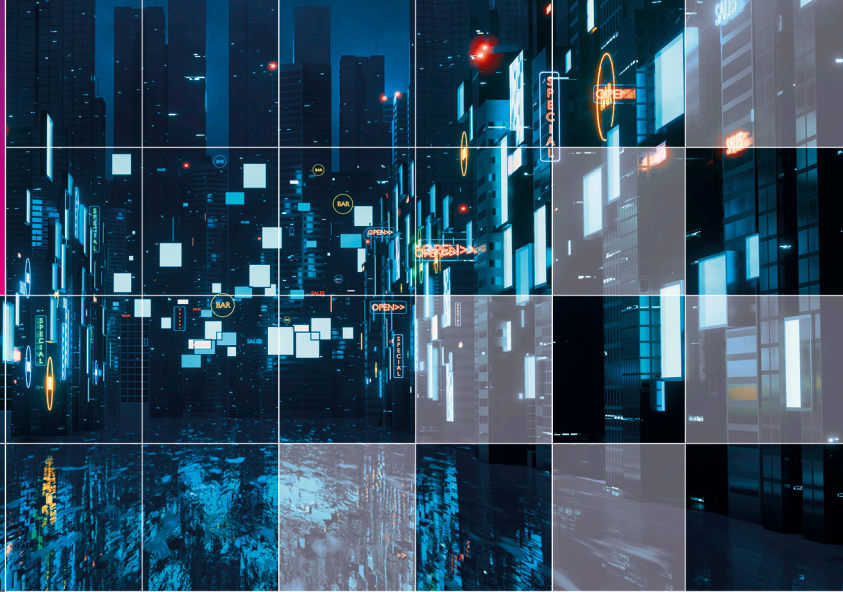


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Yearbook of the Institute of East-Central Europe  
Volume 21 (2023) Issue 2

# Cooperation Formats in Central and Eastern Europe: Determinants, Current State of Affairs, and Perspectives

International health security

The European Political Community: A Polish perspective

“But then the war started”: The value of diversity  
in editorial practices during times of war and crisis

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# Cooperation Formats in Central and Eastern Europe: Determinants, Current State of Affairs, and Perspectives

EDITED BY  
Beata Surmacz  
Tomasz Stępniewski

Instytut Europy Środkowej  
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## Table of content

Marek Pietraś	
<b>International health security</b>	7
Paweł Olszewski, Piotr Stolarczyk	
<b>Health policies in the Balkan Region: An overview and chosen examples</b>	35
Agnieszka K. Cianciara	
<b>The European Political Community: A Polish perspective</b>	55
Justyna Marzec	
<b>The hydrogen policy of the Visegrad Countries: A comparative study</b>	73
Paulina Szeląg	
<b>Regional cooperation formats and the issue of military security of post-conflict states. Case study of the South-East European Cooperation Process</b>	91
Sabina Olszyk	
<b>Defence diplomacy of the Bucharest Nine (B9) countries during the war in Ukraine. The balance of the first year of the war</b>	109
Dariusz Magier, Madi Tursynbekovich Shotayev, Talgat Zhandosovich Makhanbayev	
<b>Communist Party documents from the period of its rule in Kazakhstan and Poland: A comparative study</b>	135

(Dis)information in contemporary armed conflicts

Katarzyna Kopecka-Piech, Dorota Dyksik, Mateusz Sobiech <b>The construction of fake war news. Specificities of disinformation in social media during the first six months of the Russia-Ukraine war</b>	155
Greta Gober, Anna Jupowicz-Ginalska <b>“But then the war started”: The value of diversity in editorial practices during times of war and crisis</b>	175
Nataliia Voitovych, Liliya Imbirovska-Syvakivska <b>The spread of Russian disinformation within the Ukrainian information field</b>	197
Tetiana Zinovieva <b>War in Ukraine through the lens of interactive media: A typological study of video games</b>	213
Yaroslav Syvakivskyi, Ivan Krupskyi <b>Ethical problems with coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian war in online media and social networks</b>	231

Marek Pietraś\*

# International health security

## Międzynarodowe bezpieczeństwo zdrowotne

**Abstract:** The paper proposes the classification of health security as one of the non-military security dimensions of the second generation, determined more by globalization processes than by the end of the Cold War (first generation). The cognitive goal of the article is to identify and analyse the elements of the structure of international health security such as 1) the essence and specificity of securitization of threats to health security; 2) health security threats; 3) the referent object or whom it concerns; and 4) measures to ensure it. Specific to this dimension is the political motivation for its securitization. In the world of interrelated and global mobilities, what is significant for health security is the diversity of the development level, preferred values, and, consequently, the diversity of sensitivity and susceptibility of national healthcare systems to cross-border threats.

**Keywords:** international health security, cross-border character of health security threats, securitization, provision of health security

**Streszczenie:** W artykule zaproponowano klasyfikację bezpieczeństwa zdrowotnego jako jednego z pozamilitarnych wymiarów bezpieczeństwa drugiej generacji, zdeteminowanego bardziej procesami globalizacyjnymi niż końcem zimnej wojny (pierwsza generacja). Celem poznawczym artykułu jest identyfikacja i analiza elementów struktury międzynarodowego bezpieczeństwa zdrowotnego, takich jak: 1) istota i specyfika sekurytyzacji zagrożeń bezpieczeństwa zdrowotnego; 2) zagrożenia bezpieczeństwa zdrowia; 3) przedmiot odniesienia lub którego dotyczy; oraz 4) środki to zapewniające. Specyficzna dla tego wymiaru jest polityczna motywacja jego sekurytyzacji. W świecie wzajemnie powiązanych i globalnych mobilności istotne dla bezpieczeństwa zdrowotnego jest zróżnicowanie poziomu rozwoju, preferowanych wartości, a co za tym idzie, zróżnicowanie wrażliwości i podatności krajowych systemów opieki zdrowotnej na zagrożenia transgraniczne.

**Słowa kluczowe:** międzynarodowe bezpieczeństwo zdrowotne, transgraniczny charakter zagrożeń bezpieczeństwa zdrowotnego, sekurytyzacja, zapewnienie bezpieczeństwa zdrowotnego

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Health security is a value, the object of political practice and cognition. Its emergence at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries confirms the broadening of the subjective and objective scope of security, determined by the change of social reality and by new threats. In recent decades, this process has accelerated, thereby contributing to an increase in the number of non-military dimensions of security resulting from the securitization of threats specific to each dimension. In the 21st century, in addition to terrorism, the highest dynamic – the height of which was the Covid-19 pandemic – was shown by public health threats. Their cross-border nature made them an international security dimension, also essential for the national security of states.

The paper proposes to classify health security as one of the non-military security dimensions of a second generation, acknowledging that the first generation is the five dimensions proposed by the Copenhagen School after the end of the Cold War. The second generation is security dimensions determined first of all by globalization processes, their specific narrowing of time and space, and by people's mobility. The criterion for distinguishing between the two generations is the different quality (the end of the Cold War, globalization processes) of independent variables at the level of the international system that determine the securitized security threats.

The cognitive goal of the paper is to analyse the elements of the structure of international health security such as 1) the essence and specificity of securitization of threats to health security; 2) health security threats; 3) the referent object or whom it concerns; and 4) measures to ensure it. With regard to each of the elements, the study focused on their specificity and the individual autonomy characteristic of international health security. An attempt was made to answer several questions: What is the specificity of securitization of threats to health security? What is the scope of the threats to it? Who does health security apply to? How to ensure health security?

The research methodology covers 1) the application of the assumptions of the Copenhagen School, security dimension, and their securitization as well as the Welsh School's concept of human security; 2) identification of the independent variables of health security; 3) the concept of levels of analysis distinguishing between the level of the international system and that of the state; and 4) research techniques such as analysis of the content of documents and the state of research.

## 1. Specificity of securitization of threats to international health security

The concept of *health security* probably first appeared in the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) published in 1994. It was used in connection with the concept of *human security*, regarded as one of the seven components of the latter<sup>1</sup>. That attention was only paid to health security relatively late – as compared with other non-military dimensions of security – is surprising inasmuch as the Preamble to the WHO Statute stipulates that the health of the people is the basis for achieving peace and security<sup>2</sup>, with the interdependence between health and security being clearly indicated. However, this reasoning was not reflected in the political decisions and actions during several decades after the end of World War II. In the world of two-bloc rivalry, and mutually assured destruction by nuclear weapons, health threats were classified as so-called *low politics*<sup>3</sup>, as a humanitarian rather than political problem<sup>4</sup>. The elimination of smallpox in the 1970s was conducive to thinking that the risk of global infectious diseases was low, at least in developed states<sup>5</sup>.

Health threats were securitized and included in the analysis of security when its meaning was redefined after the end of the Cold War, although it was not the fact of its end that was decisive; two factors are essential, firstly the change of social reality. Under the conditions of the general growth in the importance of non-military security threats in the environment of globalization processes, and people's mobility, there was an increase in the diversity, intensity, and number of victims of health threats, mainly from epidemics. The second factor is a philosophical inspiration in the form of the biopoliticization of security and politics<sup>6</sup> and the accompanying permissive intellectual climate.

1 *Human Development Report 1994*, New York 1994, pp. 24-26.

2 *Konstytucja Światowej Organizacji Zdrowia*, Dz.U. 1948, no. 61, item 477.

3 D. Fidler, *Health as foreign policy: Between principle and power*, "Whitehead Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations" 2005, vol. 6, no. 2, p. 180; A.M. Farrell, *Managing the dead in disaster response: A matter for health security in the Asia-Pacific region*, "Australian Journal of International Affairs" 2018, vol. 72, no. 6, p. 554.

4 J. Youde, *The securitization of health in the Trump era*, "Australian Journal of International Affairs" 2018, vol. 72, no. 6, pp. 535-536.

5 A.M. Farrell, *op. cit.*, p. 554.

6 M. Dillon, L. Lobo-Guerro, *Biopolitics of security in the 21st century*, "Review of International Studies" 2008, vol. 34, pp. 265-266 and 269.

This means a specific synergy of the change of reality and the resulting new threats and their intellectual acceptance<sup>7</sup>.

Essential for the change of reality justifying the inclusion of health problems and health threats in the thinking about security and its provision was – on the one hand – the increasingly frequent and intense recurrence of health threats in the form of infectious diseases, their epidemics and, with time, pandemics, and on the other hand, it was the intentional use of pathogens in order to have a destructive effect on public life. The growing threat of infectious diseases was a “multiconstituent” and multi-stage process. Especially significant was the emergence and spread of new infectious diseases<sup>8</sup> like HIV/AIDS, cholera epidemics in Peru (1991), SARS in 2002-2003, bird flu from 2003 onwards, H1N1 flu in 2009-2010, MERS in 2015, Zika fever (2015-2016), or SARS-CoV-2 from 2019 onwards<sup>9</sup>. Diseases like tuberculosis, regarded as being under complete control, began to be dangerous again<sup>10</sup>. Infectious diseases became increasingly resistant to the prevailing treatment methods. These changes demonstrated the political importance of threats to health and the need for international cooperation. There was discussion on this microbiological shift in security studies<sup>11</sup>, with the turning point being the HIV/AIDS epidemic<sup>12</sup>, shaping the conviction that infectious diseases are a security threat. There was an increasingly growing awareness – especially in developed countries – that exacerbating the health condition of populations may lead to instability of social life and its “traditional” threats,

- 7 M. Pietraś, *Kategoria “bezpieczeństwo zdrowotne” w studiach bezpieczeństwa*, [in:] H. Chałupczak et al. (eds.), *Zagrożenia bezpieczeństwa w procesach globalizacji. Zagrożenia zdrowotne*, Lublin-Zamość 2022.
- 8 A. Gliński, Z. Żmuda, *Epidemie i pandemie chorób zakaźnych*, “Życie Weterynaryjne” 2020, vol. 95, no. 9, pp. 554-559.
- 9 G. Rockenschaub, J. Pukkila, M. Profili, *Towards health security. A discussion paper on recent health crises in the WHO European Region*, Copenhagen 2007, p. 13; J. Younde, *The securitization...*, p. 536; A. Gliński, Z. Żmuda, op. cit., p. 554.
- 10 A. Price-Smith, *The health of nations: Infectious disease, environmental change, and their effects on national security and development*, Cambridge 2001, p. 3.
- 11 S. Elbe, A. Roemer-Mahler, Ch. Long, *Medical countermeasures for national security: A new government role in the pharmaceuticalization of society*, “Social Science and Medicine” 2015, vol. 131, p. 264.
- 12 S. Harman, *Global health governance*, London 2012, pp. 89 et seq.; S. Elbe, *Should HIV/AIDS be securitized? The ethical dilemmas of linking HIV/AIDS and security*, “International Studies Quarterly” 2006, vol. 50, no. 1, pp. 119 et seq.

while the health of the people means more stable and secure societies<sup>13</sup>. Nor should the cases of bioterrorism be ignored<sup>14</sup>.

The second factor in the securitization of health threats was the “permissive” intellectual climate, i.e., the biopoliticization of security. Inspiration was provided by Michel Foucault’s philosophy presented in the 1970s; to Foucault, the point of reference was not the state’s territory or identity of its population, but human life. He believed that the main task of modern political power is the “administration of life”<sup>15</sup>.

These factors did not decide the “automatic” inclusion of health threats in thinking about security and the practice of its provision. This happened as a result of the securitization of those threats, i.e., the recognition of them as existential for security. The concept of securitization was proposed by the Copenhagen School of Security Studies in the late 1980s and early 1990s<sup>16</sup>. It creates the theoretical framework – despite certain controversies – for the inclusion of threats in the analysis of security and the practice of its provision, substantiating subsequent non-military security dimensions, including health<sup>17</sup>.

O. Waever and B. Buzan defined securitization as an effective speech act, through which a specific social phenomenon, e.g., a public health threat, is treated intersubjectively by a particular subject (actor) as an existential threat to the indicated referent object, e.g., the state, in order to justify the application of extraordinary countermeasures against this threat<sup>18</sup>. The securitization process combines three elements: 1) the speech act recognizing the indicated phenomenon as an existential threat; 2) the securitizing subject (actor), formulating the

13 G. Rockenschaub, J. Pukkila, M. Profili, op. cit., p. 13.

14 J. Kięczkowska, *Bioterroryzm jako zagrożenie dla bezpieczeństwa zdrowotnego*, “TEKA of Political Science and International Relations” 2019, vol. 14, no. 1, pp. 31-43.

15 M. Foucault, *The history of sexuality*, vol. 1: *The will to knowledge*, London 1998, p. 139.

16 B. Buzan, O. Waever, J. de Wilde, *Security. New framework for analysis*, Boulder 1998; O. Waever, *Securitization and desecuritization*, [in:] R. Lipschutz (ed.), *On Security*, New York 1995.

17 H. Stritzel, *Towards a theory of securitization: Copenhagen and beyond*, “European Journal of International Relations” 2007, vol. 13, no. 3, p. 357; C. Yuk-pink Lo, N. Thomas, *The macrosecuritization of antimicrobial resistance in Asia*, “Australian Journal of International Affairs” 2018, vol. 72, no. 6, p. 568; S. Bade, D. Jalea, *Twenty-five years of securitization theory. A corpus-based review*, “Political Studies Review” 2022, vol. 14, no. 1, pp. 2-11.

18 B. Buzan, O. Waever, *Regions and powers. The structure of international security*, Cambridge 2003, p. 491.

speech act; and 3) public opinion, which accepts or rejects the content of the speech act.

A securitization act reflects political and social preferences, thus being a kind of political decision<sup>19</sup>. Not without reason does the Copenhagen School emphasize the privilege of political power centres in formulating it<sup>20</sup>. A valuable proposal, a modification of the assumptions of the Copenhagen School, was suggested by H. Stritzel, drawing attention to the position power of the subject formulating a speech act, especially if this is the state apparatus with its international position<sup>21</sup>.

The problem of “position power” is essential for showing the actor (subject) that initiated the securitization of health threats. It is not the UNDP, which first used the term *health security* in 1994. This actor is the U.S., with its hegemonic position at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, which links health threats with foreign and security policy. In 1999, the United States National Security Council for the first time recognized the HIV/AIDS health problem, an infectious disease spreading cross-border, as a national and global security threat. This view was expressed in 2000 by the United States National Intelligence Council<sup>22</sup>. In 2001, State Secretary Colin Powell recognized that the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Africa was a problem of U.S. national security<sup>23</sup>.

The speech acts of U.S. institutions and politicians for the securitization of infectious diseases are unambiguous and began to be reflected in foreign policy, especially in the forum of the UN and the UN Security Council (UNSC). In 1999-2000, the U.S. Ambassador to the UN tried to convince UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who resisted these arguments, that HIV/AIDS – reducing the population of a state and destabilizing its social life – is not a humanitarian problem but one of security<sup>24</sup>. In 2000, U.S. Vice President Al. Gore suggested in the UNSC that the concept of security should take infectious diseases into account<sup>25</sup>. The United States, in the speech act of its politicians,

19 Ibid., pp. 112-114.

20 B. Buzan, O. Waever, J. de Wilde, op. cit., pp. 31-32.

21 H. Stritzel, op. cit., pp. 364-370.

22 *The global infectious disease threat and its implications for the United States*, NIE 99-17D, January 2000.

23 S. Peterson, *Epidemic disease and national security*, “Security Studies” 2002, vol. 12, no. 2, p. 44.

24 J. Youde, *The securitization...*, p. 537.

25 S. Peterson, op. cit., p. 43.

thereby treated pandemic-related health threats as a security problem rather than humanitarian. With the exception of the term of Donald Trump's presidency, the United States exercised the role of the leader of global actions for healthcare.

Under the conditions of hegemonic "position power" in the early 21st century, the United States began to include health threats caused by pandemics in the decisions of the UN Security Council. Using the Council's "institutional position", the United States strengthened the speech act and securitization of health threats. On 10 January 2000 – at the beginning of the new millennium and for the first time in the UNSC's history – the HIV/AIDS epidemic was referred to as a threat to security and development<sup>26</sup>, with UNSC resolution no. 1308 having been passed on 17 June 2000<sup>27</sup>. The UN General Assembly passed a similar resolution on 2 December 2004<sup>28</sup>.

The securitization of health threats by the UN Security Council with the involvement of the U.S. was carried out with regard to the HIV/AIDS epidemic as a cross-border infectious disease. A *modus operandi* was created resulting in similar responses by the UNSC to further epidemics. In 2014, resolution no. 2177 recognized the Ebola virus epidemic in Liberia, Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Nigeria as a threat to peace and international security with a high potential to destabilize the situation in the region<sup>29</sup>.

In comparison with the resolute response to the Ebola virus threat, the UNSC's response to the Covid-19 epidemic is surprising. The WHO announced the outbreak of the pandemic on 11 March 2020, but the UNSC addressed this threat as late as June. Earlier, on 3 April 2020, the UN General Assembly ONZ had, in its adopted resolution, recognized the Covid-19 pandemic as a global problem that required global cooperation<sup>30</sup>. On 1 July 2020, the UNSC passed resolution no. 2532, recognizing that the Covid-19 pandemic may threaten peace and se-

26 *The impact of AIDS on peace and security in Africa*, Security Council, 4087th Meeting Monday, 10 January 2000, S/PV.4087

27 Resolution 1308 (2000) adopted by the Security Council at its 4172nd meeting, on 17 July 2000, S/RES/1308 (2000).

28 United Nations, General Assembly Resolution A /59/565.

29 Resolution 2177 (2014) adopted by the Security Council on 18 September 2014, S/RES/2177 (2014).

30 Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 2 April 2020, A/RES/74/270.

curity, and demanding that armed conflicts impeding its prevention should cease<sup>31</sup>.

This tardiness of response, which could be explained by the political position of China as the place where the pandemic appeared, was criticized by analysts<sup>32</sup>. It also contrasted with many statements by politicians, who treated the pandemic in their speech acts as a threat to security, using the metaphor of war. Even Donald Trump recognized that he was a wartime president<sup>33</sup>; President E. Macron declared that France was at war, and Chinese President Xi Jinping spoke about the war of the Chinese against Covid-19<sup>34</sup>. UN Secretary-General A. Guterres said that the world was experiencing the blackest scenario since the UNO was established, threatening international security, and the WHO Director-General used the war metaphor to emphasize the enormity of the challenges<sup>35</sup>. The concerted formulation of the speech act securitizing Covid-19 – in contrast to HIV/AIDS or even Ebola – involves numerous politicians as well as international functionaries.

The securitization of health threats, cross-border epidemics, and the involvement of the U.S. in this process, as well as leaders of other states in the case of Covid-19, justifies several conclusions. Firstly, the subjects (actors) that formulate the speech act are Western developed states, with the leadership role of the U.S. and its strategic preferences and interests. The U.S. perceived epidemics as threats arising in the states of the global South and feared that under the conditions of people's global mobility, they would be transmitted to the developed states. In this context, the act of securitization was treated pragmatically, as a way to arouse the interest of the media, societies, political elites, and international institutions, and to increase funding for health threats. This also meant focusing on the concerns of the "North" and perceiving the "South" as the source of disease threats<sup>36</sup>. Likewise, it

31 Resolution 2532 (2020) adopted by the Security Council on 1 July 2020, S/RES/2532 (2020).

32 B. Charbonneau, *The COVID-19 test of the United Nations Security Council*, "International Journal" 2021, vol. 76, no. 1, pp. 6-16.

33 "The Guardian", 22 March 2020.

34 I. Wright, *Are we at war? The politics of securitizing the coronavirus*, "E-International Relations", 10 January 2021, p. 2.

35 D.E. Duarte, M. Valenca, *Securitizing Covid-19? The politics of global health and the limits of the Copenhagen School*, "Contexto International" 2021, vol. 43, no. 2, p. 236.

36 L. Weir, *Inventing global health security, 1994-2005*, [in:] S. Rushton, J. Youde (eds.), *The Routledge handbook of global health security*, New York 2015, p. 20.

confirmed the growing significance of the actors of politics in the securitization of the second generation of non-military security threats. It appears that in the securitization of these first-generation threats, e.g., ecological, the speech act was already formulated during the Cold War, first of all by the scholarly circles and the epistemic communities that they formed<sup>37</sup>. Politicians took the role of the accepting “public”, which was confirmed in the early 1990s in the security strategies of NATO, OSCE, and many countries, including Poland in 1992. As regards the scholarly circles, these are absent from the securitization of health threats.

Secondly, the dominance of political will in the securitization of health threats has contributed to an increase in the importance of the problem of desecuritization and the instrumental significance of the two opposing actions. Securitization can dynamize political actions for the increased funding and development of national healthcare systems, and for increasing development aid for these purposes. A tendency to desecuritize occurs when health threats are under control, solved as a result of “normal” politics rather than extraordinary measures<sup>38</sup>.

Thirdly, a feature of cross-border securitized health threats is the large sphere of their impact, even on the global scale, as demonstrated by the Covid-19 pandemic. In this context, critics of the mechanism of securitization accused it of Eurocentrism, i.e., focusing on threats in Europe, at the average level. Influenced by such views, B. Buzan and O. Waever proposed the concept of macrosecuritization, at the global level<sup>39</sup>. In addition to pandemics and antibiotic resistance, they included the Cold War, wars against terror, and combating piracy<sup>40</sup>.

The securitization of health threats supported by the U.S. with the involvement of the UNSC met with the “asymmetrical” acceptance of the international community. On the one hand, it began to be reflected in the decisions of international, global but also regional, especially Western, organizations. In 2004, the UN report *A more secure world:*

37 L. Brown, *Redefining national security*. Worldwatch Paper 14, Washington DC 1977, wrote about ecological and economic security, and J. Mathews-Tuchman, *Redefining security*, “Foreign Affairs” 1989, vol. 68, no. 2, p. 162, about economic, ecological, and demographic security.

38 A.M. Farrell, op. cit., pp. 551-553.

39 B. Buzan, O. Waever, *Macrosecuritization and security constellations: Reconsidering scale in securitization theory*, “Review of International Studies” 2009, vol. 35, no. 2, p. 257.

40 C. Yuk-pink Lo, N. Thomas, op. cit., p. 569.



*Our shared responsibility* pointed, using the example of HIV/AIDS, to links between health and security<sup>41</sup>. In the program for 2006-2015, the WHO made the debate on health security its priority<sup>42</sup>. The ASEAN carried out the securitization of health problems during the SARS epidemic in 2003<sup>43</sup>. The NATO security strategy of 2010 underlined “health risks”<sup>44</sup>. In the EU, health security appeared in the communiqué of the European Commission on 11 November 2020, that is during the Covid-19 pandemic<sup>45</sup>. On the other hand, during the period before the Ebola pandemic, many states of the global South opposed the use of the term “health security” and the identification of healthcare measures with security actions. They, therefore, opted for the desecuritization of healthcare. The reasons for such a stance were varied. On the one hand, there were differences between the developed and developing states in defining health security. On the other hand, the developing states viewed the securitization of health threats by the developed states as the particularistic interests of the rich North, which wanted to protect itself from pandemics occurring in the states of the poor South<sup>46</sup>. In this context, i.a. Brazil, India, Indonesia, and Thailand expressed their opposition to the attempt, mainly by the U.S., to introduce the term “global health security” with a suggestion that it should be a superior category organising international cooperation in healthcare. As a result of the opposition by the foregoing and other states, the WHO refrained from using the term “health security”<sup>47</sup>. However, after the outbreak of the Ebola epidemic in 2014, the opposition of the developing states to linking health problems with security abated. The Ebola epidemic was perceived as a global crisis, exposing

41 *A more secure world: Our shared responsibility*, Report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, New York 2004, p. 12.

42 *Eleventh General Programme of Work, 2006-2015*, WHO, A 59/25, 24 April 2006.

43 M. Caballero-Anthony, *Health and human security challenges in Asia: new agendas for strengthening regional health governance*, “Australian Journal of International Relations” 2018, vol. 72, no. 6, p. 602.

44 *Koncepcja strategiczna NATO z 2010*.

45 *Budowanie Europejskiej Unii Zdrowotnej: Zwiększenie odporności UE na transgraniczne zagrożenia zdrowia*, COM(2020) 724.

46 A. Kamradt-Scott, *Securing Indo-Pacific health security: Australia's approach to regional health security*, “Australian Journal of International Affairs” 2018, vol. 72, no. 6, p. 501.

47 *Ibid.*

social inequalities inside the states and between them as well as the weaknesses of the global system of healthcare management<sup>48</sup>.

Consequently, a political consensus developed on presenting public health threats by using the language of the analysis of security problems. In 2014, the U.S. initiated the program *Global Health Security Agenda*. It was conceived as the actions by states, international organizations, and civil society organizations to promote global health security, reduce threats caused by epidemics, and promote and implement the WHO's international health regulations. The program, initiated and supported by the U.S., contributed to the integration of actions for health security at the level of the global international system.

The political consensus, achieved in the middle of the second decade of the 21st century, concerning the presentation of health threats as a security problem, did not limit the discussions in academic circles and their critical opinions<sup>49</sup>. Attention was drawn to the fact that the global problems of healthcare become a priority only when the Western developed states are endangered. In the case of the Ebola epidemic, the media coverage caused the fear of Western societies and pressure on centres of political power. Consequently, the problem concerning African countries turned into the problem of Western states, their societies, and their security. A conviction was expressed that discussion on health security is the reflective thinking about the power structures and interests of highly developed states, striving to protect their populations against diseases in developing states<sup>50</sup>. This disparity between the interests of the developed and developing countries caused the WHO to balance in its documents the requirements of human health and international security.

Furthermore, during the Ebola epidemic, it was observed that the developed states, when involved in fighting the epidemic, did not focus on social, economic, and political causes of the weaknesses of healthcare systems in African states but on inventing vaccines and medicines. It appears that what was essential for such measures was

48 A. Roemer-Mahler, S. Rushton, *Introduction: Ebola and international relations*, "Third World Quarterly" 2016, vol. 37, no. 3, p. 373.

49 S. Rushton, *Global health security: Security for whom? Security from what?*, "Political Studies" 2011, vol. 59, no. 4, pp. 779 et seq.; S. Elbe, op. cit., pp. 119 et seq.

50 A. Kamradt-Scott, op. cit., p. 509.

the interests of Western pharmaceutical companies. Reports wrote about the “pharmaceuticalization” of the global policy of healthcare in connection with its securitization. It was claimed that health securitization creates solutions that facilitate subsequent pharmaceutical responses<sup>51</sup>.

In addition, it was emphasized that the focus on selected health threats like the sudden rapidly spreading epidemics and biological weapons leads – which was experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic – to the creation of a hierarchy of health threats, which does not reflect the actual problems of the majority of the world’s population<sup>52</sup>. That these threats are hierarchized, reflects the fears of the societies in developed countries.

An analysis of the securitization of health threats is essential for defining the term “health security”, which appeared under conditions of more and more frequent epidemics, increasingly large numbers of victims, and, at a certain moment, conflicts of interest between the developed and developing states. Despite over 20 years of its presence in the scientific discourse and political practice of states and international organizations, this term is still ambiguous and without an agreed-upon definition, even within the organizations of the UN system.

The dominant term in the literature is “health security”. The documents of international organizations, especially those of WHO, also use, clearly under the influence of the U.S., the terms “global health security” and “global public health security”, understood as indispensable measures to minimize susceptibility to sudden events that threaten the collective public health of the population living in a particular geographic region<sup>53</sup>. The focus of this is on cross-border health threats, which initiated their securitization at the beginning of the 21st century. Regarding the term “*global health security*” it was accepted that it contains three elements 1) security meaning the absence of threats; 2) health as a condition – according to the 1946 WHO Statute – of physical, mental, and social well-being; and 3) the global environment,

51 A. Roemer-Mahler, S. Rushton, op. cit., p. 376.

52 D. DeLaet, *Whose interests is the securitization of health serving?*, [in:] S. Rushton, J. Youde (eds.), op. cit., pp. 339 et seq.

53 *A safer future: Global public health security in the 21st century*, Geneva 2007, p. IX.

in which health is determined by the flow of viruses and by the social and ecological effects of the economic order.

In terms of the concept of “health security”, it has been pointed out that it is ambiguous and does not explicitly answer the questions: Security for whom?, Aimed to protect what values?, Against what threats?, and How to ensure it<sup>54</sup>? It was agreed that the analysis of the concept assumes focusing on such problems as protection against threats, the change of social, economic, technological, and other conditions that caused the earlier approaches to healthcare to become outdated, the involvement of new subjects including military personnel, and the existence of connections with the interests of states’ foreign policy<sup>55</sup>.

To recapitulate the understanding of international health security, it should be emphasized that it is the result of the securitization of health threats with a fairly clearly defined identity but with vague boundaries, especially of the objective scope. This process reflects the dynamic of the redefinition – as its element – of understanding security in the environment of double change at the level of the international system. It is determined by the simultaneously occurring and “overlapping” processes of the end of the Cold War and its characteristic understanding of security as well as globalization processes and its specific changes in social life, by people’s mobility and interdependencies<sup>56</sup>. Under such conditions, the objective and subjective scope of the understanding of security changes and health security is part of the process, being classified into the second generation of its dimensions. In the interdependent world and that of global mobilities what is vital for health security is the diversity of the development level, of preferred values, and consequently, the diversity of the sensitivity and susceptibility of societies and their healthcare systems to cross-border threats. Under these conditions, health security is socially constructed. First, the spread of health threats is the result of social behaviours, people’s mobility, but also of diverse resistance to these behaviours. Second, a response to these threats in the form of their securitization or desecuritization is individualized and depends

54 A.M. Farrell, *op. cit.*, p. 555; S. Rushton, *op. cit.*, p. 781.

55 A.M. Farrell, *op. cit.*, p. 555.

56 M. Pietraś, *Pozimnowojenny paradygmat bezpieczeństwa in statu nascendi*, “Sprawy Międzynarodowe” 1997, no. 2, pp. 29-52.

on preferred values, the economic situation, and the efficiency of national healthcare systems.

## 2. Threats to international health security

The analysis of each dimension of security requires the identification of its specific threats. It is they that are securitized. F.X. Kaufman defined them as the possibility of the occurrence of one of various negatively evaluated phenomena<sup>57</sup>. They do not need to be identified exclusively with an intentionally acting enemy, nor with phenomena or not necessarily intentional processes that may cause an existential effect. Health threats can be destructive to human life and health, but they can also destabilize social life, and be connected with other threats, also the “traditional” ones like military threats.

A feature of health security threats is their complexity and essentially their “hybrid character”, combining non-intentional processes, phenomena, with the possibility of their intentional, hostile use. This means a diversity of threats. And their range is open to discussion. They include infectious diseases, occurring as epidemics or pandemics, and, in their context, the problem of crossing the species barrier, the phenomenon of bioinvasion, the problem of growing antibiotic resistance as well as bioterrorism and the possibility of using biological weapons.

A special health security threat is infectious diseases. It was the HIV/AIDS epidemic that initiated the securitization of health threats, while the Ebola and Covid-19 epidemics reinforced this process. Epidemics with global victims took place in the 20th century, causing the overburdening of healthcare systems in many countries at that time. Since the beginning of the 21st century, there has been a distinct increase in the diversity and intensity of epidemics. Initially, new pathogens emerged like the Nipah, Marburg, Ebola, and MERS-Cov. viruses, coronavirus, SARS, the A/H5N1 flu, and also A/H1N1, A/H7N9, A/H5N6, in different places around the globe<sup>58</sup>. Then, pre-

57 F.X. Kaufman, *Sicherheit als soziologisches und socialpolitisches Problem*, Stuttgart 1970, p. 167.

58 L. Gostin, A. Ayala, *Global health security in an era of explosive pandemic potential*, *Journal of National Security Law and Policy* 2017, vol. 9, no. 1, p. 53.

viously known infectious diseases reoccurred such as cholera, tuberculosis, flu, measles, cerebral meningitis, or yellow fever. Significant factors in the frequency and intensity of epidemics were created by urbanization processes and the increase in people's global mobility, thereby causing the world to become more sensitive and susceptible to infectious diseases, which are more and more difficult to contain within state frontiers. Former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan called them "problems without a passport", which require a collective, global response<sup>59</sup>.

One of the examples of the potential for national and international security threats caused by epidemics are the Ebola and Covid-19 viruses. Ebola was identified in March 2014 in Guinea, spreading out into other West African countries like Sierra Leone, Liberia, Nigeria, Mali, Senegal, and outside Africa where it reached Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Consequently, it caused threats to the national security of those countries as well as the possibility of destabilization of the situation in the region, threatening national security on a global scale<sup>60</sup>. The Covid-19 pandemic affected the whole world. In early June 2023, since the outbreak of the pandemic, Covid-19 had infected over 690 million people, with ca. 6.9 million fatalities, moreover, with economic effects being difficult to assess.

The crossing of species barriers is becoming a health security threat. Consequently, there is a growing interdependence between the health of people, animals, and the environment. However, the problem is the limited level of knowledge about the relationships between these elements. Additionally, the globalization processes and the growing mobility of people and animals increase the sensitivity and susceptibility in the relationships between people, animals, populations, and the environment. The risk of epidemics increases as a result.

Invasive alien species, previously living in a specific environment, are another threat. Their spread is called bioinvasion and is a result of the conscious introduction of certain species by people in order to control others. Used already in the first half of the 20th century, it was

59 K. Annan, *Problems without passports*, "Foreign Policy", 9 November 2009.

60 O.F. Ifediora, K. Aning, *West Africa's ebola pandemic: Toward effective multilateral responses to health crisis*, "Global Governance" 2017, vol. 23, p. 226.

treated as a biological problem. With time, it began to be perceived as an economic problem related to globalization processes and to the security problem. There is a serious fear that these microbes, called globalization pathogens, may spread on a global scale and threaten the health of people and food security<sup>61</sup>. They may weaken the state's strength, its demographic and economic capabilities, introducing the element of biosecurity into the thinking of its overall security<sup>62</sup>.

Health security threats also include antibiotic resistance. Antibiotic-resistant infectious diseases that appear in one country pose a threat to the health and economic processes of other countries. It is estimated that in the second decade of the 21st century, drug-resistant pathogens caused ca. 700 thousand deaths annually. In 2013, health ministers of G-8 countries recognized antibiotic resistance as the main challenge to health security, pointing to several characteristics: 1) it does not have a country of origin; 2) there are many causes of antibiotic resistance in people and animals at the same time; 3) connecting this resistance with the food chain requires complex solutions concerning different areas of social life, rather than simple ones<sup>63</sup>.

A more spectacular and intentional health security threat is bio-terrorism, which is the intentional use of biological agents in order to cause victims, terrorize people, and initiate expected changes. At the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, several such attacks were carried out in the U.S. After the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks, letters containing anthrax bacteria were sent to people in New Jersey. 5 people died, 17 persons became ill and a panic arose among the civilian population. Several infected facilities, i.a. the Supreme Court buildings and post offices, were closed, thus disrupting social life.

A feature of health threats – apart from the early-analysed direct negative impact on people – are the links between the environment of social life, in which the threats arise, and the impact on social life, thus changing it. The first element of these links means that of significance for health threats, the intensity and dynamics of their manifestation, are social, economic, cultural, etc. determinants such as poverty,

61 Ch. Bright, *Invasive species: Pathogens of globalisation*, "Foreign Policy" 1999, vol. 116, pp. 51-64.

62 P. Stoett, *Framing bioinvasion: Biodiversity, climate change, governance*, "Global Governance" 2010, vol. 16, pp. 103-110.

63 C. Yuk-pink Lo, N. Thomas, op. cit., pp. 570-571 and 574.

unemployment, migration and other forms of people's mobility, urbanization, limited access to healthcare systems, social exclusion, and armed conflicts. These conditions create an environment conducive to these threats and at the same time, they individualize the sensibility, susceptibility, and limited resistance of states to them. An especially favourable environment for the spread of health threats, as shown by the Covid-19 pandemic, is created by globalization processes<sup>64</sup>. Anti-vaccination movements also contribute to this.

On the other hand, in addition to directly impacting people, health threats can be a factor destabilizing social life. An opinion is even voiced that pandemics may cause destruction of social life and of economic activity which is comparable to war, natural disasters, or financial crises. This in turn reinforces arguments that these threats should be treated as a security problem rather than a simple health phenomenon, not only because of the health expense but also the economic and political costs<sup>65</sup>.

### **3. The reference subject of international health security**

The object of discussion, or even dispute, is the answer to the question of who is the referent subject of health security threats? Who does health security concern? Michel Foucault distinguished between two tendencies of thinking about security: geopolitics and biopolitics. In the former case, the referent subject is the state, in the latter – first of all a human individual functioning at the micro level<sup>66</sup>. Does, however, the answer to the question of who is threatened have to contain the juxtaposition between referent objects? Perhaps they can complement each other? Taking into account the specificity of health threats impacting people but also social systems, the other way of thinking is suggested with an assumption that there is no one referent subject that “monopolizes” thinking about health security. There are several subjects or other referent objects. They determine their own functioning and are located on several levels of social life.

64 Ch. Jenkins et al., *Global public health: A review and discussion of the concepts principles and roles of global public health in today's society*, "Global Policy" 2016, vol. 7, no. 3, p. 334.

65 L. Gostin, A. Ayala, op. cit., p. 57.

66 M. Dillon, L. Lobo-Guererro, op. cit., pp. 274-275.



It is the human being but also a community as a population, the state, but also the international system.

A special place in thinking about the referent subject for the securitization of health threats is occupied by the individual. The 1994 UNDP report also combined the term and conception of “human security” with health threats. There are many signs that the report significantly contributed to linking health threats with the concept of human security and with the individual as a referent object. Inspired by the Frankfurt School and its critical theory, this conception meant a departure from the state-centric thinking about security and the focus on human security<sup>67</sup>. For that reason, it provoked discussion on possible change in the paradigm of thinking about security<sup>68</sup>, since it focused on threats to human security and it was subsequently accepted by the UN in 2012. It became useful for the securitization of threats caused by HIV/AIDS.

However, individual tragedies of HIV/AIDS-affected persons are not the only social effects of this epidemic, they also threaten the social communities in which these individuals function. These communities became the referent object of the securitization of health threats. In Africa, the deaths of infected teachers brought about consequences for the educational systems of many states, and the deaths of soldiers – for the armies of those states. The philosophical inspiration of M. Foucault’s biopolitics contributed to recognizing the population as the referent object and the one threatened by pandemics, and consequently, the survival of the species<sup>69</sup>. The example of HIV/AIDS has demonstrated that epidemics cause threats not only to the national security of states but also to the international system, its stability, and security<sup>70</sup>.

It follows from the conducted analysis that there is no simple answer to the question: who do health security threats concern? The discourse on this theme was dominated by human security and the

67 K. Booth, *Security and emancipation*, “Review of International Studies” 1991, vol. 17, no. 4, pp. 313-326; *Critical theory, security, and emancipation*, [in:] R.A. Denemark, R. Marlin-Bennett (eds.), *The international studies encyclopaedia*, vol. 2, Malden 2010, p. 718.

68 R. Paris, *Human security. Paradigm shift or hot air?*, “International Security” 2001, vol. 26, no. 2, pp. 87 et seq.

69 M. Dillon, L. Lobo-Guerro, op. cit., p. 266.

70 S. Elbe, op. cit., pp. 336-338.

human individual. However, this is not the only subject. There are also threats to communities or systems like states and populations within which individuals are functioning.

## 4. Provision of international health security

● Health security is a value; achieving it requires actions, and it should be remembered that what is at stake is not only people's health but also the effects of health threats to social systems – including on the global scale – to economic processes, the stability of social life, and its security. Health is not the only protected value. These actions are undertaken in the environment of global health interdependencies, and hence it is necessary to organize them at the level of the international system, and at the level of states and their healthcare systems.

These measures at the level of the international system to ensure health security are taken with regard to the world as a whole and to regions. At the global level, the system of global health security governance functions as an element of the global governance system<sup>71</sup>. Its distinctive feature is the hybridity of subjects that share the common goal of coordination of actions in order to effectively solve the cross-border health problems that require cross-border cooperation<sup>72</sup>. D. Fidler defined global health governance as the use by states, intergovernmental organizations, and transnational subjects of formal and informal institutions, norms, and instruments serving to respond to health threats. Their efficacy requires cross-border, collective actions<sup>73</sup>.

The system of global health security governance is distinguished by several features. First, it is the diversity of subjects. In addition to states, there are intergovernmental organizations and transnational, including philanthropic, subjects. The main international organization that coordinates the functioning of the system is the WHO<sup>74</sup>. Apart from the standard-setting function, it takes operational measures as

71 K. Marzęda-Młynarska, *Globalne zarządzanie bezpieczeństwem żywnościowym na przełomie XX i XXI wieku*, Lublin 2014, pp. 32-93.

72 J. Youde, *Global health governance in international society*, "Global Governance" 2017, vol. 23, p. 590.

73 D. Fidler, *The challenges of global health governance*, New York 2010, p. 3.

74 J. Stażyk-Sulejewska, *The role of international institutions during a pandemic*, [in:] J. Itrich-Drabarek (ed.), *Contemporary states and the pandemic*, New York 2023, pp. 135 et seq.

part of numerous programs. Non-state actors (subjects) play a vital role in determining the global healthcare agenda, the object of negotiations, the decisions taken, and in mobilizing financial resources. After the year 2000, an important element of the functioning of this system was the public-private partnership, significant for providing development aid for healthcare<sup>75</sup>. These actions are also participated in by such foundations as the *Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation* and *GAVI, The Vaccine Alliance*. Second, this system regulates a broad range of phenomena that make up global health threats, taking account of their “medical” specificity but also the social contexts. Third, it is not easy to show the “boundaries” of the system, because it comprises organizations dealing exclusively with healthcare but also those for which this is one of the areas of their activity; the WHO is not the only structure.

A vital element of the system of global health security governance is norms. These include the WHO Statute and international agreements, whose goal is to prevent the international spread of infectious diseases. Among the international agreements especially significant are the *International Health Regulations – IHR*. They were negotiated in 1969 and concerned 6 diseases<sup>76</sup>. Under the conditions of the growing number of epidemics and the necessity of enhancing the effectiveness of the response of the international community, new IHR were negotiated in 2005<sup>77</sup> and came into force in 2007. This agreement increased the number of infectious diseases to be regulated and went beyond infectious diseases, taking into account other health threats, including industrial accidents, natural disasters, and armed conflicts. The system of international monitoring of these threats was also strengthened, and the common goal of those measures was to strengthen international health security<sup>78</sup>. The regulations were ratified by 196 states, 194 being WHO Member States.

An opinion is advanced that despite being a “harsh” law, the IHR does not have an effective mechanism for enforcing the adopted ob-

75 J. Youde, *Global health governance...*, p. 595.

76 *International Health Regulations (1969)*, Third annotated edition, Geneva 1983.

77 *International Health Regulations (2005)*, Second edition, Geneva 2008.

78 L. Gostin, A. Ayala, op. cit., p. 64; A.M. Farrell, op. cit., p. 552; A. Bouskill, E. Smith, *Global health and security. Threats and opportunities*, Santa Monica CA 2019, p. 6.

ligations. They are even called “toothless” regulations. Indonesia, for example, refused to provide H5N1 virus samples during the epidemic in 2007. In autumn 2019, China refused to inform the WHO about the outbreak of the Covid-19 epidemic. This information reached the WHO on 31 December 2019, when the initial local epidemic was becoming a global pandemic. It was estimated in 2012 that ca. 15% of states-parties fulfilled the IHR standards<sup>79</sup>. This happened despite the fact that the IHR regulations impose on states the obligation to inform the WHO about an increase in the incidence of some diseases. It is estimated that in 2001-2020 the WHO was informed about over 70% of cases of infectious diseases<sup>80</sup>. The limited efficacy of the execution of IHR regulations came under criticism; the response to the Ebola virus epidemic was recognized as too slow<sup>81</sup>, so an attempt was made to develop alternative solutions. On 13 February 2014, the United States proposed the *Global Health Security Agenda* initiative, which was supported by ca. 50 states and intergovernmental organizations, including the WHO, but was opposed by the developing states. The criticism of the system of global health governance grew under the conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic and was an incentive to initiate the current negotiations on further amendments to the IHR.

A significant element of the system of global health security governance is the funding instruments. In the period before the securitization of health threats, the financing of responses to those threats was limited. Their securitization brought about a change of political priorities and an increase in funding. Development assistance for healthcare programs began to grow. From 1973-2004 it rose ca. 5.4% annually, and from 1998-2002 on average 13% per year, to amount to ca. 13% of the total value of development assistance in 2002-2004<sup>82</sup>. Over 56% of funds were transferred in the form of bilateral aid and ca. 7% of the volume of this assistance was provided by non-governmental

79 A. Bouskill, E. Smith, op. cit., p. 6.

80 *Acute public health events assessed by WHO Regional Offices for Africa, the Americas, and Europe under the International Health Regulations (2005)*, 2020 Report, WHO, Geneva, February 2022, p. 18.

81 O.F. Ifediora, K. Aning, op. cit., p. 227.

82 *Recent trends in official development assistance for health*, OECD, Paris 2013.

organizations and private foundations<sup>83</sup>. The global financial crisis after 2008 significantly reduced development assistance for healthcare.

A feature of the system of health security governance is its multi-levelness, confirmed by the existence of regional systems. Within the WHO, six regional offices were created for Europe, Africa, the Americas, Southeast Asia, the Eastern Mediterranean, and the Western Pacific, while the Pan-American Health Organization was founded in 1902. An element of the regional level of health security governance is also regional organizations because the response to health threats is one of the areas of their decision-making and actions. In 2003, because of the SARS epidemic as well as subsequent epidemics, the ASEAN permanently changed the agenda of Asia's security problems and included health threats in it. In 2003 – and repeatedly in subsequent years – the ASEAN organized a summit with the participation of Japan, China, and South Korea concerning regional health security<sup>84</sup>. After the end of the SARS epidemics, health threats were included in the multi-sector approach to security in the region<sup>85</sup>. In 2017, Australia proposed the *Indo-Pacific Regional Health Security Initiative*. It was recognized that national and regional health security are interrelated, and focus was given to countering threats that cause epidemics, i.a. through strengthening national healthcare systems. The *Indo-Pacific Centre for Health Security* was established within the structure of Australia's Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade.

After numerous epidemics during the 21st century, the level of institutionalization of actions for health security in Asia is the highest. The ASEAN is, however, the only regional organization countering health threats. The Ebola virus epidemic and then the Covid-19 pandemic became a challenge to numerous regional organizations, including those in Africa, especially to the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the national healthcare systems of the African states. Criticism was levelled at the limited institutional potential and slow response resulting from the lack of sufficient resources and preparedness to counter these threats<sup>86</sup>. The

83 J. Youde, *Global health governance...*, p. 593.

84 M. Caballero-Anthony, op. cit., pp. 603-608.

85 *ASEAN Post-2015 Health Development Agenda 2016-2020*, Jakarta 2018.

86 O.F. Ifediora, K. Aning, op. cit., p. 227.

level of development and efficacy of the regional health security systems is significantly diversified.

An essential element of multilevel health security governance is national healthcare systems; they are a necessary, although insufficient, element consisting of two kinds of actions. Firstly, health diplomacy or state actions at the level of the international system, and secondly, the development of national healthcare systems, i.e., actions directed within the state.

Health diplomacy or medical diplomacy is the term identified with the international actions of many subjects, not only states. For the needs of the conducted analysis, it will be identified with actions of the state, with the evolution of the objective scope of the state's foreign policy, and its organizational structures<sup>87</sup>. It is sometimes understood as an alternative concept to the concept of health security<sup>88</sup>, however, this view is not shared in the present paper. Health diplomacy is treated as the activity of states focused primarily on countering cross-border health threats through cooperation with other states, international and transnational organizations, or participation in health security governance, and also, as the activity aimed at strengthening national healthcare systems, first of all, in the developing states<sup>89</sup>.

It is not possible to ensure health security without efficient national healthcare systems, vital for actions at the level of states and at the level of the international system. An opinion is voiced that the state's ability to detect and respond to epidemics is of crucial importance for halting their spread<sup>90</sup>. Hence, the 2005 IHR contains the requirement for building national healthcare systems. Problems concerning their functioning are emphasized such as high costs, which result in the difference between the health security of states at the high and low level of development. Another problem is the efficacy of healthcare systems in countering health threats, and their resilience to these threats. Pandemics may overburden national healthcare systems. This

87 See B. Surmacz, *Ewolucja współczesnej dyplomacji. Aktorzy, struktury, funkcje*, Lublin 2015.

88 K. Bond, *Health security or health diplomacy? Moving beyond semantic analysis to strengthen health systems and global cooperation*, "Health Policy and Planning" 2008, vol. 23, p. 377.

89 I. Kickbusch, G. Silberschmidt, P. Buss, *Global health diplomacy: The need for new perspectives, strategic approaches and skills in global health*, "Bulletin of the World Health Organization" 2007, vol. 85, no. 3, p. 230.

90 L. Gostin, A. Ayala, op. cit., p. 69.

was confirmed by the Covid-19 pandemic with regard to many developing countries<sup>91</sup>. For that reason, the preferred direction of action for health security is to strengthen but also carry out a kind of standardization to achieve the minimum common equipment across national healthcare systems. Such a norm was formulated in the 2005 IHR, and the states-parties are obligated to implement a set of standards called the minimum care capacity requirements. In 2015, only 64 states informed that they had implemented the standards, and 48 did not even provide such information<sup>92</sup>.

To sum up, international health security has been classified as the second generation of non-military security dimensions, determined more by globalization processes than by the end of the Cold War, and reflects their new quality. The paper focused on defining the structure of this concept by analysing the securitization of health threats, their structure, the referent object of health security, and actions to provide it. First, health security is the result of politically motivated securitization, carried out by the developed states, of cross-border health threats in the environment of global mobility. Second, the main feature of health security threats is their diversity, comprising infectious diseases, the problem of crossing the species barrier, the phenomenon of bioinvasion, the problem of growing antibiotic resistance and bioterrorism, and the possibility of using biological weapons. Third, there is no one referent object that “monopolizes” the thinking about health security. It is the human individual but also the community as a population as well as the international system. Fourth, actions to ensure health security are taken at the level of the international system and the system of security governance at this level, as well as at the level of the state, where there are national healthcare systems.

91 O. Nkang, O. Bassey, *Securitization of global health pandemic and reiterating the relevance of 2005 International Health Regulations: Covid-19 and human security in Africa*, “African Journal of Empirical Research” 2022, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 38-39.

92 L. Gostin, A. Ayala, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

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# Health policies in the Balkan Region: An overview and chosen examples

Polityki zdrowotne na Bałkanach – przegląd i wybrane przykłady

**Abstract:** This article is a review of basic information on health policies and an introduction to the issue of their design and implementation in the Balkans. The purpose of this article is to discuss the general characteristics of health policies in the Balkans, the challenges and opportunities related to their determination, and implementation in the region and selected countries. The materials used in the preparation of the article are international publications and source documents regulating the issues raised in selected countries as well as studies of the International Health Organization. The methods used in the course of the work were analysis of source documents and data analysis. The work resulted in an article that concisely introduces the reader to the complex issue of health policies in a region still recovering from the armed conflict of the 1990s. The analysis of this issue indicates a deep differentiation of the undertaken activities and financing tools while emphasizing the similarity and often commonality of solutions. This is due to the level of development of individual countries, their economic capabilities, and the degree of advancement in integration processes with the European Union.

**Keywords:** health policies, Balkans, Stakeholders of health policies, system reforms, research, innovation, well-being

**Streszczenie:** Niniejszy artykuł jest przeglądem podstawowych informacji na temat polityk zdrowotnych i wprowadzeniem do zagadnienia ich kształtu i realizacji na Bałkanach. Celem niniejszego artykułu jest omówienie ogólnej charakterystyki polityk zdrowotnych na Bałkanach, wyzwań i możliwości związanych z ich ustalaniem, wdrażaniem i realizacją w regionie, jak i w wybranych państwach. Materiały wykorzystane w toku przygotowania artykułu są międzynarodowymi publikacjami oraz dokumentami źródłowymi regulującymi poruszane zagadnienia w wybranych państwach jak i opracowaniami Międzynarodowej Organizacji Zdrowia. Metody wykorzystane w toku prac to: analiza dokumentów źródłowych, analiza danych. W rezultacie przeprowadzonych prac powstał artykuł, który w zwięzły sposób wprowadza czytelnika

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w skomplikowane zagadnienie polityk zdrowotnych w regionie nadal jeszcze odbudowującym się po konflikcie zbrojnym z lat dziewięćdziesiątych. Analiza zagadnienia wskazuje na głębokie różnicowanie podejmowanych działań i narzędzi finansujących, jednocześnie podkreślając podobieństwo, a często uwspólnotowanie rozwiązań. Wynika to z poziomu rozwoju poszczególnych państw, ich możliwości ekonomicznych i stopnia zaawansowania w procesy integracyjne z Unią Europejską.

**Słowa kluczowe:** polityki zdrowotne, Bałkany, Interesariusze polityki zdrowotnej, reformy systemowe, badania, innowacje, dobre samopoczucie

## Introduction

Health policies refer to the set of laws, regulations, guidelines, and programs that govern the provision of health services, influence the health outcomes of a population and are part of public policies<sup>1</sup>. They are formulated and implemented by government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders to improve access to quality health care, reduce health inequities, and promote public health. Health policies can have a significant impact on the health and well-being of individuals and populations, and policymakers need to consider their potential effects and ensure that they are evidence-based, equitable, and responsive to the needs of the communities they serve.

## 1 Stakeholders of health policies

In most countries, government agencies play a crucial role in the development, implementation, and enforcement of health policies. One of the key government agencies involved in health policy is the Ministry of Health. This is the main government agency responsible for overseeing the national health system and setting health policies. It is usually responsible for the regulation and financing of health services, the management of public health programs, and the development of health policies and regulations. Another is the National Health Insurance Agency, which is responsible for implementing and managing the national health insurance program to provide financial protec-

1 C.M. Jones, C. Clavier, L. Potvin, *Adapting public policy theory for public health research: A framework to understand the development of national policies on global health*, "Social Sciences and Medicine" 2017, vol. 177, pp. 69-77.

tion for individuals and families against the costs of health care<sup>2</sup>. In some states, there are food and drug institutions responsible for the regulation of food, drugs, medical devices, and other health-related products. It ensures that these products are safe and effective and sets standards for their production and distribution. Centres for disease control and prevention are agencies that focus on the prevention and control of infectious diseases and other public health threats, providing information and guidance to healthcare providers and the public on how to prevent and control diseases as well as researching health issues. In different states, there are agencies that are responsible for improving access to healthcare services for underserved and vulnerable populations such as rural communities, low-income families, and people with disabilities. They provide funding for healthcare facilities and programs and set policies for the allocation of health resources. These are just a few examples of government agencies involved in health policy. The specific agencies and their roles may vary from country to country, but the overall goal is to ensure that everyone has access to quality health care and to improve the health outcomes of the population<sup>3</sup>. In the health care system, we can find stakeholders<sup>4</sup> other than government agencies, for example, NGOs play an important role in shaping health policies by advocating for the needs and rights of specific populations such as the poor, women, children, and people with disabilities. They can also provide important information and evidence to policymakers to inform the development of health policies and programs, and innovative solutions to health problems that are not addressed by the government or traditional healthcare providers. NGOs can play a complementary role to government agencies in shaping health policies and improving health outcomes. They can provide important perspectives and insights from communities and bring attention to neglected health issues. NGOs need to work closely with government agencies and other stakeholders to ensure

- 2 S. Shuleta et al., *The relationship between government health expenditure and economic growth: Evidence from western Balkan countries*, *International Journal of Applied Economics, "Finance and Accounting"* 2023, vol. 15, no. 1, pp. 10-20.
- 3 G. Baruzeri, U. Laaser, *The health status of the populations in the Western Balkans region*, *"South Eastern European Journal of Public Health"* 2021, vol. 15, no. 1, pp. 1-3.
- 4 A. Rütten et al., *Determinants of health policy impact: a theoretical framework for policy analysis*, *"Sozial- und Präventivmedizin"* 2003, vol. 48, no. 5, pp. 293-300.

that health policies are inclusive, evidence-based, and responsive to the needs of the populations they serve. The private sector, including pharmaceutical companies, health insurance companies, and medical device manufacturers, can influence health policies by developing and selling products and services that impact health outcomes. Healthcare providers, including doctors, nurses, and other health professionals, can provide important information and insights on the delivery of health services and the impact of health policies on their patients. Patients and consumers are the ultimate beneficiaries of health policies, and their perspectives and experiences are important in shaping health policies that are responsive to their needs. Academic institutions, including universities and research organizations, can play an important role in generating evidence and conducting research to inform health policies. Advocacy groups such as patient groups and disease-specific organizations, can raise awareness about health issues and advocate for policies that improve health outcomes for their constituents. The involvement of different stakeholders in the development and implementation of health policies can help ensure that policies are evidence-based, equitable, and responsive to the needs of the populations they serve. Effective communication and collaboration among stakeholders can be key to the success of health policies and programs.

## **2. Health policies and their role in shaping health**

**2.** Health policies<sup>5</sup> play a critical role in shaping the health and well-being of individuals and populations. Health policies can ensure that individuals and populations have access to affordable, quality healthcare services, regardless of their financial status or location. This can include policies that provide funding for health services, expand health insurance coverage, and support the development of healthcare infrastructure in underserved areas. Health policies can help reduce disparities in health outcomes between different populations by addressing the root causes of health inequities such as poverty, education,

5 E. de Leeuw, C. Clavier, E. Breton, *Health policy – why research it and how: Health political science*, “Health Research Policy and Systems” 2014, vol. 12, no. 55, pp. 1-10.

and access to health care. Health policies can encourage healthy behaviours such as regular physical activity, healthy eating, and smoking cessation, by creating supportive environments, providing education and resources, and regulating unhealthy products and behaviours, can help prevent and control the spread of infectious diseases by funding public health programs, conducting research, and providing guidance and resources to healthcare providers and the public. Health policies can protect public health by setting standards for the production and distribution of food, drugs, and other health-related products, and by conducting surveillance and responding to public health emergencies. Health policies can help improve the quality of life for individuals with chronic conditions such as diabetes and heart disease by providing access to care and support, funding research, and promoting healthy behaviours. In conclusion, health policies play a crucial role in shaping the health and well-being of individuals and populations.

### **3. Financing of health policies**

The financing and delivery of health services are critical components of any health system. How health services are financed and delivered can impact the quality and accessibility of health care as well as the overall health of a population. Health financing refers to the process of raising and using funds to pay for health services. In many countries, health financing is a mix of public (government) and private (out-of-pocket and insurance) sources. Effective health financing systems ensure that health services are affordable and accessible to all members of a population, regardless of their financial status. Health insurance is a mechanism for financing health care that protects individuals and families from the financial burden of paying for health services out of pocket. There are several types of health insurance, including private insurance, employer-sponsored insurance, and public insurance programs. Healthcare delivery refers to the process of providing health services to individuals and populations. This includes the development and management of healthcare facilities, the provision of health services by healthcare providers, and the coordination of care between different healthcare providers. Primary care is the first point of contact for individuals seeking health care services. It is provided by a range of health care providers, including physicians,



nurse practitioners, and physician assistants, and is focused on promoting health, preventing disease, and managing chronic conditions. Specialized care refers to healthcare services delivered by healthcare providers with specialized training and expertise in a particular area of medicine. Health systems refer to the organizations, institutions, and resources that are responsible for the financing and delivery of health services. Effective health systems ensure that health services are accessible, affordable, and of high quality.

## **4. The regulation of health professions**

4. The regulation of health professions is a process by which governments or other authorized bodies oversee the practice of certain professions within the healthcare industry to ensure that they are competent and ethical and provide safe and effective care to the public<sup>6</sup>. This regulation is typically achieved through a combination of licensure, accreditation, and continuing education requirements. Each country has its specific regulations for health professions, but common professions that are regulated include doctors, nurses, dentists, pharmacists, and other healthcare providers. The primary objective of regulating health professions is to protect the public and ensure that they receive high-quality care from qualified and competent professionals. This helps to prevent harm to patients and ensures that the healthcare system is providing effective care.

## **5. Promoting healthy behaviours and lifestyle**

5. The promotion of healthy behaviours and lifestyles is an important aspect of public health and wellness. The goal is to encourage individuals to adopt behaviours and habits that can improve their overall health and reduce the risk of preventable illnesses and chronic diseases. Community-based programs and initiatives can help create a supportive environment for healthy behaviours. For example,

6 J. Browne et al., *Recent research into healthcare professions regulation: a rapid evidence assessment*, "BMC Health Services Research" 2021, vol. 21, pp. 1-12, <https://bmchealthservres.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12913-021-06946-8> [8.09.2021].

promoting the availability of healthy food, building recreational facilities, and organizing community events that encourage physical activity. Policy changes such as increasing the availability of healthy food options in schools or workplaces and creating smoke-free environments can have a positive impact on public health. Using the media to raise awareness about the importance of healthy behaviours and lifestyles is an effective way to reach a large audience. Healthcare providers play an important role in promoting healthy behaviours and lifestyles. They can educate patients on the importance of healthy habits and provide them with resources and support to help them make positive changes.

## 6. Health policies in the Balkan region – introduction

The Balkan region encompasses a diverse set of countries with varying health policies, systems, and levels of development. However, there are some common challenges and trends that are faced by many of the countries in the region<sup>7</sup>. Most countries in the Balkan region are undergoing health system reform to improve the efficiency and quality of their healthcare services<sup>8</sup>. This includes measures such as the restructuring of healthcare delivery systems, the introduction of new financing mechanisms, and the development of new health technologies. It relates to access to healthcare which remains a major challenge in many countries in the Balkan region, particularly in rural areas. There is a need to improve the distribution of healthcare facilities and providers and to increase the availability of primary care services<sup>9</sup>. Another aspect is chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, and diabetes which are a growing concern in the region. To address this challenge, countries are implementing strategies<sup>10</sup> to prevent and control these conditions, for example, promoting healthy lifestyles and early screening and treatment. Furthermore, mental health is another area of concern in the Balkan region. There is a need for greater in-

7 C.M. Jones, C. Clavier, L. Potvin, *Policy processes sans frontières: Interactions in transnational governance of global health*, "Society of Policy Sciences" 2020, vol. 53, no. 1, pp. 161-180.

8 E. Tresa, K. Czabanowska et al., *Europeanization of health policy in post-communist European societies: Comparison of six Western Balkan countries*, "Health Policy" 2022, vol. 126, no. 8, pp. 816-823.

9 G. Baruzeri, U. Laaser, op. cit., pp. 1-3.

10 R. Forman et al., *Drawing light from the pandemic: Rethinking strategies for health policy and beyond*, "Health Policy" 2022, vol. 126, no. 1, pp. 1-6.

vestment in mental health services and the development of more comprehensive mental health policies. All the above are strictly bound to health research and innovation but health inequalities persist in many countries in the Balkan region, with marginalized populations facing significant disparities in access to healthcare and health outcomes. Addressing these inequalities is a key challenge for the region and one of the methods is investment in health research and innovation in the Balkans. This includes both basic and applied research as well as the development of new technologies and treatments.

### **6.1 Health system reform in the Balkan states**

Health system reform is a key challenge but also an opportunity in many of the Balkan states. The reforms are aimed at improving the efficiency and quality of healthcare services and ensuring that all citizens have access to high-quality, affordable care. In some countries, health system reforms have involved centralizing healthcare services to improve efficiency and reduce costs, while in others, reforms have focused on decentralizing healthcare services to give local communities more control over their healthcare needs. Some countries have introduced elements of privatization into their healthcare systems, such as the creation of private hospitals and clinics, with the goal of increasing competition and improving the quality of care. Many Balkan states are implementing financing reforms to improve the sustainability of their healthcare systems. This includes the introduction of new financing mechanisms such as health insurance and reforms to reduce healthcare costs. Access to healthcare remains a major challenge in many Balkan states, particularly in rural areas. Reforms are being implemented to increase the availability of healthcare facilities and providers, especially in these areas. In some countries, health system reforms are aimed at integrating health and social care services to provide a more comprehensive approach to care. This includes initiatives to coordinate care for people with chronic conditions and to integrate mental health services into the overall healthcare system. Health information technology is becoming increasingly important in the Balkan states. Reforms are being implemented to improve the use of electronic health records, telemedicine, and other health information technologies to enhance the quality and efficiency of care.

## 6.2 Access to healthcare in the Balkan states

Access to healthcare remains a major challenge in the Balkan states. Despite some progress in recent years, many people still face barriers to accessing the care they need. Access to healthcare can be limited in rural areas, where there is a shortage of healthcare facilities and providers. This can result in long waiting times for care and a lack of access to specialized services. People with lower incomes may have difficulty affording the cost of care, even if it is available. This can result in delayed or inadequate treatment for serious conditions. In some countries, a large proportion of the population does not have health insurance, which can limit access to care. Some marginalized populations, such as Roma communities, face cultural barriers that limit their access to healthcare services. This can include language barriers, mistrust of the healthcare system, and a lack of understanding of how to access care. To address these challenges, many Balkan states are implementing initiatives to improve access to healthcare, among which are measures such as increasing the availability of healthcare facilities and providers in rural areas, providing financial support to low-income individuals, and developing health insurance programs. In addition, there is a need for greater investment in health education and outreach to marginalized communities to help overcome cultural barriers to care. Overall, improving access to healthcare is a critical challenge for the Balkan states, something in which WHO is also highly interested and participating<sup>11</sup>.

## 6.3 Chronic diseases in the Balkans states

Chronic diseases are a major public health concern in the Balkan states, as they are a leading cause of morbidity, disability, and mortality. Cardiovascular diseases such as heart disease and stroke are among the leading causes of death in the Balkan states. Risk factors for these diseases include high blood pressure, high cholesterol, smoking, and a sedentary lifestyle. Cancer is also a major concern in the region, with the most common types being lung, breast, prostate, and colo-

11 World Health Organization, *Roadmap for Health and Well-being in the Western Balkans (2021-2025): European Programme of Work (2020-2025) – United Action for Better Health*, <https://www.who.int/europe/publications/i/item/WHO-EURO-2021-3435-43194-60508> [27.09.2021].

rectal cancer. The prevalence of diabetes is increasing in the Balkan states, due to a combination of factors such as ageing, obesity, and the aforementioned sedentary lifestyle. Chronic respiratory diseases such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) are also a major concern in the region. Risk factors for these diseases include smoking, air pollution, and exposure to environmental irritants. Mental health disorders such as depression and anxiety are also prevalent in the Balkan states. The stigma surrounding mental health and a lack of access to mental health services are major barriers to treatment. To address the burden of chronic diseases in the region, the Balkan states are implementing a range of public health and clinical interventions. This includes initiatives to prevent and manage chronic diseases such as health promotion programs and disease management programs as well as measures to improve access to care for people with chronic conditions.

#### **6.4 Mental health in the Balkans states**

Mental health is a growing concern in the Balkan states, as rates of mental illness and psychological distress are increasing in the region. There is still a significant degree of stigma surrounding mental health in the Balkans which discourages people from seeking help. This can result in people not receiving the treatment they need, and their conditions can worsen. In many parts of the Balkans, access to mental health services is limited, particularly in rural areas. This can result in long waiting times for care and a lack of access to specialized services. There is a shortage of mental health providers in many Balkan states. Mental health services in the Balkans are often underfunded, which can limit the quality and availability of care. This can result in a lack of resources for research and innovation and a shortage of mental health professionals. There is also low awareness of mental health issues and the importance of seeking help in the Balkans. This can result in people not recognizing the symptoms of mental illness and not seeking help. To address these challenges, the Balkan states are implementing initiatives to improve mental health services and reduce the burden of mental illness. This includes measures such as increasing funding for mental health services, increasing the availability of mental health services in rural areas, and developing public education campaigns to raise awareness of mental health and reduce stigma. By address-

ing the barriers to care and ensuring that all citizens have access to high-quality, affordable mental health services, the well-being of the population can be improved<sup>12</sup>.

### **6.5 Health inequalities in the Balkans states**

Health inequalities are a major concern in the Balkan states, as access to healthcare and health outcomes vary widely across the population. Health outcomes are strongly influenced by socioeconomic status, with people from low-income households being more likely to experience poor health outcomes. People with low levels of education are also more likely to experience poor health outcomes and have less access to healthcare services. Access to healthcare and health outcomes vary widely depending on where someone lives, with rural areas often having limited access to healthcare services and higher rates of poverty. Women and girls in the Balkans often face barriers to healthcare access, including limited access to reproductive health services and higher rates of violence and abuse. Ethnic and minority groups in the Balkans are often marginalized and experience higher rates of poverty, leading to poor health outcomes. To address these health inequalities, the Balkan states are implementing a range of initiatives aimed at improving access to healthcare and reducing health disparities. This includes measures such as increasing funding for healthcare services in disadvantaged communities, developing culturally appropriate healthcare services for ethnic and minority groups, and implementing programs to promote healthy lifestyles and prevent chronic diseases.

### **6.6 Health research and innovation in the Balkans states**

Health research and innovation play an important role in improving health outcomes in the Balkan states. Health research in the Balkans is often underfunded, which can limit the ability of researchers to pursue innovative and impactful projects. In many parts of the Balkans, there is limited infrastructure to support health research, including limited access to laboratory facilities and data systems. Health researchers in

12 World Health Organization, *Revitalizing mental health reforms in the Western Balkans after COVID-19*, <https://www.who.int/europe/news/item/09-11-2022-revitalizing-mental-health-reforms-in-the-western-balkans-after-covid-19> [9.11.2022].

the Balkans often work in isolation, which can limit the exchange of ideas and the development of innovative solutions to health challenges. There is often low awareness of the importance of health research and innovation in the Balkans, which can limit the support and funding available to researchers. To address these challenges, the Balkan states are implementing initiatives to increase funding for health research, build research infrastructure, and promote collaboration between health researchers. This includes measures such as increasing funding for health research, establishing research institutes and centres, and developing partnerships between universities, government agencies, and private sector organizations.

## **7** ● **Health policies in the Balkan region** – chosen examples

### **7.1 Health system reforms in Serbia**

Health system reforms have been a major focus in Serbia in recent years, as the country seeks to improve access to healthcare and health outcomes for its citizens<sup>13</sup>. One of the major reforms in the Serbian healthcare system has been the decentralization of healthcare services, which has aimed to improve the efficiency and quality of care. This has involved transferring responsibility for healthcare services from the central government to local government agencies and healthcare providers. One of the key goals of decentralization was to bring healthcare services closer to the communities they serve and to improve the responsiveness of the healthcare system to the needs of local populations. This involved creating local healthcare boards responsible for planning and managing healthcare services as well as devolving financial and operational control over healthcare services to local healthcare providers. Another aim of the decentralization was to improve the efficiency of the healthcare system. This was achieved through measures such as streamlining healthcare services, reducing bureaucracy, and improving the coordination of care between different healthcare

13 M. Gajić-Stevanović et al., *Health care system of the Republic of Serbia in the period 2004-2012*, "Stomatološki Glasnik Srbije" 2014, vol. 61, no. 1, pp. 36-44.

providers. The Serbian government has also made changes to the way that healthcare services are funded, including the introduction of mandatory health insurance and reforms to the way that healthcare services are reimbursed. to create a more sustainable healthcare system by pooling resources and spreading the financial risk of healthcare services. This has aimed to improve the efficiency of the healthcare system and reduce costs, while also ensuring that healthcare services are financially accessible to all citizens. The Serbian government has invested in health technology, including electronic health records, telemedicine, and digital health solutions<sup>14</sup>. The Serbian government has also taken steps to increase transparency and accountability in the healthcare system, including implementing measures to monitor and evaluate the performance of healthcare services and providers, and also made efforts to improve the quality of care in the healthcare system, including implementing quality management systems, promoting evidence-based practices, and investing in professional development for healthcare providers. The Serbian government has also promoted evidence-based practices in the healthcare system, aimed at improving the quality of care and ensuring that healthcare services are based on the best available scientific evidence. The Serbian government has invested in professional development for healthcare providers, aimed at ensuring that healthcare providers have the knowledge, skills, and competencies needed to deliver high-quality care. The Serbian government has also encouraged patient involvement in the healthcare system, aimed at improving the quality of care and ensuring that the needs of patients are met. This has involved promoting patient engagement, patient-centred care, and the involvement of patients in decision-making about their care. The Serbian government has made efforts to expand access to healthcare services, particularly in rural and underserved areas by increasing funding for healthcare services and investing in new healthcare facilities, technologies, and insurance coverage, aimed at increasing access to healthcare services for all citizens. This has involved introducing mandatory health insurance and

14 B. Li Han Wong et al., *The dawn of digital public health in Europe: Implications for public health policy and practice*, "The Lancet Regional Health-Europe" 2022, vol. 14, [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanep/article/PIIS2666-7762\(22\)00009-6/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanep/article/PIIS2666-7762(22)00009-6/fulltext) [2.02.2022].



expanding coverage to include more people, including those who are economically vulnerable. The Serbian government has invested in improving healthcare infrastructure. This has involved building new healthcare facilities and upgrading existing ones as well as improving the distribution of healthcare services to ensure that services are available in all regions of the country. The Serbian government has also promoted the use of telemedicine, aimed at improving access to care for those living in rural or remote areas. Telemedicine has been used to deliver healthcare services, including remote consultations and remote monitoring, to patients in these areas. The Serbian government has also encouraged private-sector involvement by promoting public-private partnerships and encouraging private-sector investment in healthcare services.

## **7.2 Health system reforms in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) is a country located in Southeast Europe with a population of around 3.3 million people. The country's healthcare system is complex, with different healthcare systems existing in the two entities that make up BiH – the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska – as well as in the Brčko District. The decentralization of the health system in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) refers to the process of transferring responsibility for healthcare from the central government to the entities that make up BiH – the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republika Srpska, and the Brčko District. This process began after the war in 1995, intending to improve the quality of healthcare and make it more accessible to all citizens, and has resulted in the establishment of separate healthcare systems in each entity and the Brčko District. Each system has its own policies, regulations, and funding sources. The entity and district governments are responsible for planning and managing healthcare services in their respective regions, while the central government is responsible for setting overall healthcare policies and regulations. Decentralization allows for more efficient use of resources, as decisions about healthcare services can be made at the local level, based on the specific needs of the population. It can also improve access to healthcare services, particularly in rural areas, where healthcare facilities may be scarce. Local governments can prioritize the development of healthcare facilities and services that are the most needed in their communities. Decentrali-

zation can lead to the development of more responsive and effective healthcare services, as local governments can tailor them to meet the needs of their populations and allow for greater accountability. However, there are also challenges associated with decentralization such as inequalities in access, fragmentation, and limited resources. This can lead to inequities in access to healthcare services, particularly if the distribution of resources is not balanced across regions leading to fragmentation of the healthcare system, with different policies and regulations in each entity and district, making it difficult to coordinate healthcare services across regions, exacerbating the problem of limited resources, as local governments may not have the financial or human resources necessary to provide high-quality healthcare services. The primary healthcare system in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) has undergone reforms since the end of the war of the 1990s, intending to improve access to healthcare services. The primary healthcare system is the first point of contact for patients seeking medical care, and it, therefore, plays a critical role in promoting public health, preventing disease, and managing chronic conditions. The government has invested in the construction and renovation of primary healthcare facilities, particularly in rural areas, as well as the recruitment and training of healthcare professionals<sup>15</sup>. The primary healthcare system has been reorganized around the concept of family medicine, which emphasizes the importance of providing comprehensive and continuous care to patients and their families. Family medicine doctors are responsible for providing primary healthcare services to their patients and coordinating their care with specialists as needed. The government has introduced electronic health records, which enable healthcare providers to access and share patient information, regardless of their location. This helps to improve the quality of care and reduce healthcare costs by avoiding duplicate tests and procedures. The government has strengthened preventive care measures, including immunization programs and health education campaigns. This has helped to reduce the incidence of preventable diseases and promote

15 M. Stepovic et al., *Analysis and forecast of indicators related to medical workers and medical technology in selected countries of Eastern Europe and the Balkans*, "Healthcare" 2023, vol. 11, no. 5, pp. 1-12.

healthy lifestyles. The primary healthcare system reforms in BiH have led to significant improvements in access to healthcare services and the quality of care provided. However, challenges remain, including the need to address the shortage of healthcare professionals, improve the distribution of healthcare resources, and address the inequities in access to healthcare services between urban and rural areas. Hospital reform in BiH has been a critical component of the overall healthcare system reform. The government has privatized some hospitals in BiH to increase efficiency and reduce healthcare costs and these hospitals are required to meet the same standards as public hospitals and are subject to regulation by the government. The government has introduced a system of performance-based financing for hospitals, which rewards hospitals for achieving certain performance targets such as reducing hospital-acquired infections or improving patient outcomes. The government has also consolidated some hospitals in BiH, to increase efficiency and reduce duplication of services. This has involved merging smaller hospitals into larger ones and developing networks of hospitals to share resources and expertise. The government has introduced quality standards for hospitals that are based on international best practices. Hospitals are required to meet these standards to receive accreditation, which is necessary for receiving government funding. The government has introduced telemedicine services, which enable healthcare providers to provide remote consultation and diagnosis to patients, particularly in rural areas where healthcare services may be limited. The hospital reform in BiH has led to significant improvements in the quality of care and efficiency of hospitals. However, there is still a need to ensure that patients have access to affordable and high-quality healthcare services, regardless of their location or socioeconomic status.

### **7.3 The health system in Croatia**

The healthcare system in Croatia is universal. The Croatian Health Insurance Fund (HZZO) is the sole purchaser of health services and purchases all individual health services delivered by both public and private providers. Primary care is provided mainly by private medical practices, while almost all hospitals are publicly owned and managed. Mandatory health insurance contributions made by employers and individuals are the main source of financing for health and ac-

count for 76% of total financing<sup>16</sup>. Family medicine doctors are the first point of contact for patients seeking medical care, and they provide a wide range of services, including preventive care, health promotion, and management of chronic conditions. Patients can access primary healthcare services free of charge, although they may be required to pay a small co-payment for certain services. Patients who require specialist care can be referred to specialists by their family doctor or they can seek care directly from specialists. Specialist care is provided in hospitals and outpatient clinics, and patients are required to make a small contribution for specialist consultations and procedures. The hospital system in Croatia is made up of public and private hospitals. Public hospitals are funded by the government, while private hospitals are funded through a combination of private insurance and out-of-pocket payments. All residents of Croatia are required to have health insurance, which is funded through mandatory contributions from employers and employees as well as general taxes. The national health insurance fund covers the cost of most healthcare services, including primary healthcare, specialist care, and hospital care. The cost of prescription drugs is partially covered by the national health insurance fund, with patients required to pay a small amount for most drugs. Over-the-counter drugs are not covered by the national health insurance fund and must be paid for in full by patients.

## Conclusions

The Balkans region is comprised of several countries, each with its unique healthcare policies and systems. Bosnia and Herzegovina has a decentralized healthcare system, with the responsibility for healthcare divided between two entities, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska. The government provides free primary care, but patients have to pay for secondary and tertiary care. The system faces challenges such as inadequate funding, lack of equipment, and shortages of healthcare workers. Croatia has a universal

16 L. Vončina et al., *Universal Health Cover Age Study Series, No.29, Universal Health Coverage in Croatia: Reforms to Revitalize Primary Health Care*, 2018, p. 11, <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/77393151616775654/pdf/Universal-health-coverage-in-Croatia-reforms-to-revitalize-primary-health-care.pdf> [1.01.2018].

healthcare system, funded through taxes and social insurance contributions. Patients have free access to primary care, and secondary and tertiary care is partially subsidized. Croatia also has a strong tradition of alternative medicine, with traditional practices such as acupuncture and herbal medicine being integrated into the healthcare system. Serbia has a universal healthcare system, funded through taxes and social insurance contributions. Patients have free access to primary care, and secondary and tertiary care is partially subsidized. The system faces challenges such as inadequate funding and a shortage of healthcare workers. In general, the Balkan region faces significant challenges in providing high-quality healthcare to its citizens, including inadequate funding, shortages of healthcare workers, and a lack of infrastructure and equipment. However, many efforts are being made to improve the situation, including increasing funding, improving infrastructure, and promoting preventative care.

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# The European Political Community: A Polish perspective

Europejska Wspólnota Polityczna: polska perspektywa

**Abstract:** This article seeks to investigate the birth and evolution of the European Political Community – a pan-European multilateral coordination format that has emerged at the initiative of France and in reaction to the Russian full-scale military aggression in Ukraine. The analysis draws on official speeches, think-tank briefs, and the Author’s participatory observation conducted during international expert meetings held in early 2023. It is argued that the EPC is still a “moving target” in the early stage of development, where both its objectives and structure are not yet fully defined. From a Polish perspective, it has so far sent a key strategic message to Russia and can serve as a vehicle to re-engage with the United Kingdom or Turkey. But it should not be used as yet another ENP-style waiting room for candidates seeking EU membership.

**Keywords:** European Political Community, France, Poland, European Union, enlargement, summit

**Streszczenie:** Celem niniejszego artykułu jest analiza narodzin i ewolucji Europejskiej Wspólnoty Politycznej – paneuropejskiego formatu wielostronnej koordynacji, powstałego z inicjatywy Francji i w reakcji na pełnoskalową agresję militarną Rosji na Ukrainę. Badanie oparto na oficjalnych wystąpieniach, materiałach ośrodków analitycznych oraz obserwacji uczestniczącej Autorki, przeprowadzonej podczas międzynarodowych spotkań eksperckich w pierwszych miesiącach 2023 roku. W tekście dowodzi się, że EWP pozostaje „ruchoмым celem” na wczesnym etapie rozwoju, gdzie zarówno cele, jak i struktura nie zostały jeszcze dookreślone. Z polskiej perspektywy, inicjatywa umożliwiła wysłanie kluczowego sygnału strategicznego pod adresem Rosji oraz może stanowić narzędzie ponownego zaangażowania Wielkiej Brytanii czy Turcji. Nie powinna być jednak wykorzystywana jako poczekalnia dla kandydatów do członkostwa w UE, na wzór Europejskiej Polityki Sąsiedztwa.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Europejska Wspólnota Polityczna, Francja, Polska, Unia Europejska, rozszerzenie, szczyt

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## Introduction

The European Political Community (EPC) emerged in 2022 – under the initiative of France and in reaction to the Russian Federation’s full-scale military invasion of Ukraine – as a pan-European multilateral coordination format of more than forty European states. Initially, the proposal met with harsh criticism, voiced especially by Poland and Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) more broadly. Their main concern was that Emmanuel Macron’s initiative was nothing more than old French wine in new bottles, namely François Mitterrand’s “European Confederation” version 2.0. While this new vision of a “wider Europe” excluded Russia (contrary to its 1989 predecessor), the CEEs reacted with similar distrust: it looked like a loose format designed as an alternative to the new enlargement wave, the latter resulting from a major geopolitical shift, be it the attack on Ukraine (2022) or the collapse of the Soviet Union (1989). Whereas the 1991 conference in Prague resulted in complete failure and buried Mitterrand’s confederation, the 2022 Prague summit successfully inaugurated a format that has a chance to live, even if a year after its official launch it still generates more questions than answers<sup>1</sup>.

Against this background, the article seeks to shed light on the birth of, evolution, and prospects for the EPC, as seen from a Polish perspective. The analysis is based on official speeches, think-tank policy briefs, and the Author’s own observations. Between March and May 2023, the Author participated in various international expert meetings (co-organized, *inter alia*, by the Centre for European Policy Studies, Euro Créative, French Institute of International Relations (IFRI), Open Society Foundations, Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM), and Stiftung Genshagen). Insights from these events were crucial for the present analysis, although, following the Chatham House rule, ideas and opinions cannot be attributed to any individual. The Author wishes to express her gratitude to all participants for sharing their expertise. Of course, the interpretation and conclusions contained in this article reflect solely the views of the Author.

1 The article was finalized on 5 October 2023.

## 1. The French initiative: off to a bumpy start?

During his speech delivered on Europe Day, 9 May 2022, and aimed at concluding the Conference on the Future of Europe, President of France Emmanuel Macron made a proposal – unrelated to the output of the Conference – to establish a “European political community”. This initiative was “unexpected”, according to the Polish diplomatic sources. It was framed in terms of the “geopolitical emergency of re-designing the European Union’s relationship with its neighbourhood”<sup>2</sup> as a result of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine. But it was also interpreted as “coming in response to the recent applications for EU membership received from Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova”<sup>3</sup>. President Macron himself made a direct reference to the words of Robert Schumann on 9 May 1950: “the world peace cannot be safeguarded without the making of creative efforts proportionate to the dangers which threaten it”<sup>4</sup>. The Russian invasion of February 2022 required such creativity and the EPC was meant to provide a solution. Emmanuel Macron introduced the initiative – during the French presidency in the Council of the EU and in the run-up to the French parliamentary elections – by underlining that “we must not fear differentiation, or avant-gardes”, as “they have always been fruitful for the European project” and are “a prerequisite for effectiveness and ambition”. Whereas “we feel in our heart that Ukraine (...) is already today a member of our Europe”, “we all know perfectly well that the [accession] process would in reality take several years, and most likely several decades”<sup>5</sup>. Thus, reflection on how to organize unity in Europe was urgently needed and the EPC – “this new European organization, would allow democratic European nations that subscribe to our shared core values to find a new space for political and security cooperation”<sup>6</sup>. Meanwhile, joining the EPC “would not prejudice future accession to

2 F.C. Mayer et al., *Enlarging and deepening: Giving substance to the European Political Community*, Bruegel, “Policy Contribution”, September 2022, p. 1, <https://www.bruegel.org/policy-brief/enlarging-and-deepening-giving-substance-european-political-community> [7.05.2023].

3 T. Chopin, L. Macek, S. Maillard, *The European Political Community. A new anchoring to the European Union*, Institut Jacques Delors, “Policy Brief”, 31 May 2022, p. 1, <https://institutdelors.eu/en/publications/la-communaute-politique-europeenne/> [7.05.2023].

4 Quoted in: Élysée, *Address by the President of the Republic at the Conference on the Future of Europe*, 9 May 2022, <https://www.elysee.fr/front/pdf/elysee-module-19590-en.pdf> [7.05.2023].

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

the European Union necessarily, and it would not be closed to those who have left the EU”<sup>7</sup>.

These vague yet loaded remarks sparked confusion, not only across Europe but even in Paris. Due to these immediate negative reactions, especially from Central Europe, but also Germany, the French government was soon briefing that the EPC was in no way meant to replace enlargement. This was echoed by the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, who – on 18 May 2022 – spoke of a “European geopolitical community” that “extends from Reykjavik to Baku or Yerevan, from Oslo to Ankara” and was not “a new excuse for procrastination” but will be “particularly useful (...) for those who aspire to join us”<sup>8</sup>. Still, within weeks after President Macron’s speech, rival visions of what the EPC could become were pushed by French officials. One was about supporting candidate countries, by offering them extra ties to the EU during their long years in the waiting room, while potentially involving EU institutions. The other one was purely inter-governmental and aimed at involving the United Kingdom (UK) and other non-accession countries, mainly on security issues<sup>9</sup>.

Notwithstanding the differences in substance, was there an overarching rationale for the initiative, from the French perspective? The answer to this question is not clear either. On one hand, with Ukraine’s application for EU membership, submitted under extraordinary and historic circumstances, a new membership model was considered necessary. Whereas only very gradual economic integration was deemed possible, a fast-track political integration seemed indispensable and this was where the EPC provided solutions. Unlike the neighbourhood policy model of “everything but the institutions”, the EPC would fit in with the principle of “institutions first” in order to quickly provide a sense of belonging, and on an equal footing<sup>10</sup>. Such an understand-

7 Ibid.

8 European Council, *Speech by President Charles Michel at the plenary session of the European Economic and Social Committee*, 18 May 2022, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/05/18/discours-du-president-charles-michel-lors-de-la-session-pleniere-du-comite-economique-et-social-europeen/> [7.05.2023].

9 C. Grant, *Macron is serious about the European Political Community*, “Insight. Centre for European Reform”, 1 August 2022, <https://www.cer.eu/insights/macron-serious-about-european-political-community> [7.05.2023].

10 T. Chopin, L. Macek, S. Maillard, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

ing of the EPC would focus primarily on Ukraine and aim to foster political support for the accession process, which, from the French perspective, is bound to be a very long procedure. This line of thinking was later developed by Brussels and Berlin-based think tanks that proposed to design the EPC as an accelerator mechanism for accession, accompanied by “a more formal structure relying on EU institutions”<sup>11</sup>.

But Emmanuel Macron’s address to his *corps diplomatique*, made on 1 September 2022, framed the EPC process as essentially intergovernmental, to the surprise of some<sup>12</sup>. According to the President, “we must partner very closely with all these states, in a very intergovernmental manner, to build close strategic convergence on key issues” (notably climate change, energy supplies, foreign and security policy, food security, as well as “cultural projects”) and this should “put an end to the grumbles of non-recognition with regard to many of these states and governments”<sup>13</sup>. Meanwhile, France “hopes for a configuration as wide and inclusive as possible, in which EU institutions are not central to the project nor what structures it”<sup>14</sup>. But given the list of topics to be addressed, it is difficult to see how concrete progress could be achieved if the process is based exclusively on biannual summits of heads of state or government, with no permanent structures to implement their decisions and no formalized coordination with EU institutions.

Perhaps more importantly, this speech did little to convince sceptical Central Europeans that the EPC was not about hampering enlargement. In principle, Poland and other CEE member states of the EU should have been reassured by the conclusions of the European Council of June 2022. First, the European Council decided to grant the status of candidate country to Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, while expressing its unequivocal commitment to the membership perspective of the Western Balkans and calling for acceleration of

11 F.C. Mayer et al., op. cit., p. 3.

12 M. Emerson, *Will the European Political Community actually be useful?*, CEPS Explainer. Centre for European Policy Studies, 29 September 2022, <https://www.ceps.eu/ceps-publications/will-the-european-political-community-actually-be-useful/> [7.05.2023].

13 Élysée, *Speech by the President of the French Republic at the conference of ambassadors*, 1 September 2022, <https://www.elysee.fr/en/emmanuel-macron/2022/09/01/speech-by-the-president-of-the-french-republic-at-the-conference-of-ambassadors-1> [7.05.2023].

14 Ibid.

the accession process. Second, it was stated that “a European political community” was to offer “a platform for political coordination for European countries across the continent” with the aim to “foster political dialogue and cooperation to address issues of common interest”, but this framework “will not replace existing EU policies and instruments, notably enlargement, and will fully respect the European Union’s decision-making autonomy”<sup>15</sup>. It is thus clear that the EPC cannot formally replace enlargement, but can it be used to obstruct the process and slow it down? Macron’s words about the EPC helping to “end the assumption of infinite expansion by the EU”<sup>16</sup> have certainly failed to foster trust and commitment in Central Europe for this new initiative.

From the Polish perspective, the EPC proposal raised more questions and concerns than it provided answers and opportunities. The Polish government accepted the initiative in principle and saw some benefits, notably in terms of building an understanding with the UK on military security, and with Norway and Azerbaijan on energy issues. However, the key concern was that the initiative could be used to freeze or slow down the enlargement process rather than facilitating or accelerating it. Decisions taken by the June 2022 European Council did not dispel these doubts. There was a widely shared perception, both in Poland and CEE more broadly, and across the political spectrum, that the EPC aimed at creating an eternal waiting room, while giving the candidates the illusion of being included on an equal footing in a high-level diplomatic talk shop that was in fact designed as a low-key substitute for lack of progress towards membership. The Polish understanding was that the EPC constituted yet another attempt to foster relations with the EU’s neighbours based on the *status quo* rather than on a credible enlargement policy, towards which France remained sceptical<sup>17</sup>. Accordingly, the EPC was not an adequate and resolved response to the aggression of the Russian Federation but rather more of the same – *plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose*, as

15 European Council, *European Council meeting (23 and 24 June 2022) – Conclusions*, Brussels, 24 June 2022 (OR. en), EUCO 24/22 CO EUR 21 CONCL 5, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/57442/2022-06-2324-euco-conclusions-en.pdf> [7.05.2023].

16 *Speech by the President of the French Republic at the conference of ambassadors*, op. cit.

17 A. Kozioł, Ł. Maślanka, *European Political Community meets for the first time*, “Spotlight. The Polish Institute of International Affairs”, 7 October 2022, <https://www.pism.pl/publications/european-political-community-meets-for-the-first-time> [9.05.2022].

the French themselves would say. It looked like an ENP-bis formula<sup>18</sup> that did not prejudge accession (a curious parallel with Romano Prodi's speech of 2002 about the EU's proximity policy<sup>19</sup>), while once again putting apples and oranges in one basket. As such, the EPC seemed to aim at counter-balancing or watering down the accession promise for Ukraine and Moldova, while leaving them in yet another grey zone between EU/ NATO and an increasingly aggressive Russia. Furthermore, from the Polish perspective, Russian military aggression in 2008, 2014, and 2022 made clear that grey zones only emboldened and incited Russia to intervene. Thus, only fast-track acceptance of the willing Eastern European countries to the EU and NATO, together with a credible deterrence and containment strategy backed by adequate capabilities, could stop Russia and bring peace and stability back to Europe<sup>20</sup>. Yet, at first, the EPC appeared to be heading in the opposite direction; however, as time has passed since the original proposal, can we see any shifts that align the EPC more with the Polish perspective?

## 2. The first summit in Prague: all of Europe united against Russia, and what next?

According to the President of the European Council, speaking ahead of the first EPC summit in Prague on 6 October 2022, "the fact that [all] the 44 countries which were invited decided to participate is a first positive signal"<sup>21</sup>. Indeed, the first notable achievement of the summit was simply that it happened<sup>22</sup>. And it took place with the participation of 27 EU members and 17 non-EU European states, including the

18 For a comprehensive analysis of various preferences and interests around the construction and evolution of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) see: A.K. Cianciara, *The politics of the European Neighbourhood Policy*, London–New York 2020.

19 R. Prodi, *A wider Europe – Aproximity policy as the key to stability*, SPEECH/02/619, Brussels, 5–6 December 2002, <https://ec.europa.eu/dorie/fileDownload.do?docId=255969&cardId=255969> [9.05.2022].

20 J. Szymanek, *Europejska Wspólnota Polityczna*, "Infos BAS (Biuro Analiz Sejmowych)", 9 March 2023, no. 3(305), <https://www.sejm.gov.pl/sejm9.nsf/publikacjaBAS.xsp?documentId=82311BED456D419C125896A0040F3AC&lang=PL> [9.05.2022].

21 European Council, *Remarks by President Charles Michel ahead of the first European Political Community Meeting*, 6 October 2022, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/10/06/remarks-by-president-charles-michel-ahead-of-the-first-european-political-community-meeting/> [10.05.2023].

22 M. Pierini, *Five takeaways from the European Political Community Summit*, Carnegie Europe, 18 October 2022, <https://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/88189> [10.05.2023].

initially reticent United Kingdom and Turkey as well as Armenia and Azerbaijan. Whereas no official statement was issued after the meeting, it nevertheless constituted a powerful message of unity addressed to Russia and its junior partner in crime – Belarus. The summit “confirmed that Russia was in complete isolation”, according to the Polish prime minister Mateusz Morawiecki<sup>23</sup>. Even states with close relations with Russia – Hungary, Serbia, or Turkey – showed up in Prague. But beyond strategic communication, which should not be underestimated of course, it was not entirely clear what the objectives and results of the summit were and how the way forward was framed.

This informal intergovernmental gathering somehow mirrored the European Council in its early days, albeit on a continental scale, where heads of state or government could exchange freely, with the aim of identifying common solutions to common challenges. Another visible sign of informality and flexibility was the absence of a chair, whereas the two roundtables – on peace and security and on energy, climate, and economy – were each co-facilitated by two states, one from the EU and one non-EU state. The summit featured bilateral meetings, notably between Sweden and Turkey on Sweden’s NATO accession, or between France and the UK on migration. There were also two quadrilateral meetings envisaged: one with the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan as well as the President of France and the President of the European Council; the other with the Presidents of Serbia and Kosovo as well as the President of France and the German Chancellor. Whereas the first meeting concerned the delimitation of the common border and resulted in some notable success, the second was cancelled and replaced by two separate trilateral meetings attended by the Franco-German duo<sup>24</sup>.

Participants agreed on work “paths” or priority lines of cooperation, including protection of critical infrastructure, fighting cyber-attacks, regional cooperation and security in the Black, Baltic, and North Seas

23 Quoted in: A. Brzozowski, *For the European Political Community, meeting is the message*, EURACTIV, 7 October 2022, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/for-the-european-political-community-meeting-is-the-message/> [11.05.2023].

24 European Parliamentary Research Service, *Outcome of the European Political Community and European Council meetings in Prague on 6-7 October 2022*, 11 October 2022, <https://epthinktank.eu/2022/10/11/outcome-of-the-european-political-community-and-european-council-meetings-in-prague-on-6-7-october-2022/> [11.05.2023].

as well as energy strategy to bring energy prices down, in coordination with non-EU energy producers such as Azerbaijan and Norway. It was announced that EPC meetings would be held bi-annually at the level of heads of state or government. A list of future hosts was established featuring Moldova and Spain in 2023, and the UK in 2024. The logic behind this selection was to alternate between EU and non-EU states on the one hand, and to link the EU host to the Council presidency on the other.

Still, after the Prague summit, many questions remained wide open, especially regarding funding or the institutionalization of the initiative if it were to go beyond “an opinion exchange forum”<sup>25</sup>. A decision-making capacity of 44 or 47 (as invited to the 2nd summit in Chisinau) participating states is low. The key advantage, as advocated by the French initiators, is supposedly to get out of the asymmetric accession logic and to place all participants on an equal footing. But again, equality is questionable when some participants are heavily dependent on others for key resources – military, financial and humanitarian aid – that determine their very existence.

Crucially, the EPC was launched before it acquired a clear purpose, agenda, or structure. It emerged as an “EU-centric” framework, with representatives of EU institutions being present in Prague, but at the same time kept at arm’s length so as not to estrange the UK. It only seems natural that EPC membership should be conditional on geopolitical alignment and commitment to democracy and the rule of law, but having Turkey, Azerbaijan, Serbia, or Hungary onboard means that the lowest common denominator is placed pretty low. Rather, Prague was about “get-together-diplomacy”<sup>26</sup> aimed at fostering more policy convergence in the security realm and improving foreign and security cooperation on the European continent. The challenge of building “a platform that combines political dialogue with policymaking”<sup>27</sup> was not addressed.

25 A. Koziół, Ł. Maślanka, op. cit.

26 M. Pierini, op. cit.

27 J. Pisani-Ferry, D. Schwarzer, *How to build the European Political Community*, Opinion. Project Syndicate, 3 October 2022, <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/european-political-community-epc-prague-summit-by-jean-pisani-ferry-and-daniela-schwarzer-2022-10> [11.05.2023].



It seems that between May and October 2022, the idea moved towards a model less focused on enlargement, or its alternatives, and more towards strategic cooperation<sup>28</sup>. Despite the EPC being triggered by membership applications from Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia, and ideas being voiced about framing the EPC as a facilitator for enlargement, this is not a likely scenario for the future of the EPC due to numerous objections from various sides. Rather, a de-coupling from enlargement has been underway, although this does not mean that some kind of re-coupling, whether in terms of facilitating or hampering accession, could not take place in the future. This is why Polish officials and analysts continuously stressed, also after the Prague summit, that the decision to grant candidate status to Ukraine and Moldova should not be watered down by other cooperation formats, and the EPC should not become a pretext for delaying the start of accession negotiations.

But should the EPC become a European security forum seeking to build “strategic intimacy”, in the words of Emmanuel Macron, this may also be a cause for concern from the Polish perspective. Poland sees NATO and strong US engagement in Europe as the only credible guarantee of security on the continent – directed against Russia’s aggressive and revisionist policies. The US is seen in Poland as the indispensable partner, whereas various proposals from France or Germany, regarding new security structures without US participation, are treated with marked suspicion. Thus, the ideas of the European Security Council, proposed in 2018 by Germany and France<sup>29</sup>, or a new security framework as voiced by Emmanuel Macron in January 2022, on the eve of the Russian invasion (“we need to build it between us, Europeans, share it with our allies in NATO, and propose it for negotiation to Russia”<sup>30</sup>) received a frosty response in Poland. Whereas Europe must assume its responsibilities in security and defence, there

28 T. Nguyen, *European Political Community. From family photo to ‘strategic intimacy’*, Hertie School Jacques Delors Centre, “Policy Brief”, 8 November 2022, p. 3, <https://www.delorscentre.eu/en/publications/european-political-community> [11.05.2023].

29 M. Kaim, R. Kempin, *A European Security Council. Added value for EU foreign and security policy?*, SWP Comment, 4 January 2019, <https://www.swp-berlin.org/publikation/a-european-security-council> [12.05.2023].

30 *Macron floats EU security pact with Russia, risking Western split over Ukraine*, Financial Times, 20 January 2022, <https://www.ft.com/content/odb12864-a154-4607-a0e8-c9722e956424> [12.05.2023].

has been considerable distrust in Poland, especially under the Law and Justice government, with regard to France seeking to exclude the US and appease Russia. The EPC was seen as old wine in new French bottles. Therefore, Poland adopted a wait-and-see approach before the 2nd EPC summit in Chisinau, which was understood as a turning point at which the initiative would either fly or die.

### **3. The second summit in Chisinau: how concrete can it get?**

The debate leading up to the summit in Chisinau on 1 June 2023 revealed that little progress had been achieved since the Prague inauguration. The EPC is still somewhere between a continental strategic exchange forum, an “innovation policy lab”, or a “speed-dating” opportunity for European leaders on the one hand, and an ambition to deliver concrete outcomes in the field of security, energy, and connectivity on the other. Undoubtedly, this results from significant variation in the preferences coming from participating countries and voiced by expert circles. The first line of thinking that emerged from the pre-Chisinau debate concerned the undeniable merit in periodically bringing European leaders together in a forum that does not comprise Russia. In particular, such a high-level meeting in Moldova, so close to Ukraine and the Russia-controlled separatist region of Transnistria, constituted a powerful message in itself. The continuous vagueness of the process, including a lack of formal declarations, allowed states such as the UK and Turkey to be brought to the table. In contrast, pushing for concrete and binding commitments, especially at this early stage of the initiative’s development, could in turn alienate some partners and reduce participation, whereas participation constituted both the crucial added value of the format and the essence of its strength in response to Russian aggression. Socialization and networking at the highest political level could bring important even long-term results while fostering reflection on the “new Europe” under these rapidly changing geopolitical circumstances.

The second line of thinking focused on concrete projects and deliverables while calling for more EPC ambition and greater capacity to act. But to follow up on commitments and policies, the EPC would need institutionalization, which may lead to disagreements and block-

ages, undermining the renewed sense of unity that Europe seeks. Institutionalization entails opening a Pandora's box with questions regarding funding and governance, including the competencies of EU institutions. Meanwhile, as the experience of the Poland-led regional Three Seas cooperation has shown, the execution of infrastructure or energy projects requires an institutional structure beyond loose bi-annual summitry. Some concrete results of the Chisinau summit were expected, of course. For example, the summit saw an extension of the EU-Western Balkans roaming declaration to Moldova, and announcements regarding the Franco-Slovenian project to help Western Balkans increase their cyber capacity. However, rather than formulating new policies, the EPC could also focus on rekindling a sense of European polity, based on shared security interests rather than shared values, which is what the EU has so far neglected<sup>31</sup>.

The debate on how to make the EPC a catalyst to expedite EU enlargement and revitalize the neighbourhood policies has continued in the run-up to the 2nd summit in Chisinau<sup>32</sup>. Intense work on new enlargement modalities has indeed been taking place in the capitals of EU member states, including Warsaw, Prague, and Berlin. Yet keeping enlargement off the EPC agenda helps to maintain the pressure on the EU member states and institutions to deliver on their commitments to candidate countries. The EPC could then focus on finding common ground with all European states while keeping (some of them) from (fully) falling into Russia's orbit<sup>33</sup>. This common ground should be articulated at some point – a joint vision at the strategic level, outlining a broad European position on continental security, was perceived as necessary by many experts from the “wider Europe”. From the Ukrainian perspective, EU membership is an obvious priority, but not an urgent one. What matters most is weapons, NATO's security guarantees,

31 H. Kribbe, S. Lumet, L. van Middelaar, *Bringing the greater European family together. New perspectives on the European Political Community*, Brussels Institute of Geopolitics, May 2023, <https://big-europe.eu/publication/bringing-the-greater-european-family-together> [26.05.2023].

32 L. Plesca, *Assessing the implications for Moldova in hosting the European Political Community Summit*, GMF Insights, 18 May 2023, <https://www.gmfus.org/news/assessing-implications-moldova-hosting-european-political-community-summit> [25.05.2023].

33 S. Greene, E. Lucas, N. Tenzer, *The road to Chişinău. How the European Political Community can – and cannot – address the wider continent's conundrums*, CEPA, 23 May 2023, p. 15, <https://cepa.org/comprehensive-reports/the-road-to-chisinau-the-european-political-community/> [25.05.2023].

sanctions, and financial support. Clearly, no stability and investment are possible as long as there is an ongoing war and no credible guarantees in place that would prevent future aggression.

Whereas security was framed as the number one EPC priority for Ukraine, for Moldova, it was diplomatic support and connectivity. Organization of the 2nd EPC summit in Chisinau with 47 state delegations at the highest political level was undoubtedly the greatest diplomatic event in this vulnerable country's history. The pro-European government of Moldova, acting under severe Russian pressure, hoped to use this opportunity to firmly anchor the country in Europe while bringing tangible results to the citizens<sup>34</sup>. According to President Maia Sandu, Moldova's primary objective was to become a full member of the EU by 2030, with the accession talks beginning no later than in early 2024<sup>35</sup>.

As for Poland, it contributed to the summit by co-facilitating a roundtable on security together with the UK, while shaping the debate on cybersecurity, nuclear security, hybrid attacks, and protection of the most vulnerable groups of civilians during armed conflicts. Experts stressed that the summit also provided an opportunity for Poland to seek further comprehensive financial and political support from European partners for the Moldovan reforms. At the same time, Poland indicated that formal dialogue on the next steps of countries aspiring to membership can only be effective in the EU forum as part of an enlargement policy<sup>36</sup>.

## 4. Prospects: all eyes on the United Kingdom?

● The third EPC summit took place on 5 October 2023 in Spain, on the eve of the informal European Council that was to discuss en-

34 N. Popescu, Keynote speech *European Political Community Summit: Key topic and expectations*, High-level Conference, IPRE & CEPS, Chisinau, 25 May 2023 [attended by the Author].

35 *Moldovans are Europeans – President Sandu's message which she'll carry from a Chisinau rally to the European Political Community Summit*, 22 May 2023, <https://www.epcsummit2023.md/moldovans-are-europeans-president-sandus-message-which-shell-carry-chisinau-rally-european> [26.05.2023].

36 J. Pieńkowski, *Strengthening State Security a Challenge for the Pro-European Moldovan Government*, "PISM Bulletin" 2023, no. 53(2172), <https://pism.pl/publications/strengthening-state-security-a-challenge-for-the-pro-european-moldovan-government> [24.05.2023].

largement and the necessary EU reform. One way or the other, enlargement remains central to the EPC. However, expectations regarding the Granada summit and the Spanish EPC presidency were quite limited. This is in contrast to the fourth summit planned for early 2024 in the United Kingdom. In fact, this former EU member has been hijacking the EPC show for quite some time now. Many of the initiatives voiced in Prague were announced jointly by France and the UK. According to some analysts, the EPC initiative is really more about the West than the East. It is about re-engaging the UK in the new geopolitical context and in a manner that is acceptable post-Brexit. The joint leaders' declaration from 10 March 2023, announced during the first meeting of the French President and British Prime Minister in five years, was quite telling in this respect. In this document France and the UK underlined the importance of the EPC, which should "serve as the high-level vehicle required to deepen the strategic dialogue between all its members and boost European-wide practical cooperation"<sup>37</sup>. The EPC should play a key role in promoting a collective approach in the field of energy, infrastructure, connectivity, cybersecurity, countering disinformation, as well as migration, the latter being especially relevant to the UK. The UK's Integrated Review Refresh, from March 2023, mentioned EPC as a "notable and welcome new forum for continent-wide cooperation"<sup>38</sup>, which was a break from the previous approach to European security: either NATO or bilateral partnerships.

Certainly, the UK-hosted summit and the EPC presidency would be of great importance, firstly because the United Kingdom is the key non-EU European power, secondly, because it has regained trust and credibility post-Brexit thanks to its resolute support for Ukraine, and thirdly, due to its transatlantic credentials, UK's engagement may help alleviate CEE fears of the EPC being a French Trojan horse to implement European strategic autonomy from the US<sup>39</sup>. But ultimately the fate of the EPC would depend on whether and how successive presi-

37 Prime Minister's Office, *UK-France Joint Leaders' Declaration*, 10 March 2023, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-france-joint-leaders-declaration/uk-france-joint-leaders-declaration> [12.05.2023].

38 S. Greene, E. Lucas, N. Tenzer, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

39 M. Droin, I. Toygür, *The Chisinau Summit: A Litmus Test for Moldova and the EPC*, CSIS Comment, 26 May 2023, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/chisinau-summit-litmus-test-moldova-and-epc> [28.05.2023].

dencies and other key European actors make use of it to further their own agendas. For instance, Poland does not seem to consider the EPC as an important tool to increase convergence on major issues dividing the continent: it was not mentioned in foreign affairs minister Zbigniew Rau's annual "exposé" in the Sejm in April 2023, nor was it discussed at the PISM Strategic Ark – a major event in global strategizing, organized by the Polish Institute of International Affairs in May 2023. A big question mark remains over the Hungarian presidency of the Council of the EU and the EPC in late 2024.

Finally, in terms of avenues for further and more theory-driven research, it will certainly be useful to look into emerging patterns of institutionalization over the next summits and presidencies. Existing literature<sup>40</sup> shows that institutionalization is a major factor that predicts whether an international format is bound to fly, merely survive, or ultimately die.

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<sup>40</sup> M. Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, *What kills international organizations? When and why international organizations terminate*, "European Journal of International Relations" 2021, vol. 27, no. 1, DOI: 10.1177/1354066120932976.

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Justyna Marzec\*

# The hydrogen policy of the Visegrad Countries: A comparative study

**Polityka wodorowa w państwach Grupy Wyszehradzkiej.  
Analiza porównawcza**

**Abstract:** The present paper aims to analyse and compare the preconditions for implementing hydrogen strategies in the Visegrad countries. This study attempts to verify that hydrogen policies are going to be implemented at different rates, thereby delaying their introduction. It is extremely important to assert this claim in the context of the energy crisis, the war in Ukraine, and the European Union's aspirations to achieve low-carbon economy goals and energy self-sufficiency policies at both the national and EU levels. Furthermore, the study attempts to provide answers to the following research questions: firstly, does the hydrogen policy have a realistic chance of being implemented in the Visegrad region? Secondly, will it be implemented in the indicated form and extent of cooperation?

**Keywords:** Hydrogen policy, RES (Renewable Energy Sources), minilateralism

**Streszczenie:** Celem opracowania jest analiza porównawcza warunków wstępnych w zakresie wdrażania polityki wodorowej w państwach Grupy Wyszehradzkiej (V4). W opracowaniu podjęto próbę weryfikacji hipotezy, że realizacja polityki wodorowej będzie polityką różnej prędkości, co przełoży się na opóźnienia w jej realizacji. Weryfikacja wskazanej hipotezy jest niezwykle istotna w kontekście kryzysu energetycznego, wojny w Ukrainie oraz dążeń Unii Europejskiej do osiągnięcia ambitnych celów w zakresie gospodarki niskoemisyjnej oraz podejmowania zarówno na poziomie państwa, jak i Unii Europejskiej działań na rzecz dążenia do samowystarczalności energetycznej. Dodatkowo w opracowaniu podjęto próbę odpowiedzi na pytania badawcze. Po pierwsze, czy polityka wodorowa ma realne szanse zaistnienia w przestrzeni państw Grupy Wyszehradzkiej? Po drugie, czy będzie realizowana we wskazanym formacie współpracy i w jakim zakresie?

**Słowa kluczowe:** polityka wodorowa, oze, minilateralizm

## Introduction

The global energy crisis following Russia's invasion of Ukraine has led to a shift in energy security perspectives. EU governments, which had

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previously taken a systematic, gradual, and conservative approach to increasing the share of renewables in the energy mix, have had to re-assess their thinking in this area and adopt a more dynamic approach. Rising fossil fuel prices have made wind and solar energy more competitive. Member States' energy policies now focus on diversifying energy sources and supply routes while reducing greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. The rules adopted at the EU level provide a starting point for bilateral and multilateral action by countries. They provide a new platform for cooperation on specific sub-regional projects. A practical example of energy cooperation can be found in the activities of the Visegrad Group (V4). With a view to realising national energy interests, such cooperation is practical and focused on the implementation of specific projects. *A Hydrogen Strategy for a Climate Neutral Europe* (hereafter: *The EU Hydrogen Strategy*)<sup>1</sup>, announced on 8 July 2020, provided the impetus to intensify cooperation. It sets out a catalogue of activities in the hydrogen sector. The development of hydrogen policy is part of the trend towards energy neutrality and at the same time an instrument for its implementation. It is a key component of EU and national efforts to move towards a low and eventually carbon-free economy. World demand for hydrogen in 2020 was about 95 million tonnes (Mt), with more than 70 Mt used as pure hydrogen and about 20 Mt as feedstock in gas mixtures for methanol and steel production, according to the International Energy Agency (IEA). Refinery and industrial processes accounted for almost all of the hydrogen demand in 2020<sup>2</sup>. Meanwhile, interest in the use of hydrogen in other sectors of the economy has been growing rapidly<sup>3</sup>. This applies to both the normative and practical levels. By adopting the EU Hydrogen Strategy, the European Commission has stimulated activities in the field of hydrogen technology development in EU Member States. The adoption of an EU hydrogen policy framework stems from

- 1 International Energy Agency, *Hydrogen*, 2022, <https://www.iea.org/reports/hydrogen> [5.04.2023]; International Energy Agency, *Hydrogen – more efforts needed*, 2023, <https://www.iea.org/reports/hydrogen> [5.04.2023].
- 2 K. Błach-Morysińska, G. Tchorek, *Mapa rozwoju rynku i technologii dla obszaru technologii wodornych*, PARP, Warsaw 2022, p. 31.
- 3 European Commission, 2020. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, *A hydrogen strategy for a climate-neutral Europe*, Brussels, 8 July 2020, 301 final, p. 1.

the fact that efficient hydrogen technology development and building competitiveness in this sector require international cooperation. The share of hydrogen in the European energy mix is expected to grow dynamically, from less than 2% today to 13-14% in 2050<sup>4</sup>. The EU Hydrogen Strategy is, therefore, an important element in building energy neutrality across the whole community. This document proposes policy actions in five areas. First, to support investment in the hydrogen sector. Second, to support hydrogen production and demand. Third, to create a hydrogen market and infrastructure. Fourth, to encourage cooperation and research. Fifth, to cooperate internationally in the field of hydrogen<sup>5</sup>. Hydrogen has a broad range of uses, from power generation to long-term storage. Including hydrogen in the country's raw material and energy balance will, therefore, make energy systems more flexible by balancing supply and demand, ultimately leading to increased energy efficiency. The implementation of a hydrogen policy is an instrument to achieve carbon-neutral targets. In the context of hydrogen production, we must focus on the production of hydrogen from renewable sources, given their zero emissions. The current production of hydrogen is around 70 Mt, of which 76% is from natural gas and almost all the rest (23%) from coal<sup>6</sup>. Therefore, the challenge for designing, implementing, and developing hydrogen technologies in the Visegrad countries is to adopt solutions that focus on hydrogen production from renewable sources.

The present paper aims to analyse and compare the preconditions for implementing hydrogen strategies in the Visegrad countries. This study attempts to verify that hydrogen policies are going to be implemented at different rates, thereby delaying their introduction. It is extremely important to assert this claim in the context of the energy crisis, the war in Ukraine, and the European Union's aspirations to achieve low-carbon economy goals and energy self-sufficiency policies at both the national and EU levels. Furthermore, the study attempts to provide answers to the following research questions: Firstly, does the hydrogen policy have a realistic chance of being implemented in

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 International Energy Agency, *The future of hydrogen*, 2019, <https://www.iea.org/reports/the-future-of-hydrogen> [5.04.2023].

the Visegrad region? And secondly, will it be implemented in the indicated form of cooperation and to what extent?

## 1. Overview of existing resource conditions for the development of hydrogen policy in the Visegrad Group countries

The fuel and energy balances of Visegrad countries are comparable (Figure 1). However, from the point of view of the implementation of both energy and hydrogen policies, it is the differences that are significant. The V4 countries have a comparable level of total energy supply by source, however, there are slight differences in the oil, biofuels, and waste sectors (Figure 1). In contrast, the share of coal varies considerably, with a dominant share in Poland (41.9 %) and Czechia (29.15 %), compared to 15.38 % in Slovakia and 5.18 % in Hungary. Countries with a predominant share of coal in the energy mix will start implementing hydrogen technologies based on conventional energy sources, which is actually the least desirable from the point of view of reducing emissions. Renewable energy resources in the countries analysed, together with the use of water technologies, average 13%, which is a common point for development and investment in the renewable energy sector. This is important for planning joint infrastructure projects.

**Figure 1. Total Energy Supply (TES) by source in 2021 (%)**

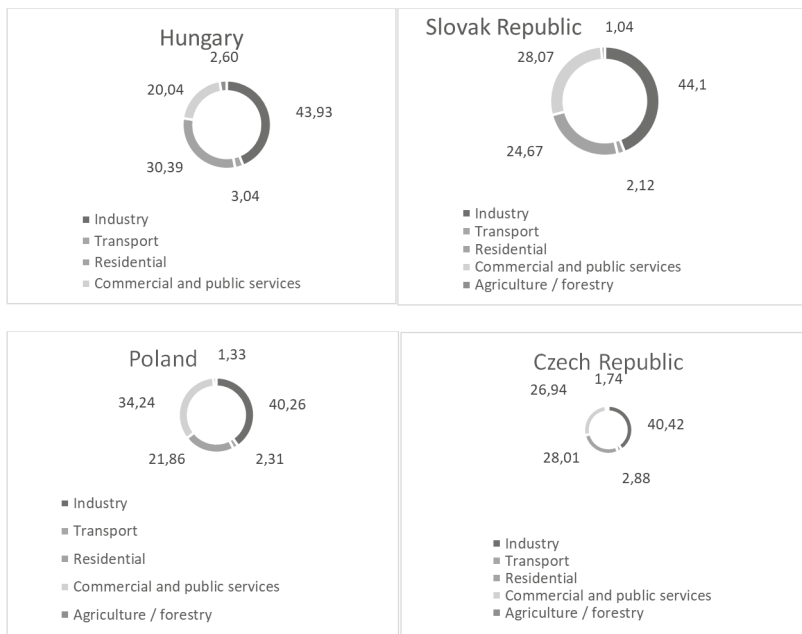


Source: Own study based on data from IEA, [www.iea.org](http://www.iea.org).

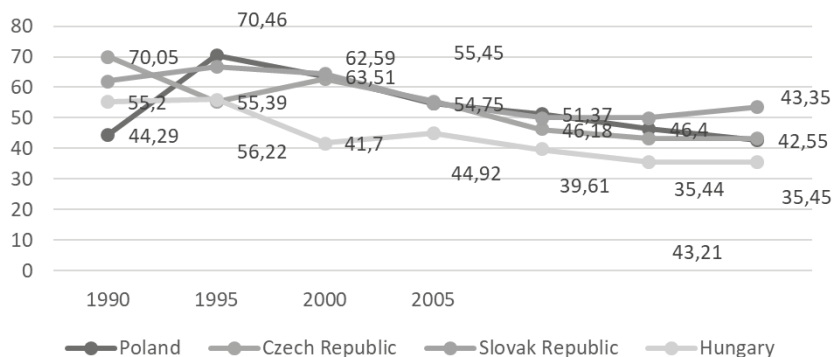
Electricity consumption is most prominent in industry, where its average share is around 41% (Figure 2). Except for Hungary, this consumption is covered by coal. By contrast, transport accounts for an average of 2.5% (Figure 2). These figures have implications for the intensity of carbon dioxide emissions in industry (Figure 3) and transport (Figure 4). It should be noted that investment in industry, which is the main source of greenhouse gas emissions, is crucial for reducing emissions. The relatively high share of high-emission fuels in the structure of the raw material and fuel balance in the Visegrad countries translates into high costs of energy transformation in the region. However, considering the process of energy transformation and the related trend, including the shift from the use of high-emission to lower-emission fuels, this share is going to be sustained.

It is, therefore, reasonable to assume that hydrogen technologies will be used primarily in industry. Another reason for this assumption is that hydrogen use in transport is effective and cost-efficient, but most viable for long-distance transport (shipping, aviation).

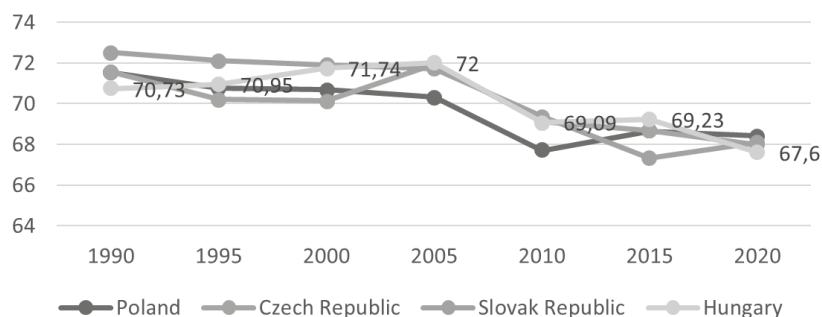
**Figure 2. Electricity consumption by sector 2020 (%)**



Source: Own study based on data from IEA, [www.iea.org](http://www.iea.org).

**Figure 3. Carbon intensity of industry energy consumption (gCO<sub>2</sub>/MJ)**

Source: Own study based on data from IEA, [www.iea.org](http://www.iea.org).

**Figure 4. Carbon intensity of road transport energy consumption (gCO<sub>2</sub>/MJ)**

Source: Own study based on data from IEA, [www.iea.org](http://www.iea.org).

Hydrogen is currently used in the chemical and refining industries. Low-carbon hydrogen accounts for less than 1% of global hydrogen production in 2021. At present, hydrogen production in the Visegrad countries varies widely. The level of hydrogen production in Poland is about 1.3 million tonnes, which ranks Poland 3rd among European hydrogen producers (14% of European hydrogen is produced in Poland), mainly in industrial processes<sup>7</sup>. Grupa Azoty S.A. is the largest producer of hydrogen in Poland, producing approximately one tonne of hydrogen. PKN Orlen produces approximately 145,000 tonnes of conventional hydrogen. Pure hydrogen will be produced in the pro-

7 K. Błach-Morysińska, G. Tchorek, op. cit., p. 70.

pane dehydrogenation process at the new Grupa Azoty plant. Hydrogen is produced as a co-product of this reaction and is of very high quality, reaching a purity of 99.99%. Poland has significant potential for developing renewable hydrogen, especially for using energy from offshore wind farms<sup>8</sup>. Unipetrol, which produces over 85,000 tonnes of hydrogen annually, is the largest producer in Czechia<sup>9</sup>. The conditions for the development of hydrogen technologies for industry are unfavourable in Czechia. The country has neither significant RES resources nor infrastructure for commercial production of renewable hydrogen<sup>10</sup>. In Slovakia, the largest producer of hydrogen is the Duslo chemical plant, which produces 100,000 tonnes of hydrogen per year. In Hungary, MOL Group produces and consumes nearly 150,000 tons of hydrogen annually<sup>11</sup>.

A number of observations can be made from the above analysis of the conditions for the development of hydrogen technologies. First of all, an analysis of the structure of power generation in the V4 countries reveals a relatively diverse picture. The gradual increase of RES is in line with the EU climate and energy policy. The level of energy dependence leaves room to search for alternative solutions to improve the level of energy security in the V4 countries, taking into account both the level of diversification of sources and the direction of supply. At the same time, it should be emphasised that diversifying sources has so far not translated into diversifying sources of conventional energy. It is also important to note that the current share of renewable energy sources in the analysed countries is inadequate, both from the point of view of the targets and the EU regulations as well as from the point of view of renewable hydrogen production. The second observation is that the share of nuclear technologies, which are considered to be relatively safe and an alternative solution for improving energy security, seems to contradict the above statement in a detailed analysis of the energy mix of the Visegrad countries. This is mainly due to

8 P. Niewiński, *Critical infrastructure at sea and the energy security of the Republic of Poland*, "Energy Policy Studies" 2022, vol. 2, no. 10, pp. 3-14.

9 L. Janiček, L. Reichmann, *Hydrogen law, regulations & strategy in the Czech Republic*, <https://cms.law/en/pol/> [5.04.2023].

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.



the technological and raw material dependence on Russian technologies of Czechia, Slovakia and, to a large extent, Hungary. Together with the dependence on natural gas and oil supplies, this often blocks rational energy solutions and, more broadly, the political choices of the analysed countries. At present, they do not have the flexibility and freedom to create their own energy portfolio, which is a consequence of technological and infrastructural dependence, among other things. As a result, the V4 countries face a national security dilemma. They are heavily dependent on one supplier for all their raw materials, and this dependence is determined by infrastructure links. This is best illustrated by the example of Hungary, where severing energy cooperation with Russia is against Hungarian national interests. This has implications for the low energy self-sufficiency indicator, energy security, and ultimately state security. Thirdly, mainly because of its high emissivity but also because of the depletion of mines, especially in Czechia, the legitimacy of coal use is widely questioned. Depleting reserves is forcing a shift in energy mixes. Fourthly, the Visegrad countries have the potential to implement major infrastructure projects. The completed natural gas transmission project, the N-S corridor, has increased gas supply flexibility and is also an interesting alternative for its use in hydrogen transport. Fifthly, for the design of hydrogen policy, the location of the Visegrad countries is important. Investments in hydrogen technologies and infrastructure will directly contribute to strengthening the energy security of the countries in the region, while specialisation in this sector has the potential to create competitive advantages in the subregion. As Marlena Gołębiowska, Michał Paszkowski, and Damian Szacawa rightly point out: “The countries of Central Europe are only at the beginning of the process of building new energy systems in which renewable energies will play a dominant role. (...) The process of energy transformation will require significant financial outlays. However, technological development and a decrease in the cost of electricity generation from low-emission energy sources will facilitate this process”<sup>12</sup>. At the same time, we have to agree with

12 M. Gołębiowska, M. Paszkowski, D. Szacawa, *Neutralni dla klimatu: zielona transformacja państw Europy Środkowej w dobie pandemii COVID-19*, “Prace IES” 2021, no. 15, p. 43.

Ewelina Kochanek that atmospheric and geological conditions limit the expansion of the RES market in the region<sup>13</sup>.

## **2. Normative requirements for the development of hydrogen policy in the Visegrad Group countries**

Hydrogen policy is another area of opportunity for energy partnerships in the region. This creates the possibility of strengthening cooperation in the regional initiatives that are functioning even in a less structured formula (the Lublin Triangle, the Visegrad Group). At present, the countries find themselves in a kind of energy paradox, which consists in trying to balance energy policy by taking account of at least four variables: their own raw material potential (i.e., their own recoverable energy resources), EU requirements setting targets in the field of carbon neutrality, external conditions related to the aftermath of the conflict in Ukraine (which will determine the geopolitics of raw materials in the world now and in the future), and measures aimed at stabilizing the supply chain of energy resources. All these elements play a decisive role in ensuring the energy security of countries and the wider area.

The proposed hydrogen policy is a relatively new element in the complex matter of ensuring energy security in the EU. *The EU Hydrogen Policy* outlines the most important development paths for Member States to follow when diversifying their energy mix with a view to 2035 and 2050. The adoption of similar documents at the Member State level was a prerequisite for the EU Hydrogen Strategy.

13 E. Kochanek, *The role of hydrogen in the Visegrad Group approach to energy transition*, "Energies" 2022, vol. 15, no. 19, p. 9.

**Table 1. List of hydrogen strategies in EU and Visegrad countries**

EU	Slovakia	Poland	Czechia	Hungary
Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic and Social Committee, and the Committee of the Regions, A hydrogen strategy for a climate-neutral Europe, Brussels, 8 July 2020, COM (2020) 301 final. (July 2020)	National Hydrogen Strategy: Ready for the Future (June 2021)	Polish Hydrogen Strategy Until 2030 with an Outlook Until 2040 (November 2021)	Czechia's Hydrogen Strategy (July 2021)	Hungary's National Hydrogen Strategy. Strategy for the Introduction of Clean Hydrogen and Hydrogen Technologies to the Domestic Market and for Establishing Background Infrastructure for the Hydrogen Industry (May 2021)

Source: Own study.

The analysis of hydrogen policies in the V4 countries reveals the importance of hydrogen in improving energy security parameters and the need to reduce GHGs. Up to 2021, no comprehensive solutions for the use of hydrogen technologies in the regulatory area existed at the level of the investigated states. Despite their similar structure, the strategies differ in detail, both in terms of objectives and the issue of setting implementation deadlines. The Polish strategy includes a reference to the concept of the hydrogen economy, defined as technologies for the production, storage, distribution, and use of hydrogen and its derivatives, including centralised and decentralised systems for the production, storage, and transport of hydrogen using the transmission and distribution network and other forms of transport, and its subsequent use in various sectors of the economy<sup>14</sup>. It is important to note that the national strategies have clarified the terms used for hydrogen technologies. However, a number of inconsistencies exist in the way hydrogen technologies have been categorised in the documentation reviewed. The regulations adopted at the EU level refer to two concepts: renewable hydrogen, which is produced from energy from renewable sources other than biomass and provides a 70% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions compared to hydrogen produced from fossil fuels, and low-emission hydrogen, which is produced from energy from non-renewable sources and meets the threshold of a 70% reduction

14 The Government of Poland, *Polish Hydrogen Strategy Until 2030 with an Outlook Until 2040*, 2021, p. 3.

in greenhouse gas emissions compared to hydrogen produced from fossil fuels. The Polish document follows the terminology adopted at the EU level. When specifying the types of hydrogen, the emissivity level was emphasised, whereas other countries referred to the criterion of how it was produced. Thus, in the former, conventional and renewable hydrogen are mentioned, and in the latter, the documents refer to green, grey, and blue hydrogen. The primary objective stated in the documents analysed is the same. It is to decarbonise economies, while eventually seeking to use hydrogen produced from renewable energy. The analysis of the Visegrad Group countries' hydrogen strategies shows that all countries envisage using hydrogen technologies for power generation, industrial decarbonisation, and transport. Therefore, the current use of hydrogen needs to be extended beyond the chemical, petrochemical, and refining industries. The production of hydrogen will require the establishment of a plant for the production of hydrogen from sources with low or zero emissions. It must be noted, however, that the Strategies allow for the production of hydrogen from various forms. The development of hydrogen production implies the need to develop the transport and storage infrastructure. Notably, the development of the hydrogen economy should help create a hydrogen industry. The Hydrogen Strategies of the Visegrad countries emphasise the need to develop international cooperation involving both the public and private sectors.

What favours the implementation of hydrogen technologies in the analysed countries is their strong orientation towards developing RES. One of the most important factors for the development and implementation of hydrogen policies has been the changing perception and approach to hydrogen policies, with a close link between energy security (the primary objective of the V4 energy policies) and climate policies. The level of reduction of greenhouse gas emissions is used to evaluate the progress and effectiveness of the hydrogen policy. This should be seen as a change in the way we think about energy security, which is already inextricably linked to the natural environment, not only in the sphere of declarations and postulates, or in the effort to build a Green Deal in the EU, but also in determining its level through specific quantitative indicators in terms of the desired level of greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere, and not the percentage share of individual suppliers and carriers in the energy mix of each coun-

try. Cooperation in the field of hydrogen technologies has taken the form of hydrogen valleys, which will ultimately be part of the European Hydrogen Ecosystem. Hydrogen valleys are going to be located in specific geographical areas and the decision to create them will be strongly embedded in the context of cooperation at the (sub)regional level. The solutions identified are expected to help create a globally competitive industry and their location has already been identified. In Hungary, the hydrogen ecosystem of the Transdanubian region has been selected as the first site. It is going to involve the development of the ammonia industry and refineries (Pétfürdő, Százhalombatta). The document shows that there are unique opportunities even at the regional level, and in addition to the current large hydrogen users, there are several sectors that have the potential to become new hydrogen users, e.g., iron and steel works (Dunaújváros) and cement production (Beremend, Királyegyháza). The nuclear power plant in Paks can provide a significant amount of emission-free electricity to build the hydrogen value chain. The second northeastern hydrogen valley is a region with a well-developed industry (Miskolc, Tiszaújváros, Kazincbarcika, strong chemical and petrochemical industry, with significant existing hydrogen consumption), with significant hydrogen demand in a concentrated area. The inclusion of the Mátra power plant and its area should also be explored<sup>15</sup>. In the field of transport, Hungary has decided to reduce the carbon footprint of heavy goods vehicles by increasing the use of hydrogen to about 65,000 tonnes by 2040 and 212,000 tonnes by 2050, following the rapid spread of fuel cell vehicles. Eventually, five valleys will be built in Poland: Silesian HV (construction of fuel cells, hydrogen buses), Lower Silesian (networks of economic links with suppliers, subcontractors, and collaborators), Greater Polish (production of zero-emission green hydrogen), Pomeranian (production of buses and trains, hydrogen education), Mazovian (research and development projects), and Subcarpathian (construction of fuel cells, hydrogen buses)<sup>16</sup>. In Czechia, the valleys

15 The Hungarian Government, *Hungary's National Hydrogen Strategy. Strategy for the Introduction of Clean Hydrogen and Hydrogen Technologies to the Domestic Market and for Establishing Background Infrastructure for the Hydrogen Industry*, 2021, p. 6.

16 *Doliny wodorowe w Polsce*, <https://h2poland.eu/pl/kategorie/doliny-wodorowe/odbiór-społeczny/doliny-wodorowe-w-polsce/> [5.04.2023].

are going to be located in the Karlovy Vary region (transport) in the northwest, Moravia and Silesia in the east, and Ústecký in the northwest. The first two of these locations have the potential to become the main hydrogen hubs in Central Europe according to Environment Minister Petr Hladik<sup>17</sup>. Furthermore, the development of hydrogen technologies within the countries studied will involve the production, storage, and use of hydrogen, especially for transport. In the Slovak Republic, advanced work on hydrogen technology is conducted at the Košice Centre<sup>18</sup>. The implementation of hydrogen technologies is not only a unilateral effort of the EU to conquer the market for hydrogen technologies. It is also dictated by the changing political and economic situation in the world, especially in the context of the military operations in Ukraine and the resulting consequences for the EU. In March 2022, the European Commission announced the REPowerEU Communication, a document whose premise is to expedite the reduction of dependence on Russian fossil fuels and the acceleration of the energy transition. The Communication highlighted the need to accelerate the use of hydrogen, in particular from renewable energy sources. It also highlights the importance of hydrogen as a replacement for natural gas, coal, and oil in industries and transport that are difficult to decarbonise. REPowerEU targets 10Mt of domestic renewable hydrogen production and 10Mt of renewable hydrogen imports by 2030<sup>19</sup>. It also stressed that hydrogen infrastructure must be developed more rapidly to produce, import, and ship 20 million tonnes of hydrogen by 2030. Cross-border hydrogen infrastructure is still at an early stage of development, but the basis for planning and development has already been laid with the inclusion of hydrogen infrastructure in the modernised Trans-European Energy Networks. Total investment needs for

17 I. Todorović, *Czech coal regions to introduce hydrogen technologies*, Balkans Green Energy News, <https://balkangreenenergynews.com/czech-coal-regions-to-introduce-hydrogen-technologies/> [5.04.2023].

18 J. Trubalska, *Slovakia – case study*, [in:] A. Wiącek, M. Ruszel, J. Stec-Rusiecka (eds.), *Energy security. Selected issues*, Rzeszów 2022, p. 221.

19 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, The European Council, The Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, *REPowerEU Plan* (SWD(2022) 230 final), p. 8.

the main categories of hydrogen infrastructure are estimated at EUR 28-38 billion for internal EU piping and EUR 6-11 billion for storage<sup>20</sup>.

The focus of hydrogen policy development cooperation in the Visegrad countries is currently on the decarbonisation of transport. To this end, a project is being implemented as part of the Black Horse Hydrogen Valley in Slovakia. The project plans to deploy 10,000 HDV vehicles, invest in 40 electrolyzers for hydrogen production, and build a hydrogen refuelling infrastructure along the TEN-T corridors with a total of 270 refuelling stations to be completed by 2030. Current status high-level planning at the government level exists<sup>21</sup>. Moreover, the Visegrad countries cooperate on hydrogen technologies within Horizon Europe, Clean Hydrogen Partnership, Important Projects of Common European Interest as well as at a bilateral level.

In summary, it should be noted that the different levels of commitment of the Visegrad countries already at the strategic policy level may determine the success of their cooperation in the field of hydrogen technologies. As mentioned above, the hydrogen strategies are quite different in terms of setting specific dates and quantifiable targets.

Heterogeneous conditions, especially in terms of renewable energy potential, are a constant that will affect the success of hydrogen production from renewables. Although governments have stated their desire and need to develop the whole hydrogen chain, they are concentrating their efforts on developing the transport sector. As indicated above, the bulk of decarbonisation efforts should be focused on industrial solutions. Furthermore, as the V4 countries begin to implement their hydrogen policies on a large scale, they are operating in a similar regulatory environment, lacking uniform and detailed legislation. The regulatory environment for the implementation and development of hydrogen technologies, therefore, requires the development of certain permanent legal instruments that take into account local conditions.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> *Black Horse*, <https://h2v.eu/hydrogen-valleys/black-horse> [5.04.2023].

## Conclusions

Since 2009, the energy sector has gained momentum within the Visegrad Group. Before that, it was not the main platform for cooperation. Changing energy market conditions, political changes, and the implementation of infrastructure projects that undermine the energy security of the countries in the region (e.g., Nord Stream) are currently driving the forms and directions of cooperation in the energy sector. This cooperation lacks an institutionalised framework and is characterised by its network structure. This, in turn, affects the flexibility that is crucial in the context of ensuring energy security, not only at the state level but also at the regional level. In practice, this means that cooperation is focused on specific infrastructure projects that are important for the improvement of the parameters of energy security in the region. The drive to decarbonise industry leads us to believe that implementing a hydrogen policy is rational and justified from an energy security perspective for the V4 countries. Hydrogen in industry is useful in areas where electrification is hard to achieve. Switching to renewable hydrogen will contribute to significant emission reductions in the identified sectors<sup>22</sup>.

There are few dedicated hydrogen projects being implemented. Most of the key projects for hydrogen production, transport, and storage are in the design phase. Implementing hydrogen investments is contingent upon increasing renewable energy shares in the energy mix. In the countries under review, hydrogen is a by-product of chemical processes and is mainly produced and used for own consumption. This means that no investment has been made so far in developing the transmission network dedicated to hydrogen on a large scale. At all levels of the hydrogen value chain (production, transport, and storage), the European Hydrogen Ecosystem project is forcing profound changes in infrastructure development.

From the point of view of the national interests of the V4 countries, it is important to diversify energy sources. This is especially true in the current dynamically changing environment. Hydrogen offers real benefits in both the economic and, more importantly, the political dimension. The diversity of conditions in the hydrogen sector in

<sup>22</sup> K. Błach-Morysińska, G. Tchorek, *op. cit.*, p. 28.



the countries analysed should be seen as an added value. It allows for specialisation in individual countries within the developed hydrogen sector and of the whole group within the EU.

Networking energy cooperation in this region requires a systematic approach to hydrogen technology activities. Such an approach must be reflected in the dynamics of the development of the analysed area, in which the states develop individual partial systems and create a competitive advantage in a fragmented manner, but in the aggregate create a new, specialized quality. This is why it is important that projects carried out at governmental and bi-national levels take account of and capitalise on existing potential.

In view of the above energy mix of the Visegrad countries, it should be noted that hydrogen will be complementary to existing solutions in the field of energy feedstock security. Therefore, hydrogen technologies are not expected to replace existing solutions, and their implementation and development will be complementary and simultaneous with the development of existing technologies.

Each of the countries analysed has aspirations to play a leading role in the hydrogen sector. In the future, it will be necessary for individual countries to specialise in a particular sector so that the relationship is one of cooperation rather than competition. In this way, it will be possible to plan future investments, including infrastructure investments in the hydrogen sector, as well as to plan for the security of energy supply in the medium and long term. Developing and implementing hydrogen policies will allow initiatives to be taken within sub-regions to enhance their competitiveness and energy edge. Considering the geopolitical position of the V4 countries and the potential of hydrogen technologies, their proper management can not only ensure energy security in the region but also help to increase their competitiveness. There are preconditions for the practical implementation of cooperation in the discussed sector, given the possibility of using the existing natural gas transmission network in the region and the geopolitical position of the V4 countries. At the same time, as evidenced by the implementation of joint investments, it is worth noting that energy companies have noticed the economic potential in the hydrogen sector.

The analysis conducted herein confirms that hydrogen policy is being implemented at an uneven pace, thus delaying it. This is mainly due to the heterogeneous resource potential for the development of

the hydrogen sector in the countries examined. The highly politicised nature of the energy sector means that the countries analysed have to make decisions on the basis of rational national considerations rather than economic ones. Therefore, these decisions will strongly correspond to actions taken at the political level, which sometimes limits options and hinders decisions to implement specific infrastructural projects. Thus, a logical consequence will be the implementation of a hydrogen policy by individual states, taking into account local conditions strongly embedded in an international context that often goes beyond the scope of the V4 and the EU. Furthermore, there will be far-reaching consequences for other sectors of the economy in the V4 countries if we assume that other EU countries will implement their own hydrogen strategies in a consistent manner and that delays will occur in the analysed group. Hydrogen policy in the Visegrad Group countries can be implemented not only at the national level through the adoption of strategies and the adaptation of legislation but also at the subregional level through the development of energy infrastructure. Based on this analysis, it is possible to conclude that hydrogen policy implementation in V4 countries is multi-vectoral and involves both direct collaboration in hydrogen (production, transmission, and storage) and in renewable energy.

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# Regional cooperation formats and the issue of military security of post-conflict states. Case study of the South-East European Cooperation Process

**Regionalne formaty współpracy a problem bezpieczeństwa militarnego państw pokonfliktowych. Przypadek Procesu Współpracy w Południowo-Wschodniej Europie**

**Abstract:** The South-East European Cooperation Process (SEEC) was launched in 1996, however, its functioning is an ongoing research phenomenon. This regional cooperation format includes all 13 states of South-East Europe. It was established as a forum of political dialogue and consultation, where regional issues could be addressed at the highest level. One of the objectives of the SEEC was security cooperation.

The aim of this article is to analyse the role of the SEEC in maintaining security in the region of the Western Balkans. This article argues that since 1996, the SEEC has been evolving and is becoming an important format of regional cooperation in South East Europe, however, it plays a limited role in maintaining the military security of the post-conflict states of the Western Balkans. From the point of view of the members of the SEEC, military security and peace could be obtained through the integration of the participants of the SEEC, in particular those located in the Western Balkans, with the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The article also shows that establishing the SEEC did not eliminate tensions and riots based on ethnicity in some states of the Western Balkans and so, the SEEC still has a lot to do in the matters of reconciliation and good-neighbourliness.

The article is based on primary and secondary source analysis, case study method comparative analysis, and the historical method.

**Keywords:** The South-East European Cooperation Process, Western Balkans, post-conflict states, military security, the European Union, the North-Atlantic Treaty Organization

**Streszczenie:** Mimo że Proces Współpracy w Południowo-Wschodniej Europie (South-East European Cooperation Process, SEEC) został zapoczątkowany

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w 1996 r., tematyka dotycząca jego działalności jest stosunkowo rzadko analizowana. Ten regionalny format współpracy został ustanowiony jako forum dialogu politycznego i konsultacji na najwyższym szczeblu. Zrzesza obecnie 13 państw Europy Południowo-Wschodniej. Jednym z celów SEECP było utrzymanie bezpieczeństwa w regionie, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem Bałkanów Zachodnich.

W artykule dowiedziono, że SEECP ewoluował od 1996 r. i stał się istotnym formatem współpracy. Równocześnie jednak format ten pełni ograniczoną rolę w utrzymaniu bezpieczeństwa militarnego państw pokonfliktowych, zlokalizowanych na Bałkanach Zachodnich. Państwa członkowskie SEECP upatrują w integracji z Unią Europejską i Organizacją Paktu Północnoatlantyckiego realną możliwość utrzymania pokoju i bezpieczeństwa militarnego. W artykule wskazano również, iż ustanowienie SEECP nie wyeliminowało napięć i zamieszek na tle etnicznym w niektórych państwach Bałkanów Zachodnich, a sam format ma jeszcze sporo kwestii do uregulowania w zakresie pojednania i relacji dobrosąsiedzkich.

W artykule wykorzystano metodę analizy źródeł pierwotnych i wtórnych, studium przypadku, analizę porównawczą oraz metodę historyczną.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Proces Współpracy w Południowo-Wschodniej Europie, Bałkany Zachodnie, państwa pokonfliktowe, bezpieczeństwo militarne, Unia Europejska, Organizacja Paktu Północnoatlantyckiego

## Introduction

The collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) became a turning point when it came to the establishment of new organizations and forums of regional cooperation. States of the former USSR as well as the former SFRY needed to rebuild core values such as democracy, the rule of law, and fundamental rights and freedoms. To do so, it was necessary to launch regional cooperation formats and organizations. As a result, in the early 90s, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe decided to enact the Central European Initiative (CEI), the Visegrad Group, the Council of the Baltic Sea States, and the Baltic Assembly. At that time, military conflicts took place in South-Eastern Europe, the result of which was that the process of regional cooperation among these countries occurred later. Only in 1996 was the first regional format of cooperation launched. It was named the South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECP). According to Andrew G. Hyde, “regional cooperation serves the mutual interests of all participating countries. By facilitating the resolution of transnational issues, it is also a catalyst for reconciliation, good-neighbourliness and improved political rela-

tions (...). Regional cooperation is also an indispensable component of the European and Euro-Atlantic integration process (...)”<sup>1</sup>.

The aim of this article is to analyse the role of the SEECP in establishing cooperation among its member states. Special attention is paid to military security since most of the members of the SEECP are post-conflict states and parties to the wars in the Balkans in the 90s. This article argues that since 1996, the SEECP has been evolving to become an important format for regional cooperation in South East Europe, however, it plays a limited role in maintaining military security among the post-conflict states of the Western Balkans. In this regard, the SEECP stresses the role of international governmental organizations such as the European Union (EU), the North-Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe (OSCE) and claims that integration of the members of the SEECP, in particular, located in the Western Balkans, with the EU and NATO, is a crucial step towards achieving military security in these post-conflict states. In addition, this article shows that indeed regional cooperation of the SEECP is a component of the European and Euro-Atlantic integration process, but it still has a lot to do in the matter of reconciliation and good-neighbourliness.

The article is based on primary and secondary source analysis, case study method, comparative analysis, and the historical method.

## **1. The history, goals, and structure of the SEECP**

The SEECP was launched in 1996 on the initiative of Bulgaria. The founding members; Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Bulgaria, Greece, North Macedonia (then the Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia, FYROM), Romania, Serbia (then Serbia and Montenegro), and Turkey gathered on 6 and 7 July 1996 at the Conference on Stability, Security, and Cooperation in South-Eastern Europe. In the meeting, representatives of various international organizations

<sup>1</sup> A. Hyde, *Seizing the initiative: The importance of regional cooperation in Southeast Europe and the prominent role of the Southeast European cooperation process*, "Southeast European and Black Sea Studies" 2004, vol. 4, no. 1, p. 4.

and states also took part<sup>2</sup>. Among them were, i.a., representatives of the United Nations and numerous states such as the United States of America, France, Germany, Russia, and representatives of the other regional co-operation formats such as, i.a., the CEI, the OSCE, and the Presidency of the EU.

In the presence of the above-mentioned representatives, the founding countries adopted *the Sofia Declaration on Good-Neighbourly Relations, Stability, Security and Cooperation in the Balkans (the Sofia Declaration)*. The main aim of *the Sofia Declaration* was to establish inter-state relations between the countries of the region and to develop comprehensive multilateral cooperation. It should be stressed that *the Sofia Declaration* was adopted after the Dayton Accords entered into force and the war in BiH had ended. As a result, the political leaders of the founding countries of the SEECP decided to develop democracy, the market economy as well as fundamental rights and freedoms and the rule of law. Therefore, the Southeast European countries also wanted to establish a forum of cooperation, which would enable them to bring back the above-mentioned values to the region, which was shattered by the bloody conflicts in 1991-1995. The ministers of foreign affairs of the founding countries, through the signing of *the Sofia Declaration*, committed their own countries to strive towards transforming the region into an area of stability, security, and cooperation in line with general developments throughout Europe. They also agreed to launch a comprehensive process of multilateral cooperation in four areas.

The first area of cooperation among member states of the SEECP covered good-neighbourly relations between the countries of the region, based on universally recognized principles of interstate relations. These principles included, i.a., sovereign equality, respect for rights inherent in sovereignty, refraining from the threat of the use of force, inviolability of frontiers, territorial integrity of states, peaceful settlement of disputes, non-interference in internal affairs, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and cooperation among

2 *Sofia Declaration on Good-Neighbourly Relations, Stability, Security and Cooperation in the Balkans*, Sofia, 6-7 July 1996, [https://www.seecp.info/\\_files/ugd/879876\\_019fff4792e14d71a3aa4dc420955315.pdf](https://www.seecp.info/_files/ugd/879876_019fff4792e14d71a3aa4dc420955315.pdf) [11.04.2023].

states<sup>3</sup>. In addition, the founding countries supported the process of full normalization of the relations between the countries of the SFRY, which was a key point in creating good-neighbourly relations. These relations in turn were necessary to enhance peace and stability in the Balkans, and especially the normalization of the situation in BiH was a priority to achieve this goal.

When it comes to the second area of multilateral cooperation of the SEECP, special attention was paid to the development of economic cooperation through cross-border relations of the countries of the region. Due to the fact that almost all of the founding countries had difficulties related to their economic transition, and some of them were undergoing post-conflict reconstruction, this area of cooperation was a real challenge. It should be noted that the founding states in *the Sofia Declaration* highlighted the need to introduce European norms and standards in the field of production, investment, transfer of technologies, financing, and trade with the objective of integrating most of the economies of their countries into the European economy. Also, cross-border cooperation should have been established on a bilateral and multilateral basis in the framework of the relevant EU programmes. This cooperation was designed to be developed on three different levels: State to State, region to region, and people to people<sup>4</sup>. The development of humanitarian, social, and cultural contacts was another area of multilateral relations among the SEECP. The promotion of social and cultural professional contacts among states of the region was seen as an essential element for lasting stability and a climate of confidence in the region. The Ministers stated their readiness for the promotion of social and cultural cooperation as well as the rights of national and ethnic minorities<sup>5</sup>. This area also applied to cooperation in the spheres of culture, science, and education between the countries in South-Eastern Europe.

The last area of cooperation of the SEECP concerned relations in the field of justice, the combating of organized crime, illicit drug and arms trafficking, and the elimination of terrorism. The minister for for-

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.



eign affairs of founding countries agreed, i.a., to elaborate a regional programme to complement national efforts in this respect. The aim of this programme was to envisage, i.a., the accession of all countries of the region to the relevant international conventions and their effective implementation. The minister also called for actions against illegal and irregular migration<sup>6</sup>.

Since 1996, the number of member states of the SEECP has changed; more countries decided to join this regional format (Table 1).

**Table 1. The secondary members of the SEECP**

Item number	Name of country	Year of joining the SEECP
1.	Croatia	2005
2.	Moldova	2006
3.	Montenegro	2007
4.	Slovenia	2010
5.	Kosovo <sup>7</sup>	2014

Source: Own elaboration based on the *South-East European Cooperation Process. SEECP Participants*, <https://www.seecp.info/services> [12.04.2023].

As a result, since 2014, the SEECP has included 13 of the region's countries. The process of extending the SEECP has been accompanied by deepening the process of this regional non-institutionalized. Since 1996, it has been coordinated by the presiding participants. The SEECP presidency lasts for one year and is rotated among the participants (Table 2).

**Table 2. Presidency of the SEECP between 1996-2023**

Item number	Name of country	Years of presidency
1.	Bulgaria	1996-1997
2.	Greece	1997-1998
3.	Turkey	1998-1999
4.	Romania	1999-2000
5.	Republic of North Macedonia (former FYROM)	2000-2001
6.	Albania	2001-2002
7.	Serbia and Montenegro	2002-2003

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

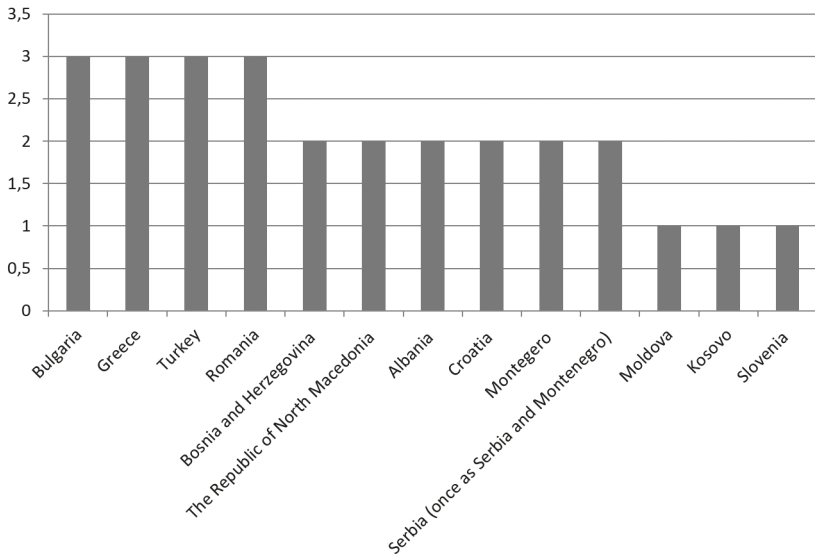
Item number	Name of country	Years of presidency
8.	Bosnia and Herzegovina	2003-2004
9.	Romania	2004-2005
10.	Greece	2005-2006
11.	Croatia	2006-2007
12.	Bulgaria	2007-2008
13.	Moldova	2008-2009
14.	Turkey	2009-2010
15.	Montenegro	2010-2011
16.	Serbia	2011-2012
17.	Republic of North Macedonia (former FYROM)	2012-2013
18.	Romania	2013-2014
19.	Albania	2014-2015
20.	Bulgaria	2015-2016
21.	Croatia	2016-2017
22.	Slovenia	2017-2018
23.	Bosnia and Herzegovina	2018-2019
24.	Kosovo	2019-2020
25.	Turkey	2020-2021
26.	Greece	2021-2022
27.	Montenegro	2022-2023

Source: Own elaboration based on the *South-East European Cooperation Process. SEECP Chairmanship*, <https://www.seecp.info/membership-copy> [12.04.2023].

Since the presidency of Bulgaria, which took place from 1996-1997, several countries have performed this function. Some of them, more than once (Chart 1).

The presiding participant presents the SEECP at international meetings and hosts the annual meeting of heads of state and government (annual summit), foreign ministers meeting (at least one informal and one formal meeting), and a number of annual meetings of political directors. Depending on the situation, the presiding participant may call extraordinary meetings<sup>8</sup>. However, it should be emphasized that the SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office is carried out by willing participants, following consensus from all participants a year in advance. The

<sup>8</sup> *South-East European Cooperation Process. SEECP Chairmanship*, <https://www.seecp.info/membership-copy> [12.04.2023].

**Chart 1. Number of presidencies performed by the member states of the SEECP from 1996-2023**

Source: Own elaboration based on the *South-East European Cooperation Process. SEECP Chairmanship*, <https://www.seecp.info/membership-copy> [12.04.2023].

Troika of the SEECP, composed of the current, previous, and incoming SEECP Chairs-in-Office ensures the continuity of efforts. Decisions within the SEECP are taken by the consensus<sup>9</sup>.

Since 1996, the most important documents on cooperation within the SEECP have been adopted during summits and meetings of the ministers of foreign affairs of the member states.

On the basis of these documents, some changes in the structure of the SEECP were made. Although the SEECP is still a non-institutionalized format of regional cooperation, on 27 February 2008 at the meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the SEECP in Sofia, the Regional Cooperation Council was established. It is based in Sarajevo and functions as the operational arm of the SEECP<sup>10</sup>. In addition, in 2014, the first meeting of inter-parliamentary cooperation between the SEECP participants was launched. The SEECP Parliamentary As-

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

sembly is chaired by the Speaker of Parliament of the SEECP Chairman-in-Office<sup>11</sup>.

## 2. Documents issued by the SEECP related to military security in the post-conflict states of the Western Balkans

*The Sofia Declaration* was the first document adopted by the members of the SEECP, that was, related to security matters. Since 1996, the states of the SEECP have enacted another 20 fundamental documents. Each of them was adopted in a specific political situation and included military security issues (Table 3).

**Table 3. The most important military security issues contained in the documents adopted during summits and meetings of ministers of foreign affairs of the SEECP since 1996**

Item number	Name of document and date of adoption	Selected security issues contained in the document
1.	Sofia Declaration, 1996	Supporting the ongoing process of full normalization of the relations between the countries of the former Yugoslavia <sup>12</sup> . Underlining the importance of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in BiH <sup>13</sup> for enhancing stability and security in the region <sup>14</sup> .
2.	Crete Declaration, 1997	Working together to create conditions in the region for the prosperity of the nations in a framework of peace, security, good-neighbourliness and stability <sup>15</sup> .
3.	Antalya Declaration, 1998	Discussing the serious situation in Kosovo and supporting UN Security Council Resolutions 1160 and 1199 <sup>16</sup> . Discussing the need for post-conflict reconstruction of BiH <sup>17</sup> .

11 Ibid.

12 *Sofia Declaration on Good-Neighbourly Relations...*

13 R. Caplan, *Assessing the Dayton Accord: The structural weaknesses of the general framework agreement for peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, "Diplomacy & Statecraft" 2000, vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 213-232.

14 Ibid.

15 *Joint Statement by the Heads of State and Government of Countries of South Eastern Europe*, Heraklion, Crete, 4 November 1997, [https://www.seecp.info/\\_files/ugd/879876\\_4780584f8cf3480ca25c338a5975c9c5.pdf](https://www.seecp.info/_files/ugd/879876_4780584f8cf3480ca25c338a5975c9c5.pdf) [14.04.2023].

16 *Summit Declaration of the Countries of South Eastern Europe*, Antalya, 12-13 October 1998, [https://www.seecp.info/\\_files/ugd/879876\\_69d88f03d1564f3fb7e67ec3e940bf46.pdf](https://www.seecp.info/_files/ugd/879876_69d88f03d1564f3fb7e67ec3e940bf46.pdf) [14.04.2023]. See Republic of Albania Ministry of Defence, *The Multinational Peace Force Southeastern Europe (SEEBRIG)*, <https://www.mod.gov.al/eng/security-policies/relations-with/international-and-regional-organization/95-seebrig> [14.04.2023].

17 Ibid. See F. Bieber, *Post-war Bosnia: Ethnicity, inequality and public sector governance*, London 2006.

Item number	Name of document and date of adoption	Selected security issues contained in the document
4.	Charter on Good-Neighbourly Relations, Stability, Security, and Cooperation in South-East Europe, 2000	Recognizing the responsibility of the countries to closely work with the international community to develop and implement a shared strategy for the stability and growth of the region <sup>18</sup> .
5.	Skopje Declaration, 2001	Supporting the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1244 <sup>19</sup> , ending the war in Kosovo <sup>20</sup> . Supporting the continuation of the process of NATO enlargement and supporting the Southeast Europe Initiative of NATO <sup>21</sup> . Welcoming the positive development of the Southeast Europe Defence Ministerial (SEDM) Process <sup>22</sup> .
6.	Sarajevo Declaration, 2004	Welcoming the recent enlargement of NATO and the EU <sup>23</sup> . Encouraging Northern Macedonia (former FYROM), Albania, and Croatia to cooperate strongly with NATO <sup>24</sup> . Welcoming the possibility of BiH, Serbia, and Montenegro to join the Partnership for Peace (PfP) Programme <sup>25</sup> . Condemning ethnically motivated violence in Kosovo and attacks on the troops of KFOR and UNMIK <sup>26</sup> . Stressing the need for full cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY). Welcoming the presence of NATO and the EU in BiH and establishment of regular political dialogue between the EU and the South Eastern Europe Region <sup>27</sup> .
7.	Thessaloniki Declaration, 2006	Emphasising the need to achieve a negotiated settlement for the status of Kosovo, mutually acceptable to the parties concerned <sup>28</sup> .

18 *Charter on Good-Neighbourly Relations, Stability, Security and Cooperation in South-Eastern Europe*, Bucharest, 12 February 2000, [https://www.rcc.int/files/user/docs/2013.10.03\\_CHARTER\\_SEECD.pdf](https://www.rcc.int/files/user/docs/2013.10.03_CHARTER_SEECD.pdf) [14.04.2023].

19 United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999), S/RES/1244 (1999), 10 June 1999.

20 *Summit Declaration of the Heads of State and Government of South-East European Countries*, Skopje, 23 February 2001, [https://www.seecp.info/\\_files/ugd/879876\\_4ebf9e5a2a8345fbbf04a82237945f8c.pdf](https://www.seecp.info/_files/ugd/879876_4ebf9e5a2a8345fbbf04a82237945f8c.pdf) [14.04.2023].

21 Ibid.

22 See SEDM Process Portal, <https://www.sedmprocess.org/> [14.04.2023].

23 *South-East European Cooperation Process 7th Summit*, Sarajevo Declaration, Sarajevo, 21 April 2004, [https://www.seecp.info/\\_files/ugd/879876\\_5db8b9adcb0443ebddfd66b1d57ca33.pdf](https://www.seecp.info/_files/ugd/879876_5db8b9adcb0443ebddfd66b1d57ca33.pdf) [14.04.2023].

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid. See *NATO. The Partnership for Peace Programme*, <https://www.sto.nato.int/Pages/partnership-for-peace.aspx> [14.04.2023].

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 *Thessaloniki Declaration of the Ninth Meeting of the Heads of State and Government of the South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECP) Together in Europe*, Thessaloniki, 4 May 2006, [https://www.seecp.info/\\_files/ugd/879876\\_f2210f9008134425b8cec4dcd3d5f6d4.pdf](https://www.seecp.info/_files/ugd/879876_f2210f9008134425b8cec4dcd3d5f6d4.pdf) [14.04.2023].

Item number	Name of document and date of adoption	Selected security issues contained in the document
8.	Zagreb Declaration, 2007	Welcoming NATO's decision to invite three SEECP member states to join the PfP <sup>29</sup> . Paying attention to resolving Kosovo's status <sup>30</sup> .
9.	Pomorie Declaration, 2008	Welcoming the progress of the Western Balkan countries in the Stabilization and Association Process (SAP) with the EU <sup>31</sup> . Welcoming the progress of the Western Balkan countries in the Visa Liberalization Process with the EU <sup>32</sup> .
10.	Chisinau Declaration, 2009	Emphasising progress related to the adoption of the Stability and Association Agreements (SAA) between particular members of the SEECP and the EU <sup>33</sup> . Stressing implementation of the visa facilitation and readmission Agreements between the EU and six member states of the SEECP <sup>34</sup> .
11.	Istanbul Declaration, 2010	Using culture and intercultural dialogue to promote stability and security in the region <sup>35</sup> .
12.	Budva Declaration, 2011	Stressing the progress in relations between the members of the SEECP, the EU, and NATO <sup>36</sup> . Expressing readiness to enhance and broaden cooperation in defence and security sectors, including among others, joint contribution to international peacekeeping missions <sup>37</sup> .
13.	Ohrid Declaration, 2013	Welcoming the continuation of the NATO open door policy <sup>38</sup> . Stressing the significance of the achievements within the EU facilitated dialogue and EU integration <sup>39</sup> .

29 *Zagreb Declaration of the 10th Meeting of the Heads of State and Government of the South-East European Co-operation Process (SEECP) Europe's New South East*, Zagreb, 11 May 2007, [https://www.seecp.info/\\_files/ugd/879876\\_fc126484c23046e6b8a6104fcb28d20f.pdf](https://www.seecp.info/_files/ugd/879876_fc126484c23046e6b8a6104fcb28d20f.pdf) [14.04.2023].

30 Ibid.

31 *Pomorie Declaration of the 11th Meeting of the Heads of State and Government of the South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECP)*, Pomorie, 21 May 2008, [https://www.seecp.info/\\_files/ugd/879876\\_75da4274dbd144a682f87b231115a2a8.pdf](https://www.seecp.info/_files/ugd/879876_75da4274dbd144a682f87b231115a2a8.pdf) [14.04.2023].

32 Ibid.

33 *Chisinau Declaration of the 12th Meeting of the Heads of State and Government of the South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECP)*, Chisinau, 5 June 2009, [https://www.seecp.info/\\_files/ugd/879876\\_53da4274dbd144a682f87b231115a2a8.pdf](https://www.seecp.info/_files/ugd/879876_53da4274dbd144a682f87b231115a2a8.pdf) [14.04.2023].

34 Ibid.

35 *Istanbul Declaration on Music as a Metaphor of Cultural Dialogue in South-East Europe*, Eight Summit of the Heads of State of South-East Europe, Istanbul, 23 June 2010, [https://www.seecp.info/\\_files/ugd/879876\\_492091b369f54a3caf8b7a8831aeb2d2.pdf](https://www.seecp.info/_files/ugd/879876_492091b369f54a3caf8b7a8831aeb2d2.pdf) [15.04.2023].

36 *SEECP Budva Declaration of the 14th Meeting of the Heads of State and Government of the South-East European Cooperation Process*, Budva, 30 June 2011, [https://www.seecp.info/\\_files/ugd/879876\\_c3703def55844d51b07c41d14f40c85e.pdf](https://www.seecp.info/_files/ugd/879876_c3703def55844d51b07c41d14f40c85e.pdf) [15.04.2023].

37 Ibid.

38 *SEECP Ohrid Declaration of the Formal Meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs*, Ohrid, 31 May 2013, [https://www.seecp.info/\\_files/ugd/879876\\_456acde395984314a65dc6d15cf222f5.pdf](https://www.seecp.info/_files/ugd/879876_456acde395984314a65dc6d15cf222f5.pdf) [15.04.2023].

39 Ibid.

Item number	Name of document and date of adoption	Selected security issues contained in the document
14.	Bucharest Summit, 2014	Welcoming the decision of the General Affairs Council of the EU to grant Albania the status of candidate country <sup>40</sup> . Welcoming the progress in the conclusion of the SAA between the EU and Kosovo.
15.	Tirana Declaration, 2015	Calling on Belgrade and Pristina to continue dialogue <sup>41</sup> . Expressing support for NATO's open door policy for aspirants from South Eastern Europe <sup>42</sup> .
16.	Sofia Declaration, 2016	Welcoming the role of NATO and the OSCE in the region <sup>43</sup> .
17.	Dubrovnik Declaration, 2017	Reaffirming the importance of the EU membership perspective <sup>44</sup> .
18.	Brdo Declaration, 2018	Stressing the enlargement of the EU as a priority of the SEECP members <sup>45</sup> . Underlining the role of NATO and the OSCE in the security and stability of Southeast Europe <sup>46</sup> .
19.	Sarajevo-Jahorina Declaration, 2019	Working together and with the institution of the EU to strengthen stability, democracy, and prosperity in the region <sup>47</sup> .
20.	SEECP Antalya Summit Declaration, 2021	Confirming the need for the individual SEECP participants to become members of the EU and NATO <sup>48</sup> .
21.	SEECP Thessaloniki Summit Declaration, 2022	Agreeing to continue their cooperation on security issues and contribution to the EU CSDP missions <sup>49</sup> .

Source: Own elaboration based on the *South-East European Cooperation Process. Declarations*, <https://www.seecp.info/declarations> [17.04.2023].

Analysis of the fundamental documents established as a result of summits and meetings for ministers of foreign affairs of the SEECP members shows that since 1996, they have been paying attention to the role of international governmental organisations in the peace process in the region. Organizations such as NATO, the EU, and the

40 *SEECP Bucharest Summit Declaration*, Bucharest, 25 June 2014, [https://www.seecp.info/\\_files/ugd/879876\\_383e3a6a21394351bf7fb2c24a7b6bab.pdf](https://www.seecp.info/_files/ugd/879876_383e3a6a21394351bf7fb2c24a7b6bab.pdf) [15.04.2023].

41 *Ibid.*

42 *SEECP Tirana Summit Declaration*, Tirana, 25 May 2015, [https://www.seecp.info/\\_files/ugd/879876\\_ddae3552fd5e455b94706df3e6cd75c2.pdf](https://www.seecp.info/_files/ugd/879876_ddae3552fd5e455b94706df3e6cd75c2.pdf) [16.04.2023].

43 *SEECP Sofia Summit Declaration „20th Anniversary of the SEECP – Key to regional Cooperation*, [https://www.seecp.info/\\_files/ugd/879876\\_cfb4cbc9079c43779a39f656a4c8c4d9.pdf](https://www.seecp.info/_files/ugd/879876_cfb4cbc9079c43779a39f656a4c8c4d9.pdf) [16.04.2023].

44 *SEECP Dubrovnik Summit Declaration*, Dubrovnik, 30 June 2017, [https://www.seecp.info/\\_files/ugd/879876\\_57c34753598c4f5dafd815f1ae7edb8b.pdf](https://www.seecp.info/_files/ugd/879876_57c34753598c4f5dafd815f1ae7edb8b.pdf) [16.04.2023].

45 *SEECP Brdo Summit Declaration*, Brdo, 24 April 2018, [https://www.seecp.info/\\_files/ugd/879876\\_8f627cebc7174a20aeecf237d8a53558.pdf](https://www.seecp.info/_files/ugd/879876_8f627cebc7174a20aeecf237d8a53558.pdf) [17.04.2023].

46 *Ibid.*

47 *SEECP Sarajevo-Jahorina Summit Declaration*, 9 July 2017, [https://www.seecp.info/\\_files/ugd/879876\\_9f4fbd70244748dbaf8513040b6f4f38.pdf](https://www.seecp.info/_files/ugd/879876_9f4fbd70244748dbaf8513040b6f4f38.pdf) [17.04.2023].

48 *SEECP Antalya Summit Declaration* [https://www.seecp.info/\\_files/ugd/879876\\_e03f601fa13f448d-b7841a8d101534f7.pdf](https://www.seecp.info/_files/ugd/879876_e03f601fa13f448d-b7841a8d101534f7.pdf) [17.04.2023].

49 *SEECP Thessaloniki Summit Declaration*, Thessaloniki, 10 June 2022, [https://www.seecp.info/\\_files/ugd/879876\\_4c61765071eb4556be9ad52b63c430f6.pdf](https://www.seecp.info/_files/ugd/879876_4c61765071eb4556be9ad52b63c430f6.pdf) [17.04.2023].

OSCE were crucial not only in the reconstruction and transformation of post-conflict states of the Western Balkans but also in peace-keeping and peace-building in various states such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and North Macedonia. The members of the SEECP, most of whom were also members of the former Yugoslavia, based their military security on strengthening relations with the EU and NATO. Analysis of the declarations indicates that the SEECP states are convinced that regional stability and security in South Eastern Europe depend on cooperation between the members of the SEECP with the EU and NATO.

Since 1996, the members of the SEECP have been emphasizing the crucial role of European integration in the region. They noted with acceptance the fact that Romania, Bulgaria, and Croatia became members of the EU. They also supported the political and economic cooperation of the Western Balkan countries such as Serbia, North Macedonia, BiH, Montenegro, Albania, and Kosovo through the SAP<sup>50</sup>. As a result, the SEECP noted with satisfaction that SAA entered into force with all the above-mentioned countries and most of them achieved candidate status to the EU. The SEECP have also been supporting the process of full normalization of the relations between the countries of the former Yugoslavia under the auspices of the EU. In addition, EU membership for the countries of the SEECP has remained the most powerful tool for encouraging the implementation of necessary reforms. This means that, in the view of the political leaders of the SEECP member states, the EU is perceived as the guarantor of long-term peace, stability, and security in the region.

The SEECP have also been supporting the open-door policy of NATO and the continuation of the process of NATO enlargement. As a result, since 1996 the members of the SEECP have been stressing the importance of accession for the countries of the region to the PfP and NATO. In 2000, Croatia became a member of the PfP, whereas Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina joined in 2006. In turn, since 2004 the members of the SEECP have been joining NATO. From 2004-2020, the following countries of the SEECP obtained full membership in

50 See N. Wunsch, *EU enlargement and civil society in the Western Balkans. From mobilisation to empowerment*, Cham 2018.



this organization: Bulgaria (2004), Romania (2004), Slovenia (2004), Albania (2009), Croatia (2009), Montenegro (2017), and North Macedonia (2020)<sup>51</sup>.

It should be emphasised that whereas NATO guarantees military security to its member states and, therefore, attracts the members of the SEECP, especially located in the Western Balkan region, the EU, through post-conflict reconstruction, inter-community dialogue, and democratization creates economic and political stability that translates into military security. Analysis of the above-mentioned documents also reveals that member states of this regional format have been underlining the need for cooperation in the area of peace and security. However, in this regard, their actions have a mostly declarative character. Members of the SEECP have been considering the military security of the region through their historical past. The inter-ethnic tensions and wars in the Western Balkans mean that since 1996, the SEECP member states have been pointing out all the situations that might lead to international or internal conflict in this region of Europe. This was the reason why the SEECP supported the United Nations Security Council resolutions connected with resolving conflict in Kosovo, appealed to Kosovo and Serbia to establish a status settlement for Kosovo, or called leaders of Kosovo and Serbia to continue the EU-facilitated dialogue. The declarative character of the SEECP is particularly visible when it comes to the deterioration of the conflict in Kosovo in 1998. Then, the member states of this regional format only called for the parties to the conflict to pursue a settlement and abide by the resolutions of the UN Security Council. The SEECP has no specific tools for conflict settlement. Despite the fact that this regional format was enacted after the Dayton Accords had come into force, the SEECP was a witness to another war in the Western Balkans.

## Conclusions

The war in Kosovo, which ended in June 1999, in some way, became a turning point in the functioning of the SEECP. Since that time, this regional format has been gathering all the Western Balkan states, in-

51 NATO, *Member countries*, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_52044.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_52044.htm) [20.04.2023].

cluding Kosovo, which is still unrecognized by Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Taking into account this fact, it is clear that the SEECP has been expanding and becoming the forum for exchanging views on various matters. In all the summits that have taken place so far, representatives of the various international organizations and non-member states took part. This makes the SEECP a forum for exchanging views not only between its member states but also between other international entities.

The analysis of the main documents issued by the SEECP shows that indeed, since 1996, the SEECP has been evolving and has become an important format for regional cooperation in South East Europe. On the other hand, during its functioning, the members of the SEECP have been coping with various issues that were threats to regional stability and security such as the war in Kosovo, the riots in Kosovo in 2004, and the tensions in north Kosovo in 2022. These facts prove that the SEECP still plays a limited role when it comes to reconciliation and good-neighbourliness in the states that are inhabited by divided societies.

In addition, the SEECP do not play a decisive role in maintaining the military security of the post-conflict states of the Western Balkans. The analysis of the fundamental documents adopted by the SEECP from 1996-2022 shows, however, that members of the SEECP have been stressing the threats to peace and security in the Western Balkans since 1996, but they had no tools to prevent or resolve the conflicts in that region. In that matter, they have been relying mostly on international governmental organizations such as NATO, the EU, and the OSCE, while at the same time calling on the members of the SEECP to integrate with NATO and the EU to strengthen their military capacity and make their states more secure and stable.

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Sabina Olszyk

# Defence diplomacy of the Bucharest Nine (B9) countries during the war in Ukraine. The balance of the first year of the war

**Dyplomacja obronna państw Bukaresztańskiej Dziewiątki (B9) w czasie wojny w Ukrainie. Bilans pierwszego roku wojny**

**Abstract:** The article concerns the cooperation of NATO's eastern flank countries in support of war-torn Ukraine. The aim of the discussion is to show the actions of the B9 countries, implementing the ideas and tasks of defence diplomacy, undertaken during the first year of the war (24 February 2022 – 24 February 2023). This support took place in several key areas: political, diplomatic, military, and humanitarian. It was of fundamental importance for maintaining the functioning and stability of Ukraine and its fighting capabilities, especially in the early period after the Russian Federation's invasion. The author tried to verify the following: How was Ukraine supported in practice? Did all B9 countries equally and with the same level of commitment provide assistance in all the identified areas? What factors could potentially strengthen or weaken the B9 countries' involvement in implementing the ideas of defence diplomacy in Ukraine? The analysis was based on current data and materials made available over the past year in the media and on the Internet.

**Keywords:** defence diplomacy, Bucharest Nine (B9), war in Ukraine, Russian invasion of Ukraine 2022, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Romania, Bulgaria

**Streszczenie:** Artykuł dotyczy współpracy państw wschodniej flanki NATO na rzecz pogrążonej w wojnie Ukrainy. Celem rozważań jest ukazanie działań krajów B9, realizujących idee i zadania dyplomacji obronnej, podejmowanych w pierwszym roku trwania wojny (24 lutego 2022 – 24 lutego 2023). Wsparcie to przebiegało w kilku zasadniczych obszarach: politycznym, dyplomatycznym, wojskowym oraz humanitarnym. Miało ono fundamentalne znaczenie dla podtrzymywania funkcjonowania i stabilności Ukrainy oraz jej możliwości bojowych, szczególnie w pierwszym okresie po inwazji Federacji Rosyjskiej. Autorka starała się sprawdzić: w jaki sposób w praktyce wspierano Ukrainę?, czy wszystkie kraje B9 w jednakowym stopniu i z takim samym zaangażowaniem

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udzielały pomocy we wszystkich wskazanych obszarach?, jakie czynniki mogły ewentualnie wzmacniać lub osłabiać zaangażowanie państw B9 w realizację idei dyplomacji obronnej w Ukrainie? Analizę przeprowadzono w oparciu o bieżące dane i materiały, udostępniane przez ostatni rok, w mediach oraz w sieci internetowej.

**Słowa kluczowe:** dyplomacja obronna, Bukaresztańska Dziewiątka (B9), wojna w Ukrainie, inwazja Rosji na Ukrainę 2022 r., Polska, Republika Czeska, Słowacja, Węgry, Litwa, Łotwa, Estonia, Rumunia, Bułgaria

## Introduction

The invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation on 24 February 2022 was preceded by Russian demands to exclude the possibility of further NATO enlargement and reduce the Alliance's military potential in Central and Eastern Europe. The political goal was to prevent Ukraine's further integration with the West, including the structures of the EU and NATO. Although anticipated by observers and intelligence services of various countries, the invasion caused considerable shock and disbelief among the authorities and societies of many countries around the world, especially those in the immediate vicinity of the conflict. The attack on Ukraine, as one of the so-called "geopolitical pivots"<sup>1</sup>, destabilized the security situation in Central and Eastern Europe and could ultimately weaken the future architecture of global security. The countries of NATO's eastern flank<sup>2</sup>, which were once part of the Eastern Bloc and for which Ukraine served as a protective shield, expressed particular concern about the situation. These were the countries of the Bucharest Nine (B9)<sup>3</sup>, which include Visegrad Group countries – Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Hungary; Baltic states – Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia; and Black Sea coun-

- 1 Z. Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American primacy and its geostrategic imperatives*, New York 1997, pp. 40-41.
- 2 "The Eastern Flank of NATO" is a term used to describe a group of countries located along the eastern wing of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. It includes northern countries situated in the region of the Baltic Sea (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia), central countries (Poland, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Hungary), and southern countries (Bulgaria, Romania). S. Olszyk, *Wschodnia flanka NATO*, [in:] O. Wasiuta, S. Wasiuta (eds.), *Encyklopedia bezpieczeństwa*, vol. 5, Cracow 2022, pp. 966-972.
- 3 The term "Bucharest Nine (B9)" refers to an informal platform for consultation and political dialogue in the field of stability and security of Central and Eastern European NATO member states. It represents a diplomatic initiative of nine Central European countries located on the eastern border of the Alliance. The cooperation of states in the Bucharest format was initiated in 2014 by the Presidents of Poland – Andrzej Duda, and Romania – Klaus Iohannis. S. Olszyk, *Bukaresztańska Dziewiątka (B9)*, [in:] *Encyklopedia bezpieczeństwa*, vol. 5..., pp. 104-114.

tries – Bulgaria and Romania. After the outbreak of war in Ukraine, the Bucharest Nine quickly gained momentum as the voice of countries whose security had been most weakened by Russia's increasingly provocative rhetoric and expansionist posture<sup>4</sup>. The Bucharest format became a symbol of unity and cooperation in the Central European region. Most B9 countries were at the forefront of providing political, humanitarian, or military support to Ukraine. These actions were part of the concept of broadly understood defence diplomacy<sup>5</sup>, defined as diverse international peaceful cooperation based on dialogue and collaboration, conducted by the political sector, the national defence sector, and its subordinate institutions and armed forces, to support foreign policy and national security<sup>6</sup>. In essence, defence diplomacy, focusing on defensive actions understood as prevention and crisis management, takes action to minimize hostility and peacefully resolve conflicts, rejecting direct military involvement of the armed forces<sup>7</sup>. Such activity is undertaken from the perspective of a state not directly involved in the conflict, through broadly understood political, diplomatic, military, and humanitarian aid, but without official participation in the war. We could observe such activity by the international community in Ukraine over the past year. Many Western countries supported this state in its pursuit of independence, doing so independently or within international organizations and various cooperation formats. The Bucharest Nine, being one such platform, despite certain differences and varied interests of individual countries, undertook a series of actions to support Ukraine.

4 M. Terlikowski et al., *The Bucharest 9: Delivering on the promise to become the voice of the eastern flank*, "PISM Policy Paper" 2018, no. 4, pp. 1-8, [www.pism.pl/upload/images/artykuly/legacy/files/24501.pdf](http://www.pism.pl/upload/images/artykuly/legacy/files/24501.pdf) [24.04.2023].

5 There are numerous areas of cooperation in defence diplomacy, including peacekeeping and promoting democratic values in international relations; military and diplomatic cooperation between two or more countries; development of the defence industry, research, and reforms in the field of security and defence. S. Olszyk, *The role of think tanks in actions for defence diplomacy. An example of Poland*, "Polish Political Science Yearbook" 2022, vol. 51, pp. 163-164, [https://czasopisma.marszalek.com.pl/images/pliki/ppszy/51/ppszy20221\\_10.pdf](https://czasopisma.marszalek.com.pl/images/pliki/ppszy/51/ppszy20221_10.pdf) [24.04.2023].

6 L. Drab, *Dyplomacja obronna w procesie kształtowania bezpieczeństwa RP*, Warsaw 2018, p. 31.

7 The assumption is that the armed forces and the associated defence infrastructure can impact international security not only through deterrence and waging wars but also by supporting and promoting the ideas of cooperation and stabilization of the international environment.



## 1 Political area

Defence diplomacy in the political area is about promoting democratic values and peacekeeping, respecting the right to sovereignty and independence, and human rights as well as combating aggression and terrorism in international relations. The defence diplomacy of the Bucharest Nine in the political area has, therefore, focused on emphasising Ukraine's right to maintain the integrity of its territory, the inviolability of its borders, and the right to self-determination. Therefore, the majority of B9 countries condemned Russian aggression and openly declared their support for Ukraine in its pursuit of democratic sovereignty and political independence. During B9 leaders' meetings, it was noted that these countries, knowing the struggles of fighting for independence from Soviet occupation, repeatedly warned the Western international community of a possible attack by Russia<sup>8</sup>. It was also noted that the war in Ukraine is not only about the security of the region but also the entire Euro-Atlantic security system. During the past year of the war, Russia was regularly urged to immediately stop military attacks and withdraw all forces from Ukraine, acknowledging that this long-planned attack on an independent and democratic country was entirely unprovoked and unjustified. Russia's violation of international law, including the United Nations Charter, and the breach of the principles outlined in the NATO-Russia Founding Act, were pointed out<sup>9</sup>. The Bucharest Nine's joint position has been repeatedly confirmed during numerous meetings and summits.

### Visegrad countries

The Visegrád Group (V4)<sup>10</sup> did not demonstrate decisive unity and solidarity with Ukraine after the outbreak of the war. The official stance of the V4 was a strong condemnation of Russia's actions, which un-

8 *Wojna na Ukrainie. Szczyt Bukaresztańskiej Dziewiątki w Warszawie*, 25 February 2022, <https://tiny.pl/wzqsb> [24.04.2023].

9 *Statement by NATO Heads of State and Government on Russia's attack on Ukraine*, 25 February 2022, <https://tiny.pl/wzqs3> [24.04.2023].

10 Visegrád Group (V4) is an organization that includes four Central and Eastern European countries: Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary. It was formed on 15 February 1991, during a meeting at Visegrád Castle in Hungary, with three representatives from each country: the presidents of Poland (Lech Wałęsa) and Czechoslovakia (Václav Havel), and the prime minister of Hungary (József Antall). S. Olszyk, *Państwa Grupy Wyszehradzkiej wobec konfliktu na Ukrainie*, [in:] T. Ambroziak et al. (eds.), *Problemy bezpieczeństwa Europy i Azji*, Toruń 2016, p. 163.

precedently violated international law and the territorial integrity of a sovereign state<sup>11</sup>. However, individual countries presented their position on the invasion in a differentiated manner, based on their economic and energy ties with Russia as well as their internal political situation.

Poland, which is heavily politically polarized on a daily basis, showed surprising unanimity of the authorities and the opposition in condemning the Russian aggression. On the first day of the war, the Polish Sejm, in a statement supported by all political parties, strongly condemned the Russian attack, calling on Russia and Belarus to cease military actions, withdraw their troops from Ukraine and the vicinity of its borders, and fully comply with international humanitarian law<sup>12</sup>. From the first days of the war, Poland attracted attention, taking in the largest number of refugees and showing extraordinary levels of activity in seeking political and military support for Ukraine.

The Czech Republic also took a clearly pro-Ukrainian position, demonstrating an unprecedented wave of solidarity, both political and social. As one of the first countries in the EU and NATO, it provided military support to Ukraine and closed its airspace to Russian aircraft. This was possible thanks to an internal political compromise achieved to a large extent by the departure of President Miloš Zeman from his previous sympathies for Russia and support for its influence in the Czech Republic<sup>13</sup>. Slovak authorities were also heavily involved in helping Ukraine and supported its efforts for political and territorial independence, while strongly condemning the Russian side, including advocating for the economic isolation of Russia and supporting EU sanctions, including the exclusion of Russian banks from the SWIFT system. Slovak President Zuzana Čaputová was among eight Central and Eastern European presidents who supported Ukraine's efforts to join the EU. On the one hand, Slovak authorities, who are pro-democratic and pro-Western, were from the beginning among the group

11 *Szczyt Grupy Wyszehradzkiej: Prezydenci V4 omówili kwestie dotyczące wojny w Ukrainie*, 11 October 2022, <https://tiny.pl/wzq6m> [24.04.2023].

12 *Oświadczenie Sejmu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej z dnia 24 lutego 2022 r. w sprawie agresji Federacji Rosyjskiej na Ukrainę*, [http://orka.sejm.gov.pl/proc9.nsf/uchwaly/2048\\_u.htm](http://orka.sejm.gov.pl/proc9.nsf/uchwaly/2048_u.htm) [24.04.2023].

13 Ł. Ogrodnik, *Reakcja Czech na rosyjską agresję zbrojną na Ukrainę*, 3 March 2022, <https://www.pism.pl/publikacje/reakcja-czech-na-rosyjska-agresje-zbrojna-na-ukraine> [24.04.2023].

of countries heavily involved in helping Kyiv. On the other hand, the increasingly popular Slovak opposition declared a policy of neutrality towards the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and took increasingly anti-Western and pro-Russian positions.

From the very beginning of the invasion, Hungary, among the V4 countries, presented a decidedly different position. It officially condemned Russian aggression and supported the EU's previous sanctions but did not loosen its ties with Russia and openly declared its lack of support for EU measures aimed at the Russian energy sector. The Hungarian authorities did not take any independent steps against Russia such as revoking "golden residency visas" for Russians or closing the headquarters of the International Investment Bank in Hungary, remaining the only member of this organization in the region of Europe<sup>14</sup>.

### **Baltic states**

The Baltic states' position from the first day of the war was unequivocally critical of Russia and unequivocally supportive of Ukraine, both politically and militarily. Russian aggression was unequivocally condemned as a threat to their borders as well as the entire eastern flank of NATO. The Baltic countries strongly called for severe sanctions against the aggressor, while supporting Ukraine's pro-European ambitions, for which, like them, joining the EU and NATO meant a kind of return to the West and rejection of the post-Soviet legacy. Since 2014, these countries have pursued an anti-Russian policy, especially Lithuania, where Russia's actions have caused a particular sense of threat, and the outbreak of the war in Ukraine was an additional warning signal. The other countries – Latvia and Estonia – initially tried to pursue a more pragmatic policy towards Russia and maintain relations at a minimum level. Unresolved national problems, and above all, open political cooperation of some Latvian and Estonian parties with pro-Putin groups in Russia, made the situation in these Baltic states far less unequivocal from the outset. Many Russian-speaking citizens and

14 Ł. Lewkowicz, S. Czarnecki, D. Héjj, *(Nie)jednolitość państw Grupy Wyszehradzkiej wobec agresji rosyjskiej na Ukrainę*, "Komentarze IEŚ" 2022, no. 567, <https://ies.lublin.pl/komentarze/niejednosci-panstw-grupy-wyszehradzkiej-wobec-agresji-rosyjskiej-na-ukraine/> [24.04.2023].

residents initially openly or secretly supported Vladimir Putin's invasion, especially in Latvia. The outbreak of the war in Ukraine, however, directed their actions entirely towards condemning the aggression and expressing support for broad sanctions against Russia.

### **Black Sea states**

In the face of the Russian invasion, Romania strongly criticized the Russian aggression, co-initiating and condemning the Russian crimes in a resolution of the UN Human Rights Council. Romania also supported the request to the International Criminal Court for the prosecution of those responsible and donated EUR 100,000 for that purpose. It also supported granting Ukraine candidate status for the EU, and President Klaus Iohannis signed a joint letter from regional presidents supporting Ukraine's accession to NATO. The Romanian authorities also supported the imposition of EU sanctions on Russia and closed its airspace to the Russians. They also established cooperation with Poland to better coordinate actions and positions on Ukraine. However, the relatively consistent pro-Ukrainian policy of the Romanian authorities was disrupted by the controversial statement of the Minister of Defence, Vasile Dîncu, who stated that the Kremlin has the means to prolong the conflict and that the only chance for peace in Ukraine is negotiations with Russia. At the same time, he stressed that other international actors such as NATO and the USA should conduct negotiations on behalf of Ukrainians because Kyiv will not be able to accept the loss of part of its territory<sup>15</sup>. This statement, widely disseminated by Russian media, provoked a series of negative comments in Ukraine and Romania itself. President Iohannis criticized it, but only after some time, declaring that Ukraine would decide when, what, and how to negotiate<sup>16</sup>. Despite unequivocal political support for Kyiv from Bucharest, Romania's policy towards the ongoing conflict can be described as overly cautious.

The second of the Black Sea countries, Bulgaria, took a position on the Russian invasion of Ukraine on the day the war broke out. The

15 K. Całus, *Nad wyraz ostrożnie. Rumunia wobec rosyjskiej inwazji na Ukrainę*, "Analizy OSW", 14 October 2022, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/analizy/2022-10-14/nad-wyraz-ostroznie-rumunia-wobec-rosyjskiej-inwazji-na-ukraine> [24.04.2023].

16 Ibid.

Bulgarian authorities condemned the attack, despite the strong pro-Russian attitudes of some political groups and society. The entourage of President Rumen Radev practically pursued nominal membership in NATO and the EU, taking a passive stance towards Russia. On the other hand, Prime Minister Kiril Petkov and his coalition government allies were unambiguously in favour of a pro-Western orientation. Conflicts also arose quickly between the ruling parties, regarding, among other matters, providing military aid to Kyiv and maintaining neutrality towards the war as well as adopting a sceptical attitude towards proposals for EU sanctions, including a ban on the import of Russian energy raw materials. On the other hand, Bulgaria, as one of the first countries to close its airspace to the Russians, showed great courage considering that half a million Russian tourists visited the country annually, and many of them had purchased real estate there.

## **2. Diplomatic area**

The Russian invasion of Ukraine, including in the diplomatic sphere, triggered an immediate response from countries in the region and intensified their diplomatic activity. This activity took place in a multi-dimensional manner, including bilateral and multilateral actions by political actors from various international organizations, cooperation formats, and individuals. The B9 countries have frequently taken significant diplomatic initiatives, becoming ambassadors of Ukraine's interests in Europe and worldwide. Due to their multidimensionality, this article focuses mainly on Poland, which was a decisive leader in this area, becoming a hub not only for millions of refugees but also for diplomats and world leaders involved in helping Ukraine.

The Polish authorities made an effort to organize an international coalition against Russia's actions, mainly within the EU and NATO. Since the outbreak of the war, foreign leaders (heads of state, prime ministers, foreign ministers, or persons holding other important international positions) have frequently visited Poland, especially during the first two months of the invasion, when it was not possible to travel to Kyiv. At that time, Poland was visited by, among others, the heads of many European countries and the United States as well as prime ministers and foreign ministers of many countries worldwide (including Japan, Brazil, Iraq, and Sudan) and the secretaries-gener-

al of the UN, NATO, and the League of Arab States, the President of the European Commission, the President of the World Bank, and the President of the International Olympic Committee. Visitors from the United States played a particular role, represented in Poland by President Joe Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris, Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, and CIA Director Bill Burns<sup>17</sup>. During all these meetings, the main topic of discussion was the war in Ukraine and ways to influence Russia through its global isolation.

During this period, the diplomatic activity of Polish decision-makers (i.e., the President, the Prime Minister, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the Marshals of the Sejm and Senate) also intensified as they undertook numerous foreign trips, becoming the most active advocates of Ukraine's interests in Europe and worldwide. President Andrzej Duda was the last foreign leader to visit Kyiv on the eve of the invasion and one of the first immediately after the outbreak of the war. Polish politicians also undertook joint diplomatic activities in the region (e.g., within the B9, the Visegrad Group, and the Three Seas Initiative), acting as leaders and coordinating the actions of the other countries in the region.

An important diplomatic event and a demonstration of neighbourly strength and solidarity was the visit of the prime ministers of three countries – Poland (Mateusz Morawiecki, Jarosław Kaczyński), the Czech Republic (Peter Fiala), and Slovenia (Janez Jansa) – to Kyiv on 15 March 2022. They were the first foreign politicians to arrive in the Ukrainian capital after the start of the Russian invasion. A month later, on 13 April 2022, another visit to Kyiv took place, this time by the presidents of the Baltic countries – Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. The speech by the President of Poland before the Ukrainian Supreme Council in Kyiv on 22 May 2022, made a strong impression. A. Duda declared that the face of a free world is Ukraine and thanked those fighting on the front lines for defending Europe against

17 *Mapa tygodnia: Polska dyplomacja w czasie wojny na Ukrainie*, <https://tiny.pl/wzq67> [24.04.2023].

Russian imperialism. At the same time, he called on all members of the EU and NATO to maintain unity around Ukraine<sup>18</sup>.

During the first year of the war, President Duda made dozens of official and unofficial trips abroad<sup>19</sup>, as did other officials at various levels such as the Prime Minister, Marshals of the Sejm and Senate, Ministers of various ministries, and politicians. A significant highlight of showing solidarity and diplomatic support for Ukraine at the ministerial level was the signing of the “Joint Declaration of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland on Deepening Cooperation in the Region”<sup>20</sup> during a meeting in Riga on 31 January 2023. The jointly developed initiatives for deterrence and border defence as well as support for Ukraine, have been implemented in various formats and structures, including the EU, NATO, and the UN.

In addition to individual, often less formal meetings between representatives of individual countries, the countries cooperating in the Bucharest format also met at official B9 summits. Three such B9 summits were held last year. The first was organized by the President of Poland a day after the invasion. The key topic of the talks was the Russian aggression against Ukraine and the security situation in Central and Eastern Europe<sup>21</sup>. During the meeting, an appeal was made to Western countries for a unified and solid stance against Russian aggression and real support for fighting Ukraine, primarily through the delivery of weapons. The B9 countries reaffirmed their unwavering support for Ukrainian independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity during the next summit, which took place on 10 June 2022, in Bucharest. The meeting was another demonstration of the unity of the countries and a clear declaration of their support for Ukraine’s Euro-Atlantic and European aspirations<sup>22</sup>. Another Extraordinary Bucharest Nine NATO

18 *Andrzej Duda przed Radą Najwyższą Ukrainy*, 22 May 2022, <https://www.prezydent.pl/aktualnosci/wizyty-zagraniczne/andrzej-duda-z-wizyta-na-ukrainie,54043> [24.04.2023].

19 *Wizyty zagraniczne prezydenta Andrzeja Dudy*, <https://www.prezydent.pl/aktualnosci/wizyty-zagraniczne> [24.04.2023].

20 *Wspólna deklaracja Przewodniczących Parlamentów Estonii, Litwy, Łotwy i Polski w rok od rozpoczęcia pełnowymiarowej inwazji Rosji na Ukrainę*, <https://tiny.pl/wzqsb> [24.04.2023].

21 *Wojna na Ukrainie. Szczyt Bukaresztańskiej Dziewiątki w Warszawie*, 25 February 2022, <https://tiny.pl/wzqsb> [24.04.2023].

22 B. Bodalska, *Szczyt B9 o wojnie w Ukrainie i wzmocnieniu wschodniej flanki NATO*, 13 June 2022, <https://www.euractiv.pl/section/bezpieczenstwo-i-obrona/news/szczyt-b9-wojna-ukraina-wschodnia-flanka-nato/> [24.04.2023].

Summit was held on 22 February 2023, in Warsaw. In addition to the member states, the President of the United States and the Secretary General of NATO personally participated in the meeting.

An important area of diplomatic support for Ukraine was cooperation within the B9 in international security organizations and alliances, including NATO and the EU. During the past year, three NATO summits were held. The first one was held remotely the day after the invasion on 25 February 2022; the second summit was held in Brussels on 24 March 2022; and the third in Madrid on 29-30 June 2022. During all of these meetings, the key topic was Russia's aggression against Ukraine and its consequences for the Euro-Atlantic community's security. During the talks, a decision was made to strengthen NATO forces on the eastern flank and increase support for Ukraine. There were also summits and meetings organized within the EU, mainly by the European Council. During the discussed period, thirteen such meetings took place<sup>23</sup>. During these talks, Russia was called upon to immediately cease its massive attacks on the civilian population and infrastructure and to immediately withdraw all troops and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. The EU-Ukraine summit, held on 3 February 2023, in Kyiv, was of particular importance. It was the first such meeting since the beginning of the Russian aggression and since Ukraine was granted candidate country status for the EU. Diplomatic support for Ukraine was declared at international forums, calling for strong solidarity with Ukraine and for all countries to comply with EU sanctions<sup>24</sup>.

### **3. Military area**

Military cooperation is one of the key areas of defence diplomacy. As previously mentioned, this idea excludes the direct use of military force in combat but includes a range of actions to militarily support a given state. The Bucharest Nine, as a format of cooperation that is not a formal international organization, does not have specialized political and military institutions, nor its own budget to finance

<sup>23</sup> *Kalendarz posiedzeń* [24.02.2022–24.02.2023], <https://tiny.pl/wzq65> [24.04.2023].

<sup>24</sup> *Szczyt UE-Ukraina, 3 lutego 2023*, <https://tiny.pl/wzq61> [24.04.2023].



aid activities, and so, did not support Ukraine in the military field. However, individual B9 countries did so on their own terms and capabilities. Immediately after the invasion, Ukraine's partners showed some caution in supplying equipment, fearing it would lead to an escalation of the conflict between NATO and Russia. However, with the resistance of the Ukrainian army, no prospects for peace talks, and a stalemate on the front, allies began to give in and support the fighters, more or less openly. In April 2022, the Contact Group for Defence Support to Ukraine (known as the Ramstein format)<sup>25</sup> was established to coordinate Western military assistance in terms of plans for the supply of weapons and ammunition. The largest suppliers of military aid were the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan, Poland, and the Baltic states. Especially in the first months of the invasion, when other Western European countries (Germany and France) did not supply equipment to Ukraine, deliveries of weapons from these countries proved crucial. At that time, it was a matter of deciding whether Ukraine would survive the first phase of the war. The value of military support from B9 countries is presented in Chart 1.

The amounts shown on the chart are based solely on intergovernmental transfers. They do not take into account private donations and aid through non-governmental organizations as well as all kinds of fundraising organised by citizens of individual B9 countries.

### Visegrad countries

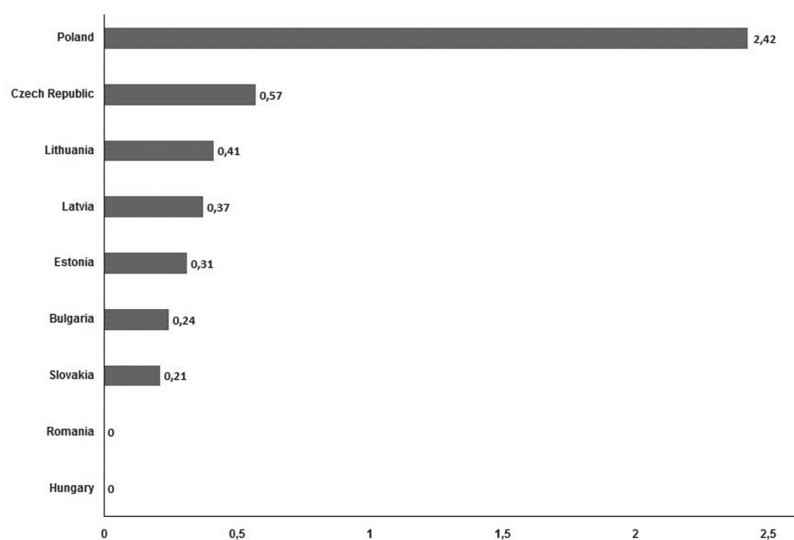
Among the Visegrad Group countries, Poland showed the greatest commitment in this area, declaring military aid worth EUR 2.4 billion (0.5% of GDP). In total, it was calculated that 19.3% of heavy equipment from the Polish army was sent to Ukraine. The military support included, among others<sup>26</sup>:

- fighter jets (MiG-29 9.12As)
- tanks (T-72, Leopard 2A4, PT-91s)
- infantry fighting vehicle (BWP-1, KTO Rosomak)
- infantry mobility vehicles (AMZ Dzik-2)

<sup>25</sup> The format was established on 26 April 2022, in Germany, at the Ramstein Air Base, during an international conference organised by the United States.

<sup>26</sup> *List of military aid to Ukraine during the Russo-Ukrainian War*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_military\\_aid\\_to\\_Ukraine\\_during\\_the\\_Russo-Ukrainian\\_War#P](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_military_aid_to_Ukraine_during_the_Russo-Ukrainian_War#P) [24.04.2023].

**Chart 1. Declared military support of the B9 governments for Ukraine (in EUR billion) (period from 24 January 2022 to 24 February 2023)**



Source: Own elaboration based on: *Ukraine Support Tracker. Government support to Ukraine: Military aid, € billion*, Kiel Institute for The World Economy, [https://app.23degrees.io/view/KJpsegWQv1CmxoMr-bar-stacked-horizontal-figure-5\\_scv](https://app.23degrees.io/view/KJpsegWQv1CmxoMr-bar-stacked-horizontal-figure-5_scv) [24.04.2023].

- command vehicles (LPG WDSzs)
- self-propelled artillery (2S1 Goździk, AHS Krab)
- multiple rocket launchers (BM-21 Grad)
- anti-aircraft (AA) guns (AZP S-60)
- self-propelled anti-aircraft guns SPAAG (ZSU-23-4 “Szyłka”)
- surface-to-air missile (SAM) systems (S-125 Nawa Scs, 9K33 Osa-AK(M)s, Osa AKM-P1 “Żądło”)
- air-to-air missiles (R-73)
- man-portable air defence systems (Piorun PPZR)
- vehicles (Star 266s, Star 266M2s)
- mortars (LMP-2017)
- small arms (Kbk wz.1988 Tantal, Kbk AKMS, FB MSBS Grot C16A2, UKM-2000P, RGP-40, RPG-76)
- large quantities of mortar ammunition, recoilless guns for artillery.

The equipment support for Ukrainian soldiers also included other resources such as helmets, bulletproof vests, and personal equipment

for soldiers, including medical equipment. In addition, treatment was organized for injured soldiers from Ukraine, and fruitful training cooperation was established. Due to the close geographical proximity, most of the training attended by soldiers from other EU countries took place in southeastern Poland. Military aid for Ukraine was also implemented as part of private initiatives – off-road vehicles were acquired, repaired, and donated to the Ukrainian army, and fundraisers for military equipment were organized. From these funds, the Turkish Bayraktar TB-2 combat drone as well as the Polish-made FlyEye observation drones and the Warmate loitering ammunition (so-called kamikaze drones) were purchased<sup>27</sup>. Poland's role in providing military support proved crucial due to the provision of territory and transport infrastructure, making it the main hub for military and humanitarian aid. Poland is the country through which a significant portion of aid from countries around the world is transported to Ukraine.

Another country that significantly supported Ukraine during last year's war was the Czech Republic, which provided military assistance worth EUR 0.6 billion (over 1% of GDP)<sup>28</sup>. The day after the invasion, the Czech government approved the transfer of troops from other NATO countries through its territory, while guaranteeing the necessary logistics services. The Czech authorities also provided weapons and military equipment, with one-third coming directly from the Czech army's resources and the rest purchased from private domestic companies. The provided equipment included<sup>29</sup>:

- tanks (T-72M1, T-55, T-72 Avenger)
- infantry fighting vehicles (BVP-1, PbV-501)
- heavy mortars (PRAM-L)
- towed artillery (D-20)
- self-propelled artillery (2S1 Goździk, SzKH wz. 77 DANA, DANA M2)
- multiple rocket launchers (RM-70 Grad, BM-21 Grad, RM-70 Vampire)

27 M. Małecki, *W ciągu roku od napaści Polska przekazała Ukrainie uzbrojenie o wartości ponad 2,2 mld euro*, "Dziennik Gazeta Prawna", 24 February 2023, <https://tiny.pl/wzq6n> [24.04.2023].

28 J. Frączek, *Polska pomoc dla Ukrainy przebiła wszystkich. Oto ile poszło z zasobów armii*, 26 February 2023, <https://tiny.pl/wzq68> [24.04.2023].

29 *List of military aid to Ukraine... C.*

- self-propelled air defence systems (9K32 Strieľa-10, MR2 Viktor)
- man-portable air defence systems (9K32 Strieľa-2, MANPADS)
- attack helicopters (Mil Mi-24 V)
- small arms
- ammunition
- vehicles, pontoon bridges, interim bridges
- military medical supplies, radiation, chemical and biological protection material, military clothing and equipment, fuel, spare parts, and transport.

The Czechs also conducted training courses for Ukrainian soldiers as well as medical rescuers and military engineers. Czech citizens organized numerous fundraising campaigns, from which funds were donated to purchase weapons and equipment, including field rocket systems, T-72 Avenger “Tomáš” tanks, and Viktor anti-aircraft and anti-drone systems.

Ukraine was also supported militarily by Slovakia with an amount of EUR 0.2 billion. Among the equipment provided were<sup>30</sup>:

- fighter jets (MiG-29)
- helicopters (Mil Mi-17, Mil Mi-2)
- infantry fighting vehicles (BVP-1)
- air defence systems (S-300PMU, 2K12 Kub)
- Kub radar station
- self-propelled howitzers (SpGH Zuzana 2, ShKH Zuzana 2s)
- anti-tank weapons
- ammunition
- engineering equipment
- Bozena 5 mine clearance systems
- military clothes, petrol, kerosene jet fuel for aircraft, lubricants and spare parts for Mig-29 fighter jets.

The last country from the V4 group to mention is Hungary, which refused to grant permission for arms supplies to Ukraine and also for its transit through Hungarian territory. This would be crucial if Belarusian troops entered Ukraine, trying to disrupt the delivery routes of allied weapons from Poland. Only training of Ukrainian combat medics and assistance in the hospitalisation of wounded soldiers were

30 *List of military aid to Ukraine... S.*

declared. Hungary's sceptical political and diplomatic stance was, therefore, reflected in military cooperation as well.

### **Baltic states**

All Baltic states provided military support to Ukraine – Lithuania and Latvia provided assistance at a level of about EUR 0.4 billion each, while Estonia provided assistance worth EUR 0.3 billion. The Lithuanian government approved draft resolutions on providing assistance to Ukraine in emergency situations and created two aid packages with a total value of EUR 1.8 million, intended for the protection of the population and armament. Among the equipment provided were<sup>31</sup>:

- helicopters (Mi-8)
- man-portable air defence systems(MANPADS)(FIM-92 Stinger)
- anti-aircraft (AA) guns (Bofors L70)
- towed artillery (M101)
- self-propelled mortars (Panzermörser *M113*)
- heavy mortars
- armoured personnel carriers (APCs) (M113, M577)
- small arms (delivered along with ammunition)
- vehicles, drones
- military winter clothing, anti-drone imaging equipment, thermal imagers, and communications equipment.

In Lithuania, the repair of weapons and military equipment was also carried out, and training of Ukrainian soldiers was organized. As part of private initiatives, fundraising campaigns were also organized in Lithuania to support Ukraine, from which ammunition for the Bayraktar TB2 unmanned aerial vehicle was purchased<sup>32</sup>.

Latvia's military assistance to Ukraine, a relatively small Baltic country, was surprisingly large (over 1% of GDP) and included not only the provision of weapons but also training for Ukrainian soldiers and rehabilitation of those injured in combat. Latvian military support included<sup>33</sup>:

- self-propelled howitzers (M109)

31 *List of military aid to Ukraine...* L.

32 M. Gołębiowska, *Litewska solidarność z Ukrainą*, "Komentarze IES" 2022, no. 712, pp. 1-2, <https://ies.lublin.pl/komentarze/litewska-solidarnosc-z-ukraina/> [24.04.2023].

33 *List of military aid to Ukraine...* L.

- helicopters (Mil Mi-8MTV-1, Mil Mi-2, Mi-17)
- air defence systems (Stinger)
- small arms
- vehicles, drones
- soldiers' equipment, medical equipment.

Estonia, as one of the smallest NATO member states with relatively small armed forces, was one of the first countries to send military equipment to Ukraine, including Javelin anti-tank systems (even before the outbreak of the war), which played a crucial role in the defence of Kyiv in the initial phase of the aggression, and D-30 howitzers (after the start of hostilities). The value of Estonian military support for Ukraine in the last year was surprisingly high, amounting to 1.35% of its GDP<sup>34</sup>. The equipment provided by Estonia included, among others<sup>35</sup>:

- towed artillery (D-30s, FH-70)
- anti-tank weapons
- small arms, rifles and pistols, grenade launchers, sniper rifles
- ammunition, vehicles, naval vehicles, drones
- protective equipment, winter uniforms, sights, thermal imagers and binoculars, communications equipment, and medical equipment.

Estonia also participated in the organization of three field hospitals in cooperation with Germany and the Netherlands and declared its readiness to train Ukrainian special forces, airborne forces, and ground forces.

### **Black Sea states**

Among the Black Sea countries, Bulgaria showed the greatest commitment. In the past year, it has provided military support to Ukraine worth EUR 0.2 billion. Prime Minister Petkov and Finance Minister Asen Vassilev deserve particular merit in this regard. Already in the first months of the Russian invasion, they initiated the provision of significant military aid to Kyiv. The politicians did this without informing the public and against the will of, among others, President Radev. Thanks to the secret initiative, Bulgaria provided Ukraine with about

34 J. Frączek, *Polska pomoc dla Ukrainy przebiła wszystkich...*

35 *List of military aid to Ukraine...* E.

one-third of its ammunition supplies and about 40% of fuel for tanks for several months, from April to August 2022. In this way, it showed other countries that despite their dependence on Russia and fears of Putin's aggression, there are creative ways to support Ukraine. The equipment provided by Bulgaria included, among others<sup>36</sup>:

- tanks (T-72M1)
- multiple rocket launchers (BM-21 Grad)
- ammunition, main artillery shells
- diesel fuel, military-technical support, including repairs of Ukrainian vehicles and military equipment. Bulgaria has also pledged to provide training for combat medics.

Romania, as a flanking allied state that recognized the threat from Russia and politically supported Ukraine, showed some reluctance to provide practical military assistance (less than EUR 0.1 billion). Although the Romanian authorities allowed for the transit of weapons from the United States, they only symbolically supported Ukraine militarily by providing small amounts of weapons and military materials, including about two thousand combat helmets and bulletproof vests as well as fuel, ammunition, food, water, and medicine<sup>37</sup>. The reasons for this restraint may be attributed to fears of Russian aggression. Romania aimed to keep military action away from its coastline, particularly with concerns about Russia seizing Snake Island, located about 40 km from the Danube Delta and adjacent to Romania's gas-rich shelf. Unofficially, Romania also explained its stance by pointing to its own shortages. Ukraine indirectly confirmed this by not insisting on an increase in aid.

**4. Humanitarian area**

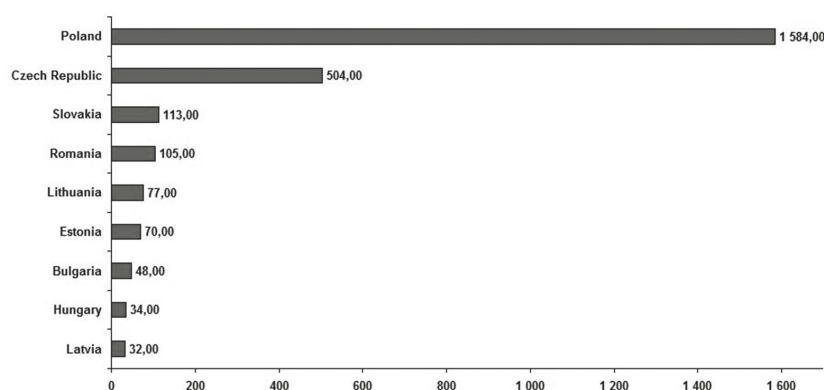
● The armed attack by Russia on Ukraine prompted many of its citizens to seek safe shelter on EU territory. The mass arrival of refugees was a huge challenge for the reception systems of the countries bordering Ukraine and a test of overall European solidarity. According

<sup>36</sup> *List of military aid to Ukraine... B.*

<sup>37</sup> *List of military aid to Ukraine... R.*

to UNHCR<sup>38</sup> data, there are currently 2,569,000 refugees from Ukraine in wealthier European countries that do not border Ukraine<sup>39</sup>. However, the highest percentage of them is concentrated in neighbouring countries. Already on the first day of the Russian attack, Poland set up additional reception points at border crossings where arriving individuals could obtain information, basic medical assistance, and material support. In the following days, in the face of the dynamically increasing number of arrivals, the governments of front-line states maximally simplified procedures for accepting refugees. Among the B9 countries, Poland turned out to be the leader both in terms of financial aid for maintaining refugees and the number of Ukrainian citizens admitted. The openness of the other eastern flank NATO countries in this regard is presented in Chart 2.

**Chart 2. Refugees from Ukraine in the B9 countries (thousands/millions) (as of the end of February 2023)**



Source: Own elaboration based on: *Ukraine refugee situation*, UNHCR, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine> [24.04.2023].

## Visegrad countries

A special commitment to humanitarian aid, and above all, the acceptance of refugees, has been shown by the Visegrad Group countries. Since the first day of the invasion, around 11 million Ukrainians, mostly

38 The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was established on 14 December 1950, as a result of a resolution by the United Nations General Assembly.

39 P. Pacewicz, *Gdzie jest milion uchodźców z Ukrainy? W danych SG widać też lęk przed rocznicą 24 lutego*, 28 February 2023, <https://oko.press/ilu-jest-uchodzcow-z-ukrainy> [24.04.2023].



women and children, have crossed the border with Poland. After some time, some of them returned to their homeland, while others went to other countries. One year after the Russian aggression, about 1 million people are currently benefiting from temporary protection in Poland. In total, up to 1.5 million Ukrainian citizens have important permits to stay in the country. Reception points were established at border crossings and in the largest Polish cities at an express pace, which were the first point of contact for refugees after crossing the Polish border. Translators, the military, the police, and volunteers provided food, medical care, and other necessary supplies on-site. The scale of Polish society's involvement in helping refugees in the last year was perceived as a kind of phenomenon on a global scale. The non-profit sector and many private companies also immediately got involved. The issue of the status of Ukrainian refugees in Poland and the benefits associated with it was resolved on an emergency basis. On 7 March 2022, a draft special law on aid to Ukrainian citizens in connection with the armed conflict in that country was submitted to the Sejm and signed by the president a few days later<sup>40</sup>. Under this law, refugees obtained equal rights to Polish citizens in terms of access to healthcare, the education system, and the labour market. They were also granted temporary protection status for a period of eighteen months. Preparatory classes were organized for students who came from abroad, did not know the Polish language, or knew it insufficiently.

The Czech Republic and Slovakia also provided massive aid to Ukrainians quickly and effectively, providing humanitarian support. Both countries adopted a package of legislative changes called "Lex Ukraine"<sup>41</sup> to regulate their legal status. According to UNHCR data, over 500,000 Ukrainian refugees currently reside in the Czech Republic. An important challenge for the Czech Republic was the budget burden in the health sector as well as the utilization of the potential of incoming people in the labour market. In the case of Slovakia, the

40 *Ustawa z dnia 12 marca 2022 r. o pomocy obywatelom Ukrainy w związku z konfliktem zbrojnym na terytorium tego państwa*, Dz.U. 2022, issue 583.

41 It was a package of three laws designed to regulate the rules for the stay and employment of refugees, health insurance, access to social benefits, and education, thus promoting the best possible management of the crisis. The amendment provides for stricter payouts of humanitarian benefits for refugees from Ukraine.

refugee crisis ultimately contributed to the improvement of relations between the sector of social organizations and the state. In the early days after the invasion, in addition to volunteers, non-governmental organizations and municipalities were the driving force behind the effective material assistance provided at border crossings and the largest railway stations. Currently, over 113,000 refugees reside in Slovakia.

In contrast to the negligible political-military support, the Hungarian authorities responded relatively quickly and unambiguously to the massive arrival of Ukrainian refugees. Already on the day of the invasion, the government declared its intention to grant them temporary protection status (valid for a year), despite the strict anti-immigration program in the country implemented since the migration crisis in 2015. However, it caused Hungary to almost completely lack the necessary infrastructure and capabilities in the face of the massive arrival of refugees. In practice, it turned out that it was non-governmental and church organizations that provided effective material assistance for several weeks at border crossings and the largest railway stations.

### **Baltic states**

The Baltic countries have also become a new home for Ukrainians fleeing the war, which has been a significant challenge for them. Lithuania has received the most Ukrainian citizens, with 77,000 refugees currently residing there, which amounts to 2.4% of the country's population. Lithuania has also taken a series of actions to regulate the status of arrivals and provide financial benefits for individuals and companies that have provided shelter to refugees. The second Baltic country that surprised with its humanitarian commitment was Estonia, which has received the most refugees per capita (currently, 70,000 Ukrainians reside there). As the Estonian aid system was overwhelmed, neighbouring Finland – a much larger country in terms of area and population – agreed to partially accept refugees from Estonia. Latvia also faced the challenge and dealt with the refugee crisis (currently, 32,000 Ukrainian citizens reside there). In support of Ukrainian civilians, the Latvian government adopted a law providing for the issuance of visas for one year with the right to work, lowered language requirements, and many social benefits. Latvian non-governmental organizations as well as those from other B9 countries, actively joined

in providing assistance by organizing, among other things, fundraising campaigns for Ukraine.

### **Black Sea states**

Among the Black Sea countries, Romania is a leader in humanitarian aid, currently hosting 105,000 refugees from Ukraine. The country has created a logistics centre in Suceava for foreign humanitarian aid, distributing and coordinating support for Ukraine, and organizing transportation of aid for the neediest. In Romania, refugees have been offered free public transportation, medical services, access to education, and facilitation of legal employment. In parallel, Bucharest has provided material and humanitarian support for Moldova, which is struggling with a significant influx of migrants. Bulgaria has also opened its doors to refugees, accepting 48,000 people. The authorities also evacuated several hundred Bulgarians living in southern Ukraine who declared their intention to leave. Most refugees have been placed in the east of the country, in large cities such as Varna and Burgas as well as in surrounding tourist towns.

### **Conclusions**

The invasion of Ukraine in 2022 solidified the vast majority of NATO's eastern flank countries' perception of Russia as a threat to regional and Euro-Atlantic security. The character of engagement of individual countries in the situation in Ukraine can be best described as mobilization at different speeds<sup>42</sup>. In some countries, countering Moscow's aggressive actions was a consensus issue in the political arena (Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Czech Republic, Romania), while in others, part of the political elites advocated for a more conciliatory approach to Russia (Bulgaria, Slovakia, Hungary). Most of the B9 countries provided unequivocal political and diplomatic support to Ukraine and are among the world leaders in terms of the value of military and humanitarian aid provided (along with Poland – the Baltic states, the Czech

42 K. Całus et al., *Wschodnia flanka NATO po roku wojny – mobilizacja różnych prędkości*, "Komentarze OSW" 2023, no. 491, pp. 1-6, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/Komentarze%20OSW%20491.pdf> [24.04.2023].

Republic, and Slovakia). The only country that maintained diplomatic contacts with Russia at a high level over the past year, continued close economic cooperation with it, and did not provide significant military support to Ukraine was Hungary. Nevertheless, Budapest usually supported further EU sanctions packages and signed official documents with the B9, EU, and NATO.

Poland turned out to be the leader in supporting Ukraine in virtually all the analysed areas. It became a spokesperson for Ukraine's interests in many dimensions, also being the creator of many decisions concerning its support in the EU forum, not only in a political and sanctions sense but also in organizing financial and humanitarian aid. Poland's role has increased tremendously since the outbreak of the war, both in the region and on the continent as well as in the EU and NATO forums. Czech Republic and Slovakia have also been among the countries providing the most military and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine since the beginning of the Russo-Ukrainian war. This was accompanied by a high involvement of state authorities in supporting Kiev in political, diplomatic, and economic matters. The Baltic states, which provided assistance in all areas of defence diplomacy to the maximum of their abilities, played a particularly important role in supporting Ukraine over the past year. Although their geographic size, Gross Domestic Product (GDP), military capabilities, and, above all, long-standing dependence on Russian raw materials suggested that they did not have the capacity to support Kiev, they acted contrary to these opinions. Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia are countries that have consistently surprised the international community with their assistance to Ukraine. In turn, the Black Sea countries, faced with internal political crises, openly supported Ukraine politically and diplomatically over the past year but showed some restraint in military support. Particularly Romania, which provided military assistance in a symbolic dimension, however, stood up to the task in terms of hosting refugees. Bulgaria, on the other hand, provided significant military support, but did so secretly, incurring energy consequences from Russia.

The multidimensional support for Ukraine from the B9 countries has also raised numerous concerns. After the initial shock of the invasion and the willingness to accept refugees, voices of protest began to emerge from some political circles and citizens themselves. The

war in Ukraine has affected the economies of individual B9 countries, which were already weakened by the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Accepting a multitude of refugees and the need to provide them with shelter, healthcare, education, etc. became a challenge for many countries. In addition, rising food prices, increasing energy prices, tightening financial conditions, and problems related to Ukrainian grain stored in warehouses became a problem for all of Central Europe. In the longer term, this may threaten the sustainability of the support that the B9 countries have offered to Ukraine and show far-reaching political consequences. Some countries are preparing for elections, and the growing crisis phenomena and war fatigue may be used in political struggles.

In seeking an answer to the question of what factors could weaken or strengthen the engagement of the B9 countries in carrying out defensive diplomacy tasks in Ukraine, the first thing to point out is the issue of energy and business dependence on Russia. These could certainly hinder helpful activity for Ukraine. In addition, the desire to maintain a semblance of neutrality (part of Slovak politicians), internal disputes and problems in individual countries, and the pro-Russian orientation of some elites and societies in certain countries (Bulgaria, Latvia) could also be factors. On the other hand, motivations for providing support to Ukraine beyond moral and ideological considerations were seemingly related to security concerns. If Russia were to take over Ukraine, it would open the way further westward, directly threatening the security of NATO countries. That is why Poland and the Baltic states are so strongly committed to supporting Ukraine. This is also why the United States and the United Kingdom are providing such strong support, knowing that a Russian victory would be a step towards destabilizing Europe, and even towards another world war. Aware of these risks, both Poland and the Baltic states are strengthening their security in close alliance with the US and the UK, fearing that in the event of Russia's occupation of Ukraine, countries such as Germany or France would be willing to agree to Russia's proposal for a "new security system" in Europe. This would mean pushing the eastern flank of NATO into a grey zone dominated by Moscow. That is why the B9 countries will continue to support Ukraine in its fight despite the challenges and difficulties because their own security largely depends on the outcome of this war.

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## Communist Party documents from the period of its rule in Kazakhstan and Poland: A comparative study

Dokumenty partii komunistycznej z okresu jej rządów  
w Kazachstanie i w Polsce – studium porównawcze

**Abstract:** The article is a brief comparison of the documentation system of the Communist Party ruling Poland from 1944 to 1989 and in Kazakhstan from 1918 to 1991. Despite considerable geographical remoteness, there are strong similarities between them in terms of party organisation, office rules and provisions regulating archives. This was caused by the reflection of Soviet models in communist Poland after 1944. The regaining of sovereignty by Poland in 1990 and independence by Kazakhstan in 1992 led to the transfer of documentation from party archives to the state archive service in both countries. As a result, it was possible to study and make them publicly available.

**Keywords:** archives, communist party, administrative office, documentation, Kazakhstan, Poland

**Streszczenie:** Artykuł jest krótkim porównaniem systemu dokumentacyjnego partii komunistycznej rządzącej w Polsce w latach 1944-1989 i w Kazachstanie w latach 1918-1991. Pomimo znacznego oddalenia geograficznego wykazuje on bardzo duże podobieństwa w zakresie organizacji partii, zasad kancelaryjnych, przepisów archiwalnych. Spowodowane to było odzwierciedlaniem w komunistycznej Polsce po 1944 r. wzorców sowieckich. Odzyskanie suwerenności przez Polskę w 1990 r. oraz niepodległości przez Kazachstan w 1992 r. spowodowało w obu krajach przekazanie dokumentacji z archiwów partyjnych w ręce państwowej służby archiwalnej. Pozwoliło to na poddanie jej procesowi opracowania i udostępnienia dla użytkowników.

**Słowa kluczowe:** archiwa, partia komunistyczna, biurowość, dokumentacja, Kazachstan, Polska

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## Introduction

Kazakhstan and Poland, despite the considerable geographical distance between central Europe and the borderlands of Europe and Asia, have shared a similar fate over the last 200 years. The First Polish Republic was deprived of its independence before Kazakhstan, with large parts becoming part of the Russian Empire at the end of the 18th century, and Kazakhstan shared the same fate in the 1880s. However, Kazakhstan was the first to come under Bolshevik rule, and from the 1920s functioned as the Kazakh Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, which in the 1930s was transformed into the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic (KSRR) and incorporated into the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Poland came under the Kremlin's influence again as a result of the Second World War when, in the 1940s, the Russians imposed communist governorship on the seemingly separate, yet effectively non-sovereign Polish People's Republic (PRL). In this way, both nations found themselves in the communist camp with similar systemic solutions created by the totalitarian communist party in power. Both countries also experienced Stalinism, which involved the elimination of both real and imaginary opponents. This same period was much crueller in Kazakhstan since it was within the structure of the USSR, which resulted in ethnic cleansing and artificially induced famine devastating the nation and, indirectly, its culture and language. The largest labour camp of the Gulag system was also located in Kazakhstan, where Poles displaced from their home areas were also victims. The disintegration of the communist bloc resulted in Poland and Kazakhstan regaining independence in 1989 and 1991, respectively.

The above-mentioned similarities prompt comparative studies of many aspects of the history of the two countries, including aspects related to their archives. The subject of this paper is the documentation produced and collected by the Communist Party of the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic (KPKSRR) and the Polish Workers' Party (PPR)/Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR). The structures of the party in power built in both countries were based on Bolshevik principles. They covered not only all administrative levels of the state, down to the smallest villages, with their network but also had their organisational units in all workplaces and social organisations, which also made the political situation in Kazakhstan and Poland similar. The following analysis relates to the manner in which party administrative offices operated and

the production of documentation and, after the fall of communism, the circumstances under which this documentation was transferred to the public archives. The purpose of this study is to briefly outline the process of documentation production and creation of party archives in both countries and then to try to find common features and differences. The research included administrative office and archival regulations that were in force in communist Kazakhstan and Poland, subsequent legislation in this regard, and an analysis of archival literature and the archives themselves.

## 1. Poland

The practice of administrative offices of the communist party in Poland was based on the experience of the PPR's work in the immediate post-war period beginning in 1945. The party bureaucracy was the result of three main elements: the phenomenon of communist bureaucracy created in the Soviet Union and grafted onto Polish soil by people sent from the USSR to build communism in Poland, the experience of the clandestine period of the Polish Communist Party between 1918 and 1939, and the lack of professional preparation of clerical staff in the post-war period, which resulted in the clerical awkwardness observed in the documentation<sup>1</sup>.

The PZPR did not develop efficient, organised administrative offices in any of its existing structures during the time of its operation. Each party instance or organisation functioned on the basis of its own instructions, sometimes operating based on tradition rather than written norms<sup>2</sup>. Formally, from the 1970s onwards, there was a case-based filing system, based on a structured and factual list of files, grouping all cases homogeneous in form or content. There were administrative offices in the committees of each party instance. The administrative office was a dedicated desk tasked with providing clerical support to the organisational units and their managers, which included ensur-

1 D. Magier, *Czynności kancelaryjne w komitetach PPR. Przyczynek do badań nad systemami kancelaryjnymi struktur partii komunistycznej w Polsce*, [in:] idem (ed.), *Partia komunistyczna w Polsce. Struktury, ludzie, dokumentacja*, Lublin–Radzyń Podlaski 2012, pp. 505-506.

2 E. Markowska, *Stan badań nad dziejami kancelarii komunistycznych struktur partyjnych w Polsce w latach 1948-1990*, [in:] D. Magier (ed.), *Partia komunistyczna w Polsce...*, p. 604.

ing the smooth circulation of documents and collecting the data and materials needed for day-to-day work<sup>3</sup>. The secretarial offices of party secretaries and heads of the various departments also functioned on an administrative basis, thus contributing to the existence of decentralised administrative offices in party committees, where secretarial activities were carried out by individual organisational units.

The tasks of an administrative office included receiving letters and confirming their receipt, opening and distributing them, registering incoming and outgoing materials, affixing and filing the receipt stamp, using a material list of files, submitting filed materials to superiors for inspection, directing letters to be dealt with as decreed by the head of an organisational unit, storing current files and keeping records of them, transferring files to the party archive, and supervising the destruction of documentation.

Each administrative office kept files of finally settled cases in folders and binders, maintained according to the file list for a given organisational entity or unit. Party archives were kept at the level of the party's Central Committee and provincial committees, where records with the value of perpetual storage were transferred from lower instances. The remaining documents were kept at individual committees, where they were destroyed over time<sup>4</sup>.

In the party administrative office, individual letters accrued as part of ongoing cases (a case file system), and these made up the entire documentation first stored in individual party committees, organisations, and organisational units. The result of the administrative production of the PZPR structures was a wide variety of documentation. After a period of post-war bureaucratic chaos in the 1940s and 1950s, the documents produced during the course of the party's functioning came to be recognised as an essential part of the day-to-day work of the organisation as well as a lasting testimony to its history. However, uniform regulations on the matter did not appear until the 1980s<sup>5</sup>.

3 W. Horst, *Kancelarie i archiwa Centralnego Komitetu Wykonawczego Polskiej Partii Socjalistycznej, Komitetu Centralnego Polskiej Partii Robotniczej i Komitetu Centralnego Polskiej Zjednoczonej Partii Robotniczej (1944-1990)*, Warsaw 2006, p. 308.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 311.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 303.

The following party activities were documented: meetings of the instances of all levels and their executive bodies, meetings of party organisations and their executive bodies, meetings of commissions and teams appointed by the instances, meetings and deliberations of party activists, resolutions and decisions of individual instances, work plans and action programmes and the results of their control and evaluation of their implementation, assessments of the situation in the party, its structure and organisational status, evaluations of the socio-political situation and social mood, opinions and conclusions coming from outside<sup>6</sup>. A series of actions were repeated at all levels of the PZPR organisation. This was particularly true of minutes of meetings of authorities, which were accompanied by the production of the same types of files.

In addition to documentation of collegiate bodies, individual bodies produced work plans and action programmes, evaluations of the implementation of resolutions and decisions, studies, information and notes, papers and all types of files characterising the essence of their substantive activities. The created documentation also included positive prints of photographs commemorating important events and party celebrations and sound recordings captured on magnetic tape.

In addition to the above-mentioned internal documentation, the PZPR structures obviously also produced external documentation (sent externally), which consisted of letters to lower instances, superior authorities, and other organisational units and individuals. Some documents were in ready-made forms that were only filled in by handwriting or typing, other material was sent out as circular information. This was mass-produced on many occasions, which would not have been possible without appropriate technical means. This purpose was served by duplicating facilities under the general law on printing activities in the country<sup>7</sup>.

A separate type of internal office documentation was financial and accounting documentation, including invoices and receipts, letters of payment, advance payments and travel and subsistence allowances

6 D. Magier, *System biurokratyczny Polskiej Zjednoczonej Partii Robotniczej w województwie białsko-podlaskim w latach 1975-1990*, Siedlce 2012, pp. 142-143.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 147.

(travel assignments); financial and accounting records included inventory books and records of party members and membership contributions.

Another type of documentation was personnel files and their records. The staffing policy of the PZPR was one of the main instruments of the communist party's exercise of power and was part of staffing a nomenclature system. The implementation of personnel policy required the production of such types of personnel files as individual files, personnel cards, nomenclature position cards and registers of changes in nomenclature positions. A separate group consisted of personal files of so-called activists of the labour movement, and widows and orphans of party activists.

The type of documentation produced by all party committees and organisations, closely related to personnel records, were statistical reports on party members and candidates. These were the reporting forms developed for the Communist Party as a whole by the Organising Department of the Communist Party Central Committee. The census of party members and candidates was the basis for drafting statistical reports.

Letters sent externally were stamped with a red ink stamp. Communist Party committees used several different metal and rubber seals, round, triangular, and rectangular, which were used depending on the rank and importance of the writing.

PZPR office activities were carried out in office rooms equipped with desks, tables, office cupboards, bookcases, metal cabinets, segments, chairs and armchairs. Information noticeboards and display cabinets hung on the walls of committees. Floors were lined with carpets and rugs. Lace curtains and curtains were hung in windows. Hangers, flowerbeds, standing lamps, and cigarette ashtrays were also placed in office rooms<sup>8</sup>.

The main writing tools were typewriters – first mechanical, then electric. They used blank A4 paper, carbon paper in particular (paper coated on one side with ink mixed with wax, used to make multiple copies of a text simultaneously as it was being written – to make copies). Later, printing presses were used for the production of large-print

8 *Ibid.*, p. 160.

and specialised magazines. Teleprinters and telephones were used to transmit rapid information. Counting machines were used for accounting, later replaced by electric calculators, in addition to which, from the 1970s onwards, televisions, tape and video recorders, gramophones, overhead projectors, film projectors, epidiascopes, and loudspeakers were used *en masse* for party work<sup>9</sup>.

The official language in the People's Republic of Poland was the so-called communist newspeak, which was imposed on Poland along the lines of the soviet pattern<sup>10</sup>. Overlaid on the old traditions of the administrative style, there was a tendency to speak in a way that would clearly distinguish itself from colloquial speech, which was considered "too ordinary". Over time, this newspeak became a marker of communist cohesiveness, growing into a kind of internal language. In this context, language also became a sign of belonging, allegiance, and legitimacy. The administrative office structures of the PZPR were one of its main gatekeepers and carriers of communist newspeak, alongside the mass media<sup>11</sup>.

Records of information produced by the PZPR were not subject to the general rules of documentation handling in Poland. The communist party was given the right to keep and manage its own files, including their destruction. In addition to this, the PZPR archives were able to store historical resources, i.e., archival material collected in the past<sup>12</sup>. The files of the communist structure were not included in the register of archival materials forming the State archival resource. However, the archival law stipulated that the documentation of the party – as an entity forming the so-called non-state archival resource – would, upon termination of its activities, pass to the State and become part of the State archival resource. No provision was made for the transfer of archive material to a legal successor. As a consequence of this provision, after the liquidation of the PZPR on 27-30 January 1990, the process of transferring its documentation to the state archives began.

9 D. Magier, *Political party archives: The system of recording and conveying information in local structures of the communist party in Polish Biela Podlaska province, from 1975 to 1989*, "Archival Sciences" 2018, no. 18, pp. 279-290.

10 M. Heller, *Maszyna i śrubki. Jak hartował się człowiek sowiecki*, Warsaw 1989, p. 246.

11 M. Głowiński, *Nowomowa i ciągi dalsze. Szkice dawne i nowe*, Cracow 2009, p. 54.

12 R. Galuba, *Materiały archiwalne, dokumentacja i archiwa PZPR w polskim prawie archiwalnym*, [in:] D. Magier (ed.), *Partia komunistyczna w Polsce...*, p. 571.

In accordance with the Polish archival principle of territorial affiliation, documents produced by the central structures of the Communist Party were transferred to the Archives of New Records in Warsaw, while those of lower-level instances were transferred to regional state archives. At present, most of them are already compiled and made available under the general rules applicable to all archives in Poland.

## 2. Kazakhstan

The Communist Party of Kazakhstan, which was part of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), was an organisation of the unified Communist Party of the Soviet Union corresponding to the republican status. It was guided by the Program and the Charter of the CPSU, which was carried out within the republic, its territories, regions, cities, and districts and regulated all activities aimed at implementing the policy of the party and organised the implementations of directives of the Central Committee of the CPSU. The supreme body of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan was the Congress, then the Conference, and in the period between them – the Central Committee. As a result of the economic and socio-political crisis in the Soviet Union and in the republic, the Communist Party of Kazakhstan was dissolved at its Extraordinary Congress on 7 September 1991<sup>13</sup>.

Until 1921, there was no unified Bolshevik party centre on the territory of modern Kazakhstan, but there was a base in the form of the Communist Party of Turkestan, created in June 1918, which included party organisations of the Syrdarya, Semirechensk, and parts of the Turgai and Ural regions. On 30 April 1920, by a decree of the Central Committee of the RKP(b), the Regional Bureau of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of the Kirghiz Territory (Obl Bureau of the RKP(b) Kirkray<sup>14</sup>) was created in order to form a unified party organisation. On 18 June 1921, the Kyrgyz (Kazakh) Regional Committee of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) was elected by the 1st Kazakh Regional Party Conference, which on 19 February 1925, by

13 *Guide to the funds of the Archive of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan: Reference and information edition*, compiled by E.M. Gribanova, A.A. Seisenbaeva, B.A. Dzharparova (eds.), edition 2, supplemented, Almaty 2016, p. 310.

14 The name of the Kazakh regional committee (1922-1925).

a resolution of the Central Committee of the RKP(b), was renamed the Kazakh Regional Committee of the Party. In connection with the creation of the Kazakh SSR in 1936, the Central Committee of the VKP(b) on 23 April 1937, transformed the regional party organisation into the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Kazakhstan.

By the end of the 1920s, all fundamental issues of the work of the executive committees, including electing the chairman and praesidium of the executive committee, the secretary, the appointment of department heads, approval of the agenda of plenary meetings of the executive committee and congresses of the Soviets, were decided by party committees. The decision-making mechanism of the party committee is quite convincingly shown in the book by M.S. Voslensky "Nomenclature. The ruling class of the Soviet Union"<sup>15</sup>.

All decisions were included under a serial number in the protocol of the meeting of the bureau of the party committee, thus protocols were the main documents characterizing political and organisational activities of the party structures. The protocol indicated the number of the protocol, the name of the party organisation, the date of the meeting, the number of those present, the composition of the praesidium, the names of the chairman and secretary, and the names and positions of representatives of higher party bodies or invited persons. Then the protocol listed issues on the agenda and names of the speakers. The protocol recorded decisions, speeches, and proposals made. Decisions were binding on any agency. Resolutions of state bodies were compulsorily approved by the relevant party authorities. Thus, in the process of documenting, the party secured the right to control the activities of all state bodies and public institutions.

In addition to protocols written during the activities of the party committee, the following were formed:

- transcripts of party conferences, plenums, meetings of the praesidium, bureaus, secretariats of regional committees, district committees, city party committees, meetings of party, Soviet, trade union, and Komsomol assets and materials for them;
- statistical reports, information on the composition, number of communists in the party organisation, on its structure;

15 M. Voslensky, *Nomenclature. The ruling class of the Soviet Union*, Moscow 1991, p. 624.



- reports, speeches by secretaries of party organisations, information, letters from party bodies and organisations, government agencies;
- personal documents (questionnaires, personal sheets, mandates, certificates, registration cards) of party members and candidates;
- political reports of local party committees about the mood among the population, on the structure of deported people and work among them, of women's departments on work among women;
- circulars, directives, instructive memorandums, instructions of the RKP(b) on accounting and distribution of party personnel, work with Komsomol organisations, on the forms and methods of party work among Kazakhs, national minorities, women, on the new economic policy;
- documents on the work of periodical press, the organisation of publishing, public education, the professional training of art workers, the work of social security agencies;
- reports on the work of the internal affairs bodies, the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court on the adoption of repressive measures, of the OGPU on the mood among the clergy, social revolutionaries, Mensheviks, cadets, on the activities of representatives of the Alash movement, the fight against the Alashordyn organisation;
- references, memoranda, letters on the course of agitation and mass work among the workers, on the state of cultural, political, and educational institutions (party offices, libraries), on anti-religious propaganda, on the work of party bodies to clarify the national policy of the party.

Party bodies controlled practically all aspects of the life of the republic: cultural, economic, political and ideological.

The office work of the party committee was divided into two parts: simple and secret. Whereas the first was under the jurisdiction of the General Department, the second was under the authority of the Secretariat, later of the Special Sector.

All incoming correspondence, both simple and secret, addressed to the party committee, was accepted exclusively at the receiver of the General Department. After registration, ordinary correspondence was transferred to the General Department as it accumulated, and secret

correspondence was immediately transferred to the Secretariat or to the addressee of ownership. Reception and transmission of telephone messages were also done through the General Department. After the archival year passed, all documents were transferred to the archive. The archival year was considered to be from congress to congress<sup>16</sup>.

The official language in party committees was Russian and Kazakh. However, until 1929, the Kazakh language was written in Arabic script, and in the areas inhabited by Kazakhs, there are many documents written in the Arabic alphabet. From 1929 to 1939, the Kazakh language was written in Latin script. In the documents of that period, there are also documents written in Latin script. The Russian language was always used in parallel with the Kazakh language but written in the Cyrillic alphabet. Ready-made forms were always prepared in two languages.

One of the main tasks of the Istpart<sup>17</sup> Kazakh Regional Committee (Kazkraykom) of the VKP(b), created on 20 November 1922, was to collect, process, and study materials on the history of the VKP(b) and the civil war in Kazakhstan, and to monitor the safety of party archives<sup>18</sup>. So, from the moment of its creation, Istpart of Kazkraykom paid great attention to the collection and storage of documents of party organisations, which was the only source for studying the history of the October Revolution, party organisation, and the civil war in Kazakhstan due to the lack of party archives at that time. This task was solved by creating a political section in the Central Archive of the KASSR.

According to the instructions adopted in the early 1920s by the Central Committee of the RKP(b), documents were to be kept in party committees for five years, after which they were to be archived. On this basis, starting from 1926, party committees began to send their files to the Central Archive. Unfortunately, these materials were not processed for a long time but were folded directly in bales. There was a threat of destruction of the most valuable documents reflecting the process of emergence and multifaceted activities of the party organisations of the republic. The Istpart of the Kazkraykom of the VKP(b)

16 Archive of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan (APRK), F. 141. Op. 1. D. 2816, p. 9.

17 The name of the commission for collecting memories; documents on the history of the October Revolution.

18 APRK. F. 141. Op. 18. D. 30, p. 9.

informed the Central Istpart about this<sup>19</sup>. At the same time, a letter signed by the secretary of the Kazkraikom and the head of the Istpart was sent to all provincial committees requesting information about the state of their archives and other archives in the provinces, the availability, condition, and storage of valuable materials for creating the history of the party organisation<sup>20</sup>. After finding out about the unsatisfactory state of the provincial archives after 1927, documents and materials from the Kazkraikom of the VKP(b), the Regional Control Commission, and the Kazkraikom of the VLKSM began to arrive at the Istpart of the Kazkraikom. These documents were unordered and needed to be put in order. In June 1927, the KazkraiCom of the VKP(b) approved the head of the party archive and allocated three temporary workers for processing<sup>21</sup>.

In this way, the foundation was laid for the creation of a party archive under the Istpart of the KazkraiCom and in 1929, on March 25th, by a resolution of the Organising Bureau of the Central Committee of the VKP(b), a necessity to immediately create a unified party archive at the Lenin Institute was recognized. In the case of field offices, party archives were to be organised under the Istparts and special commissions, consisting of party comrades who knew archival affairs, were created to streamline accounting and concentration of local party archival funds. The Regional Party Archive, organised in 1927 under the Istpart of the KazkraiCom of the VKP(b), in 1929 became a branch of the Central Party Archive under the Istpart of the KazkraiCom of the VKP(b) and had 6 funds in storage:

1. Kazakh Regional Committee of the CPSU (b);
2. Kazakh Regional Committee of the Komsomol;
3. Kazakh Regional Control Commission;
4. Red Caravan;
5. Revolutionary movement in Kazakhstan (materials in the form of manuscripts, documents, leaflets, appeals, etc.);
6. Information Department.

<sup>19</sup> APRK. F. 141. Op. 1. D. 936, p. 20.

<sup>20</sup> APRK. F. 141. Op. 18. D. 30, p. 4.

<sup>21</sup> *Institute of Party History under the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan*, Alma-Ata 1973, p. 13.

The chronological period of archival materials on the first three funds only begins in 1921, documents from the moment of the organisation of the Kirpartburo since 1920 have not been preserved<sup>22</sup>. On 28 June 1929, the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the VKP(b) approved the “Regulations on the Unified Party Archive of the VKP(b)”, according to which all the main directives for the management of party archives were given by the Lenin Institute in agreement with the secret department of the Central Committee. The Unified Party Archive was supplied with documents of party committees, Control commissions, Komsomol organisations and fractions of Soviet trade unions and other institutions created in their office work and lost their significance for current work. Materials and documents of party committees stored in other institutions (the Central Archive, the Museum of the Revolution, Eastprof, etc.) were to be transferred to the Unified Party Archive.

The Central Unified Party Archive had a secret department in which secret materials were stored, the use of which was authorized by the secretary of the Central Committee of the VKP(b), and in the localities by the secretary of party organisations. The issue of the secrecy of materials and their declassification was resolved jointly with representatives of the Lenin Institute and the Secret Department of the Central Committee, and at the local level, decisions were made by the secretary of the local party organisation and the head of the Istpart. The Central Unified Party Archive had the right to seize documents of local party organisations of particular importance<sup>23</sup>.

Party archives revived the traditions of departmental, closed archives; their documents were not included in the Unified State Archival Fund (EGAF) of the RSFSR, did not belong to the state, but were the property of the party<sup>24</sup>. Thus, violating the principles of centralization of archives, adopted on 1 June 1918 “On the reorganisation and centralization of archives in the RSFSR”, the party documents were separated from the rest.

22 APRK. F. 141. Op. 1. D. 2816, p. 1.

23 APRK. F. 141. Op. 1. D. 2816, p. 14.

24 S.Yu. Malysheva, *Fundamentals of archival science: Textbook*, Kazan 2002, p. 122.

During the formation of the party archives, there were difficulties with the premises for the party archives and repositories. Six out of 16 archives of regional committees of the KP in Kazakhstan were located outside the buildings of regional committees. With the exception of 2 archives – the Semipalatinsk and Guryev archives, the premises of the archives did not meet the requirements for the preservation of archival documents. Archives did not have sufficient cubic capacity. The premises were inadequate not only for reception of materials in the perspective of the coming years but also for the current year, which resulted in a large load for archives that violated the rules for storing documents. Seven archives were located in cold and dark semi-basements. Some archives were simply heated by an oven<sup>25</sup>.

The second problem was the lack of qualified archiving personnel, which was often reflected in the form of archival work such as processing and the description and preparation of the scientific reference apparatus of the accepted documents.

The '70s and the beginning of the '80s were a period of improvement of the material and technical base for the party archives of the republic. By 1985, 14 of the 20 party archives of Kazakhstan were located in buildings built according to special standard projects.

In the early 1990s, the party archive was in the party archive sector of the Almaty Institute of Political Science and Management, which was created by merging the Institute of Political Studies of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan and the Almaty Higher Party School<sup>26</sup>. While being a part of this institute, researchers did not have access to the archival documents and historically valuable archival documents were at risk of being destroyed and damaged. The party archive, which had accumulated many valuable documents in its funds, was subordinated to the tenants of the places it had previously owned. Consequently, there was a risk of damage to documents that required specialized care.

After the events of August 1991, the Republican Party archive was viewed not as a national treasure but as confiscated party property. Along with the assets of the liquidated Almaty Institute of Political

25 APRK. F. 811. Op. 8. D. 1517, p. 1.

26 APRK. F. 30. Op. 1. D. 1, pp. 1-2; F. 708. Op. 139. D. 3087, pp. 11-14.

Science and Management, the warehouses and funds of the Republican Party archive were transferred to the Kazakhstan Institute of Management, Economics, and Forecasting (KIMEP).

On 28 October 1991, the Committee on State Property of the Kazakh SSR adopted a resolution on transferring buildings of party archives to the General Archives Directorate under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Kazakh SSR, and on 12 April 1992, a further resolution on transferring documents of the former CPSU archives to the General Archive of the Republic of Kazakhstan<sup>27</sup>.

These documents legitimized the new status of documents of the archive funds of the CPSU. All regional party archive documents were gathered in the Central Party Archive and became part of the National Archival Fond.

On 3 August 1992, by the decision of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Central State Archive of the Modern History of Kazakhstan was established on the basis of the Party Archive of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan<sup>28</sup>, which in January 1994 was reorganised into the Archive of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

## Conclusions

Kazakh experience with communist dictatorship is almost a quarter of a century ahead of Poland. In terms of the party administrative office, creating documentation and its storage and legal status in Poland after 1945 – as in many other areas of life – models developed in the Soviet Union were implemented. This was reflected even in the common term describing this phenomenon today, namely “sovietization”<sup>29</sup>. The same type of “total” party organisation was in force<sup>30</sup>, the same internal structure and system, and finally the administrative office and archival patterns. If it were not for the language used to record party

27 APRK. F. 30. Op. 1. D. 1, pp. 16-18.

28 APRK. F. 30. Op. 1. D. 2, pp. 1-2.

29 W. Charczuk, *Dokumentacja MBP, MO, KBW i WP w latach 1944-1954 jako przykład sowietyzacji biurokracji*, [in:] A. Górak, D. Magier (eds.), *Dzieje biurokracji na ziemiach polskich*, vol. 2, Lublin-Siedlce 2000, pp. 333-358.

30 D. Magier, *System...*, pp. 11-13.

information, so characteristic of Kazakhstan and mentioned above, one could speak of a matrix mirrored in Poland. It is also valid in the field of archival policy in a state under communist rule. The work of the administrative office of the Polish Workers' Party/Polish United Workers' Party and Kazakh Regional Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks)/the Communist Party of Kazakhstan, which was part of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, was excluded from the supervision of the state archival service. The policy of dealing with party documentation was left to the mono-party, which itself decided on the manner of collecting, valuing, storing, and sharing (i.e., using), documents. A network of regional party archives, headed by the Central Archives of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR), was organised in Poland on similar principles as in Kazakhstan (i.e., the entire USSR).

After the systemic changes, collections of documentation in both countries became the responsibility of the state archive service. In Poland, they were deployed in 1990 in archives according to the territorial principle, in Kazakhstan, in a newly created archive made especially for this purpose, which was reorganised in 1992 in the Archives of the President of the Republic. This documentation is available to users, although archivists are still working on the full development of this resource in accordance with the archival practice of their countries. This is extremely important because it opens up the possibility of using the information contained in them for research conducted by representatives of various scientific disciplines dealing with national heritage, but also the history of law, administration, economy, medicine, architecture, etc. As a result of the omnipotence of the Communist Party, the documents created and collected by it bear information on all aspects of the life of the population. In this sense, their value cannot be overestimated, because no topic from the history of Kazakhstan from 1918 to 1991 and the history of Poland from 1944 to 1989 can be considered fully developed without reaching for these archives. Therefore, only by studying these documents and then making cadastral aids (inventories, indexes, guides) available (both in the form of traditional and online publications) will it allow for the effective employment of this wealth of historical sources.

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# (Dis)information in contemporary armed conflicts

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# The construction of fake war news. Specificities of disinformation in social media during the first six months of the Russia-Ukraine war (March-September 2022)

**Konstrukcja fałszywych wiadomości wojennych. Specyfika dezinformacji w mediach społecznościowych w pierwszym półroczu wojny ukraińsko-rosyjskiej (III-IX 2022)**

**Abstract:** Modern warfare, including the Russia-Ukraine war, relies heavily on disinformation. Fake news on social media is an integral part of this. At the same time, each conflict is characterised by distinct communication specificities and in the context of the complex effects of fake news, questions arise about their specificity for a given conflict. The aim of the presented research was to answer the question of what the various fake news about the Russian-Ukrainian war disseminated in Polish-language social media have in common and what narrative they generate. The analysis covered the construction of the messages as well as their contexts: social, cultural, historical, and political. For this purpose, a three-stage analysis of ten fake news cases disseminated between March and September 2022 was conducted, applying a three-element analytical matrix. The research made it possible to identify the properties of fake news, generated narratives, and their possible effects.

**Keywords:** disinformation, fake news, Ukraine, Russia, war, social media

**Streszczenie:** Współczesne działania wojenne, w tym wojna ukraińsko-rosyjska, w znacznej mierze opierają się na dezinformacji. Fake newsy w mediach społecznościowych stanowią jej integralną część. Jednocześnie każdy konflikt charakteryzuje się odrębną specyfiką komunikacyjną. W kontekście złożonych skutków fake newsów pojawiają się pytania o ich osobliwość dla

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danego konfliktu. Celem prezentowanych badań była odpowiedź na pytanie, co łączy różne fake newsy dotyczące wojny rosyjsko-ukraińskiej rozpowszechniane w polskojęzycznych mediach społecznościowych i jaką narrację generują. Analizie poddano konstrukcję przekazów, jak również ich konteksty: społeczny, kulturowy, historyczny i polityczny. W tym celu przeprowadzono trzypiętą analizę dziesięciu fake newsów rozpowszechnianych w okresie III-X 2022 r., stosując trzelementową matrycę analityczną. Badanie pozwoliło zidentyfikować właściwości fake newsów i generowanych narracji oraz ich możliwe skutki.

**Słowa kluczowe:** dezinformacja, fake newsy, Ukraina, Rosja, wojna, media społecznościowe

## Introduction

Information warfare<sup>1</sup>, hybrid warfare<sup>2</sup>, and digital warfare<sup>3</sup> are terms describing the importance of online communication in the conduct of modern warfare. At the same time, disinformation<sup>4</sup> is a key tool of warfare, not only in the communication dimension. A catch-all term is becoming fake news<sup>5</sup>, which has firmly established itself in the social media space<sup>6</sup>. Fabricated news<sup>7</sup> has universal properties by which the recipient – human or machine – can expose a message as false. It also has unique properties specific to a particular topic or event and distribution channel, which is mainly social media<sup>8</sup>.

This also applies to the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian war since March 2022, which relies heavily on disinformation and propaganda<sup>9</sup>. Fake news is an indispensable part of the activities on both sides of the con-

- 1 E. Lucas, P. Pomeranzen, *Winning the information war*, [in:] *Techniques and Counter-strategies to Russian Propaganda in Central and Eastern Europe*, The Center for European Policy Analysis, Washington 2016, pp.1-66.
- 2 B. Renz, *Russia and hybrid warfare*, "Contemporary Politics" 2016, vol. 22, no. 3, pp. 283-300.
- 3 W. Merrin, *Digital war: A critical introduction*, Abington 2018.
- 4 P. Mihailidis, S. Viotty, *Spreadable spectacle in digital culture: Civic expression, fake news, and the role of media literacies in 'post-fact' society*, "American Behavioral Scientist" 2017, vol. 61, no. 4, pp. 441-454.
- 5 D. Lazer, M.A. Baum, Y. Benkler et al., *The science of fake news*, "Science" 2018, vol. 6380, no. 359, pp. 1094-1096.
- 6 G. Pennycook, D.G. Rand, *The psychology of fake news*, "Trends in Cognitive Sciences" 2021, vol. 25, no. 5, pp. 388-402.
- 7 J. Mingers, C. Standing, *What is information? Toward a theory of information as objective and veridical*, "Journal of Information Technology" 2018, vol. 33, no. 2, pp. 85-104.
- 8 V. Bakir, A. McStay, *Fake news and the economy of emotions: problems, causes, solutions*, "Digital Journalism" 2018, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 154-175.
- 9 G. Stănescu, *Ukraine conflict: the challenge of informational war*, "Social Sciences and Education Research Review" 2022, vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 146-148.

flict<sup>10</sup>. This raises the question of the fake news characteristics concerning this war propagated on social media, the consequences arising from its specificity, and the narrative pursued.

The aim of the presented research was to identify the multifaceted characteristics of the various fake news present on social media concerning the ongoing conflict and to answer the question of what they have in common, both in terms of message construction and social, cultural, historical, and political contexts as well as possible narrative effects.

# 1. State of the art

## Definition and meaning of fake news

Fake news is defined as deliberately misleading, untrue, or partially untrue information disseminated on the internet or in the mainstream media<sup>11</sup>. The differences between fake news are at the levels of intention<sup>12</sup> and structure<sup>13</sup>, allowing an assessment of the factuality of the information disseminated. The purpose of spreading fake news can be financial, political, war-related, or to create controversy<sup>14</sup>.

From a media and communication studies perspective,<sup>15</sup> fake news is divided into:

- total falsehood (deliberately falsified facts);
- questionable truth (incomplete facts, fragmentary, lack of context, misleading by selective coverage of the subject);

10 K. Babacan, M.S. Tam, *The information warfare role of social media: Fake news in the Russia-Ukraine war*, "Erciyes İletişim Dergisi" 2022, vol. 3, pp. 75-92.

11 A. Grycuk, *Fake news, trolls, bots and cyborgs in social media*, "BAS Analyses" 2021, vol. 152, no. 1, p. 2.

12 M. Haigh, T. Haigh, *Fighting and Framing Fake News*, [in:] *The Sage Handbook of Propaganda*, P. Baines, N. O'Shaughnessy, N. Snow (eds.), London 2019, pp. 303-323.

13 D.M.J. Lazer, M.A. Baum, Y. Benkler et al., *The science of fake news...*, pp. 1094-1096.

14 M. Palczewski, *Fake news and freedom of speech*, Staszic Institute, 11 January 2019, <http://instytutstaszica.org/2019/02/11/fake-news-a-wolnosc-slowa/> [5.04.2023].

15 P. Bylicki, K. Borkowska, *Public Dialog K, Report: Fake News from a Polish Perspective Journalists*, 2017, [https://publicdialog.pl/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Raport\\_Badaniefake-news-23-05-2017.pdf](https://publicdialog.pl/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Raport_Badaniefake-news-23-05-2017.pdf) [5.04.2023].

- manipulation of quotation or textual content (changing the meaning of the message, presenting it in the wrong context)<sup>16</sup>.

Fake news plays an important role from the perspective of the war narrative. Articles with war or terrorist content are among the most engaging and reach almost every social population<sup>17</sup>. Disinformation posted on social media influences public awareness, interpretation of war events, optics, and evaluation of the conflict. It can lead to involvement in the conflict as well as to prejudice, discrimination, or violence<sup>18</sup>. One of the primary objectives of fake news during information warfare is the long-term construction of propaganda based on a given narrative<sup>19</sup> as well as its defence.

With the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation in February 2022, the topic of disinformation in this conflict has become crucial from an academic and practical point of view. So far, disinformation during the Russian-Ukrainian war spread by traditional media, social media<sup>20</sup> and fake news has been examined, among others, from the perspective of regional social and historical conditions<sup>21</sup>. The power of social media in creating social attitudes and capturing important news was also identified and explained<sup>22</sup>. Four contexts of this disinformation were identified: cultural, social, political, and historical<sup>23</sup>.

### **The role of social media in the creation and dissemination of fake news**

In wartime, social media becomes a tool for fighting the enemy<sup>24</sup>. The deliberate spread of disinformation on social media is evident in the

16 K.A. Rosińska, *Disinformation in Poland: Thematic classification based on content analysis of fake news from 2019*, "Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace" 2022, vol. 15, no. 4, article 5.

17 W. Nowak, *Fake News in Times of Contagion*, "Discourse & Dialogue" 2020, no. 1, pp. 105-117.

18 T.A. Knopf, *Rumors, race and riots*, New Brunswick 1975.

19 J. Prier, *Commanding the trend: Social media as information warfare*, "Strategic Studies Quarterly" 2017, vol. 11, no. 4, pp. 50-85.

20 A. Kuzminski, *The methods of disinformation in the Russia-Ukraine war*, "Rhetoric and Communications" 2022, vol. 53, pp. 167-171.

21 J. Kreft, J.M. Boguszewicz-Kreft, M.D. Hliebova, *Under the fire of disinformation. Attitudes towards fake news in the Ukrainian frozen war*, "Journalism Practice" 2023, pp. 1-21.

22 E. Perez, *Strategic Disinformation: Russia, Ukraine and Crisis Communication in Digital Era*, "On Research" 2022, pp. 8-18.

23 Ibid.

24 J. Prier, *Commanding the trend...*

actions of both sides in the Russian-Ukrainian information war<sup>25</sup>. Social media fosters the creation, editing, and distribution of false content<sup>26</sup> and is often the only source of information for recipients<sup>27</sup>. It is very difficult for audiences to distinguish between true information and false information, which is why researchers are focusing on developing tools to “filter” false content as well as creating new security systems<sup>28</sup>.

The architecture of social media (editability, openness, interactivity, and distributedness<sup>29</sup>), which allows for audience engagement, is particularly used by senders of fraudulent content to achieve a variety of goals<sup>30</sup>. Research has shown that social media bots are used to amplify and disseminate false information<sup>31</sup>, although humans are still primarily behind driving them<sup>32</sup>. Both bots and the architecture of social media itself foster the repetition of the same information, making it more credible in the public perception<sup>33</sup>.

## Deconstructing false information

Capturing the characteristics of fake content is a step that facilitates the resolution of what is real information and what is not. Molina et al. point to a set of attributable characteristics of fake news<sup>34</sup>. In the process of determining the trustworthiness of a message, researchers also draw, among other things, on research from Teun van Dijk’s discourse theory, based on macrostructure (related to the overall meaning of a text) and superstructure (to capture the global meaning of

- 25 N.J. Shallcross, *Social media and information operations in the 21st century*, “Journal of Information Warfare” 2017, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 1-12.
- 26 V. Bakir, A. McStay, *Fake news and the economy of emotions...*, pp. 154-175.
- 27 J. Gottfried, E. Shearer, *News use across social media platforms 2016*, Pew Research Center, <https://www.journalism.org/2016/05/26/news-use-across-social-media-platforms2016> [05.04.2023].
- 28 D.M.J. Lazer, M.A. Baum, Y. Benkler et al., *The science of fake news...*
- 29 A. Khan, K. Brohman, S. Addas, *The anatomy of ‘fake news’: Studying false messages as digital objects*, “Journal of Information Technology” 2022, vol. 37, no. 2, pp. 122-143.
- 30 M.D. Molina et al., *Fake news is not simply false information: A concept explication and taxonomy of online content*, “American Behavioral Scientist” 2019, p. 12.
- 31 C. Shao et al., *The spread of low-credibility content by social bots*, “Nature Communications” 2018, no. 9, pp. 1-9.
- 32 S. Vosoughi, D. Roy, S. Aral, *The spread of true and false news online*, “Science” 2018, vol. 6380, no. 359, pp. 1146-1151.
- 33 G. Pennycook, D.G. Rand, *The psychology of fake news...*, pp. 388-402.
- 34 M.D. Molina et al., *Fake news is not simply false information...*



a text)<sup>35</sup>. The linguistic approach makes it possible to identify specific linguistic patterns<sup>36</sup> and assess the syntax of the analysed content. A multimodal multi-image system is also used, combining information from different modalities and consisting of three components: visual, textual, and semantic<sup>37</sup>.

## 2. Methods

### Design

For the purpose of this study, a three-level analysis of ten selected examples of fake news disseminated in Polish on diverse social media platforms was conducted. For this purpose, an analysis matrix was constructed based on three pillars: 1) models of machine recognition of fabricated news<sup>38</sup>; 2) analysis of selected elements of social media architecture<sup>39</sup>; 3) analysis of contexts and potential narrative effects of disinformation<sup>40</sup>.

### Instruments

The analysis was based on a matrix considering eight main analytical categories, based on the fabricated news model<sup>41</sup>, but in a modified version, extended to include categories adapted to the social media architecture.

The matrix included an analysis of the following elements: 1) language and discourse; 2) factuality; 3) modality, transmediality, and

35 M. Palczewski, *The discourse of fake news*, "Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis. Studia de Cultura" 2019, vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 15-31.

36 H. Rashkin et al., *Truth of varying shades: Analyzing Language in Fake News and Political Fact Checking*, [in:] *Proceedings of the 2017 Conference on Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing*, M. Palmer, R. Hwa, S. Riedel (eds.), EMNLP '17, Copenhagen 2017, pp. 2931-2937.

37 A. Giachanou, G. Zhang, P. Rosso, *Multimodal multi-image fake news detection*, 2020 IEEE 7th International Conference on Data Science and Advanced Analytics (DSAA), Sydney 2020, pp. 647-654.

38 M.D. Molina et al., *Fake news is not simply false information...*

39 R. Thornton, *Social media, crisis communication and community-led response and recovery*, <https://policycommons.net/artifacts/1711562/social-media-crisis-communication-and-community-led-response-and-recovery/2443211/> [20.05.2022].

40 J.H. Fetzer, *Disinformation: The use of false information*, "Minds and Machines" 2004, no. 14, pp. 231-240.

41 M.D. Molina et al., *Fake news is not simply false information...*

integration; 4) architecture and metadata; 5) uncommon practices; 6) import<sup>42</sup>; 7) contexts: social, historical, cultural, and political; 8) narrative effects.

**Table 1. Categories of the analytical matrix with an explanation of the range of issues and areas analysed**

Analytical categories	Scope of issues and areas analysed
Language and discourse	Determining the textual content and quality of a text by analysing its grammar, spelling, punctuation, and stylistic correctness; genre or genre hybrid; rhetoric; communication style and the atmosphere built around it
Factuality	Determining the degree of truthfulness of the text based on the data and conclusions of the investigations carried out by the fact-checkers; identifying the sources of data and information indicated and used in the message
Modality, transmediality, and integration	Identifying the specificity and quality of the message in terms of the mode of communication: textual, audio, visual, audio-visual, multimodal as well as transmediality and inclusivity characteristics at the level of the message, the profile of the author, social media platforms, and sometimes mainstream media
Architecture and metadata	Determining the technical construction of the message and additional message components such as author/publisher information, redirects (links) and determining the importance of transmediality and cross-platformity
Uncommon practices	Identifying any unusual treatments, actions, measures, techniques, attitudes, and behaviours identifiable in the communication
Imports	Determining the main meaning the message may convey to the recipient's mind
Contexts	Identifying the importance of the contexts referred to or in which the message is located: historical, socio-cultural, political
Narrative effects	Identifying the key possible narrative effects to be achieved through the publication of such a message

## Selection of cases

The selection of cases for analysis was purposeful, based on the selection of fake news unmasked in at least one of the three Polish fact-checking platforms demagog.pl, fakenews.pl, and fakehunter.pap.pl, and in 8 cases out of 10, also additionally present in Fact Check Explorer<sup>43</sup>.

A review of articles verifying fake news about the war in the above sites from March to September 2022 was carried out. The predominant thematic categories were identified, and 10 fake news stories were

42 J. Mingers, C. Standing, *What is information...*, pp. 85-104.

43 Google's tool for finding and classifying fake news, <https://toolbox.google.com/factcheck/about> [24.03.2023].

selected, corresponding to different categories, in order to maximise the diversity of the fake news stories analysed in terms of:

- distribution platforms (using, e.g., Facebook, YouTube, Twitter),
- the degree of online and offline “popularity” (including the presence of fake news also in mainstream media and/or the degree of spread of fake news as determined by fact-checking platforms),
- the degree of seriousness of the problem (from very dramatic and serious to trivial and humorous), and
- thematic category.

Five main thematic categories were identified, and between 1 and 3 pieces of fake news from each were selected for analysis: refugees (1); politicians (1); weapons and military aid (2); war events; (3) Ukrainian “nationalism”; (1) protection of Polish interests and culture (2).

### Mode of analysis

The material was coded independently by the three researchers using the analysis matrix. For the analysis of language and discourse, a system of visual, textual, and semantic components was used<sup>44</sup>. The factuality analysis relied on investigations, the results of which were presented on fact-checking platforms. The analysis of modality, transmediality, and integration as well as architecture, metadata, and uncommon practices was based on the assumptions of the Molina et al. model<sup>45</sup>. In contrast, imports were analysed based on the findings of Mingers and Standing<sup>46</sup>. Contexts were extracted independently based on the basic categories historical, cultural-social, domestic political, and international political, based on, among others, the findings of E. Perez<sup>47</sup>, including the identification of potential narrative effects.

After individual analyses were completed, joint discussions were made for each case, creating consensus syntheses of the data. At the final stage, a meta-analysis of all ten cases was conducted to identify the characteristics of fake news about the Russian-Ukrainian war in the Polish-language social media sphere and its possible narrative effects.

44 A. Giachanou, G. Zhang, P. Rosso, *Multimodal multi-image fake news detection...*

45 M.D. Molina et al., *Fake news is not simply false information...*

46 J. Mingers, C. Standing, *What is information...*, pp. 85-104.

47 E. Perez, *Strategic Disinformation...*, pp. 8-18.

## 3. Results

### Content of the cases analysed

The research sample included the cases presented in Table 2.

**Table 2. Topics and content of analysed fake news**

	The subject of fake news	Main message
1.	Sinking of the "Moskva" warship	The video allegedly shows the sinking Russian warship "Moskva". In reality, it shows the ship "USS Buchanan"
2.	Destruction of Mariupol by Ukrainians	The entry shows a video containing claims of deliberate destruction of Mariupol by Ukrainians
3.	Secret American laboratories in Ukraine	The video centres around the recently "discovered" secret laboratories of biological weapons in Ukraine, which serves to point to the real reason for Russia's attack
4.	Signs with the names of Polish localities in Ukrainian	The description of the photo of the sign with the name of the Polish locality in a foreign language suggests that Ukrainian was used, whereas it is the regional Lemko language
5.	Zelenski fled the country	The message says that the President of Ukraine is not in the country, which is supposed to be indicated by a photo of him while recording video footage in a studio on the "green screen"
6.	The West supplies weak helmets to Ukrainians	The video shows a small projectile piercing a helmet that Ukraine allegedly received from Western countries
7.	Drones as Ukrainian chemical weapons carriers	The video shows Ukrainian drones allegedly carrying chemical weapons
8.	McDonald's in Norway has withdrawn the Bandera sandwich	The video claims that McDonald's in Norway is promoting Stephan Bandera by selling a sandwich called "Homestyle Bandera".
9.	Forced housing of Ukrainian refugees in Polish homes	The recording reports that forced accommodation of the Ukrainian population is planned in a province neighbouring Ukraine
10.	The brutal murder of Polish children by the Ukrainian Insurgent Army in the 1940s	The entry contains photographs of murdered children with a description indicating that this crime was committed by the Ukrainian Insurgent Army. In fact, it shows children killed by their own mother

### Design of the fake news analysed

#### Language and discourse

Despite the considerable variety of cases analysed, most of them are characterised by clear features of linguistic incorrectness. We also note numerous syntactic and stylistic errors. These affect both written and oral statements. In the case of the latter, this not only applies to the

utterances of the bystanders of the interlocutors but to the authors/speakers themselves, who are most often persons styling themselves as journalists or editors.

The predominant feature of the language of the analysed cases is the occurrence of colloquialisms and, in four out of ten cases, also vulgar expressions or swearing. The language is emotionally charged either directly and/or through the use of emoticons, by which the authors try to give validity to their statements. In some cases, speakers express themselves in a pompous or exalted manner, which sometimes sounds grotesque.

The utterance is often built on stylisation, e.g., into an expert utterance, or into a journalistic utterance, or the styles of utterance are mixed. Rhetorical tools such as direct addresses or rhetorical questions are the main tools for building the para-journalistic style and its credibility. Sloppy attempts to use specialised vocabulary and foreign words are often combined with simplifications.

Analysing the content of the posts in the context of the specific profiles on which they are posted, there is a tendency to fit in with the style prevailing in other posts, which may serve to respond to the habits and expectations of the audience, e.g., a satirical tone or stylisation as a TV diary. It also serves to build a certain atmosphere around the topics covered such as fear or seriousness. Sometimes, it leads to a call to action: the adoption of a specific stance or action, e.g., to defend Polishness and Polish interests or to oppose the authorities.

A characteristic feature of the entries analysed is their compilation. In genealogical terms, we observe hybrid creations such as an agitational column, a para-expert debate combined with a video presentation, and a reportage – *à la* “live” intervention programme. The statements combine various pieces of true and false information, attributed to different orders, e.g., political, historical, and legal, while at the same time, the presentation lacks specific sources of information and/or a lot of relevant data. Topics, themes, and contexts are also mixed, adding to the discursive chaos. Many authors do not shy away from clearly defined objectives of political or ideological agitation in the post or in the description on their profile.

### Modality, transmodality, and integration

The posts analysed are multimedia and are very diverse. Even if one modality dominates, other modalities are a kind of supplement, or the post is linked to the content of other modalities through links to other posts or other online sources. In these posts, written text is always present. There are never single images, silent videos, or graphics. Depending on the form dominating the post, we are confronted with different combinations of modalities.

**Table 3. Modalities of analysed fake news**

1. Video without sound, text, or emoticons	2. Video conference with the presentation of maps, photos, and screenshots	3. Video conference with screen sharing presentation and maps	4. Photo and text	5. Text and photo
6. Audio-video and text	7. Text and video	8. Video and text	9. Videoblog, banners, and information sidebars	10. Text and archive photos

The modalities used sometimes lead to an exaggeration of communication forms, e.g., the video in case no. 9 abounds in numerous banners, information bars, advertisements, and notifications, giving the impression of excess. This is also the case with the video in fake news no. 3. The entry in case no. 10, on the other hand, is saturated with macabre images in various styles and of various origins in order to “flood” the viewer with a multitude of visuals of the presented event and to reinforce the effect.

More often than not, however, multimodality does not just lead to variety in the delivery form, but to chaos. It is another tool for building excessive complexity – this time not at the level of content but of form, which indicates a lack of professionalism in this communication sphere as well.

Cross-communication or duplication of content is an essential feature of the fake news analysed. Cross-communication can occur at different levels:

- within the same fake news item (when other fake news items are directly or indirectly referred to in a given post)
- within the profile of the author publishing the fake news (when the author frequently publishes other fake news)
- between social media platforms (fake news is shaped in other social media)
- on the internet in the broadest sense, e.g., on private websites

- offline (e.g., on television or in the press).

Sometimes, fake news finds its way into the traditional mainstream media and, unverified, is presented as fact. This applies to both Russian media (such as “Russia Today” in the case of fake news no. 7) and Western media (CNN and BBC in the case of fake news no. 1).

In addition, the basis for the distribution of fake news is its multiplication, which occurs in other languages (in the cases analysed, mainly Russian) and involves literally the same content. It can also be an element of cross-posting with other fake news on similar profiles of non-public, poorly identifiable, relatively anonymous individuals. It can also find its way into political channels, such as the Twitter profile of a local politician (case no. 8).

In general, through comprehensive integration, there is a multi-modal and discursive multiplication of fake news that supports the construction of specific narratives which, by producing psychological and/or social effects, serve political and sometimes even warlike purposes<sup>48</sup>.

### **Message architecture, metadata, and unusual practices**

Analysing the message architecture and metadata allows a closer profile of the author and the technical layer of the message. Both of these elements facilitate content verification. Although the authors of the analysed fake news very rarely appear under a name or even a pseudonym, their profiles often lead to private websites of organisations, e.g., so-called patriotic ones. Above all, redirects are made to numerous profiles of the same or related authors on social media (Twitter, Facebook, or Telegram). In only one of the analysed cases did the speaker in the video give his telephone number, encouraging direct contact – this should be regarded as a rarity.

The fake news analysed draws attention to a lack of technical and, therefore, often aesthetic precision. They are sloppy and unreadable; they are characterised by low-quality images, sound, and processing of the media on many levels such as the lack of an official beginning and end of the video; no sound in the video; random emoticons added to the text, etc.

48 A. Khan, K. Brohman, S. Addas, *The anatomy of 'fake news'...*

In the cases analysed, there is mostly a lack of communication or technical practices that could be considered unusual. These could include the aforementioned giving of the speaker's phone number "live". All the cases analysed are based on a social media architecture that, through certain functionalities and affordances, fosters sharing, commenting, and engagement in discourse, making it more widespread.

### **Factuality of the message**

The factuality of the cases analysed is mixed. Five out of ten news are completely false, and five mix facts and false information, operating with so-called half-truths. Most often, we are dealing with a combination of information and its interpretation and opinion, sometimes also with agitation.

None of the content analysed contains information about the sources of the data, let alone how they were verified. The authors quote content without providing the names, surnames, or even the functions of the persons allegedly speaking. There is a lack of information about the time and place of the event, conversation, etc. Photographs and recordings are used without any indication of authorship. Own and other people's material is mixed, and even Creative Commons licences are broken when the authors make their text available under licence without having the right to other people's photos (case no. 10). Factuality, or rather the lack of it, is combined with the construction of a chaotic discourse and the disordered modality of the message. These processes support each other in a kind of techno-discursive process of defactualisation.

### **Imports**

The diagnosed imports can be divided into three main types: symbolic interpretation (nos. 1, 3, 6, 8, 9, 10), manipulation (linguistic and/or factual) (nos. 2, 4, 5, 7), and agitation (nos. 4, 9, 10). The key imports concern the causes of the Russian-Ukrainian war; the course of the war and individual events; the consequences of the war and the political decisions that accompanied it; complex theories, mainly conspiracy theories; and broader political and socio-cultural narratives.

Thus, we have, among other things, symbolic failures and the suggestion of the causes of war and broad globalist plans, linking, among other things, war, the pandemic, and other catastrophes. The authors



try to convince the audience of the “harmful activities” of Western states and the “legitimate intervention” of Russia. We also observe warnings against the sinister Ukrainians as threats to state sovereignty and Polish culture. Authors also call for action: defence of the Polish state and culture or, on the contrary, social or individual defence against the “hostile” state system.

### Contexts

Import is conveyed by placing statements and narratives in a specific context. Historical contexts, both distant in time (e.g., World War I and World War II), less distant in time (e.g., the Chernobyl nuclear disaster), near-contemporary (the Odessa crime of 2014), and both more local (e.g., the Polish census) and international (the Vietnam War) dominate the sample.

Numerous events from general history and Polish-Ukrainian history are cited. In the first case, events from World War I (the battles of Ypres) and World War II (the German attack on Poland), the Cold War (the East-West conflict), and the Iraq War appear. In the second case, we see the use of historical themes such as the history of the Cossack state in Ukraine and the murder of St Andrew Bobola, the crimes of genocide in Volhynia, and the history of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army during World War II.

Fake news about this war also uses three other contexts: cultural, conspiracy theoretical, and ideological. The cultural context is primarily based on stereotypes (e.g., Ukrainian-Bandera), symbols (e.g., the name of a ship as the name of the Russian capital; *onuca*, i.e., a type of Russian footwear as a synonym for collaborator), and motifs (e.g., Russia as liberator). The conspiracy theoretical context, on the other hand, locates the narrative in the broader perspective of global and local events, linking, e.g., the Russian-Ukrainian war and other spectacular or imagined events such as a pandemic, the functioning of bio-labs in Ukraine, the activities of global freemasonry, the hidden goals of the Polish census, the activities of the global government. The third category consists of ideological contexts. These include Nazism, including analogies of fascist Nazism and Ukrainian Nazism; nationalism (mainly linked to the activities of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army and Bandera); and anti-state-insurgency ideology, including incitement to activities against the authorities of one’s own state.

### **Possible narrative effects**

Placed in a specific context, the import is to produce a specific narrative effect. An analysis of the construction of fake news does not make it possible to directly determine the intentions, purpose, and strategy of the author. It does, however, make it possible to outline the potential effects of a message constructed in terms of content, modality, and technology, which is also distributed in a specific way.

The analysed fake news serves to spread interpretations and manipulations that are based on suggestions, justifications, warnings, and encouragement. The primary narrative effects are the building of an atmosphere of dislike, hatred, and sometimes disgust towards Ukrainians. The narrative of concern, fear, and horror can result in the awakening or intensification of various individual and societal fears and suspicions, which can also give rise to active opposition to the war support being provided.

The exhortation to adopt certain attitudes or carry out actions can be an assumption to effects far beyond those narrative and discursive. Decreased sensitivity and empathy may translate into reduced assistance to victims of war. Decreased trust may result in reduced support for action to defend the attacked state and its people. New interpretations of events, repeatedly reproduced and reinforced, can lead to changes in views within society and at the level of government, which in turn can exacerbate internal and external polarisation. In some cases, there can also be a potential blurring of the sense of responsibility and thus guilt, with potential implications for the course of political events during and after hostilities (e.g., in the case of the crime of genocide).

## **4. Discussion and conclusions**

● Chaos predominates in the fake news analysed; both linguistic, especially stylistic, which is intended to give more meaning and credibility to the statement and its content, as well as discursive. The latter is based on understatement, lack of data and/or sources and, most often, a combination of very different information and topics. Communication is also chaotic, making it unclear what is the essence of the message. The bluntness and exaltation make these efforts inept. As a result, it can be said that the narrative being constructed is

multithreaded, multifaceted, and sometimes incoherent, but based on a few constant elements: blurring (of facts, interpretation, communication), chaos, building an atmosphere of uncertainty, fear, hatred, and declining trust.

The results of the study confirmed the existence of different types of fake news. The most common type appeared to be a construct based on complete untruth. This applied to both textual, visual and audiovisual messages. The lack of proper linguistic construction in some cases appears to be important. This issue may influence the unmasking of fake news already at the level of its initial reception.

As a consequence of social media, fake war news is constructed in this way, and there is a blurring of discourse. It is overly complex and often chaotic. Also, due to the mixed nature of facts and lies, it is difficult to identify elements that are definitely false and definitely true.

The second consequence is the construction of a specific narrative. In the case of the Russian-Ukrainian war, this narrative is three-fold: fear, polarisation, and hatred. Fear is primarily concerned with the unethical behaviour of the Ukrainians and the consequences of the war for Poland as a neighbouring country providing aid to an attacked country. Polarisation is primarily about dividing Ukraine's allies and non-allies, both inside and outside Poland. Finally, the dislike, lack of empathy, or even hatred applies directly to the Ukrainian people, who, because of their difficult historical relations with the Polish people, are not supposed to deserve support.

The third consequence of fake news constructed in this way is the development of broader narratives into which the analysed fake news fits at the expense of other narratives, usually alternative ones. This involves raising doubts, redirecting attention, or denying the issue altogether. The aim is to fill the discursive space with specific content and tone of speech to achieve short-term or long-term strategic goals<sup>49</sup>.

The research conducted is characterised by sample size limitations; however, the aim was not to quantify the dominant discourses, but to qualitatively characterise the specifics of fake news concerning this war present in the Polish-speaking social media sphere. Enlarging the

49 A.V. Svintsytskiy et al., *Countering fake information as a guarantee of state information security*, "Security Journal" 2002, pp. 1-16.

sample could have significantly broadened the perspective and perhaps allowed other narrative effects to be isolated. However, the first six months of the war in the Polish-speaking social media sphere were dominated precisely by the discourse presented. The research needs to be continued. Furthermore, it can be extended to analyse the psychological, social, economic, and political effects of such constructed narratives. This is an area that should also be analysed in greater depth in the future, leading not only to conclusions of a cognitive nature, but also to practical recommendations.

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32. Tandoc E., Lim Z.W., Ling R., *Defining 'fake news': A typology of scholarly definition*, "Digital Journalism" 2017, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 137-153.
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## “But then the war started”: The value of diversity in editorial practices during times of war and crisis

„I wtedy zaczęła się wojna”: wartość różnorodności w praktykach redakcyjnych podczas wojny i kryzysu

**Abstract:** In this article, we analyse the impact of disruptive media events on the perceived value of diversity in editorial practices, with a specific focus on the Polish media debate following the onset of the Russian-Ukrainian war in February 2022. We do this based on a unique dataset derived from in-depth interviews with eight editors representing four different newsrooms conducted before, immediately after, and approximately one year after the start of the war. Our research answers the question of whether newsrooms can defend the value of diversity during the coverage of war and crisis. We also assess the impact of the changed geopolitical context, characterised by nation-building mobilisation and public sentiments of solidarity with Ukrainians, on editorial decisions to mute, delay, or opt out of publishing certain stories. We contribute to research on the epistemologies of journalistic news production during times of crisis, news diversity, and the role of the media in democratic societies.

**Keywords:** crisis, war, editorial practices, diversity in editorial practices, disruptive media event, value of diversity during times of crisis, Ukraine, media

**Streszczenie:** W artykule analizujemy wpływ dysrupcyjnych wydarzeń medialnych na postrzeganą wartość różnorodności w praktykach redakcyjnych, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem polskiej debaty medialnej po wybuchu wojny ukraińsko-rosyjskiej w lutym 2022 r. Robimy to w oparciu o unikalny zbiór danych, pochodzący z pogłębionych wywiadów z ośmioma redaktorkami i redaktorami reprezentującymi cztery różne redakcje, przeprowadzonych przed, bezpośrednio po i około rok po rozpoczęciu wojny. Nasze badanie odpowiada na pytanie, czy redakcje są w stanie obronić wartość różnorodności podczas relacjonowania wojny i kryzysu. Oceniamy także wpływ zmienionego kontekstu geopolitycznego, charakteryzującego się mobilizacją na rzecz „budo-

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wania narodu" i społecznym poczuciem solidarności z Ukraińcami, na decyzje redakcyjne o wyciszeniu, opóźnieniu lub rezygnacji z publikacji niektórych artykułów. Wnosimy wkład w badania nad epistemologią produkcji wiadomości w czasach wojny i kryzysu, ich różnorodnością oraz rolą mediów w społeczeństwach demokratycznych.

**Słowa kluczowe:** kryzys, wojna, praktyki redakcyjne, różnorodność w praktykach redakcyjnych, dysrupcyjne wydarzenia medialne, wartość różnorodności w czasach kryzysu, Ukraina, media

## Introduction

On 24 February 2022, Russia launched a full-scale military invasion of Ukraine. The biggest European invasion since World War II, it was referred to by Russia as a *special military operation to demilitarize and denazify* Ukraine, and left millions of Ukrainians displaced inside their own country or seeking refuge abroad<sup>1</sup>.

Polish society reacted to the situation with unprecedented speed and support. Within weeks the Polish government adopted a special law regulating the principles applicable to Ukrainian citizens in connection with the war, retrospectively effective from 24 February 2022<sup>2</sup>. From the start of the war, 13.75 million Ukrainian refugees have crossed the Polish-Ukrainian border<sup>3</sup>. Thousands of Poles volunteered to welcome refugees into their homes<sup>4</sup>. Similarly, the Polish media embraced and reinforced a message of solidarity, transforming both mainstream and social media platforms into arenas where rituals of compassion and unanimity took place<sup>5</sup>. For a short while, the dominant coverage in media aligned with Poland's new image of the *moral and material*

- 1 P. Kirby, *Has Putin's war failed and what does Russia want from Ukraine?*, BBC.com, 24 February 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-56720589>.
- 2 K. Schiffer, *Poland's answer to Ukrainians fleeing the Russian invasion*, International Bar Association, 22 April 2022, <https://www.ibanet.org/polands-response-to-ukrainians-fleeing-the-russian-invasion>.
- 3 *Aktualna sytuacja granicy ukraińsko-polskiej*, Ukrainians in Poland, 18 July 2023, <https://www.ukrainianinpoland.pl/how-many-ukrainians-have-crossed-the-ukrainian-polish-border-since-the-beginning-of-the-war-current-data-pl/>.
- 4 L. Tondo, W. Strzyżyńska, *We understand what war means: Poles rush to aid Ukraine's refugees*, The Guardian, 5 March 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/mar/05/poland-rush-to-aid-ukraine-refugees-russia-war>.
- 5 B. Erling, M. Kozielski, M. Niedbalski, *Atak Rosji na Ukrainę w polskich mediach. Reakcja na wojnę*, Press, 25 February 2022, [https://www.press.pl/tresc/69539,polskie-media-i-wojna\\_-inne-ramowki\\_-podcasty\\_-flaga-ukrainy-i-rezygnacja-z-rosyjskich-seriali](https://www.press.pl/tresc/69539,polskie-media-i-wojna_-inne-ramowki_-podcasty_-flaga-ukrainy-i-rezygnacja-z-rosyjskich-seriali).

*frontier for the West*<sup>6</sup>. The first cracks in this image began to emerge swiftly with stories of racism against non-white refugees at the Ukrainian border, Ukrainian women who, as victims of war rape, faced Poland's restrictive abortion law, or the government showing no support to groups offering assistance for LGBT+ refugees<sup>7</sup>.

Our aim in this paper is twofold. Firstly, most research examining media in the aftermath of disruptive events<sup>8</sup> primarily focuses on analysing content and textual elements<sup>9</sup>. In this article, we examine the transformation of editorial decisions and strategies of selected newsrooms to uphold the value of diversity in a period when a certain consensus or master narrative is expected to be conveyed by the media<sup>10</sup>. We contribute to the small but growing body of research that specifically investigates the choices and challenges faced by editors and journalists when dealing with the aftermath of major traumas<sup>11</sup>. Secondly, we look at the decision-practice processes used by editors to provide knowledge during times of war and crisis, while aiming to "diversify" the debate by bringing complementary or competing interpretations of the crisis into the public discourse<sup>12</sup>.

- 6 *Ukraine war hands Poland new international role*, France24.com, 21 February 2023, <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20230221-ukraine-war-hands-poland-new-international-role>.
- 7 See: A. Njai, M. Torres, M. Matache, *Ukraine: The Refugee Double Standard*. *Foreign Policy in Focus*, Foreign Policy in Focus, 15 March 2022, <https://fpif.org/ukraine-the-refugee-double-standard/>; A. Ferris-Rotman, *Ukraine's Women Refugees Face the Harsh Reality of Poland's Abortion Restrictions*, Time, 21 June 2022, <https://time.com/6188502/ukraine-women-poland-abortion-ban/>.
- 8 Disruptive events are traumatic, unwelcome by almost everyone and don't follow any script. They are mediated (broadcasted) but not ceremonial. They are described as the radical contrast to other media events, including transformative ones, see: G. Bolin, P. Ståhlberg, *Managing Meaning in Ukraine: Information, Communication, and Narration since the Euromaidan Revolution*, Cambridge 2023, p. 105, <https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/14147.001.0001>.
- 9 K. Riegert, E.-K. Olsson, *The importance of ritual in crisis journalism*, "Journalism Practice" 2007, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 143-158.
- 10 K. Thorbjørnsrud, T.U. Figenschou, *Consensus and dissent after terror: Editorial policies in times of crisis*, "Journalism" 2018, vol. 19, no. 3, pp. 333-348.
- 11 K. Thorbjørnsrud, T.U. Figenschou, *Consensus and dissent after terror...*; G. Bolin, P. Ståhlberg, *Managing Meaning in Ukraine...*; N. Uusitalo, K. Valaskivi, J. Sumiala, *Epistemic modes in news production: How journalists manage ways of knowing in hybrid media events involving terrorist violence*, "Journalism" 2022, vol. 23, no. 9, pp. 1811-1827, <https://doi.org/10.1177/14648849211015601>.
- 12 M. Ekström, S.C. Lewis, O. Westlund, *Epistemologies of digital journalism and the study of misinformation*, "New Media & Society" 2020, vol. 22, no. 2, pp. 205-212, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444819856914>; C. Callison, M.L. Young, *Reckoning: Journalism's Limits and Possibilities*, Journalism and Political Comm Unbound, Oxford 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190067076.001.0001>.

It must be stressed that the existence of master narratives or framing practices in journalism is not something journalists accept lightly, particularly when it is perceived as being at odds with objectivity<sup>13</sup>. Research discussing strategies adopted by the media which aim to provide “distinct” perspectives of the world while maintaining professional journalistic standards is scarce<sup>14</sup>. And while epistemological questions in journalism research continue to receive attention, studies looking at the ability of newsrooms to frame issues, actors, problems, and solutions “differently” while maintaining professional journalistic standards are critically needed. With this article, we fill that void by answering one major research question: How do disruptive media events affect the value of diversity in editorial practice?

## 1. Literature review

The crisis in journalism is increasingly discussed from the perspective of the epistemologies of journalistic news production. Issues related to power, structure, epistemological blind spots, gaps, and exclusions in journalism’s prevailing epistemology of objectivity are investigated under the overarching term of “diversity”<sup>15</sup>. Embracing it as an epistemology means valuing and incorporating diverse voices, viewpoints, and approaches in the pursuit of knowledge and truth<sup>16</sup>. However, studies looking at the ability of newsrooms to frame issues and actors, problems, and solutions “differently” while maintaining professional journalistic standards during disruptive media events are missing.

### Diversity in journalism as epistemology

Having a range of perspectives and opinions included in the media agenda is considered essential for a functioning democracy. This re-

13 J. Boesman, B. Van Gorp, *An Insidious Poison or a Door to the Story?*, “Journalism Practice” 2017, vol. 11, no. 5, pp. 559-576, DOI: 10.1080/17512786.2016.1159920.

14 See: S. Plaut, *Reshaping the Borders of Journalism*, “Journalism Practice” 2017, vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 1-32, DOI: 10.1080/17512786.2015.1092391.

15 C. Callison, M.L. Young, *Reckoning...: S. Steensen, Journalism’s epistemic crisis and its solution: Disinformation, datafication and source criticism*, “Journalism” 2019, vol. 20, no. 1, pp. 185-189, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884918809271>.

16 C. Callison, M.L. Young, *Reckoning...*

lies on the principles of representation, the availability of unbiased information, and opportunities for public discussions. Research on diversity in the media as such is approached from the perspective of multiple and varied media landscapes or complementary and competing interpretative repertoires and voices.

If the media landscape is not varied enough, complementary or competing viewpoints cannot find resonance, remain marginalised, or are represented as deviant in the mainstream public sphere<sup>17</sup>. In this context, Poland has been making international headlines since 2015 when the conservative United Right camp took power. On the one hand, a decline in public interest in news, together with a rise in government interference with independent media organisations, and declining standards of press freedom have been reported<sup>18</sup>. On the other hand, many editors and journalists who were either purged or resigned from their positions due to political interference with media freedom in Poland have opted to start independent ventures or collaborate to launch new media outlets. They are using crowdfunding campaigns and embracing emerging technologies to create a diverse and multifaceted media landscape<sup>19</sup>. Regarding diverse perspectives, including both in news sources and amongst journalistic staff, achieving diversity continues to be a challenge for the Polish news media. For instance, the representation of women in the news media has remained at approximately 27% since 1995. Additionally, the voices of minorities, including ethnic, sexual, and people with disabilities, are virtually absent in the news media, even in stories directly related to them<sup>20</sup>.

- 17 R.M. Entman, *Cascading activation: Contesting the White House's frame after 9/11*, "Political Communication" 2003, vol. 20, no. 4, pp. 415-432.
- 18 J.M. Stolarek, *Poland: Freedom of the press in free fall*, Heinrich Böll Foundation, 8 May 2020, <https://eu.boell.org/en/2020/05/08/poland-freedom-press-free-fall>; J. Wiseman, *Democracy Declining: Erosion of Media Freedom in Poland. Media Freedom Rapid Response (MFRR) Press Freedom Mission to Poland (November-December 2020)*, Mission Report, 11 February 2021, [https://ipi.media/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/20210211\\_Poland\\_PF\\_Mission\\_Report\\_ENG\\_final.pdf](https://ipi.media/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/20210211_Poland_PF_Mission_Report_ENG_final.pdf).
- 19 B. Erling, *As Polish public radio becomes politicised, presenters are creating independent crowd-funded alternatives*, Notes from Poland, 20 July 2020, <https://notesfrompoland.com/2020/07/20/as-polish-public-radio-becomes-politicised-presenters-are-creating-independent-crowdfunded-alternatives/>.
- 20 G. Gober, M. Ohia-Nowak, *Globalny Projekt Monitorowania Mediów 2022. Polska. Raport Krajowy*, Whomakesthenews.org, January 2022, <https://whomakesthenews.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/GMMP-POLSKA-2020.pdf>.

Research on strategies employed by journalists and editors to offer diverse perspectives while upholding professional journalistic standards is limited. Journalists who introduce alternative interpretative repertoires to the traditional newsroom, offering complementary or competing worldviews, often face accusations of bias or being labelled as activists<sup>21</sup>. Shayna Plaut's study of transnational people journalism demonstrates how the Saami and the Roma manage to develop robust journalistic practices that both preserve their distinct perspectives of the world while maintaining professional journalistic standards<sup>22</sup>.

### **Diversity in journalism as epistemology during times of war and crisis**

Katz and Liebes mention three types of disruptive events: terror, disaster, and war<sup>23</sup>. Three key phases are said to follow crisis and disaster reporting: immediate sense-making, ritualising, and transformation back to normalcy<sup>24</sup>. Existing research extensively covers the crucial role of mainstream media in the aftermath of disruptive events, particularly in the initial two phases of crisis reporting<sup>25</sup>. In this period, those who hold positions of power and influence play a crucial role in constructing and promoting master narratives that are next convened by the established news media to help people make sense of the events, and provide reassurance, explanation, and guidance<sup>26</sup>. As society finds its balance, so too do journalists reclaim their customary, expert, and diligent position as guardians of information and perceptive observers<sup>27</sup>.

21 C. Baden, N. Springer, *Conceptualizing viewpoint diversity in news discourse*, "Journalism" 2017, vol. 18, no. 2, pp. 176-194, <https://doi-org.ezp.sub.su.se/10.1177/1464884915605028>.

22 She uses the term "transnational" to refer to people who identify as belonging to the same group and/or nation yet span two or more states (ibid., p. 2).

23 E. Katz, T. Liebes, "No more peace!" *How disaster, terror and war have upstaged media events*, "International Journal of Communication" 2007, vol. 1, pp. 157-166, <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/44>.

24 K. Thorbjørnsrud, T.U. Figenschou, *Consensus and dissent after terror...*

25 K. Thorbjørnsrud, T.U. Figenschou, *Consensus and dissent after terror...*; K. Riegert, E.-K. Olsson, *The importance of ritual in crisis journalism...*; S. Waisbord, *Journalism, risk, and patriotism*, [in:] *Journalism after September 11*, B. Zelizer, S. Allan (eds.), London, New York 2002, pp. 201-219.

26 K. Thorbjørnsrud, T.U. Figenschou, *Consensus and dissent after terror...*, p. 335.

27 E. Zandberg, M. Neiger, *Between the nation and the profession: Journalists as members of contradicting communities*, "Media, Culture & Society" 2005, vol. 27, no. 1, pp. 131-141; H. Nosseck,

A limited body of research has discussed changes in professional principles within journalism and news media, as they strive to adapt to shifting sociopolitical contexts and evolving societal values in order to accommodate more diverse perspectives<sup>28</sup>. In the context of Poland, as the government gained international attention for actions such as refusing to comply with EU refugee quotas or tightening abortion laws, commercial media organizations have noticeably intensified their efforts to promote diversity. Unprecedented in the Polish media market, editorial statements like the one authored and signed by journalists from a prominent digital media outlet, have begun to be published, declaring:

*...freedom of non-public media has also been trembling in its positions. There is no reason why we should not speak out about it. We will continue to support our colleagues from other newsrooms in the face of any attack on freedom, independence, and media diversity, just as we have done so far. We will not only report on reality but also explain it – pointing out false statements, and deceptive theories. We will present as many perspectives as we discover, but you will also read our comments on current events. We want to share not only knowledge but also the opinions of our journalists. In the name of poorly understood objectivity, we do not want to stand between evil and good, denialism and ecology, unverified theories, and facts<sup>29</sup>.*

During disruptive events, journalists often assume more traditional roles as helpers, consolers, and organizers of expressions of solace and solidarity, in service to a society in crisis<sup>30</sup>. Lastly, a small body of research exists that specifically investigates choices and challenges faced by editors and journalists when dealing with the aftermath of major traumas. Thorbjørnsrud and Figenschou conducted in-depth interviews with debate editors in Norway in the aftermath of the Oslo

*"News media" – media events: Terrorist acts as media events, "Communications" 2008, vol. 33, no. 3, pp. 313-330.*

28 E. Zandberg, M. Neiger, *Between the nation and the profession...*

29 *Deklaracja redakcyjna*, Gazeta.pl, n.d., [https://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/o\\_nas/7,174552,27943986,nie-musimy-byc-pomiedzy-by-opisywac-rzeczywistosc-deklaracja.html](https://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/o_nas/7,174552,27943986,nie-musimy-byc-pomiedzy-by-opisywac-rzeczywistosc-deklaracja.html).

30 C. Kitch, *Mourning in America: Ritual, redemption, and recovery in news narrative after September 11*, "Journalism Studies" 2003, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 213-224; K. Riegert, E.-K. Olsson, *The importance of ritual in crisis journalism...*; E. Zandberg, M. Neiger, *Between the nation and the profession...*

terror attacks, to understand if and how editorial decisions were influenced by a perceived climate of public opinion, expressed through social media and online debates<sup>31</sup>. They stressed that existing research *has largely ignored the conflicting types of input and influences that mould any type of editorial process, epitomised in times of crisis*<sup>32</sup>. Additionally, Uusitalo et al. analysed how news organisations manage knowledge production during coverage of terrorist violence in Finland<sup>33</sup>.

## 2. Methodology

We write this article based on a unique dataset. We include an analysis of in-depth interviews conducted with editors of news media outlets in Poland who work with the objective of “diversifying” public debate with complementary or competing interpretations of the world<sup>34</sup>. In total, we conducted 16 interviews with eight editors-in-chief and editors representing four different newsrooms (six women and two men). Amongst the studied newsrooms are two liberal mainstream national media outlets, one digital local media outlet, one newly established crowdfunded media outlet, and one newly established news portal written by and for Ukrainians in Poland.

The interviews span a period of one month before the war (five interviews), two months after the outbreak of the war (eight interviews), and approximately one and a half years thereafter (three interviews). The 16 interviews, lasting approximately 60 to 90 minutes, were conducted by either one or two researchers using a semi-structured interview guide. In the analysis of the verbatim transcripts of the interviews, we followed the principles of grounded theory<sup>35</sup>. The analysis involved two coding phases; initial (open) and focused (theory-driven) coding, carried out by two researchers. To facilitate the theory-driven coding

31 K. Thorbjørnsrud, T.U. Figenschou, *Consensus and dissent after terror...*

32 *Ibid.*, p. 335.

33 N. Uusitalo, K. Valaskivi, J. Sumiala, *Epistemic modes in news production...*

34 Interviews were conducted as part of a project “Diversity management as innovation in journalism” (funded by Norway grants) which aims to study cases of innovative approaches to diversity management in journalism, launched by newsrooms in Poland, Sweden, and the United Kingdom with the objective of increasing newsrooms’ discursive diversity. The fieldwork for the study in Poland started in January 2022 and was interrupted by the military invasion of Ukraine by Russia on 24 February 2022. It was subsequently subsumed in March.

35 K. Charmaz, *Constructing grounded theory. 2nd edition*, Thousand Oaks 2014.

phase, we used N-Vivo software. To protect the anonymity of the interviewed editor-in-chief and editors, we have changed their names.

## 3. Analysis

### The value of diversity in editorial practices before the war

#### Moral, political, and reputational value of diversity

The value of diversity was defined by editors of media organisations participating in the study as a journalistic principle of enhancing and enabling a diverse public debate. Above all, however, interviews revealed a clear value-laden approach to diversity.

The interviewees emphasised that diversity was a moral imperative, *the right thing to do*, with human rights and dignity at the core of their editorial and managerial decisions. Iwona, a journalist with 16 years of experience and currently heading two large editorial teams in a major Polish digital media outlet, explained that creating space for marginalised and discriminated individuals involves representing their voices in a way that challenges prejudice and stereotypes. For media-facilitated debates to be considered *just*, they not only need to include marginalised voices and combat prejudice but must also take a moral stance against views that challenge human dignity and rights. According to all interviewees, this stance was considered modern, transcending traditional journalistic standards and representing a novelty, even a revolution, in Poland. Iwona describes how the diversity strategy she was tasked with developing by her company aimed to revolutionise their brand:

*It relates not only to language but also to communication style, selection of topics, and discussing stereotypes, which is particularly important in Poland. I'm working on a sort of revolution to modernize (our company).*

Marta, with a quarter-century of experience in the Polish news media, now serving as a Program Director at one of the well-established digital mainstream media outlets, points out that openly endorsing liberal values is a recent development in Poland. Such declarations are not commonly practised by journalists in the country due to *outdated views on objectivity such as giving voice to both sides even if they say*



*nonsense and quoting such statements without commentary.* Therefore, advocating for diversity necessitates a redefined journalistic standard that is unafraid of emotions, normative declarations, and transcends the traditionally understood value of “impartiality”. Joanna, the deputy editor-in-chief at one of the recently established crowdfunded media outlets in Poland, explains:

*We openly advocate certain values such as human rights. You would not see fascists invited to a debate here..., we are inflexible when it comes to our core values, and we will not give equal weight to both sides of the argument.*

The highly polarized political situation in Poland before the war, marked by The United Right camp’s assaults on non-public media and the propagation of hate campaigns against specific societal groups such as immigrants, the LGBT+ community, and women’s abortion rights<sup>36</sup>, also meant that the significance of diversity became political. Joanna describes how her company addresses diversity through the lens of exclusion and discrimination and adds that:

*When PiS (Law and Justice Party)<sup>37</sup> started its hate campaign against the LGBT community, it was a direct impulse for us to cover it more extensively.*

There was also a conviction that audiences and journalists select their media based on the values they resonate with. Therefore, openly declaring one’s values and taking a stand on certain issues was seen as beneficial for both the outlet’s audiences and its employees. Justyna, one of the younger editors interviewed, explains:

*My current boss is also very understanding and attentive to the needs of her employees; she is always on our side. I believe that if the work environment is friendly, open, and responsive to people’s needs, diversity will thrive.*

36 P. Pacewicz, J. Szymczak, *Homofobia PiS. Jak rozbudzali nienawiść do LGBT prezydent, prezes, ministrowie, poslowie*, OKO.press, 28 July 2019, <https://oko.press/homofobia-pis-jak-rozbudzali-nienawisc-do-lgbt-prezydent-prezes-ministrowie-poslowie-33-cytaty>; *Grabiec: Temat imigrantów pogrąży PiS*, Rp.pl, 5 July 2023, <https://www.rp.pl/polityka/art38698271-grabiec-temat-imigrantow-pograzyl-pis>.

37 Law and Justice (PiS) is the biggest party in The United Right camp.

### Editorial practices and decisions to uphold the value of diversity

Editorial practices and decisions aimed at upholding the value of diversity are, however, flexible, particularly when the role of the audiences and the type of publications are taken into account. In the context of audiences, flexibility pertained largely to a newsroom’s openness towards their expectations and feedback. Diversity was defended on the one hand as a value that educates and broadens the audience’s horizons, tames their social fears and phobias. On the other hand, it was said to respond and respect the audiences’ sometimes very progressive and sometimes very conservative expectations. Editors walked a fine line between what they or the audiences perceived as *inclusive* or as *ideological* and *confusing*. In such moments, they referred to diversity as a dialogue and agreed that it was not always easy to manage. Marta explained that context was always decisive in such discussions. For example, when writing a guidebook for parents on how to provide psychological support to children potentially affected by depression, the decision was to prioritize clarity:

*We had discussions about whether to introduce the non-binary language (in the guidebook). Ultimately, we decided against its inclusion. We felt that because this was intended as a basic manual and a first aid, it would be premature to divert the (parents’) attention with additional clarifications on the concept of non-binary. Many people don’t understand this, and we don’t want to disorient our readers, as well as other journalists. (Marta)*

In the context of the type of publication, the balance between market expectations and the needs of democracy was evident in editorial discussions and decisions. All the interviewees were convinced that certain articles should be written, regardless of whether they generate clicks or website traffic. These texts were referred to as identity-driven, mission-driven, premium, or niche, but they shared a common characteristic: they were consistent with the values the outlet aimed to align with. For instance, Iwona explains:

*We have a pool of topics that are important to us. We know that we need to publish them, and we want to. Whether they will be widely read or not doesn’t really affect our decision to commission them. These texts may not generate much rev-*

*enue, but our approach is such that it doesn't matter. Other articles will compensate for them financially, while these articles are essential for ideological reasons.*

Emotional or moral engagement with a story often meant opposing market pressure as well as resisting the practice of writing content solely for algorithms or for the sake of SEO<sup>38</sup>. Iwona emphasized that there are certain topics that require thoughtful and well-executed writing. If the newsroom lacks the resources to do them justice, it's better not to cover them at all. One example of balancing the value of diversity against market pressures is the use of inclusive language. This language sets the outlet apart from other media (as per the declaration of the value of diversity). However, in practice, it does not always align with the demands imposed on newsrooms by SEO departments. Marta explains how her newsroom had to negotiate a working model with their SEO department, agreeing on when and where to compromise and where to prioritise inclusive language:

*Writing with SEO optimisation in mind means writing like everyone else. However, as we've chosen to distinguish ourselves through our language, our SEO department often wants to murder us. Today, we have a better understanding of which news stories are genuinely worth the struggle, and the SEO department now accepts our arguments that it can't harm our image and needs to align with our declaration on linguistic progressiveness.*

Crucially, all interviewees believed that their capacity to defend editorial decisions for their diversity values was only possible due to the publisher's agreement on this. This provided a level of comfort to the editors, which they found *very cool*, and it ensured that the sales and marketing departments tended to work with them in tandem, rather than against them.

**38** SEO (search engine optimisation) refers to processes that aim to improve the outlet's website visibility in search engines, whenever people search for certain keywords that are currently trending on the web.

## Analysis: The value of diversity in editorial practices after the start of the war

### The moral and political value of diversity

All interviewees agreed that the value of diversity in their editorial work did not change following the war. The role their outlet needed to assume in the new geopolitical situation was clear. Similar to the period *before the war*, editors primarily aimed to defend human rights, challenge prejudice and stereotypes, including by mitigating potential hostility towards Ukrainians, and toning down negative aspects of the debate on Ukrainian refugees in the country. This responsibility to challenge prejudice and stereotypes aligned with the editors' conviction that it was their role to reshape the image of Ukrainians in Poland. Historically, Ukrainian immigration to Poland was predominately for economic reasons, and Poles were accustomed to Ukrainians working in service roles<sup>39</sup>. The new wave of immigration included affluent, well-educated people with a strong command of English, for whom Poland was not necessarily the last or desired destination. Joanna explains:

*We need to debunk stories that all Ukrainians are poor, and we only offer them pity-work. We need to create a new image of Ukrainians in Poland. That they are regular people, just like us, meaning that there are both wealthy and poor individuals among them.*

The responsibility to mitigate negative aspects of the debate on Ukrainian refugees in the country manifested in editorial decisions to censor or delay discussions about historical and problematic events between the Polish and Ukrainian nations. The argument of certain voices and debates being untimely, inappropriate, or inconsiderate was highly visible. Julia, editor-in-chief of a newly established portal written by and for Ukrainians in Poland, explains:

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39 A. Anagnostopulu, *Migranci ekonomiczni, czyli kto?*, Business Insider, 29 November 2021, <https://businessinsider.com.pl/gospodarka/migranci-ekonomiczni-czyli-kto-oto-warunki-zycia-osob-ktore-szukaja-w-polsce/258xs64>.

*There are people who want to write about the tragedy in Volhynia. It's a very difficult topic, and it's not wise to discuss it now. It's not a good moment. What matters is the present. Now, Ukrainians and Poles are friends, and that is important. We have a common enemy.*

Solidarity with Ukrainians meant that Polish editors agreed that the newly established digital portals, written by and for Ukrainians in Poland, were essentially a *Ukrainian kingdom*. Marta explains:

*Ukrainians shape the narrative there. It's quite evident, you can see it in the language, in the narrative, somewhat reminiscent of wartime propaganda. So, when we promote texts written by Ukrainians on our main page, we need to tone down emotional titles to ensure our (Polish) readers receive the information first. But on their page, it's a Ukrainian kingdom. For now, at least. They write what they need.*

Interviews conducted in 2023 confirmed a shift in this dynamic. The portal for Ukrainians remains active, but the Polish publisher has assumed greater control, including by changing its editor-in-chief. This was explained by the need to ensure professional journalistic standards were upheld and less space was given to wartime propaganda. Justyna clarifies:

*Information (published on the Ukrainian portal) is very challenging to verify, really. The whole situation is complicated by the fact that, of course, Russians have their propaganda, but the Ukrainians also have their own propaganda. This is understandable because this war is also being fought on the information front. But as journalists, editors, and publishers, we must acknowledge this reality, and there's some sort of a mental and moral barrier here. Some of us don't want to see Ukrainian propaganda. It's clear that we're on Ukraine's side, but this seems to close some journalistic eyes to the fact that it's also necessary to verify what Ukrainians are reporting.*

### **Editorial practices and decisions to uphold the value of diversity**

Editorial practices and decisions aiming to uphold the value of diversity continued to be flexible. The changed geopolitical context affected the way diversity was defended and argued. This was particularly evident when decisions on certain publications and the changed role

of the audiences were considered. In this new context, editorial diversity decisions were influenced by the climate of nation-building, heightened mobilization, and strong public solidarity sentiment with the Ukrainian nation. Anyone who disagreed or presented deviant voices that Poland was doing great work helping Ukrainians was often labelled as "anti-Polish".

Editors faced dilemmas regarding the publication of stories that were otherwise aligned with the newsroom's diversity values. Examples include reporting on hate speech against Russian residents in Poland, exploring the nature of Russian propaganda *so that people understand why Russians don't protest the war so much* (Joanna), and shedding light on the mistreatment of non-white immigrants at the Ukrainian-Polish and Belarus-Polish borders. Joanna, whose newsroom had previously covered the situation at the Polish-Belarusian<sup>40</sup> border, grappled with a feeling of incongruity when covering the help Poles offered to refugees arriving at the Polish-Ukrainian border:

*... suddenly the border was at the centre of media attention, and we were all so very awesome because we helped. At the same time, others are still there, trapped and dying (at the Polish-Belarus border). We write about the Polish-Belarusian border all the time, but I admit that in the beginning, it was very difficult. It was like poking a hornet's nest. Here everyone was saying how great Poles are, how much we help Ukrainians and here I wanted to scream, yes, it's all great, but!* (Joanna).

The anti-Polish arguments are not new in Poland. The right-wing government's previous attempts to discredit and editorially control privately-owned media often relied on *foreign* and *anti-Polish* arguments<sup>41</sup>. However, in the context of the war, these accusations began to influence how the value of diversity was weighted against the outlet's reputation and well-being. Here, Iwona describes a situation when a different newsroom from her outlet wrote a story based on a survey conducted on Instagram. They asked young Poles if they would be will-

40 The humanitarian crisis on the Poland-Belarus border has deepened significantly since September 2021, see: Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, *Situation on the Polish-Belarusian border*, 5 January 2022, <https://hfhf.pl/en/news/situation-on-the-polish-belarusian-border>.

41 W. Czuchnowski, K. Korzeniowska, *Poland's free media is shrinking*, International Press Institute, 3 February 2022, <https://ipi.media/polands-free-media-is-shrinking-gazeta-wyborcza/>.

ing to fight if Poland were attacked and apparently, a large proportion of those who participated in the survey said they wouldn't:

*This story became a story about us in state-controlled media and a major controversy, accusing us of being anti-Polish. After this, I felt there was a lot of pressure also on me, on everything we publish in my newsrooms. I was instructed (by superiors) to make sure we don't spread fear, that we monitor our sources closely, that we don't spread fake news (Iwona).*

Lack of resources, time constraints, concerns about fake news, and fear of being manipulated by Russian trolls meant that editors were more likely to opt-out or delay publishing certain stories. One example, cited by a few of the interviewees, was a story about rape crimes committed against Ukrainian women by Russian soldiers. The time needed to build relationships with Ukrainian journalists and establish trust with sources meant that the story was delayed in Poland. Joanna explains:

*The topic we neglected due to staff shortages is the wartime rape of Ukrainian women. Now, we are picking up on these stories with the help of Ukrainian journalists. This is also a way to include the Ukrainian perspective in our work, by hiring journalists from Ukraine. They have different contacts and can provide different angles to news stories.*

Iwona similarly explained that she was concerned about being exposed to fake news and chose not to publish stories if she wasn't completely certain about their sources. Other editors confirmed feeling frustrated over a lack of resources and the deluge of fake news, including opinions from laypeople who believed the crisis was the perfect moment to initiate discussions about media credibility. Here, Marta explains:

*We fell for one of these fakes, and the consequences were very harsh. It involved a guy from a reality show who faked his own death, labelling it as a social experiment to expose how the media work. So now, we not only have to deal with armies of trolls but also with these self-proclaimed "Robin Hoods" who try to prove that the media are unreliable. It creates immense pressure on us, and it's an un-*

*pleasant situation because we strive to inform as objectively as possible, yet we feel like no one believes us.*

The new geopolitical context also influenced the newsroom's approach towards their own audiences. Editors were more inclined to disable comment sections and disregard letters written by *God knows who* (as mentioned by Marta) rather than actively engage their audiences in diverse discussions. As Ewelina explained, *sometimes it's simply not necessary to let everyone talk*. Iwona added that the views spread on social media were much more likely to be muted by her newsroom. For a while, they even opted out of actively scouting social media for stories.

*I believe we handled that situation effectively. There were many refugees in Warsaw, so I told my reporters to simply go out and cover their stories, and focus on genuine human stories, to bring the human dimension of war closer to the audience. We didn't take anything from social media (Ewelina).*

## Conclusions

Our study found that disruptive media events, in particular war and crisis, influence the value of diversity in editorial practices.

What remained constant was the newsroom's commitment to the value of diversity, seen as a moral and ethical stance with human rights and dignity at the core of the editorial and managerial decisions. Prior research has shown that newsrooms reporting on disruptive media events undergo an adaptation phase where the need for flexibility in response to new circumstances is evident in their operations<sup>42</sup>. Similarly, in the immediate aftermath of the war in Ukraine, editors in Poland had to shift their focus from their usual topics and instead work tirelessly to provide real-time information and adapt their coverage to the unfolding events. Many interviewees noted that their editorial work underwent changes, with an increased emphasis on live coverage, news stories, investigative reporting, and a focus on hiring war

42 K. Thorbjørnsrud, T.U. Figenschou, *Consensus and dissent after terror...*



correspondents. New diversity initiatives, campaigns, and editorial plans had to be postponed or modified to address the current circumstances. However, even during the “repair work” phase, the value of diversity remained high among the editorial staff, although disagreement and dissenting voices appeared to receive less journalistic attention than before the war.

The perceived climate of public and political opinion, as expressed through social media and online debates, with nation-building exceptional mobilisation and strong public solidarity sentiment with the Ukrainian nation, influenced editorial decisions to opt-out or delay publishing certain stories or mute certain audience voices. This restricted flexibility of editors to engage dissenting voices appears to be a significant change in the editorial practices of newsrooms that otherwise declare a commitment to valuing diversity. However, even before the war, flexibility in editorial diversity decisions was evident.

Before the war, the value of diversity was often measured against market forces and audience expectations. Editors agreed that the publication of certain stories could be postponed or delayed if the newsroom lacked the resources to do them justice. Similarly, there was also a shared agreement that giving space to voices not allied with the newsroom’s core values was not a definition of good journalism. *Quoting nonsense* is not what journalism is about, we were told. However, in the new geopolitical context, the enthusiasm for *publishing against the current* appeared to be tempered, and newsrooms seemed to temporarily opt out of allowing certain voices to flourish. The value of diversity remained important to educate and broaden the audience’s horizons and mitigate social fears and phobias. However, due to resource constraints, fear of fake news, and concerns about trolls, newsrooms were more inclined to mute views circulating on social media and refrained from actively scouting social media for stories.

The ability of the studied newsrooms to frame issues, actors, problems, and solutions differently while upholding professional journalistic standards was influenced by the new geopolitical context. During times of war and crisis, practices and decisions used by editors to provide relevant, accurate, and verified public knowledge took precedence over “diversity”. Decisions to introduce complementary or competing interpretations of the crisis into public discourse were delayed due to resource constraints, time limitations, fear of fake news, and

concerns about manipulation by Russian trolls. However, as newsrooms regained stability, built new contacts, and established trusted sources, their enthusiasm for providing diverse perspectives in their coverage and enabling complementary or competing opinions to be heard was rekindled.

One limitation of our research is the relatively small number of interviews conducted and the limited number of newsrooms represented. However, given the thematic scope of the study and the timing of the conducted interviews, the data obtained is unique, and expanding it could be challenging, if not impossible. Nevertheless, future studies examining newsrooms' capacity to uphold the value of diversity during the coverage of disruptive media events could broaden the scope of this research by incorporating content analysis. This approach would provide a more data-rich analysis of how editorial diversity is affected during times of war and crisis.

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# The spread of Russian disinformation within the Ukrainian information field

Rozprzestrzenianie rosyjskiej dezinformacji w ukraińskim polu informacyjnym

**Abstract:** The objective of this study is to identify and analyse the methods of disinformation utilized by Russia to disseminate information in the Ukrainian information field. The main tasks include defining the concept of disinformation and explaining its societal dangers, characterising Information-Psychological Operations (IPSO) as a component of Russia's disinformation campaign against Ukraine and investigating the most prevalent elements utilised by Russia in the dissemination of disinformation. This study is aimed at the synthesis and combination of methods of monitoring, content analysis, and comparative analysis.

The article selects publications that exhibit disinformation targeted at Ukrainian society. Disinformation propagated by Russia is subsequently refuted by either foreign or Ukrainian publications, including the “NotaEnota” organisation. The study reveals that Russian disinformation aims to propagate specific narratives and manipulate mass consciousness. Disinformation involves intentionally creating misleading and manipulative content, often in the form of artificially created fakes.

The information field of Ukraine has become the primary battleground for Russia's hybrid warfare tactics, which include disinformation, propaganda, and fakes. To effectively counter these tactics, society needs to develop critical thinking skills and media literacy to discern and evaluate information critically. Future research aims to delve deeper into the methods employed in creating disinformation, their objectives, and potential strategies to prevent or counteract their influence.

**Keywords:** disinformation, fake news, media literacy, information war, propaganda, manipulation

**Streszczenie:** Celem pracy jest identyfikacja i analiza metod dezinformacji wykorzystywanych przez Rosję do rozpowszechniania informacji w ukraińskim

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polu informacyjnym. Do głównych zadań należy zdefiniowanie pojęcia dezinformacji i wyjaśnienie jej społecznych zagrożeń, scharakteryzowanie Operacji Informacyjno-Psychologicznych (IPSO) jako elementu rosyjskiej kampanii dezinformacyjnej przeciwko Ukrainie oraz zbadanie najbardziej rozpowszechnionych elementów wykorzystywanych przez Rosję w rozpowszechnianiu dezinformacji. W artykule mamy syntezę i połączenie metod monitoringu, analizy treści i analizy porównawczej.

W artykule wybrano publikacje prezentujące dezinformację wymierzoną w społeczeństwo ukraińskie. Dezinformacje propagowane przez Rosję są następnie obalane przez zagraniczne lub ukraińskie publikacje, w tym organizację „NotaE-nota”. Z badania wynika, że rosyjska dezinformacja ma na celu propagowanie określonych narracji i manipulowanie masową świadomością. Dezinformacja polega na celowym tworzeniu wprowadzających w błąd i manipulacyjnych treści, często w postaci sztucznie stworzonych podróbek.

Pole informacyjne Ukrainy stało się głównym polem bitwy rosyjskiej taktyki wojny hybrydowej, która obejmuje dezinformację, propagandę, podróbki. Aby skutecznie przeciwdziałać tym taktykom, społeczeństwo musi rozwinąć umiejętności krytycznego myślenia i umiejętności korzystania z mediów, aby móc krytycznie oceniać i rozróżniać informacje. Przyszłe badania mają na celu głębsze zgłębienie metod wykorzystywanych do tworzenia dezinformacji, ich celów i potencjalnych strategii zapobiegania lub przeciwdziałania ich wpływowi.

**Słowa kluczowe:** dezinformacja, fake news, umiejętność korzystania z mediów, wojna informacyjna, propaganda, manipulacja

## Introduction

Using propaganda, Russia wants to achieve the desired goals by promoting its narratives in Ukrainian society and the media environment. Until 24 February 2022, these channels of information transmission were not only social networks or online media but also digital television. After the full-scale invasion, President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky signed a decree enacting the decision of the National Security and Defence Council to impose sanctions against MP Taras Kozak from the Opposition Platform – For Life faction, who is accused of promoting terrorism and cooperation with Russia, as well as eight legal entities: 112 Ukraine, NewsOne, Zik, and regional broadcasters of the 112 Ukraine channel<sup>1</sup>. After the start of Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine, disinformation has most often been spread through groups in Telegram or Viber messengers or social networks such as Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram<sup>2</sup>.

1 O. Комарова, *Вимкнули «канали Медведчука»: перші пояснення та реакції соцмережах*, Радіо, 03 February 2021, <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/kanal-medvedchuk-sankciy-zelenskiy-tv-112-zik-newsone-zaborona/31082909.html> [3.02.2021].

2 А. Романюк, *Інформаційні вкиди російсько-української війни*, РЦСП, НотаЄнота 2022.

In the article *Ukraine and the beginning of a non-linear war*, Michael Weiss and Peter Pomerantsev argue that “In Russia and eastern Ukraine, where Russian television is popular, Kremlin political technologists have managed to create a parallel reality in which ‘fascists’ have seized power in Kyiv, ethnic Russians in eastern Ukraine are in mortal danger, and the CIA is at war with Moscow”<sup>3</sup>.

The relevance of the topic lies in the need to study the spread of Russian disinformation in the Ukrainian information field and the scientific understanding of the strategies, methods, and tools used by Russian propagandists to spread disinformation in Ukraine. As the researcher Alyona Romanyuk notes, “The goals of the Russian IPSO are aimed at providing their troops with optimal conditions for taking control of Ukrainian territories, that is, doing everything so that the Ukrainians stop resisting the Russian invaders”<sup>4</sup>. These operations are based on fakes, disinformation, propaganda narratives, etc. In the study, we will consider in detail the phenomena of IPSO and information injection, which carry great danger.

## 1. What is disinformation and why is it dangerous

● The information field is an evolving and dynamic ecosystem that is constantly developing. It is a collection of information that is continuously updated and used by individuals, media, organisations, governments, or institutions funded by a particular state. Some objects broadcast their messages on digital media platforms, social networks, messengers, websites, television, and other communication channels. This information is not always true and accurate. Often, these communication channels are intended to spread false or misleading information.

In the Ukrainian information field, Russian disinformation and propaganda campaigns are often aimed at exploiting weaknesses in human consciousness<sup>5</sup> and social structures. They use certain tactics

3 П. Помаранцев, *Україна і початок «нелінійної війни»*, “Критика” 2015, vol. 1-2, no. 207-208, pp. 14-23.

4 А. Романюк, *Інформаційні вкиди російсько-української війни...*

5 І. Штогрін, *«Ядерна війна проти розуму»: як російська дезінформація і пропаганда діє проти України, НАТО і Заходу? Радіо Свобода*, 15 July 2021, <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/protydiyarosyys'kiy-propahandi-dezinformatsiyi/31357962.html> [15.07.2021].



to create misleading narratives, manipulate emotions, spread fabricated pseudo “crimes” and strengthen existing<sup>6</sup> divisions in society. These campaigns often use technical means such as the use of bots, trolls, artificial intelligence, group chats in messengers, and fake accounts to simulate<sup>7</sup> support for a particular artificially created message. The purpose of such Russian disinformation attacks is hybrid warfare<sup>8</sup>. The information field is a certain dimension of the war that Russia has been waging against Ukraine for several decades<sup>9</sup>. Bellingcat investigators noted that “On February 23, on Russia’s military holiday and two days after Russian president Vladimir Putin recognized the independence of the self-proclaimed DNR and LNR, most key Ukrainian government institutions had their websites attacked in a presumed DDoS campaign. As of 16:30 Kyiv time, the websites of the Ukrainian parliament, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Council of Ministers, (including all individual ministerial sites), and the Security Service of Ukraine, were all unreachable (the website of the Council of Ministers was brought back online at approximately 17:10 local time; most other sites came online within two hours of the attack). One website that was not affected by the attack as of this time was the site of the Office of the President of Ukraine”<sup>10</sup>. In this way, Russian hackers wanted to sow panic among the population of Ukraine, spread false information, including an A.I. generated video in which President Volodymyr Zelensky called for surrender, and also paralyze the work of state institutions<sup>11</sup>. Another goal of such hacker attacks was to create a certain informational vacuum; “an informational vacuum is an artificially created state of total or partial lack of information in a certain

6 <https://www.state.gov/fact-vs-fiction-russian-disinformation-on-ukraine/>.

7 [http://politicus.od.ua/5\\_2022/11.pdf](http://politicus.od.ua/5_2022/11.pdf).

8 В. Міський, *Плутанина, розбрат, маніпуляції. Як дезінформація впливає на війну в Україні та на інші регіони*, Детектор медіа, 08 March 2023, <https://detector.media/infospace/article/208708/2023-03-08-plutanyna-rozbrat-manipulyatsii-yak-dezinformatsiya-vplyvaie-na-viynu-v-ukraini-ta-na-inshi-regiony/> [8.03.2023].

9 *Інформаційне поле – це вимір війни. Україні варто активніше битися на цьому полі бою*, – аналітик ISW, Texty.org.ua, 18 September 2022, <https://texty.org.ua/fragments/107269/informacijne-pole-ce-vymir-vijny-ukrayini-varto-aktyvnishe-bytysya-na-comu-poli-boyu-analytyk-isw/> [18.07.2022].

10 *Attack on Ukrainian government websites linked to GRU hackers – bellingcat*, b.d., bellingcat, <https://www.bellingcat.com/news/2022/02/23/attack-on-ukrainian-government-websites-linked-to-russian-gru-hackers/> [b.d.].

11 А. Романюк, *Інформаційні вкиди російсько-української війни...*

field, on a certain territory, or about certain events”<sup>12</sup>. An information vacuum is very dangerous because the lack of official information as well as increased public interest in the topic, creates a need to search for information. At that time, Russians began to spread fake information. According to researcher Alyona Romaniuk, “To create informational chaos, the occupiers not only created new fakes using current news stories but also spread nonsense from several years ago. For example, a fake that a virus downloaded under the guise of updating instant messengers hacks the phone. This message was sent and resent by representatives of various departments and institutions since the beginning of this piece of news is disguised in official style”<sup>13</sup>.

The information field in Ukraine and in the world is characterised by its interconnected nature. Disinformation and propaganda spread rapidly across platforms and communities, most often through viral messages. Grigory Pocheptsov notes: “The information space is filled naturally and artificially. We will consider ‘natural’ to be the actions of individuals, artificial – the actions of organisations that, with stronger capabilities, can drown out any individual information interventions, while repeatedly strengthening their own. However, when organisations spread fakes, they model their actions as individuals”<sup>14</sup>.

However, Russia’s disinformation campaign and its propaganda still resonate online. According to a 2020 USAID-Internews survey on news consumption by recipients, social networks come first. They provide an overwhelming majority of 62% of respondents. In second place is television (52%), and in third place are news sites. Social networks were in the first place because information spreads very quickly. In general, through Facebook, YouTube, Viber, and Telegram, a large share of all fake news and propaganda is spread and, as a result, the population is manipulated<sup>15</sup>.

12 I. Підпригора, *Умови та чинники впливу на організацію інформаційно-пропагандистського забезпечення військово-моральних сил збройних сил України у 2014 році*, “Військово-науковий вісник” 2018, vol. 29, pp. 216-229, <https://doi.org/10.33577/2313-5603.29.2018.216-229>.

13 А. Романюк, *Інформаційні вкиди російсько-української війни...*

14 *Як інформація замінює нам мізки*, АУП, б.д., <https://www.aup.com.ua/yak-informaciya-zaminyuie-nam-mizki/> [б.д.].

15 <https://internews.in.ua/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/2020-Media-Consumption-Survey-FULL-FIN-Ukr-1.pdf>.

The concept of manipulative propaganda is considered by Vasyl Lyzanchuk in his textbook *Information security of Ukraine: Theory and practice*. The scientist notes that hostile manipulation is a type of spiritual, psychological impact that requires considerable skill and knowledge. The ideological machine uses the mental structures of the human personality and uses special formats of manipulative propaganda such as the “rotten herring” method, that is, the media pick up false accusations that are aimed at causing wide public discussion<sup>16</sup>. Such false accusations were spread by the Russian authorities stating that fascists seized power in Ukraine and the state was ruled by a junta<sup>17,18</sup>.

## 2. IPSO as part of a disinformation campaign

One of the methods of spreading Russian disinformation is IPSO – information and psychological operation. These are certain planned actions to transmit specific information, the purpose of which is to influence emotions, actions, and critical thinking<sup>19</sup>. As a result – they impact each individual, and on certain organisations or even power structures. This is one type of military campaign. Such operations can be conducted at several levels at once such as tactical, strategic, and operational. IPSO usually precedes a full-scale military invasion or armed confrontation. Researcher of information security and Russian propaganda Ben Nimo identified 4 main components of disinformation campaigns – dismiss, distract, distort, dismay. First of all, Russian propagandists try to deny the truth and facts (dismiss). They also distract attention and accuse (distract), distort facts (distort), intimidate, and cause panic and anxiety (dismay)<sup>20</sup>.

Most often, IPSO is launched in such a way that it can be further distributed through ordinary Internet users or television viewers to

16 В. Лизанчук, *Інформаційна безпека України: теорія і практика*, Львів 2017.

17 *Хунта, птахи з вірусами і Україна Леніна: спростовуємо міфи російської пропаганди, Християни для України*, б.д., <https://сду.org.ua/hunta-ptahy-z-virusamy-i-ukrayina-lenina-sprostovuyemo-mify-rosijskoji-propagandy/> [б.д.].

18 П. Помаранцев, *Україна і початок «нелінійної війни»*, “Критика” 2015, vol. 1-2, no. 207-208, pp. 14-23.

19 *Що таке ІПСО, чому важливо це знати і які операції зараз проводить Росія проти України*, Український тиждень, б.д., <https://tyzhden.ua/shcho-take-ipso-chomu-vazhlyvo-tse-znaty-i-yaki-operatsii-zaraz-provodyt-rosiia-proty-ukrainy/> [б.д.].

20 А. Романюк, *Інформаційні вкиди російсько-української війни...*

other people. Artificially launched information goes viral. That is, it represents certain information, data, facts, or details that are skilfully transformed into an emotional code which, in turn, causes a certain emotional reaction, message, or stimulus to appeal as well as motivation<sup>21</sup>.

An example of artificially launched information that caused strong emotions among the population can be seen in a video with Marina Ovsyannikova<sup>22</sup>, who appeared on Russian television on 14 March 2022, with a poster in support of Ukraine. This video was created specifically to distract attention from the shooting of a civilian resident of Zhytomyr region by a Russian tank, the introduction of another number of sanctions against Russia as well as intensive missile attacks on Ukraine's civilian infrastructure. The video with Ovsyannikova instantly spread on social networks and got into foreign media. This is exactly what Russian propagandists were counting on because the main attention was attracted to the English words "No war", written on the poster held by Ovsyannikova. Thus, a logical question arises – Who is the inscription on the poster designed for? In addition, it is very difficult to break into the studio where the news is recorded, because there is security at the entrance, and the doors are usually closed.

It is unfortunate that with the destruction of Ukrainian cities by Russian missiles, the killing of civilians, and the horrors perpetrated by the Russian army in Ukraine, this production is being discussed on social media<sup>23</sup>. This manipulation had other implications. It is still actively used to promote the narrative of "good Russians", of Putin's exclusive guilt rather than the collective guilt of Russians, and of Russians as "the same" victims of Putin's regime as Ukrainians.

21 М. Кіца, *Фейкова інформація в українських соціальних медіа: поняття, види, вплив на аудиторію*, "Наукові записки. Українська академія друкарства. Соціальні комунікації" 2016, vol. 1, no. 52, pp. 281-287.

22 *Россія. Перший канал, Маріна Овсяннікова Нет войне! (2022)*, Odesa Film Studio. Новості України, Video, YouTube, 14 March 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U2aW2lkk1mg> [14.03.2022].

23 *Аде ви були усі 8 років? Не всі українці повірили у щирість антивоєнного перформансу на росТВ реакція соцмереж*, Telegraf, б.д., <https://telegraf.com.ua/ukr/novosti-rossii/2022-03-14/5699400-a-gde-by-la-vse-8-let-ne-vse-ukraintsy-poverili-v-iskrennosti-antivoennogo-performansa-na-rostv-reaktsiya-sotssetey> [б.д.].

### 3. Social media as a source of disinformation spread

There are several markers that the Russian disinformation campaign uses in the information field of Ukraine to create propaganda narratives, spread panic, or destabilize the political situation in the country<sup>24</sup>. One of these is the so-called anonymous authority<sup>25</sup>. “The favourite propaganda method for misleading the audience is anonymous authority. It is actively used in both social and mass media. The authority is never named and pronouns are often used instead. In some cases, documents, expert assessments, reports, witnesses, or other materials can be quoted for greater persuasion”<sup>26</sup>. This is a well-known propaganda technique that misleads the audience, used in social networks and media. In such cases, the name of the authority is not indicated or some pronoun or occupation is indicated in the messages. The report may include quotes from documents, reports, or even witness testimony. One such example was the spread of a message that the Security Service of Ukraine informed that at 4 am on 6 June 2022, an offensive in Ukraine would allegedly begin from the territory of Belarus. A similar report, however, was that enemy missile strikes on certain targets were expected within 24 hours. This was followed by a list of cities and even buildings<sup>27</sup>.

Such information has two goals, firstly to provoke Ukraine to transfer a significant part of the army and, secondly, to sow panic among Ukrainian society. It is the spread of panic that is a large part of hostile information and psychological special operations<sup>28</sup>. If the news is

24 Як для російської пропаганди використовують західні ЗМІ – дослідження, Радіо Свобода, Голос Америки, 07 September 2021, <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/rosijska-propahanda-zahid-zmi/31447851.html> [7.09.2021].

25 Центр протидії дезінформації при РНБО пояснює, що таке «анонімний авторитет», Телеканал I-UA.tv, б.д., <https://i-ua.tv/news/47034-tsentr-protydii-dezinformatsii-pri-rnbo-poiasnuiie-shcho-take-anonimnyi-avtorytet> [б.д.].

26 Ibid.

27 Ворог посилює інформаційний тероризм, Центр протидії дезінформації | Головна сторінка, б.д., [https://cpd.gov.ua/warnin/czpd\\_zasterigaye-vorog-aktyvuvav-sms-ro/](https://cpd.gov.ua/warnin/czpd_zasterigaye-vorog-aktyvuvav-sms-ro/) [б.д.].

28 Ворог робить інформаційні вкиди про нібито плани атакувати Україну з півночі, Інформаційне агентство Informatsiine ahentstvo Armiialinform АрміяInform, б.д., <http://armyinform.com.ua/2022/11/26/vorog-robyt-informacijni-vkydy-pro-niby-to-plany-atakuvaty-ukrayinu-z-pivnochi/> [б.д.].

structured in such a way that it evokes a strong emotion in the audience, this is a key sign of a disinformation fake<sup>29</sup>.

## 4. Elements of Russian disinformation spread

• Photos “from the scene” are also part of a disinformation campaign. They need to be verified through the available resources because even their presence does not indicate authenticity or that these photos reflect the real picture. For example, during a blackout in Kyiv in the fall of 2022, users of various messenger and social networks distributed photos of a de-energized Kyiv by Vitaliy Rubtsov. As it turned out, the photo does not show power outages; it was made in May 2019, that is, three years before the full-scale war. Media literacy trainers from the project “Learn to discern: Infomedia literacy in education” explain that such photos can discredit Ukraine and lead to doubts about statements regarding the situation in the country. After all, although the published photo emotionally and vividly illustrates the unprecedented situation that has developed in the capital of Ukraine as a result of Russian aggression, this photo has nothing to do with the current situation. Information about photos can easily be found by using the reverse photo search on Google. Thus, it can be assumed that the outages are as fake as the photo that illustrates them.

There was a similar situation with the distribution of photos about the rescue of animals after the explosion at the Kakhovka hydroelectric station and the flooding of the surrounding territories. “For the second day, along with real videos and photos from Kherson region, dozens of fake ones are being distributed, which are then used by propagandists to say “it’s all invented”, “it’s all staged”. We made for you a selection of fake photos and videos posing as frames from the Kherson region. They have gained millions of reaches on various social networks. They are distributed both by bots masquerading as Ukrainians and by Ukrainians who do not verify the information and its source. Fake news was spread even by the official pages of the Verkhovna Rada of

29 Як розпізнати фейк: 5 практичних кроків, The Village Ukraine, б.д., [https://www.the-village.com.ua/village/knowledge/mediahramotnist/338225-yak-rozpiznati-feyk-5-praktichnih-krokov?fbclid=IwARohCBGBIT8vaUN6T-IFkpmULopx46auzpa\\_44wkGhIj7XcnQtU0o3LV9U](https://www.the-village.com.ua/village/knowledge/mediahramotnist/338225-yak-rozpiznati-feyk-5-praktichnih-krokov?fbclid=IwARohCBGBIT8vaUN6T-IFkpmULopx46auzpa_44wkGhIj7XcnQtU0o3LV9U) [б.д.].

Ukraine, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, as well as several Ukrainian and foreign media”<sup>30</sup>. The Russian television propagandist, Vladimir Solovyov, had also taken advantage of this situation. He said that the Kakhovka hydroelectric station was blown up by Ukrainians, and the situation is not as critical as it is told<sup>31</sup>. In order to illustrate the events taking place in the Kherson region, old photos from other places in the world were used.

The Russians are trying to transfer the responsibility to someone else. It is not the first time that Russian propagandists have resorted to the so-called blurring of the information field. They used the same method during the events of the MH17 crash (the Malaysian Boeing that was shot down by a Russian BUK)<sup>32</sup>. As for the Kakhovka HPP, fake explanations can be summarised as follows: “It was the Armed Forces of Ukraine who fired at it”, “the dam is tired of the attacks of the Armed Forces of Ukraine”, “this is profitable for Kyiv”<sup>33</sup>. These manipulative topics are voiced by some foreign so-called journalists, influencers, and so-called experts.

However, Mykola Kalinin, Chief Project Engineer (ISU) of the Ukhydroproject Institute, refutes these Russian fakes; “The Kakhovka HPP was designed and built to withstand a nuclear strike from the outside. Therefore, any talk that it could somehow collapse itself has no basis. This is excluded. It was supposed to be several explosions that were carried out simultaneously. Most likely, the dam itself was mined, just in those spans that were opened, and, perhaps, a little further. Plus, the hydroelectric building itself was mined, where hydraulic units were installed to generate electricity. Let’s pay attention – mined from the inside”<sup>34</sup>. In addition to the above-mentioned methods of

30 <https://www.facebook.com/notaenota1/posts/pfbidoig6ghtDeReAwsKNI5gS46aVh9XJRi3P6H-V9FpxJYbToWzCsiK6unXbkG9uaRnyrwl>.

31 *Тільки послушайте! СОЛОВІЙОВ відреагував на ПІДРИВ Каховської ГЕС*, 24 канал, Video YouTube, 07 June 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=55iykpfaykk> [7.06.2023].

32 *Росія поширює ЧИСЛЕННІ «версії» про підриб Каховської ГЕС*, TCH, Video, YouTube, 07 June 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aNqeqQ6Nhxks> [7.06.2023].

33 *Ibid.*

34 А. Гарасим, *Каховська ГЕС була рознахована витримати ядерний удар. Ні про яку її саморуїнацію не може бути мови*, Texty.org.ua, 07 June 2023, <https://texty.org.ua/fragments/109840/kahovska-ges-bula-rozrahovana-vytrymaty-yadernyj-udar-ni-pro-yaku-yiyi-samorujnacyu-ne-mozhe-buty-j-movy/?fbclid=IwAR2PHu6AsD12CjP6U3ou3gS26PdHlCmtaYrfMHzuG9iVPnuBwYQgpNrCAJg> [7.06.2023].

manipulation, Russian propagandists use such methods as references to the authorities and reflection<sup>35</sup>.

Society always trusts more information disseminated by an authoritative source<sup>36</sup>. Thus, the message becomes more important and widespread. That is why the propagandists resort to references to authority. It can be any politician, famous person, astrologer, or so-called “famous expert”, that is, promoted pseudo-experts (authors that manipulate large audiences by causing strong emotions with their publications or speeches are called pseudo-experts<sup>37</sup>). Authorities can be false and genuine. False authorities are easier to identify because, when checking the information, you can find out that the person has nothing to do with the topic they are commenting on. The situation with real experts is more complicated.

The Russian TV channel Rossiya 24 spread information that the United States acknowledged the existence of its bio laboratories on the territory of Ukraine. The main argument was the speeches by Victoria Nuland, the US Deputy Secretary of State, who, when asked by US Senator Marco Rubio about bio laboratories in Ukraine, replied that there are laboratories in Ukraine whose materials can become dangerous in the hands of the Russian aggressor. Russian propagandists took her words out of context and presented the information as confirmation of the information.

For Russian propaganda, some tactics are used, in particular, to distract attention – to reflect<sup>38</sup>. Propagandists make the same accusations against Ukraine or any other country as they make against Russia. That is, they reflect the actions of the opponent. At the same time, Russian

35 *Як російська пропаганда використовує тактику апелювання до авторитету #DisinfoChronicle. Кремлівська дезінформація щодо військового наступу на Україну, Детектор медіа, б.д., <https://disinfo.detector.media/post/yak-rosiiska-propahanda-vykorystovuie-taktyku-apelivannia-do-avtorytetu> [б.д.].*

36 *Ibid.*

37 *Слухайте. Думайте. Громадське радіо, б.д., <https://hromadske.radio/podcasts/myslennia-bazova-funktsiia/1061895> [б.д.].*

38 *Тактики: Як російська пропаганда застосовує тактики «відривання від контексту», #DisinfoChronicle. Кремлівська дезінформація щодо військового наступу на Україну, Детектор медіа, б.д., <https://disinfo.detector.media/post/yak-rosiiska-propahanda-zastosovuie-taktyku-vidryvannia-vid-kontekstu> [б.д.].*



media use both real and fictitious reasons for the accusations<sup>39</sup>. Russian propagandists claim that the prosecutor has already committed exactly the offence of which Russia is now accused.

## Conclusions

The purpose of Russian disinformation in the Ukrainian information field is mass propaganda and dissemination of the narratives they need. As G. Pocheptsov notes, “Propaganda works with mass consciousness, holding there one point of view, which is realised in a set of metanarratives. Metanarratives reside in the virtual space, and specific narratives are generated in the information space. This is all new and new detailing of the metanarrative, which reinforces its impact, as it is confirmed again and again, but by different material. The greater the repetition, the more its truth is confirmed for the mass consciousness”<sup>40</sup>. Disinformation is intentionally created information with manipulative and often misleading content. In our research, we have demonstrated several artificially created fakes that manipulate reality and facts in order to cause harm.

Even before 24 February 2022, before the full-scale invasion of Russian troops into Ukraine, the Ukrainian information field had been regularly targeted with aggressive disinformation and propaganda campaigns by Russia. The Russians tried to plant misleading narratives within Ukrainian society, spread false information, and tried to manipulate the emotions of Ukrainians, all using social media and other means of communication. It was fairly common to observe such campaigns in social networks, where bots, trolls, artificial intelligence, fake accounts, and group chats were used to simulate the support of false messages.

It is the information field of Ukraine that has become the first springboard for Russia’s hybrid war against the Ukrainian people. Us-

39 *Новомова: Як Росія розмиває реальність за допомогою новомови: «силові дії» #DisinfoChronicle. Кремлівська дезінформація щодо військово наступу на Україну, Детектор медіа, б.д., <https://disinfo.detector.media/post/yak-rosiia-rozmyvaie-realnist-za-dopomohoiu-novomovusylovi-dii> [б.д.].*

40 *Пропаганда як комунікативна війна із своїм власним народом, АУП, б.д., <https://www.aup.com.ua/propaganda-yak-komunikativna-viyna-iz/> [б.д.].*

ing a variety of methods such as disinformation, propaganda, fakes, sabotage, phishing, and cyberattacks, the enemy was able to prepare for a full-scale war.

To effectively confront this in the information world, in particular Russian fakes, manipulations, propaganda, and disinformation, society must learn to perceive information critically and have [greater] media literacy skills.

In future research, we plan to further demonstrate the methods that are used to create disinformation, what their purpose is, and how to prevent or counteract them.

## Acknowledgment

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Tetiana Zinovieva\*

# War in Ukraine through the lens of interactive media: A typological study of video games

**Wojna w Ukrainie w obiektywie mediów interaktywnych:  
studium typologiczne gier wideo**

**Abstract:** The objective of the research was to assess video games related to the Russian-Ukrainian war and categorise them as media tools. The study revealed that computer games are a distinctive and practical medium for journalism. They help to dismantle the opposing side's narratives and disseminate information globally about the situation in Ukraine. Video games can help Ukrainian society convey to the world the consequences of Russian aggression.

**Keywords:** video games; deep media; Ukrainian society; Russian aggression; journalism; deconstruction; emotional aesthetics; folk culture of laughter; information warfare; media challenges; the convergence of journalism and the gaming industry

**Streszczenie:** Celem badania była ocena gier wideo związanych z wojną rosyjsko-ukraińską i sklasyfikowanie ich jako narzędzi medialnych. Badanie wykazało, że gry komputerowe są charakterystycznym i praktycznym medium dziennikarskim. Pomagają rozbijać narracje strony przeciwnej i rozpowszechniają globalnie informacje o sytuacji w Ukrainie. Gry wideo mogą pomóc społeczeństwu ukraińskiemu w przekazywaniu światu informacji o konsekwencjach rosyjskiej agresji.

**Słowa kluczowe:** gry wideo; głębokie media; społeczeństwo ukraińskie; rosyjska agresja; dziennikarstwo; dekonstrukcja; estetyka emocjonalna; ludowa kultura śmiechu; wojna informacyjna; wyzwania medialne; dziennikarstwo i konwergencja przemysłu gier

## Introduction

Being at the epicentre of events and practising work with “live” data, Ukrainian media resort to various creative means of broadcasting true

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information. One of these tools is computer games. Their relevance is strengthened by the worldwide popularisation of the game industry because the 21st century generation cannot imagine its life without video games. According to the Statista website, as of 2021, there were almost 3.21 billion video game players in the world<sup>1</sup>. According to Peter Susic, the number of players is expected to increase to 3.26 billion by 2023 and is predicted to reach 3.46 billion by 2024<sup>2</sup>. The gaming market is constantly evolving, and technological advancements are opening new possibilities for game developers to create more immersive and engaging experiences through emerging technologies like cloud and VR gaming<sup>3</sup>.

War-themed video games have become widely popular in Ukraine since Russia's invasion. These games offer players the chance to combat the invaders and defeat the enemy himself in various ways. A large number of these games incorporate real-life events and sources, making them emotionally impactful and resonant with players. It is evident that computer games have become a significant component of the mass media landscape.

Under the conditions of media convergence, video games can be evaluated as alternative media tools for informing the community, and for their emotional impact on public consciousness to oppose militarism, racism, and totalitarianism. In the future, such creative media strategies will contribute to the speedy recovery, digital transformation, and consolidation of society in building a new [more] humane world. With the ongoing development of the digital society, the information explosion, the widespread adoption of online education because of the pandemic, and the threats of war, video games are showing great potential as journalistic tools and a means of professional training for journalists and other professionals.

- 1 J. Clement, *Number of video gamers worldwide in 2021, by region*, Statista, October 2022, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/293304/number-video-gamers/> [6.06.2023].
- 2 P. Susic, *Headphones addict*, February 2023, <https://headphonesaddict.com/gamer-demographics-statistics/?nowprocket=1#:~:text=Around%203.2%20billion%20people%20played%20video%20games%20in,ln%202021%2C%20the%20percentage%20was%20higher%20at%2040.96%25> [6.06.2023].
- 3 J. Clement, *Video game market revenue worldwide 2017-2027*, Statista, June 2023, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1344668/revenue-video-game-worldwide/> [6.06.2023].

The analysis of video games as part of information warfare is based on theoretical works on propaganda during the war<sup>4</sup>, “deep media”<sup>5</sup>, “deepfakes”<sup>6</sup>, and “interactive media”<sup>7</sup>.

The source base of the theoretical study was composed from the scientific literature on media functions<sup>8,9</sup>, game theory<sup>10</sup>, and cultural works<sup>11</sup>; online game resources (STEAM, itch.io, Google Play), and various reviews of games about events in Ukraine<sup>12,13</sup>. Although it is traditionally accepted to consider serious games as a means of learning and education in spirituality and morality, scientists see video games as new media<sup>14</sup> and social media<sup>15</sup>. Further research is needed to explore how video games function as media tools that can teach, influence emotions, and shape public opinion. The first step in understanding video games as media tools is to create a games typology based on media functions.

- 4 P. Pomerantsev, *This is not propaganda: Adventures in the war against reality*, Faber and Faber Limited, London 2019.
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- 9 A. Sharma, D. Uniyal, *Development communication: Role of mass media and its approach*, “Imperial Journal of Interdisciplinary Research” 2016, vol. 2, no. 11, pp. 906-913.
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- 11 M.M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his world*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 1984, [https://monoskop.org/images/7/70/Bakhtin\\_Mikhail\\_Rabelais\\_and\\_His\\_World\\_1984.pdf](https://monoskop.org/images/7/70/Bakhtin_Mikhail_Rabelais_and_His_World_1984.pdf).
- 12 *Війна-2022: дев'ять найкращих ігор для ПК за мотивами російського вторгнення в Україну [Viina-2022: deviat naikrashchychk ihor dlia PK za motyvamy rosiiskoho vtorhnennia v Ukrainu]*, Priamyi, 21 June 2022, <https://prm.ua/viyna-2022-ta-videoihry-dlya-pk/> [1.06.2023].
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This study analyses video games related to the war in Ukraine to propose a typology based on their media functions. The study involves comparing the games' features with those of media and then analysing their typology. Classification differentiates objects based on significant features, while typology groups them based on their similarity to a generalised model. The most significant features-forming types include purpose, reader address, nature of information, and presentation style. The cultural analysis will also examine the perception of video games as a traditional laughing culture phenomenon. The results will be summarised using a theoretical generalisation.

## **1. Video games about the war in Ukraine and their typology based on media functions**

The functions of mass media are commonly referred to as informational, social, educational, and entertainment purposes. As it was done in the studies of G.A. Donohue, P.J. Tichenor, and C.N. Olien<sup>16</sup>; A. Sharma and D. Uniyal<sup>17</sup>. Investigating the most well-known video games about military happenings in Ukraine since 2022 enabled the proposal of their typology based on media functions.

### **Games-jokes-memes**

Games-jokes-memes are effective deconstruction tools for enemy narratives and fakes. It is a type of game designed to expose and mock the false information being spread by Russian propagandists.

These games are similar to memes, jokes, and folk jokes because they use satire and humour to emphasise the absurdity of fake facts. They change the way people think and act, make old beliefs less important, show things that are hidden, and make the outside world look like a text that can be used in different ways. Anecdotes, like deconstruction, do not need legitimisation, status, or commission from the art market, science, or society. The finale of joke games is consistent

16 G.A. Donohue, P.J. Tichenor, C.N. Olien, *Mass media functions, knowledge and social control*, "Journalism Quarterly" 1973, vol. 50, no. 4, pp. 652-659, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/107769907305000404>.

17 A. Sharma, D. Uniyal, *Development communication: Role of mass media and its approach*, "Imperial Journal of Interdisciplinary Research" 2016, vol. 2, no. 11, pp. 906-913.

with the deconstruction of the game event, as its functions become limited due to the loss of the primary support for the object. As a result, it acquires a new quality, which consists of the uniqueness of its secondary function<sup>18</sup>. Therefore, through such games, which are a certain reflection of ideas about the picture of the world, the very picture of the world is deconstructed. Such games fulfil the cultural role of deconstructing the grand narratives broadcast by the Russian Federation during the information war against Ukraine: “the greatness of Russia”, “the invincibility of the Russian army and navy”, “Russian peace”, “good Russian”, “biological laboratories”, etc. These are the games “Putinist Slayer”, “Ukrainian fArmy”<sup>19</sup> or “Farmers stealing tanks”<sup>20</sup>, and “Russian warship, go f\*\*k yourself”. The genre of such games is determined by the developers as action, comedy, satire, and memes.

Some video games use irony to mock the Russian army, portraying them as orcs<sup>21</sup>, marauders<sup>22</sup>, and garbage. For instance, the mini-game “Russian warship, go f\*\*k yourself”<sup>23</sup> shows Russian ships as trash that must be cleared from the Ukrainian island called “Zmiiny”.

The obscene vocabulary often used in these games serves the deconstruction of outdated cultural stereotypes. This phenomenon is commonly linked to the “carnival mechanism” as explained by M.M. Bakhtin<sup>24</sup>. The culture of laughter involves reduction and profanation, role reversal, clowning, and dethroning. This mechanism replaces regulated norms with their opposite, resulting in the polarity of accepted norms of behaviour. It also replaces seriousness with humour

18 T. Зінов'єва, *Анекдот в ситуації постмодерну та масової культури*, “Культура і сучасність: альманах. Київ: Міленіум” [T. Zinovieva, *Anekdot v sytuatsii postmodernu ta masovoi kultury*, “Kultura i suchasnist: almanakh. Kyiv: Milenium”], 2008, vol. 1, pp. 63-69.

19 “Ukrainian fArmy”, Video game, 2022, <https://ukrainian.itch.io/ukrainian-farmy> [1.06.2023].

20 “Farmers stealing tanks”, Video game. Pixelforest (dev), 2022, <https://pixelforest.itch.io/farmers-stealing-tanks> [1.06.2023].

21 “Putin orcs defender”, Video game. Pacifism (dev), July 2022, [https://store.steampowered.com/app/2005070/Putin\\_Orcs\\_Defender](https://store.steampowered.com/app/2005070/Putin_Orcs_Defender) [1.06.2023].

22 “Ukraine defender”. Video game. Devrifter (dev), May 2022, [https://store.steampowered.com/app/1973090/Ukraine\\_Defender/](https://store.steampowered.com/app/1973090/Ukraine_Defender/) [1.06.2023].

23 “Russian warship, go f\*\*k yourself”, Video game. Teapots Martian (dev), 2022, <https://martiant-eapots.itch.io/russian-warship-go-fck-yourself> [1.06.2023].

24 M.M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 1984, [https://monoskop.org/images/7/70/Bakhtin\\_Mikhail\\_Rabelais\\_and\\_His\\_World\\_1984.pdf](https://monoskop.org/images/7/70/Bakhtin_Mikhail_Rabelais_and_His_World_1984.pdf).

and humans with animals<sup>25</sup>. This carnival mechanism is also embodied in Games-jokes-memes, where the enemy's narratives (a Russian political myth) are brought down to the body level. In such games, the negative sides of the legitimised object are hyperbolized, resulting in a grotesque image of an idea or person. Examples are the video games "Sunflower Slap"<sup>26</sup> and "F\*\*K PUTIN"<sup>27</sup>, "Putler stress relief game"<sup>28</sup>, and "Putler is dead"<sup>29</sup>. These games rely on bodily aesthetics; in the first game, gamers can virtually "punish the Russian dictator with a sunflower", in a very short time, giving as many slaps as possible. In another game, the dictator is a virtual puppet for beating and torture. The third game uses clicker mechanics; when players click on the screen, they get a reward that can be used in the store. Players buy items that are thrown at the character or skins to decorate him. This form of play has age restrictions due to the level of violence. Video games that depict violence often create ethical dilemmas and so, this issue deserves a separate study in the context of media influences and learning.

### Submission games

Submission games are games with an aesthetic of passing the time, connecting to the game as such despite the limitations<sup>30</sup>. These are different life simulators ("Sims FreePlay", "Homescapes"), psychedelic games, and carnage games or "shoot 'em up" games (SHMUP, STG). The final category includes computer games where the main character battles multiple enemies by shooting at them while avoiding their incoming fire. An example is the game "Chornobaivka. The Day of the Groundhog", which shows how the occupiers stand on the same rake,

- 25 Т. Зінов'єва, *Анекдот як сучасний мінікарнавал* [T. Zinovieva, *Anekdot yak suchasnyi minikarnaval*], "Doxa" 2008, vol. 13, pp. 150-155, <http://doxa.onu.edu.ua/Doxa13/150-155.pdf>.
- 26 "Sunflower Slap", Video game. Native Games Studio (dev). Itch.io, April 2022, <https://native-games-studio.itch.io/sunflowerslap> [1.06.2023].
- 27 "F\*\*K PUTIN". Video game. Tornado Games (dev), April 2022, [https://store.steampowered.com/app/1926680/FUCK\\_PUTIN/](https://store.steampowered.com/app/1926680/FUCK_PUTIN/) [1.06.2023].
- 28 "Putler stress relief game", Video game, 2022, <https://russskiy-korabily.idi-nahuy.click/> [1.06.2023].
- 29 "Putler is dead", Video game. MasterCodeCSharpGameStudio (dev), April 2023, [https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.Master\\_Code\\_C\\_Game\\_Studio.Putler\\_is\\_dead\\_2023](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.Master_Code_C_Game_Studio.Putler_is_dead_2023) [1.06.2023].
- 30 D. Djaouti, J. Alvarez, J.P. Jessel, G. Methel, P. Molinier, *A gameplay definition through videogame classification*, "International Journal of Computer Games Technology" 2008, pp. 1-6, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1155/2008/470350>.

trying again and again to seize Ukrainian territories. To prevent this, the player can shoot, blow up, or tear to pieces the Russian invaders. For this, players have several types of weapons that can be improved. The developers' objective was not to generate profits but to provide Ukrainians a chance to enjoy themselves during challenging times. The game has an age restriction of 16 years due to excessive violence<sup>31</sup>.

The example of the rhythm game "In Ukrainian Soil" from a Ukrainian developer<sup>32</sup> illustrates submission games. Players can experience a transcendental journey and lead wandering souls to the gates of heaven in this psychedelic racing game driven by rhythm.

"Zero Losses" is a short open-world driving adventure game set in a post-apocalyptic environment inspired by the events of the Russo-Ukrainian War. Players assume the role of a driver in the Russian occupation army in Ukraine, specifically part of the security battalion. The objective is to ensure the success of special operations with no casualties. The protagonist is tasked with various missions such as transporting and cremating fallen soldiers, delivering supplies, and locating a missing battalion. The game primarily focuses on the desolate atmosphere and horror elements rather than depicting violence against civilians or Ukrainian soldiers. The developer emphasises the concept that those who bring fear are ultimately trapped by it. "Zero Losses" provides a slow-paced and surreal experience, showcasing the consequences of violence without directly showing it<sup>33</sup>.

## Documentary games

The next group of video games can be combined under the name documentary games. These are games that are based on documentary facts and involve real photos. The main purpose of such games is to increase the community's awareness of the events in Ukraine during the Russian aggression. Documentary games are the closest to the journalistic product according to the principles of journalism.

31 "Чорнобаївка. День бабака" ["Chornobaivka. Den babaka"], Video game. Team "39-40" (dev), May 2022, <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.thirtynineeighty.chornobaivka> [1.06.2023].

32 "In Ukrainian Soil", Video game. Bunker 22 (dev), 2023, [https://store.steampowered.com/app/2317120/In\\_Ukrainian\\_Soil/](https://store.steampowered.com/app/2317120/In_Ukrainian_Soil/) [1.06.2023].

33 "ZERO LOSSES", Video game. Marevo Collective (dev), 2023, [https://store.steampowered.com/app/1485920/Zero\\_Losses/](https://store.steampowered.com/app/1485920/Zero_Losses/) [1.06.2023].

The main feature of such games is the involvement of the audience in the gaming experience based on real events. There are such games as “Ukraine War Stories” or “Glory to the Heroes”.

“Ukraine War Stories” is a documentary visual, novel, interactive prose, adventure role-playing game-simulator. It shows the events of the first months of the war. The scenes of the game are based on real events and the experiences of eyewitnesses (civilians) who found themselves in the territory occupied by the Russians in Gostomel, Bucha, and Mariupol. In this game, the player’s goal is to survive and escape with their loved ones from occupation. The interface uses real photos from cities and the gameplay consists of text, music, and illustrations. The developers have stated that their focus is not on making money from the game. Instead, it is important to tell the world about the horrors of the war in Ukraine<sup>34</sup>.

“Glory to the Heroes” is a military tactical first-person shooter. Stories about the full-scale invasion by Russia into Ukraine are told through the eyes of different characters. It is a multiplayer battle featuring a variety of unit types including infantry, artillery, jets, drones, and even civilians. Events unfold in the fields of real battles<sup>35</sup>.

### Strategic learning games

Strategic learning games are educational military simulators, e.g., “Power & Revolution 2022 Edition”<sup>36</sup> is a political simulation game that addresses the Ukraine conflict, allowing players to play as Ukraine, NATO countries, or Russia. Players make decisions on military action, sanctions, and diplomacy. The game reflects complex issues like refugees, war costs, and global challenges like COVID-19 and climate change. It offers insights into international affairs and acknowledges the complexities of solving Ukraine’s problems. “Slava Ukraini!”<sup>37</sup> is a shooter game with strategic and tactical modes. Players engage Rus-

34 “Ukraine War Stories”, Video game. Starni Games: Ukrainian studio (dev), 2022, [https://store.steampowered.com/app/1985510/Ukraine\\_War\\_Stories/](https://store.steampowered.com/app/1985510/Ukraine_War_Stories/) [1.06.2023].

35 “Glory to the Heroes”, Video game. Spacedev Games (dev), 2023, <https://glorytoheroes.spacedev.team/> [1.06.2023].

36 “Power & revolution 2022 edition”, Video game. EverSim (dev), April 2022, <http://www.power-and-revolution.com/news.php> [1.06.2023].

37 “SLAVA UKRAINI!”, Video game. Thor Gaming (dev). May 2022, [https://store.steampowered.com/app/1974090/Slava\\_Ukraini/?](https://store.steampowered.com/app/1974090/Slava_Ukraini/?) [1.06.2023].

sian troops on a schematic map, targeting enemies with small arms or grenade launchers. The game focuses on rational targeting and careful unit moves. “Ukraine Defense Force Tactics”<sup>38</sup> is a turn-based military strategy where players defend against Russian forces with calculated moves. The game teaches rational decision-making and adapting to changing circumstances. In the Tower Defense game “E-Bayraktar”<sup>39</sup>, players defend against enemy equipment from different directions using the Turkish drone Bayraktar TB2, popular in Ukraine. “Rebuild Ukraine”<sup>40</sup> is an educational strategy game encouraging players to restore Ukrainian cities and monuments. It promotes positive activities and planning for Ukraine’s recovery.

### Data journalism games

An interesting type of Ukrainian war strategy game is built on the map of the “Air Alarm” app<sup>41</sup>. It is very close to the practice of data journalism offered by the Ukrainian independent online internet media channel “Texty.org.ua”, for example, the game “Battle for Ukraine”<sup>42</sup>. In this online strategy game, players have to move units of the Armed Forces across the territory of Ukraine in such a way as to expel the Russian invaders abroad. In one step, the player can either move troops or attack the enemy. The game pushes players to defend because the game losses in defence are smaller than in attack. The game also includes training videos on tactics, weapons use, destruction of enemy equipment, and military reality.

Games built on open data are a link between the game industry and journalism. It is noteworthy that “Texty.org.ua”, founded by A. Bond-

38 “Ukraine defense force tactics”. Video game. Spacewalkers (dev), June 2022, [https://store.steampowered.com/app/2005660/Ukraine\\_Defense\\_Force\\_Tactics/](https://store.steampowered.com/app/2005660/Ukraine_Defense_Force_Tactics/) [1.06.2023].

39 О. Трикіша, *Шість ігор про війну в Україні: рятує Чорнобаївку та збиває Путіна з гармати*, Сьогодні, 25 квітня 2022 [О. Trykisha, *Shist ihor pro viinu v Ukraini: riatui Chornobaivku ta zbyvai Putina z harmaty*, *Sohodni*, 25 kvitnia 2022], <https://tech.segodnya.ua/ua/tech/shest-igr-o-voynе-v-ukraine-spasay-chernobaevku-i-sbivay-putina-iz-pushki-1617201.html> [1.06.2023].

40 “Rebuild Ukraine”. Video game. P. Izotov (dev), March 2022, <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.pubrevplus.rebuildukraine&hl=uk&gl=US> [1.06.2023].

41 *Завантажуйте застосунок Повітряна тривога*, Міністерство цифрової трансформації України, Ajax Systems Inc (dev) [*Zavantazhuite zastosunok Povitriana tryvoha*, *Ministerstvo tsyfrovogo transformatsii Ukrainy*. AjaxSystemsInc (dev)], 2022, <https://www.ukrainealarm.com/> [6.06.2023].

42 *Битва за Україну [Bytva za Ukrainu]*, Відеогра, MaxDmax (dev), 2022, <https://demo.devs.mx/ukraine/> [1.06.2023].

arenko and R. Kulchynskiy back in 2010, has experience in developing such games. In particular, a gamified infographic; an arcade game based on collecting money in the form of bribes while avoiding danger in the form of electronic tax declarations, and a quest game about guessing employees' salaries<sup>43</sup>. In 2018, "Texty" collaborated with the Institute of Mass Information to create the game "Manipulator" against fake and disinformation in the media. The player's task is to "create the worst media and become popular"<sup>44</sup>. According to the Annual Report of the IMI (Ukraine) in 2018, over 20 thousand users played the game. Although this game was created before the full-scale invasion by the Russian army into the territory of Ukraine, we consider it part of this war. After all, the media literacy of the population of Ukraine played a significant role at the time of the invasion, creating an information front and consolidating society<sup>45</sup>.

In response to the onset of the Russian-Ukrainian war in 2022, "Texty.org.ua" generated a variety of user-friendly infographics suitable for gamification purposes. The journalists created the simulator game "Whose tank is this?"<sup>46</sup>, which aimed to teach players how to distinguish Ukrainian tanks from enemy tanks. The game not only provides information about the models of tanks used in the Russian-Ukrainian war but also teaches an algorithm for recognizing military equipment based on Peter Makel's guidance. The visual basis of the game is infographics.

Mapping is the basis for monitoring and analysing many issues in journalism including the progress of the war since February 24, 2022, the advancement of Ukrainian troops, the order of deployment of action on the front during a certain period, and changes in the borders of the occupied territories. The "Texty.org.ua" portal contains the infographic section "#SCHEDULE OF THE DAY" and infographic inter-

43 *Гроші, метри, два авта*, Відеогра. Журналістика даних [*Hroshi, metry, dvaavta*, Zhurnalistyka danykh], TEXTY.ORG.UA, 2016, [https://texty.org.ua/d/static/decl\\_game/](https://texty.org.ua/d/static/decl_game/) [1.06.2023].

44 *Маніпулятор*, Відеогра. Інститут Масової інформації (IMI) [*"Manipulator"*. IMI], TEXTY.ORG.UA, 2018, <https://texty.org.ua/d/manipulator-game/index.html> [1.06.2023]

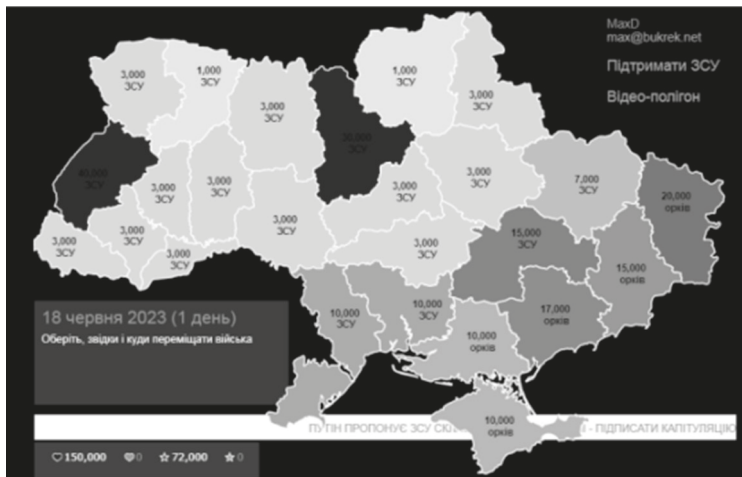
45 *Річний звіт 2018*, IMI [*Richnyizvit 2018*, IMI], 2018, <https://imi.org.ua/upload/media/2019/09/02/5d6ca90a20a94-zvit-imi-2018-2.pdf> [6.06.2023].

46 Ye. Drozdova, N. Kelm, A. Bondarenko, *Upiznaisvoikh. Hra-trenazher: Chyi tse tank?!*, Data journalism, TEXTY.ORG.UA, February 2022, <https://texty.org.ua/projects/105597/upiznaj-svoyih-gra-trenazher-chij-ce-tank/> [6.06.2023].

active projects (<https://texty.org.ua/projects/>) about events in wartime Ukraine. The database of the games portal, based on open data and journalistic infographics, is constantly updated in a separate section “#ГПА” (<https://texty.org.ua/tag/hra/>). This suggests the convergence of journalism and the gaming industry.

Figures 1-3 show screenshots illustrating the Battle for Ukraine game, the Airborne Alert app, and the Year of All-Out War interactive map, united by the map of Ukraine and the dynamics of changes on it, as seen on Texty.org.ua.

**Figure 1. “Battle for Ukraine” interface game**



**Figure 2. Ukraine Air Alarm map app**

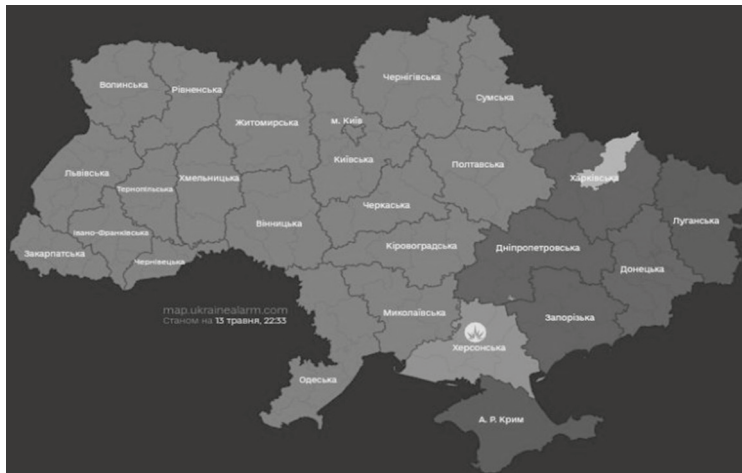




Figure 3. Interactive map “Year of full-scale war. How they changed” by “Texty.org.ua”<sup>47</sup>



### Games with DLC

Another important category is *games with DLC* to support Ukraine. A separate class of games is those that are not related to the war events in Ukraine, but their developers expressed their support by giving the main characters Ukrainian colours, including Ukrainian architectural monuments, cities, etc. in the graphics. However, despite positive support for Ukraine (moral and financial), sometimes such signs of support have the opposite connotation. So, for example, the scandalous game for adults “Succubus” from the Polish developer “admind Studio” depicted the main character in Ukrainian colours. The game simulator of the Soviet economy “Workers & Resources: Soviet Republic”<sup>48</sup> by the Slovak developers in “DLC Help for Ukraine” adds elements from Ukraine into the game. The buildings include the Zaporizhia Nuclear Power Plant, the Ukraina Concert Hall, the Lviv State Circus, and the Ukraina Hotel. Monuments include the Independence

47 Н. Кельм, Ю. Дукач, Є. Дроздова, М. Тимошенко, М. Гогун, Д. Губашов, І. Гадзинська, *Рік повномасштабної війни: Як змінювались межі окупованих територій*, Інтерактивна мапа [N. Kelm, Yu. Dukach, Ye. Drozdova, M. Tymoshenko, M. Hohun, D. Hubashov, I. Hadzynska, *Rik povnomashtabnoi viiny: Yak zminiuvats mezhi okupovanykh terytorii*, Interaktyvna mapa], TEXTY.ORG.UA. Data journalism, 24 February 2023, <https://texty.org.ua/projects/109018/rik-vijny/> [6.06.2023].

48 “Workers & Resources: Soviet Republic - Help for Ukraine”, Video game. 3Division (dev). *Steam*, May 2022, [https://store.steampowered.com/app/1948180/Workers\\_\\_Resources\\_\\_Soviet\\_Republic\\_\\_Help\\_for\\_Ukraine/](https://store.steampowered.com/app/1948180/Workers__Resources__Soviet_Republic__Help_for_Ukraine/) [1.06.2023].

Monument in Kyiv and the monument to Taras Shevchenko in Lviv. Among the vehicles are the An-70 plane, the modern K-1 tram, ZAZ Lanos, and others. In addition, the scenery of Voronovitsa town in the Vinnytsia region was added to the game. Under the conditions of the forcible introduction of the neo-Soviet regime into the occupied territories of Ukraine by the Russian invaders, the figurative series of the game looks doubtful<sup>49</sup>.

Undoubtedly, games perform the traditional functions of mass media. The games shed light on subjects pertinent to society. The informational function of mass media is embodied in games through the trend of producing serious games for learning and development, especially those based on sets of open (true) data. Games, even if they are not classified as serious, encourage learning and self-learning. Thus, the educational function of mass media is implemented in games. Games always contribute to relaxation and cultural recreation. Highlighting socially important topics, games shape public opinion<sup>50</sup>.

Table 1 provides a summary of the findings from a typological study on the use of games as media tools.

**Table 1. Typology of games as media tools**

Type of game	Function as media	Cultural role	Game purpose	Reader address or Stakeholder	Nature of information, style (genre) of work
Games-jokes-memes	Entertainment. Deconstruction tools for enemy narratives and fakes	Ridicule, reduction, devaluation of grand narratives, official authority, etc.	Entertainment	Ukrainian society, international community	Action, comedy, satire, memes, jokes
Submission games	Entertainment	Psychological compensation, reassessment of reality events	Passing the time	Victims of war	Life simulators, psychedelic games, carnage games, "shoot 'em up" games

49 *Війна-2022: дев'ять найкращих ігор для ПК за мотивами російського вторгнення в Україну* [Viina-2022: deviat naikrashchykh ihor dlia PK za motyvamy rosiiskoho vtorhnennia v Ukrainu], Priamyi, 21 June 2022, <https://prm.ua/viyna-2022-ta-videoihry-dlya-pk/> [1.06.2023].

50 J. Dovey, H.W. Kennedy, *Game cultures: Computer games as new media: computer games as new media*, McGraw-Hill Education, UK, 2006.

Type of game	Function as media	Cultural role	Game purpose	Reader address or Stakeholder	Nature of information, style (genre) of work
Documentary games	Information and influence functions. To increase the community's awareness. The process of shaping public opinion	Fixation of events as facts of history and culture	Entertainment. Information	International community. Ukrainian society	A documentary visual novel, interactive prose, adventure role-playing game-simulator
Strategic learning games	Educational. Entertainment	Developing a framework of cultural values, and future principles	Entertainment. Educational	Ukrainian military. Civilians who will restore the country. Schoolchildren, students	Strategy
Data journalism games	Information and influence functions	Fixation of events as facts of history and culture	Entertainment. Educational	Journalists and consumers of information	Strategy. Infographics. Journalistic investigations and analytics
Games with DLC	Entertainment. Branding. Advertising	Cultural communication. Cultural diffusion	Entertainment	Gamers. Representatives of the game business industry. Political circles	Any genre

This table summarises different types of games, highlighting their diverse functions as media, cultural roles, game purposes, reader addresses or stakeholders, and the informational nature and styles associated with each. From entertainment to education and information dissemination, these games cater to a wide audience and serve various societal needs. The versatility of gaming underscores its potential to be a dynamic convergence tool for cultural communication, education, and combating fake news.

## Conclusions

Video games serve as a powerful deep media tool for Ukrainian society to resist Russian aggression.

After analysing video games depicting a full-scale invasion of the Russian army into Ukraine, they can be classified into the following typology groups: Games-jokes-memes, Submission games, Documentary games, Strategic learning games, Data journalism, and DLC games to support Ukraine.

A carnival nature is the typological feature of Ukrainian games, i.e., the inversion of roles, ridicule of everything, appeal to bodily aesthetics, obscene vocabulary, will as the central value, reduction of pathos, deconstruction of grand narratives, etc. Emotional aesthetics (the presence of various types of “fun”) define a computer game as one of the more effective means of influencing and shaping public opinion. The deep involvement of the player in the game’s processes creates a personal experience of partaking in the game’s events. That is why we call video games a deep media tool.

It is important to use video games to deconstruct fake news and not deliberately spread disinformation.

Considering the development standards in the game industry, computer games cannot be used as a means of journalism because they do not correspond to the main principles of journalism. But they can be a means of fighting fake news, deconstructing the narratives of enemy politics, and as a means of information warfare.

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# Ethical problems with coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian war in online media and social networks

**Problemy etyczne w relacjonowaniu wojny rosyjsko-ukraińskiej w mediach internetowych i na portalach społecznościowych**

**Abstract:** The purpose of our research was to analyse the influence of social networks on the perception of the war in Ukraine as well as on the course of the struggle in the information field.

Today, social networks have become one of the main trendsetters, therefore, to effectively fight against disinformation and enemy information attacks, it is necessary to understand not only the specifics of their audience's perception of information but also to be well-versed in the specifics of the content generated by social media. For this purpose, we used the comparative method, monitoring, and content analysis.

In the article, we give examples of ethical dilemmas that Russia can use to its advantage in the war against Ukraine. For example, social media policies prohibit the posting of sensitive content. This does not allow telling the whole truth about the war, as a result of which not everyone understands the depth of the tragedy. Thanks to this, the world's reaction to Russia's criminal actions is not as harsh as it could be.

Our research was an attempt not only to outline the problem but also to propose ways to solve it. It is clear that media and ethics are inseparable, but at the same time, it is necessary to understand that ethics cannot hide the truth. In future studies, it is worth investigating more deeply the ethical norms of the coverage of sensitive content, especially about war. Perhaps it would be worthwhile indicating the situations that allow departure from the general rules.

**Keywords:** Russian-Ukrainian war, journalistic ethics, social networks

**Streszczenie:** Celem naszych badań była analiza wpływu portali społecznościowych na postrzeganie wojny na Ukrainie, a także na przebieg zmagania w polu informacyjnym.

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Dziś sieci społecznościowe stały się głównym wyznacznikiem trendów, dlatego aby skutecznie walczyć z dezinformacją i wrogimi atakami informacyjnymi, konieczne jest nie tylko zrozumienie specyfiki odbioru informacji przez odbiorców, ale także dobra znajomość specyfiki treści generowane przez media społecznościowe. Posłużyliśmy się metodą porównawczą, monitoringiem i analizą treści. W artykule podaliśmy przykłady dylematów etycznych, które Rosja może wykorzystać na swoją korzyść w wojnie z Ukrainą. Na przykład zasady dotyczące mediów społecznościowych zabraniają publikowania treści wrażliwych. Nie pozwalała na opowiedzenie całej prawdy o wojnie, w wyniku czego nie wszyscy rozumieją głębię tragedii. Dzięki temu światowa reakcja na zbrodnicze działania Rosji nie jest tak ostra, jak mogłaby być.

Nasze badania były próbą nie tylko nakreślenia problemu, ale także zaproponowania sposobów jego rozwiązania. Oczywiście jest, że media i etyka to rzeczy nierozłączne, ale jednocześnie trzeba zrozumieć, że etyka nie może ukrywać prawdy.

W przyszłych badaniach warto głębiej przyjrzeć się normom etycznym relacjonowania treści drażliwych, zwłaszcza o tematyce wojennej.

**Słowa kluczowe:** wojna rosyjsko-ukraińska, etyka dziennikarska, sieci społecznościowe

## Introduction

After 24 February 2022, according to the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, social networks became the most popular source of information. 76.6% of Ukrainians use them to receive news. In second place is television with 66.7% of votes. Third place was taken by the Internet (excluding social networks) – 61.2% of users. Radio is currently listened to by about 28.4% of Ukrainian citizens, and print media is read by only 15.7% of respondents<sup>1</sup>.

According to another social survey conducted by the GlobalLogic company, among 76.6% of Ukrainian citizens who use social networks as a source of information, 66% choose Telegram, 61% choose YouTube, and 58% choose Facebook<sup>2</sup>.

Among the most polar online mass media in Ukraine are UNIAN, Channel 24, and Ukrainian Pravda. These online media have a large audience on social media. The full-scale war in Ukraine has led to a sharp increase in the use of social networks as a source of news.

1 *Media consumption of Ukrainians in conditions of full-scale war*, OPORA, 01 July 2022, [https://www.oporaua.org/report/polit\\_ad/24068-mediaspohivannia-ukrayintsiv-v-umovakh-povnomasshtabnoyi-viini-opituvannia-opori.html](https://www.oporaua.org/report/polit_ad/24068-mediaspohivannia-ukrayintsiv-v-umovakh-povnomasshtabnoyi-viini-opituvannia-opori.html) [1.07.2022].

2 Y. Mudzhuri, *What social networks do Ukrainians use during the war: statistics*, SPEKA, 05 August 2022, <https://speka.media/yakimi-socmerezami-koristuyutsya-ukrayinci-pid-cas-viini-doslidzen-nya-p22nyy> [5.08.2022].

Thus, UNIAN has 857,418 subscribers, Channel 24 has 212,486, and Ukrainian Pravda has 155,260. On the YouTube platform, UNIAN has 2.71 million subscribers, Channel 24 has 5.1 million, and Ukrainian Pravda has 859,000.

On Facebook, UNIAN has 754,000 followers, Channel 24 has 2.4 million readers, and Ukrainian Pravda has 808,000 followers. The influence of online media on social networks is significant. This is why it is so important to adhere to ethical standards and current Ukrainian legislation, the recommendations of the military administration, and prioritize responsible journalism when using social media platforms to disseminate news.

Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Telegram all have certain terms of service. These are the rules that must be accepted by default in order to use the network. Social networks have strict moderation policies to prevent the spread of provocative content that incites hatred or inflames tensions. Each social network works according to a certain algorithm by which they can block a post or limit its promotion within the network<sup>3</sup>. Of all the aforementioned social networks, Telegram is the most loyal to the distribution of sensitive content<sup>4</sup>.

The Russian-Ukrainian war became a crisis that the world had not experienced since the Second World War. In an era dominated by social media, the coverage of this armed confrontation by online platforms has sparked considerable ethical debate. The article examines the ethical problems of covering the Russian-Ukrainian war on social networks of online media. Topics such as disinformation, violations of legislation, recommendations of the Ukrainian authorities, and established ethical standards were delved into. Social networks can contribute to the rapid spread of unverified information and, as a result, the spread of panic among the population and the undermining of trust in the mass media.

As a consequence of this difficult scenario, the main research problem of the article arose, which can be formulated as follows: How

3 *Social networks: concepts, history of emergence. Zaporizhzhia Regional Universal Scientific Library*, <https://zounb.zp.ua/resource/zaporizkyy-kray/zaporizhzhya-bibliotechne/fahova-osvita/socialni-merezhi-piv> [6.06.2022].

4 A. Romaniuk, *The illusion of security: Telegram*, Ukrainian Pravda, 29 July 2022, <https://www.pravda.com.ua/columns/2022/07/29/7360729/> [29.07.2022].

should online mass media present information during the war on their pages on social networks: on the one hand, revealing the whole terrible truth of Russia's military actions, and on the other hand, adhering to journalistic standards and ethics?

The main problem can be broken down into the following questions:

1. How do online media use social media during wartime?
2. What are the challenges for media in social networks during war?
3. What difficulties do journalists face when publishing news on social networks?
4. How to present content on social networks by online media during a war, from the point of view of journalistic ethics and morality?

The purpose of the research, the results of which are presented in this article, is an analysis of online media coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian war on social networks and an assessment of the ethical issues. This article highlights the importance of ethical journalism and the responsible use of social media by online media.

## **1. How online media use social media during war**

● Social networks during the war are important both for propaganda from the aggressor country and for Ukraine, which is not only repelling attacks by Russian troops at the front but also trying to tell the whole world the truth.

James Barnes noted that a social network is a social structure consisting of a group of nodes, which are social objects (social group, person, personality, individual) and connections between them<sup>5</sup>. We analysed the official recommendations of the Journalistic Ethics Commission, the Ministry of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, and the normative legal acts of Ukraine<sup>6</sup>.

5 J.A. Barnes, *Class and Committees in Norwegian Island Parish*, "Human Relations" 1954, no. 7, pp. 39-58.

6 *Recommendations of the Journalistic Ethics Commission on information that cannot be disclosed in the media during martial law*, CJE, 17 March 2022, <https://cje.org.ua/statements/rekomendatsii-komisii-z-zhurnalistskoi-etyky-shchodo-informatsii-iaku-ne-mozhna-rozgholoshuvaty-v-media-pid-chas-voiennoho-stanu/> [17.03.2022].

The primary target of social networks was to make it easy to meet people, find a friend based on your interests, and stay in touch with everyone you met in real life<sup>7</sup>. In addition, a social network page becomes a kind of blog for each user, in which he/she can talk about their life and show photos of interesting events. Users can create their own profiles that represent their personality and interests. The most famous social networks in Ukraine are Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Telegram<sup>8</sup>.

Mass media and especially online media use social networks to distribute their content to a wider audience. They share articles, videos, podcasts, and other forms of content through social media platforms. Their goal is simple – to reach a large number of users and draw attention to their media. It is also worth paying attention to the speed of information dissemination because in this aspect social networks are currently without competition.

It is in social networks that online media can interact the most with their own audience. Users comment on publications, share their opinions, and participate in discussions. Such interaction promotes dialogue and allows the mass media to understand the needs and interests of their audience. In turn, journalists can use social media platforms to gather information, find sources and find breaking news. One of the biggest advantages of social networks for online media is the promptness of providing information and quick feedback from the audience<sup>9</sup>.

In order to post news on the site, it takes time to process information and write and design content. At the same time, it only takes a few minutes to publish breaking news on social networks. These are mostly short messages of a few sentences, sometimes with attached photos and videos. That is why during the full-scale invasion of Russia, almost all online media expanded their pages on social networks and instant messengers. In this way, mass media expand their audience

7 A. Bodnar, *Social networks as a tool of formation of internal and external branding of the territory*, Donetsk National University, Political Management, 2012, [https://ipiend.gov.ua/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/bodnar\\_sotsialni.pdf](https://ipiend.gov.ua/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/bodnar_sotsialni.pdf) [2012].

8 *From which social networks do Ukrainians get information?*, Poll, Ukrainian Pravda, 15 February 2022.

9 T.M. Plekhanova, *Social networks as the newest platform for promotion of media content*, <https://cutt.ly/RwuwYiU> [w.d.].

and quickly inform them about current events and the latest news on the battlefield, in the country, and the international arena.

## **2. Social media in a time of war: truth vs platform politics**

The first ethical principle that a journalist should rely on during an attack on his/her country is to help the army win and support the fighting spirit of the society. Everything that goes beyond these tasks, the journalist simply has no right to publish. This will not always be consistent with journalistic standards, but war is a serious matter that can partly explain the departure from accepted rules.

This opinion is supported by journalists Stanislav Yurchenko, Tetiana Bezruk, and Stanislav Kozlyuk, who spent a lot of time in the war zone. They outlined several rules that journalists should follow, and one of the main ones is to listen to the military and law enforcement officers, to follow their orders. It is also worth understanding that it is the army and law enforcement that directly fight the aggressor, therefore, during war, the information vector is set by them.

Russia's full-scale attack on Ukraine on 24 February 2022, vividly demonstrated that Ukrainian journalists in general have learned to cover hostilities since Russia's annexation of Crimea and parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in 2014. However, some media workers and officials could not cope with the psychological pressure and acted according to the rule "I say what I know". This led to the fact that the enemy could adjust their fire simply by monitoring the Ukrainian mass media and social networks, and the number of innocent victims increased. With this in mind, in the future, it is worth opening a wider discussion about how to convey the truth to a wide audience in wartime without endangering any human life.

"Entertain or Enlighten?" asked Ajai K. Rai in 2000, seeking an answer to the question of the role of the media in times of war<sup>10</sup>. It is an interesting perspective because war and entertainment do not go hand in hand. This especially applies to the ethical aspect because the

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<sup>10</sup> *Media at War: Issues and Limitations*, Ajai K. Rai, *Strategic Analysis: A Monthly Journal of the Institute for defense studies and analysis (IDSA)*, December 2000, vol. 24, no. 9.

negative emotions provoked by war are incompatible with entertainment. But in practice, we see examples that make us reconsider this position. For example, the Ukrainian military can publish videos of their successful actions, superimposing music, comments, and other special effects.

Accordingly, footage that may contain scenes of violence may be accompanied by entertaining special effects. Can the media publish such content? From an ethical point of view – no, because of the violent scenes. But the reality we find ourselves in because of the war is just that, so are we not distorting our perception of it by simply blocking out some information?

By attacking Ukraine, Russia posed a challenge not only to Ukrainian democracy but also to the entire civilized world. In view of this, the Ukrainian media faced a challenge: if the observance of standards and norms could not prevent armed aggression, how would the established rules of the game allow the aggressor to stand by? How far can we deviate from generally accepted norms, which are an important marker of the quality of our work? And do we have such a right at all?

The difference now is that the rhetoric and discussions in the infospace are decisive. They form the fighting spirit of the military, promote the unity of society, and send signals to Ukraine's partners, without whose help the resistance to Russia would not be so successful and effective. Ukrainian media have to balance and seek answers to many professional questions simply in the vortex of war. The correctness of decisions can be assessed in the future, but now we have to look for options that will cause the least damage.

With the help of empirical analysis, it was possible to determine the patterns of informational pretexts, which Russia uses to try and shake Ukraine and the faith of its allies in its ability to resist. It was also possible to define basic general rules that will help journalists not only to avoid mistakes but also to be as effective as possible. The study is also designed to help media workers avoid ethical dilemmas in working during a war against their country.

Social networks often block the content of media and average users. Here, first of all, we are talking about the so-called hate speech. Hate speech often manifests itself in offensive statements, obsessive stereotypes, threats, harassment, or spreading false information with

the aim of inciting enmity. It has a wide variety of distribution channels and one of the largest is social networks.

In the context of war, it is important to distinguish hate speech from freedom of expression. During the course of the war, it was extremely important that the media and social media users had the right to express opinions, ideas, and tell the terrible truth about the war<sup>11</sup>.

One of the most striking restrictions on the right to expression was the situation when the Facebook and Instagram platforms began to block photos of mass killings in the Kyiv region, which caused public outrage. Content posted under the hashtags #Bucha, #BuchaMassacre, #GenocideOfUkrainians, etc., was massively deleted from social networks<sup>12</sup>.

The spread of misinformation on social networks has become one of the more serious problems faced by the Ukrainian mass media. Spreading false or misleading information has a significant impact and creates serious problems. Numerous studies have highlighted the alarming spread of misinformation on social networks. For example, the study by Vosoughi, S., Roy, D., and Aral, S, which deals with the spread of false information on Twitter. The authors found that fake news spreads much faster and reaches more people than true stories. The study emphasises the need to address the problem of disinformation to protect the integrity of information in the digital space<sup>13</sup>.

As we have already noted, media pages on social networks are under a lot of pressure, this happens in particular due to the imperfection of automatic algorithms and the low-quality moderation process on the part of social networks (for example, a lack of understanding of the country's internal context). However, there is another reason for the intensive activity of Russian bots, which often complain about (pro)Ukrainian publications<sup>14</sup>.

11 *What is hate speech and how to counter it*, NV, 13 November 2021, [https://nv.ua/ukr/spec/mova-vorozhnechi-shcho-ce-shcho-robiti-yakshcho-ti-jiji-zhertva-yak-karayetsya-50195594.html?utm\\_content=set\\_lang](https://nv.ua/ukr/spec/mova-vorozhnechi-shcho-ce-shcho-robiti-yakshcho-ti-jiji-zhertva-yak-karayetsya-50195594.html?utm_content=set_lang) [13.11.2021].

12 *The company Meta explained why Facebook and Instagram block hashtags about Bucha and photos of the city*, Ukrainian Pravda, 05 April 2022, <https://cutt.ly/EwuwUvMX> [5.04.2022].

13 S. Vosoughi, D. Roy, S. Aral, *The spread of true and false news online*, "Science" 2018, vol. 359, no. 6380, <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.aap9559>.

14 *Limitation of Ukrainian content on social networks: metamorphosis after Russian aggression*, CE-DEM, 15 June 2023, <https://cedem.org.ua/analytics/obmezheniya-u-sotsmerezah/> [15.06.2023].

The politics of social networks provoked an ethical dilemma for Ukrainian journalists. Every journalist is called to cover the truth, especially during the war period. Instead, blocking sensitive content to protect the audience's feelings is also understandable. Therefore, the question arises, what is more important, the truth or the feelings of the audience? Currently, everyone finds the answer to this question for themselves, however, it needs further study.

### **3. Online mass media management of social networks during war: the moral and ethical aspects of journalists' work**

It is the professional duty of every journalist to provide accurate and verified information<sup>15</sup>. A media worker has a double responsibility when he/she writes about war, especially in their own country. Journalists must exercise maximum vigilance when publishing material on social networks, where information spreads at lightning speed, so even a small inaccuracy can have an impact on a large audience<sup>16</sup>.

Thoughtful and balanced management of social networks must comply with the current legislation of Ukraine and the ethical requirements for journalistic materials.

The journalistic ethics of war coverage by online media on social networks is a topical theme since it is digital technologies that dictate the rules of the game in the field of disseminated information today. It is extremely important for journalists and media organisations to understand what content is permissible to create and distribute without harming the audience.

In order to prevent the publication of information that could influence the course of the war and help the enemy, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted Law No. 7189 on 24 March 2022, which limits the rights of the population to publish certain data about military operations on social networks.

15 *Professional journalism standards: information guide*, IMI, 27 February 2020, <https://imi.org.ua/advices/profesijni-zhurnalistski-standarty-normatyvna-dovidka-i31933> [27.02.2020].

16 *Journalist[s?] on social networks. Recommendations for the media*, IMI, 14 January 2020, <https://imi.org.ua/advices/zhurnalist-u-sotsialnyh-merezah-rekomendatsiyi-dlya-media-i31209> [14.01.2020].



The legislative body of Ukraine created a list of what exactly is prohibited from being published:

- photos or information about missiles flying or hitting a target, without official confirmation from the authorities;
- movement of Ukrainian military personnel and any military facilities;
- anti-aircraft defence work;
- places of shelling or projectile impact;
- any link, location, or coordinates of army battles;
- numbers of cars and armoured vehicles of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the police, volunteers, and other structures related to military operations;
- injured or killed before the official data are released.

Violation of these norms is punishable by a prison term in accordance with the Criminal Code of Ukraine<sup>17</sup>.

The Code of Professional Ethics of Ukrainian Journalists, adopted at the 10th Congress of the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine in April 2002<sup>18</sup>, operates in Ukraine. One of the basic rules that every media must follow is the prohibition of disseminating information related to military secrets<sup>19</sup>.

When publishing any information on social media, a journalist must be guided by the standards of humanity and truth<sup>20</sup>. The Deputy Minister of Defence of Ukraine, Hanna Malyar, asks journalists: “First of all, there should be respect for the dead and their families. Social networks and tact are incompatible, less so, it is better to wait until the brigade (commander) officially confirms the identity of the deceased”<sup>21</sup>.

17 *Draft Law on Amendments to the Criminal and Criminal Procedural Codes of Ukraine to ensure counteraction to unauthorized dissemination of information on the sending or transfer of international military aid to Ukraine, the movement, transfer, or placement of the Armed Forces of Ukraine or other military formations of Ukraine, committed during a state of war or state of emergency*, Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2160-IX, 24 March 2022.

18 *Code of ethics of a Ukrainian journalist*, NSJU, <https://cje.org.ua/ethics-codex/> [13.12.2013].

19 *Ethical principles of a journalist's work: Western experience*. Institute of Mass Information, International Organization for the Protection of Freedom of Speech Reporters Without Borders, 2002.

20 *Journalism in Conflict: Best Practices and Recommendations: A Handbook of Recommendations for Media Workers*, BAITE, Kyiv 2016.

21 *The MINISTRY of Defence was called to wait for the official confirmation of the identity of the shot Ukrainian military*, IMI, 7 March 2023, <https://imi.org.ua/news/u-minoborony-zaklykaly-dochekatysya-ofitsijnogo-pidtverdzhennya-osoby-rozstrilyanogo-ukrayinskogo-i51248> [7.03.2023].

In cases when the news is of great social importance, but there is no possibility to contact the relatives, and the information about the death of a military or civilian has not yet been notified to the relatives or has not been made public on official resources, the face of the person who died should be obscured in the photo<sup>22</sup>.

Another ethical recommendation is important for online media – the prohibition of using unverified information from social networks (about losses or active enemy attacks). Such information can cause panic among the population and play into the hands of the enemy.

An important aspect that cannot be dispensed with when broadcasting news about the war to the masses is the description and publication of photos and videos of human casualties. Posting overly disturbing images that depict violence or suffering is generally not appropriate for social media<sup>23</sup>. Such content can be traumatizing to viewers and lacks appropriate context or sensitivity to victims.

Also, the media must demonstrate the horror and brutality of the war that Russia is waging against Ukraine. This is a reality that the audience must be informed about. However, publishing photos with sensitive content can annoy relatives who have lost close family or demoralize the population.

For example, the media, which distributed on social networks a video without hiding the face of a Ukrainian prisoner of war shot on camera by the Russians, grossly violated the Code of Ethics of a Ukrainian journalist.

On 6 March 2023, a video of the execution of a Ukrainian soldier was shared on social networks. The video shows a man in a Ukrainian military uniform standing, smoking a cigarette and looking into the Russians' camera. Behind the frame, the voice of one of the Russian soldiers can be heard saying "Take him down", referring to the chevron. In response, the soldier of the Armed Forces says, "Glory

22 *Statement of the CJEU regarding the release of a video of the execution of a Ukrainian prisoner of war*, CJE 13 March 2023, <https://cje.org.ua/statements/zaiava-kzhe-shchodo-opryliudnennia-video-rozstrilu-ukrainskoho-viyskovopolonenoho/> [13.03.2023].

23 *Media and war: features of the dissemination of information and photos during martial law*, Human Rights Platform, <https://www.ppl.org.ua/zmi-i-vijna-osoblivosti-poshirennya-informaci%D1%97-ta-foto-pid-chas-voyennogo-stanu.html> [24.11.2023].

to Ukraine!”. After these words, an automatic volley rang out, which killed the Ukrainian soldier<sup>24</sup>.

When describing losses, one should think about acceptable vocabulary. You cannot use the words “corpses”, “dead”, or “killed” people. Such materials should focus on presenting facts and context without harmful emotional colouring. By not following such ethical recommendations, journalists violate accepted ethical codes and contribute to Russian propaganda, the purpose of which is to sow panic, fear, and anxiety among Ukrainians<sup>25</sup>.

Online media’s social networks should not become a platform for or exploit the suffering of individuals or communities to increase the number of views. When publishing news, a journalist must remember dignity and respect. One of the most high-profile cases of non-compliance with ethical standards is the post by RAI News 24 journalist Anton Kudinov, who published a series of videos on Facebook with Iryna Dmitrieva, a woman who lost her daughter and was seriously injured during a rocket attack on Vinnytsia on 14 July 2022.

The official representative of the media took advantage of the psychological state of the woman. In particular, in one of the videos, a woman in tears watches a video with her still-living daughter. Due to numerous complaints, Kudinov’s first post was deleted by Facebook, but he published these materials again. Thus, the journalist neglected the principles of professional ethics, which do not allow taking advantage of victims in a state of shock, and his actions could further traumatize the mother of the dead girl<sup>26</sup>.

24 *Statement of the CJEU regarding the release of a video of the execution of a Ukrainian prisoner of war*, CJEU, 13 March 2023, <https://cje.org.ua/statements/zaiava-kzhe-shchodo-opryliudnennia-video-rozstrilu-ukrainskoho-viyskovopolonenohto/> [13.03.2023].

25 *Recommendations of the CJEU on the coverage of the death of people during the war*, CJEU, 04 May 2022, <https://cje.org.ua/statements/rekomendatsii-kzhe-shchodo-vysvitlennia-zahybeli-liudey-pid-chas-viyyny/?fbclid=IwAR2a0eGD02MznTa2S9y4l6xgLO7m5XnbbJkvaJ82wmmwMelnhbJxOSFtqr6U> [4.05.2022].

26 *The RAI News 24 fixer posted a video with the mother of the girl who died in Vinnytsia on social media*, Detector Media, 16 May 2022, <https://detector.media/community/article/201059/2022-07-16-fikser-rai-news-24-vyklav-u-sotsmerezhi-video-z-matiryu-zagybloi-u-vinnytsi-divchynky/> [16.05.2022].

## Conclusions

The emergence of social networks has revolutionized the way conflicts are covered and discussed, opening up new opportunities and challenges for ethical journalism.

According to a study of 57 national and local media conducted by the Media Development Foundation, almost half of Ukrainian mass media had problems with the restrictions that the social network Facebook imposed on their pages. In particular, they were restricted from monetization, use of advertising, and organic reach of content. The reason for such steps taken by the social network is content from the front line and publications that used trigger words (for example, *Muscovites*<sup>27</sup>).

When Russia launched its full-scale war against Ukraine, content moderators on social networks began blocking content about military aggression in an attempt to preserve the previous rules. This is especially true for the Meta platforms – Facebook and Instagram. In order to better respond to events that occur in real life, these social networks should work better on the policy of moderating Ukrainian content<sup>28</sup>.

Russia's war against Ukraine is characterised as the most documented on the Internet<sup>29</sup>. It was also called the biggest war online<sup>30</sup>. This became possible thanks to the Ukrainian media community, which actively covers the course of military events, in particular, on social networks.

But many Ukrainians complain about Facebook and Instagram's restrictions on content about the Russian invasion. This is evidenced

27 *Red light for Ukrainian news. Why and how Facebook limits local media pages – analytic report*, Media development foundation, 2022, <https://research.mediadevelopmentfoundation.org/fb-2022.html#intro> [2022].

28 *Facebook and Instagram can block you if you post about war. Why?*, Radio Svoboda, 2 November 2022, <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/facebook-meta-instagram-blocking-ukraine-war-russia/32112013.html> [2.11.2022].

29 *How Ukrainians have used social media to humiliate the Russians and rally the world*, The Washington Post, 1 March 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2022/03/01/social-media-ukraine-russia/> [1.03.2022].

30 *Online discourse in times of war: Analysing the social media conversation around Ukraine*, Democracy reporting international, 9 January 2023, <https://democracy-reporting.org/en/office/ukraine/publications/online-discourse-in-times-of-war-analysing-the-social-media-conversation-around-Ukraine> [9.01.2023].

by the fact that since 24 February 2022, the amount of blocked content of Ukrainians and their accounts has increased significantly.

In social networks, online media can gather their audience, quickly convey information, and receive feedback from their readers. However, on the other hand, they contribute to the spread of fakes, misinformation, manipulation, and panic.

“Finding a balance between the public importance of information and the risk that this information may cause harm through publication is one of the challenges for Ukrainian journalists covering the events of the war. Compliance with professional standards – for example, efficiency, accuracy, reliability – is not enough to find the right solution in a particular situation. And here, the key role is played by the ethical norms that guide the journalist”, says Lina Kush, the first secretary of the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine<sup>31</sup>.

Ethical management of social networks by online media involves compliance with a number of principles and practices. This is compliance with accepted ethical principles and moral standards. All material and posts must meet the requirements of current Ukrainian legislation. Journalists must verify information from multiple sources before publishing or sharing it.

Dissemination of misinformation, rumours, or unverified claims that could lead to confusion and harm public confidence as well as cause panic or distrust, both in the media and among the Ukrainian authorities, should be avoided. The hybrid war waged by Russia against Ukraine works precisely for this purpose<sup>32</sup>.

Online media must promptly correct any errors or inaccuracies and provide rebuttals. This helps maintain trust and fosters a culture of responsible journalism online.

Another important aspect of social networks is the management of comments, which requires responsible moderation. Online media editors should set clear guidelines for comments and interactions with

31 *Self-regulation of Ukrainian media during martial law in Ukraine. From work experience Committees on journalistic ethics: Analytical and reference collection* / For general, L. Kuzmenko, L. Kush, M. Dvorovoy, O. Pogorelova (eds.), <https://detector.media/community/article/201059/2022-07-16-fikserai-news-24-vyklad-u-sotsmerezhi-video-z-matiryu-zagybloi-u-vinnytsi-divchynky/> [16.07.2022].

32 *Educational practices for infodemic prevention*, USAID, Internews, Ukrainian Press Academy, [https://nus.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/POSIBNYK\\_Osvitni-praktyky-iz-zapobigannya-infodemiy2.pdf](https://nus.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/POSIBNYK_Osvitni-praktyky-iz-zapobigannya-infodemiy2.pdf) [24.11.2023].

users, ensuring that discussions remain respectful and constructive. Hate speech, threats, or any form of discriminatory language should not be tolerated.

The media should prioritize verifying information from multiple reliable sources before publishing or sharing content on social media. Fact-checking and cross-referencing information can help combat the spread of misinformation and support journalistic integrity.

The media must be transparent about their sources and methodology when covering war-related events. Clearly defining the limitations and uncertainties of information can help the audience understand the complexity of the situation and avoid spreading unverified or misleading content.

It's important to provide context when you talk about war-related incidents. Media organizations should strive to provide comprehensive history, historical context, and geopolitical factors to help audiences better understand the complexity of the conflict and avoid simplistic or biased narratives.

Media should actively engage with their audience on social media platforms, facilitating dialogue, and responding to questions or concerns. This approach promotes transparency, builds trust, and allows for a more detailed understanding of the conflict.

By implementing these practical guidelines, media organizations can promote responsible and ethical coverage of war on social media, ensuring accurate dissemination of information and contributing to a more informed public discourse.

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Health security is a value, the object of political practice and cognition. Its emergence at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries confirms the broadening of the subjective and objective scope of security, determined by the change of social reality and by new threats. In recent decades, this process has accelerated, thereby contributing to an increase in the number of non-military dimensions of security resulting from the securitization of threats specific to each dimension. In the 21st century, in addition to terrorism, the highest dynamic – the height of which was the Covid-19 pandemic – was shown by public health threats. Their cross-border nature made them an international security dimension, also essential for the national security of states.

The paper proposes to classify health security as one of the non-military security dimensions of a second generation, acknowledging that the first generation is the five dimensions proposed by the Copenhagen School after the end of the Cold War. The second generation is security dimensions determined first of all by globalization processes, their specific narrowing of time and space, and by people's mobility. The criterion for distinguishing between the two generations is the different quality (the end of the Cold War, globalization processes) of independent variables at the level of the international system that determine the securitized security threats.

Marek Pietraś, *International health security*

War-themed video games have become widely popular in Ukraine since Russia's invasion. These games offer players the chance to combat the invaders and defeat the enemy himself in various ways. A large number of these games incorporate real-life events and sources, making them emotionally impactful and resonant with players. It is evident that computer games have become a significant component of the mass media landscape. Under the conditions of media convergence, video games can be evaluated as alternative media tools for informing the community, and for their emotional impact on public consciousness to oppose militarism, racism, and totalitarianism. In the future, such creative media strategies will contribute to the speedy recovery, digital transformation, and consolidation of society in building a new [more] humane world. With the ongoing development of the digital society, the information explosion, the widespread adoption of online education because of the pandemic, and the threats of war, video games are showing great potential as journalistic tools and a means of professional training for journalists and other professionals.

Tetiana Zinovieva

*War in Ukraine through the lens of interactive media: A typological study of video games*