts that Germany will remain a very important migration destination for Ukrainians. The directive, introduced last summer, not only provided them with free access to education, medical, and social services in EU countries, but also allowed them to work there legally. 35% of refugees from Ukraine who left Poland for Germany want to stay there, with only 13% considering a return. As Michal Wierzchowski, Director of EWL in Poland, noted, the introduction of universal Polish language courses for refugees, as well as the facilitation of the nostrification of diplomas would help specialists, in particular, doctors, who are in short supply in Poland, enter the labour market.

According to Eurostat data, by the end of June 2023, 1.1 million Ukrainian citizens were registered in Germany, while 975,000 were registered in Poland. This means that since August 2022, the number of registered refugees in Poland has decreased by more than 350,000 people, whereas in Germany, the number has increased by more than 410,000 people.

Poles' Support of Ukrainian Refugees

The longer the war lasts, the more Polish support weakens. In the first days of the war, the citizens of Poland rushed to help the refugees with all their might, donating money and various things, and accepting them into their homes. Now, however, this enthusiasm has waned. The research group Openfield conducted a survey in which it can be seen that the percentage of people who agree to accept immigrants is only decreasing. According to a poll by the Manulo Research Panel conducted on Tuesday February 14th, 2023 among 1,677 respondents, 67% of people agree to accept forced migrants. In previous editions, Poles' support was higher; 72 percent in the first release of the study on February 24th, 2022, 88% in the second release of the study on March 4th, 2022, 79% in a study on May 24th, 2022 and 71 percent in a survey conducted on October 24th, 2022 (Manulo Research Panel, 2023).

Table 4. Changes in Poles' Attitudes in Support of Forced Migrants

24.02.2022	04.03.2022	24.05.2022	24.10.2022	14.02.2023
72%	88%	79%	71%	67%

Source: Manulo Research Panel, 2023.

Increasingly more Poles think that help from the state, in the form of benefits, is better for refugees than for Poles themselves. This opinion, according to Zespół Badawczy Openfield from February 2023, is held by 60.4%. Respondents of the October 2023 issue of the study also shared this opinion, i.e., 55.7% of Poles. The number of respondents who want refugees from Ukraine to be able to stay in Poland permanently after the end of the war has decreased to 40.5 percent from 41.7%. Among the reasons for concern related to the influx of refugees, the most commonly alluded to were communal services and institutions (as indicated by 56% of the respondents), increases in apartment rental prices (49.3%), and the reduction in the number of job offers (47.6%) (Openfield, 2023). According to a recent survey by CBOS, which was conducted in August 2023, 69% of its respondents in Poland support the acceptance of refugees from Ukraine, while 25% were of the opposite opinion. Also, 70% of respondents believed that the war in Ukraine threatens the security of Poland whereas 25% believed otherwise. The survey shows that 70% of respondents believe that the war in Ukraine threatens Poland's security, which is two percentage points higher than in the July survey (Polskie Radio, 2023).

Tomasz Grzyb, Ph.D. from SWPS University, who studies human behaviour in crisis situations, claims that the so-called "burnout in

helping people” would more appropriately be called a quite natural weariness and acclimatization, as these terms more closely reflect what people are dealing with in such a situation. This is a very valid observation, since “burnout” is often the result of inability to live in constant stress and tension, rather than a lack of desire to help (Instytut Praw Migrantów, 2023).

Conclusions

Russia’s attack on Ukraine on the 24th of February, 2022 created a humanitarian crisis that forced numerous countries, but Poland particularly, to deal with the problems associated with accommodating the outflow of Ukrainian refugees. Poland’s legal response to the Russian war against Ukraine demonstrated that Poland is committed to international humanitarian principles. It quickly adapted its legislation to the needs of Ukrainian refugees. The Polish government has demonstrated flexibility in granting humanitarian visas, temporary protection statuses, and by expediting asylum applications. All these actions are consistent with international law and the Refugee Convention of 1951, which Poland ratified. Poland not only provides asylum to Ukrainian refugees, it approaches this issue comprehensively; Poland’s approach also includes social services, employment opportunities, and free housing. Additionally, in order to meet the urgent needs of Ukrainian refugees, Poland has opened reception centres to which refugees must apply after arriving in the country. This strategy demonstrates Poland’s desire to do everything in its power to facilitate the process of adaptation of Ukrainian refugees so that they can more easily integrate into society. Poland’s efforts to create language courses and help with cultural integration is another important aspect to note, as it greatly aids the transition of Ukrainian refugees into Polish society. Poland has also adapted the education system to the needs of Ukrainian children. All this testifies to the inclusive nature of Poland’s policy towards refugees.

It is also important to note the influence of Ukrainian refugees on the economic sphere of Poland. Ukrainians have become a valuable resource on the Polish labour market; their presence has contributed to economic growth and prosperity, which is very important for the development of Poland. On the basis of a report prepared by the Deloitte consulting company concerning the integration potential of refugees from Ukraine, we can conclude that if Poland develops a strategy for the integration of refugees, then the country will get an increase in GDP and employers will also get access to skilled professionals. In the long term, the plan for the

integration of refugees from Ukraine could help increase Poland's GDP from 0.2% to 3.5% (Monitor Deloitte, 2022).

Poland's response to the war against Ukraine testifies to the steadfastness of the Polish people who have demonstrated resilience and adaptability in the most difficult times for their neighbours. Poland continues to show its solidarity with Ukraine and the Ukrainian people and is doing everything possible to support Ukrainians who have fled from war and who are searching for security and protection. Poland is also trying to analyse this situation and find proper answers to any questions that arise in order to help Ukrainians and avoid any violations of rights and/or opportunities for Poles in their native state. Therefore, many challenges still should be discussed and eventually overcome and effective policy should be developed and implemented.

As evidenced in this article, there have already been some changes in the intentions of Ukrainians as regards their stay in Poland as well as the desire of Poles to help Ukrainians. The majority of Ukrainians want to return to Ukraine after the end of war. The list of people who plan to return in the near future include elderly people, people from the West of Ukraine, and people whose husbands/wives and/or children are still in Ukraine. Among the people who do not plan to return are men or youths, those who have no spouses or children in Ukraine, and people from the North of Ukraine. Therefore, such a situation will influence the development of Polish policy toward refugees. This all highlights the importance of adaptability in the face of challenges and can serve as an example for others to follow as the world continues to face the consequences of various conflicts.

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Food Solidarity Battles: The Case of Poland After the Russian Aggression on Ukraine

Abstract

The unprovoked Russian invasion on Ukraine on 24th February 2022 awakened in Poland a tremendous amount of solidarity with the Ukrainian people, including that of food solidarity. Food aid organised by the Polish government was preceded by initiatives of private citizens and NGOs to supply Ukrainian refugees – those gathered at the border and entering Poland – with ready-to-eat food, with more spontaneous food aid continuing after they arrived. It was only somewhat later that these grassroots efforts became coordinated by local governments and state bodies.

Direct help was accompanied by two other, bottom-up initiatives, the first of which being attempts to boycott Russian food products, as well as companies and retail chains which continued doing business in Russia post-invasion, and the second being a symbolic renaming of some food products and dishes that indicated Russian origins or influences.

This work aims to analyse food aid organised for Ukrainian refugees and people remaining in Ukraine as conducted by various entities in Poland. It stresses the significance of the activism of private citizens and small groups while also presenting the social and cultural implications of the symbolic de-russification of popular foods and dishes in Poland. While discussing Polish food solidarity with Ukrainians, it is important to consider that, one year after Putin's invasion, about 1.5 million Ukrainian refugees (of which over 87% are women and children) might be staying in Poland long-term (Sieradzka, 2023; Zharova, 2023). The initial impetus for solidarity is, however, wearing off; the new context also includes so-called “solidarity lanes” established by the European Union to transit agricultural products, which have unintentionally put Polish farmers in a difficult position. As food solidarity with Ukraine might be subsiding in Poland, its popularity

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throughout most of 2022 contributed to a better understanding of relief work in the work zones and augmented the integration of Ukrainian refugees within Polish society.

Keywords: Russian Invasion on Ukraine, Refugees, Food Solidarity, Food Aid, Consumer Boycotts, Grain Imports

Methodological Aspects of Researching Food Solidarity With Ukraine

Since 24th February 2022, Ukrainian refugees have become an everyday reality in Poland and this is naturally reflected in academic publications, press articles, and the mass media (Zawadzka-Paluckta, 2022, pp. 96–98). Various aspects of their lives in Poland have been studied and analysed by both academics and public policy experts (Duszczyk, Kaczmarczyk, 2022, pp. 164–166). A body of research on migration narratives and the attitudes of Polish people towards Ukrainian refugees is also growing (Helak, 2022, pp. 3–12). The solidarity of Poles with Ukrainians has received a lot of recognition and appreciation from Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, U.S. President Joe Biden, and United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres (UN, 2022). Still, there are not many analyses of food solidarity with Ukraine, other than reports and factsheets on food aid prepared by NGOs involved in such humanitarian endeavours, such as Caritas, Polish Humanitarian Action, and regional food banks. This work is meant to fill this void and to dissect food-related solidarity in a variety of ways.

As the matters discussed here deal with recent events and developments, they require a critical analysis of information presented in the media, and there are certain challenges related to researching social and cultural phenomena as they happen. Therefore, articles pertaining to food solidarity with Ukraine must be combined with documents and reports prepared by government agencies and NGOs, as well as press accounts of the ongoing developments, or even pertinent commentaries and blog entries. They are essential in tracking the course of events and serve to document the manifestations of various expressions of food solidarity with Ukraine and its people discussed in this study.

Food aid originating from the Polish government, EU programs, and non-profit organisations comprise an immense component of food solidarity, but the spontaneous efforts of citizens are still predominant. From the start of the war, they have been at the core of the humanitarian urge that many Poles have acted upon. The first days of the Russian invasion of Ukraine turned many Poles into compassionate activists

ready to collect food, hygiene products, and clothing and then take them to the border areas in their own vehicles. They used social media to engage friends and acquaintances in the collection of these articles, selecting meeting points where the donated goods could be loaded into minivans for shipment to the Ukrainian border or even beyond. The Polish and international press provided crucial information on these endeavours and constitute a starting point for the reflections in this paper.

Improvised Food Activism for Refugees and a War-Stricken Ukraine

From 24th February 2022 onward, the refugees arriving in Poland from Ukraine were welcomed with food, hot drinks, warm blankets, and winter clothing, provided mostly by regular people who wanted to make a difference, and who were not necessarily affiliated with any charity or humanitarian organisations. The Polish Economic Institute estimated that in the first three months of the war, 70% of Poles privately engaged in helping the refugees and the total value of this aid could be as high as 10 billion PLN (€ 2.2 billion), which is equal to 0.38% of Polish GDP. This is more than double what Poles spent privately on all charitable causes for the entirety of 2021 – 3.9 billion PLN (close to €866 million). Purchases of food, hygiene products, and clothing for refugees comprised the most common type of aid offered by 59% of Poles. Over half of the Polish population (53%) made monetary donations, while 35% offered organisational help or became volunteers. Finally, 7% provided Ukrainians with shelter (Baszczak et al., 2022, pp. 4–5), which basically meant welcoming them into their homes and feeding them, often for extended periods of time.

“The Great Improvisation” was the term that Warsaw mayor Rafał Trzaskowski used to describe the engagement of private citizens in charitable work benefitting Ukrainians escaping the war. While the quote is a play on words taken from a work by famous 19th century Polish-Lithuanian poet Adam Mickiewicz, Trzaskowski was referring to the readiness of Polish men, women, and even children to help in fulfilling the basic needs of incoming Ukrainian refugees. It also alludes to the fact that private citizens were faster in providing help than the national government and local authorities, which were not used to dealing with refugees in such large numbers. The help, organised privately by individuals, groups of friends, and small associations, was provided not just in border areas but also in those cities, towns, and villages where the refugees decided to stay longer. Facebook and other social media sites

and apps were brimming with appeals to help Ukrainians and online responses presented seemingly feasible solutions on how to do it. Some municipalities organised designated storage areas in well-known local spots to facilitate the handouts of food, cosmetics, linens, and first-aid products between local donors and newly-arrived Ukrainians (Urząd Miejski w Dąbrowie Tarnowskiej, 2022).

In practice, these first few weeks involved people of good will getting to the refugee reception points and asking what they needed. If they needed sandwiches, they were made. If they needed soup, word got around and large quantities were delivered. The lack of a systematic approach to refugees, however, probably caused by Poland's minimal experience with such situations, led to logistical problems. For example, someone volunteered to cook soup but the preparation and transport took 5 hours in total. In the meantime, the refugees received other meals and large quantities of soup were wasted (Ptak-Iglewska, 2022). Eventually, catering companies and cooperatives stepped in, as cooking on request became impractical and somewhat wasteful. According to researchers studying the impact of the war in Ukraine on food security in Eastern Europe, "Polish support and [the people's] welcome to Ukrainian refugees" were, at first, "based entirely on a grassroots mobilisation of individuals, businesses, educational institutions, neighbourhood centres, nongovernmental organisations, and local councils. From a refugee perspective, this means that food and essentials are available from a variety of *ad hoc* distribution points, from railway stations to special *no-money* shops" (Kovacs et al., 2022, p. 2).

The task of feeding Ukrainian refugees, along with their compatriots in war and crisis zones, was quickly picked up by non-government organisations such as Caritas Polska, Polish Humanitarian Action, Red Cross, and even the Saint Nicolas Foundation (Fundacja Świętego Mikołaja). For example, Caritas Poland has launched the Package for Ukraine programme, designed to reach Ukrainians in their homeland. In one year since the start of the war, the generosity of Poles allowed for the preparation of 83,000 packages containing nonperishable food such as rice, pasta, tea, and canned goods, as well as toiletries and first aid items. The value of each package was estimated at about 300–400 PLN (€66–90), meaning that this campaign alone delivered aid worth almost 29 million PLN (€6.4 million). In Ukraine, Caritas Poland teamed up with sister organisations Roman Catholic Caritas-SPES and Greek Catholic Caritas Ukraine. In Poland, the local diocesan chapters of Caritas partnered with numerous parishes and provided refugees in Poland with 3.9 million food packages (Caritas Poland, 2022). Similarly, Polish Humanitarian Action

(Polska Akcja Humanitarna) was able to combine direct involvement in refugee affairs in Poland with ongoing support for war victims remaining in Ukraine. Food and hygiene products, along with financial and psychological support, continue to reach “internally displaced persons and those who could not leave their homes” (Polish Humanitarian Action). This NGO was quick to establish assistance points at border crossings in Zosin, Dorohusk, and Hrebenne and ran them until the summer of 2022. Their tasks included the distribution of food, water, medicines, and toiletries. Although these assistance points are currently closed, Polish Humanitarian Action is prepared to resume their operations if necessary. On 20th May 2022, it “launched *Mission Poland* in order to effectively respond to the refugee crisis in Poland” (Polish Humanitarian Action, 2022). This could indicate an improved ability of Ukrainian refugees to prepare themselves for immigration to Poland. Since the autumn of 2022, there has been a significant drop in refugees entering Poland to escape the war. In 2023, a significant portion of the border traffic between Poland and Ukraine is generated by Ukrainians merely visiting their relatives in Poland and shopping. Both the Polish and Ukrainian governments are aware that massive waves of refugees, mostly women and children, would destabilise Ukraine’s demographic situation in the long run. The emphasis is now placed on humanitarian work inside Ukraine, especially in its Western areas, where many people from the most war-stricken areas have moved without crossing the national borders. They live in newly established, moveable “container cities” with toilets, storage areas, and canteens, and both governments supply them with food and other necessities (Kacprzak, Zawadka, 2022) as they want them to thrive.

Research articles (Kovacs et al., 2022), as well as media reports (Kozak, 2022) on food aid to Ukrainian refugees, point to the challenges arising from an insufficient presence of the Polish state and its agencies, especially in the first weeks of the refugee influx. Poland first passed a law on assistance to citizens of Ukraine in connection with the armed conflict in that country on 12th March 2022, and it was referred to as the “Special Law” (Library of Congress, 2022) but the role of the state in the coordination of refugee matters, i.e., providing food and shelter, was still minimal. On 26th March 2022, Polish President Andrzej Duda signed the amendment to the Act on Assistance to Citizens of Ukraine in connection with the armed conflict. It applied retroactively, from 24th February 2022. Ukrainian citizens who left their homeland due to the war were granted legal stay in Poland for 18 months, starting from 24th February 2022. This law enabled them to apply for social assistance including a one-time living allowance of PLN 300 per person. To some extent, this helped to cover their expenses for

food, clothing, footwear, and personal hygiene products, as well as some housing costs. Food aid was provided in the form of parcels or meals under the Food Aid Operational Programme 2014–2020, co-financed by the European Fund for Aid to the Most Deprived (Office for Foreigners, 2022). Still, civil society work, the informal support of networks, and volunteering were still predominant in all types of aid offered to refugees, resulting in myriad initiatives, mostly emergency-oriented and dispersed (Kozak, 2022). Generally, such efforts are intended to be temporary and supplemental to the expected leading role of state agencies. In Poland, role proportionality seemed to be inverted at the time, with the role of the state being supplemental to the spontaneous efforts of individuals and non-government entities. With a daily influx of over 100,000 refugees in the first weeks of the war, coordination between all these actors was quite challenging. The complexity and evolving character of the needs of the incoming Ukrainians overwhelmed the capacity of local services (Lee et al., 2023, p. 42). As a result, refugees in various parts of Poland had different experiences with their access to essential resources, including food (Kovacs et al., 2022, p. 3).

Boycotts and the Symbolic De-Russification of Food

Food solidarity with Ukrainians has extended to the ideological and symbolic use of food, which should not be surprising in the context of the war. After all, food is universally recognised as “one of the most important elements of the traditional material culture of every nation” (Bondar, Golikova, 2022, p. 123). Looking for ways to express their anger with Russia while standing with Ukraine, Poles have turned against Russian food products, as well as supermarkets and retail chains that continued to do business in Russia. In the food sector, the Auchan¹ retail chain became a target of protests and proposed boycotts because it continued to operate in Russia even after the invasion on Ukraine. In March and April 2022, activists protested in front of Auchan stores in numerous Polish cities almost every weekend (Brzostek, 2022). Well-known Polish visual artist Bartek Kielbowicz supported the boycotts and used Auchan stores in his performances, replacing product labels with information on war atrocities (Przyborska, 2022). The protests were also held in front of

¹ The protests against Auchan’s presence in Russia were usually part of a wider platform of boycotting the stores of France’s Mulliez family, which also includes Leroy Merlin and Decathlon. Activism formed around the Facebook group *Ogólnopolski Bojkot Leroy Merlin* – translating to *The Nationwide Boycott of Leroy Merlin* – and this retail chain was the main focus and target of protests.

the Agence France-Presse headquarters in Warsaw, alleging that French correspondents were not reporting on the boycotts of French retailers in Poland and were indifferent to the ties of French businesses with Putin's murderous regime (Karpieszuk, 2022). In Silesia, protests against Auchan were held by union activists from Sierpień '80 (Czoik, 2022), which originated from the *Solidarność* (Solidarity) tradition.

At first, the boycott appeals made in public and online brought some desired effects. Auchan experienced decreased consumer activities to greater extent and longer than two other French retail chains (Leroy Merlin, Decathlon) that do not sell foods. The drop was the most significant in the second half of March 2022 until 23rd April 2022, but consumers continued their shunning of Auchan until the end of May. In June 2022, consumers returned to Auchan, the 12% inflation level at the time probably being the main motivating factor of this particular consumer choice, combined with the fact that Auchan prices were among the lowest in Poland's food sector. Data from the PanParagon application showed a rise in consumer traffic in Auchan stores in the summer months to a level higher than before the war (Madejski, 2022). One might wonder about the reliability of the quoted application data, as researchers who tried to examine the scale and effectiveness of the boycotts of the retail chains discussed above found very little objective information. The available data were rather scarce and the outcomes of analyses conducted so far had been quite inconsistent (Zralek, 2022, p. 76). The literature on consumer boycotts in the last three decades seems to indicate that they typically have a short life-span. As they start with media (or social media) reports on the misconduct of certain companies, they first generate attention and consumer participation in a boycott. Over time, participation shrinks, perhaps due to consumers' fatigue-like symptoms. Some researchers point out the difficulties in analysing promoters and inhibitors of boycott participation over time. "Does boycott participation decline because consumer aggravation fades, because consumers continue disapproving of the transgression but revert to old habits for the sake of convenience, or because they lose faith in their boycott making a difference?" (Lasarov et al., 2021, p. 1129). It is possible that Polish consumers got used to the reality of the war in the neighbouring country and, at the same time, did not see any meaningful outcomes from boycotting companies trading with Russia or even putting sanctions on the aggressor. Or perhaps inflation made passing up affordable food from Auchan even harder.

Attitudes, strategies, and practices related to food used in support of political ideals can be described as gastronativism. This concept has just been recently introduced to food studies by Fabio Parasecoli (2022,

pp. 1–30) from New York University. In Poland, certain aspects of food solidarity with Ukrainians fall within the definition of gastronativism when food is co-opted as a symbol or as a tool in a situation of political or social crisis. Parasecoli (2022, “Vodka...”) sees it in restaurants re-naming traditional dishes to scrub them of any traces of perceived Russian origins. Numerous restaurants in Poland engaged in the de-russification of the traditional Eastern-European dish of dumplings (*pierogi*) stuffed with fresh cheese and potato paste – known as *pierogi ruskie* – and listed and sold them as Ukrainian *pierogi* (*pierogi ukraińskie*). Parasecoli goes on to explain that *ruskie* does not actually mean Russian in Polish (that would be *rosyjskie*). The adjective refers instead to Ruś, or Ruthenia in English, an area of today’s Ukraine that in the past had been part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Habsburg empire, and interwar Poland”. As expected, the Polish mainstream media and social media analysed the phenomenon semantically, and whether such symbolic changes of name are justified as a solidarity gesture (Miastowska, 2022). While factually the dumplings do not come from Russia, colloquially, the Russian people were – and still are – often referred to as “Ruskie” (Ruskies) in Poland and this term is well known to be used in a derogatory manner.

A more clear-cut example of the de-russification of food in Poland involved condiment companies who replaced “Russian” (*rosyjski/a*) adjectives in their products with more neutral terms. Well-known Polish companies such as Prymat, Roleski, and Społem renamed their “Russian mustard” (*musztarda rosyjska*) as “spicy mustard” (*musztarda ostra*) (Wieczorek, 2022). It can be argued that gastronativism and de-russification in this case served to express the narrative connected with the war and mark a so-called ‘invader’ as one who is not welcome at the table.

Ukrainian Women and Food Economy in Poland

Ukrainians escaping the war were invited to the table in Poland, sometimes literally and sometimes more metaphorically, with Poles purchasing Ukrainian dishes made by predominantly female refugees. Before the Easter of 2022, social media encouraged its users to buy traditional cakes and pastries from Ukrainian women as well as *pierogi* and their smaller alternative known as *pelmeni*. Over time, such initiatives became more common. The Polish food safety law of 2006, with later amendments, allows for the sale of baked goods and processed foods of “home production” as long as such production is registered. Registration with a local sanitary-epidemiological station is relatively easy and free of charge (Główny Inspektorat Sanitarny). In many cases, Polish people,

organisations, and institutions gave Ukrainian women access to their kitchen facilities and equipment.

In Wrocław, Ukrainian female expats have raised tens of thousands of PLN selling thousands of pelmeni. This little operation made the news in Poland because the women, led by Halina Czekanowska, a seamstress specialising in the production of Ukrainian folk outfits, raised enough money to buy an ambulance for Ukrainians engaged in combat against Russia. The support and interest from local people was tremendous. An example of this is that there was no fixed price for the aforementioned dumplings, but monetary donations were generous.

Ukrainian women who fled the war were given employment as cooks of Ukrainian cuisine in the Polish hotel and restaurant chain Arche, where they also received free accommodation (Bednarz, 2022). A year after opening, the restaurant, called “Garmaż od Ukrainek”, still exists and public reception is positive. A similar venture was established in Krosno in the south-east of Poland, with the help of the town’s mayor and local employment office. Since the autumn of 2022 the “Pampuszka” canteen has been serving traditional dishes from various parts of Ukraine as the refugees who work there come from various regions of the country (Kochan, 2022).

Food trucks with pelmeni in the Warsaw district of Stara Miłosna was another example of Ukrainian refugee women participating in the food economy of their host country with the help of Polish friends, a non-government agency focused on helping Ukraine, and the local parish (Bogoryja-Zakrzewski, 2022). It operated for a few months starting in the spring of 2022 and enjoyed popularity and great reviews. It is unclear why it did not last longer.

The participation of Ukrainian women in the Polish food economy allowed them some financial independence as well as an active and appreciated presence in their host country. Generally, their work was conducted in small, often considered alternative food chains as it is generally hard to incorporate small-scale, artisan cuisine in the mainstream food chain of large corporate processors and supermarket chains. A significant portion of Ukrainian women work in the informal economy, including the food sector, which was also the case before Putin’s war. However, cooking for Poles should be treated as a temporary solution to the refugee situation, as the majority of these women might have other professional skills and aspirations, and only a small percentage of them are likely to continue working in the food/gastronomy sector, should they decide to stay in Poland. For stays in Poland that fall under the legally-granted 18 months, the home production of food, or restaurant and canteen

work might be appropriate and helpful but one should not expect that this would be a permanent role for Ukrainian women in Poland. The war refugees in Poland are now entering the phase of integration and might expect more in the hosting country than food solidarity. They might want to become work partners or even competitors in more financially attractive jobs, which could be met with resistance from Poles, who, not very long ago, were generous in providing food and shelter.

EU Solidarity Lanes and Polish Interests

Poland, as a member of the European Union since 2004, is involved, by default, in other concepts of food and agricultural solidarity with Ukraine, applied by the Council of the European Union. In the spring of 2022, the Russian blockade of the Black Sea drastically limited exports of Ukrainian produce through its traditional route, and Brussels could not stay indifferent. In May 2022, it launched so-called “solidarity lanes”, enabling unrestricted food exports from Ukraine. This was followed by Regulation (EU) 2022/870 of the European Parliament and of the EU Council of 30th May 2022 on temporary trade-liberalisation measures, implemented in early June 2022 and effective until June 5th, 2023 (McGrath, Erling, 2023). Poland and other countries of Central and Eastern Europe offered to help move Ukrainian grain to intended third country markets in Africa and the Middle East (Ścisłowska, Toshkov, 2023). In late July 2022, Polish farmers reported that large quantities of Ukrainian grains were not reaching these remote destinations but instead were entering the Polish market, driving local prices down. The Polish People’s Party, previously known as the Polish Party of Peasants (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe) claimed that as much as one third of the transited Ukrainian grain had leaked into Poland (Harper, 2022).

In early 2023, while European Union authorities were considering extension of the trade liberalisation measures for Ukraine to the end of 2023, voices in Poland were already expressing concerns. They did not come from regular consumers, who did not see cheap grain reflected in the price of bread, which had doubled in the last two years. Regular shoppers did not mind more sunflower oil in the supermarkets, of which some was Ukrainian, possibly at competitive prices during record high inflation of 18.5% (as at February 2023). But farmers affected by the presence of cheap Ukrainian grain on the market had become increasingly dissatisfied. Their position in the domestic market had already been fragile in recent years, diminishing their livelihoods, dignity, and self-esteem (Bilewicz et al., 2021, p. 892). Not surprisingly, solidarity lanes failing to reach

markets outside Central and Eastern Europe were interpreted as a shady deal, and in the spring of 2023 farmers staged intense protests calling for the dismissal of the Polish Minister of Agriculture Henryk Kowalczyk. He resigned in early April 2023.

The indignation with the unexpected side effects of the solidarity lanes in Polish rural circles was criticised and misrepresented in the media of Western Europe. The lead of an article penned by Jo Harper and published by *Die Welt* in late July 2022 alleged that the trade concession made to Ukraine made Polish farmers “more upset with the EU than they are with Vladimir Putin” (Harper, 2022). Such opinions are patently unfair and unwarranted, as Polish residents of rural areas, with many farmers among them, stand with Ukraine, contribute to charitable help through parishes, and even welcome Ukrainians into their homes. It must be stressed that the problem with cheap Ukrainian grain is not exclusive to Poland. Farmers in Romania, Czechia, Slovakia, Hungary, and Bulgaria have also experienced the grain-dumping situation and share the reactions and sentiments. Back in late January 2023, these countries, together with Poland, sent a joint letter to EU authorities, calling for an “urgent response to curb the impact of significant increase of Ukrainian grain on local markets” (McGrath, Erling, 2023).

Michał Kołodziejczak, leader of AgroUnia, a political party founded on a farmer protest movement originating in a small commune of Błaszki (Bilewicz et al., 2021, p. 893), frequently voiced farmers’ demands to keep Ukrainian grain out of the EU market but still retain solidarity lanes and make them truly effective for grain transit to third party countries. In his opinion, the presence of Ukrainian grain on the markets in EU Member States since mid-2022 could be the result of corporate lobbying and not really helpful to Ukrainian family farmers. Ukrainian agriculture is dominated by 93 big agricultural holdings of international capital, who are the main benefactors of EU solutions (Adamczyk, 2023) temporarily applicable to Ukrainian products. Kołodziejczak is known to underscore the fact that Polish food security is currently of joint interest to Poland and Ukraine, having even written a letter to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in which, along with praising his heroism, he explained how detrimental cheap Ukrainian grain was to Polish farmers. While it is unknown whether Zelenskyy read this letter, his visit to Poland in early April 2023 included the promise to solve the problem quickly (Krzysztosek, 2023).

The lack of changes on the Ukrainian side that would follow Zelenskyy’s declaration prompted new Polish agricultural minister Robert Telus to enforce a ban on the import and transit (through Polish territory) of

Ukrainian foodstuff starting April 15th, 2023. Hungary quickly mirrored this move, while Slovakia banned imports without halting the transit (Polityuk et al., 2023). Although the bans on transit were lifted just a few days later, the assertion being that the shipments should be monitored and sealed to prevent tampering and offloading, the EU criticised Member States for putting individual bans in place (Florkiewicz et al., 2023). Despite initial disapproval of such unilateral action, with individual Member States deciding on trade policy (Knight, Hallam, 2023), the European Commission adopted, in early May 2023, exceptional and temporary preventive measures on imports of wheat, maize, rapeseed, and sunflower seed from Ukraine. These products could be hauled through Poland, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Romania, and Hungary but could not be stored on their territory nor purchased for domestic consumption. In return, these five Member States were obliged not to maintain any individual restrictive measures (Liboreiro, 2023). The deal was set to expire on June 5th, 2023 but was extended until mid-September causing the governments of Spain and Germany to express their consternation, especially that the five Member States of Central and Eastern Europe were expected to receive a support package for farmers totaling €100-million from the EU. While Madrid found restrictions problematic, alluding to possible crop failure as a result of drought, Germany's Agriculture Minister Cem Özdemir claimed that the Commission's decision "not only takes away from our European solidarity with Ukraine but also plays into the hands of Putin" (Dahm, Andres, 2023). Without undermining the validity of such opinions, it should also be remembered that it is Poland and other countries of the former Soviet bloc that had to carry the burden of the tremendous influx of cheap Ukrainian grains, most of it not tested nor certified for human and/or animal consumption, which under normal circumstances are required by the EU, as well as store it. Such surpluses do not reach Germany or other countries of Western Europe to the extent experienced in Poland and Romania, which for many months had been flooded with cheap Ukrainian grains. No EU country, critical of restrictive measures, proactively engaged or even proposed workable solutions to alleviate the surpluses experienced by five Eastern European Member States, which would have broadened the concept of food and agricultural solidarity with Ukraine and within the European Union.

Conclusions

In response to 2022's Russian invasion of Ukraine, Poles demonstrated their solidarity with Ukraine and its people in a variety of ways. Food

solidarity was instantaneous and based on instinct, as feeding people in crisis and distress seemed like a noble thing to do. Securing food aid for refugees and people in war zones through NGOs, private/community efforts, and government agencies proved to be the most lasting manifestation of food solidarity with Ukraine. It is worth emphasising that civil society and its grassroots efforts played a more significant role here than the state, which failed to assert a leadership role.

Boycotting initiatives targeting the Auchan retail chain, which continued to operate in Russia after the invasion, was another expression of food solidarity with Ukraine. While attractive on social media, consumer boycotts were not easily implemented and failed to really endure over time. They were more likely to inspire artistic concepts and performances rather than impactful, effective consumer practices. The effects of boycotting the Auchan supermarket chain were only visible in the initial months of the war. As of June 2022, customers returned to the supermarkets of the French retail giant known for affordable food prices. Ongoing inflation might have also been a factor, as well as a lack of effect regarding Auchan's dealings with Russia.

The removal of Russian references in the name of food products and popular dishes also brought mixed results. The de-russification of dishes such as pierogi or changing the names of condiments to avoid any associations with Russia could be seen as an interesting example of gastronativism, meaning the use of food as an ideological or political tool to define who belongs to the community and who does not (Parasecoli, 2022, pp. 1–30). In the context of the Russo-Ukrainian war, the Polish attempt at food de-russification was an expression of solidarity with Ukraine and disdainful opposition to Russia.

Food solidarity extended to welcoming Ukrainian female refugees into the food economy, not just as consumers but also as creators. Home production of Ukrainian dishes flourished in Poland and allowed their makers some financial gains. Refugee women found employment in restaurants, social cooperatives, canteens and, in most cases, it was Polish organisations, companies, local governments, and/or private individuals who helped them with such ventures. Time will tell if such solutions are temporary or permanent as Ukrainian women, after establishing themselves in Poland and learning the language, might compete for better-paying jobs.

Almost two years after the invasion of Ukraine, food solidarity with Ukraine remains significant. It is well understood within Polish society that the basic needs of Ukrainian refugees in Poland and those who stayed in the motherland must be fulfilled. The collections of food, hygiene, and

first aid products are still being organised, along with financial aid through reputable organisations. At the same time, there are growing concerns about internal Polish interests, other than any potential threat from Putin. Polish farmers are continuously outraged by the influx of cheap Ukrainian grains to Poland, an unintended result of the EU solidarity lanes meant to transit grain outside of the common European markets to Africa and the Middle East. The matter became so serious that it resulted in the resignation of Poland's minister of agriculture and a declaration of intent by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to solve this matter without hindering the Polish-Ukrainian friendship.

Food solidarity is far more complicated than simply feeding the needy in crisis situations. It requires great logistical effort, an understanding of dietary needs, as well as the willingness and means to provide various types of food aid for an extended period of time in changing circumstances. Food solidarity, as any solidarity, can become problematic over time as those who offer it see their own interests being hurt. This is particularly the case with Polish farmers affected by the significant – albeit unofficially planned – presence of Ukrainian grain on the EU market. Solving this problem has become a matter of international importance which also involves other countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

Among the various modes of expressing solidarity with Ukrainian war refugees and their compatriots who stayed in the motherland, food plays an important role, both literally and symbolically. Food solidarity is surely the most effective, if the desire to help is targeting the real, not just the perceived, needs of the people. It might be seen as a prelude to other types of solidarity involving much sought-after goods and services improving the overall quality of life. However, this broader solidarity might be much harder to achieve.

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The Factor of Democracy and Prosperity and the Formation of the Nation State in the Example of Ukraine: Pre-War Picture

Abstract

Ukraine is currently facing an armed onslaught, the likes of which no European country has struggled with since the Second World War, and it will probably take years to repair the country physically and the population mentally. However, to ensure that the future recovery process does not begin with a return to the past, a thorough analysis of the state of affairs before the intensification of the Russian onslaught in 2022, which began in 2014, is needed. The primary purpose of writing the article is to show, with real examples, the ineffectiveness of the pre-war state-forming

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function in Ukraine. This analysis indicates why most of the reforms were nullified and which steps must be taken to avoid these problems for the country's correct economic, cultural, and political evolution. Using the Cobb-Douglas function, the relationship between intra-system factors of state formation and the standard of living of the country's population is also established. It is proposed to shape the national concept of the modernisation of the public administration system and its new paradigm and to develop its state-forming model, which will be adequate with regard to Ukrainian realities (including the state post-war) and global trends. Thus, the relevance of the research topic stems from the need to provide practical recommendations for the future, post-war modernisation of the state-forming system in the context of the socio-political and economic development of the country, as well as civil society.

Keywords: Civil Society, Public Administration, National Idea, Policy, Socio-Economic Development

Foreword From the Authors

This paper, looking critically at the state of the country of Ukraine before the period of Russian aggression, may be received differently. However, we believe that our aim – as academics – is to work scientifically in this scholarly work and, despite the war, to conduct a critical analysis. We are confident that our work describing the state of Ukrainian statehood before the war will be material that will be helpful in the process of rebuilding Ukraine after Russia's ouster from its territories. Thus, what follows are considerations related to the state of affairs before the escalation of the Russian armed invasion in early 2022.

Introduction

Since the early years of the post-communist transition, or, since independence in 1991 when Ukraine declared itself neutral after the collapse of the Soviet Union, it has enthusiastically confronted the various challenges posed by the region's complex history (see, e.g., Apollo, Krupska-Klimczak, 2019; Gorodnichenko, Sologoub, Weder, 2022; Marples, 2020; Snyder, 2003; Snyder, 2022; or Whitmore, 2004). In the context of the country's socio-political and economic development, the need to build a civil society has become crucial for the modernisation of the state system. It was significantly influenced by two waves of nationwide public protests in 2004 and 2013/2014. During these protests, Ukrainians took to the streets *en masse* to oppose election rigging,

usurpation of power, and corruption. They also advocated the values of a common Europe and opposed the government's departure from its pro-Western course. It is important to note that Ukrainians protesting at that time in Kyiv's central square (Maidan) began to work together not only to achieve their chosen political goals but also to modernise the state in general. They began to spontaneously create and organise various types of structures, which were, to some extent, a substitute for state institutions of the time. As Baranska and Chervinska (2014) rightly pointed out, the social movement that spontaneously emerged at that time – Euromaidan – became a space which, through the organisation of space and the totality of life, constituted a miniature representation (or perhaps better: a kind of “mapping”; an ideal model) of the Ukrainian state. These protests, referred to as the Orange Revolution (in late November 2004 to January 2005) along with the Revolution of Dignity (in February 2014), represented a kind of explosion of civic activity. They highlighted the dormant social capital in Ukrainian society, which, as a resource related to the so-called “fitness of society”, offered hope for the country's development. In retrospect, however, it has to be said that this capital was largely squandered. In just a few years, the capacity of society to form collective action in such a way as to improve its situation has declined significantly. The social capital of Ukrainian society today has more individual than social features, enabling the individuals who possess it to survive and cope, rather than focus on the development of the country as a whole. We are therefore talking about survival and adaptation capital rather than national development capital (see, e.g., Potracki, Kurek, 2021).

Being aware of these problems (i.e., before the Russian invasion in 2022) and especially of the low effectiveness of the reforms undertaken in Ukraine, the problem of substantiating practical recommendations for the modernisation of the state-building system in the context of the development of civil society in Ukraine remains highly relevant (Kuzmenko, 2019; Wolczuk, 2019; Krajnik, 2022; Snyder, 2022; Pivovarsky 2003). This is because Ukraine has long been trying to make a complex democratic transition to a politically organised, responsible society of a new quality, which should increase the level of business activity and political participation of citizens by ensuring their rights and freedoms, forming a new social structure space and economic growth as a consequence. Unfortunately, the immobility of the political elite, the weakness of the opposition, the maintaining of informal institutions and practices in political life, and the vacuum of values in society did not allow the democratic direction to gain a foothold in Ukraine which therefore led to a conservative model transit to democracy (Kuzmenko, 2019).

Today, the comprehensive modernisation of Ukrainian society is essential (Buško et al., 2023; Gorodnichenko, Sologoub, Weder, 2022; Pivovarsky 2003; Stach, 2019; Whitmore, 2004), which is a conceptual, purposeful process of transformation, when the state carries out qualitatively new transformations in all spheres of public life based on the mobilisation of national resources and taking into account the experience of developed countries (De Haas, Pivovarsky, 2022; Palamarchuk, 2014). At the same time, constant changes in Ukraine's socio-political and economic space not only actualised the problem of forming the country's development strategy, but also revealed the low efficiency of the domestic system of state and national economic management of the country's development (Kuzmenko, 2019; Pivovarsky, 2016). The low perception of state reforms by Ukrainians further exacerbates this trend. Until recently, up to 70% of the country's population did not sense any significant changes in state reforms and were sceptical about the possibility of implementing any planned reforms and achieving any planned results (Lesyk, 2019). The existing dissonance between managerial influences and the needs of society, insufficient flexibility, and adaptability of the subject of management to rapidly-changing dynamic transformations both inside and outside the public administration system led to the fact that most of the managerial influences were aimed at eliminating the consequences of problems (Obolensky et al., 2003).

Under these conditions, when it is necessary to intensify the process of state-building to give it a qualitative impetus, it is crucial to form a national concept of the public administration system modernisation – a new paradigm – and development based on its model of state-building which is adequate as regards Ukrainian realities and world trends. Thus, when selecting and adapting the developments of other countries, national scientists tend to use the contextual (Drechsler, 2013) trajectory (model) of application. These scientists also substantiate the relevance of combining the efforts of the management subject with the management object to achieve synergistic efficiency of the management process, which is reflected in a relatively new concept – so-called “joined-up” governance.

Since 2014, during the post-Maidan period, the term “European security zone” has been actively used in the informational space of Ukraine (Blockmans, 2015). The strengthening of Ukraine is not only the sole interest of its people; it is one of the key preconditions of the European Union's existence. Ukraine would have the status of a “European security zone” which means not only the development of the military, but also the acceleration of modern-European-democratic-structure formation and the consolidation of the socio-political system of Ukraine (Snyder, 2015).

The analysis of the relationships between political freedom (democracy) and economic growth in post-socialist countries, including Ukraine, undergoing transformation from 1990 to 2011, revealed a strong correlation (Piątek, Szarzec, Pilc, 2014). These studies suggest that, in the short term, one of the reasons for the expansion of political freedom could be a favourable economic situation. In the longer term, after eliminating cyclical fluctuations, democracy led to a faster pace of growth. It can be concluded that in transforming post-Soviet countries, including Ukraine, democracy and economic growth were not competing features of development. Economic freedom, which positively influences the pace of economic growth in highly developed countries, has the same positive impact on economic growth in transforming countries. However, there is no one-size-fits-all recipe or algorithm for democratising a society.

Achieving effective democratic changes involves considering a multitude of political, economic, social, national, and ethnic factors. Researching ways to address a country's socio-political problems can indeed benefit from economic-mathematical modelling, including the use of the Cobb-Douglas function. Such modelling, however, cannot be done in isolation from ongoing discussions about post-colonialism and other development parameters of dependent states (which is especially true of post-Soviet states like Ukraine) (see, e.g., Schroeder, 2016; Brzechczyn, 2020). Thus, the interdisciplinary group of authors attempts to answer the question of why most of the reforms that have been initiated (i.e., those completed, as well as those in progress) have been nullified, and what steps should be taken to avoid these problems for the proper economic, cultural, and political evolution of a post-conflict country. The authors of this paper believe that if the reforms do not take place in a situation of full transparency (with the aim of nullifying corruption), and the authors of these reforms do not benefit from the historical experience (using successes and not repeating mistakes) of countries such as Poland and Romania, the process of building a modern nation may be prolonged if at all possible.

Methodology

Theoretical and methodological foundations of the research are rooted in the findings of both national and foreign literature concerning the issues of state formation in Ukraine and the development of a mechanism for state influence on the advancement of societal well-being and prosperity within the state. Specifically, a universal method of cognition based on dialectics was employed when examining state-building phenomena

within the dynamic interplay between the state and societal life. These relevant phenomena were studied not in a static but in a dynamic manner, relying on the applicable laws of dialectics:

- a) The law of the transformation of quantitative changes into qualitative ones (for instance, the expansion and constriction of the sphere of national idea development contributing to shifts in the historical context of the state).
- b) The law of negation (for example, in the state-building system of modern Ukraine, elements of both the new and past systems of public administration coexist) (Bilozyorov et al., 2017).

To establish the theoretical foundations for understanding the positive and negative determinants of statehood, the method of proceeding from the abstract to the concrete was employed. To identify similarities and differences in the individualism of people, particularly within the Ukrainian context, the comparative method was utilised. By comparing democratic phenomena against standardised criteria such as time, actors, and scope, both their common and distinctive features were revealed. Through analysis, the internal construction of the nation state was unveiled, and, through synthesis, a comprehensive understanding of the essential attributes, content, and scope of the concepts of nation and state, as well as their structural components, was formed. The application of the systemic method allowed for the examination of national phenomena as a holistic collection of elements (components) interacting with each other and their surrounding environment.

This involved the development of quantitative indicators that objectively reflect the state's condition, dynamics, and trends in democratic development. In reality, selected elements are being examined. Methods were used to identify the presence and strength of the relationship between the standard of living and the corruption perception index, more specifically, the relationships between democracy and the level of well-being, taking into account population-related issues. The method adopted was extended to include a critical analysis of the literature and considerations based on it.

Ukraine as a Nation State

Scholars are constantly searching for the correct answer to the question of why nations decline. However, many works boil down to the simple statement that a given, declining nation under scrutiny was merely unlucky. Thus, Ajemoglu and Robinson (2012) in the book “Why Nations Decline”, came up with a simple explanation for successful and

unsuccessful nations; inclusive and extractive institutions. If inclusive institutions prevail, democracy prevails, and open access to resources equals the nation prospering. If, however, there is authoritarianism, clientelism, cartels, or oligarchs, the nation declines. Unfortunately, how to establish inclusive institutions for failed nations is difficult to understand.

Within the institutional approach, Ajemoglu and Robinson (2012) distinguish between economic and political institutions, which, in turn, are represented by extractive and inclusive species. National development and prosperity are possible with a combination of inclusive political and economic institutions (Ajemoglu, Robinson, 2012):

- The political process determines under which institutions people will live. Although economic institutions are critical as regards a nation's movement to wealth or poverty, according to the authors, politics and political institutions determine what these institutions will be.
- Inclusive economic institutions encourage, inter alia, large masses of people to participate in economic activities, respect private property, an impartial legal system, the provision of public services to create a competitive environment, and pave the way for technology and education. Those institutions' extractive counterparts encourage saving resources, access to management having a limited number of people, monopolies, and non-compliance with property rights. The diversity of economic development models around the world indicates the relationship between critical coincidences in development and slow institutional change.
- Inclusive political systems are rather centralised, but, at the same time, widely distribute power (pluralistic), with a clear "monopoly on legitimate violence" (the central definition of the state according to M. Weber), whereas extractive political institutions concentrate power in the hands of a narrow elite and impose weak restrictions on their exercise of power, wherein there is no rule of law.

Political and economic institutions (extractive and inclusive) are interconnected and create a whole cycle of positive, inverse-inclusive influence or a cycle of extractives. The authors highlight several hypotheses about the prosperity and decline of nations; the geographical hypothesis, the cultural hypothesis, and the ignorance hypothesis.

One of the reasons for inequality between countries is the geographical hypothesis. According to this hypothesis, the vast divide between rich and emerging countries is due to geographical differences. Wealthy nations, in contrast to their poor counterparts, occupy temperate latitudes. Such

a geographical concentration of poverty and wealth superficially leads to a geographical hypothesis, which is the starting point of the theories and views of many social scientists and scholars. However, this theory does not precisely explain the problems of Ukraine because this country has a favourable geographical position, which, to the contrary, should contribute to the economic development of the country, but for some reason, it does not work.

The second widely-used theory, the cultural hypothesis, links welfare to culture. The cultural hypothesis, akin to the geographical hypothesis, has a clear line that can be traced back to the scholar Max Weber, who argued that the Protestant Reformation and Protestant ethics, as a consequence, played a significant role in stimulating the development of modern industrial society in Western Europe. The cultural hypothesis is no longer based solely on religion but reveals other beliefs, values, and ethics. But Ukrainians have the same religion as most European countries, and Ukrainians are one of the hardest-working peoples in the world who understand the idea of poverty, but this is not a factor to rely on.

Some authors attempt to break away from the Eurocentric model of the state-nation and the dominance of the Weberian perspective. Taking Charles Tilly's state genesis model as a starting point, researchers point to the existence of specific organisations in the world where so-called "hybrid governance" operates. According to Tilly's concept, states emerge as forms of organised violence in which four types of tasks are undertaken: conducting war (understood as the elimination or neutralisation of external enemies); state-building (understood as the elimination or neutralisation of internal enemies); protection (understood as the elimination or neutralisation of a state's clients and allies' enemies); and extraction (acquiring resources for carrying out the remaining tasks) (Tilly, 1975; 1997).

The last popular theory of why some nations are poor and others rich is the theory of ignorance. It is worth pausing here for more detail; this theory argues that global inequality exists because our rulers do not know how to make a developing country rich. This idea is supported by most economists, who argue their opinion by employing a famous phrase of Robinson (1935, p. 16): "Economics is a science that studies human behaviour as a link between goals and limited means of alternative use".

The conclusion is that economics should focus on making the best use of scarce resources to meet social goals. Indeed, the most well-known theoretical result in economics, the so-named First Welfare Theorem, determines the conditions under which the allocation of resources in a market economy is socially desirable from an economic point of view. A market economy is an abstraction aiming to capture a situation where all

individuals and organisations can produce, buy, and sell goods or services. If these circumstances do not exist, there is a market crash. Such failures are the basis for the inequality theory because the more market failures go unnoticed, the poorer the country. The ignorance hypothesis argues that emerging countries are miserable because of numerous market failures and because economists and politicians do not know how to deal with them. Rich countries are rich because they have pursued better policies and successfully overcome failures.

Political institutions determine the results of the prosperity of society. According to their established rules, incentives in politics are thus determined. Political institutions determine how a government can be elected and which structural elements have the right to do something. They establish who has power in society and for what purposes this power can be used. If power is not limited and the division of power is narrow, then political institutions are autocratic, as evidenced by absolute monarchies that have existed throughout the world for a long time.

There is a synergistic process between political and economic institutions. Interactive economic institutions are created on the basis laid down by interactive political institutions that ensure a wide distribution of political power in society and limit its arbitrary exercise. Such political institutions also complicate the usurpation of power and the destruction of the foundations of interactive institutions. Those who control political power cannot easily use it to establish extractive economic institutions for their enrichment. Interactive economic institutions create a fairer distribution of resources by supporting the existence of interactive political institutions.

In almost 30 years of independence, Ukraine has not adopted a clear economic strategy nor created viable professional institutions, and has yet to create attractive business development and investment conditions. And the result? Since 1991, Ukraine's GDP has fallen by 28%, while Poland's GDP has grown by 15.1%, as has Moldova's, by 6.8%. During this time, Ukraine positions itself as a resource base on the world market, as about 25% of its labour works abroad, and exports account for 60% of raw materials (Ukrstat, 2021). In sum, three decades after its liberation from Moscow's influence, Poland's gross domestic product had reached USD 679 billion, whereas Ukraine's GDP is at a mere USD 199 billion, representing a more-than-threelfold disparity (World Bank, 2021).

In the world ranking of country prosperity, formed by the analytical organisation Legatum Institute, Ukraine 2020 ranks 92nd out of 167 (see Legatum Prosperity Index, 2020, p. 16). The Legatum Prosperity Index (2020) is a series of studies aimed at assessing countries' contribution to the

prosperity of their peoples, reflecting both economic, social, and political well-being. According to research by the Legatum Institute, the strengths of Ukraine are education (38th place) and living conditions (69th place), whereas its weaknesses are social capital, interpersonal trust, and trust in institutions (147th place), and personal security (144th place) (Figure 1).

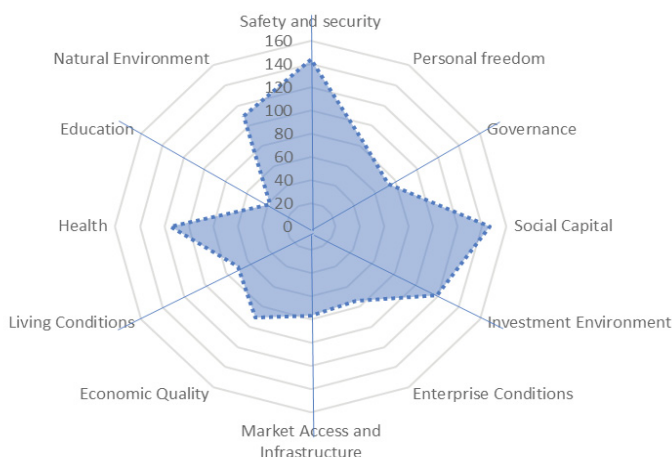


Figure 1. A Breakdown of the Performance of Ukrainian Prosperity, 2020

Source: based on Legatum Prosperity Index, 2020.

In 2020, Ukraine, Guyana, and El Salvador were ranked 91st, 92nd and 93rd respectively. Ukraine was overtaken by Namibia, South Africa, Mongolia, and the Philippines, and it is noted that, compared to 2019, Ukraine rose by four positions, and for four years (since 2016), it fell in the ranking by 11 places (Figure 2) (see: Legatum Prosperity Index, 2020, p. 16).

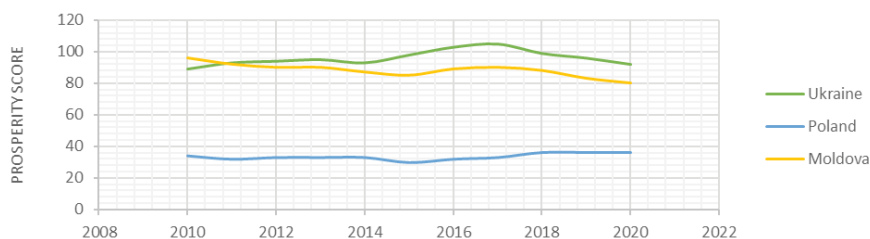


Figure 2. Prosperity Change by Ukraine, Poland, and Moldova, 2010–2020

Source: based on Legatum Prosperity Index, 2020.

At the present stage of the development of Ukrainian society, the progressive political forces of the country face the task of consolidating the nation to implement political, economic, and social reforms. This process is only possible with the revival and formation of the nation's spirituality, national consciousness, and self-consciousness. It is a question of stimulating the national revival, renewal in all its aspects, a consolidation of the Ukrainian nation, the formation of the people of Ukraine as a society, and the inclusion of the state in the general civilisation process. Resolving these issues will make it possible to overcome the alienation of people as members of different ethnic groups, to avoid interethnic clashes and conflicts, as national harmony can only be achieved with solid, concrete guarantees of national balance (Gonta, 2017).

Using the Cobb-Douglas function, the authors will analyse the impact of democracy on the development of the nation's prosperity and consider the possibilities of further economic development. Structuring elements at the national level from the standpoint of a systems approach makes it possible to identify effect-generating factors that, using appropriate economic and mathematical tools, show not only the existing relationship between factors (input variables, which, in relevant mathematical models, are called argument factors, predictors, exogenous, or independent) and the resulting indicators (endogenous, dependent or explanatory) but also the degree of such a relationship. With appropriate correlation-regression models, it is possible to identify priority measures to improve the system (in this sense, the system is the state/nation) (Voinycha, Popivniak, 2020).

Regression analysis begins with the formation of a database. Information on a nation's development (prosperity) indicator is provided by the Legatum Institute (Democracy Index, 2020). To analyse the data related to the development of democracy, the index of democracy, which forms the Economic Intelligence Unit, was chosen. The EUI Democracy Index provides an overview of the state of world democracy for 165 independent states and two territories. The Democracy Index is based on five categories: electoral process and pluralism; civil liberties; government; political participation; and political culture. Based on estimates of 60 indicators in these categories, each country then classifies itself as one of four types of regime: a full democracy; an imperfect democracy; a hybrid regime; or an authoritarian regime (Democracy Index, 2020). According to research by the Economic Intelligence Unit, Ukraine is characterised by the so-called "hybrid" democracy with no absolute rule of law, no independent judiciary, widespread corruption, and problems in the governance system.

To visually assess the level of prosperity of countries and the level of democracy, the authors have plotted the value of these indicators on

a graph (Figure 3). Data analysis shows that even the naked eye can see the existence of such a connection. Lest we forget, leaders in the development of democracy are leaders in the world regarding living standards and vice versa.

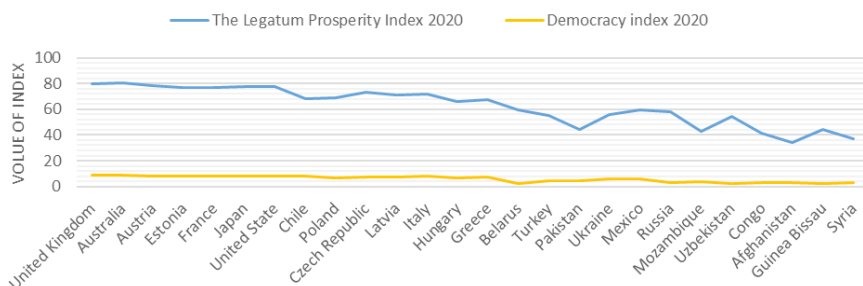


Figure 3. The Level of Prosperity and the Level of Democracy in the Studied Countries

Source: based on the Legatum Prosperity Index (2020) and Democracy Index (2020).

When analysing the impact of intra-system factors on improving a population’s living standards, it is advisable to use modern mathematical methods of statistical data processing (Kuzmenko, 2017). This toolkit can provide computer support for solving a vital problem of any study; identifying and describing the relationships between those factors based on the partial results of statistical observation of the events or indicators being analysed. When constructing the Cobb-Douglas function, we consider the world’s population according to the UN.

In its formalised form, the Cobb-Douglas function looks like this:

$$Y = f(K ; L) \tag{1}$$

This function determines the relationship between the initial factor (the country prosperity index) Y as the factor that reflects the level of democracy – the democracy index K, and the factor that reflects the population of country L, where the possibility and limitations of factor substitution are significant. Twenty-six countries were selected for the study and evaluated by the above organisations.

To sum up the results, the following conclusions can be made:

There is a strong relationship between the studied variables of the studied system. These relationships’ structure and density are characterised

based on paired correlation coefficients. Thus, the linear function takes the form of:

$$Y_t = 0.4559X_1 - 0.0158 X_2 + 3.5026 \quad [2]$$

With $a_0 = e^a = e^{3.5026} = 33.2017$ and get the Cobb-Douglas function:

$$Y_t = 33.2017 K^{0.4559} L^{-0.0158} \quad [3]$$

Table 1. Initial Data for the Formation of the Cobb-Douglas Function

Countries (t)	Prosperity Index 2020 (Yt)	Democracy Index 2020 (Kt)	The population of the countries in 2020 (Lt)	Ln(Yt)	Ln(Kt)	Ln(Lt)
United Kingdom	80.07	8.53	67886	4.382901	2.143589	11.12559
Australia	80.43	8.96	25449	4.387387	2.19277	10.14443
Austria	78.6	8.16	9006	4.364372	2.099244	9.105646
Estonia	76.89	7.84	1326	4.342376	2.059239	7.189922
France	76.55	7.99	65273	4.337944	2.078191	11.08633
Japan	77.27	8.13	126476	4.347306	2.095561	11.74781
United States	77.46	7.96	331002	4.349762	2.074429	12.70988
Chile	68.39	8.08	19116	4.225227	2.089392	9.858281
Poland	69.14	6.85	37846	4.236133	1.924249	10.54128
Czechia	73.12	7.67	10108	4.292102	2.037317	9.221082
Latvia	71.01	7.24	1886	4.262821	1.979621	7.542213
Italy	71.83	7.74	60471	4.274302	2.046402	11.00992
Hungary	66.13	6.56	9660	4.191623	1.880991	9.175749
Greece	67.32	7.39	10423	4.209457	2.000128	9.25177
Belarus	59.33	2.59	9449	4.083115	0.951658	9.153664
Turkey	54.94	4.48	84339	4.006242	1.499623	11.3426
Pakistan	44.25	4.17	220892	3.789855	1.427916	12.30543
Ukraine	55.73	5.81	43733	4.020519	1.759581	10.68586
Mexico	59.53	6.09	128932	4.08648	1.806648	11.76704
Russia	58.04	3.31	144386	4.061132	1.196948	11.88025
Mozambique	42.98	3.65	31255	3.760735	1.294727	10.34993
Uzbekistan	54.37	2.12	33469	3.995813	0.751416	10.41837
Congo	41.21	3.11	89561	3.718681	1.134623	11.40268
Afghanistan	34.35	2.85	38928	3.536602	1.047319	10.56947
Guinea Bissau	44.03	2.63	13132	3.784871	0.966984	9.482807
Syria	37.07	2.7	17500	3.612808	0.993252	9.769956

Source: Prosperity Index (2020); Democracy Index (2020); Population by Country (2020).

An analysis of the adequacy of the regression equation obtained based on these coefficients of determination (R^2), F-criterion, and the level of its significance p , as well as studies of regression model residues and graphical visualisation of the residual scattering diagram, give an observer reason to believe that the linear regression model adequately describes between variables. Thus, the constructed production function is characterised by reliable statistical characteristics.

An analysis of this dependence allows us to estimate the values of the input parameters at which the function of the Prosperity Index reaches a maximum. A study of the prosperity function has shown that for some values of elasticity, the maximum value of the prosperity function increases by several orders of magnitude, which is vital for the strategic management of a country's development. However, the prosperity index is more difficult to achieve in countries with large populations.

Function [2] shows that the parameter that characterises the quantitative impact of the Democracy Index on the dynamics of growth of the Prosperity Index and the parameter that characterises the quantitative impact of population on the dynamics of growth of the Prosperity Index are 0.4559 and -0.0158, respectively. It means that a 1% increase in the Democracy Index increases the Prosperity Index by about 45.6%, and an increase in the country's population can reduce it by 1.6%. Thus, there is a direct relationship between the indices of prosperity and democracy and a negative relationship between a country's population. However, it should be understood that the main direction of a country's economic growth policy is the state policy of forming not only qualitative but also quantitative human capital. In this context, it is crucial to implement the strategic priority of public policy to develop civil society in Ukraine. Under such conditions, the policy should be aimed at using the *opportunities* of civil society, in particular, to ensure non-conflict relations in ethnonational, cultural, and religious spheres, along with the intersectoral social partnership between government, business, and civil society institutions to create conditions for the direct involvement of stakeholders in management decisions. Social groups should be created that would contribute to ensuring social harmony, social peace, sustainable development, and stability in the state. Under such conditions, large countries have achieved economic prosperity (the USA, the UK, China, Japan, among others).

Ukraine has the opportunity to achieve economic growth, as the inclusive process and institutional changes have been launched, but many reasons hinder success. The first reason is the lack of completed reforms, as their current incompleteness significantly worsens the

general welfare of the state and produces significant obstacles to economic development. The main problem continues to be the incompleteness of reforms in the law enforcement system, health care, and the protection of property rights. The second reason is people's low level of economic literacy, their lack of understanding as regards entrepreneurial activity, and respect for private property. The third reason is the low efficiency in the disposal of state property. The fourth is the obsolescence of the regulatory framework and its over-regulation, which is accompanied by an increasing impact on the degradation of economic sectors (Sobolieva-Tereshchenko, Zhukova, 2020; Zelinska, Andrusiv, Simkiy, 2020). All of this increases the unattractiveness of the state to foreign investment in general. The fifth reason is the loss of foreign markets, along with the inability to use geopolitical opportunities to expand geography and improve the conditions for exporting Ukrainian products. The sixth reason is the urgent need for updated infrastructure (energy, production, logistics, etc.). The post-Soviet stock is exhausted, and there is no alternative to innovative economic growth in Ukraine, as any effort to modernise infrastructure can only achieve what Ukraine's international competitors did ten years ago. The seventh – and most significant – is the outflow of talent. According to various data, Ukrainians abroad produce 2 to 4 times more GDP than Ukraine (Sheremeta, 2016).

The victory of the Revolution of Dignity in 2014 opened a window of opportunity for profound changes in Ukrainian society and an effective transition towards a fully democratic country. Among the former Soviet republics that have successfully undergone reforms and democratisation, there are countries that have become members of the EU and NATO, namely Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. Political observers and scholars agree that Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia could follow these countries' paths.

The experience of reforming all aspects of public life in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia indicates that reforms in Ukraine should be based on the requirements set for candidate countries seeking NATO and EU membership. As we all know, NATO represents not just a military alliance but a union built on democratic values. Accession to the Alliance is preceded by a country's fulfilment of the Membership Action Plan (MAP).

The authors believe that at the current stage of implementing political, economic, and social reforms, Ukraine should base its efforts on fulfilling NATO's Membership Action Plan (MAP) as a candidate country for NATO membership. The MAP is a practical manifestation of the policy of open doors and involves reform in the following main areas:

1) Political and economic issues,

- 2) Defence/military matters,
- 3) Resource issues,
- 4) Security issues,
- 5) Legal issues.

The open military aggression by Russia against Ukraine has influenced the possibility of systematically implementing these reforms. Over the past year and a half, significant, positive changes have occurred in the military component, in that the Ukrainian army has successfully adopted NATO standards in the military sphere, including administrative, operational, and material-technical aspects. Ukrainian military personnel undergo training in NATO member countries, and acquire and effectively use modern military equipment.

Implementing the second-military component of the Annual National Program cannot disregard the requirements for other directions of the country's reform. In Ukrainian politics, there is a heated debate about the advisability of Ukraine acquiring fully-fledged NATO membership without fulfilling the Annual National Program. In this regard, the example of Finland and Sweden is cited. However, the authors believe that in this case, it is difficult to compare Ukraine with Finland and Sweden. Finland and Sweden are economically, politically, and democratically compatible with NATO member countries.

A more acceptable path for Ukraine in building a full democracy is the experience of countries such as Romania and Poland. Currently, these countries are members of both the EU and NATO, but they initially became NATO member countries first. Reforming political, economic, legal, and other issues and bringing them in line with NATO standards significantly facilitated their compliance with EU membership requirements.

Summarising the research findings, it is necessary to note that the democratisation of society significantly improves the well-being of the population. Ukraine has a clear plan for further development based on the requirements for reforms set by NATO and the EU. A series of reforms that Ukraine needs to undertake include the following conditions:

- Reform of the Constitutional Court,
- The continuation of judicial reform,
- Anti-corruption measures, including the appointment of the head of the Specialized Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office (SAP),
- Combating money laundering,
- The implementation of anti-oligarchic legislation,
- The harmonisation of audiovisual legislation with European standards,
- An amendment of legislation regarding national minorities.

Compliance with the so-called Copenhagen criteria will allow Ukraine to build a democratic, socially responsible society, ensure economic development, and achieve political stability.

Conclusions

The formation of an independent, democratic, and economically self-sufficient nation state is a prolonged process that is inherently linked to changes in all aspects of society and determines the common boundaries not only of institutional reform but also of the quality of state policy, its shaping, and implementation. Successful implementation of structural transformations is possible only with scientific support for the modernisation of public administration and the improvement of the mechanism of institutional support.

Using methods of economic-mathematical modelling of democratic processes and social phenomena, the interconnection between internal systemic factors, such as population size and the level of democracy, and their impact on the level of societal well-being and the prosperity of the state has been established. Based on the use of the Cobb-Douglas function, it has been proven that the level of democracy positively influences societal well-being and prosperity.

Reorganising political institutions, their interactivity, pluralism, and adequate centralisation to prevent chaos will help address some issues in Ukraine. This will then become a catalyst for the reform of economic and cultural institutions towards greater interactivity.

Today, the foundation of the state-building process, using foreign experience, will not only be the formation of a rational selection and adaptation of specific provisions of state construction from other countries to the contemporary needs and realities of Ukrainian society, but also the formation of situational factors along with the country's circumstances during wartime and in the post-war period, with a focus on existing problems or the ultimate goal; available resources (the balance between aspirations and capabilities), and subjective factors.

It should be unequivocally emphasised that no criteria of economic modernisation in defiance of cultural inertia (conservatism, nationalism, or resentment) protect the turnaround on the development path (see, e.g., Lipset, 1959; Huntington, 1991) especially in shorter time windows (Treisman, 2020). Poland has painfully experienced this in recent years. And if Poland, a country which has higher Prosperity and Democracy indexes (see Table 1), has proven to be susceptible to these treatments, Ukraine and its people should be very careful in this regard. Education

emerges as an antidote in this situation, playing a pivotal role in shaping an open, tolerant, and dynamic society, free from cultural constraints. Its fundamental components encompass the cultivation of cultural awareness, development of critical thinking skills, facilitation of intercultural dialogue, enhancement of social skills, and the promotion of universal values.

Ukraine's situation is, however, further complicated by one more fact; future ambitions of reconstruction, development or modernisation will develop with tendencies towards sustainable development and maybe even de-growth (see e.g. Foryś, Gorlach, 2023). Considerations in this regard could provide a testing ground for future research.

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CSR in Ukrainian Retail Enterprises in Time of the COVID-19 Pandemic and the Russian Invasion (2019–2022)

Abstract

The corporate social responsibility (CSR) landscape of Ukraine's retail sector underwent profound and global transformations during the COVID-19 pandemic and the extensive Russian incursion into Ukraine in 2022. These transformations were precipitated by rapid changes in the operational activities of the retail sector's enterprises, resulting from significant external disruptions. Consequently, the primary objective of this study is to analyse the indicators of the CSR status of Ukraine's retail enterprises and ascertain the extent of the changes that occurred due to the pandemic and Russia's incursion. The study also aims to determine the influence of these transformations on CSR initiatives and identify key issues within the realm of corporate social responsibility in Ukraine's retail sector. To quantify these changes, indicators of CSR status encompassing key

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aspects of corporate social responsibility (economic, legal, environmental, and social indicators) were selected (Carroll, 1979). To achieve the set objectives, research methods such as analysis (measuring CSR indicators), comparison (relating the examined indicators chronologically), induction (identifying specific factors affecting the overall CSR status of retail enterprises), and deduction (determining the nature of the impact of the overall CSR status on its individual aspects) were employed. Throughout the investigation, the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic along with the comprehensive Russian incursion into Ukraine on the CSR status of retail enterprises was revealed. It was observed that enterprises reduced nonessential and irrelevant activities at that time not only to support stakeholder interests and enhance working conditions for employees, but also to aid community support.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, CSR, Russian Invasion of Ukraine, Retail, COVID-19

Introduction

The operations of retail enterprises underwent significant changes during the COVID-19 pandemic, which, in turn, had a notable impact on their corporate social responsibility (CSR) status. The retail sector faced the imperative of adapting its business processes to the challenging external environment. During this time, CSR underwent substantial transformations, shifting from a secondary aspect of business to a supportive tool for maintaining financial and economic well-being. By integrating CSR into their business processes, retailers managed to simultaneously uphold performance indicators and provide assistance to stakeholders. This created a synergy that benefited both sides.

With the onset of the full-scale Russian incursion into Ukraine in 2022, the retail sector experienced significant losses of assets and resources, leading to a reduction in certain aspects of CSR activities and a redirection of corporate social responsibility focus towards supporting those in need. These substantial disruptions in the external environment caused profound changes in the CSR strategies of myriad businesses. This article aims to explore these transformations.

Selected Literature Review

The subject of the influence of external environmental factors on enterprises and their CSR is not novel. Ukrainian scholars I. Lomachynska, D. Khalieieva and V. Shmagina (2023), have examined

contemporary trends in CSR development under the impact of a volatile external environment. They revealed that the further advancement of CSR is directed towards deepening the engagement of CSR within enterprise business processes, aiding in overcoming the complex conditions under which the enterprise operates. Another group of Ukrainian scholars, namely, I. Stoyko, R. Sherstiuk, and O. Dolubovska (2022), investigated the necessity of business-related social responsibility and its intensification during wartime and post-war periods. Finally, the work of T. Lunkina, who examined the primary trends of corporate social responsibility in Ukraine within the context of post-war recovery, should be noted (Lunkina, 2023).

A. Carroll examined the impact of the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic on CSR activities across enterprises in diverse sectors and showed that many companies are seeking to alter their perspectives and initiatives regarding CSR to manage the crisis and meet public expectations (Carroll, 2021). M. Asemah-Ibrahim, E. Nwaoboli, and E. Asemah, who studied the practices of CSR in conflict zones during the Ukrainian-Russian war, came to the conclusion that enterprises can utilise CSR to mitigate the effects of war by supporting any interested parties (Asemah-Ibrahim et al., 2022). The work of yet another group of scholars in the forms of W. Ahmad, E. Battisti, N. Akhtar, M.I. Ahmad, and R.U. Rehman, is dedicated to cross-cultural research on the impact of CSR practices of retail sector enterprises on clients during the pandemic (Ahmad et al., 2023).

Research on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on CSR is also not a novel endeavour. Numerous studies, conducted by both Ukrainian and foreign researchers, have thoroughly examined this. These studies delineate the transformations that occurred across various sectors encompassing both manufacturing and non-manufacturing during and after the pandemic. Conversely, there are relatively fewer studies that focus on evaluating the repercussions of war on CSR. Extant research primarily concentrates on industrial enterprises while often neglecting sectors such as retail. However, the authors' article is explicitly tailored to appraise the effects of significant factors such as pandemics and war on CSR performance metrics within the retail trade sector, using the Ukrainian retail market as a case study. We believe the findings from this study can be extrapolated to other cases in the future. This approach enables one to delve into some previously-unexplored facets of this topic.

A Comprehensive Overview of the State of Retail Enterprises and Their CSR During the COVID-19 Pandemic and the Full-Scale Russian Incursion Into Ukraine in 2022

The operational dynamics of retail enterprises are significantly influenced by their external environment. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, businesses in that sector encountered substantial challenges and difficulties, which in turn manifested in their operational practices. Broadly speaking, the working conditions of the retail sector during that period can be characterised by:

- disruptions in logistical supply chains for imports due to local lockdowns;
- sharp increases in demand for essential goods such as food, medications, and fuel (during the initial stages of spread, preceding prolonged lockdowns);
- elevated demand for electronics, home appliances, and the do-it-yourself (DIY) segment; declines in demand for clothing, footwear, accessories, and leisure products;
- temporary closures of non-food retail points during lockdowns; reductions in rental payments for Shopping and Entertainment Centres (SECs);
- workforce reductions or furlough arrangements;
- a rapid growth of online commerce and overall omnichannel adoption;
- an expansion in home delivery services, even in the food retail sector which had traditionally held the smallest share in Ukraine;
- increased options for non-in-store purchases (click and collect, pick-up points, etc.);
- an escalation in retail-related crime (RAU, 2021);
- a widespread transition to remote work, where feasible.

Evidently, corporate social responsibility (CSR) among retail enterprises underwent various changes. The primary directions of such changes encompass: ensuring safe trading conditions; facilitating omnichannel retail (in this context, the synergy between CSR and the economic function of the enterprise is apparent – retailers are concerned about customer safety, while also partially compensating for the inability to operate in the usual manner); providing safe working conditions for employees; implementing tools to support employees for their physical and mental well-being; adopting a hybrid work format for main offices

(offline and online); engaging in philanthropic efforts within the healthcare sector; and ensuring accessibility to vaccination.

In 2021, Ukraine experienced a partial economic recovery overall, including within the retail sector. However, by February 2022, a full-scale Russian invasion had occurred on Ukrainian territory, leading to another economic crisis. The dynamics of the retail sector's activities and its corporate social responsibility (CSR) during this period were previously discussed in the authors' prior work (Konstantynovskyi, 2022). Nevertheless, it is important to highlight significant changes in the CSR strategies of enterprises during this time – businesses directed their CSR efforts primarily towards meeting the needs of stakeholders (employees, customers, communities); substantial resources were allocated to support the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU), territorial defense units (TDUs), volunteers, and aid organisations; non-essential CSR activities such as environmental, educational, and/or cultural initiatives were temporarily suspended; safe working and shopping conditions were ensured, which sometimes involved closing retail locations and shopping centres during air raid alarms or other forms of threats; financial and moral assistance was extended to those affected by the crisis; and aid was provided for the relocation of employees who found themselves under occupation or in areas of military conflict, among other measures.

An Analysis of the State of CSR Among Retail Enterprises During the COVID-19 Pandemic and the Full-Scale Russian Incursion Into Ukraine in 2022

All of the aforementioned factors directly influenced the state of CSR indicators, which will be further analysed. It is noteworthy that in previous works, the authors have already conducted research on the status of specific CSR indicators during the COVID-19 pandemic and the full-scale Russian incursion. However, in this study, the authors focus on other essential CSR indicators. In this investigation, the categorisation of CSR indicators is based on Carol's research, which encompasses various aspects of a company's activities, namely in the form of economic, legal, environmental, social, and other activities (Carroll, 1979). It should be added that the assessment of indicators in the environmental aspect of CSR was carried out in a previous study, and since no new statistical data have been published between then and the time of this writing, this aspect will not be included in the current research. Let's delve into the indicators included in each aspect of corporate social responsibility. Under the category of economic indicators, the following indicator of "annual

labour costs per employee” is included. In the second group of indicators, which covers the legal aspect of CSR, the level of workplace injuries in the retail sector is included. The social aspects of CSR in the authors’ study are represented by a wide pool of indicators, including expenditure on innovative activities by retail enterprises, expenditure on incentives and other compensatory costs by retail enterprises, and workforce movement within the retail sector.

The economic aspect of CSR in this study is represented by the indicator “Annual Labour Costs of one Employee per Year for Retail Enterprises by Types and Years”. The data is presented in figure 1 below.

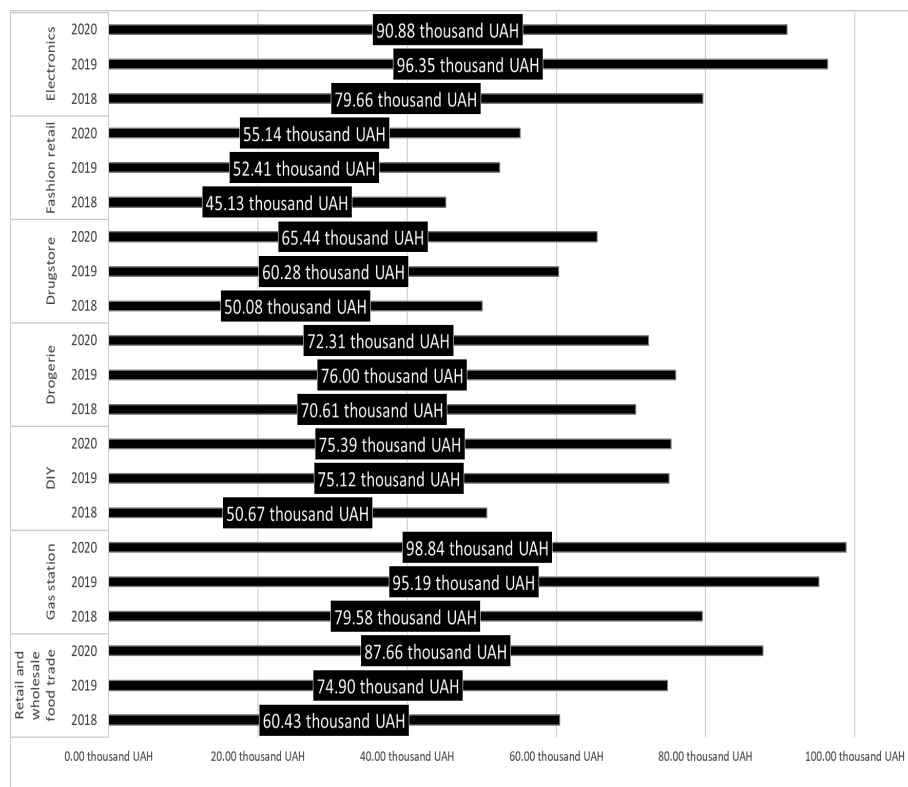


Figure 1. The Annual Labour Costs of one Employee per Year for Enterprises in the Retail Sector by Types and Years

Source: The authors’ own construction based on the State Statistics Service of Ukraine (2022).

The obtained results testify to the following aspects of the CSR activities of retail enterprises in the direction of remuneration:

- all types of retail pay wages no less than the minimum level established by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, and in most cases higher (except for the trade in clothing, footwear, and accessories) (from 1.01.2018 to 31.12.2018 – UAH 3,723; from 01.01.2019 to 12/31/2019 – 4,173 UAH; 01/01/2020 to 08/31/2020 – 4,723 UAH; and from 09/01/2020 to 12/31/2020 – 5,000 UAH) (Minimum salary in Ukraine, 2021);
- the highest wages are observed in such types of retail as petrol stations, trade in electronics and household appliances, and retail trade in food products. This trend is explained by the fact that in the field of food trade, large enterprises, both Western and Ukrainian, adhere to the principle of paying wages at a level higher than the minimum by 25–35%, which allows the traditionally low profitability of this industry to continue (from 5% to 10%). In the electronics trade, in order to ensure the efficiency of the enterprise, the presence of the possibility in the system of motivation and encouragement for employees to implement their own sales plans is characteristic, which directly affects the salary of the employee. Therefore, due to the payment of bonuses, the wage fund per employee increases. For petrol stations, the explanation for this choice is the efforts of enterprises to alleviate difficult working conditions (i.e., the cold, heat, remoteness of the workplace, extended work shifts, etc.) with a higher level of wages compared to other industries in order to overcome staff turnover;
- the lowest level of remuneration for employees is in the field of clothing, footwear, and accessories. This sector is characterised by the division of the market into large international players as well as representatives of Ukrainian brands on the one hand, and small entrepreneurs on the other. The first group is based in large regional centres, providing employees not only with significantly higher wages than in other retail industries but also with additional benefits (insurance, travel expenses, additional holiday days, etc.), while the second group is based in smaller cities with a lower level of remuneration and less responsibility for this business (the official salary is at the minimum level, while the employee receives the rest “in an envelope”, to use the (semi-literal) metaphor, which cannot be reflected in official statistics). What causes such indicators?

For all types of retail, except for food and pharmacies, in 2019, there was either a reduction in the rate of wage growth or no wage growth at all, which indicates the current tendency to reduce costs due to the onset of the pandemic.

In connection with the lack of official statistics for the period of military time (i.e., from February 24th, 2022), the following changes that took place during this time should also be noted.

Three phases of change can be distinguished during this period. The first phase is the pre-war period of 1.02–23.02; during this period, a balanced growth of the market was observed – the number of vacancies and CVs/applications for them were in balance. Wage levels gradually increased in accordance with enterprise budgets and the level of the minimum wage. The second phase (24.02–5.04) is characterised by panic, uncertainty, a reduced demand for goods and services, problems with logistics, and a direct response to hostilities. Enterprises in the retail sector reduced their expenses as much as possible, which also affected the reduction of wages. Expenditures for the search for personnel dropped to the last lines of the budget and, in some cases, were completely excluded from businesses' agendas. The third phase (2005–the present day) is marked by the adaptation of retail enterprises to new realities. Business work has been partially or even fully resumed in territories where there are no hostilities; companies are being relocated to the western regions of the country; and the state is launching support programs. The remuneration of employees in the retail sector has been undergoing and will continue to undergo significant changes. There has already been a decrease in salaries for unqualified personnel and a significant increase in pay for employees in less common professions such as drivers and logisticians.

Only 36% of retail enterprises have ensured pre-war salaries and payment stability. 20% of employers have been able to maintain salaries at 60–90% of the pre-war level. Only 2% of retailers actually increased the salaries of all employees or, at the very least, key specialists, whereas all others were forced to significantly reduce the wage fund to ensure enterprise survival (RAU and robota.ua, 2022). This state of affairs indicates the impossibility of fulfilling the CSR obligations of enterprises due to a significant upheaval both in the retail market and in the country as a whole.

The next stage of the research involves analysing the state of CSR among retail enterprises from a legal perspective. An important indicator of the legal aspect of CSR is the number of workplace injuries in the retail sector. In this study, this indicator is represented by two measures, namely, the average number of days of incapacity per employee and the duration of temporary incapacity for individuals affected by workplace accidents. The inclusion of these indicators in the study is justified by the fact that the level of workplace injuries directly reflects various aspects of corporate social responsibility such as compliance with occupational health and safety rules, the allocation of resources for this purpose, the

effectiveness of training and education in workplace safety, and so forth. It is important to note that the inclusion of indicators related to workplace injuries is driven by the existence of a wide range of state regulatory acts in Ukraine pertaining to workplace safety and the state-based social protection of employees. Data regarding the average number of days of incapacity per affected employee and the duration of temporary incapacity for individuals affected by accidents are presented in figure 2 and figure 3 respectively (State Statistics Service of Ukraine, 2023d).

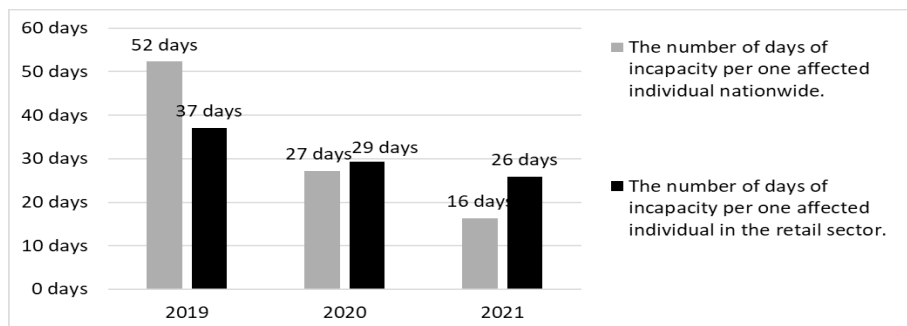


Figure 2. The Average Number of Days of Incapacity per Affected Employee

Source: The authors' own construction based on the State Statistics Service of Ukraine (2023d).

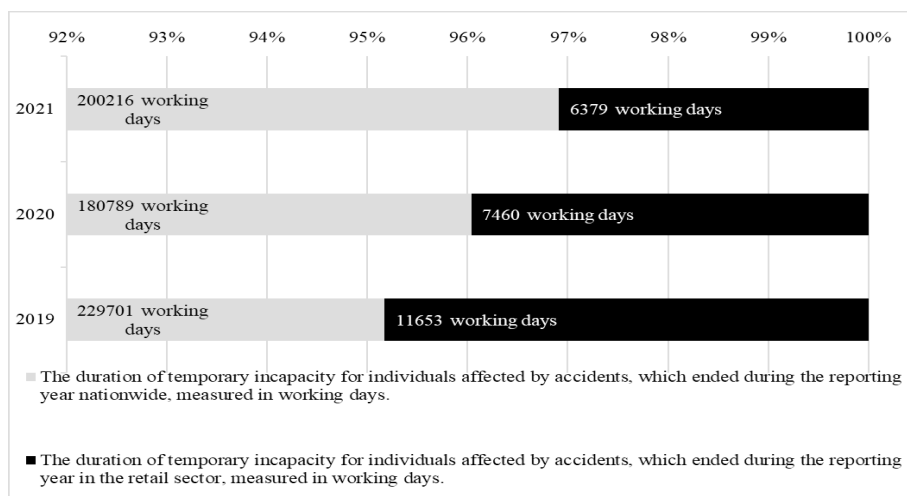


Figure 3. The Duration of Temporary Incapacity for Individuals Affected by Accidents

Source: The authors' own construction based on the State Statistics Service of Ukraine (2023d).

Based on the obtained data, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- Starting in 2020, there would be a significant reduction in the number of days of incapacity for work per victim (from 52 to 16) across the country, which indicates the high rate of development of labour protection at enterprises. In the retail sector, positive dynamics of this indicator are also observed, but the rate of decrease is significantly lower than in other areas. This state of affairs may be a manifestation of the development of corporate social responsibility in this direction; however, due to the pandemic, this development could be overshadowed by other CSR projects that were more urgent.
- Despite the longer average duration of days of incapacity for work in the retail sector than the national average per victim, the total duration of days of incapacity for work in this sector decreased rapidly (from 11,653 days in 2019 to 6,379 days in 2021). It is important to note that the opposite situation was observed across the country; a sharp decrease in 2020, and already in 2021, a sharp increase again. In general, this trend confirms the previous conclusion about the selectivity of CSR practices in this direction.
- The general state of such a CSR indicator of retail enterprises as “the level of injuries at the workplace” is at a fairly high level. In both studied indicators, there is a positive trend, which indicates the importance of this direction of corporate social responsibility for the activities of enterprises; however, in connection with the spread of the pandemic in 2020, there was a certain deterioration in the dynamics of development.

The next stage of assessment covers the largest pool of indicators of the state of corporate social responsibility of enterprises in the retail sector, namely, social indicators. The first assessment indicator from this set is “the percentage of other incentive and compensation payments from the wage fund of enterprises in the retail sector”. This indicator is a direct reflection of the corporate social responsibility of enterprises as regards personnel, because it includes: rewards based on the results of work for the year; annual rewards for years of service; awards for promoting invention and rationalisation; mastering and implementing new equipment and technology; performing important and particularly important tasks; material assistance of a systematic nature provided to all or most employees (for recovery, in connection with the environmental condition); expenses in the amount of insurance contributions of enterprises for the benefit of employees, related to voluntary insurance (personal, insurance

property); payment or subsidies for food for employees; payment for the maintenance of employees' children in preschools; the cost of tickets for employees and their family members for treatment and rest; the cost of travel tickets that are distributed personally among employees, and reimbursement to employees of the cost of public transportation; rented housing; dormitories; and subscriptions to health groups among others (Ukraine. Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 1995). Data on the percentage of other incentive and compensation payments from the wage fund of retail enterprises and average values for the country are presented in Fig. 4 (the structure of the fund of payment for the work of staff workers for the types of economic activities for the quarter, 2022).

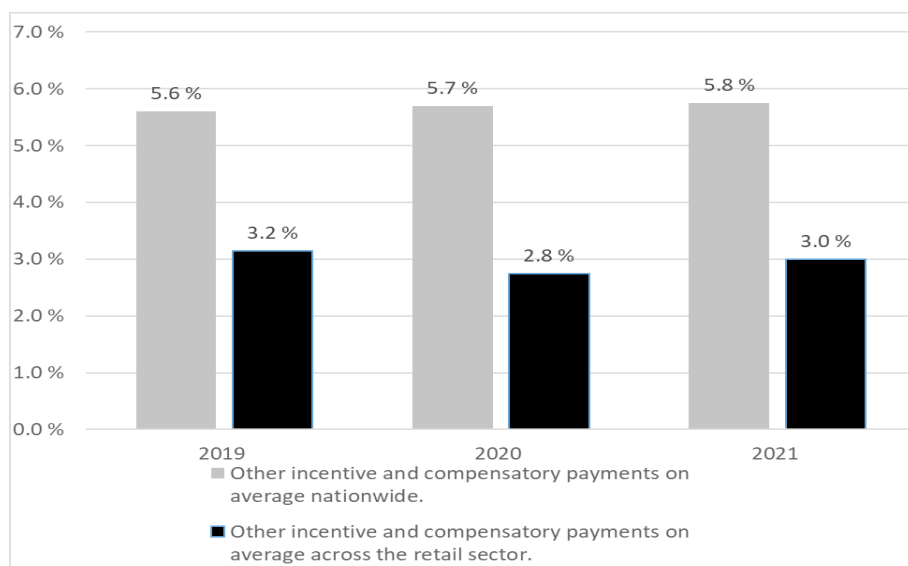


Figure 4. The Percentage of Other Incentive and Compensation Payments From the Wage Fund of Retail Enterprises and Average Values for the Country

Source: The authors' own construction based on the State Statistics Service of Ukraine (2023c).

The obtained results indicate that in 2020, payments were reduced due to the pandemic, and in 2021, there would be a gradual recovery to 2019's level. In the retail sector, there has been a significant decrease in this type of payment, while in the country as a whole, there has been an increase, albeit not significant (0.1% annually). This trend is related to the significant costs and downtime that retail has faced during the pandemic. Other industries (pharmaceutical, IT, logistics) got the opportunity to

additionally stimulate their own personnel which was generally reflected in the average values for the country. During martial law, the situation with this indicator is ambiguous. On the one hand, with the introduction of the March 24th, 2022 law “On the Organisation of Labour Relations under Martial Law”, according to which restrictions on the constitutional rights and freedoms of a person and a citizen are introduced during the period of martial law in accordance with Articles 43 and 44 of the Constitution of Ukraine (Ukraine. Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2022), which in turn exempts enterprises from additional payments, retail enterprises with developed CSR continued to pay both wages and, in some cases, other possible incentive and compensation payments.

The next element of the analysis is the assessment of the costs to retail enterprises for innovative activities. Since the retail sector is highly dynamic due to changes in the external environment, consumer trends, and sales channels, spending on innovation is a necessity in order to maintain the competitiveness of a given enterprise. It is accepted that innovative activity is the prerogative of manufacturing and industrial enterprises, but retail should also invest in innovation in order to improve its position on the market. The inclusion of costs for innovative activities in the composition of indicators of the social aspect of CSR is explained by the fact that innovation can affect not only financial and economic indicators, but also the activities of an enterprise in the direction of CSR. For example, the development of new software for store inventory management not only optimises the costs of purchasing goods and the volume of their deliveries but also allows one to reduce their write-offs and, as a result, improve the conscious consumption of this enterprise. Another example is innovative activity aimed at the development of biodegradable options for packaging goods, which, on the one hand, reduces the cost of packaging materials and, on the other hand, reduces carbon footprints. It is important to note that not all innovative activities of enterprises in the retail sector are aimed at CSR. However, due to the lack of data on the structure of costs for innovative activities of enterprises in the retail sector in state statistics, the authors will assume that these costs also affect corporate social responsibility. Data on the costs of retail enterprises on innovative activities are presented in figure 5.

Based on the obtained data, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- Even despite the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the retail sector, in 2020 there was an increase in spending on R&D, performed both by companies’ own forces and by other contractors, which indicates the importance of this direction of CSR in order to ensure competitiveness.

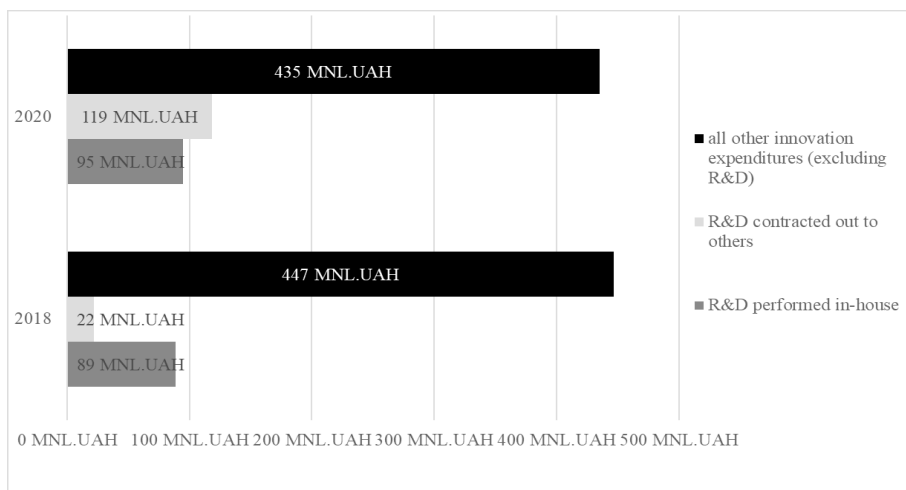


Figure 5. Costs of Enterprises for Innovative Activities

Source: The authors' own construction based on the State Statistics Service of Ukraine (2023a).

- In 2020, there was a slight decrease in expenses for other innovation expenses (from UAH 446.8 million to UAH 435.1 million), but at the same time, there was an increase in expenses for R&D performed by other enterprises. This state of affairs is explained by the significant investments of retail companies in the online sales channel as a response to lockdowns and other restrictions caused by the pandemic in offline stores.
- It is difficult to assess the impact of the war on innovative activity since, on the one hand, enterprises could not afford to invest in such an expensive way, which in most cases gives results in the long term, and, on the other hand, their activity was conditioned by only one goal; survival. Therefore, it was predicted that in 2022 there would be a significant decrease in the costs of retail enterprises engaged in this activity.

In our opinion, it is appropriate to summarise the study of the social aspect of CSR during the coronavirus pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 by analysing such an indicator as “personnel movement”. After all, the movement of personnel is a direct reflection of the effectiveness of CSR policy pertaining to personnel. This indicator directly reflects the satisfaction and provision of the staff of retail enterprises with the necessary benefits. Employee satisfaction with

a competitive salary, a low risk of injuries at the workplace, the absence of various types of discrimination, an increase in the level of incentive and motivational payments, investments in innovation, and others – all these CSR indicators affect the loyalty of employees and therefore their decision to change their place of work. In our study, this indicator is represented by two components, one being the total number of employees by country and retail sector, and the other being the total number of those dismissed (figure 6) (Personnel movement by types of economic activity, 2023).

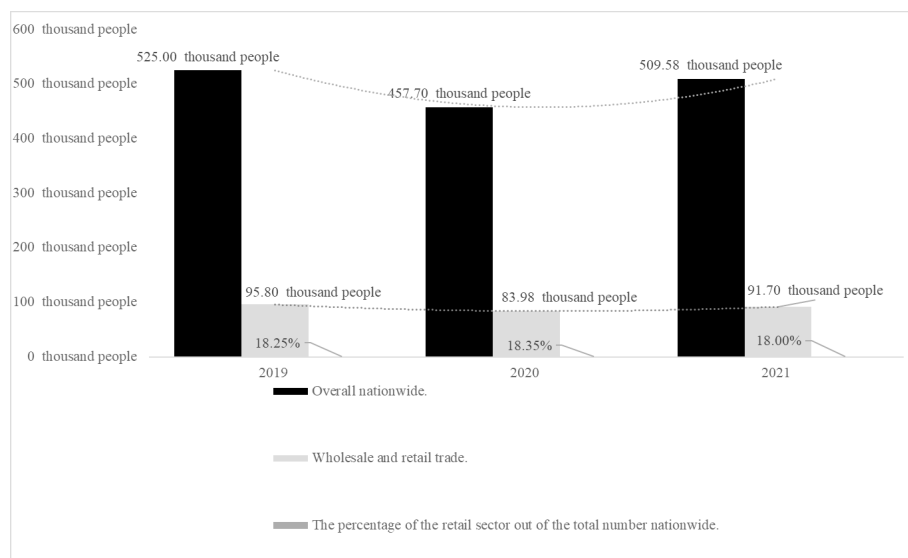


Figure 6. Cumulative Number Accepted by Country and by Retail

Source: The authors' own construction based on the State Statistics Service of Ukraine (2023b).

Based on the obtained results, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- In the peak period of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, there would be a significant drop in the number of hired employees, both in the country as a whole and in the retail industry in particular. This situation is explained by a decrease in business activity in the country due to significant COVID restrictions and lockdowns. For 2020's retail sector, there was a significant reduction in the total number of admissions (by almost 8,500 people) due to the fact that this sector was one of those that was most significantly affected by the pandemic.

- In 2021, there would be a gradual recovery of the hiring of employees; their number in the country has almost reached the pre-year level of 2019 (457.7 thousand employees), but the pace of recovery in the retail sector was not as large-scale. Therefore, in 2021, retail employed 18% of the total number of employees, which was the lowest figure during the research period. However, there is an increase in the absolute number, which indicates a recovery of activity in this area.
- During the military operations on the territory of Ukraine (from February 2022 to the present time), there have been significant fluctuations in the hiring of employees; according to the report of the International Labour Organization (ILO), about 4.8 million jobs have been lost since the beginning of the Russian aggression in Ukraine. The study estimates that if the fighting escalates, job losses will rise to 7 million. However, if it stops, a quick recovery is possible with the return of 3.4 million jobs (International Labour Organization, 2022). As at September 2022, there was a gradual recovery of hiring processes in the retail sector in relatively safe areas, while due to the continuation of military operations in certain regions of the country (in the east and south), the number of vacancies and therefore hiring is insignificant (work.ua, 2022).

Let's analyse the number of dismissed employees during the coronavirus pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine (Figure 7) (Personnel movement by types of economic activity, 2023).

Based on the obtained data, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- In 2020 and 2021, there would be a decrease in the number of layoffs both in the country and in the retail sector. For the retail sector, this state of affairs is explained by: the concentration of CSR practices on companies' own staff; the efforts of enterprises to keep existing staff in turbulent times due to the resource-based and financial costs of training new staff; and, in times of lockdown, when there was a temporary suspension of TT work, by suspending labour relations instead of terminating them.
- In relative terms, the pace of layoffs in the retail sector increased from year to year compared to other industries (from 16.73% in 2019 to 17.62% in 2021). In this situation, CSR manifested itself in efforts to keep personnel at optimal numbers for the effective operation of the enterprise and, as a result, support the income of employees at the highest possible level.

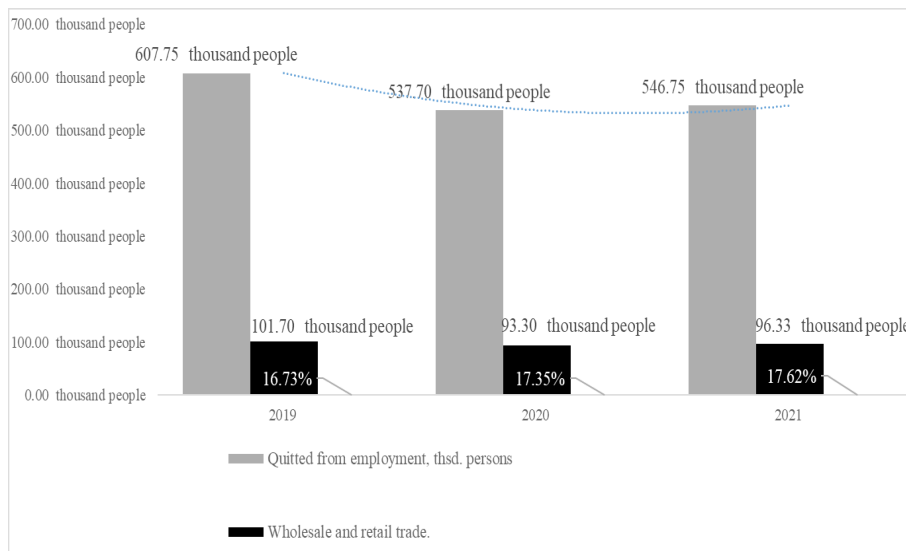


Figure 7. The Number of Dismissed Employees During the Coronavirus Pandemic and the Russian Invasion of Ukraine

Source: The authors' own construction based on the State Statistics Service of Ukraine (2023b).

- Despite a partial recovery of business activity in Ukraine in 2021 after the widespread spread of the pandemic, and in connection with the start and continuation of hostilities, a significant reduction in employees is observed (International Labour Organization, 2022). In this case, enterprises that have lost their commercial facilities are unable to retain employees from these points, which in turn causes a reduction and, in enterprises with more developed CSR – a suspension of labour relations.

Based on the study of the social aspect of corporate social responsibility in retail enterprises during the coronavirus pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, it can be argued that this aspect of CSR in retail is quite developed. In most cases, positive trends prevail. With the recovery of business activity, there are also positive shifts in the direction of CSR in the retail sector. However, such indicators as the number of days of incapacity for work, the percentage of other incentive and compensatory payments from the wage fund, the ratio of wages of women to men, the costs of environmental protection, and the average monthly salary of full-time employees by 2021 did not reach pre-2018 levels. This state of affairs indicates a change in the focus of CSR on other, more urgent aspects, which

include reducing staff turnover, spending on innovative activities, reducing informal employment, and increasing personnel costs per employee. Based on forecasts regarding the course of CSR cases of retail enterprises during military operations, it can be stated that most indicators will have negative trends, but enterprises with more developed corporate social responsibility will have more advantages in this market than others.

Conclusions

In conclusion, our research has unveiled substantial shifts in the landscape of corporate social responsibility (CSR) within the retail sector amidst the dual challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian incursion into Ukraine in 2022. These changes primarily stem from adverse business conditions experienced during these crises. Retail businesses, responding to the urgent needs of society, redirected their CSR efforts towards essential, life-critical activities, resulting in a reprioritisation of secondary projects, as evident in our analysis of CSR indicators.

Notably, the retail sector witnessed a significant decline in wage levels during the pandemic, with a 2.6% decrease compared to other industries in 2020. Conversely, post-COVID, in 2021, there was a substantial wage increase of 19.5%. However, during the Russian invasion, the average retail sector salary decreased by 17.5% compared to the previous year, reflecting a salary of UAH 11,130, while the national average was UAH 13,855.

Costs for compensation and incentive payments also fluctuated, with a reduction in 2020 due to the pandemic and a gradual recovery in 2021 towards 2019 levels. In the realm of research and development (R&D), there was an increase in expenses in 2020, despite the pandemic's impact, especially in R&D performed by external entities. However, a significant decrease in R&D costs for retail enterprises was anticipated in 2022.

Regarding the CSR indicator of workplace injuries, there is an overall positive trend in both studied indicators, highlighting the importance of this aspect of corporate social responsibility. However, the dynamics were somewhat hampered by the pandemic's impact in 2020.

In terms of employment, the pandemic caused a drop in the number of hired employees, including a notable reduction in retail sector admissions in 2020. The onset of the Russian aggression in Ukraine further disrupted employment, resulting in the loss of approximately 4.8 million jobs. While there was a slight recovery in 2021, ongoing hostilities continue to impact employee numbers.

Looking ahead, future research will delve deeper into understanding the ramifications of the Russian incursion on CSR within the retail sector.

This will involve scrutinising the intricacies of CSR transformations, analysing CSR metrics, and forecasting potential risks that may shape the trajectory of corporate social responsibility among retail enterprises in Ukraine.

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*Jakub Wódka**

Turkey's Middlepowermanship, Foreign Policy Transformation and Mediation Efforts in the Russia-Ukraine War

Abstract

This article provides insight into Turkey's strategic pursuit of a more active and influential role as a mediator in the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war. Turkey, positioning itself as a middle power, seeks to elevate its global standing. This involves a delicate diplomatic balancing act in its foreign policy approach towards both Russia and Ukraine. The equilibrium thus achieved positions Turkey as a natural mediator, serving as a catalyst for brokering a peace initiative among the conflicting parties. Ankara's diplomatic activism is not just a tactical move but also a manifestation of Turkey's broader global ambitions, underlining its commitment to playing a more significant role in shaping international affairs. These aspirations clash with a rising penchant in Turkey to pursue a more militaristic and coercive foreign policy, which stands in contradiction to the role of a benign power.

Keywords: Turkey, Russia, Ukraine, Mediation, Middle Powers

Introduction

In the era of changes occurring in the international order, characterised by what Andrew Hurrell (2006, p. 12) has termed "hegemonic decompression" and Fareed Zakaria (2008) has referred to as the "rise of the rest", and as articulated by Amrita Narlikar and Rajiv Kumar (2012) in the context of a "pax mosaica", countries that were previously located

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on the semi-peripheries or even in the peripheries of the global system are increasingly influencing the shape of world politics and the economics. This concerns not only the much-debated BRICS countries, but also – as labelled by Ziya Öniş and Mustafa Kutlay (2013; 2017; 2020), “near-BRICS”, such as Turkey, Mexico, and Indonesia. Following the example of those so-called “big revisionist players”, these countries have also started challenging the established hegemonic powers and demonstrating a firm determination to chart a more autonomous course in their policies, one that transcends being merely a reflection of the interests of major powers. They have begun to fill diplomatic niches, strategically searching for global specialisations that would enable them to stand out or escape the ranks of non-major powers. Middle powers stand out among the nations witnessing an increased significance within the global power structure. Examples of such countries include Brazil, India, South Africa, Mexico, and Turkey, and their growing significance is driven by factors including burgeoning economic development, heightened involvement in regional dynamics, and proactive participation in international initiatives and organisations.

In the last 15 years, Turkey has indeed significantly strengthened its international status. Moving from a semi-peripheral state, essentially that of a satellite state whose foreign policy was largely shaped by the interests of a great power in the form of the United States, Turkey has transformed into a more independent player in international relations. It now aspires to conduct its autonomous foreign policy and, in selected areas, even demonstrates leadership ambitions on a regional and global scale. Ayşe Zarakol (2014, p. 740) notes that some observers “were struck by the speed with which Turkey went from a country pursuing a classical secondary state type of foreign policy (and one that was single-mindedly focused on its European and American alliances) to a country with regional or even global leadership ambitions”.

Undoubtedly, today Turkey is no longer perceived as a state on the fringes, and it is increasingly referred to as a “central” player (Davutoğlu, 2008), exerting real influence on international politics and striving to pursue a more independent foreign policy. Some now include Turkey, alongside Brazil, China, Germany, India, Israel, Russia, and the United States, among the countries shaping the international landscape – so-called *shaper nations*. They “all share one major characteristic; in our multipolar and interdependent world, these states will have a decisive influence on their geopolitical *neighbourhoods* and perhaps on international relations the world over” (Hitchcock, 2016, p. 1). Thanks to the “new geographical mental map” or the transforming “geographical

imagination” of Turkish leaders (Aras, Karakaya Polat, 2007; Aras, Fidan, 2009), Turkey has succeeded in significantly diversifying the directions, forms, and instruments of its international engagement. Instead of a cold-war policy of self-isolation in the region, it has begun to strive to play the role of a regional leader. Transitioning from an introverted state, it has become an extroverted player, open to collaboration not only with regional partners but also making efforts to strengthen ties with other emerging powers. It has shifted from being a reactive, passive state, basing its foreign policy on bilateral relations and focusing on security issues, into an active, constructive, and multidimensional player (Keyman, 2009, p. 8). Fuat Keyman and Şebnem Gümüşçü (2014, pp. 72–73) note that “Proactivism and active globalisation constitute Turkey’s response to global turmoil giving rise to uncertainty, insecurity, and the risky nature of the present. Rather than reactionism and inward behaviour, Turkish foreign policy behaviour has been formulated as *active globalisation*, that is, involving and engaging in global problems, as well as in global debates, very actively, and acting in a proactive and outward fashion to strengthen its place and position *vis-à-vis* global turmoil”.

As a result, this article delves into Turkey’s response to the ongoing conflict initiated by Russia against Ukraine since February 24th, 2022, with particular emphasis on Turkey’s proactive mediation endeavours. These efforts serve as tangible evidence of Turkey’s expanding aspirations, underscoring its growing role as a stakeholder in international diplomacy and peace-building. At the same time, one can question whether Turkey, whose foreign policy has been undergoing transformative changes under the AKP government, is best suited to serve as an honest middleman in conflicts in its closest vicinity. Consequently, this article posits that there is a self-expectations-capabilities gap in Turkey’s mediation efforts – a disparity between how the country perceives its role as a mediator and its actual capabilities. As Tarık Oğuzlu (2023, p. 674) aptly notes, Turkey’s “efforts to play an over-ambitious middle power role in global politics seem to have largely failed to produce expected results”.

There has been a notable surge in academic interest and publications related to middle powers’ behaviour, Turkey in particular (Parlar Dal, 2016; Ongur, Zengin, 2016; Öniş, Kutlay, 2017; Karim, 2018; Oğuzlu, 2023). Recently, scholarship has put emphasis on the changing nature of middle powers’ behaviour (Kutlay, Öniş, 2021; Altunışık, 2023; Soyaltin-Collela, Demiryol, 2023), becoming increasingly “unusual” or “modified”. As this paper focuses on recent developments regarding Ankara’s ambitions to mediate between Ukraine and Russia, the empirical part of the analysis concerning the war Russia has been waging against Ukraine and Turkey’s

mediation efforts primarily relies on press releases and reports from think tanks, with a lesser emphasis on the still nascent academic discourse surrounding Turkey's role.

The paper is structured as follows; section 1 discusses what middle powers are and explores why they are perceived as predestined to act as intermediaries in conflicts. Section 2 examines the evolving dynamics of Turkish foreign policy, highlighting a growing inclination towards hard power instruments, resecuritisation, and a quest for strategic autonomy. The subsequent section reviews Turkey's mediation efforts, with a particular focus on Ankara's involvement in the Russia-Ukraine war. The final section presents the conclusions.

What Are Middle Powers?

Defining a middle power, like any type of power, is not an easy task, hence the abundance of definitions. Jennifer Welsh (2004, p. 585) and many other researchers, including Carl Ungerer (2007, p. 539), as well as Richard Rigby and William Tow (2011, p. 157), argue that there is no objective definition of a middle power. Andrew Hurrell (Hurrell, 2000, p. 1) writes that the term "middle power" has been applied to such a large number of states with various internal and external conditions that it is difficult to define common patterns of what these states "will" do and what they "can" do. Consequently, there is also no consensus when it comes to delineating the roles assumed by middle powers in the realm of international relations and characterising the nature of their international involvement.

Eduard Jordaan (2003, p. 165) defines middle powers as "neither great nor small in terms of their power, capacity, or influence, and exhibit the capability to create cohesion and obstruction toward global order and governance". They must show a willingness to "assume, in some form, responsibility" for regional affairs, including influencing the behaviour of other states to build stability in the region (Fels, 2016, p. 213). It is underscored that middle powers transcend their regional agendas, embarking on proactive international endeavours that extend to the global stage. What is essential for assessing Turkey's role is the fact that middle powers are expected to act in a way that matches their material capabilities – as benign regional or global actors capitalising on their soft power capabilities (Kutlay, Öniş, 2021, p. 3052).

Selectively, middle powers also harbor leadership ambitions in specific domains. Frequently, they take the lead in niche initiatives, which, precisely due to their niche nature or even secondary or tertiary status,

do not always capture the interest of major powers engrossed in grand global issues. Given their comparatively limited resources compared to great powers, these states cannot engage across the full spectrum of global politics. Thus, within a functional approach, they prioritise their objectives and specialise in narrow areas of international activity. The selection criteria for these “functional niches” are based on the calculation of both narrowly defined national interests and the likelihood of achieving greater influence, as the involvement of middle powers in niche areas lacks a normative foundation that would compel them to assume the role of a “good international citizen” or a “good multilateralist” (Cooper, 1997, p. 7). This approach enables middle powers to achieve a relatively substantial return on their invested resources while simultaneously shaping their image as engaged participants in international politics. It represents a “result-oriented diplomacy” (Higgott, 1997, pp. 37–38), underscoring the importance of actions taken by states that transcend ideological, regional, or developmental differences and divisions. Peyton V. Lyon and Brian W. Tomlin (1979), pointing to the roles characteristic of medium powers, write, among other things, about the role of a “mediator”. Mediations, as William Zartman and Sadia Touval (1985, p. 32) note, may serve the mediator two interests: “one is essentially defensive; the continued conflict between two actors threatens the mediator’s own interests (...). The second self-interested motive for mediation is the desire to extend and increase influence”.

Yet a distinction has to be made between traditional and emerging/new middle powers. In the shifting dynamics of the post-hegemonic global order, characterised by a growing multipolarity and a diminishing Western-centric influence, emerging middle powers are demonstrating a decreased allegiance to international organisations and the norms associated with the liberal order. Their focus has shifted towards a quest for increased autonomy in navigating the complexities of both regional and global political landscapes (Soyaltin-Collela, Demiryol, 2023, p. 127).

How Do Changing Dynamics of Turkey’s Foreign Policy Affect Its International Activism?

In the initial years following the AKP’s rise to power, Turkey underwent a transformative process of democratisation, marking a pivotal shift in the nature of the Turkish state. This period not only significantly bolstered Turkey’s global image but also paved the way for a more pronounced utilisation of soft power. The attractiveness of Turkey’s evolving political

model became a cornerstone for its diplomatic engagements. With the de-securitisation of the Turkish state, traditional power politics, which had long characterised Turkish diplomatic practice, gradually ceded ground to more innovative and nuanced approaches. This shift allowed Turkey to explore creative means, beyond conventional power dynamics, in fortifying its position both regionally and on the global stage. The shifts in the conduct of Turkish foreign policy have transformed Turkey into a benign power. The concept of “zero problems with neighbours” became the official doctrine of Turkish foreign policy. Consequently, non-military instruments took the place of securitisation and the primacy of force in foreign policy as means of building security. Desecuritisation meant a shift of emphasis from hard actions towards Turkey’s civil engagement and developmental cooperation in its immediate and broader neighbourhood.

Yet, the Arab Spring clearly highlighted the geopolitical limitations of Turkey’s imagination, forcing a resecuritisation of its foreign policy. Faced with regional isolation, Turkish decision-makers created slogans, such as “precious loneliness” (Coşkun, 2015) aimed at legitimising this new geopolitical situation, which undermined the achievements of a decade-long regional engagement. In recent years, Turkey has witnessed a departure from its earlier emphasis on diplomacy and soft power approaches towards a reassertion of security concerns and a recalibration of its foreign policy objectives. This shift has been particularly evident in Turkey’s responses to regional conflicts, where the language of security and the prioritisation of national interests have gained prominence. The Syrian civil war, the Kurdish question, and tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean and East Africa have all played pivotal roles in prompting Ankara to reevaluate and resecuritize its foreign policy. This resecuritisation is often marked by a more assertive stance, an increased military presence in certain regions, and a heightened focus on securing Turkey’s borders. Mustata Kutlay and Ziya Öniş (2021, p. 3051) write about coercive diplomacy and coercive methods that Ankara started employing in its increasingly interventionist foreign policy practices. In regional politics, Turkey has transformed from that of a neutral regional player into a partisan state, engaging in a conflict on one side, thereby damaging its image as an impartial player with mediation capabilities. This is evidenced by, among other things, the intensification of relations with Qatar following the isolation of that country by a coalition of Arab states led by Saudi Arabia. The resecuritisation of foreign policy has been even more evident since July 15th’s coup attempt. It has also been evident in

its policies in multilateral settings, including NATO, where Turkey has been blocking a further enlargement of the Alliance.

As Turkey grapples with complex geopolitical challenges, the resecuritisation of its foreign policy underscores the intricate interplay between security imperatives and diplomatic considerations in shaping the country's approach to regional and global affairs. This has had an impact on how Turkey perceives itself as a mediator – the country's "conception of its role as a mediator and integrator, drawing on the *logic of interdependence*, was gradually replaced with an assertive quest for *strategic autonomy*" (Kutlay, Öniş, pp. 1102–1103).

This has been coupled with "the recent regression in reforms [which] caused a withdrawal from middle-power activism, and a more recent shift towards populism and anti-democratic tendencies have resulted in foreign policies that not only hinder regional peace but also contribute to the sources of instability within the liberal international order" (Aydın, 2021, p. 1379).

What Are the Manifestations of Turkey's Mediation Ambitions?

As early as the 1980s, Turkey aspired to play a mediator role in international disputes, offering its services to its neighbours such as Iran and Iraq. During the years 1980–1988, these countries were engaged in a war that claimed hundreds of thousands of lives and caused immense material losses. Turkey also offered its services in the disputes between Iraq and the United States. However, in both cases, Turgut Özal did not want Turkey's actions to be labelled as mediation. He rejected the possibility of acting as an intermediary in intra-state conflicts, as evidenced by the refusal to mediate in talks between the Central Asian republics and Moscow, even before the dissolution of the USSR (Süleymanoğlu-Kürüm, 2019, p. 119).

Ankara also exhibited mediating ambitions in the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia, engaged in the frozen dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh (Oran, 2001, pp. 154, 402). It proposed a "friendly mission" to President Shevardnadze regarding Georgia's dispute with Abkhazia. In the context of the Middle Eastern conflict, both Özal (as prime minister in the 1980s) and Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Ismail Cem, in the late 1990s, attempted to act as mediators. With the outbreak of the second intifada, Cem engaged in shuttle diplomacy between Israel, Palestine, and Egypt. He believed that Turkey had the potential to play a mediating role in conflicts and disputes in the Caucasus (Bayer, Keyman, 2012,

p. 76). In 2002, a few months after the September terrorist attacks in New York, under Cem's leadership, the Istanbul Forum of the European Union and the Organization of the Islamic Conference took place, with representatives from 76 countries in attendance. This meeting can be considered a precursor to the Alliance of Civilizations, one of the flagship projects of AKP diplomacy.

With the implementation of a new philosophy in Turkish foreign policy under the rule of the Justice and Development Party, mediations became a significant expression of Turkey's growing ambitions, not only regionally but also globally. Turkey has also mediated in less publicised, more local disputes, even in remote corners of the globe. Undoubtedly, Turkey's activity in the Middle East and its broader neighbourhood falls into the first, "conflicts of considerable significance" category. Turkey viewed its engagement in resolving conflicts in its own neighbourhood as a tool to strengthen its own security, especially concerning the Israeli-Arab conflict. Turkish decision-makers from JDP have often referred to the legacy of the Ottoman Empire as a just and impartial mediator in disputes among communities residing in the Empire. This legacy has practical implications for resolving current disputes – for example, Ahmet Davutoğlu maintained that the Jerusalem status dispute cannot be resolved without utilising the Ottoman archives that Turkey inherited from the Empire (Aras, 2009, p. 131).

Turkey has been actively engaged in facilitating internal reconciliation in several conflict-ridden regions. The first major mediation initiative by Turkey in the Middle East was an attempt to resolve a dispute surrounding Iraq, accused by the USA of possessing weapons of mass destruction. At Turkey's initiative, Iraq's neighbours' meetings were launched. In total, both before the US' intervention in 2003 and after the commencement of military actions, there were 11 official meetings and 3 unofficial meetings, some of which occurring in Baghdad and Tehran. Turkey, resorting to unconventional diplomatic methods, secretly brought the Vice President of Iraq, Taha Yasin Ramadan, one of Saddam's closest collaborators, to Istanbul. However, the attempt to use him as an intermediary to persuade the Iraqi regime to make concessions proved unsuccessful (Murinson, 2006, p. 954). Other than that, Turkey's mediation efforts in the Middle East also include Ankara's activity in defusing the conflict between Israel and Arab states. In November 2007, shortly before the Annapolis summit, a meeting took place in Ankara between Presidents Mahmoud Abbas and Shimon Peres. Both politicians addressed the Turkish parliament. Until the start of the Israeli invasion of the Gaza Strip at the end of 2008, Turkey mediated between Damascus and Tel Aviv. Between May and

December 2008, four rounds of talks between the conflicting parties were held through Turkey's implementation of so-called "shuttle diplomacy". The legitimization of Turkey's role as a mediator in the disputes between Israel and Arab states stemmed from its familiarity with the local realities of the Middle East. At the same time, Ankara, nurturing its transatlantic identity for decades, remained a regional outsider – it was not directly involved in regional affairs and issues, which made it easier for Turkey to play the role of a broker, a state objectively assessing the disputes taking place in that volatile region.

It is also worth noting that Turkey has repeatedly declared its willingness to mediate in the matter of the Iranian nuclear program. As suggested by Havva Kök and İmdat Öner (2016, p. 58), since the Justice and Development Party came to power, the Turkish government has transitioned in this issue from being an observer to a facilitator, ultimately assuming the role of a mediator. The Turkish-Brazilian initiative, aimed at resolving the crisis in Iran's relations with the West, resonated widely. Both countries presented the initiative regarding the Iranian nuclear program in 2010.

Transcending its ambitions to be active as a mediator in the Middle East, Turkey launched trilateral cooperation mechanisms with Serbia and Croatia to ensure stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and another one with Afghanistan and Pakistan. Additionally, Turkey has provided assistance in facilitating talks between Somalia and Somaliland and offered support to the peace process in the southern Philippines. Turkey's mediation activity has become one of the most significant manifestations of the Turkish quest for middlepowerdom, alongside its engagement in humanitarian and development assistance.

Turkey has been actively institutionalising its involvement in mediation by proposing initiatives within the framework of international organisations. In collaboration with Finland, Ankara inaugurated the "Mediation for Peace" initiative under the auspices of the United Nations, aimed at highlighting the significance of mediation in conflict prevention and resolution while advocating for increased resources to support mediation endeavours. Concurrently, Turkey hosts the "Istanbul Mediation Conferences".

How Has Turkey Contributed to Mediations Between Russia and Ukraine?

Turkey's desire to actively mediate in the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict brings into focus its carefully observed policy of cautious neutrality.

In the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Turkey stands out as the most accommodating NATO member in its dealings with Moscow, refraining from imposing sanctions or disrupting diplomatic and economic ties. Instead, Ankara champions the importance of maintaining open channels of dialogue with Russia, emphasising the potential for constructive conversations to pave the way for peaceful reconciliation.

In the debate on Turkey's foreign policy, its relations with Russia have been described as an example of "cooperative rivalry" (Secrieru, Saari, Bechev, 2021), "conflictual cooperation" (Isachenko, 2021) or "managed regional rivalry" (Köstem, 2022). Carlo Frappi (2018, p. 54) writes about the logic of "double compartmentalisation", which involves the separation of economic and political-diplomatic relations on the one hand, and a tendency to marginalise problematic matters that could trigger tensions on the other. Instead, Turkey and Russia tend to focus on those regional issues where their interests converge. This logic makes it possible to "insulate tactical convergences from persistent strategic divergences, effectively capitalising on the former while avoiding being affected by the potentially negative repercussions of the latter" (Frappi, 2018, p. 54).

In parallel, Turkey remains resolute in its commitment to maintaining a delicate balance *vis-à-vis* the war. In a strategic move, it promptly closed its waterways to military vessels at the outset of the conflict, serving as a deterrent to Russia's naval build-up efforts. Additionally, Turkey has not hesitated to provide military support to Ukraine – Turkish drones could be a "game changer" on the battlefield, according to Francis Fukuyama (Daily Sabah, 2021). President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has consistently exhibited dedication to upholding Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty.

During his official visit to Kyiv in February 2022, at a time when tensions between Ukraine and Russia were rapidly escalating, the Turkish president, in a resounding display of diplomatic leadership, emphasised the paramount need for all parties to exercise restraint. He not only reiterated Turkey's steadfast commitment to upholding Ukraine's territorial integrity but also urged for an immediate de-escalation of hostilities. The President's dedication to seeking a peaceful resolution to the unfolding crisis did not go unnoticed on the international stage. His efforts were lauded and commended by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, who extended his praise on February 7th, acknowledging the significant role that Turkey was playing in diffusing the mounting tensions.

Within the Turkish media landscape, the President's commitment to fostering regional peace garnered significant attention. This commitment was underscored when he vehemently condemned Russia's decision to

recognise the independence of the self-declared “Donetsk and Luhansk Republics” on February 22nd. President Erdoğan regarded this move by Russia as not only provocative but also wholly unacceptable, firmly opposing the unilateral declaration of independence by these regions.

On February 24th, President Erdoğan issued a clear and unequivocal condemnation of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, categorising it as a grave obstacle to regional peace, stability, and calm. He reiterated Turkey's staunch backing of Ukraine's ongoing endeavours to protect its territorial integrity, underscoring the fundamental importance of preserving the sovereignty of all nations (Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye, 2022).

In March 2022, an important development in the Russia-Ukraine war materialised as high-ranking officials, including Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmitro Kuleba, came together for diplomatic discussions (MFA Turkey, 2022). This dialogue, moderated by Turkey's Foreign Minister, marked a critical attempt to stop the war in the very first phase thereof. Following this significant development, on March 29th, 2022, substantial peace negotiations unfolded in Istanbul, with both Russian and Ukrainian delegations in attendance. The progress realised during these deliberations was described by Turkey's Foreign Minister, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, as the “most substantial” breakthrough witnessed since the initiation of the conflict. Furthermore, on the very same day, the 8th of March, the Istanbul Mediation Conference convened, shedding light on Turkey's noteworthy contributions to international diplomatic efforts.

This intricate tightrope walk and strategic wavering between Russia and Ukraine position Turkey, according to its leadership, as a potential mediator between the conflicting parties and a key catalyst for fostering peace in the region.

Turkey's diplomatic efforts were a key factor in brokering an important deal in Istanbul. This deal brought together Turkey, the United Nations, Russia, and Ukraine and led to the reopening of several Ukrainian ports. This allowed for the release of a large grain stockpile that had been stuck there for months due to the ongoing conflict. The Black Sea Grain Initiative has played a vital role in addressing a growing global food crisis, preventing a potential worldwide food shortage.

The initial agreements governing the export of food and fertilisers from Ukraine's Black Sea ports had a duration of 120 days. However, in October 2022, Russia suspended its participation in the agreement, citing suspected air and sea attacks on Russian naval vessels in Sevastopol, Crimea. Russia contended that Ukrainian air and sea forces may have been responsible for the attacks, purportedly using civilian vessels for

the operation. It was only after Ukraine provided written assurances, facilitated through Turkish mediation, that Russia consented to reengage with the Black Sea grain initiative. Consequently, the agreement was extended for another 120 days. The successful resolution of this crisis owed much to the diplomatic endeavours led by Turkey's President, Defense Minister, and Foreign Minister, who all played a pivotal role in persuading the parties to return to the negotiating table.

On the 22nd of September, 2022, an unforeseen breakthrough was achieved as Ukraine and Russia reached an agreement on a prisoner exchange, a pivotal moment facilitated by Turkish mediation, and President Erdoğan personally, who met President Putin at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. This historic accord led to the liberation of a significant number of detainees, encompassing 215 Ukrainian citizens and 55 Russian and pro-Russian combatants (Reuters, 2022). Three weeks later, president Erdoğan intensified his personal commitment by proposing a meeting between Putin and Western leaders. Moreover, by mid-November, he had actively promoted the idea of direct and comprehensive peace talks between Ukraine and Russia (Butler, 2023).

Fast forward to a significant international conference held in Ankara in January 2023, with the presence of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. During this gathering, Ukraine's human rights ombudsman, Dmytro Lubinets, engaged in a sideline meeting with his Russian counterpart, Tatyana Mosalkova. Their discussion yielded a preliminary announcement of an agreement involving the exchange of "more than 40 prisoners" from each side (Anadolu Agency, 2022). However, this initial announcement was subsequently retracted, underscoring the intricate nature of such negotiations and the challenges inherent in navigating complex diplomatic terrain.

On March 18th, 2023, Russia announced a 60-day extension of the grain deal, stating that this duration would suffice for evaluating the success of the memorandum signed with the United Nations. As per the United Nations, the agreement's terms allowed Ukraine to export approximately 28.8 million tons of agricultural products, including 14.6 million tons of corn and 7.8 million tons of wheat. Although Russia's refusal in mid-2023 to extend the agreement once again was – despite successive attempts by the Turkish leader, including during his trip to Sochi where he met Vladimir Putin in September 2023 in yet another opening of "grain diplomacy" (France24, 2023) – allegedly grounded in its grievances over unmet commitments concerning the liberation of its food and fertiliser shipments (Reuters, 2023), it is essential not

to downplay Turkey's significance as a facilitator in the Russia/Ukraine conundrum.

In addition to brokering the grain deal, an Istanbul-based Joint Coordination Committee (JCC) has been established. It includes officials from the three concerned nations and the United Nations and is responsible for ensuring the smooth implementation of the Initiative and managing the transportation of goods from Ukraine's Black Sea ports.

Conclusions

The structural transformations unfolding within the global political and economic landscape have triggered a reevaluation of foreign policy priorities among Turkish elites. This recalibration may be seen as a strategic response to Turkey's positioning amid systemic shifts, notably the decreasing strength of the West. The waning relative power of the United States and the European Union on the international stage, along with adverse developments in domestic politics, serve as impetuses pushing Turkey toward a course of more autonomous foreign policy and a diversification of its international engagement strategies.

Today, Turkey is at a pivotal juncture, wherein it seeks to reinforce its position as a middle power while simultaneously aiming for greater regional and global autonomy. A tangible manifestation of this evolving role is Turkey's proactive involvement as a mediator in the war Russia has been waging against Ukraine. By assuming a mediator role and trying to ensure open lines of communication with both opposing factions, Turkey has tried to reinvigorate diplomatic endeavours aimed at finding a resolution to the crisis. Turkey's equidistant policy *vis-à-vis* Russia and Ukraine reflects its diplomatic balancing act in the face of the ongoing conflict. Ankara has sought to maintain a pragmatic middle ground, engaging with both sides. This signifies Turkey's increasing determination to assert its independence and take on a more self-reliant role in shaping the course of global affairs.

Turkey's recent foreign policy trajectory, marked by assertiveness and militarism, introduces a potential clash between roles. On one hand, there is the role of a benign power focused on humanitarianism and mutual benefit. On the other, however, there is the role of a more assertive power readily employing hard power tactics. This dynamic presents a complex interplay that may lead to conflicts in role performances.

Moreover, the surging trend of securitisation raises considerable apprehensions regarding Turkey's capacity to maintain neutrality and impartiality in its mediation efforts. The heightened prioritisation of

security measures could cast doubt on Turkey's image as a neutral mediator, especially in the context of regional conflicts. The intricate balance between assertiveness, militarism, and the traditional role of a benign power adds layers of complexity to Turkey's evolving foreign policy landscape.

The timing of the Ukraine-Russia war coincides with a phase in which Turkey has strategically embraced more pacifist approaches in its foreign policy. The considerable political and economic challenges faced by Turkey in recent years have compelled a shift toward a more cautious diplomatic stance. This shift is reflected in Turkey's efforts to enhance relations with various nations, including Armenia, Israel, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, and the European Union, as highlighted by Akpınar (2022). In response to the complex geopolitical landscape, Turkey is expediently attempting to reconstruct its image and ideational capabilities as a mediator in regional conflicts. In an alternative phrasing, it incorporates mediations as a key instrument within its diplomatic toolbox.

Being an "unusual" or "modified" middle power, Turkey's role as a mediator is primarily driven by a dual objective; firstly, to safeguard its own interests, and, secondly, to expand and amplify its influence. Contrary to the conventional role of middle powers as "good international citizens", Turkey's motivations for mediation efforts are pragmatic and strategic. Despite the varying degrees of success in Turkey's mediation endeavours as demonstrated, for instance, by the grain deal – its underlying motivations deviate from the idealised roles of traditional middle powers. Instead, they align more with the ambitions and aspirations characteristic of emerging, rising powers.

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*Paweł Stawarz**

Azerbaijan's Path to Fulfilling Its Current Role in Building Global Energy Security and Its Prospects for the Future

Abstract

The research problem of this paper concerns energy security in the regional and global dimensions in the context of Azerbaijan's role in its construction, the aim being to verify whether Azerbaijan is one of the key elements in building energy security, especially in the South Caucasus, but also in relation to the European Union and even in a global sense. The factorial and comparative methods were mainly used to examine the indicated subject matter. This article shows that both natural conditions and the appropriate actions of the Azerbaijani authorities have been strengthening the country's role for several decades not only as the main element of the energy security of the South Caucasus, but also as one of the key factors in building the energy security of the European Union and is shaping itself as a significant co-creator of global security in this sphere. Azerbaijan's achievements to date in the sphere of energy security and forecasts for the future allow one to conclude that the state will have an increasingly stronger position as a guarantor of security in the discussed sphere in the South Caucasus, and its role as a co-builder of the Union's energy security will take on new, unprecedented shapes. Also, in the global dimension, the role of Azerbaijan will increase.

Keywords: Azerbaijan, Energy Security, Natural Gas, Crude Oil

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Introduction

The issues raised in this article concern the role of Azerbaijan in the building of global energy security. In order to properly assess the discussed issue, one should look at it not in a fragmentary way, but as a process that began when Azerbaijan regained its independence, leading to the current position of this state in the field of building global energy security. In order for a review of the subject of research to be complete, an attempt should also be made to determine the further, most probable direction of development of the analysed phenomenon. For this reason, the above approach has been used in this study. This will allow for a new perspective on the researched subject, which will be a significant contribution to European or even world science.

The research question posed in the article asks whether Azerbaijan, since regaining independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union, has conducted consistent activities in the field of energy policy, especially regarding the extraction, processing, and transmission of crude oil and natural gas or not, thus becoming one of the key elements of energy security not only in the South Caucasus, but also in Europe and even in the world, and which may become even stronger given the current geopolitical situation related to the victorious Second Karabakh War, and the severance of cooperation between the West and Russia – which had been a strategic supplier of crude oil and natural gas to many European countries – and events in Karabakh on September 19–20th, 2023.

In answering the indicated question, it will be helpful to verify the research hypothesis; practically from the very beginning of Azerbaijan's return to the political map of the world, the country has sought to develop its industry related to the extraction, processing, and transmission of crude oil and natural gas, while taking care to maintain control over it, which strengthens its position in the international arena by making Azerbaijan a strong *subject*, not an *object* of international energy security policy, i.e., a country that not only has deposits of energy resources and a developed sector of the economy related to them on its territory, but also decides on the method of its use and further development. The victory in the 44-Day War, the war between Russia and Ukraine, and the success achieved in Karabakh on September 19–20th, 2023, further strengthened Azerbaijan's current position as one of the key builders of global energy security, also putting forth the prospect of a further strengthening of the country's position in this field. The above statements are supported by such facts as the actions of the Azerbaijani authorities, which, since the 1990s, have sought to modernise and increase the extraction of energy resources,

(also by involving Western capital), while expanding the infrastructure for their transmission, while maintaining ownership control over the energy sector. It is also important to strengthen territorial integrity after the successes in the Second Karabakh War and goals achieved as a result of the activities on September 19–20th, 2023 and the possibility of intensifying cooperation with the European Union in the field of energy supplies after the EU members broke off cooperation with Russia – for many, until recently, a key supplier of crude oil and natural gas.

Due to the volume limitations of this article along with substantive issues, a time limit was applied – the research covers a period which starts from Azerbaijan regaining its independence in the early 1990s to the present day (2023). This is supplemented by various predictions regarding the discussed issues in the medium term. The discussed period is of the greatest importance for determining the role of Azerbaijan in building global energy security, considered as a process. Research on the indicated phenomenon (territorial limit) will focus on the territory of: Azerbaijan; entities with the most significant impact on the South Caucasus; and European Union states. This area is of the greatest importance for the research in question. The objective limitation is related to the narrowing of the research work to issues related to the oil and natural gas industry, as, mainly, these two elements are the most important for studying of the role of Azerbaijan in creating global energy security.

In the 21st century, energy security is one of the main factors necessary to provide the basis for the existence of each state and the societies inhabiting them. That is why it is so important both for individual states and the global dimension.

Azerbaijan's Path Towards Becoming One of the Key Players in the International Energy Security Architecture

Azerbaijan is one of the key states in terms of ensuring global energy security. This is due to several facts. Firstly, the country has significant reserves of oil (*Zasoby ropy Azerbejdżanu starczą na 150 lat*, 2007) and natural gas (*Azerbejdżan ma coraz więcej gazu*, 2020). It is also very important to have extensive, modern infrastructure for the extraction and transport of both of the aforementioned energy resources. Thanks to the wise policy of the Azerbaijani authorities regarding energy resources, as has been pursued for several decades in accordance with the same main goals, i.e., striving to expand and modernise the infrastructure for the extraction and transmission of crude oil and natural gas (Misiągiewicz, 2021, p. 304), while maintaining Azerbaijani control over the energy industry, the state

can decide to which states and how much crude oil and natural gas to sell, both in terms of the state's own energy resources and those from Central Asian states (Misiągiewicz, 2021, p. 303), the transit of which Azerbaijani pipelines may be used to the West.



Figure 1. Azerbaijani Pipelines for Transmitting Energy Resources Westwards: BTC and BTS (for the Transmission of Crude Oil) and BTE (for the Transmission of Natural Gas)

Source: *Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline*, N.D.

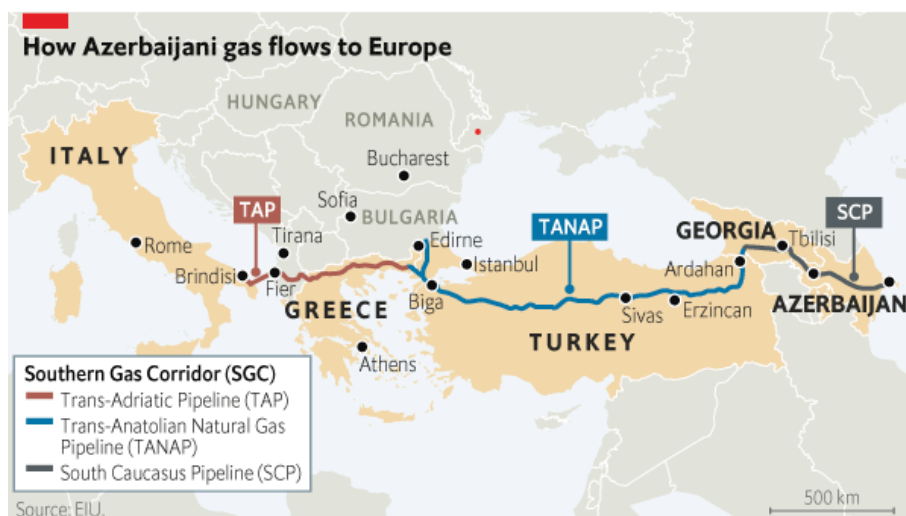


Figure 2. The Southern Gas Corridor Connecting Azerbaijan with Greece and Italy

Source: SOCAR, N.D.

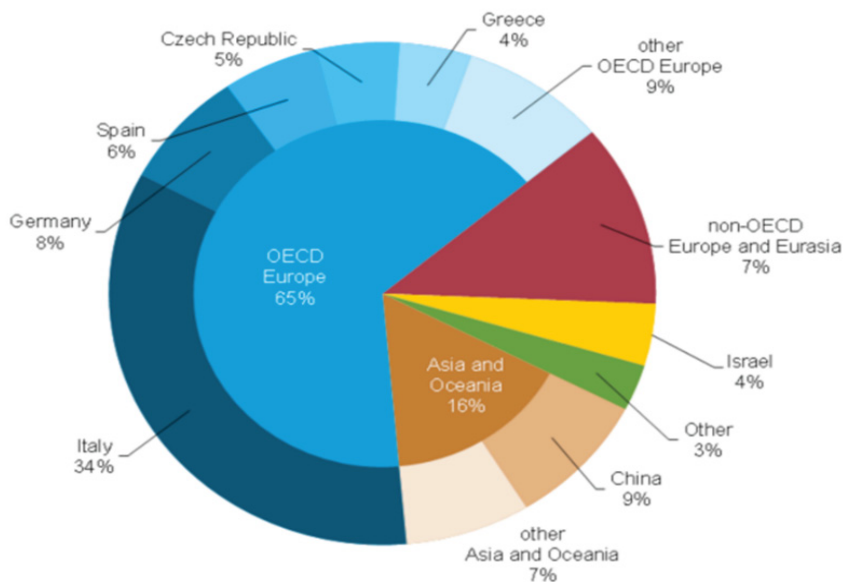


Figure 3. Azerbaijani Crude Oil Exports by Destination States in 2020

Source: EIA, 2021.

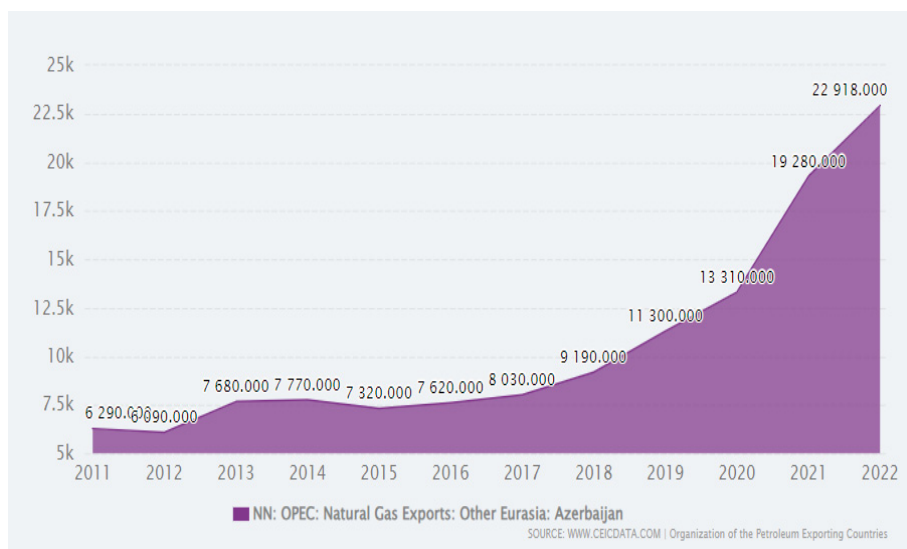


Figure 4. The Increase in the Production and Export of Azerbaijani Natural Gas in 2011–2022

Source: www.ceidatat.com Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries.

One of the first steps towards the current, favourable situation of Azerbaijan as an independent supplier of energy resources was 1994's signing of the so-called "contract of the century", which allowed for extensive, long-term development of modern oil extraction infrastructure thanks to the investments of international oil companies, mainly Western ones, led by the British BP company. Together with Azerbaijan's SOCAR, they formed a consortium under the name Azerbaijan International Operating Company (AIOC) (*The Contract of the Century – A National Strategy for Success*, N.D.). After an extension, the aforementioned "contract of the century" is valid until 2050. Thanks to the implementation of the indicated contract, the production of Azerbaijani oil has increased significantly, strengthening the position of the state as a supplier of this particular energy resource. Investments focused on oil production were supplemented by the construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline. Thanks to the BTC, which was opened in 2006, energy resources have been delivered via Georgia and Turkey to the West (*Heydar Aliyev Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Main Export Pipeline*, N.D.), making Azerbaijan one of the most important oil suppliers to European countries. Azerbaijan is also intensively developing natural gas production, being a country which has significant resources of this energy resource. In this context, it is very important for the state to have gas pipelines to the west that are independent of Russia. Its gas flows through the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum pipeline, built parallel to the BTC pipeline (Ochman, 2021). However, the most important in terms of length and capacity is the Southern Gas Corridor, which consists of the South Caucasus Pipeline, the Trans-Anatolian Pipeline, and the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline. Thanks to this infrastructure, Azerbaijani natural gas reaches Greece, Albania, and Italy via Georgia and Turkey (*The Southern Gas Corridor*, 2023). There are also plans to extend it to other European states.

The Role of Azerbaijan in the International Energy Security Infrastructure of the Future

The discussed issues are positively affected by an increase in territorial integrity resulting from Azerbaijan's victory in the Second Karabakh War in which the country regained control over a large part of Karabakh which had been illegally occupied by Armenia, and also regained control over territories around this region. This situation has increased the stability of the state as a result (Stawarz, 2020). As a consequence of Azerbaijan's victory, the state, Armenia, and Russia signed a document guaranteeing a land connection between the main part of Azerbaijan and Nakhichevan

through the so-called “Zangezur Corridor” (Eruygun, 2022). This has opened up new communication opportunities, including in terms of the transport of energy resources to the West, or, to EU countries. The indicated route would be much shorter than the current one, which would reduce not only the time needed to transport crude oil and natural gas to the EU states, but also the price. Maintaining a shorter pipeline would also be cheaper. The territorial stability of Azerbaijan was further strengthened as a result of the actions carried out by the state in Karabakh on September 19–20th, 2023. As a result, on the territory of Azerbaijan, the part of Karabakh over which Azerbaijan did not regain real control after the Second Karabakh War was destroyed, and part of the Armenian armed forces were forced to withdraw, while other Armenian troops in Karabakh were disarmed and disbanded (SONXEBER.NET, 2023). As a result, Baku’s control over this part of Azerbaijan was restored, and Azerbaijan ended the illegal occupation of part of its territory by Armenia and now has real control over its entire territory. The indicated facts not only led to the optimal strengthening of Azerbaijan’s territorial integrity, stability, and strengthening of its position in the South Caucasus; a highly significant element destabilising the region was eliminated – the illegal occupation of part of the territory of Azerbaijan by Armenia. Armenia’s illegal occupation resulted in constant tension between the two countries and the freezing of communication between Azerbaijan and Turkey, as its strategic partner, with Armenia. The latter-mentioned state was supported by Russia, thanks to which it was able to illegally occupy part of the territory of Azerbaijan. However, the Russian Federation used this fact to make Armenia dependent on it in the political, economic, and military spheres. This situation was unfavourable not only for Azerbaijan but also for Armenia. It destabilised the South Caucasus and strengthened Russia’s position in the region. After the end of the illegal occupation of Karabakh by the Armenians – as a result of the Second Karabakh War and the events of September 19–20th, 2023 – Armenia no longer needs Russia as a state supporting the illegal occupation, which gives Armenia a chance to pursue a more independent policy; one less dependent on the Russian Federation. If Armenian society understands that the actions of Armenians in Karabakh and adjacent areas over the last several decades were an illegal occupation of part of the territory of a neighbouring state and does not question the current situation in which Azerbaijan has control over its entire territory, then there is a chance for a permanent stabilisation of relations between both states, thus would significantly strengthen the stability of the South Caucasus and make the region significantly independent from Russian influence. This situation

would further strengthen the importance of Azerbaijan as one of the key players in building energy security in the region, in the European Union, and even globally. The importance of Azerbaijan as a key partner in ensuring the energy security of the European Union is evidenced by the fact that it already supplies 12 billion cubic meters of natural gas to the Member States of that particular international organisation. After the start of Russia's aggression against Ukraine in 2022 and the Western countries' resignation from the supply of that raw material from the Russian Federation, which had historically been the main partner of the European Union in this field, the energy security of many European states has deteriorated. In this situation, Azerbaijan, which has large natural gas deposits that are independent of Russia and also has high-capacity infrastructure for the transmission of natural gas to European countries that is not under the control of the Russian Federation, is gaining a strategically important position as a country that can, to a large extent, replace Russia in the short term as a strategic partner in the field of Europe's energy security. Even greater opportunities in the future would arise if the Azerbaijani natural gas transmission infrastructure to the West was used to transport this raw material from Turkmenistan, which has the fourth largest natural gas reserves in the world. Prospects in this regard have been opened by an agreement between Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan regarding the extraction of natural gas from the bottom of the Caspian Sea and the transmission of gas from Turkmenistan to the West through the Southern Gas Corridor – a gas pipeline connecting Azerbaijan with the European Union.

Azerbaijan's cooperation with Turkmenistan in the field of gas transport from Turkmenistan to the EU has been motivated by Russia's war with Ukraine, with the Russian Federation concentrating most of its military forces and financial resources on actions against its Ukrainian neighbour. The state of the Russian economy and military even before the outbreak of the war did not allow Russia to be involved in several conflicts conducted in parallel. Additionally, the weakening of Russia's capabilities after its attack on Ukraine on February 24th, 2024 – as a result of numerous sanctions imposed on this state by the international community – mean that Russia is unable to influence the states of Central Asia, including Turkmenistan, to the same extent as before. Turkmenistan is aware of this fact, which is why its policy is becoming one that is more and more independent from Russia. Thanks to this, the Russian Federation's opposition to natural gas supplies from Turkmenistan to the European Union is no longer so important for the authorities in Ashgabat. Azerbaijan's intermediation in the transport of energy resources to the West from Kazakhstan, which has

large deposits, creates similar opportunities. The strategic importance of Azerbaijan for the energy security of the European Union was evidenced by a visit to Baku (in August 2022) by Ursula von der Leyen, the head of the European Commission along with the Commissioner for Energy, and their meeting with President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, and the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on a strategic partnership in the field of energy. Azerbaijan has been identified as a key partner of the Union in the field of energy security, and one of the main goals has been to increase the supply of natural gas to the EU to at least twenty billion cubic meters of natural gas by 2027 (Trusewicz, 2022).

These facts clearly indicate that Azerbaijan is one of the most important elements of global energy security, and the discussed situation may evolve, strengthening the country's position in the field of building global energy security.

Conclusions

To sum up, it should be stated that the research hypothesis put forward at the beginning has been positively verified, according to which, practically from the very beginning of Azerbaijan's return to the political map of the world, the country has sought to develop the industry related to the extraction, processing, and transmission of crude oil and natural gas, while taking care to maintain control over it, which strengthens its position on the international arena by making Azerbaijan a strong subject, and not an object, of international energy security policy – a country that not only has deposits of energy resources and a developed sector of the economy related to them on its territory, but also presides over the method of its use and further development. The victory in the 44-Day War, the war between Russia and Ukraine, and the success achieved in Karabakh on September 19–20th, 2023, have all further strengthened Azerbaijan's current position as one of the key builders of global energy security, while also raising the prospect of further strengthening the country's position in this field. The above statements are supported by such facts as the actions of the Azerbaijani authorities, which, since the 1990s, have sought to modernise and increase the extraction of energy resources while involving Western capital, expanding the infrastructure for their transmission, and maintaining ownership control over the energy sector. It is also important to strengthen territorial integrity after the successes in the Second Karabakh War and the goals achieved as a result of the activities on September 19–20th, 2023 and the possibility of intensifying cooperation with the European Union in the field of energy supplies after

the EU members broke off cooperation with Russia – until recently a key supplier of crude oil and natural gas for many.

In conclusion, it should be pointed out that the consistent, long-term actions of the Azerbaijani authorities have led to the state gaining a very strong position among the entities on which not only does the energy security of the South Caucasus and the European Union states depend, but also the world. Such a situation became possible thanks to the proper use of the possessed deposits of energy resources. Azerbaijan met the challenge of having energy resources on the one hand, but, on the other, the country overcame myriad obstacles connected to the outdated, insufficient post-Soviet infrastructure for those resources' exploration, extraction, and processing. A sizeable issue was also the lack of appropriate infrastructure for the transmission of crude oil and natural gas to the west, independent of external entities, especially Russia. An additionally unfavourable factor was the shortage of sufficient funds for the necessary modernisation of the sector of the economy related to energy resources, which was the result of the earlier, predatory economy of the USSR authorities against the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic, and then, after regaining independence, the high costs related to the need to defend its own territory, so illegally attacked by the Armenians, which went down in history as the First Karabakh War. Despite these largely unfavourable conditions, Azerbaijan focused on the rapid development of the sector of the economy related to energy resources while ensuring its continued control over it. This was possible thanks to successful negotiations, mainly with Western partners, as a result of which much-needed missing capital was obtained for the rapid modernisation and expansion of the energy sector related to crude oil and natural gas, all while preventing external entities from taking control of that part of the economy. A similar mechanism was used in the construction of pipelines for the transport of energy resources to the West, bypassing the territory of Russia and independent of the indicated state. Thanks to the aforementioned actions of the Azerbaijani authorities, this country is not now an object, but one of the key subjects of energy security policy not only in the South Caucasus and Europe, but also in the global dimension. Thanks to such a strong position, additionally strengthened by the effects of the Second Karabakh War and the actions of September 19–20th, 2023, which also influenced the stabilisation of the South Caucasus and the weakening of Russia's position in the region, Azerbaijan can take advantage of the favourable situation related to the severance of cooperation between the European Union and the Russian Federation in the field of energy supplies. This opens up great opportunities for further intensification of Azerbaijan's relations with the EU in terms of energy

supplies, which will lead to even greater importance of this country as one of the key entities shaping global energy security.

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