30 Years of the Visegrad Group

Volume 3

The war in Ukraine
and the policy
of the V4 countries

edited by
Ewelina Kancik-Kołtun

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Visegrad
Group

The published articles were presented at the 3rd International Scientific Conference in the series "30 Years of the Visegrad Group: The War in Ukraine and the Policy of the V4 Countries".

The international conference "30 Years of the Visegrad Group: The war in Ukraine and the Policy of the V4 Countries" was held on April 19–20, 2023 in Lublin at the Faculty of Political Science and Journalism of the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University (Poland).

Post-conference papers included in the book were accepted for publication by the members of the international conference committee, and then underwent an independent editorial review.

The scope and purpose of the Conference:

The scope of the conference covered topics related to the policy of the Visegrad Group countries in connection with the war in Ukraine. The aim of the conference was to present the problems related to the outbreak of war in Ukraine from the international perspective from the point of view of researchers from the V4 country and Ukraine.

Organizers of the Conference:

Faculty of Political Science and Journalism of the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University (Poland)
Center for Eastern Europe UMCS (Poland)

International Scientific Committee:

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Doc. PhD. Josef Smolik – Department of Security Studies, Faculty of Security Management, Police Academy of the Czech Republic in Prague (Czech Republic)
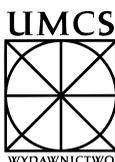PhD Sándor Fekete – Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Miskolc (Hungary)

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30 Years of the Visegrad Group

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The war in Ukraine and the policy of the V4 countries

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Contents

Introduction

The escalation of Russia's war in Ukraine came as a shock, although it should not have come as a surprise, as it had been warned of by US and NATO intelligence. The military conflict in Europe threatens the security of many other countries: neighbouring Ukraine, and thus the Visegrad Group's countries of the former USSR. The war has shattered the hitherto existing peace and security order in Europe and in the world. Russia, as a strategic player, is thus trying to return to its position from before the collapse of the Soviet Union as well as to gain dominance in Europe and become a world-level player, which is impossible without Ukraine.

With Russia's full-scale armed conflict in Ukraine, the Visegrad countries faced an enormous challenge, as three of them became frontline states overnight. The course of the conflict itself developed unexpectedly, as Ukraine successfully resisted the Russian aggressor from the very beginning, and even over time Ukrainian soldiers began to go on the counter-offensive. Many countries in the West thought that the war would end quickly with a Russian victory, but the end is not in sight, and Russia's cruel war crimes against civilians have been seen by the whole world. Europe began to plunge into an energy crisis, which in turn caused it to start to become independent from Russia.

In the politics of the Visegrad countries, Russia's war in Ukraine has caused many problems not only within the states, but also internationally, such as the energy crisis, the food crisis, the refugee crisis, the looming economic recession and the unease among Visegrad members in relation to the perception of the war in Ukraine. This publication, written by authors from Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and Ukraine, tries to show the politics and contemporary problems of the Visegrad countries during the war between Ukraine and Russia. The book presents the different research approaches of the academics, using the research methods available, as it should be remembered that the war is still underway, which may result in a different picture of the given problems in the future.

The first chapter by Jacek Wojnicki, entitled *The Visegrad Countries Towards the War in Ukraine*, deals with the stance of the Visegrad countries towards the armed conflict in Ukraine, which began on 24 February 2022, as a result of the aggression of the Russian Federation's forces.

The next chapter, *A Trojan Horse or a Strategic Alliance? The Ukrainian War and the V4*, by Andrea Schmidt, highlights the problem of the crisis in the Visegrad

Group in relation to the war in Ukraine and the deterioration of Polish-Hungarian relations. The author considers the crisis from a Hungarian perspective, by placing it in a certain historical and political context.

Péter Rada's and Péter Stepper's chapter *The Effect of the Shifting International Strategic Environment on the EU and the V4* deals with the ideas of a new world order affected by the war in Ukraine. The article aims to underline the characteristics of the evolving trends in the international strategic environment that affect the EU and, through the EU, the Visegrad countries.

Andrii Hachkevych's chapter, *Why Did the States of the Visegrad Group Allegedly Apply Double Standards When Helping the Asylum Seekers and Refugees from Ukraine?* discusses the policies and practices of the Visegrad states regarding their attitude with respect to people applying for asylum and refugee status. In his work, the author focuses on assessing the treatment of Ukrainians and non-Ukrainians by the Visegrad states on this issue, in which said "double standards" apply.

The next chapter, *Polish Aid to Ukraine and Its Citizens During Russia's War Against Ukraine*, by Ewelina Kancik-Kołtun, examines the effects of Polish help, both governmental and civilian, to Ukraine and Ukrainian citizens in connection with the war. The work analyses military and humanitarian aid to Ukraine, including refugee assistance.

The subsequent chapter by Bożena Dziemidok-Olszewska and Marta Michalczuk-Wlizło entitled *Institutional Assistance to Refugees from Ukraine. The Case of Poland* is a study of institutional – i.e., enacted and planned – assistance and legislation for the support and care of the refugees. The authors focus on the Law of 12 March 2022 on Assistance to Citizens of Ukraine in Connection with the Armed Conflict on the Territory of That Country and the drafts of its amendments under preparation.

Tomasz Wicha's article, *The Verbal Will for Consensus Despite The Internal Political Conflict – an Examination of the Political Debate in the Polish Sejm on 24th February 2022 on the Policy of Poland Towards the War in Ukraine*, reveals the issues that influenced the political conflict in contemporary Poland. The author analyses the political debate in the context of the war in Ukraine.

The next chapter by Piotr Żak, *The View of the Visegrad Countries – Czechia, Slovakia and Hungary – on Issues Concerning the Russian Invasion of Ukraine in the First 30 Days of the War in 2022*, presents the reaction of the three countries of the Visegrad Group – the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary in the first month of the war in Ukraine after the attack of the Russian Federation. The author explores the political reactions, aid efforts towards Ukraine, and assistance to refugees arriving in the Visegrad countries.

The chapter by Štefan Danics and Josef Smolík, *The Czech Security Policy in the Context of the Hybrid Warfare in Ukraine*, explores the changes in the Czech security

policy that are taking place in the context of the hybrid war waged by the Russian Federation (Russia) in Ukraine, described by the former party as a special denazification and demilitarization operation.

In the chapter *Ukrainian-Slovak Relations: the Human Dimension Before and After the Beginning of the Full-Scale War in Ukraine in 2022*, Hanna Melehanych presents relations between Ukraine and Slovakia in terms of migration issues and the life of the Ukrainian community in Slovakia. She describes the reactions of the Slovak authorities and the solidarity of society, as well as international legal mechanisms.

Miroslav Řádek, in the text *Ukrainian and Russian Sources in the Slovak Media After the Start of the War in Ukraine*, takes a closer look at the proportional use of media resources on both sides of the conflict. Using quantitative content analysis of Slovak media, he obtains results that confirm the equal use of resources on the Russian and Ukrainian sides.

Sándor Fekete's final chapter, entitled *On a Narrow Sphere: Hungary's Position in the Russian-Ukrainian War*, addresses how Hungary has approached the most important geopolitical situation today concerning the European Union and NATO. The author notes that the apparent disruption of Western unity by Hungary's hostility towards allied Ukraine, while maintaining good relations with its enemy, Russia, has been widely criticized but rarely understood.

The book is not an exhaustive study of all issues and important topics, but rather initiates a discussion on the impact of the war in Ukraine on politics and international relations in the Visegrad countries, Europe and the world.

JACEK WOJNICKI

The Visegrad Countries Towards the War in Ukraine

Abstract: The dramatic months of 2022 exposed the weakness and heterogeneity of the Visegrad Group. The conflict was a testing moment for the allied and partner relations not only in this part of the Old Continent. Relations in the triangle Central Europe-Kyiv-Moscow showed mutual dependencies and complex conditions of mutual and regional relations. Three of the analysed countries strongly supported the Ukrainian side, condemning Russia's aggression and supporting the Ukrainian state. The attitude of the Hungarian state, however, was characterized by ambivalence. This complexity in the stances should be considered a testing experience for the discussed group of Central European countries in the context of the future global and regional challenges.

Keywords: Visegrad Group, Ukraine, war, regional cooperation, NATO

Introduction

This article deals with the position of the Visegrad countries towards the armed conflict in Ukraine, which broke out on 24 February 2022 as a result of the aggression of the Russian Federation forces. This has been Europe's largest and bloodiest conflict after the end of World War II, far surpassing earlier wars in the former Yugoslavia (1991–1995), the conflict in Transnistria (1992), the war in Georgia (2008) and the first armed attack of the Russian forces on Ukraine (Crimea and Donbas in 2014). At the same time, it has marked a painful and bloody end to the period of geopolitical equilibrium on the Old Continent forged by the great powers (primarily the US and the Russian Federation) after the demise of the bipolar system (December 1991 – the collapse of the Soviet Union and the establishment of the Commonwealth of Independent States). It is important to note at this point in our political analysis that the paper's scope of investigation covers three Central European countries – the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary. The case of Poland – for various reasons and due to a more comprehensive knowledge of developments – comes up sporadically, primarily in the context of comparative analysis [Bieleń 2021, Brzeziński

2004, Calvocoressi 2010, Kukułka 2007, Kuźniar 2018, Parzymies 2004, Pietraś & Kapuśniak 2007, Zięba 2020].

The conflict in Ukraine has also been a difficult experience for the functioning of the Visegrad Group, a Central-European regional organisation. The countries have failed to develop a unified position towards the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, as three of them – the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland – have supported the Ukrainian state in different manners while Hungary has adopted an ambiguous position, seeking to avoid the deterioration of its rather close relations with the authorities of the Russian Federation [Budzisz, Góralczyk, Radziejewski 2022]. As the analysts pointed out: "*We are dealing with a double war, namely a Russian-Ukrainian hot war and a parallel Western-Russian cold war. They are closely interdependent but not identical. And their course and outcome may differ*" [Budzisz, Góralczyk, Radziejewski 2022].

It is necessary to point out the non-uniformity of stances of political elites in these countries, with a pro-Ukrainian and anti-Russian narrative dominating in three of them, while the reverse stance is found only in Hungary. The aspect of social reactions to the conflict across the eastern borders should also be noted (in this group of countries only the Czech Republic does not directly border Ukraine) [Czyż 2022].

It is worth reviewing the developments in individual countries, starting with the Czech Republic. The invasion of Ukraine by the Russian forces triggered an unprecedented wave of both social and political solidarity in the Czech Republic. From the beginning of the war, the Czech Republic, who took a staunchly pro-Ukrainian stance, undertook measures to support Ukraine. A similar approach to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict was followed by Slovakia, whose authorities were involved in political, military and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine from late February. In addition, Slovak society was largely in favour of providing support to refugees. In contrast, Hungary has adopted a starkly different, ambiguous position towards the war in Ukraine. The Hungarian authorities, on the one hand, have condemned the Russian aggression and supported the EU sanctions so far, but on the other hand, they have not loosened ties with Russia while also declaring their lack of support for EU measures targeting the Russian energy sector [Lewkowicz, Czarnecki, Hejj 2022].

Slovakia

When analysing the position taken by the Slovak Republic, it is worth noting that the 20th-anniversary conference dedicated to Slovak foreign and European policy issues was held in Bratislava on 15 February 2022. The event, organised by the Slovak Foreign Policy Association (SFPA) in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, was an important contribution to the public debate on foreign policy and international security. During the

conference, top Slovak politicians, diplomats, academics and experts discussed such issues as the main challenges of Slovakia's European policy and the changing global security environment. It is worth pointing out that the conference took place in the shadow of the escalating Russian-Ukrainian crisis and a radicalisation of the internal debate following the Slovak parliament's adoption of the Defence Cooperation Agreement (DCA) with the US, which was reflected in the speeches made by the participants [Lewkowicz 2022].

Top politicians in Slovakia (the Head of State, Head of Government, Speaker of the Parliament) strongly condemned Russia for its military attack on Ukraine. Following an extraordinary meeting of the Slovak Security Council held on 24 February, President Zuzana Čaputová, Prime Minister Eduard Heger (OĽaNO) and Parliament Speaker Boris Kollár (Sme rodina) issued a joint statement on the events across the eastern border. The representatives of Slovakia's three most important state authorities defined Russia as an aggressor that had launched a military invasion of Ukraine. They announced that Slovakia firmly condemned the Russian aggression and would support the Ukrainians. They unequivocally stated that, together with its NATO and EU allies, the Slovak side was ready to assist Ukraine in ending the conflict and protecting human life. They assessed that the security situation in Europe had changed dramatically in the wake of the Russian attack. At the same time, they reassured Slovaks that Slovakia's territorial integrity and security were not directly threatened, not least because of its NATO and EU membership. They also asked the public for solidarity and assistance for refugees from Ukraine [Lewkowicz 2022b].

Then on 14 March 2022, Slovakia's special services reported the detention of a group of individuals suspected of espionage on behalf of the military intelligence of the Russian Federation. In connection with the detentions, the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of Slovakia took a decision to expel three Russian diplomats. As announced by the Ministry of Defence, this was only the beginning of efforts to expose the spy network operating in Slovakia [Lewkowicz 2022c].

On 15 March, in turn, the Slovak parliament approved by a vote of 96 MPs (out of 134 present in the chamber) the government's request to increase the number of NATO troops in the rapid reaction force on the country's territory. During a heated parliamentary debate, the opposition argued that Slovakia was not directly threatened by the conflict in Ukraine and did not need the presence of other NATO troops on its territory. "We cannot wait for someone to attack us, we have to be prepared for all possible scenarios", Prime Minister Eduard Heger responded to the accusations. The international group would be made up of soldiers from the Czech Republic (600), the Netherlands (200), Poland (100), Slovenia (100), Germany (700) and the United States (400). The troops would be deployed at four training grounds: Lešť, Sliač, Kamenica nad Cirochou and Záhorie. Slovakia would also receive Patriot missile systems, US Sentinel radar technology systems and drone systems for border

protection. The Ministry of Defence intended to finance an unmanned system with European grants [Niewiadomski 2022].

It should be stressed that Slovakia has unequivocally and emphatically condemned Russia's attack on Ukraine and consistently supported an embargo on imports of energy resources and fuels. But the Slovak Republic's heavy dependence on natural gas supplies has necessitated the need for creating a more diverse import structure, which, however, has posed a serious challenge in the existing market conditions. Running counter to the actions of the majority of the government coalition was a public remark by Slovak Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy Richard Sulík (SaS), in which he admitted that purchasing Russian gas for roubles was a possibility. This was strongly criticised by both his own political circle and other representatives of the government coalition [Lewkowicz, Paszkowski 2022].

A meeting of representatives of the European Affairs Committees of the Parliaments of the Visegrad Group countries took place in Košice, Slovakia, on 25 April with the participation of a Ukrainian MP, Chair of the Committee for the Integration of Ukraine into the European Union. The main topics of the meeting included discussions on the situation in Ukraine and energy security in the European Union. Representatives of the European affairs committees stressed that Russia is committing crimes against humanity on Ukrainian territory, which violate international law and the UN Charter [Niewiadomski 2022b].

A debate had been going on in Slovakia for several months about a possible introduction of an embargo on oil imports from Russia by European Union countries. The Slovak government, for its part, hoped to secure an appropriate derogation period from these regulations. Technological and infrastructural issues were cited as a problem. A proposal to introduce a special tax on oil imports with the aim of raising funds from Slovnaft caused great controversy [Lewkowicz, Paszkowski 2022b].

During an extraordinary session of parliament on 10 May, deputies of the National Council listened to Volodymyr Zelensky's video speech on the current situation in Ukraine. Coalition MPs enthusiastically welcomed the speech, while MPs from opposition groups demonstratively left the meeting room after the first words of the Ukrainian president. The president thanked the MPs for the military and humanitarian aid provided. "We are at the epicentre of the dispute between tyranny and the European Union. Russia wants to humiliate our country. If we do not stop the Russian forces, they will march on, also to Slovakia. Arms shipments are the main aid for us. The Ukrainians thank the Slovaks for these and will remember that Slovakia gave us what we needed most," the Ukrainian president said [Niewiadomski 2022c].

It should be pointed out here that even in the face of Russia's military attack on Ukraine a considerable number of Slovaks have trusted the claims of the Kremlin's propaganda, which have been promoted in the anti-establishment media (internet, radio). In recent years, they have further gained popularity by criticising the

government's handling of the covid pandemic. According to a Slovak Academy of Sciences poll conducted from 22 to 24 March this year, 34% of the population of the Slovak Republic is convinced that the Russian attack was a response to aggressive provocations by the West. A further 28% of respondents declared that demilitarisation and denazification of Ukraine were the objectives of the invasion, while 27% said that genocide against the Russian minority had taken place in eastern Ukraine. Immediately after the war broke out, 62% of Slovaks did hold Russia responsible for the war, but one in four respondents still attributed responsibility to the US, 9% to NATO, 8% to Ukraine and 5% to the EU (more than one answer was possible; a poll by the AKO agency). At the same time, it should be stressed that the government's commitment to increasing the NATO presence in Slovakia has not been unquestionably popular with the public. According to data from a Focus agency poll for TV Markíza on 6 March 2022, 45% of Slovaks oppose the deployment of NATO troops in Slovakia, and 67% specifically oppose the deployment of US troops. Just before the war broke out (in January and February), the opposition organised protests against the signing of a defence cooperation agreement with the US (ultimately ratified on 9 February). It allowed the US army to use Slovak military airfields [Dębiec 2022].

The July 2022 survey "How are you doing Slovakia?", conducted by researchers from the research agencies MNFORCE, Seesame and the Slovak Academy of Sciences produced results which showed that the majority of Slovaks supported a victory for Russia rather than Ukraine in the current Russian-Ukrainian conflict. Meanwhile, an earlier survey, conducted by the think tank Globsec, found that a sizable portion of the Slovak public continued to define Russia as a strategic partner while wishing for Ukraine to be neutral after the end of the war and also believing in disinformation and conspiracy theories spread by pro-Russian conspiracy media. At the same time, a growing public support for authoritarian tendencies in Slovakia, as indicated in the survey, was a cause for some concern [Lewkowicz 2022d].

President Zuzana Čaputová, Parliament Speaker Boris Kollári and Prime Minister Eduard Heger in a joint statement on 30 September firmly and unequivocally condemned the illegal annexation of parts of Ukrainian territory announced by the Kremlin. "The results of illegal referendums organised by Russia on occupied Ukrainian territory have no legal standing and are an illegal attempt by Russia to cover up its act of aggression. Slovakia recognises Ukraine as an independent, sovereign state," the Slovak politicians wrote [Niewiadomski 2022d].

The priorities of Slovakia's Visegrad Group presidency in the area of defence reflected the military developments in Ukraine. The Slovak side included the following among its main tasks on this level: providing assistance in demining and removing unexploded ordnance on Ukrainian territory after the end of the war; preparing the Visegrad Combat Group for its six-month duty in the first half of 2023;

intensification of joint trainings and exercises in order to increase the combat read-iness of the armed forces of the Visegrad countries; promotion of joint research and tighter cooperation between defence companies of the Visegrad countries; coordi-nation of national positions on the development of the EU and NATO; expansion of the V4's military cooperation with Ukraine; promotion of military cooperation in the Visegrad Plus formula with selected countries (i.e. the US, France, Germany, the UK, Korea); improved effectiveness of the use of armed forces within the frame-work of NATO Integrated Air and Missile Defence System [Lewkowicz 2022d].

The Czech Republic

The second country in our analysis in the context of the Ukraine conflict is the Czech Republic. The Russian Federation's attack on Ukraine and Russia's recogni-tion of the independence of the separatist republics in Donbas took centre stage in the public debate in the Czech Republic. In response to the Russian aggression, in an act of solidarity, the government of the Czech Republic quite quickly declared its full solidarity with Ukraine while offering a number of assistance measures. From the very beginning of the conflict, the Czech Republic has provided Ukraine with arms and ammunition, medical supplies and extensive humanitarian aid. The Russian aggression was denounced by both the government, the opposition parties and the former Czech President Miloš Zeman, who, as recently as the beginning of that month, had downplayed Russia's actions. Political support for Ukraine was complemented by a large-scale social mobilisation, underpinned by public concerns about an escalation of the conflict and a threat to Czech security [Czarnecki 2022].

It should be noted that the number of refugees arriving in the Czech Republic from Ukraine exceeded 150,000 in the first 14 days of the armed conflict, which confronted the Czech Republic with the largest migration wave since the end of World War II. The Czech Republic's first aid effort was to set up regional assistance centres for Ukraine, which, besides compulsory registration, were meant to pro-vide refugees with such essentials as accommodation and humanitarian assistance. The next step of Petr Fiala's government was to prepare a package of "Lex Ukraine" laws to regulate the residence and employment of refugees, health insurance, the use of social benefits and education, thus aiming to manage the emerging crisis in the best possible way [Czarnecki 2022b].

At the same time, the Chamber of Deputies in March fast-tracked legislation to facilitate the stay in the Czech Republic of refugees from Ukraine, whose number has exceeded 300,000. The government's bill implements agreements adopted by EU interior ministers. Under its terms, Ukrainian refugees will be able to benefit from universal health care in the Czech Republic, with the state paying for their insurance.

Schools will be allowed to accept Ukrainian children and employ Ukrainian educators. The bill was also passed by the Senate [Sierszuła 2022].

Then, in April 2022 the Chamber of Deputies passed the government's draft law on tax relief for those who have decided to provide material aid to Ukraine, whether through contributions to the defence fund or to the accounts of NGOs that organize aid. Up to 30% could be deducted from the tax base in 2022. The draft was then sent to the Senate as part of legislative work. Ukrainians working and paying taxes in the Czech Republic were also given the opportunity to deduct 30% from their tax base if their income earned in the Czech Republic accounted for 90% of all their income. Free housing for working refugees and their families provided by employers would be treated as a relief in 2022. The state administration, provincial and municipal offices would not charge any fees for their services from people staying in the Czech Republic due to the war in Ukraine in 2022. Administrative offices were to decide which services should not be charged for. The bill was supported by 163 MPs from all factions [Niewiadomski 2022e].

The evolution in the Czech attitude towards Russia and China was not just a consequence of the centre-right coalition (led by Petr Fiala) taking power in December 2021. It was also the result of increasing scepticism of both Czech public opinion and its political scene towards cooperation with authoritarian regimes, a process which has unfolded in recent years. Public reports by the Czech counterintelligence service (BIS) have for years pointed to evidence of hostile Russian and Chinese activity in the Czech Republic. The former President Miloš Zeman and his inner circle, while pledging to strengthen cooperation with Russia and China, found themselves increasingly unable to count on support from the government (in office until November 2021) of Andrej Babiš. His cabinet responded to reports of involvement of Russian services in an explosion at an ammunition depot in Vrbětice by expelling a large group of Russian diplomats. At the same time, it excluded state-linked Russian and Chinese entities from a tender for the expansion of the Dukovany nuclear power plant. The Senate and the Prague local government, controlled by the centre-right opposition at the time, contributed with their gestures to the deterioration of relations with China (e.g., a high-profile visit to Taiwan by the Senate President from the ODS in autumn 2020) and the Russian Federation (e.g., the removal of a monument to Soviet Marshal Ivan Konev in 2019). The premises undermining pro-Russian and pro-Chinese influence in the Czech Republic also included the former President M. Zeman's health problems and his fading into the background. The premises also included the sudden death in 2021 of the richest Czech man Petr Kellner, with business interests in both Russia and China [Dębiec 2022b].

At the same time, it should be emphasised that the Czech Republic has become one of the most important safe havens for Ukrainian refugees alongside Poland. One of the reasons behind this development has been a sizeable community of

economic migrants from Ukraine on the Czech labour market (approximately 150,000 before the Russian invasion). The Czech government has implemented a fairly decentralised model of assistance, which, according to the interior ministry, was supposed to ensure better identification of needs and quicker responses. Although the mechanism for relocating refugees was established after consultation between the government and the regional authorities, the key for their distribution was adopted before a proper review of housing capacity was carried out. It ran the risk of displeasing those local governments that had to provide accommodation for the largest number of refugees. Some mayors criticised the government for shifting the burden to local administrations [Wasiuta 2022].

Since the beginning of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, public debate has raged in the Czech Republic over the possible confiscation of the property of Russians supporting President Vladimir Putin's regime. The first actions of the Czech government focused on freezing the assets of Russian citizens and companies covered by EU sanctions. The Czech Republic froze assets of Russian citizens and companies worth hundreds of millions of CZK over the first few weeks of the war (until early April). According to Prime Minister Petr Fiala, the freezing of Russian assets was a complicated procedure, as it often involved businesses that were part of larger companies. The issue of existing legislation has also posed a problem in taking further steps. The available legal possibilities have only allowed for the freezing of assets and limited the confiscation procedure, which would be facilitated by a special law with an elaborated model and legal instruments for expropriation [Czarnecki 2022c].

On Tuesday, 31 May, the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Republic, by 158 votes out of 161 present, approved an amendment to a law devoted to refugee issues. The amendment provided for stricter terms in payments of humanitarian benefits to refugees from Ukraine. Humanitarian benefits of CZK 5,000, previously paid to all persons who had arrived from Ukraine after Russia launched its invasion, were to be reduced. Those who had free accommodation with guaranteed food and basic hygiene measures lost access to the funds. In addition, under the new regulation, humanitarian aid in the amount of CZK 5,000 would be provided from the second month of stay in the Czech Republic only to those who have confirmed their stay on Czech territory. In this way, the government of the Czech Republic sought to limit the possibility of the same people receiving benefits in different countries [Czarnecki 2022d].

Meanwhile, some political circles began to raise anti-Ukrainian and pro-Russian slogans. The day after a vote on a motion of no confidence in the government of P. Fiala, an anti-government protest called "Czech Republic First" took place in Prague on 3 September, drawing around 70,000 people. The demonstration was a joint initiative of several civil society organisations, non-parliamentary political parties and

citizens who took to the streets with demands including the immediate resignation of the government, the appointment of an interim expert government and the calling of early parliamentary elections. The organisers and participants in the protest criticised high energy prices, the pro-Western policies of the current government, and also COVID-19 vaccination. In addition to energy issues, the demonstration emphasised the need for the Czech Republic to be militarily neutral, putting an end to the process of "dilution" of the nation by Ukrainian refugees, and retaining independence in political decision-making. There were also numerous banners with slogans criticising the government of the Czech Republic, the EU, NATO, or the European Green Deal. Among the speakers and supporters of the demonstration were activists and politicians associated with the Czech disinformation, pro-Russian and xenophobic scene. One of the speakers was Zuzana Majerová Zahradníková, head of the Trikolora movement, who said that the Czech government should drop anti-Russian sanctions and halt arms shipments to Ukraine. Also present was former MP and leader of the VOLNÝ blok party, Lubomír Volný, who raised slogans of cooperation with nationalist forces [Czarnecki 2022e].

At the same time, the Chamber of Deputies approved at its September meeting the participation of Czech soldiers in a mission to protect the eastern borders of the European Union, which would see 1,200 soldiers join other NATO units in Slovakia, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, strengthening the EU border protection system. 1,362 Czech soldiers will take part in overseas missions in 2023–2024. The plan has already been approved by the Senate. As the Czechs have been in command of the NATO battlegroup in Slovakia since April 2022, a further 650 soldiers are scheduled to be deployed to that country. In addition, 290 soldiers will be deployed to the Baltic States and a further 95 soldiers will be assigned to protect the airspace of the area in question [Sierszuła 2022b].

The Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee, in accordance with a resolution of the CE Parliamentary Assembly, passed a resolution in October 2022 describing the current regime in Russia as terrorist. It also rejected the results of the so-called referendums on the annexation to Russia of four occupied regions in the east of Ukraine. In the resolution, the committee further stated that Russia is denying the Ukrainian people the right to their own identity and independent existence. The MPs argued that the actions of Russian troops and other armed groups formed with the support of the Russian authorities bear the hallmarks of war crimes and crimes against humanity and that those responsible must be punished. The MPs also asked the international community to continue its unwavering support for Ukraine [Sierszuła 2022c].

Hungary

The situation in the Hungarian state has taken a different turn, for various reasons. The Hungarian reaction to the Russian aggression against Ukraine has been controversial. On the one hand, the Hungarian government has backed EU sanctions against the Russian Federation, but on the other, it has neither supported Ukraine with arms supplies nor agreed to the transit of arms through its territory. Both Fidesz leaders and the Hungarian pro-government media have remained very reserved towards the Russian aggression, making no mention at all of war victims, for example. Meanwhile, it is symbolic that Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó has still not returned the Order of Friendship he received from Vladimir Putin in 2021 [Hejj 2022].

However, it is worth noting some divergences between the positions of the government and the new president (from March 2022). On foreign policy issues, the new president Katalin Novák began to speak out more broadly only after her election to the new, prestigious position. In her public remarks, she emphasised that Central European cooperation and activity in the Balkans (especially the Western Balkans) were of crucial importance for Hungary. In her inauguration speech on 10 March, she took a more pro-Western stance and, it should be stressed, a more critical one towards Russian politicians than that of Prime Minister Orbán and Fidesz politicians, who emphasised the need to remain "impartial" towards the Ukrainian-Russian conflict. Meanwhile, the Hungarian head of state declared publicly that "the war was caused by Russia and its actions are indefensible and inexplicable". But she did emphasize, in keeping with the government's line to date, that Hungary, in the face of the Ukrainian-Russian war, stands above all "for the preservation of peace", and thus she did not express unequivocal support for the Ukrainian state authorities. At the same time, after the outbreak of the conflict, the Hungarian president made several visits to towns near the border with Ukraine. She met there with refugees from Ukraine (primarily Transcarpathian Hungarians) and representatives of charities providing assistance to them [Sadecki 2022].

The war in Ukraine coincided with the closing stages of the parliamentary campaign for the National Assembly elections in Hungary. Hungary's policy of "opening up to the East", which had been pursued since 2010, was intended by those in power to help Fidesz score a victory in the parliamentary elections scheduled for 3 April 2022. Maintaining gas prices at their current level was one of the measures complementing social transfers in Hungary to win over voters for Prime Minister Viktor Orbán. The Hungarian Prime Minister's visit to Moscow at the beginning of February was designed to help increase Russian gas supplies. The "opening up to the East" can be considered a success in domestic politics. However, Russia, China and Turkey are yet to assume a major role in the Hungarian economy, despite the fact that Asian capital has made investments in the new technology sector [Rajczyk 2022].

Prime Minister Orbán's visit to Moscow in early February 2002 (i.e., three weeks before the Russian Federation's attack on the Ukrainian state) was consistent with Russia's strategic objective. This included arranging relations with European countries along the following lines: economic benefits in exchange for geopolitical neutrality in the US-Russian conflict and acceptance of Russia's neo-imperialist policy. The Hungarian Prime Minister portrayed Hungary and the Central European region as a passive, neutral subject in the conflict between equal powers – Russia (and previously the USSR) and the West [Rodkiewicz, Popławski 2022].

Therefore, the Hungarian political leader's February visit became part of the promotion of a model of relations favourable to Russia, which was defined by the Orbán government as the "Hungarian model". In his public remarks, he has insisted that he is an "advocate of peace", but at the Kremlin press conference he failed to voice strong criticism of Russia's aggressive policy towards Ukraine. By contrast, he strongly criticised the EU's sanctions policy towards Russia. The Prime Minister's statement about the possibility of reconciling Western and Russian positions on European security in the context of ongoing negotiations with Russia represents, in the view of many security analysts, a serious challenge to alliance solidarity. The course of Orbán's visit indicated that Hungary wished to continue exploiting the situation of an existential threat to Ukraine for its own economic gain. At the same time, it should be remembered that Russian promises have been nothing more than declarations and that Hungarian-Russian cooperation to date, e.g., in the nuclear sector, has been marked by numerous problems. The Russian side pushed for Rosatom to quickly start the construction of two units at the Paks nuclear power plant, but it took a long time for the Hungarian Atomic Energy Authority to give its final approval [Rodkiewicz, Popławski 2022].

On 10 March, in turn, deputies of the National Assembly adopted the text of a declaration on Russian aggression against Ukraine, approved the day before by the parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee. 174 MPs voted in favour of the declaration, two abstained. The left-wing opposition boycotted the vote and withdrew from the Foreign Affairs Committee in protest. In the declaration, the National Assembly condemned Russia's military intervention and supported Ukraine's sovereignty and the inviolability of its territorial integrity. The MPs called for an immediate cessation of hostilities and starting peace talks. Hungary, as a member of NATO, agreed with the statements by the alliance's leaders that it was necessary to avoid the spread of conflict to the territory of member states, as this would have unpredictable consequences. As a member of the UN, the OSCE, the Council of Europe and the European Union, Hungary supported joint efforts to achieve peace [Niewiadomski 2022f].

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán held an extraordinary press conference for foreign journalists on 6 April, his first after the parliamentary elections. As he opened the meeting, the Hungarian politician thanked the voters for their trust and pointed out

that Fidesz had achieved its best election result since 1990, with 53% of the votes cast for its lists. Asked about the reasons for the increase in support, the Prime Minister said that "there is a war going on in Hungary's neighbourhood and Hungarians voted for the party that guaranteed peace in the country". The second reason – in his opinion – was that "Hungary under Fidesz has become a successful country, just like neighbouring Poland". The third reason was the opposition's position – ambiguous and blurry – on the most important socio-political issues [Niewiadomski 2022g].

Viktor Orbán revealed that he had a conversation with President Vladimir Putin after the National Assembly elections, offering Budapest as a venue for peace talks in the France-Germany-Ukraine-Russia format. Meanwhile, when asked about economic cooperation with Moscow, he replied that "Hungary would have no problem paying for gas and oil in roubles". Journalists asked whether the Hungarian government recognised Russia as the aggressor in the Ukrainian war – Viktor Orbán responded that "Hungary has expressed a common position with the European Union and recognised Russia as the aggressor". At the same time, the Prime Minister called for an independent investigation into the events in Bucha [Niewiadomski 2022h].

In September 2022, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán sided even more strongly with Russia in its war against Ukraine. He also sharpened his criticism of EU and US policy towards Moscow in his public remarks. He promoted a defeatist image of Western European countries, an all-powerful Russia and a doomed Ukraine in his speeches. The West was portrayed by the Prime Minister as a party looking for conflict with Russia and aggressively "imposing sanctions on others". In Orbán's view, this stood in contrast to the peaceful countries of Central Europe (including Hungary in particular), which only bore the costs of these restrictions. At the same time, the Hungarian head of government pressed the false thesis claiming that the economic problems (inflation and high energy prices) resulted only from the EU's imposition of sanctions on Russia and were not a consequence of a number of other developments and processes – the pandemic, the invasion of Ukraine and the Kremlin's planned manipulation of raw material supplies. Orbán's claims that, if the restrictions were lifted, "energy prices and inflation would be halved" and "the European economy would avoid recession" completely ignored the fundamental fact that the main source of the global slowdown is the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, the pro-Russian narrative in the Hungarian government-controlled media increased after the 2022 summer holidays. Their criticism was primarily directed against the EU, the US and Ukraine [Sadecki 2022b].

"*The European Union can already be called a loser in the Ukrainian conflict because it is acting against its own economic interests*" – the Speaker of the National Assembly, László Kövér, declared on 12 September in a public televised speech. Speaker Kövér stressed that the European Union was politically incapable of preventing the outbreak of war in Ukraine and has now failed to restore peace through

diplomatic means, and that its actions have been at odds with its economic interests [Niewiadomski 2022i].

The Hungarian government announced another round of public consultations in autumn 2022 to address the issue of sanctions imposed by EU institutions and countries on Russia. The Hungarian Prime Minister said after a cabinet meeting on 28 September: "*It was promised in Brussels that sanctions would bring the war to an end and hurt the aggressor more than the EU member states. Instead, every European citizen in fact pays extra for the energy sanctions*". At the same time, the head of government emphasised that the cabinet had accepted Fidesz's proposal to hold consultations [Hejj 2022b].

Questions for these consultations were to be drafted in October and November this year. According to a study published by Századvég, a think-tank sympathetic to the government, the US and China have benefited the most from the sanctions introduced, while other countries have suffered losses. It should be noted here that the government discourse did not mention "EU sanctions" but "Brussels sanctions", which was supposed to be synonymous with bureaucracy and misguided policies. According to a poll conducted in September 2022, 71% of Hungarians were of the opinion that the US was gaining from the economic consequences of the war as well as the sanctions introduced (17% said they were losing). China was also gaining, with 68% of the respondents expressing this view. When asked about Russia, the respondents pointed out that it was suffering losses (52%) rather than gaining (43%). The vast majority of those taking part in the survey (81%) were of the opinion that the European Union was losing from the sanctions and the economic consequences of the war. With regard to Hungary, this percentage was as high as 87%. At the same time, 84% of the respondents felt that Ukraine itself was suffering from the sanctions [Hejj 2022b].

Conclusion

When the presidents of the Visegrad Group (V4) met in Bratislava on 11 October 2022, the security situation in the Central European region in the wake of Russia's aggression against Ukraine and the energy crisis were the main topics of discussion. The Slovak president said that any peace must be just. "*A peace that is not just is only a temporary ceasefire. For peace to come, it is enough that Russian soldiers leave Ukraine, it is enough that the Russian Federation starts respecting the internationally recognised borders of a sovereign state*", said Z. Čaputova. The risk of a potential nuclear conflict as well as the issues of the energy crisis and spiralling energy prices were, according to the former Czech President Miloš Zeman, some of the topics of Tuesday's meeting of the presidents of the Visegrad Group (V4) countries in

Bratislava. At a joint press conference, the Czech president recalled that during the previous week's EU summit in Prague, he spoke about "avoiding at all costs a risk that would make us the last generation of presidents and prime ministers before the outbreak of World War III. "*We condemn President Putin's actions, we condemn the attack on a sovereign country, the annexation of integral Ukrainian territories and the attacks on civilians. Also, the risk of a nuclear conflict is unacceptable to us*", Hungarian President Katalin Novak declared in Bratislava on Tuesday, "*Together we are stronger, alone we are weaker*", moreover, President K. Novak said at a press conference with the presidents of Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic, summing up the meeting of the V4 Group presidents [Śmiłowicz, Rebelinska, Dąbkowska-Pożyczka, Kostrzewa 2022].

The dramatic months of 2022 exposed the weakness and disunity of the Visegrad Group. The conflict was a moment of trial for alliance and partnership not only in this part of the Old Continent. Relations in the Central Europe-Kiev-Moscow triangle revealed the interdependencies and complex determinants of mutual and regional relations. Three of the analysed countries strongly sided with Ukraine, condemning Russia's aggression and supporting the Ukrainian state. The stance of the Hungarian state was ambiguous. Artur Gruszczak from Jagiellonian University concluded: "*The Russian invasion of Ukraine has exposed the weakness of the Visegrad Group as a regional forum for cooperation between like-minded governments. The V4's silence indicates that the Group has failed to overcome the deepening divisions between Hungary's pro-Russian policy and the other member states' growing concerns about Russia's neo-imperialist stance.*" This should be regarded as a difficult experience for this group of Central European countries in the context of future global and regional challenges.

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ANDREA SCHMIDT

Trojan Horse or Strategic Alliance?
The Ukrainian War and the V4

Abstract: The Visegrad Group celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2021. The countries considered the most prominent students during the period of regime change have survived several crises over the past thirty years. The biggest crisis of the moment is the war in Ukraine, one of the group's neighbours, which has also driven a wedge between the Polish-Hungarian friendship, previously considered rock-solid. Our intention in this work is to shed light on this crisis, primarily from a Hungarian perspective, by grounding it in some historical and political context.

Keywords: colonisation, integration, crisis, neighbourhood

Introduction

The year 2021 was centred around commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the Visegrad Group. Although the group was functioning as a model and mediator of "Europeanization" and European policies toward the candidate countries of the Western Balkans, the Visegrad Group has attempted in the last decade to promote itself as an alternative or – neutrally speaking – an additional group of countries that introduces agenda within the EU and profiles itself as a significant collective actor [Cabada-Waisová 2018:10]. These countries were characterised by three clearly declared goals that were incorporated into V4 policy: the support of Eastern and South-Eastern directions of EU enlargement, the support of the Eastern dimension of neighbour policy, and finally, a shared vision of regional energy policy. The birth of the Visegrad Group was thus treated as a miracle and an ultimate proof of the success of strong contributions based on a common interest [Schmidt 2017:113], however, from time to time it causes surprises and obstacles in the European context. For all these positive appraisals, Visegrad has had its share of controversies. On several occasions, the necessity of the Visegrad Group and its effectiveness has been questioned; leading politicians have put the success of the Group at risk by subordinating it to their personal ambitions.

The third decade of the 21st century, however, was dominated by concerns about changing global world. One of the central issues of the 2020s has been the

COVID-19 pandemic, which has triggered a chain of crises that have posed new challenges for European governments and even for the European Union itself. Among others, the pandemic affected international relations, security, economic inequalities, and existing centre-periphery relations. This security required a reassessment not only of networks and supply chains, and economic relations, but also of the changing conditions of the world order, the problem of societies, identities, inequalities, threats, and challenges [Laurelle and Rivera 2020:16].

While the epidemic entered a new phase at the end of 2021, thanks in no small part to effective control with vaccines, the new year, 2022, threatened an old/new challenge. The outbreak of the war in Ukraine in February fundamentally changed and – at the same time – challenged the post-war international order, which relied in no small measure on the idea from the 1945 Yalta Conference; that the West must respect the Russian sphere of influence in Central and Eastern Europe [Daniszewski 2022]. History has thus become part of everyday debates, and the unsolved or forgotten problems of 1945 and the 1990s have resurfaced in the post-totalitarian world, alongside the layers of crisis [Schmidt 2022:10]. The fate of almost all previously established regional cooperative projects has been called into question, and their objectives have had to be rethought. The following study seeks to answer the question of to what extent the war in Ukraine rearranged the earlier relations within the Visegrad Group, what could have led to Hungary's dissenting attitude, and finally, whether the Visegrad Group countries' perception has changed towards the challenge of refugees, the issue that managed to link these countries together in mid-2010s. We would like to investigate whether the war in Ukraine can be precepted as a sign of postcolonial phenomenon, overall, how this theory affected the Visegrad Group states in the past centuries and decades.

The asymmetric relations in Central Europe

Eastern European scholars have used postcolonial studies to explore representations of the region as Western Europe's "other". Postcolonial studies also strengthened their argumentation while recalling the political, social, military, and economic interference and domination by Russia, Western countries, or entities, such as the European Union. At the same time, it is precisely in the context of postcolonial theories that the question arises as to whom, which power can be considered a colonising agent [Schmidt 2022V]. In the course of their history, the member states of the Visegrad Cooperation have in many cases been both colonising and colonised [Terian 2012]. Both Poland and Hungary raise the question of so-called "white colonialism" [Glinski 2015; Mayblin et al. 2014].

As Etkind argues [Etkind 2015:159] internal colonization was a state-sponsored program of managing the frontier between Prussia and "the Slavic wilderness" to the

east. Prussian and, then, German officials consistently, though arbitrarily, called this policy 'the program of inner colonization'. In the case of Russia, as Etkind argues, the direction of Russia's self-colonization was coherent, from the south-west to the north-east, from the banks of the Danube to the banks of the Dnieper. That approach affected Poland together with the internal colonisation of the Habsburg Monarchy, which incorporated the territory of the Bohemian Kingdom in the 1620s, while a huge part of the Hungarian Kingdom became the province of the Habsburg Monarchy in the 16th century, and by the 18th century, Hungary lost its independence.

At the same time, Hungary was also a subordinate player within the Habsburg Empire, essentially alongside Bohemia, with a slightly different status, while as a multi-ethnic entity, an asymmetrical relationship was established between the individual national minorities and the dominant Hungarian nation, which could be grasped especially in the context of the granting of political rights. It is beyond dispute that the nationalities living in the territory of Hungary did not enjoy the same rights, but a similar relationship of subordination was observed between Hungary and Austria within the Habsburg Empire. The Austro-Hungarian dualist monarchy was asymmetrical and unbalanced[1] [Pelinka 2015].

This asymmetrical relationship persisted in the decades after the Second World War, except that the identity of the "colonizer" changed. The post-Yalta division of the continent and the isolation of the eastern territories fostered the strangest of fantasies about the "kidnapped part of Europe", and thanks to the perception of the totalitarian regimes, corruption, and bureaucracy, the Western popular culture fed on an image of Central Europe as a backward region [Czyzewski 2017]. At times, even the Soviet satellite states under the Warsaw Pact were left out, thus, "Europe" became synonymous with the "West" and its associated political values [Schmidt 2013]. Among the consequences of the revolutions of 1989 was a profound reordering of the spatial imaginary of Europe. The collapse of the Berlin Wall and the Soviet bloc called for the creation of new geographical stories and new spatial representations that could capture and codify the cartographic chaos of the former Eastern European space [Bialasiewicz 2003]. It is precisely the war that broke out in 2022 that has highlighted the problem of what we mean by colonisation of the post-Soviet space, and partly answers the question of the extent to which the Soviet Union was a colonial power. As Benningsen pointed out in a study, even during the existence of the Soviet Union, scholars were divided over the question of which territories the Soviet Union colonised and whether this activity should be understood as applying only to the Central Asian republics or to all the non-Russian nations of the Soviet Union, Ukrainians, and Belarusians, the Baltic and the Caucasus peoples.

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[1] The new construction gave a different significance to different nationalities, not as a result of their quantitative size but due to their traditional position in the Habsburg Monarchy.

Other views held that colonialism could only be defined as the treatment of peoples other than those of Christian culture, while there were also opinions that set a time limit for colonialism; only from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards did anything done by Tsarist Russia count as colonialism [Benningsen 1969:143].

As Timothy Snyder points, "Putin took a pronounced colonial turn returning to the Presidency a decade ago. In 2012, he described Russia as a "state civilization", which by its nature absorbed smaller countries such as Ukraine's. Next year, he claimed that Russians and Ukrainians were joined in "spiritual unity". In 2021, in his long essay,[2] he claimed that Russia and Ukraine were a single country, bound by a shared origin. "His vision is of a broken world", as Snyder argues, "that must be restored through violence. Russia becomes itself only by annihilating Ukraine" [Snyder 2022]. During the years of the Soviet Union's existence, it was clear that the most effective means of integrating the people living in the country was linguistic assimilation. After 1991, this process was reversed in now-independent Ukraine, and it can no longer be said that knowing Russian makes it possible to understand Ukrainian. They are related languages, but they are distinct languages. The situation is different with Belarus, which hardly uses its mother tongue any more, a Russian "vassal" country. Ukraine wanted to avoid this crushing brotherly embrace, the Belarusian way [Kovács 2022].

As Terian argues, the fact that East-Central European post-colonialism – if such a thing exists – was not institutionalised as such, but was always an implicit, concealed phenomenon, disguised in the forms of political and cultural dependency, has stirred numerous controversies not only concerning the colonised but also the colonisers [Schmidt 2022]. Krastev and Appelbaum however, identify the status of Central and Eastern Europeans as subordinated, whose desire was to "shake off the colonial dependency implicit in the very project of Westernisation" [Appelbaum, 2018; Krastev 2018][3].

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[2] First of all, I would like to emphasize that the wall that has emerged in recent years between Russia and Ukraine, between the parts of what is essentially the same historical and spiritual space, to my mind is our great common misfortune and tragedy. *Article by Vladimir Putin "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians"*, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66181 (access: 16.12.2022).

[3] For two decades after 1989, the political philosophy of post-communist Central and Eastern Europe could be summarized in a single imperative: Imitate the West! The process was called by different names—democratization, liberalization, enlargement, convergence, integration, Europeanization—but the goal pursued by postcommunist reformers was simple. They wished their countries to become "normal", which meant like the West. This involved importing liberal-democratic institutions, applying Western political and economic recipes, and publicly endorsing Western values. Imitation was widely understood to be the shortest pathway to freedom and prosperity [Krastev et Holmes 2018].

The Eastern Periphery – Russia versus Ukraine

Accommodating Russia in Europe has always been a dilemma since its inclusion would drastically shift the balance of powers within Europe as a region, although excluding Russia creates a powerful adversary. Under the trans-Atlantic region, the tensions with Russia in a divided Europe could seemingly be managed by maximizing asymmetries [Diesen 2021]. The 2019 presidential elections and the ambitious behaviour of the new president in Ukraine made Russia's position unstable. As Meister argues [Meister 2022], such a policy shift that resulted in the Russian invasion of Ukraine was probably inevitable: a key reason for the Ukraine war was Russia's perception of geopolitical competition in its shared neighbourhood with the EU.

As Meister says, the Russian leadership was not willing to lose what it feels to be Russia's traditional sphere of influence, including de facto control of Ukraine. Despite weaknesses and contradictions in the EU's approach, the union's neighbourhood policy and soft power had begun to foster transformation in the common neighbourhood through its impact on societies. Russia's elites, by contrast, could resort only to military power in a desperate attempt to prevent a further loss of influence in Ukraine. But the brutal use of force to subjugate another country is precisely what is causing the further decline of Russian power and has strengthened European unity against Russian aggression.

Standpoints within the Visegrad group states towards Russia are various. In the Polish narrative, Russians are accused of imperial ambitions, the desire for revenge, return to the old communist frame. On the other hand, according to the Russians' standpoint, Poles are suffering from an inferiority complex, and are afraid of losing their sovereignty, because Russia is rich in mineral resources, and views it as an unreliable Western neighbour, while Poland emphasized that Russia is located somewhere in Asia [Zurzenko 2009]. As Miłosz emphasizes, the other reason for the conflict between Poland and Soviet Russia lay in the practice of the specific Russian foreign policy; if you acquire a part of the territory, you have the right to claim the whole [Kaplan 2013, Brzezinski 2017].

According to Brzezinski, Ukraine is an "important space on the Eurasian chessboard", while in the post-Cold War world under the United States geostrategic domination. He identifies Ukraine (alongside Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan) – as the state "deserving America's strongest geopolitical support". While Ukraine's independence affects the nature of Russia's state itself, it is for the US "the critical state" among "key Eurasian geopolitical pivots". As both Kaplan and Brzezinski argue, without these territories the Russian Empire as the successor state remained a Eurasian, or predominantly Asian country [Kaplan 2013, Brzezinski 2017].

Ukraine has become a major state in Central Europe for the first time in modern history. Aided by its allies and inspired by its President, Volodymyr Zelensky, Ukraine

has stymied the Russian conventional forces which have been overhanging Europe since the Second World War. And the international system – including China – is opposing Russia's threat or use of its nuclear weapons [Kissinger 2022].

Ukraine and the Visegrad Group

The Visegrad Group was brought together by its common action in the face of the migrant threat in 2015 and was ready to take a stand on its own within the European Union, in opposition to the common position. However, the war in Ukraine has prompted a different political response within the group. Cooperation itself was put on very shaky ground, and thirty years of joint effort were called into question as a result of the reaction to the war. Critics of the group's cooperation often referred to the group as "Visegrad Two Plus Two" rather than "Visegrad Four", mainly due to the growing dissenting opinions of Hungary and Poland within the European Union since the late 2010s. In response to criticisms of the rule of law, the two countries even threatened to veto the adoption of the EU's seven-year budget. At the time of the regime change, there was no doubt that both countries were opting for a Western orientation, and the common intention of Central and Eastern Europeans was to adopt Western values [Appelbaum 2018]. Until 2015, Poland was contrasted with Hungary and the other two Visegrad countries and was hailed as the "bastion of modern democracy" and a "good student" of the European Union.

The Visegrad Group was more or less unified in the question of how to treat the threats of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The member states belong to the EU and NATO, however, their relationship with Ukraine is various. Czechia is the only country that does not have a common border with Ukraine, while Poland is sharing a common border not just with Ukraine, but with Belarus and Russia, too, so its geographical position is more challenging regarding the potential threats. All member states are sharing a common experience with the former Soviet Union, however, the Polish Kingdom has deleted from the political map of Europe in the 18th century thanks to the Russian Empire among others. By the 19th century, the age of national awakening the Czech, Slovakian, Polish, and Hungarian nations experienced subordinated positions. While Slovakian and Czech politicians were followers of the idea of pan-Slavism [Teich, Kováč, Brown 2011] Polish territories were by that time annexed by the Russian Empire that made it impossible to follow the principles of classical Pan-Slavism.[4] The Hungarian War of Independence was defeated by the Russian tsarist overwhelming force, and Hungarian nation was not Slavic.

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[4] Classic Pan-Slavism, which was the future-oriented vision of a new political entity embracing already existing states and regions, the latter could be seen, for example, in the geopolitical ideologies

The Polish responsibility towards its neighbourhood and field of interest beyond the borders of the European Union can be recognised in its attitude towards the Caucasus, i.e., the concept of Eastern Partnership that was also initiated by Poland together with Sweden, as a part of the European Union's global strategy and neighbourhood policy. The orientation towards the eastern borders and the assistance in the 2008 war between Georgia and Russia made cooperation among post-Soviet states necessary. The establishment of the joint initiative called Eastern Partnership based on the agreement between the Swedish and Polish ministers of foreign affairs opened a new chapter in the Polish (and European) neighbourhood policy. The quintessence of this cooperation was the perception, that "this is more than a friendly support, or a partner-based cooperation, as it is a familiar support", as Dmytro Kułeba, the Ukrainian minister of Foreign Affairs declared. Cooperation with the Eastern Partnership is an obvious choice both for Poland and the Visegrad Group since three of the four Visegrad member states share borders with Ukraine, and the "Orange Revolution" and resulting Ukrainian political instability have created new threats at eastern borders. These are also the eastern borders of the European Union, which has led to even more interest in the security question. This Lublin Triangle ally was also open toward Belarus. There is a special relationship between Poland and Ukraine since its inclusion together with Lithuania in the Lublin triangle, the Eastern Partnership member states, and the Polish reaction towards the 2004 revolution and the Euromaidan events in 2014 when the Agreement on settlement of the political crisis in Ukraine was signed by Radek Sikorski, the actual Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs together with his German colleague. In 2019, the new Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenski made his first official trip to Warsaw and since the commencement of his presidential activity, the Polish and Ukrainian negotiations intensified in parallel with the increase of tension between Poland, Ukraine, and Russia.[5] As Ukraine was not a member of NATO, it was the Polish and Lithuanian initiative to assist in the approach for the country's towards the Euro-Atlantic ally, but this regional cooperation also focused on the integration of these three countries in the field of security policy, economic cooperation, healthcare, and cultural and touristic layers. These three states established a joint military unit, LITPOLUKRBRIG in 2014 in Warsaw. The Brigade is comprised by an international staff, three battalions, and specialised units. Another memorandum of contribution was signed by the three ministers of Foreign Affairs that resulted in the founding of the "Lublin Triangle". From the Ukrainian perspective, the Lublin Triangle

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of the "Russian world" and "Holy Russia," in which the bottom line is the revanchist and nostalgic recreation of the split imperial unity, such as the union of Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarussians. Đorđević, V., Suslov, M., Čejka, M., Mocek, O., & Hrabálek, M. 2022. Revisiting Pan-Slavism in the Contemporary Perspective. *Nationalities Papers,* 1–11. doi:10.1017/nps.2022.75 (access: 16.12.2022).

[5] Since it became available Poland and Ukraine are those two European countries that expressed their opposition against the recognition of Sputnik V, the Russian vaccine against COVID 19.

was evaluated as an addition to the Eastern Partnership program of the European Union. According to its standpoint, security would be one of the main priorities of the Lublin Triangle, with the format's participants agreeing to coordinate actions to protect international law in the context of Russia's ongoing annexation of Crimea. It is worth mentioning, that the Lublin Triangle is the first Central Europe-specific alliance that Ukraine joined, as the country is currently not a part of the Visegrad Four or the Bucharest Nine [Đorđević].

"We treat Ukraine not as a problem. Indeed, we have problem with the Russian aggression, but it is our common interest to strengthen the stability of Ukraine for the security of Europe and for Poland"[Ministerstwo Spraw Zagrnaicznych]. These were the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs' words regarding to the importance of this regional co-operation. The Lithuanian partner also emphasized the necessity to tie the relationship closer between Ukraine and the European Union.

The Hungarian standpoint towards Ukraine and Russia is controversial. The Hungarian government repeatedly opposes the Ukrainian NATO candidacy referring to various conflicts [Dunai]. The reason for the Hungarian opposition can be explained by two factors. On one hand, the Hungarian government extended Hungarian citizenship to all Hungarians living outside but in the territory of historical Hungary. In the Transcarpathian region, according to the 2001 census, there live around 150,000 Hungarian-speaking Ukrainian citizens, almost the same as Poles. The aim of the extension of the Hungarian citizenship program can be explained in various ways, however, the Ukrainian Constitution does not recognise dual citizenship. The Hungarian interference in the Ukrainian local elections was also a core conflict in Autumn 2020 that resulted in the expulsion of two high-ranking Hungarian officials as an accusation surfaced of their interference in Ukrainian internal affairs. As a reaction, at that time Hungary strengthened its intention to oppose the negotiations about Ukrainian NATO membership. The Ukrainian Language Law that made the Ukrainian language the only official language in Ukraine in 2015 and 2019 also faced criticism. Although its original aim was to reduce Russian influence, both Poland and Hungary expressed their displeasure.

The V4 and the refugee crisis – 2016–2022

The Visegrad cooperation was called in various ways. One of the most fitting names is a "geopolitical marriage of necessity", where there are better and worse days, but ultimately, it doesn't end up at a divorce lawyer.[6] Well, since there is no

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[6] Somehow the same interpretation was told by Viktor Orbán in 2010 talking about Central Europe. "Not just nice days, but – as with old married couples – also antagonisms and feuds between our countries" [Orbán, V. 2010 64, quotes Balogh, 2017].

written institutionalised framework for Visegrad Cooperation, it is, in the example of marriage, an open marriage from which the parties can wiggle out, but to which, on the basis of past examples, they keep coming back. At least that has been the trend so far. The memory of Havel, the belief in the change of regime, and the common interests have kept the parties together. Although Hungarian diplomats co-authored both the Visegrad Group and EU declarations which condemned the annexation of Crimea by Russia and supported Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, as Sadecki [Sadecki 2014] points out, the Hungarian Prime Minister has emphasized Hungary's neutrality as regards the Ukrainian – Russian conflicts and tried to avoid any friction in relations with Russia since Hungary is in the process of building closer cooperation with the energy sector [Schmidt 2017:129].

The refugee crisis has led to a renaissance of the Visegrad Group as the threat of an increasing number of migrants from the south-east has required a coordinated reaction. In February 2016, the states made a joint declaration concerning a common security policy, closer cooperation with Romania, Bulgaria, and Macedonia, and the plan to stop the refugees at Greece's borders. A so-called line of defence was to be set up under this agreement. Andrzej Duda, the Polish president has also drawn attention to the increasing power of the Visegrad Group based largely on the migration crisis. If the response to the embargo against Russia divided the member states, then the fear of the growing number of immigrants helped them to strengthen and deepen their cooperation. Antimigrant sentiment, thus, unified the Visegrad Group of Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic [Schmidt 2017:136].

But that typical refugee is considered to be somebody who would come from a different culture (mainly representing the "other", a slightly different culture) and politicians managed to instil the fear in the society.

As Glied and Zamecki argue [Glied-Zamecki 2021:648], populist, Eurosceptic, and anti- immigration voices have played a major role in this discourse and their success can be explained by the fact that two or three decades after the democratic transition, indifference, disenchantment, and the overwhelming need for radical reforms pervaded Central European public opinion.

The war in Ukraine opened a new chapter in the imposition of migration policy. As three of the V4 countries share a common border with Ukraine, since early 2022 there was a pressure on the borders of Slovakia, Poland, and Hungary and they had to prepare for hundreds of thousands of refugees. Until late December 2022, Poland was by far the most affected country with its roughly 1.5 million refugees, while in Czechia 474 thousand, in Slovakia 105, and in Hungary only 33 thousand refugees applied for refugee status.[7] The perception of refugee immigrants was mostly positive.

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[7] The data are taken in December, 2022. https://www.statista.com/statistics/1312584/ukrainian-refugees-by-country/ Hungary was not so popular among refugees, not particularly because of

With the exception of Slovakia, as the poll from 2022 December shows, the majority of the V4 country citizens were supportive of refugees. It is remarkable that despite the negative connotation of the phenomenon "refugee" the recipients were open-minded.
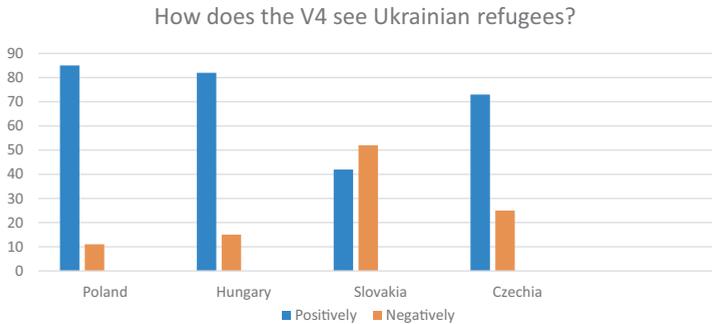
Fig.1. How does the V4 see Ukrainian refugees?

Source: Globsec, 2023, https://www.globsec.org/what-we-do/publications/perception-ukrainian-refugees-v4-support-some-reservations (access: 19.12.2022).

Although there was a common reaction to the Russian aggression among the three Visegrad member states, the remaining one, Hungary, was criticised previously as a Trojan horse of Russia [Schmidt, 2022:19] regarding its rather pro-Russian stance. The Hungarian foreign policy considered a pragmatist approach that relied on calculating the balance between the Euro-Atlantic allies and the Russian economic ties. This balancing attitude was helpful until February 2022, because it guaranteed the supply of cheap Russian energy resources (mainly, gas) that could maintain one of the bases of the political programme, the promise of the Hungarian government, the reduction of the "overheads reduction". With his visit to Moscow in January 2022, Viktor Orbán received critical arguments from his EU colleagues. On the other hand, in March 2022, he was missing from the meeting of the group of Visegrad states Prime Ministers.

The Hungarian foreign policy had to face multiple challenges in 2022, among those:

1. Its response to the war
2. The approach towards the responses of the European Commission, primarily grounded in the imposition of economic sanctions on Russia
3. Securing the energetic security of Hungary

the government's rather pro-Russian view, but because of the language barrier. A huge share of refugees arrived in Hungary from the Transcarpathian region, the Westernmost part of Ukraine, which was least affected by the war. It is hard to predict their number as some of them are having (in Ukraine not recognised) dual citizenship.

The settlement of debates with the European Commission

In this situation, the response to the challenges was aided by the fact that Hungarian foreign policy was pragmatic and grounded in the economic interest of the nation rather than ideology-based, thus being grounded on three main tenets :

1. Assume neutrality in the military conflict between Russia and Ukraine, not get itself dragged into the war, not supply arms nor any other military assistance to Ukraine
2. Stop the war by any means necessary
3. Implement solutions allowing to prevent humanitarian crises, including welcoming the refugees of the war

The fact is that in the recent years multiple issues and unresolved problems have accumulated within the group. It is also a fact that the international perception of the group has not been the most favourable. In the case of Hungary, there was a serious risk of diplomatic isolation, and Hungary was confronted by former allies. The meeting of the defence ministers at the end of March 2022 was cancelled, even though the war situation would have justified it [Krzysztoszek 2022].The President of the Republic of Hungary, elected in May, undertook this very mission of the V4, as he visited Warsaw and then the other two Member States instead of delegating the traditional first visit to the Prime Minister.[8] During her visit to Warsaw, Katalin Novák strengthened the Hungarian view against Russian aggression and the war, however, it became the most important message of the Hungarian election campaign since late February that Hungary is on the side of peace.[9] That was repeated by the Hungarian President reacting to Putin's proposal for a ceasefire for the Orthodox Christmas which caused great consternation among Ukrainians

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[8] While in March 2022 the Polish, Czech, and Slovakian Prime Ministers together with Jarosław Kaczynski were the first politicians who visited Kyiv sincet he war has broken out, the 4th member of the V4 Group, the Hungarian Prime Minister was replaced by the Slovenian colleague. A. Ferentzi. 2022. Az ostromlott Kijevbe utazik ma a cseh, lengyel és szlovén kormányfő, Világgazdaság, https://www.vg.hu/kozelet/2022/03/az-ostromlott-kijevbe-utazik-ma-a-cseh-lengyel-es-szloven-kormanyfo (access: 14.12.2022). The official explanation based ont he fact that 15th March is the Hungarian national holiday, but as the Hungarian Prime Minister also emphasized, since Hungary is not sending weapons to Ukraine the visit is useless. Iván-Nagy Szilvia. 2022. Novák Katalin első külföldi útja Varsóba vezetett, és ott is elítéli a putyini agressziót, https://telex.hu/kulfold/2022/05/17/novak-katalin-utazas-varso-koztarsasagi-elnok (access: 28.12.2022).

[9] MTI. 2022. *Magyarország békepárti*, https://kormany.hu/hirek/magyarorszag-bekeparti-2022-10-11 (access: 22.12.2022).It was the message of the election campaign in 2022 spring, while this message was in comparison with the candidate for the PM position from the opposition, who, according to the goevernmental media "wanted to send soldiers to Ukraine". Bozzay, B.: Fact check: Erre alapozza a kormány, hogy „a baloldal katonákat és fegyvereket küldene" Ukrajnába, https://telex.hu/ellenorzo/2022/02/24/marki-zay-fidesz-media-propaganda-nato-magyar-katonak (access: 12.01.2023).

[Twitter]. Hungary may be a reluctant partner, but for the time being it is fulfilling its obligations as a member of NATO and the EU, although it is also a fact that only its President visited Ukraine within a joint action supporting the grain transport from Ukraine.[10] Meanwhile, Hungary also commemorated the Great Famine in the 1920s which resulted in the execution of millions of Ukrainians. The oppositional mayor of Budapest, however, paid a visit to Kyiv together with colleagues from the V4 group capital cities in January 2023.

The Hungarian government also denied the transmission of weapons to Ukraine in the name of "wishing peace", while, according to the data from December 2022, Poland was the 4th and Czechia the 7th country by the value of armour that was transferred to Ukraine [Spencer 2022].
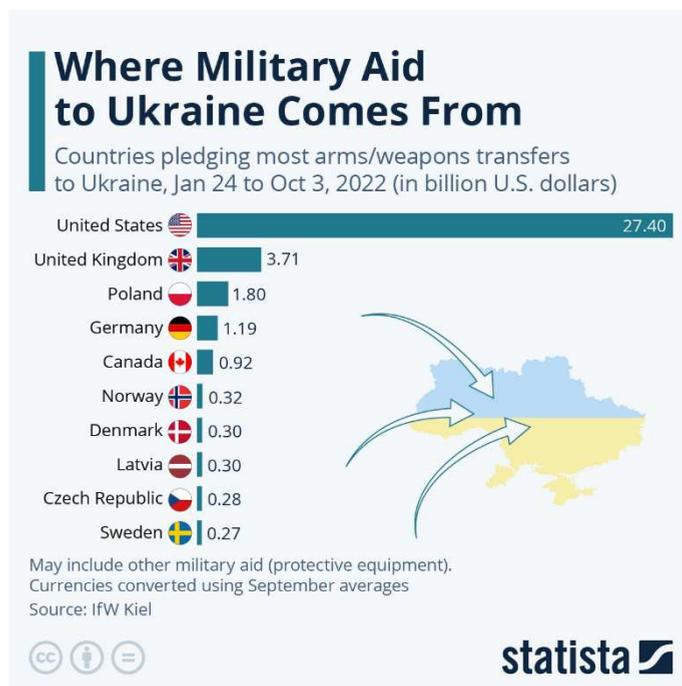
Fig. 2. Where Military aid to Ukraine comes from.

Source: Statista, https://www.statista.com/chart/27278/military-aid-to-ukraine-by-country/ (access 24.12.2022).

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[10] Novákannounced that Hungary is funding the shipment of 10,000 tonnes of grain to Africa, worth 3.5 million dollars under the recently launched program. MTI-Hungary Today. 2022. *President Novák meets Zelensky in Kiev*, https://hungarytoday.hu/president-novak-meets-zelensky-in-kiev/ (access: 22.12.2022).

Conclusion

After the September 2016 V4 meeting in Bratislava. the Czechs and Slovaks were observed to have moved away from the Hungarian-Polish nationalist-populist axis and the 2+2 norm within the V4 was perpetuated. This in particular is evidenced by the observed opinions that:

1. Czechs and Slovaks support deeper integration of the EU
2. Prague says that Hungarian and Polish society is deeply divided
3. Opinions on Russia remain divided
4. V4 lacks a common positive message to the outside world

The last thing that pulled the members together was the refugee issue, but since Polish and Hungarian politics have been paddling new waters even within the European Union on the rule of law and corruption, this V4 has slowly begun to transform into V2+2, while the four countries have of course demonstrated cohesion to the outside world. Since February, V3+1, where Hungary remained the +1 member, although it could be called (V2+1)+1, because the Ukrainian-Russian war shows that the Polish-Hungarian friendship, which seemed to be irreversible, can also be transformed. The Hungarian position in the Ukrainian war is difficult for Polish politicians to accept, but the demonstrations in Warsaw after the outbreak of the war and the resignation of the honorary consul in Szczecin show that the verse "Magyar and Pole, two friends so fine…" exists, but the experience of the Russian occupation of Ukraine is just as important [Herczeg 2022]. However, a split with Poland over Russia's invasion of Ukraine could leave Orbán on shaky ground. For years, Hungary and Poland have supported each other in confrontations with the EU over democratic standards and the rule of law. But Warsaw's position toward Moscow threatens that arrangement. "My assessment is unequivocally negative," as Jarosław Kaczyński, Poland's deputy prime minister, and de facto leader, said in Spring 2022, "when Prime Minister Orbán says that he cannot see clearly what has happened in Bucha, then he should be advised to go and see an eye doctor. We cannot continue to cooperate as we have so far if it continues like this" [Gosling].

V4 cooperation can be interpreted as a strategic alliance, a nostalgic reflection on the past thirty years, and a platform for reconciling interests. Past crises have suggested that it has been successful in dealing with them when it has been able to look toward new goals. War is raging next door, while the global world order is being transformed before our eyes. This is where this alliance should fit in and find new tasks. The war in neighbouring Ukraine completely redistributed the roles, with the Czech Republic, which occasionally looked outside the alliance, Slovakia, which was more westward-looking, and Poland and Hungary, which had enjoyed centuries of friendship, now playing different roles. The question remains to be

answered whether Visegrad cooperation is in fact a marriage of convenience born of geopolitical considerations, a strategic alliance, or the continuation of dreams from three decades ago.

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The Effect of The Shifting International Strategic Environment on the EU and the V4

Abstract: The changes in the international system started earlier than the Russian aggression in Ukraine. It would not be false to state that the international system's main characteristics is that it is not constant. Stability is very important, because it makes international relations predictable for the players in it, however, the system itself is developing continuously. Therefore, scholars came out with ideas about a "new world order", especially often after systemic events such as the war in Ukraine. The present paper is aiming at highlighting the characteristics of the shifting trends in the strategic international environments which are influencing the EU and, through the EU, the Visegrad countries. The focus is not on the war in Ukraine, which is considered to be a symptom of the changes. Nevertheless, we need to understand how our world functions to be able to assess scenarios for the future which will designate a space in which Europe and the V4 countries need to navigate.

Keywords: *World order, EU, Central Europe*

Introduction

The changes in the international system started earlier than the Russian aggression in Ukraine. It would not be false to state that the international systems main characteristics is that it is not constant. Stability is very important because it makes international relations predictable for the players in it, however, the system itself is developing continuously. The topic of EU strategic autonomy and how Europe needs to navigate in the changed international system has been on the agenda since the 1990s. Both the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the war in Kosovo shed light on a problem that Europe struggles to create peace and security in its neighbourhood alone. The war in Europe created the demand for capabilities of autonomous actions, which led to the St. Malo Declaration and the establishment of the European Security and Defence Policy. The Iraq war in 2003 started serious debates on the dilemma of how autonomous Europe should or could be within and besides NATO, and

what is the price of American security guarantees. These debates were well-written in scientific literature, which is not necessary to repeat here. This paper however is significant, because the international order is in change again, and this change effects everyone, but European perspectives might differ based on the countries' own national interests.

Scholars have come out with ideas about a "new world order" time-to-time especially often after systemic events such as the war in Ukraine. The present paper is aiming at highlighting the characteristics of the shifting trends in the strategic international environments which are influencing the EU and through the EU the Visegrad countries. The focus is not on the war in Ukraine, which is considered to be a symptom of the changes. Nevertheless, we need to understand how our world functions to be able to assess scenarios for the future which will designate a space in which Europe and the V4 countries need to navigate.

The transformation could be described as a new Cold War. The US gives a strong response to the rise of China and the aggressive military steps of the Russian Federation. The Trump presidency published a National Security Strategy (NSS) in 2017 [NSS 2017], which mentioned Russia 25 times and China 33 times in various context. The current NSS published by the Biden administration in 2022 mentions Russia 71 times and the PRC 46 times [NSS 2022]. This increase is a clear sign of the shift into a new great power competition.

Some might argue this is a battle of democracy against autocracy. This is the revival of the logic of ideological camps, and the European submission in the US-led world order is inevitable as China and Russia are basically empires, which do not respect democratic liberal values. These foes might form an uneasy alliance either by creating structures like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), or just looking for *ad hoc* cooperation.[1] This simplification however forgets the fractures, which are important not just in the case of the Chinese-led cooperation formats, but also reappear in the West, which accepted the rules of US hegemony so far. It is evident though that the West have a clear image of the enemy after the Russian attack against Ukraine in February, and this common defence perception helped to strengthen NATO solidarity. Endgame scenarios and expectations, however, might differ when it comes to the individual foreign policies of EU member-states. Therefore, we cannot say for sure that the Eastern threat, which decreased the European feeling of being secure helped the case of strategic autonomy. Just the opposite tendencies we can see from the more and more signs of Atlanticist political messages across Europe.

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[1] See further information: Abrams E., The New Cold War, https://www.cfr.org/blog/new-cold-war-0.

The effects of changes in the international system on Europe

At the end of the Cold War two parallel processes could be witnessed. These two trends were (or rather, have been) interconnected, thus they are needed to be analysed together: the transformation of the Westphalian system based on modern nation states and the security architecture became obsolete which was based on the bipolar opposition of the two superpowers. Stemming from the two trends, new security threats emerged in the international system which was not prepared to successfully manage the immense interconnectedness of the new challenges. During the Cold War the "enemy" – the static nation state – was visible and fitted in the Westphalian logic but the increase in the number of the new players in the international system called for new approaches and a qualitatively new logic. The new world order is more complex and more unpredictable.

These trends (or one megatrend) were reflected in the actual foreign policy decisions of the European players and they were simultaneous with the development of the EU's common foreign and security policy and also with the enlargement process of the EU towards former socialist countries. The development of the EU's foreign policy and also the enlargement process reflected the new realities. The Visegrad countries consequently had a very difficult job: changing the political, economic and societal systems whilst adapting into the new international system through the tough and expanding conditionality of the EU integration. The mainstream thinking in international relations was questioned, because realism could not reliably explain all the changes but the new theoretic post-rational models were not convincing either. The leaders of the Visegrad countries needed to keep in mind that they are pursuing a membership in a club which is rapidly changing. From the EU's point of view, the changes were favourable not only for enlargement but for deepening the integration, for instance, in the domain of strategic thinking.

There have been several changes in the international system in the last three decades.[2] The importance of these changes or more precisely their consequences to the international system can be analysed from different perspectives and there have been long debates on a "new world order"[3] but there are no sane arguments against the statement that 2022 as a year was definitely a turning point in world politics, in the EU's foreign policy and consequently in Central Europe and for the Visegrad countries. The stakes are high in Europe (and in the world) because the simultaneous crises do not seem to be managed reassuringly. Having in mind that

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[2] See for instance: P. Rada. 2022. *The Rubik's cube of Visegrád,* in*:* E. Kancik-Kołtun (ed.) 30 years of the Visegrad Group. Volume 1: Political, Legal, and Social Issues and Challenges, Lublin, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University Press.

[3] See: P. Rada, 2019. *Megváltozó világunk és a biztonsági kihívások átalakulása* in: "Biztonságpolitikai Corvinák", vol. 1. kötet, pp. 1–10.

the Visegrad countries have still one of the most pro-EU public opinions, the integrity of the EU came into question.

The Russian aggression changed our thinking, the reality and material conditions. The latter is more important to realists, the first is more relevant to the constructivist approach. Anyway, the question remains valid: whether we are able to maintain international order in these circumstances. Anything what happens in the EU is crucial for the Visegrad countries and the changes and new realities are very significant for the EU's future, as well. The EU as a grand project was funded with the very goal to overcome the violent historic greed and grievances in Europe and through cooperation to create possibilities for the members to shape the international system in which they feel secure (and comfortable). The war in Ukraine proves that world orders exist simultaneously: the EU feels the comfort in a liberal world order when some players like Russia felt threatened (even if it is a miscalculation) by this order, consequently the postmodern Western liberal world coexists with ambitions for disorder and 20th century geopolitical thinking. Within the EU the success and necessity of the EU integration has never been questioned and it was paired (most probably in past tense) with the belief that the EU is able to increase the sphere of stability, security and prosperity in the immediate neighbourhood. The normative power of the EU was strong enough to feed this belief and thinking also in the Eastern Neighbourhood but the Russian invasion proved otherwise and revealed that the "king is naked": the EU as an economic superpower was not able to prevent a major war – which was considered as an outdated "concept" in Europe – in the immediate neighbourhood. The EU's neighbourhood policy and short-sighted conditionality of enlargement, the not effective sanctions since 2014 all make it clear that traditional "powers" are still relevant. That is the realist are right: material power continues to be decisive in the 21st century's Europe. However, we need to add that the pure logic of realism is not correct either because materialism and geopolitical thinking became dominant again because they were reconstructed as important elements of international politics. First, because Putin thinks like a realist, second because the Western world accepted the realist challenge.

We need to take a note here that the European economic hardships are the consequence of several miscalculations and the latent effects of parallel economic problems which started way earlier than the war. This is clearly true in the Visegrad countries where the politicians referred to increased resilience and economic excellence as compared to the old EU members for years in the 2010s but the imbalance knocked on the door of the region in the form of high inflation of basic commodities (including natural gas and electricity) and general fiscal and monetary problems during the Covid pandemic. This is still true despite the fact that the sanctions against Russia make the recovery slower. The sanctions are necessary (or the only possible answer) for the maintenance of the liberal international order which is based on sovereignty and non-intervention but counterproductive to the efforts to help the European economy

recover. The later has immediate consequences to our life (and our voters' behaviour) the earlier has unpredictable (and possibly very grave) but rather long-term effects on the international system. The statistical forecast is dimmer for Europe.
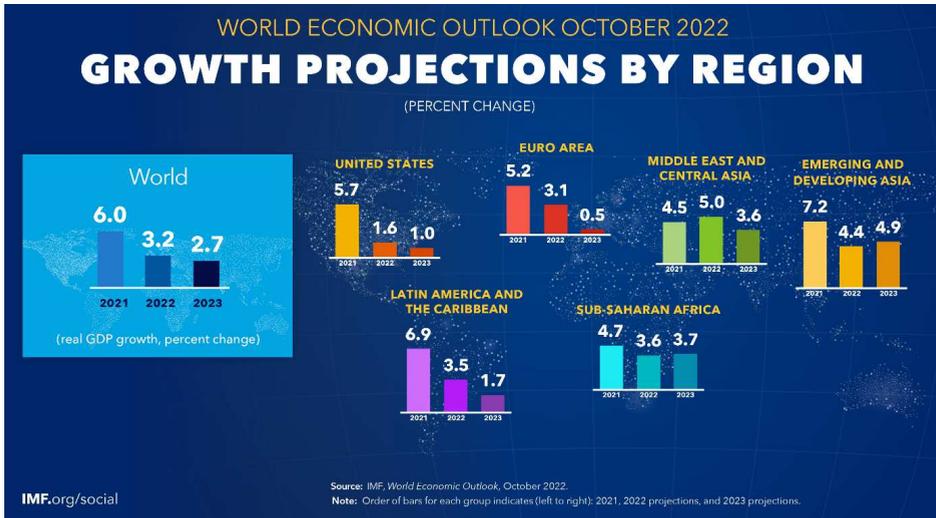
Fig. 1. Economic outlook regionally in October 2022.

Source: IMF. World Economic Outlook October, 2022.

The above argument cannot be surprising in Europe because resilience has been widely and often mentioned as a key in the debates about the future of Europe.

Turbulent years and the Visegrad countries

The Russian invasion of Ukraine changed everything. It is beyond doubt – as mentioned above – a cornerstone in our history and beyond doubt it raised questions related to the existence of V4 as a regional security complex. It is not a question that geographically the V4 has been a regional institution but it has been less clear whether it is a regional security complex in the classical Regional Security Complex Theory's sense. Before the war in Ukraine, we could already argue that the V4 is rather a question-specific security complex with a regional character and these questions appear in different dimensions. Sometimes these questions strengthened cooperation (such as coordinating within the EU and NATO, reactions to the migration crisis) but many times they weakened V4 (such as the supremacy of the EU values vs. sovereignty, Euro zone crisis or the relations with Russia or China). After Russia's inexcusable violation

of international law, it seems that the weakening factors within the V4 are stronger but it can be also seen that it did not lose its relevance because the EU has not been able to find a reassuring solution for the simultaneous crises.[4]

Theoretically all the questions (which create the security complex) can be associated with one specific dimension. Nevertheless, all the dimensions interact with each other through the connections of the questions and they create question specific super complexes. One example is strikingly showing how quickly the super complexes can change: the V4 countries (have) regarded themselves as "new" members (still true in 2022) of the Transatlantic community whose voices cannot be heard individually thus their interests connects them within the EU and NATO. It was probably more visible in the EU where Hungary and Poland were on a common platform of refusing "imperialistic" EU influence in the domestic dimension.
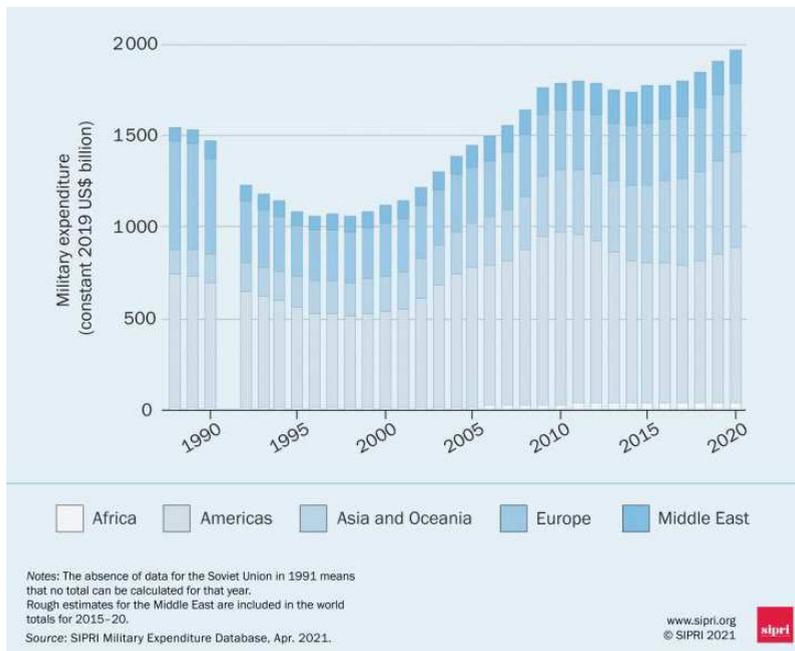
Fig. 2. World's military expenditure 1988–2020.

Source: SIPRI. 2020.

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[4] Let alone the fact that the EU's leadership is losing credibility because of the applied double standards within the EU, the mistaken prioritization of issues (e.g., the importance of the rule of law's mechanism vs. economic recovery) when there is a war in Europe. These all are overshadowed by the preposterous corruption scandal in the European Parliament who lectured the Visegrád countries (lately Poland and Hungary) about democracy.

Before the Russian invasion we could have written that in 2020 and 2021 we witnessed many challenges, which would prove to be a turning point or a cornerstone in the development in international relations. These challenges were those that are widely analysed in the international political literature but convincing arguments were not presented. Of course, the COVID-19 global pandemic; the further challenges of Russia and China to the international order; not decreasing activity of terrorist networks; further environmental problems; unsolved identity crisis in the EU – including the not properly managed Brexit – and the pressing issues related to for instance energy security of the EU, or illegal migration.

Since the Visegrad Cooperation was founded, the four countries experienced different leading paradigms in international relations: the unipolar moment of the American era of liberal democratization; global war on terror (still unquestionably American dominance i Central Europe: the V4 countries were part of the "coalition of the willing") [Lorenz 2013]; financial and economic crisis of 2008–2009; the return of power politics in 2014; mass illegal migration; the global pandemic and simultaneously an unfolding "new Cold War" [Mearsheimer 2021] and finally the war in Ukraine in 2022. The real dilemma from our[5] perspective is whether the "liberal" world order will be able to function without deep reforms. The dilemma brought heavy ideological and political debates to the surface also within our own alliance and the label "liberal" gained negative connotation. Unfortunately, these debates are not focused on the core question whether our alliance will be able to survive by maintaining the existing security architecture. Today the criticism is related to philosophical (sometimes outdated) principles.

In the last three decades, that is since the foundation of the Visegrad Cooperation we have witnessed several significant changes in the international system. These cornerstones brought forth new ways of thinking about our world and new strategies. The V4 countries were affected by these changes and they needed to adapt to them. The first cornerstone was of course the process of system changes and the beginning of democratic transitions in Central Europe which correlated with the idea of institutionally bringing together the countries of our region. The second cornerstone was the simultaneous terrorist attacks against the United States in 2001 due to which the world sole superpower woke up from a kind of strategic slumber and turned its attention to security issues again. The third cornerstone, the global financial and economic crisis of 2008 and 2009 called the attention (again) to the discrepancies in our celebrated liberal economic world order. Most probably we can name 2014 and 2015 new cornerstones because of the Russian aggression in Ukraine and the

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[5] Being Hungarian scholars from Hungary who have researched V4, the term "our" refers to the personal experience with V4 politics and it is not a "royal we" referring to generally to the international community.

mass illegal migration crisis in the later year. Unfortunately, the cycles got shorter and the year 2020 proved to be the beginning of a new era. The new era created new dilemmas: how can we fight the global pandemic whilst avoiding unmanageable consequences of economic regression? Let alone the fact that we will fight these challenges successfully, the emergence of parallel traditional threats coming from the emergence of defiant powers are also on the table. As a result of all changes, it is widely accepted that the "controlled competition" between the United States and China will significantly influence our immediate future [Mearsheimer 2021]. As argued above the new cycle came parallelly, the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 is definitely a new cornerstone because it questions the effectiveness of our Transatlantic world and the validity of international order based on (liberal) institutions and international law.
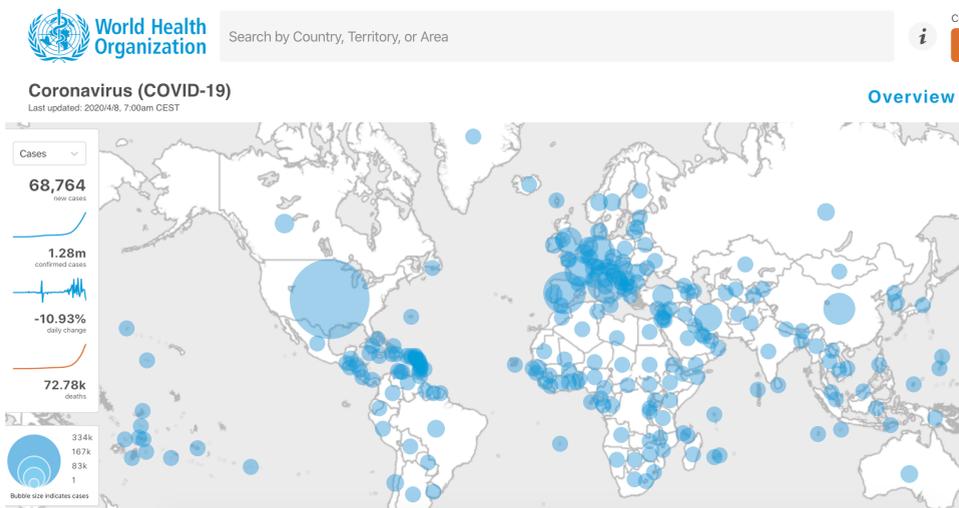
Fig. 3. Covid cases in the World in 2022

Source: WHO. 2022.

Since 1989 (and obviously since 1991 and the foundation of Visegrad Cooperation), the Visegrad countries were exposed to the changes in international politics and they needed to react quickly to the incremental change in the security architecture (e.g., the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, the violent disintegration of Yugoslavia) and later to the re-emerged Russian influence. Yet the Western allies were not always receptive to the concerns even after the Visegrad countries joined the NATO and later the EU. The foremost expectation of the Alliance was unconditional integration of the "new members". That is, the integration meant full alignment. The conditions were designed by the EU in Europe and by the United States in the Transatlantic

world. Despite the existing criticism, the transatlantic integration of Central Europe had no alternative and it was successful. The Visegrad countries needed to find the healthy balance in the Western club that is the fine synergy between the American alliance and the more and more detailed conditionality of the EU accession. It was not the easiest task because the United States in the 2000s found its closest allies in the frames of the "coalition of the willing" in the "new members" of the club whilst many EU members raised eyebrows on the unilateral US foreign policy. The Visegrad countries wanted to prove that they are reliable allies of the United States and they supported Washington's foreign policy moves whilst they did not want to alienate the EU right at the doorstep of full membership.

The changes of system gave the Visegrad countries an opportunity to re-join the West after almost five decades. The doors were practically closed by the great power agreement in Yalta on the post war reconstruction of Europe. Joining the transatlantic institutions gave back what was taken during and after the Second World War and the opportunity opened up to (again) become a full and now hopefully permanent member of the Western value and interest community. The V4 countries all went along the exhausting road of democratic transition and they built functioning market economies. At the end of the Cold War, large scale system changes strengthened the hope for the final victory of democracy and free market. Growing consensus about unstoppable worldwide spread of liberal democracy was feed by several favourable factors. The "third wave of democratization" spilled over the former socialist block and liberal democracy remained without real opposing ideological alternative. Later on, the "end of history" [Fukuyama 1993] and the "third wave of democratization" [Huntington 1996] met in the process of globalization. After the first flames of "democratic euphoria", everyday problems of emerging democracies fuelled academic debates on the characteristics of democratic transitions.

Until full membership, the foremost goal of the Visegrad countries was the successful and operative integration in the Western clubs which needed deep domestic reforms. In spite of the fact that the process can be assessed as effective, the question has been unfortunately valid during the decades of membership why the new members cannot have equal voice in political debates and why the Western allies apply double standards vis-à-vis the Visegrad countries. Furthermore, substantiated fears were present that the strategic considerations many times overshadow the importance of V4 and despite Central European efforts the United States or the EU do not refrain from driving a wedge in the alliance. The continued rule of law mechanism parallel with the failed recovery policies and the neglected individual needs of the Visegrad countries when a war is going on unfortunately for a longer time than expected is a good example for the internal problems of the EU.

Thus, the picture would not be complete without looking at the permanent crises the EU needs to face today. The most severe problem is that the EU could not find

its identity after the accession of the Visegrad countries (not because of them) due to the fact that the unprecedently bigger and diverse community was not able to find common answers to the parallel challenges of the 2010s: the financial and economic problems in the EU and the Euro zone, the illegal migration crisis, military threat in the neighbourhood etc. Designing the future of Europe must be based on wide acceptance of the reality that the for instance the Visegrad countries have different interests and different domestic characteristics. It is true that the last decade started pessimistically with the global financial crisis and continued not promising either. The prospects will not dim less if the plans for the future cannot integrate all members and some feel left out. It is not enough that the European Commission publishes white books, or the French president comes out with his own political vision our Germany designs the economic strategy.

The newly democratizing countries had many headaches when trying to designate their respective countries' future and find the best ways of restructuring their polities, economies and societies. There were and still are some open questions whether the NATO, the American alliance, or the EU indeed serve the real self-interest of the Visegrad countries. Despite some diverging voices, the majority of the Central European countries are pro-NATO (and pro-EU) and have generally better views of the United States than the Western Europeans. Their populations are in favour of strengthening the Euro-Atlantic alliance. It is often mentioned that Atlanticism is failing but actual opinion polls cannot back the fears of a waning feeling towards the Western security institutions [HVG 2022].

Of course, none of the above is an easy task. The priority is clearly to restore peace in Ukraine but the longer-term strategy cannot neglect other factors of the complex challenges stemming from the changes of international system.

US-EU relations and the V4

The Russian aggression is a test of the international order and of the EU as a security complex. The scholarly literature often refers to the EU as such [Buzan, Wæver 2003] and the EU Global Strategy [European Union 2016] clearly includes this multidimensional approach and ambition. However, the comparison with the United States makes this claim weaker. In Kagan's footsteps we can characterize this difference through the Mars-Venus analogy. [6] According to this comparison, the EU's foreign policy is constructed on the level of the member states and it is the common denominator of the member's foreign policy motivations, individual beliefs, subregional (for example, the V4) interests. Only those questions can become

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[6] For further details, see Robert Kagan's related work.

dominant in the EU's foreign policy discourse which are securitized similarly within the members' decision-making processes. Stopping the war in Ukraine is clearly one tangible example. However, even though a question is securitized similarly, the still existing nuances in national interests make it difficult to follow an unquestioned common policy. Not surprising that there is a wide debate about the nature of the EU's foreign policy or strategic culture, and how far the member states are converging towards the common foreign and security policy [Krotz, Maher 2011].

Top defence budgets, 2018 (US$bn), including total European NATO spending

1. United States — 643.3
Total NATO Europe — 264
2. China — 168.2
3. Saudi Arabia — 82.9
4. Russia[a] — 63.1
5. India — 57.9
6. United Kingdom — 56.1
7. France — 53.4
8. Japan — 47.3
9. Germany — 45.7
10. South Korea — 39.2
11. Brazil — 28.0
12. Australia — 26.6
13. Italy — 24.9
14. Israel[b] — 21.6
15. Iraq — 19.6

United States
Other top 15 countries
Rest of the world

0   100   200   300   400   500   600   700   800

[a] Under NATO defence-spending definition; [b] Includes US Foreign Military Assistance
Note: US dollar totals are calculated using average market exchange rates for 2018, derived using IMF data. The relative position of countries will vary not only as a result of actual adjustments in defence spending levels, but also due to exchange-rate fluctuations between domestic currencies and the US dollar. The use of average exchange rates reduces these fluctuations, but the effects of such movements can be significant in a number of cases.
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Fig. 4. Military expenditures by alliances in 2018 (billion USD)

Source: IISS. 2018.

The picture is even more complex because the strategic culture cannot be separated from the wider Transatlantic Alliance in which the United States has the dominant position. Thus, the state of the Transatlantic Alliance and the United States interest in influencing the EU's foreign policy will eventually shape the European strategic thinking. Undoubtedly, the war in Ukraine brought the EU and the US

closer but also revealed that the American dominance is significant. How independent can the EU remain in foreign policy anyway in strategic domains? It has never been the intent of Washington to foster European strategic autonomy, therefore the development of the CFSP has been regarded as a sensitive issue in the US. It does not cause headaches for the Americans that the EU member allies are able to deliver more defence capabilities through the EU's common foreign and security policy but it would raise eyebrows if the EU ambitioned independent strategic decision towards, for instance, Russia (or China, or Iran).

We need to admit that through the development of the CFSP the EU became a useful security partner for the US[7] not simply because of the NATO. Even before the Russian aggression, questions related to the management of the liberal world order were on the agenda of the EU-US talks. The EU (and the EU members) are the closest allies of the US in the endeavour of preserving international order and it is not surprising that an existential threat to this order (the war in Ukraine) brought the allies closer again.

Conclusion

As we argued above, the European security architecture created in the 1990s can be considered old (perhaps even obsolete) and need serious adjustments and reconfiguration. New models of security studies, such as the securitization theory show how new challenges could be prioritized over traditional threats, even in the realm of military, which was impossible during the Cold War. Furthermore, it is clear that a small regional conflict can turn into global problems, thus Europe cannot remain unaffected by these events. One good example for this could be the Arab Spring in 2021.

History did not end in the 2000s, and the American Global War on Terror showed a series of new military and political problems until 2008. The global economic crisis however changed our perception again, shifting the focus from the areas of military and politics to economy. In 2022, the attention of the West is primarily on Russia, and secondarily on China, but it is still a question if transatlantic solidarity can endure the fractures, and to which extent do the strategic interests of the US and Europe align in the politico-economic dimensions.

This transformation caused by COVID-19 and Russo-Ukrainian war did not affect the world the same way. Considering the monetary policies, we can see the American dollar to hit parity with the euro. Furthermore, it seems that the US economy is in relatively good shape except the high level of inflation rates. Predictions

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[7] EU. 2006. *The European Union and the United States.*

of economic development, however, decreased to the moderate 2% instead of past 4–5% of GDP growth annually. This amount of decrease was more modest in the developing markets of Asia and the Middle East, where the expected GDP growth does not exceed 5–6%. US economy is a bit more resilient than the European, but the most damage in this multidimensional crisis has been taken again by Africa and the Latin-American subcontinent. 2–4% of GDP growth is far from what they need in order to close the gap between them and the developed world. Resilience of the European Union depends basically on the performance of German economy, but the energy crisis hit the German industry hard. Economists expect a GDP growth of 1.5–2% in the upcoming 5 years [IMF].Although the European institutions created a framework for economic reconstruction large enough to tackle the challenges, receiving the financial support is not easy due to the heated political debates on various issues. This delay can deepen the economic crisis, which does not favour the idea of European strategic autonomy.

If we consider the EU as a soft superpower, and the European security as the echo of national sovereigns' interest politics, then it is safe to stay that the EU really looks like a regional security complex. Even if the members-states have second thoughts about the effectiveness of sanctions against Russia, they all agree that military aggression cannot be tolerated in the 21st century.

Besides the agreement on the Russia issue, the strategic cultures also have some common points in the EU member-states. These however has been developed in the framework of NATO cooperation and have more of a transatlantic than simply European nature. The question indeed remains: how realistic is to even talk about the idea of European strategic autonomy? The roots of European strategic culture are embedded in NATO, and our threat perception is common only because we are afraid of the attack against a rule-based international system created by the US.

A much more optimistic picture we can draw on the European regional security complex, if we focus on the military and defence policy, instead of political and strategic debates. France spent a lot on its own defence; hence, Paris has a leading role to push for a more autonomous European Union. But also, Germany intends to close the gap and now Berlin spends enough on its own military to leave behind the accusations of being a stowaway on the ship of NATO. Berlin now delivers, when it comes to army development. And, they are quite clear that nobody is looking for loopholes in doing business with Moscow but suspended their economic and energy projects to show solidarity. It is obvious that transformation of the European energy markets is not possible in a few weeks. Some great powers can make estimates and market calculations to decide, which path to follow, but certain small states like Bulgaria or Hungary face existential threats when it comes to gas storage problems, and energy supply security.

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ANDRII HACHKEVYCH

Why Did the States of the Visegrad Group Were Alleged to Apply Double Standards When Helping Asylum Seekers and Refugees from Ukraine?

Abstract: This chapter is dedicated to state policies and practices regarding attitude towards asylum seekers and refugees. It focuses on the evaluation of the treatments of Ukrainians and Non-Ukrainians by the Visegrad states, which has been described as operating "double standards". It discusses those allegations concerning different approaches to different groups of people and examines their features, in particular, presumed discrimination on the ground of human rights. The results of the present research may be further useful in counteracting manipulation with the usage of evaluative statements about double standards. Moreover, they contribute to providing more conscious responses to relevant accusations by officials.

Keywords: double standards, asylum seekers and refugees, migration crisis, well-balanced policy, non-discrimination principle, Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Introduction

After the states of the Visegrad Group began to accept asylum seekers from Ukraine and give them a warm welcome in late February, early March this year, allegations against these states – primarily Poland and Hungary – appeared in statements of activists, journalistic publications, and even reports by experts of international organizations. The claims were about the unfair treatment of non-Ukrainian asylum seekers and refugees. The difference between the latter two categories involves the obtaining of the status of a refugee according to adopted procedures. That unfair treatment was described as the policy of double standards. And the reason for it lies in the fact that people from African or Middle Eastern countries did not receive the same protection as Ukrainians. Although such statements have not been translated into the legal plane as bases for bringing claims before national and international courts, they point at different approaches capable of influencing the mood in the society and provoking crises in international relations.

Taking this into account a question arises: what is the nature of double standards regarding the refugee and asylum policy? The answer to this question depends, in the first place, on whether they stand for concerns about fairness and respect for human rights. A complain about applying double standards in the times of migration crisis in one way draws attention to the violation of the non-discrimination principle and guarantees for refugees and asylum seekers, set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It accomplishes a hidden, manipulative purpose in another, ignoring the fact that national interests and sovereign rights are prioritized. "Double standards" cliche has become a tool of information warfare and political manipulation. Moreover, those accusations have turned into a challenge for the officials of the highest level, because a typical reaction in the form of disregarding them may not be the most effective. And because of that, both the nature and substance of the accusations might be helpful in revealing how the accused should reply.

The purpose of this chapter is to analyse the character of the allegations of applying double standards by the Visegrad states' policies and practice related to refugees and asylum seekers after the Russian invasion of Ukraine in the last February. This purpose invokes a deeper understanding of "double standards" as a term and examining its basic assumptions.

Since Ukrainian citizens began to flee the war and gained protection in the territories of the EU states first and the foremost Poland and Hungary, there appeared a lot of publications in the media comparing treatments of Ukrainians and non-Ukrainians. Their authors found dissimilarity in attitudes and tended to point out at different approaches. Allegations of that kind may have an impact on the international perception of the Visegrad Group, the European Union, and even Ukraine if they are not responded timely and accurately. They can provoke international conflicts because of presumable unfairness and foster the formation of an enemy image. Therefore, an in-depth study of relevant materials underlies the present research. The results of this study will help to provide more conscious responses to the accusations addressed to officials, especially when counteracting manipulation with the usage of evaluative statements about different approaches towards refugees and asylum seekers.

The overall structure of this chapter is divided into three parts: introduction, main part consisting of three subchapters, and conclusion, followed by the list of references. Subchapter 1 explains what double standards mean in international politics and the general context in which they are considered. Subchapter 2 provides an overview of the allegations of applying different approaches by the Visegrad states in their refugee and asylum policies. Subchapter 3 examines the features of those allegations.

The Meaning of Double Standards and Their Context

Complaints about double standards have become a part of modern international relations. The term "double standards" is usually found in the media materials of journalists who give their opinions on current events. Relatedly, representatives of states and international organizations tend to speak of different approaches while discussing migration crises, recognition of states or criminal matters. *De facto*, inequality is at the heart of the definition of double standards. Jan Willem Sap explains that a policy of double standards is the implementation of different sets of principles in similar situations. He links unfairness with non-equal treatment ("all parties should stand equal before") and claims its negative connotation [Sap 2000: 199].

Those three characteristics of double standards are applicable in considering the reaction of the mass media, non-governmental organizations and officials to the migration and asylum policy of the European Union, and the acceptance of asylum seekers and refugees in the states of the Visegrad Group, as discussed later. The essence of this concept consists in the confidence that a single standard exists – a pattern of behaviour developed for particular instances. Such a standard is expected to be followed by a state where people come after crossing borders of their native states for the reason of war. It is determined by ensuring the respect for their rights without discrimination on any of the grounds. Therefore, people or groups being in equal conditions should be treated similarly. In this connection it is necessary to define the notion of migrational double standards. We may clarify it as different treatments of states and international organizations towards similar migration processes depending on citizenships (or origins) of the people involved.

One of the first mentions of double standards in the world history is a story about a pirate and Alexander the Great told by St. Augustine. Alexander the Great accused the pirate of molesting the sea ("How dare you molest the sea?"). He asked in response: "How dare you molest the whole world? Because I do it with a little ship only, I am called a thief; you, doing it with a great navy, are called an Emperor" [Chomsky 1986: 1]. Regarding the latter, this story shows that the protagonist took a completely different approach when evaluated the others. But he did not find himself guilty. Alexander the Great expressed indignation, anger and condemnation in the question posed. To draw parallels with the situations related to asylum seekers and refugees, we may assume that he most likely considered his actions to be right. His behaviour in no way was self-described "molesting". However, the pirate's answer leads to the modern interpretation of different approaches – it is not a result or a purpose that is important, but a method, a way of doing things.

A statement about different treatments towards similar processes suggests a kinship with the phrase of Gerald Seymour. He wrote in one of his novels: "One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter". Seymour's phrase is a well-known

illustration of the phenomenon of double standards. Those who evaluate refugee and asylum policies in the modern world believe that no importance should be attached to a country of origin of a group member otherwise the applying of double standards is observed. And there is one thing common among all those groups. Their members are considered to be refugees in the terms of 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol (or are granted the right to seek asylum corresponding to the provisions of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights).

It is probably no accident that we find "Defining Terrorism: Is One Man's Terrorist Another Man's Freedom Fighter" in the title of Boaz Ganor's article, who heads the International Institute for Combating Terrorism in Israel [Ganor 2002: 287–304]. On the one hand, the author points to the problematic nature of adopting an objective and authoritative definition of terrorism. There is a thin line between a terrorist organization and a guerrilla movement when considering a danger to society. And because of that, a space for the allegations of double standards has been opened. On the other one, Ganor's attempt to show the difference between terrorists and insurgents by distinguishing different objects of attack – military targets or civilians – makes it possible to establish clear criteria and thus prevent manipulative statements.

The Overview of the Allegations on Asylum Seekers and Refugees

To prevent illegal migration processes from the territory of Belarus, Poland erected a long metal wall on the border. Such a step on the part of Poland caused an ambiguous response both inside the state and outside it. The head of the Polish NGO Open House (Dom Otwarty) Natalia Gebert contrasted treating refugees on the Ukrainian border with the Belarusian one. "If you give a lift to a refugee at the Ukrainian border you are a hero. If you do it at the Belarus border you are a smuggler and could end up in jail for eight years" [Sephton 2022]. The term "double standards" was not used in the words of the Polish activist. But it is present in the title of the article about the construction of the wall, authored by Connor Sephton from Sky News. Gebert's opinion has been quoted therein.

Poland's refugee and asylum policy has been described as "double standards" by experts of international organizations. One of them Felipe Gonzalez Morales, the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, concluded that "double standards" approach had been applied to the citizens of third countries (other than Ukraine). It led to illegal discrimination: "Even for those that have fled the same war, although all were accepted for entry into Poland and have received assistance from the State, third country nationals are not protected under the same legal framework… Those with specific vulnerabilities including the ones with irregular

migratory status face heightened difficulties in obtaining residence permits and proper shelter" [UN News 2022].

Why did Hungary cause great indignation among some NGOs when it dealt with the citizens of Ukraine who escaped the war? The report of the researchers from Global Detention Project[1] confirms that Hungary refused to accept refugees from outside the EU since the migrant crisis of 2015. Such a decision was explained, among other things, by the need "to preserve its cultural and ethnic homogeneity" (Victor Orbán). The current Prime Minister of Hungary invited warmly the citizens of Ukraine after February 24, 2022. He called Hungarians their friends and juxta-posed refugees from Ukraine fleeing the war with Muslims looking for "a better life" [Global Detention Project 2022: 2–3]. Additionally, it is worth taking into consider-ation that Hungary also erected a border fence for the cause of the migrant crisis of 2015. It appeared on the border with Serbia stretching for 170 km [BBC News 2019].

We find a reference to double standards against Hungary in the article of the New Arab[2]. It describes a story of a non-Ukrainian citizen who had come to Ukraine from the Middle East before direct Russian aggression started. He decided to left Ukraine shortly thereafter and moved to Hungary on the way to other EU countries. He was disappointed that he was not treated as citizens of Ukraine. And that is the reason why the state's policy is evaluated to be unfair. The explanation for "double stan-dards" complaint is the following: "In fact, while Hungary has opened its borders to receive hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian refugees fleeing the war, it remains intransigent regarding the reception of refugees arriving from other countries. This double standard, however, creates a series of contradictions and errors in the recep-tion system, perfectly embodied in Samir's story" [Toniolo, A., Giauna, C. 2022].

Another interesting fact is connected with the allegations against the Czech Republic. According to the authors of Radio Prague International, the refugee and asylum policy of this state turned out to be an example of different approaches towards Ukrainians of non-Roma and Roma origins – some restrictions were imposed on the latter. "Many Ukrainian refugees of Roma origin are having trou-ble finding accommodation in the Czech Republic, amid allegations that Czechia is employing double standards. The interior minister denies racial segregation and announced that accommodation for 300 Ukrainian refugees of Roma origin could be ready next week" [Fodor, A., Fenykova, S. 2022]. Their arrival in the Czech Republic has been called "social tourism" by a regional governor Martin Netolicky. In his view, those people should not be treated like the Ukrainians who fled the war because were in danger. Most of them lived in relatively safe region in western

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[1] Global Detention Project is a non-profit organisation based in Switzerland. Its main field of activity is to promote the human rights of asylum seekers.

[2] The New Arab is a London-based news website focusing on the Middle East and North Africa.

Ukraine. Nevertheless, the authors found the refugee and asylum policy of Czech Republic unjust.

Like other Visegrad states', the Czech Republic's attitude towards asylum seekers and refugees from Syria was characterized by the word "racism". The sentiments of the people living there were described as Islamophobic. Such evaluation was carried out within the comparison of attitudes to Ukrainians and Syrians in the article entitled "Double standards in international responses to the war in Ukraine". It was written by Reya Kumar, the executive opinion editor at Tufts Daily[3] who supported the people of Ukraine. She stated: "Over 2 million refugees from Ukraine have been accepted by nearby nations, while the 1.1 million Syrians who sought asylum in Europe over the past few years have met blocks at every turn. The racism and Islamophobia are most apparent in Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic, which broke EU law by refusing to host refugees from Africa and the Middle East. Last November, Poland refused asylum-seekers entrance, leaving them freezing in the forest on the Poland-Belarus border… This double standard has been reinforced by Western media coverage, which also highlights a clear difference based on racism in how refugees from Ukraine and those from Africa and the Middle East are seen. The numerous examples of blatant racism from respected media organizations underscore the widespread bias in Western society" [Kumar 2022].

Slovakia is a country of the Visegrad Group that was alleged of different approaches and double standards to a lesser extent based on the analysis we have conducted. At the same time there happened a situation involving Syrians who had not received any adequate protection. They were forced to stay in the territory of Slovakia as documented in the Financial Times. This situation created an enormous challenge to the local authorities. It reflected the problematic character of migration crises arising from the trans-national movement of asylum seekers and refugees. On the one hand, Slovakia did not deny the entry and gave them the opportunity to move through. Neighbouring states on the other hand did deny their entry. "In Slovakia, thousands of mostly Syrian refugees are now trapped along the country's border areas because Czech border police have prevented them from entering, while Hungary is refusing to take back those who travelled through Hungary into Slovakia. Local residents complain about refugees roaming the countryside, while aid workers are calling on the authorities to assist them urgently or grant them safe passage to another country" [Kazmin et al. 2022].

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[3] The Tufts Daily is one of the leading college newspapers in the United States (ranked 7th) [CollegeChoice.net Staff 2022]. It represents Tufts University (Massachusetts).

Presumed Discrimination and Other Features of Allegations

Based on the breadth of situations in which allegations of applying double standards were made, we will examine their features. First, they are *evaluative statements* that reflect the position of an evaluator. Usually, the role of the latter is played by journalists, although evaluators might be officials representing international organizations (e.g., The President of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies Francesco Rocca [The Times of India 2022]) or even states. Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei hinted at Western double standards in March 2022: "If oppression takes place in countries obedient to them, they do not show any reaction at all. Despite all this cruelty and oppression, they claim to be advocates of human rights… Today is one of the most openly disgraceful periods in contemporary history in terms of oppression and arrogance. The people of the world are directly witnessing these acts of oppression and double standards" [Tehran Times 2022]. An evaluative judgment associated with the wrong behaviour and different approaches depicts someone or something in a bad light. Nevertheless, it is not considered libel, largely because of a reasoned explanation, consisting of facts, and internal logic behind it. "Though everyone who fled the war suffered equally, unequal treatments were doled out at border crossings. Some said that Ukrainian border guards prioritized Ukrainians and sent others, such as people from African countries, to the back of the queues, some of which stretched for kilometres" [Ovuorie 2022]. At the same time, such allegations do not turn into a legal battle – evaluators are not likely to bring claims before national or international courts.

They are reactions to *challenging behaviour*. Why do claims of "double standards" in international politics emerge? Due to the fact that states or international organizations tend to show different attitudes to people of different residence countries. And that is why there are conducted actions, spoken words, adopted laws, taken decisions behind those allegations (objective criterion). The UN Special Rapporteur Morales appealed to the fact that migrants and refugees, who mainly had come from the countries of the Middle East, were stopped and detained in special centres located near the Polish border [Al Jazeera and News Agencies 2022]. The statement of the Prime Minister of Bulgaria Kiril Petkov is considered to be the quintessence of the phenomenon of double standards according to our examination of media sources. It was mentioned by many journalists who were discussing the issue of the EU refugee and asylum policy. Although this case does not involve any specific actions, Petkov's words were publicized widely. They were described as unacceptable from the point of view of human rights. Petkov said: "These are not the refugees we are used to… these people are Europeans… These people are intelligent, they are educated people... This is not the refugee wave we have been used to, people we were not sure about their identity, people with unclear pasts, who could have been even terrorists…" [Faiola et al. 2022].

The decision of the Council of the European Union regarding Temporary Protection Directive became controversial in terms of discrimination [Rodrigues, P., Tobler, C. 2022]. Its alleged imperfection was about giving privileges to Ukrainians who fled the war. However, one cannot ignore two facts. Ukraine and the European Union have concluded the Association Agreement. Ukraine belongs to the European family.

The next feature is the *presumed discrimination on the ground of human rights* which takes place against a person or a group. A complaint about double standards is often proved by the acknowledgment that a principle of law is violated. We may enumerate three legal prerequisites. Firstly, the principle of non-distinction which requires the equal treatment of all people, regardless of race, country of origin, social status, etc. Such a criterion is subjective – it looks for the comparing and contrasting two persons or groups. They should be in equal conditions, but they are in different ones. The authoritative explanation of this principle is formulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (article 2)[4]. Secondly, the inviolability of a certain human right(s) is established at the international legal level. An evaluator is likely to discover a particular entitlement referring to civil, political, economic, social and cultural spheres. Some of existing rights are said to be violated by challenging behaviour. The representatives of the African Union (including the President of Senegal, Macky Sall, and the Head of the African Union Commission Moussa, Faki Mahamat) expressed their disturbance by reports that "African citizens on the Ukrainian side of the border are being refused the right to cross the border to safety" [Omondi 2022]. The right to cross the border safety is granted by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which includes Article 13[5]. Thirdly, additional legal protection guaranteed by the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol. The core definition of a refugee poses problems in comprehension who deserves protection and to what extent. Along with this, that additional protection is much broader. We see explicit mentions of Article 3[6] in the publications where "double standards" are described, but its provisions reflect Article 2 of the 1948 Declaration and emphasize the idea of equal treatment.

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[4] Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

[5] 1. Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.

2. Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

[6] The Contracting States shall apply the provisions of this Convention to refugees without discrimination as to race, religion or country of origin.

Allegations of applying double standards pertain to *the conflict of inconsistency*. It arises between a single standard confirmed by previous experience and atypical approach implemented in recent practice. Consequently, it is considered that the existing single standard must be followed in the future – otherwise a "double standard" will occur. If such perspective is inevitable then inconsistency naturally occurs. Most likely, the impetus for the emergence of certain expectations is the previous experience resulting in a pattern of behaviour. Those expectations are not met, since a state or international organization does not follow existing pattern. And because of that they are charged. However, when something is done based on practice against expectations, when a statement destroying stereotypes is made, double standards are put on display. The Washington Post's article including "inconsistencies" in the title exposes established standard of Western governments and media outlets. They relate to the struggles in Palestine, Yemen and Kashmir, which have negative connotations. The author suggests that those struggles in general terms resemble the situation in Ukraine after February 24, 2022. "The public's ideal of a freedom fighter and terrorist is intensely racially motivated, which enables the seeing of lay Ukrainians taking arms and throwing Molotov cocktails as heroes and Muslims engaged in the very same acts, in pursuit of the same self-determination, as extremists" [Beydoun 2022].

Conclusion

The search for double standards and their discovery in the policies and practice of the Visegrad Group and the EU in general, evidenced by different attitudes towards refugees and asylum seekers from different countries, raises the question of how far human rights and the principle of non-distinction are respected for all the people without exception. Accusations made by journalists, activists, state officials and experts of international organizations presented in this chapter show that migration and asylum policy is under constant monitoring, as well as authorities' actions and statements. All these factors are very sensitive from the point of view of international politics and therefore need careful consideration before they are brought into light. We managed to find media materials in which the lack of a single standard was exposed and became an object of disapproval. It encompassed adopted laws, taken actions and pronounced words – summarized as a treatment. Thus, accusations of double standards do happen when different attitudes toward refugees and asylum seekers are shown depending on their citizenships (or origins). "Double standards" are incriminated to the state authorities, states themselves, international organizations, or even civilizations. At the same time, such accusations are likely to raise an alarm for the need to observe Article 2 of the Universal Declaration of

Human Rights. They draw attention to the balance between national interests and the abstract idea of the full equality, for which the need to take care of national and regional security is an additional contributing factor. Taking into account the explosive potential of the media-accepted, not very favourable attitude towards representatives of individual nations, especially prone to radicalism and intolerance, officials' decisions and their implementation in practice must be consistent with the expectations of various members of the international community, first and foremost: those who support the suggestion of absolute fairness and equality or stand up for the victims of "double standards" policy. Furthermore, allegations concerning different approaches to different groups of people since February 24 alarm about how manipulatively and sensationally relevant facts are usually presented by the media.

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EWELINA KANCIK-KOŁTUN

Polish Aid to Ukraine and its Citizens During Russia's War Against Ukraine

Abstract: The escalation of Russia's war in Ukraine, which began on 24 February 2022, caused a great challenge to the security of Europe, where the states and citizens of the former USSR, and thus those directly bordering Ukraine, felt particularly threatened. Poland, as a frontline state, began to significantly support Ukraine through various means of aid. This article outlines the directions of Polish aid, both governmental and civilian, to Ukraine and Ukrainian citizens in connection with the war. Military and humanitarian aid to Ukraine is analysed, including assistance to refugees.

Keywords: war, Ukraine, military aid, humanitarian aid, refugees, Poland

Introduction

With Russia's full-scale war in Ukraine, which began on 24 February 2022, countries from around the world have begun to support Ukraine and provide it with various types of assistance. Neighbouring frontline and transit countries play a major role in supplying support, as they are heavily involved in many areas of helping Ukraine (e.g., Poland and Slovakia). Here, the matter is no longer easy, as numerous social surveys have shown, with both Slovak and Hungarian citizens showing pro-Russian support. Being a frontline state entails a number of consequences and challenges, among them, the admission of refugees and the provision of humanitarian aid, but also involves possible military incidents and provocations. Undoubtedly, the events [PAP 2022] in Przewodów[1] should be regarded as such an incident and a consequence of Russia's military action in Ukraine. The functioning of such a frontline state is a challenge to the country's economy and, in this case,

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[1] On 15 November 2022 in the village of Przewodów, located in the municipality of Dołhobyczów, Hrubieszów district, Lublin province, 10 kilometers from the Ukrainian border a Russian-made missile fell. Two Polish citizens died as a result of the explosion. The situation was deemed an unfortunate accident, with the Polish prosecutor's office working on an investigation of the case.

to the democratic system and the institutions of democracy. As a frontline state, Poland fears war with Russia, which has resulted in numerous actions on the part of the ruling class, aimed at strengthening the state's security, including the military.

Ukraine's aspirations for regime change, its attempt to join the EU and NATO, and "the possible success of Ukraine's democratic transition, its adoption of European standards, and its political and economic integration into Western structures have been and are seen by the Kremlin as a serious threat not only to the security of the Russian Federation, but also to the stability of Putin's authoritarian regime" [Menkiszak 2021:1].

The war in Ukraine is therefore a struggle for democracy against an authoritarian regime; hence, Western countries should help Ukraine, as its collapse will be the collapse of democracy and may have the effect of triggering World War III, in the long or short term. The level of democracy in Western Europe has deteriorated considerably in the past dozen years, where its contradictions are still many, and thus countries with economic ties to Russia have had numerous difficulties in providing aid and support to Ukraine. According to economic forecasts, the West will now face a difficult period of low economic growth in the face of an energy crisis, a costly transition, and above all, a demographic collapse and a crisis of democracy [Obserwator Gospodarka 2022]. It should be borne in mind that the war in Ukraine has caused inflation in many countries, and thus an increase in product prices, which in some countries could lead to a reduction in the living standards of citizens. While during the initial phase of the conflict, many countries idly watched the war in Ukraine, waiting for it to end quickly, it seems that since the revelation and media coverage of the Bucza atrocity, the world has woken up and noticed Ukraine's cry for help.[2] The Polish government had already warned the West about Russia many years earlier, when Putin attacked Georgia[3] in 2008 and later, in 2014, when Russia seized Crimea and started a war in Donbass. Unfortunately, these voices were then

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[2] The war crime in the town of Bucha in the Kiev region took place in March 2022. After the Russian troops were pushed out of the town as part of the Ukrainian counteroffensive, bodies and mass graves of hundreds of civilians were discovered, many of which appeared to be executions. The drastic photos of the bodies quickly made their way into numerous media reports and circulated around the world, causing controversy, declarations of solidarity and offers of assistance in explaining the massacre of civilians.

[3] This refers to the speech of Polish President Lech Kaczyński in Tbilisi, during the Russian-Georgian war, who opposed Russia's aggression and appealed to Western countries (EU, NATO) for involvement and solidarity. Lech Kaczyński initiated this solidarity meeting with Georgians, which was attended by representatives of the Lithuanian, Latvian, Estonian and Ukrainian governments. Although many years have passed since the speech, its theses and the problems presented for Central Europe are still relevant. All the more so because the speech later turned out to be almost prophetic, and here it is worth quoting at least these words: "And we also know very well that today – Georgia, tomorrow – Ukraine, the day after tomorrow – the Baltic States, and later maybe it's time for my country, for Poland. We believe that Europe will understand

completely ignored by Western countries, mainly Germany and France. Poland, thus aware of the great threat, began to help Ukraine even then, and changed its security strategies and increased defence spending. From the beginning of the full-scale war, Poland began to provide Ukraine with various types of aid and to take in refugees on a massive scale. Among the main types of assistance, one should also note the diplomatic efforts of the Polish government, which has repeatedly met with representatives of other countries to convince them to help Ukraine and impose sanctions on Russia. Polish aid to Ukraine should be considered in terms of the assistance provided: military, financial and humanitarian.

The purpose of this chapter is an attempt to analyse and evaluate Poland's assistance to Ukraine and refugees from Ukraine in connection with its war with Russia. The types of aid offered by Poland, its scale and the involvement of civil society were examined. Content analysis, statistical analysis and the comparative method were used to obtain the best results.

Military aid

Ukraine's Armed Forces had been in a state of stagnation and headed for collapse in the years immediately preceding Russian aggression, starting with the abandonment of NATO integration and the restoration of Ukraine's non-bloc status since July 2010 [Wilk 2017:10]. Russia's hybrid warfare in Luhansk and Donbas, which has been ongoing since 2014, has resulted in attempts to purchase weapons from the West and NATO training of Ukraine's Armed Forces, and this has occurred to a limited extent. At the same time, military aid was organised by the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and Poland. With Volodymyr Zelenskiy becoming President of Ukraine, we see advanced steps toward national defence.

Military aid should be understood as assistance to a country in its defence efforts, where the main objective is to maintain control of its own territory, which has been attacked by another country or is fighting a battle with rebels or separatists. Military assistance to a country's armed forces may be provided in the form of financial aid for the purchase of equipment or other military purposes, or in the form of direct military assistance – such as weapons (crew-served weapons, artillery, rockets, armoured or protective) and ammunition. Military assistance can also take a technical form, i.e., air defence systems, reconnaissance drones, military drones, anti-drone systems, radar imaging systems, technical surveillance systems,

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your right to freedom and will also understand its interests." The entire speech is available to listen here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RqYkLJMc_Xw.

communications systems. Military assistance should be delivered in an effective and secure manner.

Ukraine has not been in a position to militarily resist Russia on its own, as its arms industry was mostly destroyed during the war. For all its capabilities since the start of the Donbas war, despite increases in defence GDP, Ukraine has failed to exploit its arms production capabilities, with continued armed conflict since 2014 diminishing resources. Military aid from other countries is playing a significant role in the Ukrainian army's advances and counteroffensives, while the Russian offensive does not appear to have collapsed yet, and the end of the war is not even on the horizon.

Ukraine very often appeals to the world for aid of various kinds, but mainly for military aid in the form of heavy armaments and various types of military equipment. At first, many countries feared provoking Russia; some countries hoped to neutralise the problem by having Russia quickly occupy Ukraine and thus wanted to wait out the situation. However, the escalating scale of economic problems due to the supply of raw materials from Russia, the protracted defence of Ukraine, as well as Polish political and diplomatic lobbying abroad to encourage countries to help Ukraine, led many countries to opt for military assistance.

 "Most of the barriers to providing military aid to Ukraine are political in nature. Ukraine's partners have very different strategic calculations, scope, scale and determination to provide assistance. Objective obstacles to providing aid also stem from limited reserves of armaments and ammunition, and decades of reduced production capacity in the West's defence industry" [Piotrowski 2022:7].

According to a study by the Kiel Institute for the World Economy, between 24 January and 20 November 2022, Poland spent 1.82 billion euros on military aid to Ukraine, ranking it fourth among those helping Ukraine militarily (Figure 1). Military aid includes various forms of weapons and equipment, as well as financial assistance for military purposes, and these are only bilateral disclosed military commitments. The United States comes first in military aid, followed by the United Kingdom and Germany in third place. Of course, these are not the total costs, as not all of them have been disclosed, and it is also difficult to calculate the estimated price of a given piece of equipment transferred to Ukraine.

The bilateral nature of military assistance to Ukraine is coordinated by the United Kingdom, the United States and Poland through the International Coordination Centre and Ukraine Defence Contact Group [Mills 2022:6]. Poland also acts as a logistics hub for the transfer of military equipment from other allies to the western part of Ukraine, not yet occupied by the Russians [Mills 2022:34]. The logistic hub connects all flows of cargo and allows goods to be loaded onto different modes of transport; the storage of cargo takes place in hubs, together with its marking and redistribution to a particular location [Khaletskaya 2021].

Government support to Ukraine: Military aid, € billion

Commitments Jan. 24 to Nov. 20, 2022. Data on 31 donor countries; scroll to see more countries
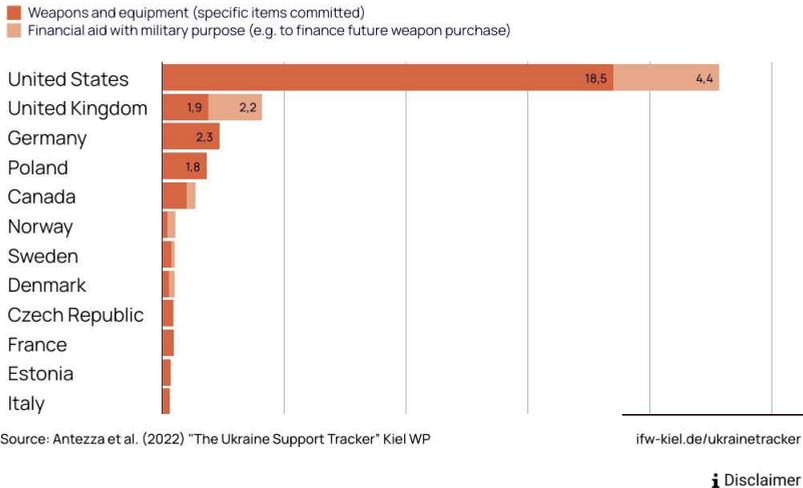
■ Weapons and equipment (specific items committed)
■ Financial aid with military purpose (e.g. to finance future weapon purchase)

Country		
United States	18,5	4,4
United Kingdom	1,9	2,2
Germany	2,3	
Poland	1,8	
Canada		
Norway		
Sweden		
Denmark		
Czech Republic		
France		
Estonia		
Italy		

Source: Antezza et al. (2022) "The Ukraine Support Tracker" Kiel WP   ifw-kiel.de/ukrainetracker

ℹ Disclaimer

Fig. 1. Military aid for Ukraine.

Source: Ukraine Support Tracker, https://www.ifw-kiel.de/topics/war-against-ukraine/ukraine-support-tracker/ (access: 25.12.2022).

The Polish authorities rarely provide details of military aid to Ukraine, which, of course, is understandable in view of the ongoing war. The media sometimes report announcements or statements by ministers talking about military aid to Ukraine, but the details are not presented. On the internet, however, we can find amateur footage from the battlefront of how Polish equipment is performing. Poland has most likely transferred the following military equipment to Ukraine [Piotrowski 2022:67–69]:

- individual equipment and medical assistance; uniforms, helmets and bullet-proof vests, gas masks and NBCR suits; individual medical first aid packages and full or partial field hospital equipment
- assault rifles: AK-47 (20000), MSBS Grot
- lightweight and automatic grenade launchers: M-203 (200), M-320, Mk. 19 (100), RPG-40, RPG-76 Komar
- short-range anti-aircraft missiles: Piorun
- mortars: LMP-2017 (100), M-224 LWCMS, Soltan K-6
- MRAP-class, off-road and heavy-duty vehicles: Dzik-2
- towed barrel artillery: M-77 Dana (111)
- self-propelled barrel artillery: 2S1 Goździk (227)
- missile artillery: T-72M1 (318), T-72M, T-72M1R, PT-91 Twardy (232)
- infantry combat vehicles: BWP-1 (1252), AHS Krab

- medium-range anti-aircraft sets: S-200 and S-125
- transport and multipurpose helicopters: Mi-8 (9) and Mi-17 (8)
- attack helicopters: Mi-24D/W (28)
- attack aircrafts: Su-22M (12)
- multipurpose aircraft: MiG-29 (22)

The list of donated equipment may be incomplete and is not de facto finalised, as talks on transferring military equipment to Ukraine are still ongoing.

It is still worth mentioning the involvement of the United States in the war in Europe, as the narrative of the weakening of the US and its exit from hegemony has been building in recent times, and thus we have seen a significant weakening of its position in Africa, Asia-Pacific, and the Middle East in favour of Russia and China [Matisek, Williamson 2020]. 2021 saw the complete withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan after 20 years, undoubtedly increasing the tri-polarity of the balance of power globally. The war in Ukraine shows that the United States do not want to allow Russia's hegemony in Europe and intend to help Ukraine long term to lower Russia's potential and importance in the current tri-polar balance of power. Following the end of the war, a new order, both regional and global, will be formed. Undoubtedly, what we have now is the strengthening of the United States in Europe, a significant weakening of Russia, which may already have lost its superpower title – with the whole situation seeming to benefit China, and the world perhaps returning to a bipolar system in the future.

It should also be noted that the Polish people largely support the government's policy of providing military support to Ukraine. The IBRiS survey, from December 2022, found that as many as 77.5% of respondents are in favour of handing over arms and weapons to Ukraine, only 18.3% are against, while a mere 4.2% have no opinion [PAP 2022]. The arms deliveries provided by Poland and other NATO countries are intended to help Ukraine repel a Russian invasion and strengthen its position.

The collapse of Ukraine would have many consequences important for global security. It is worth noting that the primary goal of the Russian Federation is to gain influence and control the security system in Europe and strengthen itself in a global position, where Ukraine is a strategic point of such an order.

Humanitarian aid

There are many definitions of humanitarian aid. Patrycja Grzebyk, Elżbieta Mikos-Skuza define it as "a type of material and logistical support which has to be provided relatively quickly, almost immediately after a disaster, in response to its initial effects. The purpose of humanitarian aid is to save human lives, to reduce suffering, to preserve human dignity, and hence facilitate a return to normal existence.

Therefore, humanitarian aid most often consists of providing food and drinking water supplies, basic hygienic materials and access to sanitation, shelter, basic medical assistance, facilitating the return to normal life for those, who have been forced to migrate, including the organization of camps, guaranteeing security and access to information" [Grzebyk, Mikos-Skuza 2016:9].

Humanitarian aid can be also understood in terms of provision of assistance, care, and protection to those who have been affected by armed conflicts [Jagielski 2016: 78] Thus, aid to refugees is also included in this concept, as it should be borne in mind that, in the event of armed conflict, civilians are protected under international humanitarian law.

The outbreak of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine caused migration that had never been seen before in Poland. Poland was in no way prepared, either legally or strategically, for such a turn of events. It should be noted that Poland has been the main country of flight for Ukrainian citizens since the beginning of the war. The mass scale influx of refugees caused institutional involvement of not only the Polish government, services, and local government, but also ordinary citizens, who voluntarily committed themselves to helping refugees. Poland faced the largest wave of refugees since World War II, and the spontaneous solidarity between Poles and refugees led to Poland being described in the international media as a humanitarian superpower [Baszczak, Kiełczewska, Kukołowicz, Wincewicz, Zyzik, 2022: 7].

In the first days after the invasion began, grassroots public engagement took place across the whole country, with material and financial assistance for refugees near the border, and various forms of support for those redistributed across the country [Baszczak, Kiełczewska, Kukołowicz, Wincewicz, Zyzik, 2022: 12]. The Centre for Public Opinion Research (CBOS) has polled citizens on the topic of accepting refugees from Ukraine since 2015.[4] In October 2022, 76% of Polish people supported Poland's acceptance of Ukrainian refugees, yet this result is a part of a downward trend, which have been observed since the beginning of the war. At the outbreak of the war, it was as high as 94% (Figure 2).

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[4] As can be found in the CBOS report, "the survey 'Current Problems and Events', which was conducted under a mixed-mode procedure on a representative registered sample of adult residents on Poland, drawn from the PESEL (Polish Citizen Identification Number) register. Each respondent independently chose one of the methods:

– face-to-face interview with an interviewer (CAPI method)
– telephone interview after contacting a CBOS interviewer (CATI) – the respondent's contact information was received in an announcement letter from CBOS,
– self-completion of an online survey (CAWI), which could be accessed based on the login and password provided to the respondent in the announcement letter from CBOS.

In all three cases, the survey had the same set of questions and structure. The survey has been conducted from 3 October to 13 October 2022 on a group consisting of 1,041 people (including: 58.3% by CAPI, 26.1% by CATI and 15.6% by CAWI)". p.1.
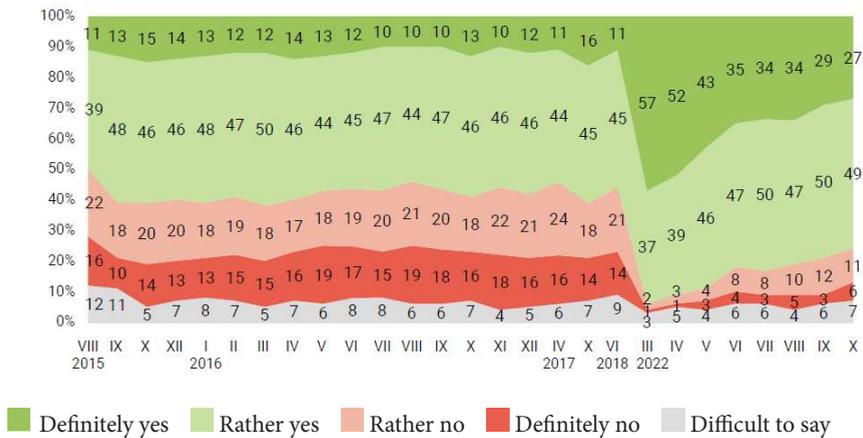
Fig. 2. In your opinion, should Poland accept Ukrainian refugees from conflict areas?

Source: CBOS, Poles on the war in Ukraine and the threat of nuclear weapons, No. 136/202

The scale of support of Polish people delivered to refugees from Ukraine is enormous, as shown by the research that in April 2022; 63% of the surveyed said that they or someone in their household voluntarily and free of charge helped refugees from Ukraine (Figure 3). In October 2022, a downward trend was recorded, where it decreased to 50% among respondents, but this could also have been caused by the war entering a different phase and a smaller number of refugees.

Figure 3. Assistance to refugees from Ukraine by household residents.

Source: CBOS, *Poles on the war in Ukraine and the threat of nuclear weapons*, No. 136/2022

The mobilisation of Polish society in helping Ukrainian refugees was unprecedented, adequate to the scale of the challenges faced by Polish citizens (or the transit country) for the most numerous groups of refugees [Baszczak, Kiełczewska, Kukołowicz,

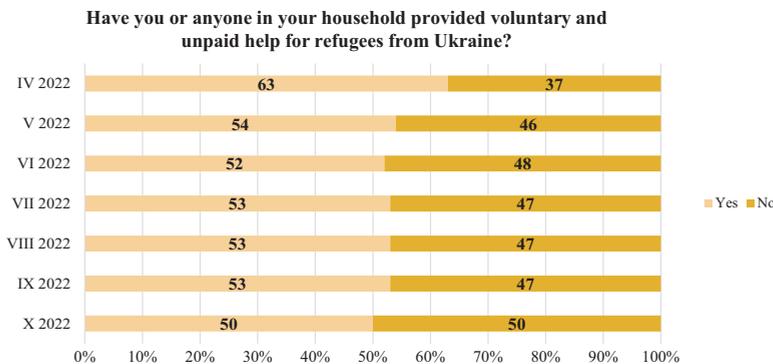Wincewicz, Zyzik, 2022: 12]. As there is no official state data, sources estimate that more than 6 million refugees have crossed the Polish-Ukrainian border. Polish people helped them in many ways, and among these, the following should be stressed: they participated in the donation of food, medical supplies, clothing, hygiene materials; took part in fund-raisers; organised various aid campaigns; provided housing; helped with official, medical, educational matters; volunteered at reception points, refugee accommodation centres; transported people from the border; prepared meals for refugees; transported donations to the border and to Ukraine. These obviously are only some of the forms of Polish people's assistance to refugees from Ukraine; in fact, the scale was much larger. Statistical analysis regarding the assistance provided by Polish citizens to refugees from Ukraine are shown in Figure 4, which was presented by the Central Statistical Office (GUS). According to the survey, most people were involved in the transfer of donations of items – 79.60% in Q1 2022 and 80.90% in Q2 2022. Second came financial assistance, which was declared by 63.40% of those surveyed in Q1 2022 and 66.70% in Q2 2022, respectively.

Percentage of households that provided assistance to Ukrainian residents in
Q1 and Q2 2022 by type of assistance

Financial support (direct or through an organisation) — 63,4% / 66,7%

In-kind donations — 79,6% / 80,9%

Assistance in the vicinity of border crossings, at reception points, accommodation facilities, in aid centres or at collection points for in-kind donations — 3,3% / 2,9%

Transport (transport of refugees, transport of in-kind aid, free lending of car) — 3,2% / 2,3%

Blood donation for those in need in Ukraine — 1,4% / 1,4%

Reception of refugees from Ukraine into a house/flat, allowing them to use the residential premises one owns — 3,0% / 3,1%

Assistance provided to refugees staying in Poland (in finding a job, dealing with day-to-day issues, caring for relatives, etc.) — 6,4% / 5,5%

Other not listed above — 0,4% / 0,7%

■ Q1 2022   ■ Q2 2022

Fig. 4. Households that provided assistance to refugees from Ukraine by type of assistance.

Source: GUS. *Assistance provided by households to Ukrainian residents in H1 2022 in the light of the results of the household budget survey*, 27.10.2022, https://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/warunki-zycia/dochody--wydatki-i-warunki-zycia-ludnosci/pomoc-udzielona-przez-gospodarstwa-domowe-mieszkancom-ukrainy-w-pierwszym-polroczu-2022-r-w-swietle-wynikow-badania-budzetow-gospodarstw-domowych,34,1.html#_ftn1 (access: 25.11.2022).

It is believed that 35% of Ukraine's population, which is approximately 15 million people, has left the country due to the war. The Polish government has tried to coordinate its efforts through the Ukraine Relief Fund[5], and a dedicated action page – #Pomagam Ukrainie (Help Ukraine)[6].

With the largest number of refugees arriving in Poland, the government became involved in the provision of aid and took the following measures under a special Act on Assistance to Citizens of Ukraine in Connection with the Armed Conflict on the Territory of That Country of 12 March 2022 [Dz. U. (Journal of Laws) of 2022, item 583], which stipulates the following:

"1) special rules for giving job to citizens of Ukraine, legally residing within the territory of the Republic of Poland

2) assistance offered to Ukrainian citizens by provincial governors, local government units and other entities

3) establishment of the Relief Fund to finance or subsidise the implementation of tasks for help provision to Ukrainian citizens

4) some entitlements of citizens of Ukraine, whose stay within the territory of the Republic of Poland is recognised as legal

5) special rules for extending the periods of legal residence of citizens of Ukraine and the documents issued to them by the Polish authorities, acknowledging their rights of entry and residence within the territory of the Republic of Poland

6) some rights of Polish citizens as well as Ukrainian citizens who are students, academic teachers or research workers entering from the territory of Ukraine

7) special regulations for the education, upbringing and care of children and pupils who are citizens of Ukraine, including support for local government units in the implementation of additional educational tasks in this regard

8) special rules for the organisation and functioning of higher education institutions in relation to the provision of study places for the citizens of Ukraine referred to in section 1

9) special rules for undertaking and carrying out business activity by citizens of Ukraine legally residing within the territory of the Republic of Poland."

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[5] Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego. Relief Fund, https://www.bgk.pl/programy-i-fundusze/fundusze/fundusz-pomocy (access: 23.12.2022).

[6] Pomagam Ukrainie. https://www.pomagamukrainie.gov.pl/ (access: 23.12.2022).

In your opinion, the assistance that our country offers to refugees from Ukraine is:

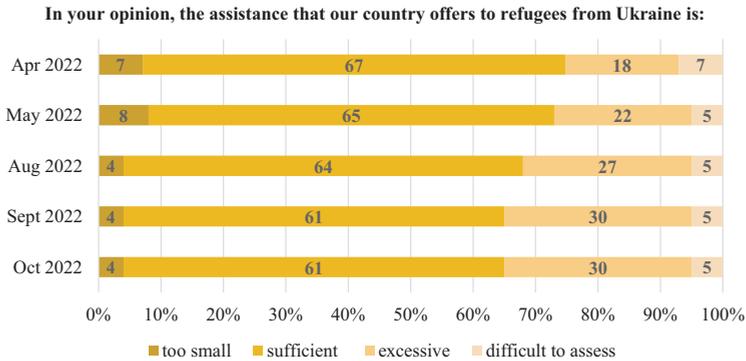|	too small	sufficient	excessive	difficult to assess
Apr 2022	7	67	18	7
May 2022	8	65	22	5
Aug 2022	4	64	27	5
Sept 2022	4	61	30	5
Oct 2022	4	61	30	5

Fig. 5. Evaluation of assistance lent to Ukrainian refugees by Polish citizens.

Source: CBOS. *Poles on the war in Ukraine and the threat of nuclear weapons*, No. 136/2022.

On the other hand, the answers to the question about the scale of the assistance Poland offers to refugees from Ukraine are interesting (Figure 5), because we can clearly see a downward trend as compared with the outbreak of the war. There is a decrease in the number of respondents who think that aid provided by Polish citizens is too small and a decrease in the number of those who think that this help is adequate. Simultaneously, there is an increase in the number of respondents who find Poland's help excessive – in October 2022 it was 30%, whereas it was 18% in April. Undoubtedly, this tendency and the perception that Poland's assistance to refugees is disproportionate may persist among citizens, resulting from several factors. After the initial willingness to help refugees, we are starting to experience increased social tensions that may give rise to future conflicts. These feelings include [Dec-Kiełb 2022]:

- "The sense of injustice in some Poles related to the scale of social and financial support for Ukrainians.
- A lively historical discussion around difficult moments in shared history (for example, the genocide in Volhynia and Polish-Ukrainian relations marked by inequality).
- Competition in the labour market, which can create difficulties in finding employment or lower salaries.
- The dynamic increase in the prices of renting properties in cities, partly due to the growth in demand from migrants.
- Uncertainty related to maintaining the quality and availability of care and education services in the context of an increased number of children in educational facilities.
- The rise of nationalist attitudes (oriented towards loyalty to the nation-state) and xenophobic attitudes (aversion to subjectively defined otherness)."
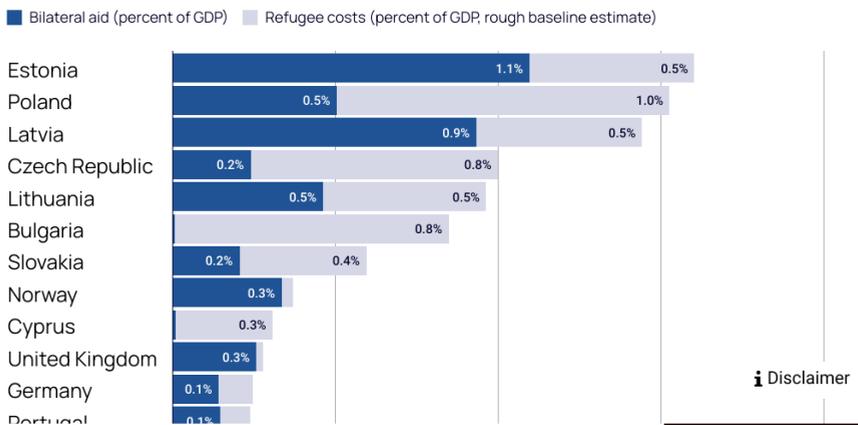
The huge support that Poles have offered to Ukrainian refugees during the war is a peculiar phenomenon, and one that is unique in Europe or on a global scale. It is well known that the level and scale of involvement and the nature of aid always changes over the course of a war.

As regards the estimates for measuring government assistance to Ukraine refugees, Poland ranks second in the world, just behind Estonia (Figure 6).

Fig. 6. Government support to Ukraine: by donor GDP, incl. refugee costs.

Source: Kiel Institute for the World Economy, https://www.ifw-kiel.de/topics/war-against-ukraine/ukraine-support-tracker (access: 28.12.2022).

It is estimated that the largest cost of providing support for refugees up until June 2022 was borne by Poland, where the general cost of supporting refugees was multiplied by the number of months, thus giving a total cost of 1.73 billion euros, with a base cost of 500 per person per month [Kiel Institute for the World Economy].
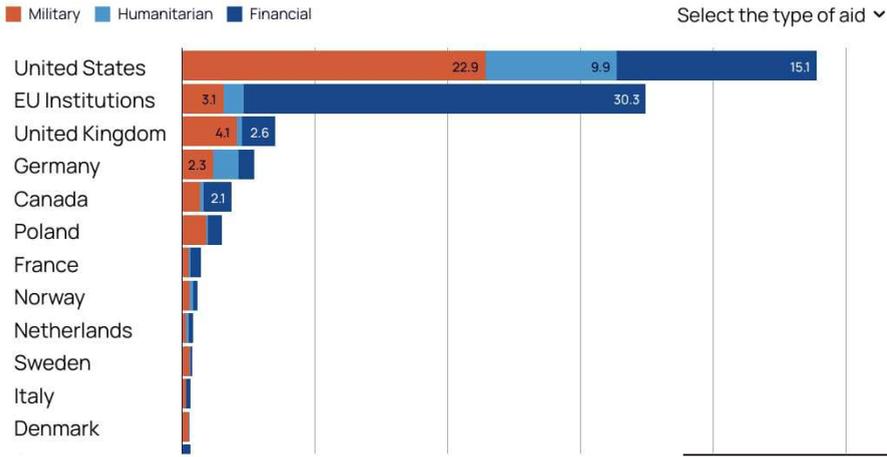
Conclusion

In the global ranking of countries assisting Ukraine, Poland takes the fifth position, following the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Canada in terms of military, humanitarian, and financial assistance (Figure 7). According to

the data, Poland has spent 0.18 billion euros on humanitarian aid, 1 billion euros on financial assistance and, as mentioned earlier, 1.82 billion euros on military help.

Government support to Ukraine: Type of assistance, € billion

Commitments Jan. 24 to Nov. 20, 2022. Data on 41 donors ; scroll to see more donors

■ Military ■ Humanitarian ■ Financial   Select the type of aid ⌄

	Military	Humanitarian	Financial
United States	22.9	9.9	15.1
EU Institutions	3.1		30.3
United Kingdom	4.1	2.6	
Germany	2.3		
Canada		2.1	
Poland			
France			
Norway			
Netherlands			
Sweden			
Italy			
Denmark			

Source: Antezza et al. (2022) "The Ukraine Support Tracker" Kiel WP   ifw-kiel.de/ukrainetracker

ℹ Disclaimer

Fig. 7. Government support to Ukraine: Type of assistance, € billion.

Source: Kiel Institute for the World Economy, https://www.ifw-kiel.de/topics/war-against-ukraine/ukraine-support-tracker/ (access: 28.12.2022).

Unfortunately, the lack of joint action by Western countries encouraged Russia to try to rebuild its position in the European and global security arena as early as 2008. Moreover, the continuation of this policy can be observed today, with many Western countries failing to provide adequate support to Ukraine. It should be remembered that it was Germany and France that blocked Ukraine and Georgia's efforts to join NATO in 2008. After Russia's attack on Crimea, this situation was further exacerbated, and many countries continued to cooperate economically in full with Russia and to sell it arms, while EU sanctions were too weak to have any effect. On the eve of a full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, Germany blocked the sale of military equipment, and France wanted individual EU negotiations with Moscow. After several months of Russia's war against Ukraine, a lack of solidarity in Europe as regards military aid to Ukraine, which needs weapons to resist Russia, is still visible. For example, Germany and France are very slow to act and often backtrack on their declarations, while Hungary has blocked the imposition

of sanctions on Russia and aid to Ukraine. Pro-Russian public sympathy can also be observed in Slovakia and Bulgaria. The Nordic and Baltic countries, as well as Poland, the United Kingdom and the United States, are pursuing a policy of supporting Ukraine's actions.

The Polish government and the President, during diplomatic visits to various countries, are undoubtedly lobbying for aid for Ukraine, sometimes with very good results. The Polish government provides very high-level help through various channels (military, humanitarian) and supports Ukraine and its authorities in their actions. Polish citizens, who spontaneously and voluntarily supported Ukrainian refugees, have made a significant contribution as well. This analysis is only a starting point for a broader consideration about the types of assistance to Ukraine and its citizens required during the Russian-Ukrainian war by individual states and international organisations.

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Institutional Assistance to Refugees
from Ukraine. The Case of Poland

Abstract: The purpose of the paper is to discuss the assistance provided by the Polish state to Ukrainian citizens. The subject of the study is institutional assistance, i.e., the enacted and planned legislation for the support of and care for refugees. An analysis was carried out of the Act on Assistance to Citizens of Ukraine in Connection with the Armed Conflict in the Territory of That Country, adopted on 12 March 2022, and the drafts of its amendments that are being prepared. The main hypothesis of the paper is that the assistance provided for in the legislation is comprehensive and holistic.

Keywords: Ukraine, refugees, law on assistance to Ukraine

Introduction

After the armed forces of the Russian Federation invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022, thousands of Ukrainian citizens came to Poland in the search of refuge. More than 7.3 million people have entered Poland from Ukraine since the start of the war. About 25,000 refugees a day continue to cross the Polish-Ukrainian border. However, this cross-border traffic goes in both directions. Since February 24, 2022, 5.5 million trips to Ukraine have been recorded, which means that the balance of the cross-border traffic is 1.8 million. However, this does not mean that this is the number of people from Ukraine who are currently in Poland, because, the same persons cross the border in both directions.

The purpose of the paper is to discuss the assistance provided the Polish state to Ukrainian citizens. The subject of the study is institutional assistance, i.e., the enacted and planned legislation for the support of and care for refugees. An analysis was carried out of the Act on Assistance to Citizens of Ukraine in Connection with the Armed Conflict in the Territory of that Country, adopted on 12 March 2022, and the drafts of its amendments that are being prepared. The assistance provided by the Polish people, which, according to popular opinion, was enormous and invaluable, was not taken into account.

The main hypothesis of the paper is that the assistance provided for in the legislation is comprehensive and holistic. The aforementioned Act provides for both granting a special status to Ukrainian citizens and specific forms of assistance. The implementation of the Act has brought to light a number of issues that had been impossible or difficult to foresee, the correct solution to which is currently being prepared.

The paper was written based on the legal act and online sources. The timeliness, if not freshness, of the subject matter discussed herein means that it has not yet been the subject of scientific studies. Online sources are mainly materials available on government websites and newspaper articles. The research method used was analysis of legal norms and analysis of contents of documents.

The applicable Act

The receipt of the refugees required the development of *ad hoc* and, most importantly, special and unique legislation applicable to this group of foreigners. The preparation and adoption of the bill was carried out at a very fast, if not express, pace. The government bill [Office of the Prime Minister 2022] was received by the Parliament on March 7, 2022, and on the same day it was forwarded to be processed by the parliament. The first reading of the bill during a session of the Sejm was carried out on March 8. On the next day, after three readings and work in the committee, the act was adopted by the Sejm with 439 votes in favour (12 against and 3 abstentions) [Sejm.gov.pl 2022] and then forwarded to the President and the Speaker of the Senate. On the night of March 11–12, the Senate proposed a total of 60 amendments to the bill; about a dozen of them were adopted by the Sejm on March 12 [Rebelińska 2022]. On the evening of March 12, the bill was signed by President Andrzej Duda and was subsequently published in the Official Gazette. Due to its special status, the act was called a special act, and its official name is Act on Assistance to Citizens of Ukraine in Connection with the Armed Conflict in the Territory of That Country. The provisions of the act took effect on the date of its promulgation, March 12, 2022, and are retroactive to February 24, 2022.

The act regulates a number of key issues related to the stay of Ukrainians fleeing the war, primarily the legalization of their stay in Poland [Deloitte 2022]. The new provisions also organize issues related to the access of Ukrainian refugees to the labour market, as well as the use of aid instruments and other public services, health care, and education [Michałowski 2022].

According to the act, citizens of Ukraine and their spouses (regardless of nationality) who came to Poland directly from Ukraine due to the hostilities taking place there may legalize their stay if they declare their intention to stay within the territory of the Republic of Poland. The only condition is the registration of the arrival

of such a person in Poland by the Border Guard. If a Ukrainian citizen has already arrived in Poland, but has not been registered, they have 90 days from the date of entry into the territory of the Republic of Poland to do so [Article 3(2)]. The stay of Ukrainian refugees in Poland was considered to be legal for 18 months, counting from February 24, 2022, i.e., until August 24, 2023 [Article 2(1)]. During that period, the stay of a child born in the territory of the Republic of Poland by a mother legally residing in Poland will also be considered legal.

After 9 months, those refugees whose stay is considered legal can apply for a temporary residence permit for a period of 3 years. The relevant application will have to be submitted in a timely manner – no earlier than 9 months after the date of entry after February 24, 2022 and no later than 18 months after February 24, 2022. Therefore, the earliest date on which the application may be submitted is November 24, 2022, and the latest date is August 24, 2023 [Deloitte 2022].

A temporary residence permit is granted by the provincial governor for a period of 3 years at a time, starting from the date of the decision, which is final [Article 38(3 and 9]. Ukrainian citizens who receive such a permit will be entitled to work in Poland without a work permit. Only in three cases will the permit not be granted in only 3 cases: when it may not be granted for reasons of national defence or security, or protection of public security and order; if the Ukrainian citizen is on the list of foreigners whose stay is undesirable, or if the application was not submitted within the prescribed period [Article 38(4)] [Deloitte 2022]. The permit will be revoked if one of these circumstances becomes apparent during the stay. The provisions of the Act on foreigners will apply to matters that are not regulated by the special act.

According to the act, the above rules also apply to Ukrainian citizens fleeing the war who hold a Pole's Card and to their immediate families, if they had left Ukraine before February 24, 2022 and then arrived in Poland [Article 2(2)]. On the other hand, the provisions do not apply to Ukrainians with residency legalized on other grounds, including those holding a residence permit, a refugee status, or a permit for tolerated stay [Article 2(3)]. It was stipulated that if the national visas, temporary residence permits, residence cards, or Polish identity documents of Ukrainian citizens expired during the war, they would be extended by 18 months. Also, the stay of a citizen of Ukraine will be considered legal for 18 months if during the war he loses the permission to stay in Poland on the basis of, for example, a Schengen visa or visa-free movement [Rebelińska 2022].

In order to exercise the rights and gain access to public benefits and services provided for by the act, Ukrainian citizens are required to obtain a PESEL registration number [Article 4(1)]. Refugees can apply for a PESEL number to any executive body of a commune or municipality (there is no regionalization in this regard). Parents, guardians, or person who actually have custody of children may file the application on their behalf [Deloitte 2022]. The application must be submitted in a paper form,

in person, at any commune or municipal office (no regionalization). Applications for a PESEL number could be submitted from March 16, 2022. Moreover, an applicant can obtain a trusted profile (i.e., electronic identification that allows confirmation of identity in public systems), which allows access to public services online.

The act gave a number of rights to those Ukrainian citizens who legally reside in the territory of Poland pursuant to the act. The most important of these are easier access to the labour market and the right to receive social benefits.

Ukrainian citizens were granted the right to work in Poland [Article 22(1)]. In order to be employed, they are not required to obtain a separate permit; instead, the district labour office only needs to be notified by the employer on the employment a citizen of Ukraine [Michałowski 2022]. Refugees also gained the right to register with district labour offices and be recognized as either unemployed or looking for work. This arrangement allows Ukrainian citizens to benefit from employment services, career counselling, and training (but not from unemployment benefits) [Deloitte 2022]. In addition, the act stipulates that Ukrainian citizens have the right to undertake and carry out business activities in the territory of Poland, on the same terms as Polish citizens.

The act provides Ukrainian families and citizens with material support in the form of family and child benefits, as well as cash and non-cash social assistance benefits. The right to social benefits paid in Poland includes family benefits (including a family allowance and one-time childbirth allowance), child benefits (500 zlotys per month per child), family care capital (either 500 zlotys or 1,000 zlotys per month per child aged 12 to 36 months), "Good Start " benefits (300 zlotys per child), subsidies to parents' fee for a child's stay at a nursery, a children's club, or a day-care provider [Article 26(1)]. The benefits are due upon fulfilment of the conditions and criteria set forth in the acts that govern them, starting from the month in which the application for them was received (but not earlier than the month in which the Ukrainian citizen crossed the border and was entered in the register kept by the Border Guard).

In addition, assistance was granted in the form of a one-time cash benefit of 300 zlotys per person for subsistence purposes, monetary and non-monetary benefits from the social assistance system (according to the rules and procedures of the Act on social assistance), i.e., among other things, allowances, meals, necessary clothing, and assistance in kind [Article 29(1)]. Provision was also made for food aid as part of the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived [Michałowski 2022].

An important instrument for assistance to refugees from Ukraine is including them in the healthcare systemin Poland [Ukraine. Legal Intervention 2022]. All citizens of Ukraine who are legally staying in Poland were given access to healthcare services just like persons covered by mandatory or voluntary health insurance in Poland, i.e., free access to doctors and reimbursement of prescription drugs, among other things [Article 37(1)]. Refugees also received free psychological assistance, which is to be secured by the commune head, mayor, or city president

with jurisdiction over their place of residence [Article 32]. Another support is the possibility to allocate funds from the State Fund for Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities for activities intended for disabled Ukrainian citizens [Deloitte 2022].

Pursuant to Article 12(1), the province governor may provide assistance of a social nature. The assistance may consist in the provision of accommodation, full-day meals, transportation to places of accommodation or places where medical care is provided, financing of travel on public transportation and specialized transportation designed for people with disabilities, cleaning and personal hygiene products, and other products. According to the act, assistance may be provided by other public administration bodies in addition to province governors.

The act also stipulates that any entity, especially a natural person, that provides housing and food to Ukrainian citizens is eligible to receive financial support. The benefits will be paid by the commune or municipal authority for a maximum period of 60 days, but this period may be extended in justified cases.

The act provides, as a solution that supports the implementation of assistance activities, for the creation of a special Assistance Fund in the Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego, the funds of which will be allocated for the performance of tasks to help citizens [Article 14] (Rebelińska 2022). The Assistance Fund is to finance or subsidize tasks performed not only in the territory of Poland, but also outside it. The Fund is to have an *ad hoc*, emergency nature, which means that it will operate during the conflict and during the period needed to eliminate with its consequences.

The act also regulates a number of matters related to care, education, and higher education. The purpose of the act is to provide Ukrainian children and students with education and upbringing. In order for a child to attend a school, all his or her parents need to do is apply to the nearest school and fill out the relevant documents. With regard to education and upbringing, the act includes, among other things, the following specific solutions: the possibility of creating new classrooms and other locations for teaching, upbringing, and care activities; facilitating the employment of Ukrainian citizens who speak and write Polish to the extent that they can assist a student who does not speak Polish in the position of a teacher's assistant [Ministry of Education and Science 2022]. In addition, the conditions for the establishment and operation of nurseries and children's clubs, both public and non-public, have been relaxed. This is to ensure that more children are cared for than pursuant to previous regulations [Deloitte 2022]. The act provides for the possibility to grant material assistance to students in the form of scholarships or school allowances [Article 53]. The benefits are granted by the head of the commune or municipality (mayor, city president) and may be received by students who are in a difficult financial situation.

In the field of science and higher education, the act introduced the possibility of continuation of education for Polish citizens and citizens of Ukraine who were students at universities in Ukraine on February 24, 2022, and who do not have

documents certifying the periods of their study, the examinations they have passed, and their credits or internships [Articles 41–45]. Universities may conduct proceedings to confirm the completion of studies at a certain level for, among others, citizens of Ukraine residing in the territory of the Republic of Poland, whose stay in the territory of Poland is recognized as legal, or Polish citizens who entered the territory of the Republic of Poland directly from the territory of Ukraine in the period since February 24, 2022, who do not have graduation diplomas obtained abroad.

The act also gives Ukrainian citizens the ability to apply for a living cost stipend and a student loan. In addition, Polish and Ukrainian citizens legally residing in Poland on the basis of the special act who had worked in Ukraine as academic workers and have the relevant qualifications, were given the possibility to be employed at a university/academic unit/Polish Academy of Sciences/research institute/Łukasiewicz Research Network without a contest for the position [Articles 46–49] [Ukraine. Legal Intervention 2022].

The government was given a statutory obligation [Article 115] to report in writing, once every 12 months, to the Sejm and Senat on the implementation of this act.

The act was positively evaluated and very well received by Polish institutions and public. Local government officials considered it ground-breaking on a European scale, appropriate from a humanitarian point of view, and beneficial for Poland [Kaługa 2022]. The Federation of Polish Entrepreneurs positively evaluated the adopted law, especially the opening of access to the Polish labour market for refugees without unnecessary formal requirements [Ceo.com.pl 2022].

The act has already been amended several times. The amendments adopted in July 2022 included the application of regulations related to the adaptation of buildings owned by local governments as housing for refugees. The amendment introduced simplified procedures for the reconstruction or renovation of buildings owned by local governments, exempting them from the application of some of the provisions of the Construction Law and the Act on Spatial Planning and Development [Polish Press Agency 2022].

Proposed changes

At the end of October 2022, eight months after the Act on assistance to citizens of Ukraine in connection with the armed conflict in the territory of that country became effective, the Council of Ministers prepared a comprehensive bill aimed at amending the act in question once again. The proposed changes are aimed at eliminating the difficulties, deficiencies, and abuses that were identified during the period of application of the act. The amendment is needed in order to clarify certain provisions, modify some of the solutions adopted, and supplement the current act with new provisions. Gaps in

the assistance system were pointed out primarily by representatives of local government bodies, which have the principal obligation to implement the provisions of the act. For example, the mayor of Przemyśl – a city located on the Polish-Ukrainian border, where trains from Ukraine carrying refugees made a stop – pointed out the frequent practice of extortion by Ukrainian citizens who actually live in Ukraine and who collect the 500+ benefits for minor children and other refugee benefits on accounts opened in Poland [Prawo.pl 2022]. According to the data provided by the Social Insurance Institution, by October 2022, benefits for more than 80,000 Ukrainian citizens have been withheld due to the fact that they do not reside in Poland permanently.

In view of the above, the proposed solution is to introduce a legal basis for the Social Insurance Institution and the competent authorities and province governors providing family benefits to obtain from the Border Guard such information as the dates and history of border crossing by Ukrainian citizens. Measures involving verification of the date of each entry and exit from Poland will enable more effective elimination of cases of unauthorized collection of benefits by Ukrainians. According to the changes proposed by the Council of Ministers, if a refugee from Ukraine, who has been assigned a PESEL number in Poland, leaves Poland, then they will have the right to receive the benefits provided for by the act suspended. The *ratio legis* of these provisions was presented by the government spokesman, who stated that "The most important thing for us is that Poles are convinced and know that the government takes care of public finances and that there is no possibility of any public funds being paid to refugees that should not be paid to them. Therefore, we are tightening the system related to entry into and exit from Poland and, consequently, also to the benefits that refugees receive" [Forsal.pl 2022].

The project's announcements indicate a future obligation for every Ukrainian refugee arriving in Poland to obtain a number in the Universal Electronic Population Registration System (PESEL), as well as the sanctioning, as a residence document, of an electronic document available in the public mobile application Diia.pl (the equivalent of mObywatel for Ukrainian refugees). This document, together with a travel document, will entitle a citizen of Ukraine to cross the border multiple times without the need to obtain a visa [Kadry 2022]. Submission of an application for a PESEL number within 30 days of arrival in Poland will result in recognition of the further stay of a Ukrainian citizen in the territory of the Republic of Poland as legal. An additional condition of the registration process will be to upload a personal photograph as a mandatory element in the register of Ukrainian citizens [Office of the Prime Minister 2022]. The introduction of the obligation to hold a PESEL number has been evaluated positively. Oksana Pestrykova, the coordinator of the consultation point and hotline of the Ukrainian House in Warsaw, stated that: "This is a positive change. First, we will know how many people are in Poland and need protection, who has been provided temporary protection, and who wants to continue the path

of legalization of residence. Second, it will work in favour of the refugees, who will be able to benefit, for example, from healthcare services" [OKOPress.pl 2022].

Other changes proposed in the amending bill under discussion are the introduction of an obligation for Ukrainian citizens to pay a part of the cost of housing and food, and the activization of Ukrainian citizens staying in collective accommodation centres. According to the submitted proposal, from February 1, 2023, refugees who have stayed in Poland for more than 120 days will have to cover 50% of the cost of such assistance, but no more than 40 zlotys per person per day, and from May 1, 2023, refugees who have stayed in Poland for 180 days or more will cover 75% of the cost, but no more than 60 zlotys per person per day. This obligation will not have the *erga omnes* effect. Disabled persons, children, persons of retirement age, pregnant women, persons raising a child under 12 months of age, and caregivers of at least three children, as well as persons in a difficult financial situation that would prevent them from contributing to the costs, were excluded from this obligation. The evaluating authority, at the request of the interested party, will be the province governor with jurisdiction over the place of residence of the applicant or the assistance provider.

In addition to the new obligations, the amending bill also provides for the introduction of institutional facilitating solutions for Ukrainian citizens who have lost the ability to access their trusted profiles, as well as the introduction of solutions into the Polish legal system that protect Ukrainian citizens from being denied a temporary residence permit in a situation where they do not meet the statutory requirements for receiving a specific type of permit or where the circumstances that are the basis for an application for this permit do not justify a stay for more than 3 months [Polish Press Agency 2022]. In addition, the proposed amendment will guarantee the continuity of payment of the monetary benefits obtained pursuant to Article 13 of the Act for Accommodation and Food for Ukrainian Citizens Who Came to the Republic of Poland from the Territory of Ukraine in Organized Foster Care Groups.

The bill drafted by the Council of Ministers increases the powers of public administration bodies. The proposed changes include providing governors with greater access to data from the records of minors for purposes other than just monitoring the performance of their tasks by district family assistance centres. In practice, provincial governors can perform a number of other activities with respect to children registered as minors, such as arranging transportation for them. The act will sanction the possibility to support local government units in carrying out additional educational tasks related to the education and upbringing of, and care for, children and students who are citizens of Ukraine – also in the next year, 2023. What was also announced was the planned clarification of issues related to the disbursement and reimbursement by local government units of funds received from the Assistance Fund as part of the support for educational tasks, and allowing communes, municipalities, and districts to obtain support from the Assistance Fund due to the recognition of the stay of a child

or student receiving education in a school being a part of the Polish educational system as legal pursuant to laws other than the act. The amending bill provides for giving the minister competent for the interior the power to issue temporary passports in particularly justified cases [Government Legislation Center 2022].

With regard to the education of children and adolescents, who constitute a very large group of refugees, the provisions of the act will enable communes, municipalities, and districts to obtain support from the Assistance Fund on the grounds that the stay of a child or student receiving education at a school in the Polish educational system is considered legal, to cover for students of public and non-public elementary schools and art schools providing general education in the scope of an elementary school the cost of purchase of textbooks, educational materials, and exercise materials for students from Ukraine. The amending bill will implement changes that will make it easier for school principals, communes, and municipalities to control compulsory schooling and compulsory education.

Another proposed amendment results from the need to expand the use of the Assistance Fund by including the possibility of financing of the tasks of the Polish Red Cross (PRC) carried out to assist Ukrainian citizens through the National Information Office, as provided for in international conventions on the treatment of prisoners of war and the protection of civilians in wartime. The work of the Office in 2022 has largely focused on meeting the needs of war victims. Ukrainian citizens taking refuge in Poland are and will continue to be at risk of losing contact with their loved ones who stayed in the territory of Ukraine. According to the applicants, the increase in the scale of activities carried out by the PRC's National Information and Search Bureau that are due to the war in Ukraine justifies supplementing the state budget expenditures allocated in 2022 to finance the activities of the Office with additional funds from the Assistance Fund. Money from the Assistance Fund could be used to finance or reimburse expenses or costs incurred by the PRC in carrying out its tasks to assist Ukrainian citizens [Explanatory Memorandum 2022].

Conclusion

The legal provisions that concern assistance to refugees from Ukraine should be considered multi-track and sufficient. Quickly prepared and enacted, and immediately implemented, they fulfilled their primary purpose. The deficiencies noted in the process of implementation of the act are being corrected in the amendments that have been implemented and are currently being drafted. It seems that both the speed and the size of the assistance offered to Ukrainian refugees should be viewed very positively.

According to available data, the Minister of Interior and Administration has already spent 4.1 billion zlotys (as of October 2022) from the assistance fund

established specifically to help Ukrainian war refugees in Poland. This amount covered only the cost of accommodation, food, transportation, and benefits of 40 zlotys per person per day for every Ukrainian provided accommodation in a private house. On top of that, one should add the welfare and family benefits that the refugees receive – which are the same as those received by Polish citizens. These include the 300 zlotys benefit for every Ukrainian (total cost of about 450 million zlotys) and the 500+ benefits (500 zlotys for every minor child) (total cost of about 1 billion zlotys). In financing refugees, Poland is supported by the European Union, which has donated 700 million zlotys (144.6 million euros) to help Ukrainians in Poland. Poland has applied to the European Commission for another 200 million zlotys. There are 1.4 million Ukrainians registered in the PESEL database, although this figure does not truly reflect the actual number of people currently residing in Poland, as some of them have left. It is worth emphasizing that among the registered refugees, 93 percent are women and children and 600,000 are of working age.

In its "Migration Outlook 2022" report, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development calculated that by the end of 2022, Poland will pay the largest amount of all OECD countries to cover the cost of living for refugees from Ukraine. This amount, which is equal to more than 8.36 billion euros, is almost a third of the total cost borne by these countries. Poland is estimated to spend 6.2 billion euros on housing and benefits, 1.5 billion euros on education for Ukrainian children and youth, and 664 million euros on healthcare.

It should be noted that unlike the earlier waves of refugees from Syria or Chechnya, the refugees from Ukraine are mostly well-educated women with children. Most of them declare that their stay in Poland is only temporary and they will return to their homeland after the warfare stops. They are characterized by a high degree of self-reliance and entrepreneurship, with the vast majority seeking work as a source of livelihood and a sizable portion supporting themselves with their own resources. Undoubtedly, integration into the Polish labour market would be accelerated by employment services provided to the immigrants and Polish language courses. According to data released in November 2022, 61 percent of Ukrainian refugees still have not taken up employment. The main reasons are the lack of knowledge of the Polish language and the lack of job offers corresponding to their specializations and in line with their competencies.

Currently, the biggest problem for refugees from Ukraine seems to be psychological, social, financial, and living issues. The first category is due to the need to find one's place and adapt to life in another country, in a society that speaks a different language. Finding their place and adaptation of the refugees to the Polish labour market, which is in crisis, remains a significant and serious problem. In addition, there is an apparent barrier in the access to the rental housing market and problems associated with the current inflation.

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TOMASZ WICHA

The Verbal Will for Consensus Despite the Internal Political Conflict – the Analysis of the Political Debate in the Polish Sejm on 24th February 2022 on the Policy of Poland Towards the War in Ukraine

Abstract: The war in Ukraine highlighted many issues which affected the political conflict in contemporary Poland. Seemingly, the launch of war imposed the consent on the political arena in Poland. During the political debate the representatives of all the parliamentary parties displayed the solidarity towards Ukraine, still – there was only one issue allying all the representatives – the necessity to pass the law on protection of the homeland. Other issues on the 24th February 2022, despite the launch of the war, did not differ from any other day in which the political debate in Poland is immersed in the political conflict. The context of war in Ukraine only temporarily calmed down the issues which were present and active on the polarized the contemporary political arena of the Republic of Poland.

Keywords: war between Ukraine and Russia, political conflict, geopolitical breakthrough

Introduction

In many scientific papers there were the analyses of the cooperation of the states of Central and Eastern Europe. The evaluation of such relations is definitely possible in times of crisis as there is the necessity to cooperate in order to alleviate the problem. The beginning of the war in Ukraine on 24th February 2022 was definitely such geopolitical breakthrough. The analysis of the political debate on the day of the launch of the war between Russia and Ukraine is of utmost importance in the context of the political conflict in the time which deserved solid support towards the victims of war [The Shorthand Notes of the Polish Sejm on 24th February 2022].

Poland takes part in many cooperation formats. One of the channels of cooperation is the V4 group which was perceived as a very important international cooperation group Poland actively participated in [Kancik-Kołtun 2022: 7 – 9]. It was

widely understood by the political representation in the Polish Sejm that the war in Ukraine did not begin on 24th February 2022 but it was launched many years before – in 2014. The international community made an attempt to help Ukraine [Podvorna 2015: 183–206], still – the activities were not effective as they did not stop the full- scale war which began in February 2022.

The declaration of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland on the issue of the aggression of the Russian Federation on Ukraine

The Members of the Polish Parliament expressed solidarity with the Ukrainian nation. There were many actions of the international community which were not effective because Russia started the full-scale war against Ukraine. The attack was not the result of the provocation, nor any other actions which could justify the launch of war. The war on Ukraine was a breach of international law. The statement presented the view that the Russian Federation broke the Charter of the United Nations.

The declaration of the Polish Sejm contained the expression that the Russian Federation did not obey the international obligations. The launch of war against Ukraine was treated as an attack on the European security which has geopolitical implications. Moreover, the statement contained the sentence that the Russian Federations excluded itself from the international community and chose the step back into the 20th century which was the century of wars.

The Sejm strongly condemned the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine. The statement of the Sejm was not directed only towards the Russian Federation but also to the Republic of Belarus which enabled the aggression which partially was launched from the territory of the Republic of Belarus. The Sejm called for the aggressor to stop the war and remove all the Russian soldiers from the territory of Ukraine. Polish MPs wanted the restoration of the borders of independent Ukraine and the obedience of the international humanitarian law.

The Sejm fully supported the democratic authorities and the Ukrainian nation and expressed the solidarity with them. Poland would consequently support the sovereignty of the independent state. Moreover, the Sejm called the European Union, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the whole international community for the immediate establishment of sanctions which ought to be severe and serious.

The statement of the Polish Sejm was passed by the acclamation which confirmed the exceptionalness of the moment in the history as it is typical that the political conflicts among the political subjects on the international arena in Poland make it impossible to find solutions which would not lead to the exacerbation of

the political conflict at least. The statement of the Polish MPs was the first step to ensure there were some topics which would be understood similarly across the groups no matter the intensity of the political conflicts in any other areas.

The statement of the Prime Minister of Poland
Mateusz Morawiecki

Mateusz Morawiecki delivered an extraordinary speech to the Sejm. The Prime Minister expressed that the morning of 24th February 2022 would be remembered as the moment which Russia chose war as the means of exercising influence. The Prime Minister of Poland emphasized the lack of justification for Russia to perform the attack. There was no provocation from the side of Ukraine and therefore, the decision to start war was groundless. Such an act of aggression was inexplicable.

Mateusz Morawiecki called the beginning of war barbarity. Such barbarity which occurred in Ukraine demanded a stand against the invaders. The politician claimed that Ukrainians did not struggle only for their own freedom but were ready to face the Russian invader in order to protect the freedom of the whole Europe.

The Polish political arena recognized the danger from Russia as real. Still, it was widely understood that the risk was not taken seriously in the western part of Europe. On such a day as the beginning of war between Ukraine and Russia more and more Europeans started to understand the real potential of conflict. Beforehand, many European states somehow enabled the excessive behaviour of the Russian Federation. The Prime Minister of Poland claimed that only imposing sanctions against the aggressor could prevent the conflict from escalating further.

Mateusz Morawiecki expressed that Poland was safe because of its participation in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Furthermore, it was stated publicly that all the activities by the government served ensuring the security of Poland. The key actions were focused on strengthening the country's defensive abilities. Moreover, it was publicly stated that there was the need to form the Committee for the Security and Defence by the Council of Ministers of Poland. The activity of the institution resulted primarily in the creation of the law on the protection of homeland.

Mateusz Morawiecki expressed that Poland was not shocked by the attack of the Russian Federation. In November, the Prime Minister of Poland warned the leaders of the European Union that the possibility of the attack from the side of the Russian Federation may become real. The full-scale attack which started on 24th February 2022 was predicted based on the preparations which Russia had made beforehand.

The Prime Minister pointed out that Russia chose the way of terror and wanted to break the solidarity among other European states. The main goal of the joint actions of Poland and the allies of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization was to

restore the integrity of Ukraine. Such a goal could have been achieved only with the help of all democratic states of Europe and NATO. The beginning of war was treated by the Polish government as a breakthrough. The position of Poland was clear – each action which would help to restore the integrity of the eastern neighbour of Poland ought to have been introduced. The impact of the war which began was massive and it many innocent lives of the people of Ukraine were lost due to the conflict. Mateusz Morawiecki called for unity on the political arena of Poland.

The authorities of Poland classified the activities established as the result of the launch of war within the territory of Ukraine as multifactorial. The first step, which was of utmost importance, was to impose sanctions which would be effective and would scare off the political enemy. Such an act would be beneficial in other aspects, too. It was claimed that the introduction of such a deterrent would be essential in yet additional aspect – restoration of the integrity of Ukraine.

Another direction of the activities of the Polish authorities was the reinforcement of the eastern flank of NATO and the east of the European Union. All the heads of the internal affairs of Poland agreed that there was a necessity to strengthen the presence of the soldiers of NATO on the eastern border of Poland. On the 24th February 2022, more than 6,000 NATO soldiers were present in Poland.

It was publicly stated that the prelude to the war between Russia and Ukraine was the migration crisis on the border of Poland and Belarus. Mateusz Morawiecki expressed that the events of 2021 were a part of the actions planned conscientiously by the Kremlin.

The Polish Prime Minister turned directly to Ukrainians in the Polish Sejm and called them friends of the Polish nation. Mateusz Morawiecki invited the victims of war to Poland and assured they would never be alone as even if they left their homes in Ukraine, they would find a second home in Poland. Poland introduced the humanitarian aid to Ukraine which meant multiple channels of support addressed to Ukraine. The Polish Prime Minister promised all the actions would be continued as long as it would be necessary. Such a promise was not only the individual reaction of Poland as it was the outcome of the diplomatic talks of the Polish government with the President of the European Commission, the President of the European Council and the diplomatic talks between the President of Poland with the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

The beginning of war changed everything on the international arena. Mateusz Morawiecki stressed that not only conventional models of war would be introduced, but also hybrid ones as well. No matter the means, Poland was ready express solidarity in practice and wished such acts of solidarity to be shared among European leaders. Hybrid war was connected with the fake news and propaganda which destroys the factual information and alters the media content. Disinformation was one of the means of war which started on 24th February 2022. The key to

overcome the enemy was to present stable support for Ukraine and express solidarity. Furthermore, there was a need to limit the internal political conflict in Poland as it was destructive in particular in the context of the war in Ukraine.

The statement by the representative of Law and Justice party
Ryszard Terlecki

The MP claimed that Ukraine struggled for freedom and independence which ought to be understood not only with the reference to Ukraine but more broadly. The representatives of the Polish Sejm appealed to the whole world to make use of all the mechanisms to stop the war some days before the 24th February 2022. Ryszard Terlecki called the international community and the international organisations for the solidarity with Ukraine. The politician called for one democratic voice supporting Ukraine and wanted the international community to establish and introduce pragmatic measures which might stop the war and block the aggressor.

The statement by the representative of the Citizens' Coalition
Borys Budka

The MP of the Civic Platform Borys Budka delivered the speech in which he expressed the full support for Ukraine. Borys Budka claimed a need arose to call for the international solidarity with Ukraine. One group was put at risk in particular – the ones who stood on the first front line. Apart from the emphasis put on the solidarity, the politician stressed there was the necessity to help Ukraine in many aspects. Borys Budka called it was a time of test for the international community to remain responsible and develop a cohesive strategy of strengthening the security of Poland as a neighbouring state of Ukraine.

The context of the war on a full scale which began on 24th February 2022 caused the need to end all international conflicts on the political arena. There was the necessity to allocate energy to the cooperation among the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Borys Budka called the representatives of the government of Poland to restore the rule of law (the source of the political dispute between the Republic of Poland and the European Union). The limitation of any conflicts in the international arena was the intention of the Polish State in the opinion of the Civic Platform.

The politicians claimed that there was a need to pass the law on the protection of homeland. The protection of homeland in the context of the situation in Ukraine was of utmost importance regardless the political conflict. Borys Budka

stressed that there was a possibility to pass the law in the Polish Sejm by means of acclamation. The war in Ukraine caused many implications for the security of the Republic of Poland and deserved the political consensus, at least in the issues classified as the reason of state.

The statement of the representative of the Left
Krzysztof Gawkowski

The Left claimed the attack of the Russian Federation was disgraceful. The launch of war on a full scale was a breach of international law. The attack on Ukraine was perceived by the Left as an attack on Europe. In the opinion presented by Krzysztof Gawkowski, the beginning of war on 24th February 2022 could not be justified. The MP stressed that the President of the Russian Federation was the greatest public enemy not only in Ukraine but in the whole Europe as well. The attack on Ukraine was the destruction of the security system which was built in Europe.

In the opinion presented by Krzysztof Gawkowski, the war changed everything – in particular, shook the feeling of safety in Europe. The Left called for political consensus, agreement and unity. On behalf of the Left, the politician asked to cease political conflicts on internal arena in the Republic of Poland. There was no division of those who supported left-wing or right-wing parties as the only ideas which ought to be present were those of solidarity and cooperation.

The Left declared that all the political offices of the MPs from the Left would be at disposal of the Ukrainians seeking help. Krzysztof Gawkowski uttered that Poland would become the greatest ambassador of Ukraine in Europe and in the whole world. A resolute reaction of the international arena was the answer to the conflict in Ukraine. The Left claimed that the Russian Federation should be isolated in the international arena. The first step would be the isolation from the world banking system and the second – the confiscation of the possessions of the Russian oligarchs. The gained money should be given to the Ukrainians.

The Left claimed there was a need to set Ukraine free from the foreign debt which amounted to 95 billion dollars. Such enormous amount of money could be allocated to defending Ukraine. Furthermore, the politician stressed that 'a friend in need was a friend indeed' and Poland was open to help the neighbours. It was anticipated that many asylum seekers from Ukraine would find shelter in Poland. Krzysztof Gawkowski that the war on Ukraine implicated many duties for the Republic of Poland and Poland ought to be ready to stand against the terror of war.

The statement of the representative of the Polish Peasants' Party Władysław Kosiniak-Kamysz

The MP admitted that the regular war between Russia and Ukraine implicated the necessity to protect Poland. The reason of state was the democratic and independent state. In the context of war launched by the Russian Federation on Ukraine, it was of utmost importance to express and promote the right of the independent state of Ukraine to remain present in the international arena. The integrity of the independent state of Ukraine was for the Polish Peasants' Party *the conditio sine qua non*.

The cooperation among the member states of the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization was the only possible answer to the unjustified aggression. The MP claimed that there was a necessity to stop the dictators and stop the war. Solidarity and responsibility were the only options which ought to be exercised. What the Peasants' Party stressed was a necessity to establish new directions in the Polish politics. Władysław Kosiniak-Kamysz called for the permanent meetings of the Council of the National Security and promised cooperation from the Polish Peasants' Party.

The Peasants' Party was ready to amend the budget of Poland so that it would enable the spendings on the protection of the homeland and the indispensable help for Ukrainians. It was publicly stated that the war refugees were widely welcomed in Poland. Still, the cooperation between the municipal authorities, the government and non-governmental organizations was the key to establishing good rules of help the Ukrainians. Władysław Kosiniak-Kamysz claimed that the guest in the house was the God in the house, as the Polish proverb says.

Władysław Kosiniak-Kamysz claimed there was a need to present the gestures of solidarity and proposed a joint visit of all the representatives of the political parties to the Embassy of Ukraine in Warsaw. The president of the Polish Peasants' Party wished Ukraine success. His political speech was finished with the statement in which he expressed the wish for both independent Poland and Ukraine to exist as free states on the international arena.

The statement of the representative of the Confederation Krzysztof Bosak

The MP stated that the day of 24th February 2022 was unprecedented. Krzysztof Bosak claimed the invasion was totally unjustified. The full-scale attack was unusual, still – the reaction of the democratic world was necessary. The sympathy was a normal reaction for the actual cruelty but the key focus was the strengthening of the state. Some issues present in the internal political conflict occurred in the political debate as well because Krzysztof Bosak accused the Left of blocking the expenses for the

national defence. Moreover, the politician expressed publicly that that many politicians in Poland attacked the Polish soldiers who protected the Polish border against the great number of migrants wishing to breach it and enter the territory of the Republic of Poland from Belarus. Krzysztof Bosak admitted that Belarus participated in the Russian attack against Ukraine. The Confederation claimed there was a need for the public debate in regards to the scope of the system of defence of Poland.

The statement of the representative of Polska 2050 Paweł Zalewski

The MP inaugurated the political speech with the expression of admiration towards the Ukrainians as they were a great nation who put their lives at risk for the values which were common for the European community. Paweł Zalewski agreed the launch of war was the time for solidarity understood in the internal and external context. The solidarity in the internal context concerned the defence, the security and the foreign affairs of Poland.

The MP agreed that Ukraine struggled for the freedom of Europe. Still, such a statement demanded some reflection. Ukraine defended themselves not only against dictatorship but also strived to build and promote democracy. Paweł Zalewski compared the war in Ukraine to the war of freedom against enslavement. The war in Ukraine was not limited to the territory of Ukraine only. The military character of war took place in Ukraine, still, its repercussions would be present outside Ukraine as well. The MP claimed it was a very positive change that Europe started to speak Polish and use the arguments delivered by Poland. It was high time Poland began to cooperate in the European Union.

The statement of the representative of Agreement Jarosław Gowin

Jarosław Gowin who used to be part of the United Right presented the statement of unity in the context of the war which began in Ukraine. The MP claimed that the war was a violent crime. He supported the idea of sanctions against Russia but simultaneously agreed that there were no sanctions which would be classified as an adequate countermeasure for the unprecedented and brutal attack against an independent state.

Jarosław Gowin enumerated four areas for the aid necessary in the context of the war:
1) diplomatic support;
2) equipment for the Ukrainian army;
3) financial support;
4) humanitarian aid.

The statement of the representative of Kukiz'15 – Paweł Kukiz

The politician claimed the situation was very dangerous not only for Ukraine but for the international community as well. Poland and the democratic world could not remain passive as the war may be the beginning not only of the democracy but the civilization as well. Nothing would be as it used to be as the situation dramatically escalated.

Paweł Kukiz expressed the opinion that the international community ought to draw conclusions from the events in 1938 when there was the annexation of Czechoslovakia by Hitler. Lack of understanding of the political proceedings would lead to the attack on Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. The war in Ukraine put the whole Europe in danger, especially the Central Europe.

The statement of the Polish Matters Agnieszka Ścigaj

The MP claimed there was a necessity not only to express verbal solidarity but to behave in a pragmatic way. Agnieszka Ścigaj told there was the need to prepare not only humanitarian aid but the labour market as well. Moreover, she recommended the continuation of the dialogue among allies to put forward supportive measures to help Ukraine.

**The statement of the representative of the Polish
Socialist Party Andrzej Rozenek**

The politician reminded the role of the Polish army in the international arena. Because of the actions undertaken, Poland became a solid and stable member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. In the statement, the politician did not mention the context of war and the implications of the attack of the Russian Federation on Ukraine directly.

Conclusion

There were many questions on the role of the international community in preventing the full-scale war [Pospieszna 2018:311–320; Kuczyńska-Zonik 2016:7–25]. In particular it was important to analyse the role of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union since 2014 [Stępniewski 2017: 89–92; A. Antczak-Barzan 2016:29–44]. Additional analysis ought to be put into the reaction

of the Central and Eastern European states to the events in Ukraine which started in 2014, in particular the reaction of the V4 group [Czyż 2017: 621–629]. One needs to stress that one of the greatest issues is a possible offer of integration after the war. At some time, such a discussion among those who supported both the integrity and the independence of Ukraine since 2014 (*compare:* Koszel 2020: 75–93) will become a political obligation.

The full-scale war which began on 24th February 2022 was undoubtedly the landmark in the contemporary history of Central and Eastern Europe. The war in Ukraine did not change the level of the political conflict even if the political debate on the 24th February 2022 displayed some layers of the possible cooperation in the political arena of Poland. The full presentation of the speeches delivered in the debate in Sejm on the day of the launch of war between Ukraine and Russia proved that while the differences between the political parties on the political arena remained stable, every representative expressed the will to cooperate in helping Ukraine but – as the proverb says – "the devil is in the details".

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PIOTR ŻAK

View of the Visegrad Countries – Czechia, Slovakia and Hungary on the Issue of the Russian Invasion of Ukraine in the First 30 Days of the War 2022

Abstract: The subject of the analysis is the reaction of three countries of the Visegrad group – the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary during the first month of the war in Ukraine after the attack of the Russian Federation. The analysis will be performed of political reactions, aid towards Ukraine, as well as assistance to refugees arriving in the countries of the Group. While the stance of Czech Republic and Slovakia was fully pro-aid and pro-Ukrainian, Hungary's reaction may have been somewhat surprising (in a negative manner) and the activities of the Hungarian state led to a certain dissonance between the Visegrad Group countries. The first 30 days of the invasion turned out to be very important for maintaining the spirit and will to fight the occupant of the Ukrainian nation.

Keywords: Ukraine, Russia, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Visegrad Group, War, Invasion, Aid, Refugees

Introduction

The biggest crisis in the V4 Group so far was caused by Hungary in March 2022, when it refused to unequivocally support Ukraine in the fight against Russian aggression. The government in Budapest continued contacts with Moscow and banned Western weapons for Ukraine from being transported through Hungarian territory. "This is not our war," Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said in July in a pro-grammatic speech at a convention of representatives of the Hungarian minority in the Romanian resort of Băile Tuşnad. "Ukraine will never be able to win a war with Russia," he said at the time. He added that EU sanctions against Moscow were a shot in the foot. The other three V4 countries behaved quite differently: they pro-vided Ukraine with very significant military and humanitarian aid. Poland and the Czech Republic were the first NATO countries to provide the government in Kiev

with tanks and heavy military equipment, and Slovakia even provided the S300 air defence system. In terms of population, Poland and the Czech Republic took in the largest number of Ukrainian war refugees, while Hungary took in only few. After the clear victory of Viktor Orbán's Fidesz party in the April 2022 parliamentary elections, many political observers predicted the end of the V4. "The result of the elections in Hungary de facto means the end of the Visegrad Group or its immobilization for a long time" – said political scientist Josef Mlejnek from the Charles University in Prague at the time on the Czech Radio. Nevertheless, it is questionable whether the four Visegrad countries will be able to revive the close cooperation of the past. In 2016, they were united above all by their common opposition to the European migration and asylum policy. Then, however, the Visegrad Group was in danger of losing its importance completely due to the growing discrepancies between its governments.

Czech Republic

Before 2021, Czechia was considered to be soft on Russia with some of its prominent politicians, such as the former President Miloš Zeman, being openly pro-Russian. Following the 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea, Czech diplomacy also made a point of distancing itself from being considered a part of NATO's East flank and declining an offer to host the Alliance forces on its territory.

On the day of the full-scale military invasion, the Czech government took additional steps: closed down two Russian consulates at home and two Czech consulates in Russia, suspended granting new visas to Russians, called home the Czech ambassador to Moscow and Minsk and announced preparations for refugees from Ukraine [Visegrad Insight 2022].

Note that the western part of Ukraine used to be part of Czechoslovakia in 1918 through 1938. Ukrainian was one of the six languages on Czechoslovak banknotes back in the "First Republic", the between-the-wars years. The multicultural aspects of between-the-wars Czechoslovakia, and the sore lack thereof later on, are oftentimes mentioned during our tours. So, some of Czechs feel closer to Ukraine than it is possible to imagine. And everybody knows a Ukrainian person – it can be a colleague, or a waitress, or somebody who provides a service to you on a daily basis [Taste of Prague 2022].

Czech Republic. The coalition government of Petr Fiala (ODS) took the first steps to support Ukraine even before the beginning of the armed conflict, sending artillery shells to Ukraine worth CZK 36.6 million (approximately USD 1.7 million). The position of the Czech Republic was confirmed by the symbolic visit of Foreign Minister Jan Lipavski (Pirates) who, together with the foreign ministers of Slovakia

Ivan Korčok and Austria Alexander Schallenberg, visited Kyiv and Donbas in early February. Already then, Jan Lipavský stressed Ukraine's right to decide about its belonging to the West, including *rapprochement* with the EU and NATO.

The attack of the Russian Federation on Ukraine intensified the activities of the Czech authorities. The day after Russia's attack on Ukraine, the government of the Czech Republic approved the possibility of transferring troops from other NATO countries through the territory of the Czech Republic, while guaranteeing the provision of necessary logistical services. Defence Minister Jana Černochová (ODS) declared her readiness to mobilize the Czech rapid reaction forces. Three days after the start of the conflict, the government of the Czech Republic decided to provide further support to Ukraine, which received pistols, assault rifles, machine guns and sniper rifles, as well as a million rounds [Instytut Europy Środkowej 2022].

A significant gesture was also the visit of the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic, Petr Fiala together with the Prime Minister of Poland Mateusz Morawiecki and Deputy Prime Minister Jarosław Kaczyński and the Prime Minister of Slovenia Janez Janša in Kyiv on 15 March this year. The politicians met with the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky. Prime Minister Fiala described the visit as an expression of solidarity and added that it was both symbolic and pragmatic. It was made clear to Ukraine that it could count on support, and issues such as sanctions and their effectiveness, humanitarian aid, military aid and further diplomatic steps were discussed.

The Czech Republic was the first country to send tanks to Ukraine: T-72 main battle tanks from the Czech Army's active reserves. It has since sent more heavy weapons, including Mi-24 helicopters.

However, the transfers – a combination of donations and arms purchases – are shrouded in strategic ambiguity. Even after the US defence secretary Lloyd Austin publicly thanked Prague for sending its Mi-24s to Kyiv, the Czech defence ministry maintained what amounted to a diplomatic silence [Cameron 2022].

Even though the Czech Republic is not a major refugee destination, the country is facing the biggest refugee crisis since the end of World War II. According to estimates, about 300,000 people came to the Czech Republic from Ukraine. In response to the refugee crisis, the authorities of the Czech Republic prepared on 17 March 2022 and signed into law a package of three government bills related to the armed conflict on the territory of Ukraine and the influx of displaced persons from Ukraine, collectively referred to in the media as "Lex Ukraine".

Lex Ukraine responds to the invocation of the temporary protection directive, and modifies Act No. 221/2003 Coll. on Temporary Protection of Foreigners and other laws, in order to allow for a more flexible response to the large number of incoming refugees from Ukraine. All the laws came into force by publication in the Collection of Laws on 21 March and are due to expire on 31 March 2023, except for

the exemption from knowledge of the Czech language for teaching staff, which will expire on 31 August 2022. Russia's aggression against Ukraine and the firm political stance of the Czech Republic have united the rather polarized Czech society. According to Median research from the beginning of March, 87% of Czechs strongly condemn the aggression of the Russian Federation, and according to STEM/MARK agency analyses from the end of February, 97% of Czech citizens declare the need to help refugees (67% of respondents indicated that the Czech Republic should help every refugee, and 30% supported at least some of the refugees).

The vast majority of Ukrainian refugees residing in the Czech Republic have a university degree and more than half intend to take up employment in the country, according to the study 'Ukrainian refugees in the Czech Republic' prepared by the EWL Migration Platform and the Centre for East European Studies at the University of Warsaw. The results of the study were presented at the Czech News Agency on June 22 by experts of the EWL Migration Platform – Michalina Sielewicz and Radek Vlk [Zymnin 2022].

The Czech Prosecutor General warned that expressing support for a Russian attack on Ukraine could be a crime punishable by imprisonment. The Public Prosecutor's Office appealed for Czech citizens to stay within the confines of the country's constitutional and legal restrictions. Although freedom of expression is stipulated in the Czech constitution, meaning everyone has the right to express their views, it also has its limits just as in any democratic state.

Slovakia

The Slovak authorities – President Zuzana Čaputová and the government of the right-wing coalition of four groups – unequivocally condemned Russia's actions towards Ukraine. Prime Minister Eduard Heger spoke, among other things, of the economic isolation of Russia, supporting EU sanctions, including the exclusion of Russian banks from the SWIFT system. At the same time, the Slovak government is calling for an end to the conflict, and this appeal has been strengthened by the proposal that Ukrainian-Russian peace negotiations be held in Bratislava. This idea was also approved by part of the pro-Russian opposition. The Slovak president was among the eight presidents of Central and Eastern Europe who, in a letter of February 28, supported Ukraine's efforts to join the EU. Slovakia – like Hungary – did not close its airspace to Russian aircraft on its own initiative, it did so only on February 27 as a consequence of the decision of the entire EU [Ogrodnik 2022]

The Slovak authorities continue to provide political, military and humanitarian support to Ukraine, which was attacked by Russia. At the same time, the position

of some opposition politicians (e.g., from Smer-SD, Republika, ĽSNS) is unclear for the preservation of Slovakia's neutrality. Moreover, the Slovak Prime Minister Eduard Heger (OĽaNO) did not take part in the trip of the prime ministers of the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovenia to Kiev, which is under attack by the Russians. He informed the public that he consulted his security services on the matter, which strongly advised him not to go. After media criticism that fell on Heger, he changed his mind and admitted that he should go with his partners from Central Europe.

On March 9, the Slovak government agreed to the arrival of 2,100 NATO soldiers who will form an international battlegroup strengthening the eastern flank of the Alliance. It was declared that it would be 100 Poles, 700 Germans, 600 Czechs, 400 Americans and 200 Dutch. Foreign soldiers are to carry equipment that cannot be provided by the Slovak armed forces, including the MIM-104 Patriot missile system. The Slovak side is also to receive Sentinel radar systems, modernized T-72 tanks, armoured personnel carriers and drones. The stay of soldiers is indefinite.

On March 20, Slovak Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď (OĽaNO) confirmed the arrival of the first units responsible for the deployment of the Patriot missile system, which is made available by the governments of Germany and the Netherlands. Temporarily, the system is to be placed at the Sliač airbase. However, other locations are constantly being consulted by experts, enabling the protection of as much of the territory of Slovakia as possible.

In return for accepting the Patriot missiles, the Slovak authorities allowed to provide Ukraine with its own S-300 missile system. In response, Russia informed that after the Ukrainian side took over the system, it would become its military target, and added that such transfer would be illegal. Therefore, Slovakia is currently facing dilemmas related to the possible, safe transport of S-300 elements on the territory of Ukraine and the resulting further deterioration of Slovak-Russian relations Instytut Europy Środkowej 2022].

Humanitarian aid to Ukraine continues. According to UNHCR data from March 23, more than 260,000 people crossed the Slovak-Ukrainian border people. Therefore, on March 16, the Slovak government adopted a package of legislative changes, the so-called "Lex Ukraine". Thanks to the changes contained therein, Ukrainians are to have an easier opportunity to take up work, use health care, find housing and receive financial support from the state. It is particularly important to shorten the period for recognizing medical education, and doctors from Ukraine will also be able to work in Slovakia as part of temporary internships.

The city of Košice, Slovakia, about 100 kilometres (60 miles) from the border with Ukraine, is home to a rail terminus where east meets west. For decades, the terminus has received trains carrying raw materials out of Ukraine along wide-gauge rail lines. The cargo is then transferred onto train cars that run on the standard-gauge rail lines used elsewhere in Europe. In addition to the use of the wide-gauge rail

network, the Rotary and Rotaract clubs are part of an initiative called Railway Helps. Started by the owner of Gepard Express, a Czech passenger transportation company, Railway Helps is using passenger trains to bring supplies into Ukraine and transport refugees out of it. So far, the initiative has brought more than 500 tons of supplies into Chop, a town in the Uzhhorod region. Trains returned to the city of Pardubice carrying more than 5,500 Ukrainian refugees. Rotary members have helped raise funds, which have come from a variety of sources, including a public fundraiser, district funding, and a contribution by the owner of Gepard Express. The participating railways have also absorbed significant costs and other organizations have waived fees [Grahl 2022].

Under the new law, any refugee who presents a certificate of temporary residence will be entitled to medical care. Details of the housing allowance for private persons taking in refugees are also known. For a one-room apartment, it will be a maximum of EUR 500 per month, for a two-room apartment – EUR 750, for a three-room apartment – EUR 1,000 and for a four-room apartment – EUR 1,250. You will be able to receive the add-on backdated to February 26.

On 23 March, Prime Minister Eduard Heger announced the organization of a humanitarian hub in the commune of Haniska near Kosice in eastern Slovakia, which will enable the regular sending of aid to Ukraine. It is an ideal location for a logistics hub as it has both normal and broad-gauge railway lines. Once the hub is operational, it will be possible to send one humanitarian train or several trucks a day.

The attitude of Slovaks towards refugees from Ukraine is shown in a survey conducted by the Focus research center for "Dennik N" from February 22 to March 1. The vast majority of Slovaks (85%) believe that refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine should be accepted. When asked whether a refugee as a neighbour would bother them or not, the openness of the respondents turned out to be slightly lower – such a neighbourhood would not bother 71%, and would be a problem for less than 30% of the respondents. 84% of Slovaks saying Ukraine is sufficiently supported, according to a March Gallup poll [Nattrass 2022].

Accepting refugees is mostly supported by voters of the two main parties forming the government coalition: OĽaNO, SaS, the extra-parliamentary liberal party Progressive Slovakia and, interestingly, the pro-Russian party Hlas-SD (support varies between 92 and 94% of respondents). The third coalition partner, the Sme Rodina party, which entered parliament for the first time on a wave of hostility towards refugees from Syria and Iraq, has slightly less support among its voters for accepting refugees from Ukraine, but it still stands at 83%. The voters of the largest opposition party Smer-SD (28% of opponents) and supporters of the far-right Republic party (33% against) are against accepting Ukrainian refugees.

Hungary

Hungary. Since the beginning of March, the Hungarian authorities have empha-
sized that they will not agree to sanctions aimed at the energy sector, as this would
lead to an increase in prices in Hungary, both for gas (in the event of termination
of the contract with Gazprom) and electricity (if the Paks 2 project implemented
by Rosatom is accused). This is accompanied by the slogan "Hungarians cannot
pay the price of war". Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán (Fidesz) pointed
out in one of his interviews that the destruction of relations with Russia is not in
the interest of the Hungarians, cooperation must be continued because the war will
end someday [Palata 2022].

It should be pointed out that, up to the moment of submitting this comment, the
Hungarian authorities have not taken any independent steps against the Russian
Federation: they have not revoked the "golden residence visas" of the Russians who
purchased them, they have not terminated the contract for the production of the
Sputnik V vaccine in Hungary, they have not liquidated the seat of the International
Investment Bank (Hungary remained the only bank member from this region of
Europe). It is also symbolic that Hungarian Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó (Fidesz)
has still not returned the Order of Friendship, which he received on December 30,
2021 in Moscow from Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov (the decoration was awarded
by Russian President Vladimir Putin) [MTI-Hungary Today 2021].

Hungary refuses to consent to the supply of arms to Ukraine, as well as its transit
through Hungarian territory. This would be of particular importance if Belarusian
troops entered Ukraine in an attempt to interrupt the allies' arms supply routes from
Poland. Viktor Orbán entered the ban on deliveries in the regulation of March 7. The
Hungarian prime minister also criticizes any proposals related to increasing NATO
involvement in Ukraine – both the introduction of a no-fly zone and the potential
sending of a peacekeeping mission. According to Orbán, NATO is a defensive alliance
whose task is to maintain security within its borders, not outside them. According to
the Prime Minister, the introduction of a no-fly zone or a NATO peacekeeping mission
would result in a full-scale war with Russia. Viktor Orbán agreed to send additional
NATO forces to Hungary, but in the aforementioned regulation he clearly indicated
that building bases is only possible west of the Danube line. Prime Minister Viktor
Orbán has sought to foster close ties with Moscow but Hungary has closed ranks with
the rest of the EU on tough sanctions against Russia. "We will not allow the transfer of
deadly weapons across the Hungarian territory," Foreign Minister Peter Szijjártó wrote
on Facebook. He said the decision was taken to ensure the safety of Hungarians both
in their country and across the border in Ukraine [AFP, The Economic Times 2022.].

It is worth noting the repeatedly emphasized contestation of NATO's defence capa-
bilities under Article 5. Viktor Orbán has emphasized not for the first time that those

who believe that Hungary will be defended by NATO are wrong. At the same time, in the government's announcements regarding the situation on the Hungarian border, it is emphasized that the army makes sure that armed troops do not get to Hungary. On the other hand, these branches are not defined in any way without realizing the consequences of such action. An attack from across the Hungarian border could mean the activation of Article 5 of NATO, and thus the Alliance's defensive action in Hungary.

According to UNHCR data from March 23, around 330,000 people crossed the Hungarian-Ukrainian border. However, the Hungarian authorities give more than twice the number, which results from adding up the number of people crossing the Hungarian border from Ukraine, but also from Romania, which is unjustified. There are no statistics showing what percentage of refugees remain in Hungary. It can be assumed with a high degree of probability that this is the Hungarian minority from Transcarpathia, and a large part of the remaining refugees from Ukraine move either to the west of Europe (Austria, Germany) or north, towards Poland. Referring to efforts to welcome those fleeing Ukraine, Hungary's representative said all cases of discrimination will be investigated and perpetrators held accountable. Highlighting ongoing initiatives to respond to requests from nations to evacuate their citizens from Ukraine, she said Hungary has allowed entrance for all those fleeing war without restrictions or discrimination as to race, ethnicity, religion or country of origin [United Nations 2022]

Hungarian authorities inform that they are conducting the largest humanitarian operation in history. Interestingly, it is called the "Transcarpathian Bridge", which suggests that most of the aid goes to the border areas where Transcarpathian Hungarians live. Politicians of the ruling party talk about potential facilitations that will be addressed to refugees. However, there is currently no possibility of legislative action, as parliamentary elections will be held in Hungary on 3 April, and therefore the National Assembly is no longer held there.

In the longer run, the war may have some other lasting effects for Hungarian foreign policy. First, it turns Hungary into a rim state of a major conflict zone, addressing foreign and national security policy in a structural way. Orbán's various administrations have had little to say about defence-related conflicts in the past. Second, the war has disrupted the relatively peaceful patterns in which PM Orbán could and did get on during the last decade. Much of the policy boundaries between Russia and the EU/NATO have disappeared, so pursuing the former line regarding Ukraine would be foolish and extremely dangerous. Western strategic thresholds will be likely set to lower levels, making any continuation of former policies impossible. Third, past concessions and policy initiatives, most notably the Paks-2 project, turn from opportunities into liabilities as a result of the war. Fourth and last, it remains to be seen how western attitudes towards outliers in general will change as a result. Depending on the turn that German security and defence policy

might take – along with the feasibility of the European energy policy framework transforming – Hungary might come under direct, politicized, economic pressure from Berlin, its prime economic partner, that would not be easy to ignore. While it remains certain that Hungary would maintain its relations with China, Turkey and other non-western powers in an unamended way, the post-war European/trans-atlantic context may force some modifications of its behaviour [Pitronova 2022].

It's no surprise that Hungary and Slovakia threaten to splinter Western unity on the crucial topic of Europe's energy dependence on Russia. Hungary said it would be happy to pay roubles for gas as demanded by Mr. Putin. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen promptly warned him that doing so would be a breach of sanctions [Nattrass 2022].

Conclusion

The actions taken by the government of the Czech Republic for Ukraine confirm the significant focus of Petr Fiala's cabinet on Eastern issues and present the Czech Republic as an important partner of Poland in regional cooperation, the EU and NATO.

The position of the Czech Republic was confirmed by the symbolic visit of the Minister of Foreign Affairs Jan Lipavski with partners from Slovakia and Austria to Kiev and Donbas in early February, as well as the visit of the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic together with the heads of governments of Poland and Slovenia in Kiev on 15 March.

Slovakia maintains its full support for the attacked Ukraine. At the same time, in recent weeks, it has taken a number of measures to strengthen its own defence potential, including agreed to the arrival of an international contingent of NATO troops with the Patriot missile system.

The Czech Republic and Slovakia provide active humanitarian support to refugees from Ukraine. In order to regulate their legal status, both countries adopted a package of legislative changes known as "Lex Ukrayina".

Hungary's approach to Russia has not changed after that country's attack on Ukraine – the Hungarian authorities are not taking steps to reduce its energy dependence on Russia. There is a risk that after the war there will be a time of a significant revision of relations with Hungary within the Visegrad Group and NATO, and an attempt to force Budapest to decide on which side the country is on the strategic security map.

The overriding factor that determines Viktor Orbán's political actions during the war is the desire to win the election. In order to win (which means not cutting himself off from Russia's actions), he also sacrifices Hungary's position within NATO and its alliance with Poland.

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Czech Security Policy in the Context of the Hybrid Warfare in Ukraine[1]

Abstract: This chapter analyses the changes in Czech security policy that have been ongoing in the context of the hybrid war waged by the Russian Federation (Russia) in Ukraine and described by it as a special operation to de-Nazify and de-militarise the country. This war is prosecuted according to a scenario conceived by Chief of the Russian General Staff Valery Gerasimov, and his concept of hybrid warfare is therefore described, alongside that used by British and American academics and implemented by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). The paper investigates NATO's ability to counter hybrid threats, including co-operation within the organisation and with countries of the European Union (EU).

Explaining changes in Czech security policy in the context of the impacts of the war in Ukraine, the paper focuses on the activities of the Czech security community and their recommendations as to how Czech security policy and the security system should be improved to make the country more resilient to hybrid threats. A decisive role in this respect was played by the National Security Audit, which analysed the state of Czech security policy and made a number of recommendations to ensure Czech resilience to hybrid threats. The paper describes which of these recommendations have been implemented, and notes those that so far have not been put into practice.

Developed by the Copenhagen School in the 1990s, the concept of societal resilience is concerned with security from internal threats to the state and society's ability to overcome crisis and return to the original, pre-crisis situation as soon as possible. The concept allows non-state actors (private firms and segments of civil society) to be involved in security, some of which are able to identify hybrid threats – particularly disinformation campaigns – before the state's security forces. The chapter describes how security policy capacities have had to be bolstered, legislation adopted and coordination mechanisms in the security system improved to make the Czech Republic (Czechia) more resilient to hybrid threats in the light of the war in Ukraine.

Keywords: Russo-Ukrainian conflict, hybrid warfare and its concept in Czechia, hybrid threats and NATO response, Czech National Security Audit, changes in Czech security policy in response to hybrid threats, coordination of the Czech security system, societal resilience to hybrid war.

Introduction

A much-discussed topic today, hybrid war is usually described as a multi-level or complex conflict. The concept has attracted extraordinary attention thanks to the Russian intervention in Ukraine in 2014, at a period of substantial political change and erosion of the apparatus of power in the latter country. However, the concept of hybrid war was developed theoretically quite some time ago, and significantly in the last decade, with the first formulations appearing in the mid-1990s [Stojar 2017:45; Řehka 2017:187]. The concept of hybrid war has substantially influenced Czech security policy[2] (and its various components including the Security Information Service,[3] BIS, the domestic intelligence agency) and has featured not just in academic discussions, but also in specific documents, during the creation of capacities to deal with hybrid threats, and in specific procedures and measures.

Hybrid war is characterised by a synergy of political, economic, technological and military measures [Bastl 2015:4]. The term has been most often associated with the conflict between Israel and the Lebanese Hezbollah to describe an alternative to conventional war [Banasik 2015:19; for more detail, see Hoffman 2007]; it has also been used in connection with the counter-insurgency operations in Iraq and Afghanistan [Bahenský 2018:94; Eichler 2006:133–135].

The February 2022 escalation of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict, when Russia's military attacked Ukraine, was an important event that changed the security environment of the whole of Central Europe, because the Russian 'special military operation' – with its stated aim of 'de-Nazifying and de-militarising Ukraine' – transformed how countries in the region now needed to approach their own security. Indeed, the very character of warfare changed, due to the rapid development of technologies and the immense amount of information that flowed. The distinctions between concepts that are important for defining the beginning of any crisis, and the eruption and understanding of any conflict, such as 'peace, crisis and war', 'public and private sector', 'external and internal security', 'state and non-state actors', 'the battlefield and the rear' and 'strategy and tactics', became blurred. And so did the

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[2] Like other policies, security policy is implemented on multiple levels, from local and regional to national within a state, and internationally from sub-regional and regional to global. In European regional policy, the phenomenon of Europeanisation appears in both external and internal security policy, though its promotion in the domain of security is more difficult than in some other policy areas. Security policy can be defined as a set of actions and measures aiming to provide internal and external security, defence and protection of citizens and the state and is implemented by means of foreign, defence and economic policies, as well as domestic security and public information policies, which are linked [Mareš 2010:32–34].

[3] BIS noted the increasing Russian influences in its annual reports, which from about 2010 pointed to growing Russian information activities in Czechia, including disinformation campaigns, influence operations and espionage [Nutil 2018:173–174].

differences between offensive[4] and defensive[5] strategy, and direct and indirect[6] strategy [Eichler 2009:82–84; Galatík 2008:21–23; Konyshev and Parfenov 2019:56–57; Divišová 2022:38].

One of the main objectives of the actors on a battlefield is to develop and exploit all information assets to influence the positions and actions of the target audience. Within strategic communication, the importance of the promoted narrative is growing, as this substantially influences the outcome of the conflict between the various inimical actors; this means that emphasis is placed on the struggle for people's minds. The narrative can be described as an adopted story that provides an explanation of events and context. The assumption is that if a media message contradicts the fundamental (strategic) narrative of the audience, it will be rejected. Thus, the narrative becomes an instrument in controlling the interpretation of information. Thematic (topical) communication frames are used to control the narratives. These frames are exploited for societal effects, leading people to associate certain feelings or opinions with particular objects or subjects in the given context [Řehka 2017:201].

In the military context, the aim of the narrative is to explain the actions of one's organisation in the operation, for instance the deployment of one's own units abroad in a military operation, and hence to justify this to the target audience (public). At a political-strategic level, narratives may also serve to shape public opinion and

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[4] The main aim of an offensive strategy is to impose one's own will on the adversary or enemy. If implemented successfully, it may result in a significant change to international arrangements. In its most distinctive form, the strategy aims to destroy the adversary, seeking his unconditional surrender. An overwhelming victory is not limited to the military, but also impacts on other spheres, including politics, the economy, society, culture and psychology [Eichler 2009:82]. If two more-or-less equal adversaries face each other, then the offensive strategy entails significant risks [Eichler 2006:41].

[5] The fundamental principle and aim of a defensive strategy are to discourage the adversary from starting or continuing an offensive. The first way to achieve this is to create effective resistance, making the adversary understand that he stands no chance of imposing his will militarily. The second way is deterrence, which demonstrates to the adversary that attack or aggression would ultimately bring greater losses than gains. Both ways are intended to prevent the adversary from resorting to force [Eichler 2009:83–84].

[6] An indirect strategy is mainly applied by guerrilla units in their struggle against occupiers or by terrorists. It is a method that disrupts the adversary's system of command, attacks the enemy morale and seeks to medialise one's own methods [cf. Eichler 2006:41–42; Eichler 2009:84; Nastoupil 2000:76–80]. An indirect strategy does not place its bets on an open conflict. Rather, it employs a mixture of psychological, political and economic instruments, or a limited deployment of armed forces, to achieve its objectives and defeat the enemy. The reliance is primarily on non-military instruments. French General André Beaufre, who in his brilliant 1963 study *Introduction à la stratégie* described all the aspects of warfare that we today describe as hybrid war, is often invoked in this context [Bastl 2015:1]. Beaufre linked military strategy with creating and utilising a situation which causes such disruption to the enemy's morale that he will be forced to accept the conditions we want to impose on him [Stojar 2008:72].

mobilise support for the military intervention, and even to prevent to some extent the negative impacts on the public opinion of the tragic events linked with the deaths of the soldiers deployed [Divišová 2022:39–40].

The established methods of rivalry, which include, for example, espionage and terrorism, are further developed by clever exploitation of cyber capabilities and social media. Initially part of 'preliminary' operations, aiming to win over the target audience for one's own aims, they have become 'decisive importance' operations in achieving the political strategic objectives in the conflict. This fundamentally changes the requirements of defence, the provision of security and the coordination within the security system in deploying various security instruments as part of an adequate response to hybrid threats [cf. Nutil 2018:171]. The defence system ought to be able to counter various threats, posed not just by enemy states, but also by enemy non-state actors, whose abilities have grown unprecedentedly thanks to new technologies and support from enemy states. The defence system should be comprehensive, flexible and coordinated and involve not just the state's security branches but also civil society and firms, which can no longer be mere passive consumers of security. What is more, civil society might be able to detect new hybrid threats long before the state's security forces; this is an important aspect of the concept of a resilient society.

Russia's annexation of Crimea and the special operation in Ukraine reminded the West of the reality of hybrid warfare [cf. Řehka 2017:199–202; Konyshev and Parfenov 2019:61–63]. This was one of the reasons why the concept of hybrid warfare was thoroughly discussed at the 2016 NATO summit in Warsaw.

Over time and due to modern technologies, hybrid warfare develops – as indeed conventional warfare does – and becomes a more dangerous threat to Czechia and more difficult to identify. If a modern hybrid war is to be prosecuted successfully, it must meet its principles, which are the exploitation of the enemy's ignorance and his inability to detect it. This type of warfare elides the boundaries between peace, crisis and war; who the aggressor is and against whom one ought to intervene [cf. Konyshev and Parfenov 2019:56]. A hybrid war is distinguished by a variability of method; its actions cannot be circumscribed [Kurfürst 2022:12].

The concept of hybrid war was succinctly described by Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces Valery Gerasimov in 2013,[7] that is, a year before

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[7] Valery Gerasimov argued that psychological operations (PSYOP) are mainly used by the US with the aim of changing political regimes that do not favor them, citing as examples the so-called 'colour revolutions' occurring in areas of interest to the Americans – for example, in former Yugoslavia in 2000, in what Russia sees as its 'near abroad', Georgia (2008), Estonia (2007), Chechnya (1994–1996, 1999–2009), Ukraine (2004), Kyrgyzstan (2005) and the Middle East and north Africa (Iran, Tunisia, Kuwait and so on) [Bastl 2015; cf. Smolík 2014:121–124; Ftorek 2017:169; Řehka 2017:199; Konyshev and Parfenov 2019:60; Kurfürst 2022:22–24]. Organisations

Moscow started its war in Crimea with virtually no shots being fired. His article, 'The Value of Science Is in the Foresight: New Challenges Demand Rethinking the Forms and Methods of Carrying Out Combat Operations', published in the *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kurier*, has been described by experts as the exact scenario according to which Russia prepared the conflict in Ukraine. Gerasimov wrote that Russia was behind the times and had to master a new way of waging war – that is, hybrid war – and that it must not just be able to counter but also exploit war to its own benefit. Hybrid war must be seen not just as a threat but also as an opportunity. Gerasimov further noted that hybrid warfare blurred the boundary between war and peace, and that the importance of non-military (political, information, economic, social and psychological[8]) instruments was growing, as they play significant roles in all phases of a conflict. Russia had to develop the ability to promote its political will via soft power. It had to develop capacities to counter special operations that might be waged against the country: terrorist and cyberattacks, sabotage operations, disinformation[9] campaigns contesting its narratives and values and propaganda promoting the adversary's own narrative – this is the struggle for the minds of the people[10] [cf. Banasik 2015:20; Kovanič 2017:123]. Gerasimov also discussed the deployment of special and irregular units under the pretence of regulating the crisis to protect the successes achieved in the conflict. An overall shift in Russian strategic thinking was required, Gerasimov argued: from directly destroying the enemy to disintegrating it internally. Last but not least, the West was to be permanently accused of leading a hybrid war against Russia. Also described as the Gerasimov doctrine, this shift in Russian strategic thinking reflected the Russian experience in the period since 2000, including hybrid threats [see Gerasimov 2013; cf. Konyshev and Parfenov 2019].

Hybrid threats are not necessarily immediately apparent and are able to weaken the enemy's system in the long term, preparing grounds for its collapse once a conventional war is launched. Following the so-called Gerasimov doctrine, the security

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such as USAID, the International Republican Institute, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, Freedom House and many other governmental and non-governmental organisations – the Open Society Institute has been frequently mentioned – have been alleged to be involved in pro-Western regime change or simply in destabilising the situation in these countries [Bastl 2015:2].

[8] These are often described using the abbreviation PMESII (political, military, economic, social, informational, infrastructure) [cf. Kurfürst 2022:13].

[9] Disinformation can be defined as delusive or false information aiming to influence the judgments and opinions of an individual, a group of people or an entire society. There is a semantic overlap with terms such as fake news, hoaxes and conspiracy theories [Nutil 2018:18; cf. Ftorek 2017:151–152; Smolík 2019:183].

[10] Propaganda primarily appeals to feelings and prejudices, not to reason. Propaganda does not employ only disinformation, it also works with truths and half-truths, or suppresses information [Kovanič 2017:123, Smolík 2019:177].

situation in Central and Eastern Europe changed rapidly. Disinformation websites promoting false narratives became more powerful, and conspiracy theories disseminated Russian propaganda with the aim of questioning Western values and disrupting the unity of NATO and EU countries [for more detail, see Ftorek 2017:182–185]. The Prague Security Studies Institute noted that there were more than a hundred active websites spreading Russian propaganda in Czechia. Various 'patriotic' and 'militia' groups were established, informed by Russian propaganda ideas. The dangers of these groups were revealed in their prosecution in Czechia; in 2021, there were large-scale arrests among the members of these 'militias', which were involved in sending people to eastern Ukraine where they were to be involved on the side of the pro-Russian insurgents. Political forces on the fringes of the political spectrum were also mobilised to support the ethnic separatist groups. There were attempts to influence referendums and elections in Central and Eastern Europe. Though Russian subversive activities have been apparent in Czechia throughout the country's independence, once the Russo-Ukrainian conflict started, Russian trolling was ramped up massively. This is an art of war on social networks, also supporting paramilitary groups in Czechia. Further components of this hybrid war include hacking (cyber) attacks[11] and the establishment of pro-Russian (disinformation) websites [cf. Banasik 2015:19].

Defining hybrid warfare, hybrid war and hybrid threat

Over the past few years, the terms 'hybrid war', 'hybrid conduct of war' and 'hybrid threat' have become established not just in official documents, but in expert and non-expert vocabularies alike. Yet, there is mounting academic criticism of the 'hybrid war' concept, and among the practitioners who use these terms or work at institutions that deal with the problem of hybrid war at least nominally, strong advocates of the concept are difficult to find [Bahenský 2018:90]. The hybrid war concept is criticised for its unclear boundaries and many indicators, which are often used by researchers arbitrarily [Pavlíková and Hanzelka 2019].

Although there is currently no precise conceptualisation or agreement, it is evident that ideas connected with 'hybrid war' do influence military strategies, and are often articulated in strategic documents of the state. Bahenský considers this

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[11] The typical forms of cyberattack include distributed denial of service (DDoS) attacks. These aim to disrupt the targeted system or network by overwhelming its servers. Ransomware attacks are another threat, in which attackers target data on computer hard drives or encrypt them and condition their unlocking on the payment of a ransom (typically in a cryptocurrency) [Stojar et al. 2010:44].

situation one of pragmatism among the institutions and the various authors,[12] in the context of what has been called the hybrid war paradox [Bahenský 2018].

The new arrangement of the state and the instruments of power it uses to bolster its own interests in recent years have revolved around the so-called 'hybrid rule', that is, a more expansive character of the state formation that privatises some originally purely state activities to strengthen its power. This approach sheds new light on the evolving relations between the public and private sectors and determines the changing nature of power and political authority in the 21st century [Shelley 2015].

The various approaches that came to be included in the idea of hybrid warfare, chiefly elements of indirect strategy and proxy fighters, began to be developed in the 1960s. After the Cold War, there was a period when the doctrine of information operations was developed. For a long time, this covered psychological operations, military deception, electronic warfare and operations involving computer networks [Bastl 2015:2, Banasik 2015:21, Bahenský 2018:95, MO ČR 2011:114]. Discussing the development of information technologies (social networks, the internet, mass media), some authors have used the term 'information warfare' [Ftorek 2017, Řehka 2017].

In the past two decades, a new perspective for understanding the phenomenon of hybrid warfare has been subject to intense discussion in the security community, with Hoffman and Mattis describing hybrid war as a new phenomenon that could potentially become the new standard [Hoffman and Mattis 2005]. However, their approach has been criticised by many experts, who argued that the essential objectives, causes (the political background), principles and premises for the conduct of war remain the same, and it is only the character of the means – that is, the instruments used – that changes. The earlier work of Carl von Clausewitz, the eminent military theoretician,[13] has also been re-assessed; Clausewitz famously argued that war is a continuation of politics by other means [Clausewitz 1996:36, cf. Suchý 2012:14, Banasik 2015:20].

The global security community today does not agree on universal definitions of hybrid war, hybrid threat[14] or hybrid warfare, and there is no binding definition used by Czech experts either.

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[12] In Czechia, experts who critically reflected on the concept of hybrid war included Zůna [2010], Stojar [2017] and Bastl [2015].

[13] Clausewitz's thought was influenced by Machiavelli, among others. Machiavelli argued that war was an instrument of politics and cannot be separated from it. Clausewitz defined war as a relationship between aims and means. The aim of every war is clear in theory, says Clausewitz, but achieving it in practice is much more difficult. War is an act of violence intended to force the enemy to subject itself to our will. If war is an instrument of politics, then fighting is the (sole) means of war. The aim can be achieved by the elimination or destruction of the enemy's fighting force, territory and will [Nastoupil 2000:5-7; Stojar 2008:67; Ftorek 2017:167].

[14] Frank Hoffman [2009] defined a hybrid threat as 'any adversary that simultaneously and adaptively employs a fused mix of conventional weapons, irregular tactics, terrorism and criminal behaviour in the battle space to obtain their political objectives'.

Presently, a large number of competing definitions and concepts (often with similar contents) are used: mixed war, non-linear war, rebellious war[15], fourth-generation war[16], war of the new generation, post-industrial war, asymmetric war, guerrilla warfare strategy[17], active measures and information warfare [Banasik 2015:19, Bastl 2008:222, Pavlíková & Hanzelka 2019:111–113].

The variety of the concepts and their definitions depends on how they are used and the referenced security object. We will describe some definitions that have proved inspiring in Czechia and NATO; considering the Czech membership of the alliance, it is logical that they resonate strongly among Czechs.

Frank Hoffman, a research fellow at the Center for Emerging Threats and Opportunities at the Marine Corps Combat Development Command in the US, argued that 'hybrid wars incorporate a range of different modes of warfare, including conventional capabilities, irregular tactics and formations, terrorist acts including indiscriminate violence and coercion, and criminal disorder.' [Hoffman 2007:14, cf. Stojar 2017:46–48, Bastl 2015:2].

Security analyst Martin Bastl [2015] has defined hybrid war as a 'graduated employment of available instruments, from influencing and pressure in the spheres of culture, politics and the economy, to the military.' The purpose is an effective combination that will lead to the coercively effective (cheap) achievement of the strategic objectives. Hybrid war is a term describing the phase in which the conflict has gone beyond a political dispute; violence is present, but it has not yet developed into a full conventional war. It has also been defined as low-intensity conflict.[18]

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[15] The theory of rebellious war formulated by Jewgenij Messner was a prototype for the concept of hybrid war. It presented the blurring of differences between a state of war and peace, between regular and irregular actions. According to the Russian strategist, in the so-called rebellious wars, irregular action such as sabotage, terror, guerrilla action and uprising was the basic form of action [Banasik 2015:22].

[16] Typical characteristics of fourth-generation war include: psychological warfare, direct attacks on the enemy culture (systems of standards and values, social cohesion and so on) and terrorism. The actors are often non-state or transnational entities, not linked to a specific territory. Fourth-generation wars are asymmetric, to the extent that this asymmetry is conditioned historically. They develop following the transitional period when the legitimate use of force was the exclusive domain of states, so they are not oriented towards state structures. They also feature different models of organisation, in particular the network model (devised by John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt), which may be and often is more efficient for conducting this type of conflict than the old, strategic structures, in particular, the organisation of the central type, which by definition was characteristic of traditional war. Also, in this type of conflict, a greater emphasis is placed on knowledge and the exploitation of soft power [Bastl 2008:225; cf. Řehka 2017:44–45].

[17] A guerrilla strategy depends on avoiding direct confrontation; though it mainly targets the adversary's armed forces, the aim is not their destruction but disruption of the adversary's will to continue fighting, tiring out the adversary and subverting his morale [Bastl 2008:223].

[18] Low-intensity conflicts can take very varied forms: revolutionary war, guerrilla activity, insurgency, terrorist attacks and all kinds of clandestine operations. The means change according

The US Army defines the term 'hybrid threat' as follows: 'A hybrid threat is the diverse and dynamic combination of regular forces, irregular forces, terrorists, or criminal elements acting in concert to achieve mutually benefitting effects' [Army Doctrine Publication ADP 3-0 Operations 2019].

For NATO, hybrid threat encompasses a broad range of overt and clandestine military, paramilitary and civilian instruments, incorporated in a highly integrated design. Its terminological dictionary (NATO Glossary of Terms and Definitions – English and French) defines hybrid threat as 'a type of threat that combines conventional, irregular and asymmetric activities in time and space' [NATO AAP-06 – Edition 2020].

Beyond these, current security terminology also employs terms such as hybrid fighting, hybrid operation, hybrid tactics and hybrid countertactics. Although hybrid warfare is principally different from the traditional ways of conducting combat, warfare and other activities, its essence as discussed in the literature is that it is a borderline activity, in which various combat activities may be combined or blended. These may include conventional war (symmetric war), asymmetric war (asymmetric conflict[19]), irregular war, sabotage, enemy propaganda, civil war, resistance movements, terrorism and guerrilla war [Schröfl 2011; Konyshev and Parfenov 2019].

Czech use of the concepts connected with 'hybrid' issues

It is important for our chapter how some of the ideas discussed above are dealt with in the Czech context. The concepts of hybrid warfare, hybrid way of conducting a conflict, hybrid campaign and hybrid strategy can essentially be understood as synonymous. In the interests of succinctness and brevity, the National Security Audit (2016) mainly uses the term 'hybrid campaign' [cf. Bahenský 2018], the definition of which is based on NATO's 'Strategy for countering hybrid warfare' (2015). The National Security Audit noted that this primarily covers the ways of waging confrontation/conflict, i.e., a broad, comprehensive, adaptive and integrated combination of conventional and non-conventional means, overt and concealed activities having the character of coercion and subversion, which are undertaken by military, paramilitary and various civilian actors. When a hybrid campaign is waged, it is a combination of a number of classic tools with the aim of exploiting

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to the character, will and number of those who employ them. This might be small clandestine groups, and can include superpowers, urban guerrillas, revolutionary armies and medium-importance states. The aims of these various actors are very different [Nastoupil 2000:22].

   [19] Asymmetric conflict involves adversaries whose means, tactics and strategies are similar or identical, but they strongly, even fundamentally differ in their military potentials – one of the adversaries is much stronger than the other [Bastl 2008:216].

the weaknesses of the adversary; a suitable environment and situation is sought so that the political responsibility for these hybrid activities cannot be unambiguously attributed. The attacker seeks to maintain his activities below the threshold of armed aggression, so that his actions do not contravene international law. The spectrum of classic instruments that can form part of a hybrid campaign are described using the acronym DIMEFIL (diplomatic, information, military, economic, financial, intelligence and law enforcement):

D) Diplomatic – the exercise of influence and pressure by the words and actions of official representatives

I) Information – mass media, social networks[20] and others means of disseminating information, used for manipulation and including disinformation campaigns and propaganda

M) Military – the overt use of military force or various forms of demonstrative military presence and readiness, or the direct combat use of small groups and individuals with the aim of infiltrating the target militarily

E) Economic – exerting various forms of economic pressure (imposing tariffs, embargos, denying supplies of raw materials or energy, blocking the use of traffic routes, destabilising key branches of industry, enterprises and suchlike)

F) Financial – destabilising the currency, stock and bond markets and the banking sector, influencing crucial financial institutions

I) Intelligence – activities of intelligence services, espionage, recruiting collaborators (especially state or political officials) for anti-state activities

L) Law enforcement – use of various subversive activities to attack the values, legal and other aspects of social structure, for example by inciting disturbances in the target country by exploiting ethnic, religious or social fissures in society, or by using a broad gamut of terrorist attacks and other criminal methods, for example, kidnapping, blackmail and intimidation.

Russia has demonstrated a developed hybrid campaign model in the conflict with Ukraine. One of its climaxes was the annexation of Crimea in 2014, and another important aspect has been the attempt to freeze the conflict in eastern Ukraine through a special operation ostensibly aimed at de-Nazifying and de-militarising Ukraine. Russia has waged this campaign using various methods and forms of coercion, and the campaign has been highly coordinated in the long-term. We must also consider the fact that Russia is a nuclear power [Audit národní bezpečnosti 2016:127–128; cf. Kurfürst 2022:13–14].

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[20] Social networks are seen as a suitable instrument and platform for conducting information operations by both state and non-state actors. The main social networks are Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, TikTok and Clubhouse [Stojar et al. 2022:46].

How does NATO counter hybrid threats and increase its resilience?

Hybrid actions[21] and attacks often target the weakest link or the allied nations with specific vulnerabilities. NATO has made some progress in countering these threats. Its Allied Command Transformation (ACT) conducted a thorough analysis of the security environment, and in August 2010 published the first draft of the important conceptual document, *Military Contribution to Countering Hybrid Threats (MCCHT)* that addresses a number of problems and security challenges that might impact on NATO and the broader international community over the following two decades. NATO leaders expected that the new MCCHT concept would mean an important shift and contribution to counter hybrid threats, but this has not been the case in practice. The follow-up documents were the 2010 *New NATO Capstone Concept for the Military Contribution to Countering Hybrid Threats* and the *NATO Information Operations Reference Book.*

In 2016, allies recognised cyberspace as another operational domain. In 2018, specific Counter Hybrid Support Teams (CHST) were created, providing assistance to allies during peacetime. In November 2019, NATO adopted a report on strengthening the alliance response to hybrid threats, which outlines the priorities and the programme for fighting them. Despite this progress, NATO needs a joint political framework for the assessment and response to hybrid and cyberspace incidents in a crisis. Lengthy political discussions about attribution and on how and if NATO should respond to concealed security threats increases the risk of unintentional escalation by potential adversaries [NATO 2030: United for New Era – Analysis and Recommendations of the Reflection Group Appointed by the NATO Secretary General, 2020:45–46].

In general, NATO's approach to hybrid threats and actions should include: intelligence and information; the options of civil-military response; strategic communication; support to allies; resilience; cyber defence; training and education; and cooperation with partners and the EU. The aim of hybrid action in recent years – in particular the Russian invasion of Ukraine – has been fundamentally to polarise the West and destabilise the institutional coherence of the alliance, and hence comprehensively to weaken its capabilities, and, in contrast, to promote Russia's own interests. This implies that the structural arrangements and the use of the various instruments of power against potential opponents need to change, from hard power and soft power to smart power and sharp power.

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[21] Hybrid actions are concerned with information and influence, seeking to change the behaviours and positions of the key target groups, whether they be the general public, political leaders or the media [Divišová 2022:48].

Hybrid warfare methods, such as propaganda, deception, sabotage and other non-military tactics, have long been used to destabilise adversaries. What is new about these attacks in recent years is their speed, extent and intensity, allowed by rapid technological development and global interconnection. NATO has a strategy concerning its role in countering hybrid warfare and is ready to defend the alliance and its allies against any threat, be it conventional or hybrid. The following points must be noted in this context:

- The primary responsibility for responding to hybrid threats or attacks lies with the target country.
- NATO is ready to aid any ally against hybrid threats in the framework of collective defence. The alliance has developed a strategy for its role in combatting hybrid warfare, to help countries in countering these threats.
- In July 2018, NATO leaders agreed to create Counter Hybrid Support Teams, providing upon request by allies targeted assistance in preparing and responding to hybrid activities.
- NATO is bolstering its coordination with partners, including the EU, in an effort to counter hybrid threats.
- NATO's Joint Intelligence and Security Division has a hybrid analytical branch that helps to improve situational awareness.

The alliance is actively fighting propaganda – not with propaganda but with facts – online, in broadcasting and in the press.

NATO cannot face hybrid threats alone. Cooperation with partners, especially with the EU, is necessary to increase resilience to hybrid threats. The alliance continues to strengthen cooperation and coordination with such partners as Finland, Sweden and Ukraine. In an attempt at ever-closer collaboration between NATO and the EU, joint work has been improved in resolving hybrid threats, with a particular focus on fighting cyberattacks. NATO also cooperates with partners in the Asia-Pacific region to exchange information about national approaches to fighting hybrid threats such as disinformation and cyberattacks. This proved particularly valuable in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Centres of Excellence also play an important role, as they provide NATO with expert knowledge on hybrid issues. These are international research centres financed nationally or supranationally. Located in Helsinki, Finland, the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats provides expertise and helps the countries involved to improve their civil-military capabilities, resilience and readiness to counter hybrid threats. It was inaugurated in October 2017 by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg together with European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission Federica Mogherini. An initiative of the Finnish government, the centre is supported by 27 other countries and by NATO and the EU. Other Centres of Excellence

are contributing to the NATO efforts in countering hybrid threats: the Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence in Riga, Latvia; the Cooperative Cyber-Defence Centre of Excellence in Tallinn, Estonia; and the Energy Security Centre of Excellence in Vilnius, Lithuania.

Response of departments responsible for Czech security policy to hybrid threats

The hybrid-threat problem first started to be dealt with in Czechia in connection with the wars in the Middle East, in particular in Iraq and Syria, and subsequently, from 2014, in connection with the Russo-Ukrainian conflict.[22] This latter conflict is an example of a war pursued in a hybrid manner, including the 'special military operation' with the proclaimed objective of 'de-Nazifying and de-militarising Ukraine'. Gradually, it has become apparent that a broader gamut of attacks – including cyber-attacks, disinformation, propaganda and psychological operations[23] – were being tried out in this conflict, with the aim of instilling fear in Ukrainians and undermining their will to defend themselves; the 40-km-long Russian column, slowly moving military equipment towards the Ukrainian border, much featured in the media, was part of this effort. What was not initially clear to the Czech security community was how this Russo-Ukrainian conflict would affect Czech security policy.

States that seek options for defence against hybrid threats inevitably will not avoid discussion of their entire security systems and security policy. An adequate defence response to the variants of hybrid warfare must be coordinated across all

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[22] From the start of the war in Ukraine in 2014, Czech experts and, gradually, journalists and the general public too, have noted the activism of pro-Russian and anti-Western narratives in the public domain. In addition to domestic apologists for the Crimea annexation, disinformation websites emerged that intensively disseminated content inimical to NATO, the EU and US [Kurfürst 2022:34].

[23] Psychological operations (PSYOP) are part of the psychological dimension of war, focused on influencing the psychic state of the adversary [Ftorek and Kovařík 2013:45–49]. The aim of psychological warfare is to weaken the enemy's will to resist and his fighting capabilities. One of the main instruments is a propaganda campaign, which can be advantageously unleashed before the start of hostilities, yet conducted during the war itself. The purpose of a propaganda campaign is two-fold: to bolster one's own internal and external forces and weaken the enemy forces. Propaganda campaigns generally employ a combination of true information and disinformation. Disinformation campaigns may be effective in the short term, but in the long term, they are associated with the risk of being uncovered as false as events develop. Propaganda targets people's feelings, seeking to affect pleasant and unpleasant emotions, promise rewards or threaten punishment, and arouse feelings of insecurity and confusion. It focuses on those areas that are dearest to humans: family, property, country and freedom [Nastoupil 2000:55–56]. Some authors have argued that in the mass-media age (including social networks), psychological war, with its individual psychological operations, will increasingly replace military war [cf. Galatík 2008:23].

elements of the security system, as the various means of this warfare cannot fall under the purview of a single department, but, rather, inter-departmental cooperation is required to counter these threats. The response to a number of hybrid threats requires a broader coordination among the institutions and elements of the security system, and sometimes more broadly across the public administration and civil service. Whether inter-departmental and broader collaboration is functional or not is usually a reflection of the state of the entire security system, which ought adequately to respond, and do so in a coordinated manner, according to the form of the hybrid warfare being countered.

Hybrid action undertaken by Russia in Czechia has concerned many areas, including:

- Political operations (interventions in debates concerned with sanctions against Russia, efforts to polarise politics etc.)
- Diplomatic operations (the allegation that the Novichok nerve agent was manufactured in Czechia)
- Intelligence activities (deployment of Russian agents in Czechia under the cover of its diplomatic mission)
- Projection of force and intimidation (for example, manipulative and disinformation websites which reported about new Russian weapons, the readiness of the Russian army in the context of military exercises etc.)
- Information operations (activities on disinformation websites and social networks aiming to damage trust in the Czech state)
- Cyber operations (cyber assaults, most often DDoS attacks, cyber espionage etc.)
- Economic operations (concerned with mineral resources, but also business activities in Czechia)
- Support for protest movements (in the context of Russian organizations active in Czechia, as well as in support of particular events – e.g., the rides of the Night Wolves motorbike gang and anti-government and anti-migration rallies)
- Lawfare (interpretation of certain narratives, mainly on disinformation websites, focused on international law and international relations) [Kurfürst 2022: 34–36; cf. Pavlíková and Hanzelka 2019: 109].

The Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which dedicates itself mainly to bringing information from abroad and communication with foreign countries, but is not primarily responsible for the security of the state, is aware of the changing security situation in the context of the hybrid warfare methods noted above. The Ministry responded to the issue in its role of administrator of Czech Security Strategy, initiating a review of the document in 2015. Thanks to this, the Strategy featured asymmetric combat, new forms of terrorism and the necessity to build up the resilience of the state for the first time, ushering in a transformation of Czech security policy. At

the time, various branches of the Czech state hesitated in their response to the new phenomenon of hybrid warfare, in part because of its ambiguity and in part because it overlapped the purviews of the various institutions and elements of the security system, exacerbated by the historical departmentalization of the Czech security system. Although the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the administrator of the Czech Security Strategy document, this role was assigned to it without a rational foundation, and not in a systemic fashion; the Ministry does not coordinate Czech security policy. The practice is that there is administrative responsibility for the document, and for the policy which the document addresses (this lies with the government), and these are connected vessels. Unsurprisingly, then, the Foreign Affairs Ministry initiated a review of the Security Strategy, and this was generally quite successful. By doing this, the Ministry fulfilled its role of the administrator of the document. Logically, it then expected that the revised Security Strategy would be implemented in the state's internal security, military defence, cybersecurity and intelligence services by other departments. For the intelligence services, the hybrid (mixed) character of threats came as a natural phenomenon, and this is probably why they understood its seriousness best of all the agencies. But given that the Czech intelligence services do not have executive powers (with the exception of the area of provisioning the defence of the state in cyberspace, grounded legislatively only by a 2021 amendment of the Military Intelligence Act), they likewise did not consider themselves qualified to recommend the executive the steps they ought to take in response to hybrid threats.

At the time, the Ministry of Defence (MoD), not least thanks to the Czech membership of NATO, had perhaps the best awareness of the nature of hybrid warfare and the character of hybrid threats. However, the ministry's focus on the military aspects of state security were the reason why it could not address hybrid threats, which are primarily of non-military character. The ministry had neither the capacities nor the know-how to cover the entire palette of the various types of hybrid threat. The MoD, therefore, did not feel responsible for coordinating the response to hybrid threats on its own initiative. The National Security Authority – and the National Cyber and Information Security Agency, later spun off from the former – had their purview limited by law to cybersecurity only. These agencies therefore did not feel called upon to deal with hybrid threats, the gamut of which were in many respects beyond their competence. The Government Office at the time had a defence and security branch (with sections responsible for the agenda of the secretariat of the National Security Council, coordination of intelligence services and internal security at the Government Office). But, again, even this office, as a supra-departmental body, did not believe it was its task to coordinate national security policy and referred to the fact that no such task was assigned to it in the Responsibilities Act. The fact is that the office had neither the necessary human resources nor the corresponding know-how to deal with hybrid threats.

The Ministry of the Interior has traditionally dealt only with issues of public administration and domestic security, and in 2015 focused on resolving the migration crisis, protecting the borders, radicalism in society and policies concerned with disinformation campaigns. Closely linked with this was concern about disruptions to domestic security, in particular by terrorist attacks and threats. There was apprehension about a potential wave of migration from Ukraine, which did not take place; ultimately it was the South/Middle East that was deemed to be the main source of migration. At this time, the Interior Ministry was confronted with issues in public and political discourse, as the issue of the migration crisis was often exploited by some xenophobic politicians and parties. There was also manipulation on social networks, with disinformation frequently posted by pro-Russian propagandists [cf. Kovanič 2017: 125–129]. It is no wonder that anti-democratic opinions and positions were disseminated too, masked as a political 'alternative'.[24] The Ministry gradually realised that the nature of hybrid threats had a strong informational dimension (for example, in the form of disinformation campaigns, conspiracy theories and propaganda, and including psychological operations), and that the malevolent actors spreading this material sought to exert influence in various areas, including the media, and affect cybersecurity and foreign policy – i.e., provinces that did not fall under the purview of the Interior Ministry. Nor did the agencies under the ministry, that is, the police and the fire rescue service, come into consideration as investigators of hybrid threats.

The political leadership of the Ministry of Defence felt in 2015 that these were not ordinary security threats,[25] believing that the problem was rather with their interpretation in the media, politics and on-line, including information with influence on society serving the interests of a foreign state power. Yet, as the ministry solely responsible for domestic security, the MoD was not motivated to initiate wholesale change in national security policy. Thus, all of the Czech ministries and branches, in the way described above, due to the departmentalisation that was so strongly rooted in the Czech security system, showed unwillingness to take on a new role implied by the new hybrid threats. The situation in most European countries, that

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[24] Income from sales of advertising is another major reason for the dissemination of disinformation, conspiracy theories and shocking news. This issue does not concern only pro-Russian websites, but also some sensationalist – and, unfortunately, even serious – websites [cf. Kovanič 2017:130].

[25] The MoD defined the security threats that might be hurtful to Czech interests connected with security and defence in the White Paper on Defence [2011]. This document identified the following security threats, among others: political extremism and its manifestation (mainly terrorism), the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, cyberattacks, disruptions to key infrastructure (communications, transport and energy), interruptions to the supply of strategic raw materials, mass illegal migration, organised crime, natural disasters and industrial accidents [for more detail, see MO ČR 2011: 39–40].

could at the time serve as an example for Czechia, showed quite clearly that the issue of hybrid threats was naturally understood as a strongly interdepartmental affair, whose coordination was entrusted to the ministries of defence or foreign affairs or the government office of the country in question. On the other hand, the Czech government did not send out a clear signal that the situation was serious and that it expected proposals from the various ministries and branches as to how to respond to hybrid threats. Thus, the situation was addressed merely by changes in the text of the Czech Security Strategy (2015), without this spelling a change in the actual national security policy [Vangeli 2021:203–205].

The Ministry of the Interior differed from the other departments and branches in that it was willing to take on the work linked with initiating and coordinating a response to hybrid threats, and ultimately, on the initiative of the interior minister at the time (Milan Chovanec, ČSSD), the prime minister (Bohuslav Sobotka, ČSSD) asked for an interdepartmental audit of national security policy, which was to analyse the situation and propose recommendations. The purpose of the audit was to verify the state's capability to identify particular threats, take preventative measures against them and respond to security crises as they arise. Each of the audit's chapters was to pay attention to functional legislation, sufficiency of capacities to overcome the threat, and the state's ability to identify and counter it in a timely manner. The audit was to assess whether the security system[26] was able to respond to topical threats, whether its various branches were able to communicate and cooperate, and whether all entities and stakeholders were adequately involved.

Although not representative of all threats, the ten that were investigated in the audit were serious enough to significantly damage domestic security. Each chapter had its own specially convened interdepartmental working group; about 120 governmental, and several external, experts worked on the audit. The investigators evaluated the security situation in Europe overall and came to the unequivocal conclusion that it had deteriorated. They found that the strong wave of migration faced by Europe had a number of impacts, some with security implications; that the number of terrorist attacks in the EU had increased significantly; that there was growing radicalisation among populist and xenophobic groups, which in turn might cause individual radicalisation and violent extremism, but that might equally radicalise the majority in society; and that the ability to dampen the threat of radicalisation

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[26] The Czech security system is constituted by the corresponding elements of the legislature, executive, judiciary and local government, as well as the legal and natural persons responsible for ensuring Czech security. The structure of the security system encompasses in particular the president, parliament, government, the National Security Council (BRS) and its working groups, the central administrative authorities, regional and district authorities and their executive crisis management bodies, as well as the armed forces, security forces, intelligence agencies and rescue and emergency services [Mareš 2010:40].

by democratic means was limited [cf. Danics et al. 2022]. The authors pointed out that an armed conflict had erupted in Europe after two decades, and that Russia had annexed Crimea (2014) – that is, seized territory from the sovereign Ukrainian state – and was supporting various paramilitary groups and pro-Kremlin extremist movements, which sought to project influence.

The document noted that the current security situation was generating not just classic threats, but also new threats, which were closely linked with information warfare and cybersecurity, and had secondary impacts (including psychological, political, economic and social impacts), and that this was fully true of terrorism as well. Last but not least, it was emphasised that many security threats were inter-linked, and that these connections were not fortuitous, but in the interests of for-eign powers. The audit noted the domestic aspects impinging on foreign powers' ability to influence the situation: weak public resilience to influencing operations and efforts to undermine trust in democracy and the rule of law; poor civic and media literacy; weak resistance on the part of civil servants and politicians to the exertion of influence and intelligence collection, including cyber resilience; the activities of businesses, various entities and people openly advocating the interests of foreign powers; and the state's lack of systemic instruments to counter disinfor-mation campaigns.

All the recommendations by the expert working groups were relayed to the Coordination Committee, which assessed and approved them. It was noted that most threats could be resolved most effectively using an e-government model, which would improve communications within the security system. The conclusions of the audit were discussed at the National Security Council and adopted by the Czech government in December 2016.

Above all, the audit's crucial finding was that the security situation, which had objectively deteriorated, demanded a response. An unwillingness and inability to implement responses to the worsened security situation were found to be the main weaknesses of the Czech state. Some chapters stated explicitly that there was a lack of capacity to deal with the threats; for example, the influence of foreign powers and the hybrid campaigns being waged and their impact on the security of Czech citizens. In this regard, it was also noted that there was a need for better coordina-tion of the various elements within the security system, and greater involvement of the social, economic, legal and political components of civil society. Resilient communications among public authorities were described as decisive in managing a quick response, irrespective of the type of threat. The audit found that some topics (security education, improving civic and media literacy) had to be added to edu-cation curricula. The security system needed more support and development. The audit noted that in a number of areas the effectiveness of the security system was satisfactory, but at the same time highlighted a crucial finding: the system's capacity

to evaluate and respond to complex linkages of threats was insufficient. To improve resilience, the audit recommended defining a Czech strategic approach to counter a hybrid campaign waged against Czechia or another NATO or EU country. It was suggested that this strategic approach could become part of an updated National Security Strategy or be a stand-alone strategy white paper. In conceiving this strategic approach to counter a hybrid campaign, the Czechs should seek international cooperation, especially in the EU and NATO [Audit národní bezpečnosti 2016].

The National Security Audit noted that the assessment of potential threats to Czechia from hybrid actions, in the light of the current instruments and capacities of the institutions in the security system, does not lead to any alarming conclusions. Legislation and the specific operational instruments of the various institutions were also deemed adequate. Despite this, Czechia had some deficiencies in terms of efficiently countering hybrid threats. Here the audit made a number of crucial specific recommendations, which ought to be understood as laying the foundations of our counter-hybrid security policy, as they had potentially systemic impacts on Czech resilience (in terms of collaboration among various departments, joint exercises – e.g., to counter cyberattacks – and coordination with partners abroad).

The concept of 'societal resilience' was devised by the Copenhagen School. Rather than studying the decreased risk of a large-scale armed conflict, in the 1990s the Copenhagen School investigated the threat of terrorism and other dangers within the state. The concept of societal resilience did not associate security primarily with protecting the state's territory, but with ensuring a functional society. From this perspective, it was crucial that society be able to overcome a crisis created by domestic threats as soon as possible, and to return to a standard mode of functioning. In this approach to security, non-state actors – that is, the economic, social and political segments of civil society – play a very important role. Not only are they able to offer means and capacities to achieve societal resilience that state authorities do not have; they can also participate in identifying potential threats. The Copenhagen School scholars do not see the threats as objectively given, but as a construct, i.e., a result of public discussion. In other words, what today is seen as a non-problematic social phenomenon, might tomorrow be perceived as a threat demanding an appropriate response. And it is precisely civil initiatives or private firms that can be the non-state actors that point out this threat in the public discussion, before it is noticed by state institutions. Thanks to its ability to reflect a broad spectrum of real and potential threats and the involvement in threat assessment of new non-state actors, the concept of societal resilience came to be understood as an ideal theoretical framework for hybrid threats and the response to them. Furthermore, well-functioning collaboration between state and non-state actors provides a means not just to counter hybrid threats more efficiently, but also to prevent them [Yanakiev, Dimov and Bachvarov 2018: 77–89].

On the basis of the public National Security Audit, government resolution no. 407 dated 22 May 2017 approved a non-public Action Plan accompanying the audit, which developed the particular tasks for administrators and the dates by which they would be achieved. The discharge of these tasks is assessed annually and reported to the government [Vláda ČR 2017].

Creating Czech capacities for dealing with hybrid threats and coordination

One of the key recommendation of the audit was to establish workplaces at the relevant institutions to evaluate terrorism, various forms of radicalisation, influence and disinformation campaign, and other manifestations of influence by foreign powers (consider the Vrbětice affair).[27] Following this recommendation, so far only one such workplace has been created, namely, the Centre Against Terrorism and Hybrid Threats at the Ministry of the Interior, opened on 1 January 2017 with Benedikt Vangeli as director.

Initially, the centre was to monitor threats directly connected with domestic security, and this envisaged a rather broad gamut of threats and potential incidents in areas such as terrorism, attacks on soft targets and the security aspects of migration, extremism, mass events, disturbing the peace and various crimes, but also disinformation campaigns if related to domestic security. On the basis of this monitoring, the centre was to evaluate the problems detected and propose substantial and legislative solutions, and if needed implement them. It was also expected to disseminate expert information and raise public awareness of such problems [cf. Kovanič 2017: 121]. However, the agenda of fighting terrorism and protecting soft targets remains in the purview of the Security Policy branch of the Ministry of the Interior.

New workplaces have also been created that were not part of the audit's recommendations but are important for dealing with hybrid threats. One is the National Cyber and Information Security Agency (NÚKIB), which was spun off from the National Security Authority (NBÚ). The NÚKIB is the central administrative authority for cybersecurity including protection of classified information in the field of information and communication systems and cryptographic protection. It is also responsible for the publicly regulated service within the Galileo satellite system. The agency was created on 1 August 2017 under Act No. 205/2017 Coll., which amended Act No. 181/2014 Coll. on Cyber Security and Change of Related Acts (the Act on Cyber Security). The

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[27] This concerned explosions in munitions depots in Vrbětice municipality 2014. In 2021, Czech security authorities uncovered the involvement of agents of GRU, the Russian military intelligence. This finding inspired diplomatic retaliation (mutual reductions in the diplomatic corps) and a deterioration in Czech-Russian relations.

director of the agency regularly participates in the meetings of the National Security Council (BRS) and is a member of the Cyber Security Committee, a standing BRS committee for planning measures to ensure cybersecurity in Czechia.

The NÚKIB has an executive branch, the National Cyber Security Centre, which provides the following:

- The activities of the Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT) (GovCERT.CZ)
- Prevention of cyber threats to critical infrastructure elements, basic service information systems, important information systems and selected public administration information systems
- Resolution of and coordination of resolutions of cybersecurity incidents at critical infrastructure entities, operators of basic services and public administration bodies
- Awareness and educational activities concerning cybersecurity
- Cooperation with national and international organisations that participate in securing cyberspace
- Organising and participating in cybersecurity exercises at the national and international level
- Cybersecurity research and development
- Representing the Czech Republic in cooperation with the Director's Office at international organisations active in cybersecurity
- Evaluating cybersecurity risks and taking the appropriate corrective and preventive measures
- Fulfilling international obligations and cooperating at the international level in implementing regulations stemming from Czech membership of NATO, the EU, and other international organisations within its jurisdiction as part of the NÚKIB's security policy
- Defining the NÚKIB's cybersecurity communication strategy in cooperation with other organisational units at the agency [nukib.cz]

The decision on 1 July 2019 to create a Cyber Forces and Information Operations Command within the Armed Forces of the Czech Republic (VeKySIO) was in fulfilment of one of the conclusions of the NATO Warsaw Summit, as well as a response to the emergence of a new cyber operations space of the alliance. At this time, hybrid activities and threats by state and non-state actors were on the increase, and they exploited cyberspace. This was also a period of response to the expansion of information instruments and the development of modern technologies in the military sphere, and the need comprehensively to interlink all the main operation domains for the efficient planning and conduct of military operations. The main task was to be active in cyber and information spaces; be included in the command of joint army operations with the aim of protecting our own forces and means in cyberspace, and supporting strategic communication and lead operational communication, whilst

facing cyber, information and hybrid threats. The Command is expected to reach full operational capacity within five years.

Closely connected with the abovementioned capacities was the audit's recommendation to create an effective coordination mechanism within the Czech security system. There is a need to create a platform for sharing information, where information can converge, on the basis of which potential hybrid campaigns may be identified. This would not necessarily mean creating a new institution; rather, it would bring together staff with the required expertise from existing institutions, and work under existing legislation. A system of early warning indicators will be created to help institutions other than the intelligence services to capture information that might help uncover ongoing hybrid campaigns. The Czech government should establish a mechanism that will be able to identify hybrid threats according to the established indicators, share information about these threats, evaluate them and propose and implement adequate measures to address them. For now, the functionality of such a mechanism could be provided by the Joint Intelligence Group and National Security Council's Intelligence Committee, but it would have to cover the entire spectrum of hybrid threats and not just terrorism, as it does at present. This is a unique mechanism where findings and information from various security forces and authorities dealing with terrorism come together, but, sadly, the other areas of security do not have such a mechanism. There is an attempt to create a coordination mechanism – an expert working group on hybrid threats at the National Security Council – in which all BRS members would be represented. Representation of the majority of ministries might be counterproductive, as such a broad community would be restricted in terms of ability to share the more sensitive information in the areas of activities by foreign powers, and in their qualification to address the threats identified. In 2021, a positive shift was achieved in the area of coordinating the response to hybrid threats, as the BRS expert working group is expected to have a new office of coordinator for hybrid threats.

The audit recommended creating a training system for civil servants, aimed at bolstering resilience to attempts at influence by foreign powers. Such a system has been created, instructors recruited and thousands of people have already been trained. Currently there is an ongoing effort to expand the training to the public administration more broadly. Another of the audit's recommendation was to offer voluntary training to people who might be objects of interest to foreign powers. So far, this recommendation has not been implemented, but it remains topical, as there have been cases of influence exerted by a foreign power at Czech universities. The audit's recommendation to conduct training on the principles of safe behaviour on the internet in state institutions has been implemented. The National Cyber and Information Security Agency has created e-learning facilities for public administration, and this training is compulsory for Czech civil servants. An important recommendation of the audit was to change the primary and secondary school curricula to improve the teaching

of civic and media literacy, including democratic values and behaviour in crisis situations under potential hybrid threats. Most active in increasing media literacy in schools are non-governmental organisations and their corresponding administrator, that is, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports.

On 16 June 2020, at the 49th session of the Chamber of Deputies, according to Article 47 of Act No. 90/1995 Coll., on the Rules of Procedure of the Chamber of Deputies, the Standing Commission on Hybrid Threats was created. Over 12 meetings, the commission met with all the relevant bodies that deal with hybrid threats. Following these meetings and in consideration of the current developments in security threats, the commission prepared a list of concrete recommendations for the present and future government. The recommendations are concerned with all areas that may directly or indirectly affect readiness for action in response to hybrid threats. Specifically, the recommendations are as follows:

- Create the post of a secretary for national security with sufficient staffing and a corresponding position in the security system. The secretary will be entrusted with coordinating supra-departmental and strategic matters to ensure efficient coordination of, and communication among, security institutions and act as an advisor to government, the National Security Council and the prime minister on security affairs.
- Propose and establish a functional system for the Czech government's coordinated strategic communication, including instruments for fighting disinformation.
- Bolster the media and civic education of pupils, students and the general public to improve critical thinking and societal resilience to the negative effects of disinformation.
- Improve the training of civil servants so that they better detect influence exerted by foreign powers, and expand this training to civil servants generally.
- Create a transparent mechanism for granting financial and non-financial support to expert bodies involved in building up media and civic literacy and fighting disinformation.
- By increasing the capacities of the relevant security forces, ensure that internet crime is rigorously suppressed.
- Increase the support of NÚKIB and other relevant state institutional capacities and the parts of the critical infrastructure crucial for cybersecurity in order to increase national cyber resilience, including support for non-state actors in this field.
- Open an expert discussion about reviewing and redefining the act on critical infrastructure in view of the current development of security threats.
- Strengthen international collaboration with NATO and EU countries in the area of security threats.

The standing commissions are advisory parliamentary bodies consisting of MPs deemed expert in the area. They issue recommendations to their colleagues in Parliament and, if necessary, provide consultations and recommendations. Czechia is located in the heart of Europe and is a favourite target of influence operations by foreign powers such as Russia and China. The main reasons why Russia continues to seek to influence the situation in Czechia are historical and geopolitical. As a legal successor to the Soviet Union, Russia fails to respect the sovereignty of neighbouring countries, in many cases continuing to see them as its satellites. This historical obsession is being expressed in an illegitimate Russian claim to Czech obedience, as the recent 'Konev affair' illustrates well. This was concerned with the decision of the Prague 6 council to remove an old statue of Soviet Marshal Konev from a square in Prague, causing a string of disinformation campaigns, cyberattacks and a number of Czech extreme-left and right civil actors moving into action. The mayor of Prague even had to be given police protection. The affair ended with the expulsion of two Russian diplomats.

The experience so far of the Czech security policy response to hybrid threats

The audit recommended that conditions be created for efficient and plausible strategic communication within government, and the creation of an active media strategy for important democratic institutions against the influence of foreign powers. Last but not least, the audit recommended that a mechanism be set up for systematic coordination among all relevant public administration actors. So far, a proposal for such a strategic communication system has not been presented to the Czech government. The MoD, which was entrusted with this interdepartmental task, has been implementing it within the department, and developing its own communication capacities. The branches of the state thus have the same instruments they had before the audit; this usually means their own press departments. Hence the strategic communication units (StratCom) have not yet been established in ministries. The entire system for coordinating Czech government communication with the public concerning hybrid threats is yet to be implemented. It is clear that if most of the recommendations by the 2016 National Security Audit were implemented, Czech security policy would be better equipped to counter hybrid threats. The lack of unified strategic communications was manifest during the Novichok affair,[28] during a number of cyberattacks against Czech hospitals, in the weak state

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[28] In 2018, Russia claimed that Novichok, the nerve agent used in the attack on former Russian agent Sergei Skripal in the United Kingdom, had been manufactured in what is now Czechia. The communicated response by Czech political leaders to this accusation was not uniform.

response to repeated waves of disinformation and foreign power propaganda during the COVID-19 pandemic, and in the pressure exerted on local government and their officials. Hybrid threats, foreign power influence and disinformation campaigns are now discussed not just by the security community, but also by the general public. People have started to pay more attention to cyber hygiene, and training is now given to civil servants to counter foreign power influence. Parliament has adopted an act on screening foreign investment in the key branches of the economy (Act No. 43/2021 Coll., On Vetting Foreign Investment).

Deeply-rooted departmentalisation is a long-term problem that has been clearly manifest during the effort to implement the various recommendations of the audit concerning hybrid threats, and in everyday security policy. The reasons for this are political, because each of the political parties in the government holds one of the 'power ministries' (these are the ministries of the interior, defence and foreign affairs). The measure of cooperation within the security system is then influenced by the measure of political will to cooperate shown by the members of the coalition government. Typically, each department and its minister are responsible for their department only, and they do not feel collective responsibility for the Czech security policy. This situation, when national security policy is addressed legislatively, institutionally and practically as a departmental problem, also influences the position of the Government Office, which can hardly coordinate the overall security policy of the government. Unfortunately, it does not have the designated human and other resources to do this, and the prime minister is hardly in a position to coordinate diverse departmental hybrid issues. Even under a crisis situation, the various ministries are often not motivated to harmonise and coordinate their approaches to achieve a synergic effect. Rather, there are often multiple competing approaches, which weaken the Czech security policy's ability to respond to security threats. In this respect, national security policy has remained unchanged, both legislatively and in terms of organisation, and often in fact cannot do much to prepare for the new reality of combined security threats. What Czechia lacks today most is an integrated and coordinated security policy in practice. Even the National Security Council is unable to ensure the coordination of Czech security policy, as it too reflects the varied partisan make-up of the government. In this platform, the same departmentalisation prevails as in the coalition government. Indeed, Czech security policy consists of a tacit consensus of the main policy administrators, who do not intervene on each other's turf as they do not seek to achieve supra-departmental coordination.

This enduring piecemeal approach to Czech security policy is the more surprising when we consider that NATO and EU countries are today strongly emphasising the need for a comprehensive security policy designed to respond to hybrid threats. Some European countries are stressing and promoting a so-called 'whole-of-society'

approach, that is, the involvement not just of the state but of all civil society in defence. Examples include the Swedish concept of total defence and the Finnish concept of comprehensive security. There is no place for departmentalism in these concepts, which are based on and assume collaboration across state and civil society branches. The example of Finland could provide a strong inspiration for Czechia. Finland has a good quality education system, yet it seeks to improve the media literacy of its citizens and increase cooperation among civil servants, politicians, journalists and business people in participating on national security policy. Finland also emphasises the importance of clear and consistent communication, and building up trust between state and citizens. Furthermore, the Finns are aware that hybrid threats cannot be seen as exclusively national phenomena, cooperate closely with their neighbours and are open to collaboration with other countries, including Czechia.

Conclusion

The topicality of the hybrid warfare phenomenon, in particular the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian conflict, has profoundly transformed the security environment. A shift is apparent in the intensity of how instruments are used, from the type of hard power to soft power and smart power, where the information environment, modern technologies and particularly cyberspace, recognised by NATO in 2016 as a new operational domain, are all of fundamental importance.

It can be assumed that the domain of (efficient) strategic communications (StratCom) will be increasingly reflected in the upcoming period, as strategic communications can be seen as an instrument in fighting disinformation and enemy propaganda [Divišová 2022].

Although in the sense of simultaneous deployment of a combination of multiple instruments of power, hybrid warfare is nothing new; it is a new set of channels, technologies and platforms, related to the generally known instruments of power. The increased importance of hybrid warfare today logically goes hand in hand with the newly generated spectrum of threats, which are hybrid in character and often concern organisations such as NATO and the EU and the nation states in Central Europe.

It is necessary and desirable for Czechia to reflect these facts and continually to adapt to new ways, characteristics and forms of warfare. We need to reflect in Czechia upon the broad spectrum of existing hybrid threats targeting the sphere of security and efficiently respond to these threats using the concept of a resilient strategy. Here Czech national strategy, currently being drafted, could be very helpful in countering hybrid actions. Yet we must also bear in mind the criticism of the hybrid war concept, which is subject to 'the needs of the times, which ultimately blunts its explanatory potential' [Stojar 2017: 44].

List of abbreviations

BIS – *Bezpečnostní informační služba* (Security Information Service)
BRS – *Bezpečnostní rada státu* (National Security Council)
CERT – Computer Emergency Response Team
MoD – Ministry of Defence
NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NBÚ – *Národní bezpečnostní úřad* (National Security Authority)
NÚKIB – *Národní úřad pro kybernetickou a informační bezpečnost* (National Cyber and Information Security Agency)
PSYOP – Psychological operations
StratCom – Strategic communications
VeKySIO – *Velitelství kybernetických sil a informačních operací Armády ČR* (Cyber Forces and Information Operations Command within the Armed Forces of the Czech Republic)

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HANNA MELEHANYCH

Ukrainian-Slovak Relations: Human Dimension Before and After the Beginning of the Full-scale War in Ukraine in 2022

Abstract: The article deals with bilateral relations between Ukraine and Slovakia regarding migration issues and the life of the Ukrainian community in Slovakia. The war launched by Russia in Ukraine contributed to the departure of more than 7 million Ukrainians to other countries of the world, and more than 1 million departed through the Ukrainian-Slovak border. More than 100,000 among them became temporary asylum seekers in Slovakia. This was facilitated by the quick response of the Slovak authorities and the consolidation of society. It should be underlined that international legal mechanisms and the representation of international organizations also contributed to the fact that immediately after crossing the border, Ukrainian refugees (mainly women, children and the elderly) receive the necessary aid.

Keywords: refugees, migrants, temporary asylum seekers, Ukrainians, Slovak Republic, Ukraine, national minorities

Introduction

The Visegrad countries have historically had close relations with Ukraine. There is a significant representation of the Ukrainian national minority here as well as neighbouring European countries have always occupied a prominent place among the destination countries of Ukrainian migrants. This migration was of different nature and intensity, but nothing similar in scale, before the war Russia started in Ukraine, had happened earlier. Within a very short period after February 24, 2022 millions of Ukrainians crossed the western borders of Ukraine, and therefore the eastern borders of the EU. One of the noteworthy examples is Slovakia, where by far the largest share of forced migrants from Ukraine fell on the number of local residents.

Ukrainians in Slovakia

The Ukrainian national minority of Slovakia belongs to the autochthonous population of the country – this is its fundamental difference from the Ukrainian ethnic groups of many other countries of Europe and America. For several centuries, representatives of the Ukrainian national minority have lived in the region, which extends on both sides of the northern ridge of the Carpathians and today is located on the territories of four states: Ukraine (Zakarpattia region), Poland, Slovakia and Romania. Today, representatives of the Ukrainian national minority live in approximately 250 localities in Slovakia, being formerly Ukrainian, and now, mainly, Slovak-Ukrainian settlements. Most Ukrainians live in Presov and Kosice regions which border on Ukraine. Part of the autochthonous Ukrainians in Slovakia, due to the historical tradition, continue to call themselves "Rusyns-Ukrainians", showing the uniqueness of their origin and history through this name.

According to the official population census of the Slovak Republic in 2021, representatives of the Ukrainian national minority in the Slovak Republic number 9,451 persons (0.17%) of the population [Sčítanie 2021]. Despite the previous trends towards a decrease in the number of the Ukrainian minority, the 2021 census showed an increase of Ukrainians by 2,000 persons. In addition, it is worth saying that the Slovak Republic, following some neighbouring countries' example, decided not to determine one nationality, but to give the opportunity to determine the belonging to two ethnic communities. And consequently, the census showed that more than 300,000 residents of the Slovak Republic feel like they have two ethnic identities. We consider this to be a very good practice in the 21st century, because people being in mixed marriages, from mixed territories or even those who moved outside their native communities for various reasons, and many others also had the opportunity to declare a second ethnicity.

It has to be admitted that if we talk about Ukrainians in the Slovak Republic, Rusyns are also taken into account, they are recognized as a separate national minority in there. The Ukrainian community of the Slovak Republic continues to believe that Rusyns and Ukrainians are representatives of the same people (by the way, the coat of arms of Rusyns is the same as the coat of arms of Zakarpattia region of Ukraine). That is why it is important to mention the number of Rusyns – 23,476 (0.44%); yet under the possibility to indicate two nationalities in the 2021 census (the second for 39,810), this number turns out to be almost three times larger. The Rusyn minority generally became the leader of the decade in Slovakia. Interestingly, in 2011 nearly 33,000 people declared themselves to be Rusyns, in 2021 the total number of people, who answered the first and second questions about belonging to Rusyns in a positive way, amounted to 63,000 people. Almost 40,000 people responded to the second question in the population census questionnaire positively (indicating a second nationality) [Národnosť 2021]. Thus, we can assume that not

only those who identified themselves as Ukrainians, but also Rusyns have a certain connection with Ukraine.

The Slovak Republic pays attention to the support of national minorities living on its territory and to the implementation of the provisions of relevant international treaties and legislative acts in the field of ensuring the rights of national minorities. The financing of the activities of national minority organizations in the country is carried out according to the subsidies scheme. The Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic acts as the coordinator [Kultúrno-humanitárna 2020].

The main institution allowed by the communist party to represent minority interests of Ukrainians in Slovakia after World War II was the Cultural Association of Ukrainian Workers (Kulturny zvaz ukrajinskych pracujucich – KZUP) set up in the early 1950s. After its last congress in 1990, the KZUP was dissolved and two separate new organizations were established: the Union of Rusyns-Ukrainians in Slovakia (Zvaz Rusinov-Ukrajincov Slovenska – ZRUS) and the Rusyn Renaissance (Rusinska Obroda – RO). In terms of national self-identification, the ZRUS supports a Ukrainian and the RO a Rusyn orientation. The ZRUS continues to publish periodicals issued by the former KZUP (the bi-weekly "Nove Zytta" /"New Life"/ and the two-monthly journal "Druzno vpered" /"Friendly forward"/) while the RO has started two new periodicals (the bi-weekly "Narodny novynky" /"National newsletters"/ and the two-monthly journal "Rusyn"). Both organizations compete with each other in persuading Rusyns/Ukrainians living in Slovakia about their national identity and in attempts to win government support [Duleba 2002:19].

There function several other Ukrainian non-governmental organizations: the Slovak-Ukrainian Society, the Union of Ukrainian Writers of Slovakia, the Union of Plast Scouts of the Ukrainian-Rusyn Nationality in Slovakia, the T. H. Shevchenko Scientific Society, the Young Rusyns, the Slovak-Ukrainian Youth Association "SURMA".

The Center of Ukrainian Culture operates in Presov. On the territory of the Slovak Republic there also functions an amateur Ukrainian music and drama ensemble named after Taras Shevchenko. The Museum of Ukrainian Culture in the town of Svidnik is an important Ukrainian scientific and cultural institution, it is a branch of the National Museum of Slovakia; the Art Gallery Named after D. Mylyi is a constituent part of the museum. Under the auspices of the Union of Rusyns-Ukrainians of the Slovak Republic, there operate 36 collectives of folk art of various genres and a number of cultural and artistic events of national and regional importance are organized. In Kosice, there functions the editorial committee for producing programs for national minorities on the STV2 channel. Every second Tuesday of the month, the program "The TV Journal of National Minorities" is broadcast in Ukrainian. Additionally, the Ukrainian editorial committee, working on programs for national minorities of the Slovak Radio, operates in Kosice, where programs in Ukrainian are broadcast [Kultúrno-humanitárna 2020].

In 1994, a year after the signing of the basic treaty between Slovakia and Ukraine, the Ukrainian government proposed to set up a bilateral committee on minority issues. The bilateral Ukrainian-Slovak Committee for National Minorities, Education and Cultural Affairs held its first session in Kiev in February 1995. Both sides agreed that the committee would meet regularly at least once a year [Duleba 2002:22]. *De facto,* the Committee did not gather annually, sometimes the break lasted several years. In total, 14 sessions were held by Ukrainian-Slovak Committee for National Minorities, Education and Cultural Affairs, and the last one took place in March 2017 in Bratislava. The next meeting was supposed to take place in Ukraine, and due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was postponed to the first half of 2022, as there was no thought about the war which was shortly to break out. The committee is an advisory body of the governments of both countries and primarily deals with the issue of the Slovak minority in Ukraine and the Ukrainian minority in the Slovak Republic aiming to preserve and develop their identity through the support of national education and culture. The committee monitors bilateral relations in the field of education and culture, pays attention to the support of national mass media and exchange programs. The committee consisted of representatives of governmental institutions, foreign ministries of affairs, education and culture, later it was expanded to include representatives of organizations of the Ukrainian minority in the Slovak Republic and the Slovak minority in Ukraine, representatives of Presov Autonomous Region, Zakarpattia region, RTVS – the Slovak Radio, Presov University, Uzhhorod National University and others.

Agreements reached at meetings since the formation of the committee in 1994 manifested themselves in concrete results, e.g., establishment of the Department of Slovak Philology and the All-Ukrainian Scientific and Methodological Center of Slovak Studies of Uzhhorod National University and jointly, the Department of Ukrainian Studies of the Institute of Ukrainian Studies and Central European Studies of the Faculty of Arts of Presov University in Presov, including programs related to exchange, internships of teachers and students, cultural centers of national minorities – the Center of Ukrainian Culture in Presov (Slovakia) and the Center of Slovak Culture in Uzhhorod (Ukraine), etc.

Notably, due to the cultural and educational activities of the committee, the institutions of national minorities in both countries enjoy mutual state support, and the level of protection of their rights is not a problematic issue in bilateral relations. It can be concluded that MVK fulfills the purpose for which it was formed and is a useful institutional tool in bilateral relations. It has to be mentioned that in recent years, Slovak-Ukrainian relations have been strengthened by a new phenomenon which is the growth of the Ukrainian diaspora in the Slovak Republic owing to the natural migration of Ukrainian citizens for the purpose of work and study. In the Slovak Republic, there grows the number of representatives of the "new" Ukrainian

minority, which differs from the "old" Ukrainian minority that traditionally lives on the territory of the Slovak Republic. The number of migrants coming from Ukraine to Slovakia to work or study is increasing and this is a new factor in bilateral relations [Duleba 2021:55].

Migration of Ukrainians to Slovakia before the Start of the Full-scale War

The level of migration of Ukrainians to Slovakia is significantly inferior to that observed between Ukraine and other states of the Visegrad Group. The Slovak Republic has never been a "top destination" country for migrants, rather a transit territory. This is explained by the limitations of the labor market, the level of salaries which is lower in comparison to the average one in the EU. However, starting from 2004 – the time of joining the EU – their number increased from 22,108 to 67,877 persons in 2012. At the end of 2011, when the population census was conducted, 71,348 foreign citizens or 1.32% of the entire population lived on the territory of the Slovak Republic on a permanent basis [Lendel 2017:12].

Like migration from Ukraine in general, migration to Slovakia grew at a particularly fast pace after the events of 2014, Russia's military aggression. Slovakia was prepared to accept around 10,000 people. Yet this did not happen. There are two possible explanations for this situation: "Firstly, the forced migrants from the Donbas do not have developed migration networks within the EU (as opposed to Russia). Secondly, they still hold out the hope that the conflict is temporary, and that they will be able to return to their places of residence" [Plenta P. 2016:8].

However, the migration level and the number of Ukrainians are growing rapidly in this country due to territorial and cultural proximity, the increase in the needs of the neighbouring country for additional workers from abroad, and the gradual liberalization of its migration policy. Ukrainian citizens go to Slovakia primarily for the purpose of employment, at the same time, educational migration to the neighbouring country has been increasing over the last 5–10 years, a certain part of migration is connected to commercial matters. According to the results of the 2021 census, this figure increased by 3.7 times [TASR, 2022]. The number of Ukrainians in it was 3915 in 2011, and 6339 – in 2021 [Sčítanie 2021]. The duration of 86% of residence permits for Ukrainians in Slovakia, first issued in 2020, was more than 12 months. In the European Union, the share of permits of this duration for Ukrainians was 22.7%, and in Poland – only 10%, that is, Ukrainians began to arrive in Slovakia for relatively longer periods than in most EU countries [Malynovska 2022:78].

The attitude of Slovak citizens towards foreigners was the aim of a study conducted by the Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Culture as part of the project "The Study of Foreigners' Integration – Barriers, Tools and Attitudes", implemented

in 2021. It showed that Slovaks were more open to accepting economically more advantageous foreigners, or those who are not very different in terms of culture. Out of a sample of 1,012 respondents, approximately 65% of people believed that the country should be accessible only to highly skilled and culturally close foreigners. It should be pointed out that up to 73.1% of them believe that migration from poorer countries should be significantly limited [Krieglerová 2021]. Based on the results of separate studies, their comparison and analysis, it can be concluded that women are of the opinion that the migration policy is more moderate and the level of aid provided to refugees is more significant than in the past. However, it also largely depends on what foreigners we are talking about. Slovaks are much better prepared for foreigners if they come from Slavic countries and the similar culture [Bárta et al. 2022].

Migration Caused by the War in Ukraine

Russia's attack of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 changed the demographic picture of Europe and, accordingly, increased the presence of Ukrainians in Slovakia in a significant way. Like all countries neighbouring Ukraine, Slovakia immediately faced the direct and indirect consequences of the war in Ukraine, including the rapid flow of people fleeing the combat zones across its border. It was on 26 February 2022 when a state of emergency was declared in Slovakia due to the massive influx of people, including Ukrainians and citizens of third countries, caused by the war on the territory of Ukraine. Since then, the Slovak government has been generously keeping the borders open, and local communities have been welcoming refugees and other affected people.

Based on a study carried out by Tado Yurych, Integrating Analysis of Ukrainian Refugees and Refugee Flows with the Big Data Approach: Social Media Analysis (Crisis), the so-called analysis of the "digital footprint" showed that interest in Slovakia among users of Facebook, Instagram and YouTube was growing very quickly. In particular, as of March 13, it was 2,200 persons, and as of April 10, 17,800, that is, almost 8 times more. This figure for the same period is bigger than in Hungary or Romania. Certain cities were often searched more often than other large cities of neighbouring countries, such as Bratislava – 25.62% (for comparison, Warsaw ‒ 11.94%), Kosice – 4.94% (Krakow ‒ 3.53%) from March 7 to April 2 [Juric 2022].

The same author claims that the analysis of Facebook groups of Ukrainian diasporas in the EU shows that these groups can be a valuable source for studying the integration of Ukrainians. That is why we use these data too.

Most refugees from Ukraine are women and children, as men were called out to defend their own country. In response to the situation in Ukraine, almost the entire

Slovak society, the state, various non-governmental and public organizations and volunteers came together. This level of aid and solidarity is quite different from the refugee crisis of 2015 and 2016. At that time, Slovak society had an extremely negative attitude towards it, perhaps, inter alia, due to some cultural threats. According to the conclusions, Štefančík and Kiner structure this threat into four dimensions: personal, political, economic and cultural. In the first – personal – dimension migration is presented as a possible threat to health or directly to the life of domestic society. In the second dimension, migrants are presented as a factor threatening state sovereignty. This dimension is subject to the creation of a common immigration policy of the European Union or is related to the proposal to introduce mandatory quotas for the redistribution of migrants among the Member States of the European Union (the EU). In the third – economic – dimension migrants present a threat to the domestic labour market or are perceived as a threat to the stability of the social assistance system. Eventually, in the last – cultural – dimension, many Slovak politicians present migrants as bearers of different cultures, traditions and, last but not least, religion [Štefančík, Kiner 2021]. Ukrainian refugees are currently perceived by Slovak society as a culturally similar environment, which is why the level of aid and solidarity is so high and is not viewed as a threat.

The experience of legal regulation of residence of Ukrainians in 2022 is also interesting, since rights and opportunities depend on the determination of status. Ukrainians, who arrived in the EU countries in 2022, can be viewed in different ways – either as migrants or as refugees, but both definitions have certain caveats. Migrants are people who have lived outside their country for a long time and deliberately leave their homeland mainly for economic reasons, whereas a refugee is a person who has a legitimate fear of persecution because of race, religion, nationality or because of belonging to certain social classes or certain political beliefs in their country. In Slovakia, the term of asylum seeker was applied to Ukrainians in accordance with the Slovak legal order. After the start of the military conflict, all persons fleeing the war were allowed to enter the territory of the Slovak Republic for a period of 90 days. Temporary asylum was granted to refugees for the purpose of protection from a military conflict, the consequences of the humanitarian disaster, but with a violation of human rights in the foreigners' homeland (Law No. 480/202 Coll., § 29). The term 'temporary protection' refers to a mechanism that is activated in case of exceptional events of mass influx of refugees. Its purpose is to provide immediate protection to displaced persons and to reduce the pressure on the asylum systems of the host countries of the European Union, it concerns citizens of Ukraine and their family members who were in the territory of Ukraine until 24 February 2022, received international protection or have a permanent residence permit and cannot return to their country. The period of granting temporary protection is from 1 to 3 years, depending on the situation in Ukraine. As of 2 January 2022 the number of

refugees from Ukraine, recorded in Slovakia is 105,205 persons, and in total, more than 1 million Ukrainians have crossed the border since 24 February 2022. The general dynamics can be seen in Chart 1[The Operational Data 2023].

This is an extremely big number for a small country and, it is one of the largest indicators in recalculation on a local resident. Thus, there are over 100,000 Ukrainian refugees in Slovakia, and this is a huge burden for the country in view of the number of people who came here fleeing the war.

The Slovak government expressed a clear position on the situation in Ukraine and from the beginning it offers different kinds of support. From March 1, it approved an amendment to the asylum law according to which the Ukrainian people and their relatives escaping the war can apply for a temporary shelter which will be granted till March 4, 2023. Temporary shelter is the simplest way to protect people fleeing war, which does not require lengthy official procedures. It will give Ukrainian citizens quick and unrestricted access to the labor market, health care and access to education for their children. This special form of protection can in principle be obtained immediately in contrast to the asylum procedure, which is administratively longer and can take up to 6 months. Holding this status, they will be provided with accommodation, food, health care and hygiene packages free of charge. Even people without any documents can apply, however in such case the processing time of application is 30 days. For improved communication the government established the webpage www.pomocpreukrajinu.sk ("help for Ukraine") as well as hotlines in Ukrainian language providing all necessary information related to entering Slovakia, staying in Slovakia or transition to another country.

But not only government is helping. It turns out that Slovak people, despite the ongoing pandemic situation or inflation and energy price concerns, are willing to help and joined the efforts to provide needed support. Huge support on social networks and the media from tagging user profiles with Ukrainian flag to organizing collections of basic material needs or even offering temporary accommodation or jobs for Ukrainian fugitives. For example, in the first day since the announcement of aid to Ukraine, the NGO People in Need managed to raise more than 200,000 EUR. People write to them with offers of accommodation, transportation across borders, but also material assistance. More than 1,500 volunteers applied for volunteer help in one day, of which more than 500 offered accommodation.

International organizations and their executive partners help provide specialized services: the UNHCR / The Slovak Humanitarian Council, the International Organization for Migration, UNICEF / Mareena, The Mental Health League, Firemedical and others.

UNHCR operates in Slovakia under the inter-agency refugee response plan (RRP) which brings together 28 partners in a coordinated multi-sectoral response with the aim to further complement the Government-led efforts and – in particular – by

addressing any gaps in the provision of assistance to refugees, and others in need, while helping reinforce the reception and monitoring capacity of local authorities including for those with additional and specific protection needs and seeking to ensure equality of access to services according to needs [Protection 2022].

It has to be underlined, since the beginning of the war, 48 executing organizations and 27 reporting organizations in 11 areas have been involved in helping Ukrainians in all 8 regions of the country (accommodation, basic needs, cash, education, food, health, inclusion, logistics, protection, child protection, protection GBV) and there have been carried out 1733 activities [The Operational Data 2023].

Ukrainian-Slovak Relations in the Conditions of the War

In general Slovakian-Ukrainian relations may be best described by words "pragmatic" and "balanced". They are free from historical burden, ideological sentiments, and geopolitical speculations. At the same time partnership is driven by complimenting interests, most importantly in security and energy areas. Slovakia is believed to be one of Ukraine's best friends in the EU, while Ukraine is an opportunity for Slovakia to play a more active role in the region [Ukraine-Slovakia 2018].

Only the attitude towards Russia was often different and caused certain inconveniences. It is connected with the fact that there are some politicians and their supporters in the country who maintained friendly relations with Russia. However, with Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Slovakia officially, like most countries of the world, condemns the act of aggression and supports EU sanctions against Russia. The general moods in the country are nevertheless different. In the survey "*How do you like Slovakia?*" respondents were supposed to answer the question of which end of the war in Ukraine they wanted. A 10-point scale was at their disposal, where 1 meant Russia's clear-cut victory, and 10 – Ukraine's clear-cut victory. As the results of the survey show, on the one hand, around 20% of respondents want an unequivocal victory for Russia, and more than half of respondents simply support the victory of the Russian side. On the other hand, a third of the respondents want Ukraine to be the winner in the war, and a fifth declare vivid support for the Ukrainian victory. It is interesting that about 18% of Slovaks say that they do not know who should win the war [Lewkowicz 2022]. These results are much better than those received in the 2021 survey, which showed that 78% of Slovaks considered Russians their "Slavic brothers", 42% viewed Russia as a strategic partner, 56% believed that the NATO was provoking Russia, and only 41% thought that the opposite was true [Milo 2021].

Slovaks can feel the closeness of the threat of war, living through the immediate experience while providing active assistance on the Slovak-Ukrainian border,

or via the similarity of the culture of Ukrainian people. Despite feelings of fear or anxiety about migrants, people are ready to help and agree with the need to help women, children, the elderly or entire families. The study has also discovered that social networks appear to be a very powerful vehicle for shaping public opinion. They are also a place for the outpouring of emotions and conducting discussions. People, who until now had no need to express themselves about anything, are also present through them [Bárta et al. 2022].

In November, 2022 the Ukrainian-Slovak business forum was held in Uzhhorod, it was dedicated to the meeting of the Ukrainian-Slovak Intergovernmental Commission and the Slovak delegation's visit to Ukraine. The forum provided an opportunity to discuss interesting issues of bilateral cooperation and prospects for further partnership with the participation of the diplomatic mission, the administration of the Ukrainian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Slovak Investment and Trade Development Agency, government officials, foreign companies, representative offices of foreign companies in Ukraine, representatives of ministries, regional state administrations, etc. Hundreds of participants were able to communicate and consider ways of future collaboration.

Relations between Slovakia and Ukraine resemble strategic partnership: parties' interests and positions often coincide or complement. They also have huge potential for development of bilateral trade, and the growth of commodity turnover between the two countries amounted to 36% in the first half of the current year. The two countries have similar vision on regional challenges and close perception of threats [Ukraine-Slovakia 2018].

The war in Ukraine united all of Europe and Slovakia, particularly, in supporting Ukraine. Cooperation between countries now needs more focus, specifically, in the field of education and regarding the status of the "new Ukrainian minority" in the Slovak Republic. These issues have been brewing for a long time, but now they demand urgent attention. It is necessary to consider the targeted expansion of cooperation in the field of education beyond the national educational agenda and to engage all types of schools and levels of education (primary, secondary, tertiary) into this cooperation activities. The economic integration of Ukraine into the EU single market will also mean the integration of the Slovak and Ukrainian economies, including the labour market, which requires skilled labour force. Harmonization of educational programs at the level of primary, secondary and tertiary education is among the long-term interests of both countries. The new Ukrainian diaspora in Slovakia, which will certainly remain in Slovakia even after the end of the war in Ukraine, requires attention from both countries. The increase in the number of Ukrainian citizens studying in Slovak schools or working on the territory of the Slovak Republic was a phenomenon typical of recent years, and now it has become a daily occurrence in large and small communities in Slovakia. However, this causes

a number of socio-economic problems related to their long-term stay in the Slovak Republic, issues related to their social status, the Slovak language acquisition and meeting cultural and linguistic needs.

Conclusion

Supporting Ukraine today for Slovakia means declaring to the whole world that it is an integral part of the West and a loyal friend of Ukraine. Slovakia's current support for Ukraine is not accidental, it is, in fact, an opportunity to deepen bilateral Ukrainian-Slovak cooperation and to integrate Ukraine into the EU. Until recently, researchers talked mainly about labour or educational migration to Slovakia, but now the main focus is on forced migration, which, however, simultaneously intensifies the first two types. Slovakia, as well as a number of European countries, has significantly eased the conditions of stay for Ukrainian labor migrants in their countries on the one hand, and on the other hand, the point is not only about easing, but the simplification of the employment procedure in different countries. A considerable number of forced migrants will not return to Ukraine in the near future, and therefore specially developed programs for the integration of Ukrainian citizens, social packages, preferential programs for attracting students and schoolchildren to study are needed, as these simplify adaptation.

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MIROSLAV ŘÁDEK

Ukrainian and Russian Sources in the Slovak Media After the Start of the War in Ukraine

Abstract: Since February 24, 2022, the world has witnessed an open military conflict in Ukraine. As this is a state of tragic proportions that evokes many emotionally charged moods, it is important that impartial and balanced information is made available to the public. The media, which work with sources from the place of the conflict in the interest of current news, play an important role in this issue. In our study, we investigate the proportionate use of media resources from both sides of the conflict. Through the use of quantitative analysis of Slovak media content, we bring results that confirm the equal use of resources from the Russian and Ukrainian sides. The text also brings several findings that can be the subject of further research on the issue.

Keywords: Ukraine, Russia, war, resources, media

Introduction

Since start war conflict in Ukraine thousands of media reports have been published in the Slovak media. The aim was to convey information about the conflict in Ukraine to readers, viewers, or listeners. In the era of the so-called information society that depends on receiving and processing a huge amount of information, this is an event that legitimately gains unprecedented space in the media.

For entrepreneurs, information about the impact of the conflict on the global and local economy is important, politicians focus not only on the economic aspect, but also on the geopolitical one, ordinary people (especially in the regions of eastern Slovakia) pay close attention to news regarding the risk of endangering their own security in the event of the conflict crossing the border. All groups of the population, perhaps with the exception of the leadership of the state, are dependent only on mediated information brought by the media.

Since our ability to obtain information about the conflict from primary sources (witnesses, participants, direct actors and so-called decision makers), i.e., the world beyond our immediate experience, is limited, we are dependent on news brought by the media. In the spirit of Walter Lipmann's famous statement: "The world with

which we have to deal politically lies beyond our reach, is distant in meaning and thought..." we automatically become recipients of the "pseudo-environment" created by the news media.

Considering the tragic dimension of the conflict and its sensitive perception by society, the media faces a difficult task to convey information about the events in Ukraine objectively and impartially. A precise and balanced selection of resources plays an important role in this ambition. On a daily basis, we witness news reports or articles from editors sent to the conflict site, but this is still only a marginal part of the total amount of news. This is also why the so-called are extremely important for editorial offices. secondary sources – news agencies, media and, to a lesser extent, the actors themselves via social media, preferably via Twitter.

Our study focuses on the work of selected Slovak internet media with secondary sources on both sides of the conflict, i.e., Ukrainian and Russian, and asks the question of the proportionality of the use (citation) of these sources in published editorial texts. Through a quantitative analysis of more than 2,000 articles published between February 24 and May 24, 2022, it also identifies new questions that could be the subject of further research using one of the qualitative methods used in content analyses.

Theoretical framework

Considering the focus of the post, it is first necessary to clarify what we mean by the term journalistic source. Any source of information can be perceived. These are resources [Marková 2015:13] that a journalist inevitably needs for his work. When it comes to the participants of the events and the journalist conducts direct communication with them (personal interview, phone call, e-mail), it is the so-called living (primary) resource. Other sources of information are the so-called inanimate (secondary) sources, i.e., reports from news agencies, other media, press releases, archives, official documents, audio and audio-visual recordings or information published on social media.

In events such as the conflict in Ukraine, reports published by foreign intelligence agencies play a significant role. Their task is to create "newspapers for journalists", that is, to collect, process and subsequently convey information to subscribers, which are usually media organizations. Press agencies deliver text messages, photos, infographics, or audio or video recordings.

Reports published by other media are also an important source of information for journalists, which have become significantly easier to follow thanks to the digitization trend. The range of content has expanded, but at the same time, journalists have a difficult task – to select only the relevant and verified information from the huge amount of content. At the same time, it is important that a journalist, aware of

the role of a mediator of information towards the public, approaches the content of other media critically and builds a permanent resistance to texts that are the result of PR activities, lobbying activities or the so-called motivational propaganda, which is a frequent phenomenon in times of war conflicts.

In the 21st century, the mentioned traditional sources were partially replaced by social networks. From the point of view of interpreting political content, the most preferred social networks are Facebook and Twitter, or LinkedIn (oriented more towards professional content). Compared to other countries, Slovakia is rather an exception, as politicians share their positions and opinions primarily via Facebook. But not only in the USA or in the countries of Western Europe, but also in the Czech Republic, for example, Twitter plays a primary role, which makes it an important source of information for many media. The media themselves use the potential of Twitter not only to gain followers, but also to publish information, which is also confirmed by our study.

Topics and sources are selected by journalists through several procedures, but most often [Reifová 2004:174] the final selection is the result of one of the following factors:

- economic interests of the media organization,
- internal media routines,
- division of labour in a media organization,
- the time schedule of the media organization's work,
- goals of the media organization.

It is the factor of "media routine" that is probably the most fundamental when it comes to the choice of sources. It is about the use of procedures (Trampota 2006:55) that have proven themselves in practice for journalists and are regularly repeated due to time efficiency. As Trampota writes, "journalistic work takes place under the constant time pressure of deadlines, and in order for journalists to manage it, it must be routinized." These routines, as regular patterns of behaviour of media organizations, facilitate the control of the flow of work and make it possible to process unexpected events in a short time horizon". Media routine is manifested in every journalist [Burton, Jirák 2001:102]. As a result, the public perceives that specific media use only a limited number of experts (economic and security analysts, scientists, doctors, former politicians, other experts or prominent social figures) to evaluate events. Their regular addressing is often the result of a normal media routine.

Research methods

Due to the significant number of reports on the conflict published by Slovak media, we focused on quantitative data when examining the proportionality of the use of resources from both sides of the conflict.

The formulation of the research question: *What is the proportionality of the use of secondary (inanimate) media sources from both sides of the conflict in the content of Slovak internet media?*

1. In terms of methodology, we used the method of quantitative analysis using the MONITORA tool. When identifying the research sample, due to the extensive amount of data, we focused on the content of the 10 most visited Slovak internet media according to IAB monitoring. The following internet portals were selected on the basis of publicly available ones: www.aktuality.sk, www.sme.sk, www.pluska.sk, www.cas.sk, www.pravda.sk, www.topky.sk, www.hnonline.sk, www.dobrenoviny.sk, www.startitup.sk and www.tvnoviny.sk. When selecting the media, we used average traffic data for the period from February to May 2022 (Table 1).

Tab. 1. Website traffic data

web	average traffic for February – May 2022
aktuality.sk	2 829 697
pluska.sk	2 447 287
sme.sk	2 424 631
pravda.sk	2 104 474
cas.sk	1 996 952
topky.sk	1 962 824
hnonline.sk	1 832 953
dobrenoviny.sk	1 725 297
startitup.sk	1 649 687
tvnoviny.sk	1 426 815

Source: Dáta IABmonitor online, https://monitor.iabslovakia.sk/ (access: 15.12.2022).

2. Another variable was the choice of source agencies and media from both sides of the conflict. In the case of Ukrainian and Russian media, we used the updated list published on the website of the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs. From the offered overview, we found 21 Ukrainian and 36 Russian media. After the first selection, based on the number of mentions in the Slovak media, we worked out a ranking of ten media on both sides of the conflict with the highest number of mentions in the Slovak media (table 2). Information on the number of mentions will be the subject of further content of our study.

3. The last variable, necessary to answer the research question, was the determination of the monitored period, during which the outputs of the monitored Slovak media were published with mentions of Russian or Ukrainian media. In order to obtain a representative amount of data, we focused on a relatively extensive period of 3 months, i.e., from the first official day of the conflict (February 24, 2022) until May 24, 2022.

Even before the actual attempt to answer the research question, we carried out a basic overview of the number of mentions of Russian and Ukrainian sources in

Slovak media outputs. Based on the automated analysis of the MONITORA tool, we arrived at a total number of 2159 outputs in which the names of the monitored Russian and Ukrainian media were listed and were published in the period February 24 – May 24, 2022.

Tab.2. Infirmations in the media.

Russian medium	Media type	Ukrainian medium	Media type
TASS	agency	The Kyiv Independent	web
Interfax	agency	Unian	agency
Ria Novosti	agency	Ukrajinská pravda	daily/ web
Russia Today (RT)	TV	Ukrinform	agency
Novaja gazeta	daily/ web	Interfax – Ukrajina	agency
meduza.io	web	Hromadske TV	TV
Pervyj kanál	TV	RBK – Ukrajina	TV
Kommersant	daily/ web	Suspilne	TV
Telekanal Dožď	TV	RADA TV	TV
Telekanal Zvězda	TV	1+1	TV

Source: Monitora.sk, *Monitoring, analýza a meranie médií novej*, https://monitora.sk/ (access: 15.12.2022).

For the sake of interest, it can be mentioned that the publishing house that was most often mentioned by the Russian and Ukrainian media in its media outputs (Figure1) was the company Petit Press, a.s. (owner of the portal www.sme.sk) with 385 mentions.
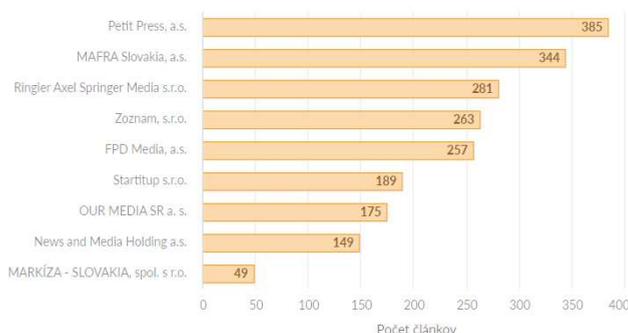

Fig. 1. Referring to specific media.

Source: Monitora.sk, *Monitoring, analýza a meranie médií novej*, https://monitora.sk/ (access: 15.12.2022).

In the case of individual media, we arrived at a result (Figure 2) that partially correlates with the previous chart. The Internet media that during the observed period worked in its texts with the highest number of mentions of Russian and Ukrainian media was the portal www.sme.sk with 385 articles.
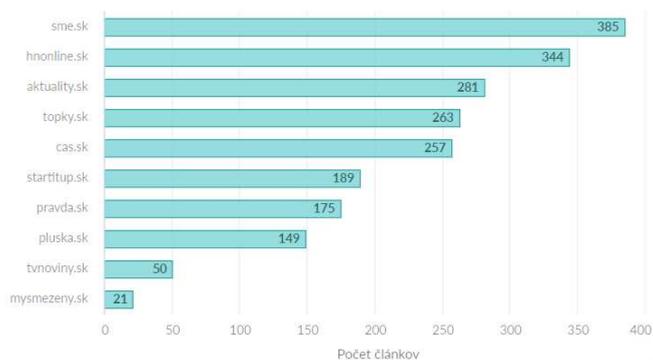
Fig. 2. Slovak media relying on Ukrainian and Russian media.

Source: Monitora.sk, *Monitoring, analýza a meranie médií novej*, https://monitora.sk/ (access: 15.12.2022).

After the initial analysis of the number of media outlets, we continued with the analysis of the number of mentioned monitored secondary sources. In this case, it was a relatively simple process, which we implemented through the use of functions to determine the monitored time period and specific ten monitored Slovak Internet portals (Figure 3).
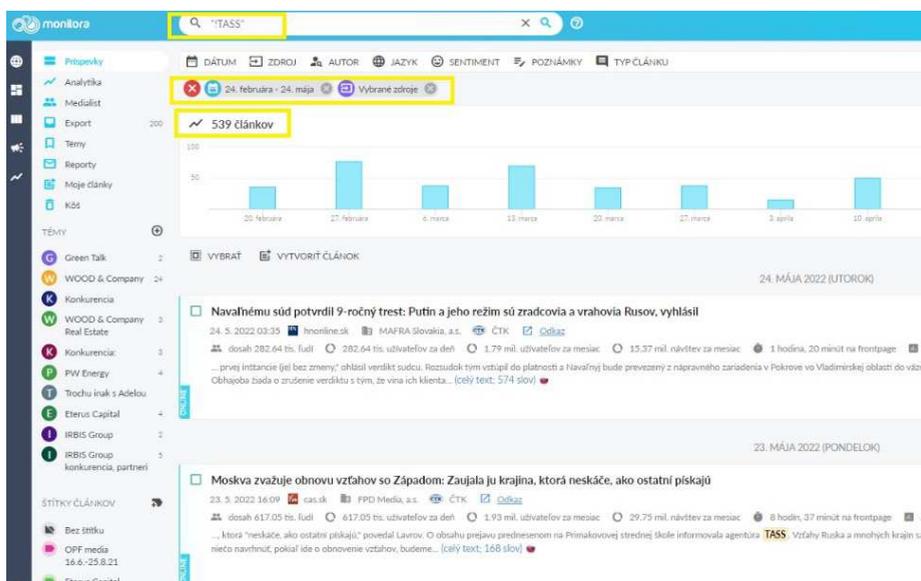

Fig. 3. Monitoring of Slovak Internet portals.

Source: Monitora.sk, *Monitoring, analýza a meranie médií novej*, https://monitora.sk/ (access: 15.12.2022).

Using the same key as for the TASS agency, we gradually identified the number of mentions of all monitored 36 Russian and 21 Ukrainian media that were in our expanded file (Table 3).

Tab. 3. Media monitoring.

Russian medium	num. of mentions	Ukrainian medium	num. of mentions
agency			
Interfax	278	Interfax – Ukrajina	78
Ria Novosti	332	Ukrinform	161
TASS	539	Unian	370
Rossija Segodňa	4	**TV**	
TV		UA:Peršij	0
Rossija 24	23	Suspilne	35
Rossija 1	14	1+1	9
Pervyj kanál (prvý kanál)	69	ICTV	2
REN TV	0	STB	0
NTV	13	5 kanal	1
Telekanal 360	0	Kanalukrajina	0
TNT	0	Inter.ua	0
Pjatyj kanal	0	Novy kanal	0
Telekanal Zvězda	53	Hromadske TV	59
Telekana Dožď	89	RADA TV	10
Russia Today (RT)	126		
internet			
RBC.ru	15	Ukrajinská pravda	209
Gazeta.ru	11	Liga.net	4
Lenta.ru	16	The Kyiv Independent	510
360.ru	0	Gordon	0
fontanka.ru	3	Cenzor.net	1
kp.ru	2	RBK – Ukrajina	22
news.ru	0	**Denníky**	
life.ru	1	Fakty i Kommentarii	0
meduza.io	172	Dělo	0
Denníky		Děň	0
Kommersant	75	Golos Ukrajiny	0
Izvestija	5	Ukrajina moloda	0
Rossijskaja gazeta	1	Ukrajinská pravda	209
Komsomolskaja pravda	20	Liga.net	4
Moskovskij komsomolec	4	The Kyiv Independent	510
Parlametskaja gazeta	0	Gordon	0
Vědomosti	0		
Novaja gazeta	165		
Vědomosti	0		
Vesti.ru	3		
RBK	7		
weekly newspaper			
Argumenty i Fakty	0		

Looking at the table, it is clear that while several Russian and Ukrainian media had tens to hundreds of mentions in the outputs of the monitored Slovak media, there were also some that were not mentioned and we marked them with the symbol "N/A (Not Applicable)". We have removed these media from our list. During the next selection, we decided to narrow down the list of mentioned sources to 10 for each country. Considering their low number of mentions (from 1 to 20), it was not an intervention that would significantly disturb the representativeness of the research as such. After narrowing down, we arrived at a ranking (table 4), in which 10 media were processed for each country according to the number of mentions.

Tab. 4. Top Ukrainian and Slovak media.

Russian medium	TOP10	Ukrainian medium	TOP10
TASS	539	The Kyiv Independent	510
Ria Novosti	332	Unian	370
Interfax	278	Ukrajinská pravda	209
meduza.io	172	Ukrinform	161
Novaja gazeta	165	Interfax – Ukrajina	78
Russia Today	126	Hromadske TV	59
Telekanal Dožď	89	Suspilne	35
Kommersant	75	RBK – Ukrajina	22
Pervyj kanal	69	RADA TV	10
Telekanal Zvězda	53	1+1	9
number of mentions	*1898*		*1463*

Source: Monitora.sk: Monitoring, analýza a meranie médií novej, https://monitora.sk/ (access: 15.12.2022).

The data presented in the table show the dominance of mentions by the Russian media in the number of 1898 mentions compared to 1463 mentions by the Ukrainian media. In percentage terms, it is 56.47% versus 43.53%.

However, during a manual check of the outputs, we came to an important conclusion – not every mention is automatically a citation, therefore not all mentioned Russian and Ukrainian media can be automatically attributed the function of a source. A number of such examples can be identified in the long list of outputs. We can mention the following three for all of them:

1. Text published on March 2, 2022 on the www.hnonline.sk portal, which mentioned the Russian agency TASS:

Google has stopped showing Russian-funded media sites in its Google News service. This applies, for example, to RT, Sputnik or the TASS news agency.

2. Text published on 23/5/2022 on the www.sme.sk portal, which was mentioned by the Russian independent daily Novaya Gazeta:3.

Actresses Sarah Jessica Parkerová and Mila Kunisová or actor Channing Tatum are in the artist category. In the "titans" category, Time included the CEO of Apple Tim Cook, TV presenter Oprah Winfrey and the head of the European Central Bank, Christine Lagarde. Among the "icons" is, among others, the editor-in-chief of the Russian independent newspaper Novaya Gazeta, Dmitry Muratov

3. Text published on March 28, 2022 on the portal www.hnonline.sk, which mentioned Ukrainian television 1+1:

The Servant of the Nation broke viewership records on 1+1 television screens in its native Ukraine, and in addition to the three seasons of the series, a full-length film was also shot. After the huge success of the series, the creator and central actor Volodymyr Zelensky announced his intention to run for president in the 2019 elections – this time for real.

Due to the detected discrepancy between the number of mentions and citations, we had to proceed to the next phase of quantitative analysis, this time focused exclusively on citing source media. This was the most challenging part of the research, as finding a mechanism for selecting mentions from citations was not easy. Finally, we used another function of the Monitor tool, enabling the creation of strings containing specific (key) words. We identified relevant keywords by analyzing several dozen articles that met the attributes of citing secondary sources. In the end, we arrived at a list of 56 words (phrases) including their variations: according to, quoted, cited, quoted, quotes, stated, states, with reference, does not state, informs, informed, refers, appealed, claims, claimed, writes, wrote, aired, for, cites, and with reference to.

The use of keywords in connection with the source media can be shown through the following example of an article published on May 13, 2022 on the www.cas.sk portal:

Russian President Vladimir Putin spoke by phone with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz today about the evacuation of civilians from the Azovstal steelworks, the last Ukrainian stronghold in the port city of Mariupol on the Sea of Azov. Referring to the Kremlin, the Russian agency TASS wrote this today.

For the sake of a correct search, it was then necessary to determine the distance between the keyword and the name of the source media. From the mentioned articles read, it was evident that in most examples the distance between the keyword and the name of the medium is in the range of 5 words. In rare cases, we also recorded a span of six words. For this reason, we have set our range at max. 7 words with a margin. Subsequently, we could proceed to the creation of chains. An example of combining keywords with the name of the Russian media Kommersant with a span of 7 words:

Kommersant+podľa~7 OR Kommersant+citoval~7 OR Kommersant+citovala~7 OR Kommersant+citovali~7 OR Kommersant+cituje~7 OR Kommersant+uviedol~7 OR Kommersant+uvádza~7 OR Kommersant+uviedla~7 OR Kommersant+uviedli~7 OR Kommersant+s odvolaním~7 OR Kommersant+neuvádza~7 OR Kommersant+informuje~7 OR Kommersant+informovala~7 OR Kommersant+informoval~7 OR Kommersant+informujú~7 OR Kommersant+informovali~7 OR Kommersant+odvoláva~7 OR Kommersant+odvolal~7 OR Kommersant+odvolala~7 OR Kommersant+odvolali~7 OR Kommersant+odkazuje~7 OR Kommersant+napísal~7 OR Kommersant+napísala~7 OR Kommersant+napísali~7 OR Kommersant+zverejnil~7 OR Kommersant+zverejnila~7 OR Kommersant+zverejnili~7 OR Kommersant+povedal~7 OR Kommersant+povedala~7 OR Kommersant+povedali~7 OR Kommersant+vyjadril~7 OR Kommersant+vyjadrila~7 OR Kommersant+vyjadrili~7 OR Kommersant+priniesol~7 OR Kommersant+priniesla~7 OR Kommersant+priniesli~7 OR Kommersant+pridala~7 OR Kommersant+pridal~7 Kommersant+pridali~7 OR Kommersant+odvolávajúce~7 OR Kommersant+odvolávajúca~7 Kommersant+odvolávajúci~7 OR Kommersant+tvrdí~7 OR Kommersant+tvrdili~7 Kommersant+tvrdila~7 OR Kommersant +píše~7 OR Kommersant +písal~7 OR Kommersant +písala~7 OR Kommersant +písali~7 OR Kommersant +odvysielala~7 OR Kommersant +odvysielal~7 OR Kommersant +vysielal~7 OR Kommersant +vysielala~7 OR Kommersant +pre~7 OR Kommersant +cituje~7 OR Kommersant +s odkazom~7

In the case of a smaller part of the outputs, we noted the method of citation without using the keyword, but by stating the name of the source in parentheses (example no. 1) or in connection with the word "Author" or "Source". (Example no. 2)

Example no. 1: use of a source in parentheses in an article published on May 24, 2022 on the www.aktuality.sk portal:

11:05 – UKRAINE: According to a survey conducted by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology between May 13 and 18, it appears that 82% of Ukrainians are not ready to sacrifice the territories of Ukraine for the sake of peace

Source: Ukrainian Pravda

Example No. 2: use of a source in connection with the term "Author" or "Source" in an article published on March 17, 2022 on the portal www.startitup.sk:

Sýriu možno označiť za ďalšie známe pôsobisko Wagnerovcov, kde si čoraz viac budovali povesť brutálnych, nemilosrdných zabijakov, ktorým mučenie rozhodne nie je cudzie – podobné zverstvá sa o nich šírili v podstate všade, kde sa objavili (k niektorým sa dostaneme nižšie).

Source: Novaja Gazeta

The last category is texts that cite sources through their posts (tweets) on the Twitter social network (example no. 3). In this case, it concerns the use of texts in a foreign language (English, Ukrainian or Russian) in their full form, including the Slovak translation.

Example No. 3: use of a resource through its "tweet" on the social network Twitter in a text published on May 16, 2022 on the portal www.topky.sk:

> Putin says military drills will be held in autumn. The military exercises will be held in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in the framework of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, a Russian-led military bloc, Russian dictator Vladimir Putin said on May 16.
>
> Source: The Kyiv Independent (@KyivIndependent) May 16, 2022

After applying all four citation methods to 20 monitored sources, we arrived at the results shown in table no. 5

Tab. 5. Citation results.

Russian medium	mentions	citations	Ukrainian medium	mentions	citations
TASS	539	507	The Kyiv Independent	510	496
Ria Novosti	332	311	Unian	370	370
Interfax	278	259	Ukrajinská pravda	209	207
meduza.io	172	153	Ukrinform	161	157
Novaja gazeta	165	95	Interfax – Ukrajina	78	77
Russia Today	126	33	Hromadske TV	59	59
Telekanal Dožď	89	15	Suspilne	35	35
Kommersant	75	60	RBK – Ukrajina	22	22
Pervyj kanal	69	17	RADA TV	10	10
Telekanal Zvězda	53	41	1+1	9	5
together	*1898*	*1491*		*1463*	*1438*

Source: Monitora.sk, *Monitoring, analýza a meranie médií novej*, https://monitora.sk/ (access: 15.12.2022).

It is clear from the detailed data that, compared to mentions, there was a slight leveling of the proportion in citations. Russian media recorded 1491 and Ukrainian ones – 1438 citations. In percentage terms, Russian media accounted for 50.9% of the total number of citations and Ukrainian media for 49.1%.

From a quantitative point of view, it cannot be stated that the observed Slovak internet media would significantly prefer quotations from one or the other side of the conflict. The analysis showed that the proportionality of the use of resources is almost equal, which corresponds to the principles of media impartiality.

Potential deviations

It is correct to state that the results of our analysis may contain inaccuracies caused by the following factors:

1. During the analysis of media outputs, it was found that mentions or in the case of some secondary sources, the citations were not given with the correct name, or there have been cases where sources have been listed without a name. As an example, we can cite the article of the portal www.aktuality.sk from 3.5.2022 with the following excerpt:

> Mariupol riot police chief Mykhailo Vershinin, quoted by Ukrainian TV, said that the Russian army "started to attack the (Azovstal) factory in several places".

2. Not only in the mentioned excerpt, but also in the entire article, the name of the mentioned "Ukrainian television" was not mentioned, therefore it is not possible to identify which Ukrainian television it is.

3. Additional deviations may have occurred when separating citations from mentions. Despite the extensive list of 56 keywords that we evaluated as the most frequently used in relation to cited sources, we admit the possibility of the existence of other, less frequent terms.

However, due to the extensive time devoted to data processing, it can be concluded that even if the inaccuracies were removed, the results of the analysis would with a high degree of probability not be significantly different from the presented data. In both cases, these were individual cases, which, considering the results in the volume of thousands of analyzed outputs, can be perceived as a permissible statistical deviation.

Further findings

In the interest of correct work with secondary sources, we noted several moments that would be appropriate to elaborate from a qualitative point of view. In texts that generally provide information about the conflict in Ukraine, we identified instances of the use of terms such as "pro-Russian", "pro-Putin", or "pro-Kremlin". Several of them were assigned to a specific medium, as in the case of the article published on 16.3.2022 on the portal www.aktuality.sk:

"I have a naive question. I understand that we feel sorry for them, that we do things gently, but couldn't we stop caring about them, surround them and turn off the electricity?" Berezovsky asked on a March 10 talk show on the pro-Kremlin state TV station Pervyi kanal.

Passages from the article published on March 8, and 18, 2022 on the portal www.cas.sk:

Russia has lost its illusions that it can rely on the West, said the head of Russian diplomacy, Sergei Lavrov, in an interview with the pro-Kremlin news channel RT (formerly Russia Today).

That same day, the notorious propaganda website Komsomolskaya Pravda published a story accusing Ukraine of using phosphorus bombs, but the video they used as their alleged "proof" actually showed heat traps, fake targets for surface-to-air missiles

Even if, from the overall point of view, these are rather isolated examples, it is perhaps worth asking whether in texts, which, unlike comments or blogs, are supposed to fulfill a news purpose, it is necessary to assign the mentioned terms that carry evaluative information, or they present the reader with an opinion that he may be able to form himself.

Another knowledge that points to a new trend of working with secondary sources is a significant number of examples of citing content from social networks. In this regard, it is interesting that, similar to Western politicians, in the case of Volodymyr Zelensky, his account on the social network Twitter is a place to which not only the public but also the media draw attention. In our analysis, we came to 155 outputs of the monitored Slovak media that directly quoted the Ukrainian president's Twitter. As an example, we can cite an excerpt from an article on the portal www.aktuality. sk from March 30, 2022:

I just finished an hour-long conversation with the American president. We exchanged our views on the situation on the battlefield and at the negotiating table. We talked about specific defense support, a new package of strengthened sanctions, macro-financial and humanitarian aid,

Zelensky wrote on Twitter.

It is assumed that while President Zelensky uses Twitter primarily for the purpose of informing the Western media, if he wants to address the population of Russian origin living in the east of Ukraine or directly to Russian citizens, he prefers the Telegram communication platform. His messages are also found as sources in the outputs of the Slovak media, we counted a total of 83. As an example, we can cite an excerpt from an article on the portal www.hnonline.sk from May 20, 2022:

On Friday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky condemned the Russian missile attack on the building of the cultural center in the city of Lozova in the Kharkiv region. Seven people, including an 11-year-old child, were injured in the attack. Zelensky stated this in a post on the Telegram social network.

In the case of using social networks as a secondary source of information, it is interesting to draw attention to one unique moment that concerns the Ukrainian media The Kyiv Independent. While in the case of other media, Twitter has more of an additional function, in the case of the mentioned media it is an information channel, which becomes a source of information used by the Slovak media as well. Out of the total number of 496 citations, up to 126 came from Twitter managed by The Kyiv Independent portal. As an example, we can take an excerpt from an article on the portal www.topky.sk from May 17, 2022:

21:15 The Ukrainian army is liberating another settlement in the Kharkiv region. On May 18, Ukraine regained control over the village of Dementiivka. Hostilities with the Russian forces continue in another village, Ternova.

— The Kyiv Independent (@KyivIndependent) May 18, 2022

Conclusion

Although our study did not demonstrate a disproportionate use of secondary sources on a relatively comprehensive sample, it cannot be unequivocally confirmed that in the case of the work of the monitored media there is objective information about the conflict. Following the above-mentioned opinion of Denis McQuail, that the text can be conceived biasedly and in favor of one side despite its factual basis, it could be useful for the sake of correctness to carry out follow-up research on the selected one through one of the used qualitative methods.

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SÁNDOR FEKETE

On a Narrow Sphere: Hungary's Position in the Russian-Ukrainian War

Abstract: Hungary has taken a unique approach toward the current most important geopolitical situation concerning the European Union and NATO. Seemingly disrupting Western unity by being hostile towards the ally, Ukraine, while keeping good relations with the enemy, Russia, Hungary's stance has been widely criticized but seldom understood. Hungary's strained relationship with Ukraine stems in particular interethnic conflict and its relationship with Russia is mostly pragmatic, not ideological. Research also shows that even though Hungary is presented in the international media as a 'black sheep', its stance has sympathies in the West and stems in popular support domestically.

Keywords: Hungary, Ukraine, Russia, minority.

Introduction

Hungary has been quite the prominent actor of international politics and a frequent talking point of global media through Viktor Orbán's tenure as prime minister since 2010, despite its small size and geopolitical relevance. Now, as the war in Ukraine shapes day-to-day discourse it's almost natural that Hungary would take centre stage once again and stir further controversy within the European Union and NATO communities.

Hungary has been criticised as the only country standing in the way of a unified response against Russian aggression in the West. In my paper I will try to not only investigate the reasons for this 'deviance', but also disprove this assumption by showing that differing national interests hinder a unified support for Ukraine and complete disassociation with Russia even without Hungary.

First, we will have an overview of Hungary's role in the Russo-Ukrainian war and the nature of the government's relationship with it. Second, we will look at the reasons behind this: Hungary's relationships with Ukraine and Russia, and the domestic politics that influence Hungarian international affairs. Lastly, I would also like to point out the popular background of the Hungarian government's stance and how it compares with other EU countries' opinions and interests.

Hungary and the War

As a neighbouring country of Ukraine, Hungary has been directly affected by the Russian invasion since its start on 24 February. So far (the end of July 2022), over 995 thousand refugees have arrived from Ukraine to Hungary, one tenth of the total figure of refugees who had to leave their home country because of the war [United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs].

Since the outbreak of the conflict, Hungary's local communities and volunteers have taken part in welcoming these refugees and offering humanitarian aid to them at the borders and transit centres as well as offering them refuge in private and municipal residences. The Hungarian government however has not been as straight-forward in showing its solidarity to Ukrainians [Gall 2022].

The government has positioned itself internationally between East and West regarding the war. On one hand, Hungary aligns with and serves Eastern interests through the government's reluctant support for sanctions against Russia, not only refusing to aid Ukraine with armaments, but also blocking all weapons shipments going through Hungarian territory altogether[1], spreading pro-Russian narratives in state media by blaming the war on failed US foreign policy, avoiding labelling the conflict as a war, and going as far as drawing parallels between Hitler and president Zelensky [Eszter 2022]. Prime minister Viktor Orbán himself called the Ukrainian head of state an enemy of the Hungarian nation and has maintained his opposition against severing ties with Russia, first stressed in protest against 'the renewal of a cold war' in 2015, during the first wave of EU sanctions responding to the annexation of Crimea [Hadas, Holland 2022].

On the other hand, as a member of the European Union and a close ally of the United States of America through its NATO membership, Hungary has thus far supported most sanctions imposed on Russia: Hungary gave the green light to banning Russian banks from SWIFT, banning Russian flights from European airspace, and the supply of EU and NATO weapons to Ukraine. Hungary also fulfils the obligation it has on the defence of European borders [Eszter 2022].

Ukrainian-Hungarian Relations

The first reason behind Hungary's peculiar stance on the issue is its relationship with Ukraine. Even though the government has been friendly with Russia, Hungary also voiced support for Ukrainian EU-membership in 2016. Hungary offered visa-free

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[1] This is done to avoid making the Hungarian minority in Ukraine a target for Russian retribution, according to the government's narrative.

travel to all Ukrainians despite the European Union's earlier reluctance to do so. Hungary also openly vowed to not only respect Ukrainian sovereignty but also to assist in reinforcing it. In return, Hungary asked Ukraine's support for the Hungarian minority living within its borders. At that moment, the prime minister of Ukraine described Ukrainian-Hungarian relations as very positive and Ukraine as proud to have the Hungarian minority within its national borders [Cabinet office of the Prime Minister 2022a].

In contrast, the animosity between the two countries has hit unprecedented levels since the start of the Russian invasion. Top Hungarian officials have gone as far as personally insulting the Ukrainian president and criticizing Ukraine for not being thankful enough to Hungary [Sinka 2022]. The Hungarian government has also criticized the European Union for implementing sanctions against Russia, claiming that they are counterproductive and are against Ukraine's interests as well. In contrast, Ukraine claims the sanctions help their cause by weakening Russia's ability to wage war [RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service 2022]. Ukraine also accused Hungary of serving Russian interests by rejecting the principles behind EU-sanctions, thereby acting as a 'trojan horse' for Putin within the bloc [Sinka 2022].

The stark contrast between the two countries' relations compared to only 6 years ago cannot be attributed to a Hungarian change of heart: Hungary has not had a change of government since 2010 and its foreign policy has largely been consistent regarding the EU and Russia as well. Therefore, we must look at what changed in Ukraine between 2016 and 2022.

The Hungarian Minority in Ukraine

Hungary itself was among the first nations to recognize Ukraine's independence in exchange for guarantees on their recognition of the native Hungarian minority's[2] rights to use their mother tongue and practice their own culture [The New York Times 2022]. Conflicts around this minority in Subcarpathia however have surfaced only in the past decade. Viktor Orbán's government granted Hungarian citizenship to the community and has been funding its local schools, churches, businesses, and newspapers, thereby securing extra votes for the Hungarian general elections but also creating stronger ties with the minority than what they have with their home country of Ukraine. Subcarpathian Hungarians have also started to observe the Remembrance

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[2] They ended up under Ukrainian authority after the turbulent border-changes of the 20th century, whereby after the 1920 treaty of Trianon Subcarpathia (also known as Transcarpathia or Zakarpattia) first became part of Czechoslovakia, then independent, reconquered by Hungary, then annexed by the USSR as part of the Ukrainian SSR and finally remained part of Ukraine after the breakup of the Soviet Union.

Day of the Trianon treaty, strengthening a sentimental bond to the idea of a Greater Hungary. Contemporaneously, Subcarpathian Hungarians also tend to listen to government-affiliated Hungarian news channels where they face pro-Russian narratives, such as the Russian *casus belli* of needing to protect the Russian minority instead of wanting to conquer land. These facts have aroused Ukrainian suspicions over the Hungarian minority's true loyalties [The New York Times 2022].

The outbreak of the Russo-Ukrainian war in 2014 not only resulted in Ukrainian animosity toward its Russian minority but also worsened the relationship with the Hungarian minority as well. Several incidents of nationalist extremism targeted Subcarpathian Hungarians: Marches were held in Uzhhorod with an intent of intimidation, their flags have been ripped down and their cultural centre has been attacked twice in 2017 and 2018 [Lajosi2022; The New York Times]. The Ukrainian government claimed Russian provocation behind some of these incidents [Coynash 2019], as part of Russia's plan of undermining Ukrainian national unity, some warning that these provocations were meant to create causes for a future Russian invasion. Similar conflicts have erupted in Ukraine around a supposed Ruthenian autonomy, Romanian independence in Bukovina and other separatist protests in Lviv and Odesa, all either fabricated or blown out of proportion by the Russian news agency, TASS [Lajosi 2022].

Ukraine, however, has not been without fault in the escalation of ethnic tensions. Aimed against the Russian minority, they implemented controversial language laws in 2017, limiting the use of minority languages in school, and in 2019, making Ukrainian compulsory in all spheres of public life, effectively only allowing all other languages to be spoken in private or during religious events. This resulted in Hungary blocking ministerial-level political meetings between NATO and Ukraine ever since 2018. Aside from Hungarians, the country's Bulgarian, Greek, Romanian, and Polish minorities were affected as well, prompting similar outcries from all kin-states and even international organizations such as the Council of Europe, the Venice Commission, the European Union, and NATO itself [Washington Times 2021].

Hungary protested that the new language laws pose a threat to the existence of Ukraine's minorities instead of improving the quality of teaching the national language. The Hungarian government's narrative therefore blames Ukraine of following Putin's playbook by depriving minorities of their fundamental rights, creating tense interethnic relations by speaking against these rights, and tolerating hate-speech against the minorities. This would result in a destabilized, weak Ukraine, fulfilling the goal of the Russian provocations. Hungary has reiterated its support for Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity but underlined that it cannot support their Western integration until human rights are again fully respected. This being not only right by principle, but also aligning with Ukraine's national interests [Washington Times 2021].

Russian-Hungarian Relations

The second reason behind Hungary's unique stance on the war is its positive relationship with Russia. Hungary has acted as a 'spokesperson' for them within the EU and NATO, alienating even its closest allies [Gosling 2022] and leading some to suspect this being the true intention behind blocking past talks with Ukraine [Eszter 2022; Hadas, Holland 2022]. Although formally siding with Ukraine in the conflict, the Hungarian government continues to avoid antagonizing Putin's regime both internationally and domestically [The New York Times]. In fact, Orbán has been classified as Putin's ally in the Russian information war by portraying Russia in government-affiliated media as a victim of the West's bullying [Lajosi 2022].

To see the reason behind this, we must understand another aspect of Orbán's foreign policy. The ruling Fidesz-KDNP coalition declared an 'Eastern Opening' economic policy after 2010, whereby the Hungarian market opened toward Russia and China, inevitably building stronger ties with these powers than before. This was in part a prerequisite to run the system of 'Overhead Reduction' (Rezsicsökkentés) which put a price cap on utilities since 2013, keeping consumers' energy bills low and resistant against market fluctuations. To minimize the government's spending on the difference between the real market price and the reduced price, the procurement of cheap Russian gas supplies was needed even at the cost of going against the EU's struggle of decreasing Eastern energy dependence. Aside from gas, Hungary's need for cheap electricity too led to creating further ties with Russia. The expansion of the nuclear reactor complex at Paks has been planned to be carried out with Russia's atomic energy agency, Rosatom. The need to sustain this cooperation led to Hungary criticizing the first economic sanctions against its partner after the 2014 annexation of Crimea [Hadas, Holland 2022]. These same reasons stand behind the current reluctance for implementing newer sanctions and the opposition of the sanctions deliberately affecting energy imports from Russia. This is why Hungary notoriously accepted Russia's demand of paying for imported natural gas in roubles instead of euros, which prompted Ukraine to again accuse Hungary of helping Putin in waging war and undermining EU unity with its continued hostility toward Ukraine [Askew 2022].

The Role of the Media

Russian influence has not only affected Hungarian energy dependence but seemingly shaped the entire political landscape in Hungary. Viktor Orbán has been following President Vladimir Putin's leadership model for quite some time, where the ruling party exercises strong control over the country's media environment and

ensures the loyalty of an oligarchy made rich with state contracts. One could argue that authoritarianism in Hungary developed without a need for a Russian example to follow, however we cannot disregard the fact that Orbán himself expressed great admiration for it when praising non-liberal models of governing in his infamous 2014 speech on illiberal democracy [Mandiner 2014].

What is sure, is that the Fidesz-KDNP government has relied greatly on an anti-EU and anti-Western rhetoric to mobilize its voter base, speaking to those who feel let down by Hungary's 2004 EU accession and those rural voters who feel left behind the Budapest elite's opportunities. Courting Putin therefore cannot be explained with economic interests alone, but also as a part of Orbán's continuous campaign against Brussels [Hadas, Holland 2022].

It cannot be overlooked however, that Hungary still has an EU-dependent economy and relies greatly on NATO for military defence. The political elite and mainstream media therefore have refrained from advocating for a sort of 'Huxit' and kept a positive or at least neutral view on the existing military alliances. Anti-NATO narratives and outright Kremlin propaganda are however spread in the media's 'grey zone'[3] and social media, what's more, some media outlets also tend to adopt unfiltered news from the state news agency, MTI, often reporting unedited Russian standpoints. This, coupled with the government projecting a positive image of Russia for the past years, resulted in a dissensus regarding NATO's priorities among Hungarians, making Ukraine's support an issue divided along party sympathies [Political Capital 2022].

The government's narrative also outgrew the country's borders, so to speak. In part due poor coverage of Ukrainian cable television in (Hungarian-populated) border areas, Subcarpathian Hungarians have also been largely exposed to pro-Russia and anti-Western narratives through Hungarian coverage. This, combined with seeing that Hungary funds them more than the Ukrainian state does, casts their doubts over whether Ukraine genuinely wants them to integrate [The New York Times].

The Hungarian minority however rejects separatist sentiments. The Hungarian Cultural Association of Subcarpathia (KMKSZ) voiced its support for Ukrainian territorial integrity and assured the community of the Hungarian state's continued effort to support Ukrainian EU-membership [Lajosi 2022]. In contrast, irredentist sentiments regarding Subcarpathia are kept alive in Hungary itself. According to a member of the parliamentary radical nationalist Mi Hazánk (Our Homeland) party, Ukrainians fear the opportunity granted by the Russian invasion for Hungarian territorial expansion [Kalan 2022]. We cannot discard these views as simple conspiracy theories, since Ukrainian governmental figures have voiced similar concerns

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[3] Openly biased outlets that lack the funds and professional background of the mainstream media, adopting sources from alternate portals spreading Kremlin narratives.

and as a chain reaction even Slovak politicians have expressed their own fears of Hungarian irredentist claims targeting Slovakia's territorial integrity [Lajosi 2022].

Both the KMKSZ and the Hungarian Democratic Federation in Ukraine (UMDSZ) dismissed such irredentist notions however, claiming that the Subcarpathian minority does not aspire for nor will initiate amendments to the recent language laws nor push for any sort of autonomy. In their opinion, interethnic relations aren't as tense in day-to-day life as in they are for example in the Donbas, Transnistria, Abkhazia, or South Ossetia. Despite their political differences, Hungarians and Ukrainians coexist peacefully and although Hungarians don't see the war as their own struggle, they won't take advantage of it either [Kalan 2022]..

Popular support and the International Context

The Hungarian government's accusation of Ukraine being nationalist and extremist was dismissed by the UMDSZ as a show put on for the general election campaign [Kalan 2022].. This suggests that not only does Fidesz-KDNP mobilize its voter base by maintaining a strong anti-Western rhetoric but also that the people require of them a certain animosity toward Ukraine in protest of the perceived oppression against Hungarians. Research shows that Hungarians are the least supportive of Ukraine's accession to the European Union and NATO, and most perceive Russia as a strategic partner the same way as before the invasion. The governing parties also must cater to the need of Hungarians to be more aligned between the Eastern and Western powers than fully committing to one or the other [Hajdu, Klingová, Kazaz, Kortiš 2022].

The role of the April elections cannot be understated as the war became a focal point for government communications in search for popular support. During the campaign Fidesz-KNDP was portrayed by government-affiliated media as the sole guarantor of peace and security for Hungarians, including those in Subcarpathia, by depicting the opposition as wanting to join the war on the side of Ukraine [Lajosi 2022]. This strategy was built on exploiting a national consensus: nine out of ten Hungarians agreed that the country has to stay out of the conflict and everything has to be done to keep it this way according to a study done in late February by a right-leaning think tank. Only 9% of people were of the opinion that active participation in anti-Russian action would be more important than staying out of the war [Szazadveg 2022].

Instead of feeling a greater need to support Ukraine, the Hungarian population doubled down on its anti-Ukrainian sentiments and Russian sympathies in the past months. Fewer people view the invasion as Russian aggression than before (showing an 8% drop over 2 months) with more people now thinking Russia is defending itself (15% in early March versus 25% in early May). Looking at party sympathies,

we can see that Fidesz-KDNP voters are content with the government's approach to the war and reject a stronger condemnation of Russia. In general, support for this inbetweener stance has risen, attributed by the left-wing media as a result of the government media's adoption of Russian propaganda [Harsányi 2022].

The government's foreign policy also enjoys the support of a substantial part of the opposition's voter base, since most Hungarians generally reject EU sanctions that would result in higher energy bills. Another common point between Fidesz-KDNP and opposition voters however is the preference for Hungarian alignment with Western values and rejecting getting closer to Russia at a cost of distancing the country from the EU and the US [Harsányi 2022].

The Hungarian government's standpoint has not only found its sympathies among the domestic opposition, but also with countries that support Ukraine more staunchly. It is in fact Germany that resists sanctions against Russian energy imports the most, having had a broader cooperation with Russia and now seemingly hiding behind Hungary's louder voice in the international scene. In fact, Hungary has never been a key actor on EU policy toward Russia. Along with it, several other countries could be accused of 'undermining EU unity': Italy and Finland have also built strong ties with Russia, Austria also blocks sanctions on energy imports, and Spain is even deepening its energy dependence at the moment [Hadas, Holland 2022; Azonnali 2022]. This approach would paint Hungary not as much as the 'black sheep', but more as the 'patsy' of the European Union.

It must be stressed that although the EU's popular support for Ukraine seems strong with Hungary alone being the outlier, people in Bulgaria, Greece and Slovakia share remarkably similar views on Russia's culpability. While there is an overwhelming support for humanitarian aid, most EU citizens oppose direct military involvement or higher energy costs due to sanctions. In general, Bulgarians show the lowest support for Ukraine, Hungarians polling much higher on agreement with providing aid and taking in refugees [YouGov 2022].

Conclusion

The Hungarian standpoint therefore is not as peculiar as one would think at first glance. Several countries have similar or stronger ties with Russia and some EU member states' populations side with Russia more than Hungarians do. Hungary's relationship with Ukraine is more unique, but not tied directly to Orbán's politics: The protection of ethnic Hungarian communities is a constitutional obligation, not just the current government's priority [Washington Times 2021]. The Hungarian government however admits that the need for peace outweighs ethnic conflicts at the moment, but the way of achieving this peace is the true issue on which they diverge from the European

Union. Viktor Orbán declared at his 2022 oath of office that sanctions against Russia will not work [Cabinet office of the Prime Minister 2022a] and reiterated his views more recently in his controversial speech in Băile Tuşnad: While the West believes that 1. Ukraine can win a war against Russia with Anglo-American training and NATO weaponry, 2. sanctions will weaken Russia and destabilize Moscow, 3. we can manage the economic consequences of these sanctions, meaning they hurt Russia more than they hurt us, and 4. the world will line up behind us because we are right, the reality is that this strategy failed and this war might mark the end of Western hegemony in the world [Cabinet office of the Prime Minister 2022 b].

This is how Hungary once again tries to shape international discourse in its own way, adopting a standpoint that could garner sympathies with countries who have similar views or interests, but with an undertone that is sceptical toward the entire Western community and truly questions the need for the unity that the European Union and NATO are trying to achieve. The latter is the true reason behind Hungary's alienation in the issue and the international community's difficulty in trying to understand Hungary's individual interests. Although it was speculated that Hungary would finally have to choose between East and West [Hadas, Holland, 2022], it seems that this consistent behaviour might survive against the odds of these unprecedented times.

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The book is dedicated to the topic and relevant issue, namely the impact of the war in Ukraine on the policy of the Visegrad Group countries. Collective monography deals with various aspects of relationship.

The above-mentioned covering of various aspects (international relations, asylum policy, aid, including military supplements, institutional assistance, parliamentary political debates, security policy, strategic environment, hybrid threats, media attention) makes the relatively heterogeneous character of the book.

The book can be characterized as a fruitful contribution to recent academic research on the regional impact of the war and the political situation in East Central Europe. It can be used mainly in the following scientific disciplines: political science, international relations, security and strategic studies, area studies, and media I communication studies. The book could also be helpful for decision-makers, journalists, and the educative sphere, including diplomatic education.

An excerpt from the review by Prof. Miroslav Mareš