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# Political Reputation As an Analytical Category in Political Communication

## A Comparative Analysis of the Political Reputations of the Civic Platform–Polish People’s Party and the United Right in Poland

BARBARA BRODZIŃSKA-MIROWSKA\*

### Abstract

The article analyses the political reputations of the two coalitions that ruled Poland from 2007 to 2023. Political communication is most often explored from the perspective of political marketing, less so from the point of view of political public relations, especially in its long-term-goal-oriented strategic dimension. This partially explains why analyses of political reputation are rare; yet reputation is worth considering in the study of political communication, not only that of individual political actors but also of institutions – political parties and governments.

The analyses presented in this article examine communication skills. They aim to determine the political reputations of the two coalitions and identify the factors that could have influenced them. Particular emphasis is placed on communication issues, especially the potential maintenance of political reputation. The analyses were carried out on data publicly available as part of CBOS reports and existing research on party political communication, the aim being to determine and compare the political reputations of the Civic Platform–Polish People’s Party, CP-PPP (Polish: Platforma Obywatelska – Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe) and United Right (UR) (Polish: Zjednoczona Prawica) governments. The results reveal that the populist government of the United Right maintained a positive reputation for much longer than CP-PPP, despite facing many image-related threats during its tenure. The CP-PPP government could have been more effective in maintaining its political reputation, even though it started from a higher initial level.

*Keywords:* political reputation; political public relations; mediated political communication; populism communication

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## 1. Introduction

Political reputation is rarely discussed in the context of political communication and even less studied (Brodzińska-Mirowska, 2013; Brodzińska-Mirowska & Jacuński, 2022; Schnee, 2015; Browning & Sweetser, 2020). This is mainly due to the advanced process of mediatizing politics. In everyday communication, political actors have primarily short-term goals, while reputation is the result of long-term activities. There is no broader reflection, either theoretical or empirical, on the usefulness of this category in analysing the process of political communication, its management or its effects. There are, however, several reasons for considering political reputation as an additional analytical category in political communication research. Firstly, it can help find ways out of the second wave of the crisis of political communication in social practice (Brodzińska-Mirowska, 2022) and from the kind of impasse in research on political communication that has been signalled for several years (Nielsen, 2014). Secondly, the importance of political reputation and its role will increase (as is happening in commerce), mainly due to the challenges of new communication technologies, artificial intelligence, information bubbles, micro-targeting, disinformation and neopropaganda. All these phenomena significantly affect the political and communication processes, reducing their quality. They were particularly prominent in the case of Brexit, Donald Trump's victory in the USA in 2016, the strengthening of populist movements in Europe and, finally, during the war in Ukraine in 2022. Thirdly, political reputation can be helpful to researchers analysing relations between voters and politicians, especially in the context of the aforementioned phenomena. Reputation in politics is of great importance because 'voters with particularly low issue or political involvement may rely on political party reputation as a heuristic cue to process issue information' (Browning & Sweetser, 2020, p. 2).

Reputation is also essential because of the requirements faced by politicians in the fourth era of political communication (Blumler, 2016). The attention paid to reputation changes the perception of permanent actions in political communication. Despite the ever-significant roles of traditional and online media, the permanent campaign of the fourth era of communication must go beyond the aspect of media activity. Finally, political reputation is important because of the low level of trust voters have for politicians, which is fundamental to the quality of both democracy and political communication in a crisis (Brodzińska-Mirowska & Jacuński, 2022; Brodzińska-Mirowska, 2013; Pfetsch, 2023).

The analyses presented in this article are exploratory. The considerations are therefore focused on the research problem related to showing the possibility of researching and analysing the issue of political reputation in Poland. The article aims to show the potential of reputation as a theoretical and analytical factor in political communication.

Studies of Poland offer an exciting contribution to the analysis of political reputation, as there it is mainly influenced by political and social issues and may present a useful comparative example when analysing political reputation in other Central and Eastern European countries. As a post-communist country, Poland has gone through a long and fruitful path of transformation, as have other countries in the region (Piatkowski, 2018). In addition to the epistemological aspect, the analysis aims to compare the political

reputation of the two coalition governments that ruled Poland from 2007 to 2023: Civic Platform (Platforma Obywatelska) in coalition with the Polish People's Party (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe) – CP-PPP – and the United Right (UR) (Zjednoczona Prawica). Both the main parties of these governments, i.e., Civic Platform (PO) in CP-PPP and Law and Justice (PiS) in URs had the experience of holding two terms of government. To frame the objectives of the analysis, the following research questions were formulated:

*RQ 1: What were the political reputations of the CP-PPP and UR government coalitions in 2007 to 2023?*

*RQ 2: What factors determined the political reputations of the two governments?*

The following sections briefly indicate the socio-political context within which political reputation is analysed. Next, the theoretical framework of considerations is presented. In the methodological part, the analytical framework of the analysis is indicated along with a detailed description. The results of the study and its main conclusions are presented in the last part of the article.

## 2. The social and political context of researching the political reputation of parties in Poland

In this introduction, I briefly outline issues related to socio-political divisions in Poland to show the socio-political context, which is important in understanding the specificities of the political communication process and its effectiveness in shaping political reputation.

Law and Justice won the 2015 parliamentary elections with 37.5% of the vote (Markowski, 2016, p. 4). In a very coherent and consistent election campaign, the party effectively 'demobilised part of the electorate of the governing coalition' (Markowski, 2016, p. 2, see also Markowski, 2019). Law and Justice identified the needs and expectations of its electorate very well. This ability to diagnose and simply respond to voters' problems is common to many populist parties (Sawczuk, 2018). When in opposition, the party worked very consistently to consolidate the community, reaching its target groups very accurately with its message and political offer (Sadura & Sierakowski 2023; Gdula, 2020; Markowski & Kotnarowski, 2016). The period after 2015 is qualified as the fourth wave of populism (Stępińska et al., 2016).

Within a few years of the start of the PiS-led government, Poland consistently fell in democracy and media freedom rankings (Reporters Without Borders, 2022; the Economist Intelligence Unit, 2022). The CEE countries are diverse when it comes to the quality of democracy. As Ben Stanley points out, 'these differences notwithstanding, it is clear that the quality and durability of democracy in the region [was] more fragile and provisional than commonly assumed' (Stanley, 2019, p. 344; see also Pirro & Stanley, 2021) and in Poland 'led to a decline in the quality of democracy swifter and steeper than that observed in Hungary' (Stanley, 2019, p. 349). Law and Justice – the main party of the ruling coalition –

‘marries nativism and cultural conservatism with redistributive policies aimed at correcting social inequalities through state action, and thoroughgoing reform of Poland’s political-institutional architecture’ (Stanley & Stanley, 2020, p. 5). Violating the foundations of the liberal democratic order in Poland is a manifestation of the ‘hollowness and weak embeddedness of both liberal-democratic institutions and the norms that sustain them’ (Pirro & Stanley, 2021, p. 97; see also Sadurski, 2019).

The sources of the various crises of democracy, despite similarities, are different. The social, political, historical and economic context matters (see Klein, 2022; Kohut, 2022). As Tomasz Zarzycki (2000, pp. 851–873) emphasises, Poland stands out among the CEE countries (which have similar experience) in terms of its socio-political characteristics. Analyses of the process of shaping Poland’s electorates and political divisions after 1989 showed the importance of assessing the course of transformation and historical events (post-communism – post-Solidarity, left-right division). These factors were important in the 1990s and in the first decade of the 21st century (Zarzycki, 2000, p. 852). However, that decade was the time when the division into ‘liberal Poland and Solidarity Poland’ was established. This division proved to be very durable and supportive of social polarisation (Obacz, 2018). It is worth remembering that in this form the slogan of liberal Poland vs. Solidarity Poland appeared in the election campaign in 2005, in the competition between CP and Law and Justice (Kolczyński & Mazur, 2005; Cześnik & Kotnarowski, 2011).

Analyses by Bogusława Grabowska and Tadeusz Szawiel showed that electoral behaviour is explained most precisely by the cognitive relation hypothesis. First of all, this assumes, as the author argues, that people have knowledge of the party and its leaders, and that the party and its leaders send a clear and understandable message to the voters (Grabowska & Szawiel, 2001, p. 205). It seems that this hypothesis is of great interpretative importance to this day.

The left-right dimension used in the analysis of political divisions changes in character. However, it is still a noteworthy reference point because ‘it is associated with many beliefs about the world, values, political and social attitudes, and even experienced emotions’ (Skarżyńska, 2019, pp. 184–185). The value-oriented approach is becoming increasingly popular as an essential factor around which voters structure their attitudes towards politics. Much research and many analyses indicate that values allow organized political attitudes to a greater extent than ideologies (see also Borowiec, 2021; Borowiec, 2022; Kwiatkowska, 2018). Therefore, they are also an essential point of reference for political communication.

The characteristics of the electors in Poland after 2015 visible in the research indicate that the electorate of Law and Justice appreciates values such as ‘justice, discipline and loyalty’. The Civic Platform electorate leans towards such values as ‘openness, curiosity about the world, a sense of agency and effectiveness’ (Skarżyńska, 2019, p. 186). The electorates of the two largest parties differ in this regard. This perspective of political psychologists finds points of convergence with those of sociology, political science and communication science. Radosław Markowski and Ben Stanley defend the thesis that it was only in the middle of the first decade of the 21st century, i.e., after 2005, that the ‘structuring of electoral preferences’ could be observed in Poland. Reserving caution, the researchers point to the loyalty of the electors towards parties that are close to them for various reasons (Markowski & Stanley 2016, pp. 35–36).

This proximity of electorates and parties is not ideologically conditioned but primarily emotional. Agnieszka Kwiatkowska emphasizes this relationship in her analyses. She indicates that the topics that evoke emotions and divide Polish society most are abortion, the European Union and issues related to the Catholic Church. In addition, in 2015, the issue of immigrants also became a divisive topic (Kwiatkowska, 2018, p. 31). In a democracy, civic quality is influenced by political knowledge. Voters with more excellent political knowledge are rather oriented towards programmes. On the other hand, those whose political knowledge is more complex do not refer to ideological issues but to thematic ones concerning cognitively accessible issues (Kwiatkowska, 2018, pp. 9–35). In Poland, research shows that the level of political knowledge is relatively low (see Żerkowska-Balas et al., 2017, pp. 7–31; Czeńnik & Wenzel, 2018, pp. 103–123).

Therefore, it is worth looking at both governments in this context, especially from the perspective of their reputation as a category explaining their political position. This may be a noteworthy point for comparative analyses of researchers in the field of political communication as well as political science, especially in Central and Eastern Europe.

### 3. Theoretical background and analytical framework

The theoretical framework for my analysis was primarily derived from the political communication and public relations literature. Political communication is a very complex type of social communication (Lilleker & Jackson, 2011; Mancini, 1999; Schulz, 2014, Van Aelst et al., 2017; Wojcik, 2013, Blumler, 2016, 2019; Pfetsch, 2008). Richard Perloff defines this type of communication as ‘the process by which language and symbols, employed by leaders, media or citizens, exert intended or unintended effects on the political cognitions, attitudes or behaviours of individuals or on outcomes that bear on the public policy of a nation, state or community’ (Perloff, 2014, p. 30). It is a complex process, dependent on the context and political culture; the media significantly impact its course. Political communication is defined by researchers in two ways, either as a broad process or as a process of particular importance during an election campaign (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995; Blumler, 2016; Perloff, 2014; Powell & Cowart, 2018). The latter sense is still dominant in research. As a consequence, the analysis of political communication is dominated by the marketing perspective (Lees-Marshment, 2009; Ormrod, 2006; Newman, 1999; Scammell, 1999). Political marketing tools are useful when focusing on short-term communication and political goals. The long-term view when it comes to political communication research is much less frequently taken. From this perspective, it is about the transaction (choice) and about building trust and reputation among voters, as well as maintaining relationships with them. These public relations include focusing on a long-term goal, which is shaping relationships with the organisation, and these relationships translate into reputation (Grunig & Hung-Baesecke, 2015, pp. 63–74; Bronn, 2007; Wojcik 2013; for more, see Brodzinska-Mirowska & Jacuński, 2022, pp. 105–118). Public relations is defined here in the strategic paradigm of James Grunig. This means that ‘what an organisation does [...] has a strong influence on what people think and say about it (its

reputation) and the relationship they have with that organisation. [...] Public relations must play a role in managing the behaviour of an organisation through the strategic management process, to have an effective role in the “managing” of reputation or relationships’ (Grunig & Hung-Baesecke, 2015, p. 74). Following this line of thinking, I understand public relations in the context of the considerations undertaken here as communication activities aimed at such goals as:

- Qualitative ties between political parties and voters.
- Changing voters’ attitudes towards political parties.
- Building trust.
- Improving communication quality, including relations with the media.

These are essential goals for both the quality of political communication and the quality of democracy. Improving the quality of democracy and the quality of communication (especially journalism) in times of crisis are becoming among the most critical challenges today (see McNair, 2000, 2015; Pfetsch, 2023). A look at political communication from the perspective of PR raises questions about reputation in politics. Some theoretical remarks are in order.

The review of research positions reveals that reputation is understood primarily as the result of specific (1) ideas and (2) emotions concerning the organisation, as well as (3) expectations and (4) their implementation. Kerstin Liehr-Gobbers and Christopher Storck define reputation as: ‘the collective perception of a company or institution through its stakeholders. It is the result of the exchange of personal and shared experiences between the organisation, its stakeholders and third parties over time’ (Liehr-Gobbers & Stock, 2011, p. 18). Researchers agree that this is a multidimensional concept. This means that organisations have different reputations with different groups of people (Helm, 2006, pp. 4–8; Grunig & Hung-Baesecke, 2015; Fiedler, 2011). Reputation is also a category that considers the long-term perspective of assessing the operation of an organisation and its communication (Helm, Gobbers & Storck, 2011; Lange & Lee, 2011; Gaultier-Gaillard, Louisot & Rayner, 2009). Therefore, reputation is the combination of effective action and strategic communication (Da Camara, 2011, p. 50). Sandra Helm and Christian Kolde explain: ‘reputation is an “umbrella” construct, capturing cumulative impressions of internal and external stakeholders beneath its “shield”’ (Helm & Klode, 2011, p. 99). In turn, as Steven Wartic emphasises, ‘the idea that corporate reputation is fundamentally a construct based on perceptions (even if there are problems) seems indisputable. [...] The empirical truth of corporate reputation comes from whatever the respondents say’ (Wartic, 2002, p. 375). Ronald Burke adds an important point: ‘reputation comes from direct experiences with an organisation, word of mouth, advertising and media coverage. It takes a considerable time to develop an outstanding reputation; yet reputations can be damaged in an instant’ (Burke, 2011, p. 6).

Trust must be added to these ideas, emotions, expectations, actions and experiences with an organisation (Helm, 2006; Blöbaum, 2016). Reputation can be analysed by taking into account three types: 1) functional – consisting of the evaluation of the action; 2) social – referring, for example, to the integrity of the organisation; and 3) expressive –

referring to the perception of an organisation or institution (Blöbaum, 2016: pp. 10–12). This approach is used in the case of political reputation because emotions, perception and the evaluation of the actions of political parties, governments and individual politicians are of great importance for politics and political communication (Brodzińska-Mirowska & Jacuński, 2022, pp. 141–178; see Migalski, 2020). Public relations, i.e., where reputation is discussed most often, is a concept often discussed in a political context (Seltzer & Zhang, 2011; Strömback & Kioussis, 2020). However, studies that directly refer to political reputation are still rare. Reputation is often treated as a synonym for political image (Scammell, 2015). Key differences need to be highlighted. The source of the concept of image is marketing. Reputation is a concept from the field of public relations. The image is the result of promotional activities. Reputation is based not only on the communication aspects of an organization, but also on its activities. Finally, the image may be subject to change. Reputation requires stability (Brodzińska-Mirowska, Jacuński 2022: 153).

Researchers analyse how media influence the perception of political parties and as a result how they affect their reputation (Browning & Sweetser, 2020). A broader discussion of political public relations and political reputation can be found in reputation building for individual politicians. Such an approach has been presented, for example, by Christian Schnee (2015). Finally, political reputation also shows the internal dynamics of political parties' functioning and thus organisations' political communication. Due to several challenges in studying political parties and their members, such an approach is also rare (Brodzińska-Mirowska & Jacuński, 2022). Reputation is also analysed in the context of the internal selection of candidates (Marland & DeCilla, 2020) or the impact it has on the possibility of using various competitive strategies at a time of political change (Hamann & Sgouraki, 1999). Taking this into account, it will be understood as 'how the target groups of key importance for political parties [...] perceive and evaluate their functioning and the effects of their activities' (Brodzińska-Mirowska & Jacuński, 2022, p. 154). It must be emphasised that in the case of voters – the group taken into account in these analyses – political reputation does not equal support for political parties. Therefore, it will be treated as one of its elements. Political reputation also comes with higher risk. This is mainly due to politicians' dependence on the media.

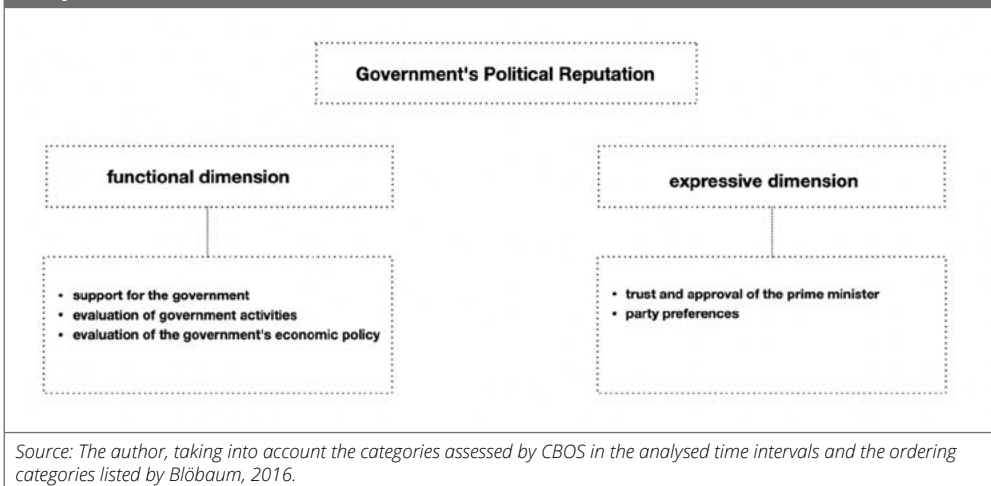
However, several factors play a role in reputation in politics, as is the case with commercial organisations. These are categorised as external, often independent of the party, and internal, related to the party's organization, management and communication (Brodzińska-Mirowska & Jacuński, 2022). The external factors determining reputation, apart from the media and the specificity of the narrative about politics, include the impact of the quality of communication on the actions taken by politicians, the political experience of leaders and the political culture of voters. Internal factors include the approach taken by parties to communication (not least during the inter-election period) and the extent to which parties cooperate with specialists in the field of communication (in Poland, this differs significantly from the models adopted by parties, for example, in the USA). As in other organisations, internal reputation matters – in the case of political organisations, reputation among its members (Brodzińska-Mirowska & Jacuński, 2022, p. 156). That is why it is so important in the analyses undertaken here to consider a broad context, which is essential for assessing the level of political reputation.

Based on the theoretical assumptions, the analysis was conducted taking into account two dimensions: functional and expressive.<sup>1</sup> As researchers rightly point out, reputation analysis requires the inclusion of possible indicators to evaluate specific groups (Fiedler, 2011; Dowling, 2016). It is worth considering the most critical components from the point of political communication view. Detailed indicators of both dimensions were selected from the database of research reports published several times a year by the CBOS public opinion research centre from 2007–2023. In the functional aspect, it was necessary to consider the results of research on voters' assessments and perceptions of government actions and the level of support for governments. One of the important aspects of the voters' assessment of politicians is economic issues. Therefore, in the functional dimension, voters' opinions on this were taken into account (Skarżyńska, 2019, p. 239).

In the expressive dimension, the existing research lists such data as measurements of trust in and acceptance of the prime minister. This is important due to the role of personalisation in politics and the importance of perceiving leaders in the context of their political parties (Mazur, 2014; Peszyński, 2023). I took into account preferences for all the parties which in 2007–2023 make up the government.

The research process consisted of three steps. Firstly, I collected data published by CBOS<sup>2</sup> in 2007–2015 and 2015–2023 (to August) on selected indicators, i.e., support for the party, acceptance of and trust in the prime minister, support for the government, the evaluation of the government's actions and opinions on economic policy. In the second step, I calculated the average of these indicators to estimate the level of reputation each year. I got my final reputation score by calculating the average of the annual reputation levels. In this way, I obtained the level of political reputation in both periods. In the case of the CP-PPP government, it was two full terms; in the case of the United Right, it was the entire first term, and the second term until August 2023. The analytical scheme according to which the reputation of both governments was analysed is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: The political reputations of the CP-PPP and UR governments – analytical framework**

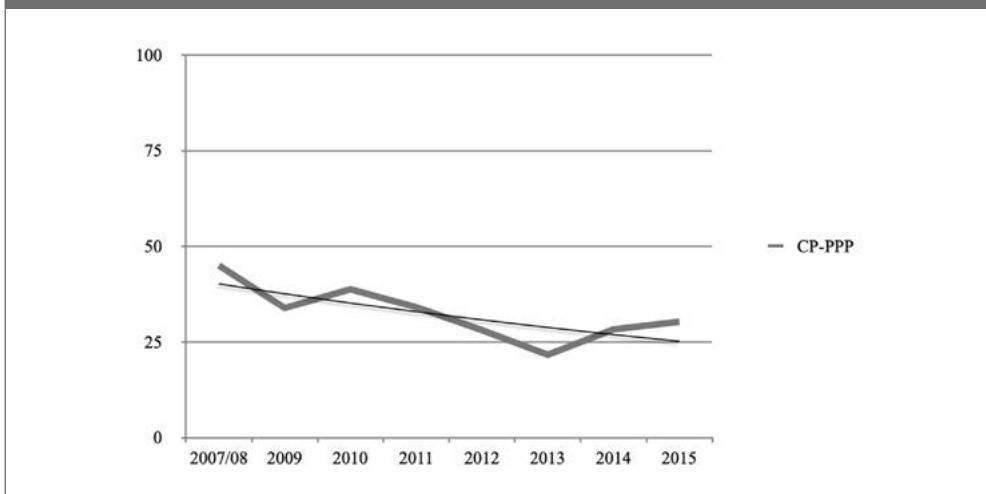


Analysis of the existing data allows the first research question to be answered. I will refer to the second research question on the basis of the literature on the subject, including the analysis of political parties' communication. In the course of the analysis, the results of my own research on the expectations voters had of the main political parties in the two governments, carried out as part of nationwide research, are also cited.<sup>3</sup>

#### 4. The results of the analysis

The political reputation of the CP-PPP government among voters, taking into account the functional and expressive dimensions, remained at a stable, relatively high level at the beginning of the first term of office. From the middle of this term a downward trend was visible in all analysed areas. The government suffered a fall in its reputation in the second year of office and another in the sixth year. This translated into an overall average reputation score of 32.5% in 2007–2015.<sup>4</sup> Distribution, along with the trend of the reputation level, is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: The level of political reputation of the CP-PPP government in its two terms, 2007–2015**



*Source: The author, based on the existing data concerning the analysed categories published by CBOS in 2007–2015.*

The CP-PPP government started with a reputation of 45.15%, slightly higher than the United Right government (see Table 3). The average level of reputation of the party in the analysed period was 32.5%. The first dip in political reputation occurred very soon after the start of the first government – in the second year of office. It is worth noting that, the reputation trend declined from the middle of the first term. The factor that caused the first decline in reputation was the economic crisis in 2008. Its effects were already visible in the second year in office when the average satisfaction with the financial situation was 26%. The

critical independent from the CP-PPP government, which shook this government's reputation, were the economic crisis and the 2010 presidential plane crash in Smolensk. Their political consequences were visible primarily in the solid and clear polarisation of Polish society. The first re-election of a government in the history of Poland after 1989 (in 2011) did not translate into an improvement in reputation. Another critical moment (2012) came with pension reform – the government raised the retirement age to 65 for women and 67 for men. This vital reform, however, needed to be constructively communicated and became a critical message point for the opposition (see also Markowski, 2016). The downward trend in reputation continued. The second drop in reputation level occurred in the second half of the second term of office due to the image crisis caused by the publication of tapes clandestinely made of ruling party politicians' talking. Even though the tapes turned out to be a recording of politicians' private conversations, representatives of the ruling party did not manage to overcome this image crisis in terms of communication.

The change of the prime minister in the CP-PPP government was inevitable at the end of the second term. Ewa Kopacz replaced Donald Tusk, who became president of the European Council. This change did not negatively affect the general level of the government's political reputation. The analyses showed the increase in its level in 2014, which can be explained by the refreshment of the party's image; the increase in the level of reputation didn't stop the downward trend of this government.

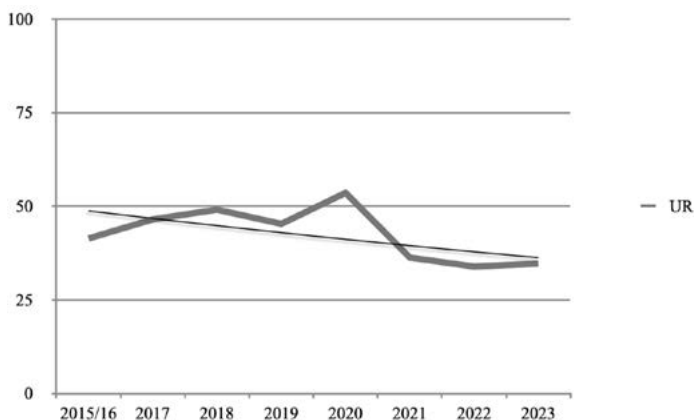
The main exogenous factors in maintaining a high reputation level are shortcomings in communication. This mainly concerns the issue of permanent communication, which was primarily focused on the media dimension (see Brodzińska-Mirowska, 2013). Despite a large expenditure of effort in this area of communication, the CP-PPP clearly had problems with creating a coherent and effective communication policy, especially covering large projects introducing changes, for example, increasing the retirement age. This government's communication policy was reactive – i.e., messages responded to communication stimuli – rather than proactive, thus actively framing the thematic agenda and interpretations.

The second internal factor that can be taken into account to determine the level of reputation is how political parties operate on the ground, at lower organisational levels, how party structures operate and how their members engage. This dimension proves that, the Civic Platform had fallen into the 'trap of mediatisation', neglecting those dimensions of communication that bring profits in the long run and are much easier to control. The research carried out shows that despite its extensive structures, the CP did not use its potential even during its rule. In turn, its coalition partner PPP was significantly more active in the structures, but in turn its ability to increase media visibility was therefore not great (Brodzińska-Mirowska & Winclawska, 2019; Winclawska & Brodzińska-Mirowska, 2016; Jacuński et al., 2021). Research on the party's reputation in the intra-organisational dimension after the CP lost the elections in 2015 showed that its reputation was the lowest of all the parties surveyed at that time (38.7%). The other coalition member, PPP, performed better in this field. The PPP enjoyed one of the best internal reputations of all Polish parties surveyed, 66% (Brodzińska-Mirowska & Jacuński, 2022, p. 167). Thus, a significant contributing factor was communication short-sightedness, and the fact that the communication activities were carried out in an ad hoc way, rather than coherently and strategically.

Initially, the United Right government enjoyed a reputation of 41.4%, which is only slightly lower than that of the CP-PPP government at the beginning of its rule. During its

time in office, the average level of reputation over the period considered was 42.6%. This is higher than the CP-PPP government. The reputation trend of the United Right government was very stable from the beginning of its first term in office. The good economic condition of the country, especially in the first term of office, made it possible to implement one of the critical election promises concerning social policy. These actions were transformed into an improvement in reputation and this trend continued throughout the first and much of the second term.

**Table 3: Political reputation of the government of the United Right in 2015–2023**



*Source: The author, based on the existing data concerning the analysed categories published by CBOS in 2015–2023.*

The communication of the Family 500+ programme to voters was widespread and sustained.<sup>5</sup> In this respect, the government of the United Right showed remarkable coherence and consistency and thus responded to one of the expectations of its electorate. Surveys of voter opinions, especially among Law and Justice voters, showed clearly that they expected election promises to be kept. Such an expectation was articulated by as many as 65.5% of respondents participating in the survey and declaring their support for Law and Justice.<sup>6</sup> The United Right government was very effective in managing communication crises, setting them apart from their opponents. During the analysed period, an apparent reputation crash occurred only once in 2020. The decline in reputation was very noticeable at the time, from the average reputation level in the fifth year of the rule of 53.63% to 37.42%. This resulted from political decisions to restrict abortion rights in Poland in the first year of the second term of office. Media information on several doubts about the actions of United Right government representatives (e.g., violations of the constitution, spending public money, conflicts over the rule of law with the EU) did not have much impact on declared party preferences (susceptible to greater fluctuations and being the result of the moment) and reputation (i.e. the result of both the affective assessment and the party's activities in various areas) among their electorate. It was of great importance to the Law and Justice electorate that the party was not 'involved in scandals' – this

expectation was indicated by 39% of respondents expressing their support for Law and Justice (Jacuński et al., 2021).

However, the period of power of the United Right also presented external challenges, independent of the party, which posed a potential threat to its reputation. For example the Covid-19 pandemic occurred during the UR's rule. However, the fact that Poland did not do as well in the crisis as the rest of Europe did not affect the reputation of the United Right government. Contrary to the CP and PPP, Law and Justice, the largest party forming the coalition government, tried to build foundations in the regions and even during its period of opposition. During the first term of office, its intra-organisational reputation was also relatively high at 65.7% (Brodzińska-Mirowska & Jacuński, 2022, p. 167). During both governments, the prime minister was changed. In the case of the United Right government, this occurred during the first term of office. Due to the advanced process of policy personalisation, not only during the election period (King, 2002; Mazur, 2014, 2017a, 2017b) but also during permanent communication, such a change carries a risk of refusal. The change of prime minister from Beata Szydło to Mateusz Morawiecki was not discussed in detail. This change did not have a noticeable effect on the party's reputation.

From the perspective adopted here, both government coalitions had a significant number of challenges and experienced events that were potentially significant for their reputation. The UR government suffered many more such incidents, but its reputation turned out to be less sensitive to crises than that of the CP-PPP government, whose reputation level suffered clearer dips. Both cases confirm the theoretical assumptions in the field of crisis communication, which emphasise that the way an organisation reacts to an image crisis is crucial. It is communication rather than the nature of the problem that determines potential reputation loss (Tworzydło, 2019, 2022). The two governments differed significantly in terms of communication strategies and tactics. A summary is provided in Table 4.

**Table 4: The communication tactics of the two government coalitions**

Communication tactics	CP-PPP	UR
The nature of communication activities	reactive communication	proactive communication
Communication culture of relations with the media	symbiotic, subjective	assertive, politicised, objectifying
Internal communication	low level of satisfaction of party members with internal communication	high level of satisfaction of party members with internal communication
Crisis communication	low level of effectiveness in crisis communication management, dominant 'apology' strategy (see Tworzydło, 2019, 2022)	high level of effectiveness in managing crisis communication, using the strategy of defence by attack and downplaying
Communication tools	media relations, limited strategic public relations	propaganda

*Source: The author.*

Effectiveness in communication management was a key factor in maintaining a stable political reputation. The researchers of reputation also point to this effect (Da Camara, 2011).

## 5. Discussion and limitation

An important objective of the analysis of the existing data was to answer the question about the strength of the reputation of both government coalitions. The main conclusion is that the United Right government maintained a better and much more stable reputation of 42.6% throughout its term in power. The political reputation of the CP-PPP government decreased quickly in its first term. There were also more moments of reputational collapse than during the United Right's term of office. The average reputation for the entire period of the CP-PPP government was 32.5%. Comparing these averages with the results of research conducted by Polish political parties allows factors that could have a significant impact on political reputation to be identified. This was the subject of the second research question. The parties forming the two coalitions differ fundamentally in many aspects of communication, which, especially when it involves the perspective indicated in this article – i.e., excellent public relations (Grünig, 2009) – is important for the levels of reputation obtained. The strong relationship between reputation and communication strategy is confirmed by analyses undertaken by other researchers (Klewes & Wreschniok, 2009). The decline in UR's reputation appeared much later than for CP-PPP. The first severe decline in the level of political reputation also appeared relatively late. A stable and good reputation was maintained despite many potentially harmful activities. Three such factors could have been influential in maintaining a sound reputation. First of all, the victory of the United Right in Poland in 2015 was primarily the result of the in-depth understanding of voters and the preparation of a precise offer for them, with social reforms becoming its flagship slogan (Wojtasik, 2016; Sadura & Sierakowski, 2023). They were only a complement to the whole picture because the politicians of the United Right turned to those who for years might have felt alienated from politics and also felt that they had no representation (Wigura, 2020, p. 17). The fulfilment of the flagship promises and a consistent message focused on building an identity and the safe community reality all contributed to the loyalty of the electorate. The statements of the United Right were also made at the right moment politically, i.e., they appeared in a period of significant crisis of democracy and a substantial increase in the importance of populism (Jansen, 2011). Law and Justice, basing its messages on issues of identity and dignity (ensured by a social programme), very well reflected the character of post-communist populism, which was characterised by Arkadiusz Lewandowski and Marcin Polakowski in the following way: 'it has established that it is marked by three out of the four D-features of populism: i.e., the distrust of politicians and institutions of liberal democracy; the criticism of the primacy of transnational structures, of migration and of the destruction of historical national identity; and the utilisation of deprivation resulting from social inequality to criticise elites' (Lewandowski & Polakowski, 2023, p.19). At the same time, UR pursued a communication strategy characteristic of populist parties (Stępińska et al., 2016).

Secondly, the politicisation of public media is not without significance for the reputation of UR. The popularity of populist parties is, in many cases, associated with reducing the quality of communication by trying to influence the media (see also Stępińska et al., 2016, 2020). The propaganda involved in political communication objectifies the audience, but it is very effective. Public television in Poland carries propaganda for the ruling party,

creating an imbalance in access to general information. The propaganda of the pro-government traditional and online media is essential in maintaining the continuously good reputation of the ruling party among its voters. They watch TVP not only because they do not have access to other communication channels but also because they identify with its message (see Gdula, 2020, pp. 139–183; also Sadura & Sierakowski, 2023). The example of Poland (and similarly of Hungary) shows that television is still significant in building political support (see Hejj, 2022; Stanley, 2019; Pająk-Patkowska & Rachwał, 2016).

Politicising the media guarantees politicians control over the message. Any difficulties in creating a narrative that fulfills political communication goals in the era of a complex and demanding communication environment are overcome by populists by the politicisation of the media. This is how they gain influence over the nature of any communication content. The changes that took place in the Polish public media after 2015 were fundamental. Although public media are often the target of political influence, the scale of changes under the CP-PPP and UR governments is difficult to compare. Thus, the possibility of influencing media messages during CP-PPP rule was different from the opportunities the UR gained from politicisation (see Węglińska, 2021; Jędrzejewski, 2016, 2017).

The UR broke some of the rules of political communication to improve its reputation, supporting this by generating propaganda; this was effective, although it objectified the audience. The party also subverted the culture of political communication in its relations with journalists. The UR government perceived the media instrumentally and claimed that changes in the public media were necessary to 'equalise' the messages. The representatives of CP-PPP, which formed the government before 2015, had a different view of the role of the media. Despite many remarks to the media, they presented opinions indicating their acceptance of the role of the media in a democracy (Jacuński, Brodzińska-Mirowska, Pacześniak, Winclawska, 2019, pp. 4–32). This break is the basis of – as van Dalen points out – 'the common interpretation of the appropriate way for journalists and politicians to interact' (Van Dalen, 2019, p. 2714). Meanwhile, the negativism of media messages and the tendency to criticise politics in a structural dimension, i.e., 'structural critical bias' (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2019, p. 212), means that building a good reputation for political organisations, governments and individual politicians is a big challenge. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why the homeostasis of media relations and politics is violated by politicising them (see Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018).

The two governments differed fundamentally in the effectiveness of their communication strategies. CP-PPP communication was definitely more reactive. The tone of the public debate was set more effectively by UR while in both government and opposition. Despite its economic successes, CP-PPP was not able to use this to communicate with important success groups. In addition, an important factor was the crisis of leadership, which was important for the position of the party (Wojtasik, 2016; Winclawska et al., 2021; see Kasińska & Gajewski, 2021).

The analysis I performed, like any research process, had certain limitations. Political reputation as an analytical category can be helpful, especially in studying the real effects of actions under a permanent campaign, going much further than daily short-term communication goals related to media visibility. Further research on political reputation should be expanded with in-depth theoretical and methodological analyses. It may also

be a perspective worthy of attention in terms of social practice, especially in the era of the second wave of the crisis of political communication (Brodzińska-Mirowska, 2022) and the deficit of quality in both politics and the media. The quality of political communication and relations with voters are of great importance in the case of the level of reputation (see Ledingham & Bruning, 1998; Ledingham, 2011). Low-quality political communication is a problem not only in Poland. On the other hand, the Polish case may be a useful point of reference for attempts to analyse the political reputation in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe due to a shared historical experience. In-depth analyses of the role of media in building political reputation may also be noteworthy (Brodzińska-Mirowska, 2019). Such research is essential primarily because the intermediaries affect reputation. This relationship is also confirmed by studies (Lange & Lee, 2011, p. 171).

The academic challenges are related primarily to the ordering of terminology, as political reputation does not equal party support or image. However, both of these elements are significant for reputation. The methodological challenge is, among other things, to analyse reputation when propaganda tools and public media are used to shape it, as in the cases of Poland and Hungary. Here, political reputation is shaped by meaningful organic access to reliable information. These are research challenges, because in the still competitive political market there are entities that use communication tools that, to some extent, take away the audience's subjectivity. The next point is the indicators in the research of reputation in politics. The reputation measurement process is a topic that raises several doubts and discussions (Goberbes & Stork, 2011; Helm & Klode, 2011). These mainly result from the fact that it is an intangible asset, so it is challenging to develop indicators that can be used in such a measurement. The elements of political reputation must differ in scope and detail depending on the target audience included in the study.<sup>7</sup> These comments also apply to political reputation. Therefore, the challenges in the empirical area concern, as in the case of the reputation of other organisations, issues, possible additional indicators of reputation and their well-being. The analysis I carried out was limited due to the resources available from CBOS. However, it is worth considering whether any dimensions can still be considered in the case of the political reputation of governments. The analyses based on the background data showed the empirical potential of this category. Therefore, the methodological work on the development of the political reputation survey scale, together with the determination of the importance of individual variables, are worth attention.

However, it should be born in mind that researching political reputation seems to have more limitations than researching the reputation of other types of organisation. First, it is about the specificity of politics and political communication, access to information, trust in the source of political statements and people's knowledge of politics. Therefore, the scales of political reputation research will be and must be limited.

Finally, the studies of the political reputation of other groups essential for the party, governments and politicians, such as journalists, non-governmental organisations and businesses, are worthy of in-depth attention. It is worth going in the direction Schneer (2015) shows, i.e., the reputation of individual politicians. Due to the results of research suggesting a relationship between reputation and loyalty in the case of commercial organisations (Helm, 2006, p. 63), it may be interesting for researchers in the field of communication and media, as well as political science. In addition to the solid political polarisation, the transfer

of communication bubbles from the online world and back sheds light on the importance of party loyalty. Today, reputation itself as well as the process of shaping and protecting it, are among the most crucial challenges for various types of organisation, both in the private and public sectors (see Gaultier-Gaillard, Louisot & Rayner, 2009). The challenges in shaping and maintaining reputation are also reinforced by the dynamic development of artificial intelligence and its importance for politics (see Duberry, 2022). Questions about reputation in politics become more important in today's complex communication conditions, about which Barbara Pfetsch writes: 'the coincidence of disrupted democracy and dissonant public spheres is related to profound structural changes in the party organisation, campaigning and political leadership' (Pfetsch, 2023, p. 346; see also Freelon & Wells, 2020). This is why it is worth observing reputation in politics and political communication.

## Endnotes:

1. The concept of different dimensions of reputation described by Blöbaum was also useful in analysing internal repetition (see also Brodzińska-Mirowska, Jacuński, 2022).
2. CBOS – Public Opinion Research Centre [www.cbos.pl](http://www.cbos.pl). Reports from December were most frequently used as they contained the results for each month of the year in one report. All reports I used are included in references.
3. The conclusions from research that I refer to are the result of a team project entitled Political parties in relations with the environment. Communication and organisational strategies – Sonata BIS programme conducted in 2016-2020 and financed by the National Science Centre (grant no. 2015/18 / E / HS6 / 00763). The research team was composed of: Barbara Brodzińska-Mirowska, Anna Paczeński, Michał Jacuński and Maria Winclawska.
4. If, for the purposes of interpreting this value, we assume three working reputation categories: low, moderate and high with a maximum scale of 100%, the CP-PPP government obtained a low level of reputation. I used percentage data so I also present the results as percentages. However, as part of further work on methodological assumptions, when designing a tool dedicated to reputation, it is worth considering its indexing.
5. The programme's assumptions include an allowance of PLN 500.00 for each child in the family. The programme was communicated as actions to improve the demographic situation in Poland. The programme is part of social policy. There was no significant impact of these measures on the change in the fertility rate in Poland.
6. Research (CATT) on a nationwide group of adult Poles N-1006 was carried out in January 2018 as part of a team research project entitled Political parties in relations with the environment. Organisational and communication strategies of Polish political parties. The project was carried out by the scientific consortium of Nicolaus Copernicus University and the University of Wrocław, conducted in 2016-2020 and financed by the National Science Centre (grant no. 2015/18 / E / HS6 / 00763). The members of the research team were Anna Paczeński, Barbara Brodzińska-Mirowska, Winclawska and Michał Jacuński.
7. The following elements were taken into account in the reputation analyses carried out among members of Polish political parties (i.e., the internal dimension of reputation): 1) the assessment of party management, 2) the assessment of the party's performance, party management when asked, among other things, about the issues of assessing whether the party represented its voters, acted as an intermediary in contacts with state institutions, or implemented the programme and whether it efficiently communicated decisions to party elections. More detailed questions in this area resulted primarily from the assumption that party members were familiar with various areas of its operation (Brodzińska-Mirowska & Jacuński, 2022, pp.158–168).

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# Ukraine's Information Security Policy: at the Crossroads between Russia and the West\*

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## Abstract

This is a study of the development of Ukraine's information policy within the dichotomy of two concepts of information (or cyber) security – those of Russia and the West. Ukraine may have chosen a policy of integration into Western security structures; however, for decades, it has been firmly connected to the traditions and approaches inherent in the Russian concept of information security. This phenomenon has been observed in the positions taken by researchers and lawmakers in the country and causes some ambiguity. Here, we present an assessment of the contradictory characteristics of Ukraine's information security policy and compare its Russian influence with its orientation to the West. We conclude that Ukraine is still balancing between these two spheres. Exposure to Russia's concept remains in academic circles, but the legal and normative sphere tends to follow the Western approach; and gradually, Ukraine's subjectivity in information security issues is developing at the international level.

*Keywords: information security; cyber security; information policy; Ukraine; international cooperation*

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## 1. Introduction

Ukraine set a course for integration into the EU and NATO in its Constitution. In 2022 it applied for EU membership and now declares its European identity in every possible way.

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However, discussions about its Europeanisation and Westernisation continue; its commitment to a Western identity has been questioned for decades (Madsen, 2007; Minesashvili, 2022) and there is a noticeable 'split' in the orientation of Ukraine's domestic and foreign policies towards Russia and the West (Doroshko, 2017; Legvold, 2022). G. Virchick and J. Harris assess such a position as critical and even threatening for this state (Virchick & Harris, 2022).

Ukraine has started the formal process of gaining EU membership and, in practical terms, is approximating to NATO standards. This has increased the interest of observers in understanding specific areas of its policy, specifically related to security. In this study, we consider the nature of Ukraine's information security policy in compliance with Western and Russian approaches.

Information security is defined as 'the protection of information and systems from unauthorised access, use, disclosure, disruption, modification or destruction in order to provide confidentiality, integrity and availability' (Nieles, Dempsey & Yan Pillitteri, 2017, p. 7). 'Information security is not a static process and requires continuous monitoring and management to protect the confidentiality, integrity and availability of information as well as to ensure that new vulnerabilities and evolving threats are quickly identified and responded to accordingly' (Nieles et al., 2017, p. 10). To achieve this requires a specific policy – information security policy – which is an 'aggregate of directives, regulations, rules and practices that prescribe how an organisation [or a state – authors' note] manages, protects and distributes information' (NIST, 2022).

Two concepts of information security policy are used to understand the approach to information space in different socio-political systems. The first, developed in democratic countries (the West), is based on freedom of information, the independence of cyberspace (the state provides only technical regulation) and the absence of any ideological component (Christou, 2014; Taylor & Hoffmann, 2019). In the second concept, adopted by predominantly authoritarian states including Russia (Sharikov, 2018) and China (Gao, 2022), the state has a monopoly on the management of the information space including all the information it considers necessary to implement its power priorities.

Since its independence in 1991, Ukraine has remained under the powerful influence of Russia in all spheres of life, and the formal announcement of a course to Euro-integration in early 2000 did not bring any significant changes. The turning point was in 2014 when Russia began military aggression against Ukraine. This created the impetus for further orientation towards Europe, European values and the West.

In this article we present an analysis of the influence of the two approaches to information security – those of Russia and the West – on Ukraine's academic and legal framework.

The empirical sources of our research include scientific publications, current and draft legislation, and evidence of international cooperation by Ukraine in the field of information security. The time frame covers the period from 1991 to 2022. Having found no objective material in the literature on Ukraine's international cooperation on information security policy, which is often reported with bias by researchers, we have analysed the topic comprehensively.

Our research methodology was to analyse the sources descriptively, make a comparative examination of information security policy, related issues and challenges, and

conduct a qualitative study of Ukraine's actions and published statements in domestic and foreign policy.

The article is structured as follows. The introduction outlines the aim and the frame of the research. The second section provides background on the dichotomy of the Western and Russian approaches to information security issues, particularly the growing divergence in their attitudes. The third section draws on the academic and normative influence of Russia on Ukraine's information security. The fourth section is an analysis of Ukraine's efforts to follow and comply with Western standards and principles regarding information security policy. The article concludes with an evaluation of our analysis.

## 2. The dichotomy of approaches to information security issues

The differences between the Western and Russian concepts are manifested in various aspects of information security policy, particularly in combating cyber crime, preventing terrorism and countering threats of a military-political nature, as well as in the application of international law and international cooperation on cyber security. For almost two decades, Russia has opposed the establishment of one international standard for combating cyber crime, i.e., the Council of Europe's Convention on Cybercrime, known as the Budapest Convention (Council of Europe, 2001), while promoting an alternative document at the UN level, i.e., the Draft United Nations Convention on Cooperation in the Field of Combating Information Crime (United Nations, 2017). Russia does not accept the Budapest Convention's article on 'cross-border access to stored computer data', which would allow various intelligence services to conduct operations on third-country computer networks without official notification, claiming it threatens the country's security and sovereignty. Russia's perception of cyber terrorism is also different from that of the West, where this is seen as a threat to information systems, primarily critical infrastructure (Janczewski & Colarik, 2008, p. 13), whereas, in Russia, cyber terrorism is taken to include complex threats to the individual, society and the state (Ivanov & Tomilov, 2013) (the Chinese government also follows this approach).

The approaches to information security in terms of military-political strategy contradict as well. Authoritarian systems use the idea of integrated influence of the power structures and the state-controlled media sector, i.e., the concept of 'information warfare' (Turonok, 2003; Panarin, 2006; Anichkina, 2007). Instead, democracies (primarily the United States and other NATO members) support media independence and separate military and civilian information influences on the realisation of the government's strategic interests, i.e., the concept of 'strategic communications' (NATO, 2009). Western countries are characterised by a purely utilitarian idea of using cyberspace in a military-political context (Szafranski, 1995; Molander, Riddie & Wilson, 1996; Libicki, 2009). They consider the concept of 'information warfare' closer to the actual context, although often in a multidisciplinary sense (Ivančík, 2021).

These different concepts of information security result in fundamentally different approaches to applying international law in this area. Western countries perceive cyberspace as a continuation of 'normal' relations in society, particularly regarding information security. Thus, the National Cyber Strategy of the United States of America, 2018, reflects an in-depth approach to assessing the risks associated with cyberspace and integrates cyber activities into the system of power relations. 'Cyberspace will no longer be considered a category of policy or activities separate from other elements of national power. The United States will integrate the use of cyber options into all elements of national power' (the White House, 2018). From a legal point of view, the position of NATO members on information security is presented in the Tallinn Manual (Schmitt, 2013; Schmitt, 2017), which convincingly demonstrates the relevance of applying existing international law to cyberspace. The exact position is typical for Western countries (Greenberg, Goodman & Soo Hoo, 1997).

However, Russian authors insist on adapting the law to the specifics of the information space (Krutskih, 2007; Korotkov & Zinovieva, 2011; Fedorov & Zinovieva, 2017). Russia's concept of the legal regime and format of cooperation in this area, known as 'international information security' is also supported by other states with a low level of democracy including China, which advocates special mandatory 'rules of conduct'. Since the late 1990s, on the main international platforms, Russia has been promoting draft decisions on the leading role of the state in all processes of informatisation, telecommunications and internet governance (Akushev, 1999; Bykov, 2008), the issue of 'information sovereignty' (United Nations, 1999; United Nations, 2018b), drafts on 'rules of conduct' in cyberspace and conventions on cyber crime (United Nations, 2015).

Russian initiatives are generally supported by China, which insists on cyber sovereignty (Hao, 2017) and offers an authoritarian model of internet governance (the Wuzhen Initiatives) (Zhu, 2015). This runs counter to the well-established model of global network management Western countries seek to preserve. The US stands for a liberal approach to developing cyberspace and multilateral internet governance (MacLean, 2005; Hofmann, 2007; Kurbalija, 2014; Balzacq & Cavelti, 2016). It advocates the concept of optional norms of behaviour in cyberspace and has suggested a draft UN resolution: Encouraging the responsible behaviour of states in cyberspace in the context of international security 2018 (United Nations, 2018a).

The interpretation of the concept of 'information security' in Russia creates a dichotomy with the West and is similar to that in other authoritarian countries. Such states include political and ideological aspects in the meaning of 'information security', namely: countering propaganda, preventing destructive information influence and interference, ensuring the security of information. Information is declared an integral component of national sovereignty. Scholars (primarily Russian) consider four main threats to national and international security in the information sphere: crime threats, terrorism, military and political influence, and public disorder and instability by impact on the state's public opinion (Shvets, 2005; Smirnov, 2011; Kucheryavyi, 2013).

Instead, in states with freedom of information, computer networks and resources are protected (information is secure as long as the relevant infrastructure is secure). This is treated as 'cyber security', and governments provide their citizens with the freedom and

security to use information and communication technologies. This approach is also applied to developing regulatory frameworks for cyber security in the international arena (Finnemore, 2011; Farrell, 2015). In academic discourse, threats to cyberspace of a criminal, terrorist or military-political nature are considered mainly in the context of their information or technical impact (Wenger, 2001; Hansen & Nissenbaum, 2009; Giacomello, 2016; Tikk-Ringas, 2015).

International cooperation in information security takes place on various platforms; mainly negotiating tracks at the UN, e.g., within the UN Group of Governmental Experts (UN GGE) and, more recently, the Open-ended Working Group (OEWG), which is the result of strategic competition between the United States and Russia. The UN GGE has developed approaches close to the US position, while the OEWG track is for the development of cooperation at the UN level on the initiative of Russia (Schmitt, 2021).

The European Union has joined the dualistic system of counterbalances in information security formed over the recent years at the UN. Since 2020, the EU has become increasingly active and has adopted its own strategy (European Commission, 2020). The EU also proposed a novel format for the interaction of parties at the UN, aimed at promoting responsible behaviour of states in cyberspace, which generally reflects the Western concept (United Nations, 2020). In light of the long-standing competition between Russia/China and Western approaches to information security, this was seen as an attempt to bridge the dichotomy of cyber issues at the UN within the UN GGE and OEWG.

### 3. Russia's impact on the academic and legal vision of Ukraine's information security policy

Since the 1990s and throughout the years of Ukraine's independence, its information security has been oriented towards the Russian concept, both in the legal approach and scientific research. This is explained by the common origin of the information space and the continuity of professional experience in law and science dating back to Soviet times. One of the leading indicators is the emphasis on 'information sovereignty', that is, the exclusive power of the state to dispose of 'information resources belonging to it'. Such information sovereignty is mentioned in the Law of Ukraine on Information (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 1992), amended in 2011, in the Law of Ukraine on the National Informatisation Programme (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 1998) and in some other legal documents. The 2009 Doctrine of Information Security of Ukraine states that one of its main goals is 'to create a developed national information space in Ukraine and protect its information sovereignty' (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2009).

At the end of the 1990s, a concept of information policy was developed based on 'information sovereignty' and 'national information space', which was reflected in the above-mentioned Russian initiatives at the UN level. In Ukraine in 1998, a draft Law on Information Sovereignty and Information Security of Ukraine defined 'information sovereignty' as 'the right of the state to form and implement national information policy under the Constitution and legislation of Ukraine, and under international law in the

national information space of Ukraine' (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 1998a). Another bill appearing in 1999 (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 1999) focused similarly on information sovereignty. The 1998 Law of Ukraine on the National Informatisation Programme defined 'information sovereignty' as 'the ability of the state to control and regulate the flow of information from outside the state to comply with Ukrainian laws, rights and freedoms, and guarantee national security' (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 1998b).

In the late 2000s the internet posed new challenges, and a new wave of interest in 'information sovereignty' appeared. Notably, the Draft Law on the Concept of State Information Policy, 2010 claimed that the need to 'ensure effective protection of Ukraine's information sovereignty, especially the domestic segment of the internet' was an essential task of state security (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2010). In essence, the legislators meant to achieve what had already been done in China and Russia: to single out and protect the 'sovereign internet'. At the same time, the concept of state policy on information sovereignty (analytical report of the National Institute for Strategic Studies) (NISD, 2014) was offered. However, the wording 'information sovereignty' and an article were removed from the Law of Ukraine on Information, 2011 as it 'does not belong to the principles applied in at least one human rights treaty'. The amendment was made after considering the recommendations of Council of Europe experts (UHHRU, 2007).

The interpretation in Ukrainian legislation of such notions as 'national information space', 'information relations', 'information security' and the concept of the state as the 'owner' of information is typical of authoritarian states. For example, the idea of 'national information space' was not entirely compatible with Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (United Nations, 1976) in which the right to freedom of speech and right to information exist without regard to national borders. The owner of the information is not any public authority that disposes of it, but taxpayers (the public) due to whom the information has been created and is being processed.

Concerning 'information security', expert opinion claims that information at the disposal of the state is public property, and it can be removed from this category if its distribution could harm the interests that the state can protect on legal grounds (particularly, the interests of national security, which require the storage of certain information so that only a few representatives of the government or the military can access it). Such restrictions are necessary, must meet the criterion of public interest (for example, during martial law) and are always temporary (UHHRU, 2007).

Today, the concept of 'information security' is formalised in Ukrainian law, which generally corresponds to the well-defined concept of protection of national security interests in international law, i.e., protection against attack, the overthrow of the constitutional order etc., particularly, protection of Ukrainian society from aggressive information influence to propagate war, incitement of national and religious enmity, change of the constitutional order by violent means or violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine (President of Ukraine, 2017).

Because of the Russian military aggression, which started in 2014, the issue of information security has become especially relevant as the information sphere turned into a battle field. On this basis, there are proposals to develop a fundamental law (information code), which will include a separate section on information security, or to adopt a particular Law

of Ukraine on the Information Security of Ukraine, which 'will be able to regulate the state policy basic principles aimed at protecting the information security of people, society and the state from external and internal threats' (Shevchuk, 2021, p. 213).

In academic circles, there is a widespread opinion about the state's exclusive role in information circulation. This position influences the development of such concepts as 'national information space' and 'information sovereignty'. It represents the authoritarian model typical of Russia's 'information security' concept: 'the function of the state as the main subject of information sovereignty is not limited to controlling information flows, but also involves the state's informational influence on its citizens to ensure the national interests of the state in the information field' (Solodka, 2020a).

While singling out cyber security, some authors still support a strong position for the state in information security and the information space (Horlynskyi & Horlynskyi, 2019). Other researchers suggest strictly regulating access to mass information to 'protect the citizens of Ukraine from destructive (information) influence' (Averianova & Voropayeva, 2020). The issue of 'information sovereignty' has re-emerged in scientific discourse and is treated as 'a legal feature of the supremacy, independence, completeness and indivisibility of its power in the information space of Ukraine' (Solodka, 2020b, p. 237). Modern publications focus on the 'sovereignisation' of the information space, which is typical of authoritarian states: 'normative and legal regulation of the formation of Ukraine's unified information space should contribute to the harmonious development of information resources, information services and information products in the country' (Havryltsiv, 2020, p. 203).

On the threshold of the third decade of the 21st century, attempts to regulate access to information do not stop, motivated by concern for national security. In 2019, the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports of Ukraine introduced a draft Law on Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine on Ensuring National Information Security and the Right to Access Reliable Information. This offered to strengthen the concept of protecting the 'national information space' from unwanted information under the guise of combating disinformation (MCIPU, 2020). Even recent studies reserve for the state a certain exclusive role in the issue of subjectivity in 'information relations'. They define 'information security' as 'a certain state of security of the information environment of Ukrainian society, due to which such society is developed as an information subject (including individuals, groups and the state as an information subject)' (Sopilko, 2021, p. 20).

Some Ukrainian scholars are in favour of the concept formulated in the Russian-initiated resolutions Achievements in Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security, as they do not consider other documents and initiatives. For example, V. Nastyuk and V. Bielievtsseva argue that 'information security includes issues such as confronting cultural expansion by countries with developed audiovisual industries, preserving national and linguistic identity' (Nastyuk & Bielievtsseva, 2014, p. 42). They share views on the development of international law in the field of information security, which is characteristic of Russia and its satellites: 'it is necessary to develop international principles (regime, code of conduct of states) aimed at strengthening international information security, which initially could be made in the form of a multilateral declaration,

and, in the future, fixed in the form of a multilateral international legal document' (Nastyuk & Bielievtseva, 2014, p. 42).

O. Frolova praises the role of the UN in the 'system of international information security', and positively assesses the initiatives of the state-dominated concept followers in matters of freedom of information, particularly in the context of the 'regime of international information security' (Frolova, 2018). This is consistent with Russian strategy in this area (MFA, 2011; Security Council of the Russian Federation, 2021). She seems to favour the Russian draft UN General Assembly resolution 73/27 Achievements in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security, 2018 and considers this a positive shift in regulatory and organisational support (Frolova, 2019, p. 125). Resolution 73/768 Encouraging responsible behaviour of states in cyberspace in the context of international security, adopted in parallel at the same session and initiated by the United States, is not mentioned by the researcher.

O. Kisilevych-Chornoivan (2009) substantiates building a separate 'information and security' domain in international law and the formation of 'international information security', referring to the above-mentioned Russian-initiated resolutions of the UN General Assembly (Kisilevych-Chornoivan, 2009). A. Voitsikhovskiy (2020) promotes the same idea: 'one of the areas of international activities in the information field is the formation and improvement of a system of international information security' (Voitsikhovskiy, 2020, p. 284). However, the author does not mention the initiatives of democratic countries. A. Kostyrev explains the contradictions between the West and Russia in their approaches to information security by their commitment to idealistic and realistic paradigms. Nevertheless, he insists on the need for the active participation of the state in the development of norms of international information law, their implementation and control over the implementation by all subjects of information relations (Kostyrev, 2010).

At the same time, the balanced position of foreign policy practitioners is worth mentioning. Thus, Yu. Romanchuk, an expert diplomat and scientist, draws attention to the need to find a solution for Ukraine to the problem of disagreements in the leading global approaches to information security policy. He supports the prospect of the 'codification of special principles and norms based on the UN Charter and the achievement of new agreements to regulate and stabilise the relations of states concerning the problem of information security. 'The diplomat emphasises that Ukraine is interested in overcoming the destructive dichotomy in managing global security policy in the context of conflicts between the interests of the United States and Russia' (Romanchuk, 2009). This indicates the complexity of information security in Ukraine. Recent publications by leading scientists in the field examine the real state of affairs in balancing the approaches of the main actors, countries and international organisations to information security policy (Kopiika, 2020).

The problem of information security in the international dimension is the subject of thorough studies in Ukraine, particularly in education where these issues are less dependent on specific political or state-strategic trends and approaches. For instance, the textbook *International Information Security: Theory and Practice* (Makarenko et al., 2016) reveals the security aspects of the strategies of international organisations, intergovernmental associations and individual states, although the title of the book is somewhat consistent

with the Russian concept of the international legal regime of ‘international information security’.

#### 4. The Western vector of Ukraine’s information security policy

Ukraine’s strategic course, as enshrined in the Constitution, to acquire full membership of the EU and NATO determines practical steps in foreign and domestic policy, as in strategic planning. A particular shift is indicated in the Cybersecurity Strategy of Ukraine, ‘Safe cyberspace – the key to the successful development of Ukraine’, adopted in August 2021. This replaced Ukraine’s previous Cybersecurity Strategy, approved in March 2016 (President of Ukraine, 2016). Even then, the 2016 Strategy outlined primary directions characteristic of democracies, namely, the development of a national cyber security system with respect for human and civil rights and freedoms; ensuring national interests; open, accessible, sustainable and secure cyberspace; capacity building in the security and defence sector (cooperation with the private sector, civil society and the international community, adequate risk-based cyber security measures, priority of preventive measures); and establishing democratic civilian control in the field of cyber security.

Regarding international cooperation, the 2021 Strategy focuses on several priorities that may indicate compliance with Western countries’ approach and a focus on collaboration with partners in the EU and NATO. It outlines the following (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2021): ensuring Ukraine’s participation in UN activities to promote responsible behaviour of states in cyberspace; consistent support for the provisions of the Budapest Convention of the Council of Europe on Cybercrime; and strengthening cooperation with leading IT companies, global digital service providers and social networks.

The 2021 Strategy foreign policy priorities stipulate (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2021): unification of approaches, methods and means of cyber security with the established practices of the EU and NATO; mutually beneficial exchanges of information and experience with partner intelligence services of EU and NATO member states; lasting active participation in the international dialogue on responsible behaviour of states in cyberspace in compliance with the principles of international law, the UN Charter, as well as norms, rules and regulations of responsible behaviour of the state; maximum support for a multi-stakeholder (multilateral) model of internet governance involving representatives of the private sector, scientific and educational circles, civil society institutions (it is emphasised that the attempts of individual authoritarian states to sovereignise the internet contradict the long-term interests of Ukraine and its model of socio-economic development); and the promotion of further compliance with international human rights law and standards (Ukraine proposes that the internet should remain global and open, technologies should focus on people and their fundamental freedoms, guarantee non-interference in their personal lives, ensure their privacy in cyberspace, and any restrictions should be implemented only in accordance with the law).

The listed priorities fully correspond to the democratic Western concept of information security, in which the state's monopoly on internet governance is absent, human rights and freedoms are respected and states and stakeholders cooperate in a joint fight against cyber threats. The following assurance confirms this: 'Ukraine will cooperate with international partners, organisations and other interested parties that share our common vision of the future of cyberspace as global, open, free, stable and safe, based on the observance of human rights, fundamental freedoms and democratic values, which is key to the socio-economic and political development of Ukraine' (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2021). The strategy has been positively assessed by Ukrainian researchers as it 'will strengthen the national security of our state, as well as provide guarantees of human and citizen rights and freedoms in a democratic state' (Pravdiuk, 2022, p. 47).

At the same time, there is 'neutrality', or even uncertainty on some issues regarding the positioning of Ukraine's cyber security strategy within the dominant world policy concepts in this area. We compared the approved text of the Strategy with its draft (NSDC, 2021), published on Ukraine's National Security and Defence Council website, and found some discrepancies. There is a significant deviation from the specifics of formulating individual theses, which may indicate an attempt to avoid irrelevant positions in the future, given the long-term perspective of the document. For instance, the draft Strategy declares 'deepening European integration processes by unifying approaches, methods and means of ensuring cyber security with the established practices of the EU and NATO' to be 'the top foreign policy priority of Ukraine in the field of cyber security'. However, the final document does not mention this 'top priority'. The draft contains wording that is in line with the consensus adopted in 2015 by the UN GGE report on 'voluntary, non-binding norms, rules and principles of responsible state conduct', apparently referring to 11 norms, rules and principles published in this report (UN General Assembly, 2015). Instead, the document that came into force references compliance with certain 'norms, rules and principles of responsible conduct of the state' (without specification). The final text of the Strategy does not include an indication that Ukraine is supposed to participate in the work of the international platform of the Programme of Actions for Encouraging Responsible Behaviour of States in Cyberspace of the UN General Assembly and the UN Group of Governmental Experts on Information Security (UN GGE). This provision is replaced by a general wording on participation in 'international events of the UN on encouraging responsible behaviour of states in cyberspace'.

Ukraine did not participate in the UN GGE at the expert level (Digwatch, 2021). However, it did express its views on the UN secretary-general's annual report on changes in information and telecommunications in the context of international security (UNIDIR, 2021). There is also no information on the statement of Ukraine's position in the preparation of the OEWG report (UNODA, 2021). Instead, the official Facebook page of the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the UN states that one of Ukraine's priorities in the activities of the Working Group includes the acquaintance of the international community with the state's position on issues within its competence. It is also mentioned that there is a need to launch the Programme of Action on Responsible Behaviour in Cyberspace of a group of countries (co-authored by 53 countries, including Ukraine). This means creating a single body to replace the previous two negotiating

platforms on cyber security and focus not only on drawing conclusions and recommendations but also on monitoring the implementation of decisions (Perm Mission of Ukraine, 2021b).

Thus, Ukraine co-authors the Programme of Action on Responsible Behaviour in Cyberspace. Specifically, Ukraine's Permanent Mission to the United Nations confirmed the application of international law in cyberspace, including the UN Charter, emphasised the importance of this Programme of Action and called for further substantive discussion of this initiative in future formats under the auspices of the UN. This should lead to a permanent institutional dialogue to 'terminate the existence of certain ICT working bodies in the context of international security' (Perm Mission of Ukraine, 2021a). Therefore, we can assume that Ukraine has chosen a Western approach to implementing an information security policy, which is followed by an increasing number of countries that support the Programme of Action.

In the context of coordinating positions with other democracies, Ukraine's cooperation in cyber security is strengthening with the European Union and the United States. In June 2021, the Ukraine-European Union Cyber Dialogue was launched. This is likely to have a goal similar to the EU-US cyber dialogue launched in 2014, namely to coordinate foreign policy on cyber issues, cooperate in strategic aspects of cyber security and discuss practical issues of cooperation in this area. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine claims by starting cooperation within the Cyber Dialogue, Ukraine and the EU will coordinate cooperation within international organisations to strengthen cyber resilience and ensure responsible behaviour in cyberspace. Ukraine's position aligns with the European vision of the Western concept of information security with strict adherence to the principles of democracy in the development of cyberspace. 'Ukraine and the EU reaffirmed their commitment to a global, open, stable and secure cyberspace that fully complies with the principles of the rule of law, in which the rights of individuals are equally protected online and offline, and in which the security, economic development, prosperity and unity of free and democratic societies are encouraged and properly protected' (MFA of Ukraine, 2021).

In terms of policy coordination, Ukraine confirms the importance of the Budapest Convention, which serves as a basis for national legislation and international cooperation to combat cyber crime. During the first meeting of the Cyber Dialogue, Ukraine presented its work on including the provisions of the Budapest Convention in national legislation, namely the draft laws amending the Criminal Procedure Code of Ukraine and the Code of Administrative Offences already approved by the relevant Verkhovna Rada Committee. With the European Union, Ukraine has committed to the swift adoption of the Second Additional Protocol draft to strengthen cooperation in cyber crime and electronic evidence and reaffirmed its continued support for international cooperation to combat cyber crime effectively in regional and international forums (EU4Digital, 2021; MFAU, 2021).

Table 1 presents the impact of the Russian and Western approaches on the development of information security policy in Ukraine.

**Table 1: Western and Russian influences on Ukraine's information security policy**

Criteria	Russia	Western states	Ukraine
State control of information	full	absent	partial
Dominant understanding of security regarding advances in information and telecommunications	'information security'	'cyber security'	both
'Information sovereignty'	supported	rejected	discussed in academic research
Understanding of information space	national information space	global information space	national information space
Legal regime of 'international information security'	supported	rejected	not officially supported, but present in scientific discourse
Proposal of a special law on information security and development of 'rules of conduct' of states	supported; special 'rules of conduct' of states	rejected; voluntary 'rules of conduct' of states	rejected; voluntary 'rules of conduct' of states
Objects of information threats	person, society, state	information systems	person, society, state, but in the context of exclusively negative information influence of Russia
International cooperation to combat cyber crime based on the Budapest Convention	not supported	supported	supported
Understanding of 'cyber terrorism'	a threat to the person, society, state	utilitarian interpretation (as a threat to infrastructure, targeting non-combatants)	terrorist activity carried out in cyberspace or with its use (regarded also as a threat to the national security of the state in the context of Russia's armed aggression)
Understanding information threats of a military and political nature	integral understanding – the concept of 'information warfare'	differentiated understanding – the concept of 'strategic communications'	the concept of 'information warfare' is being replaced by the concept of 'strategic communications'
Internet governance	state	multistakeholder	multistakeholder

*Source: The authors.*

The presence/absence of relevant norms in regulatory acts or other documents of significant importance in the internal or external policy of countries constitutes the grounds for the selected criteria:

- 'full' – there are relevant norms in national strategic planning documents (doctrines, strategies), directive legislation (laws, by-laws) and acts of international law adopted or promoted by the country;
- 'absent' – absence of the corresponding norms in national legislation, strategic planning documents and international acts adopted or promoted by the state;
- 'partial' – in the national legislation there are disagreements regarding a certain norm as a result of temporary restrictions or its ongoing change;

- ‘supported’ – in the national legislation there are norms to support a concept or a norm existing in world practice;
- ‘not supported’ – there is a lack of data on state support of a norm or concept existing in world practice;
- ‘rejected’ – either in the national legislation or in international acts adopted by the state or in its officially expressed positions there is a denial of the concept or norm existing in world practice.

For instance, in Russia, full state control of information is reflected in the 2019 laws on ‘the sovereign internet’ (Federal Law of 1 May 2019 N 90-FZ On Amending the Federal Law ‘On Communications’ and the Federal Law ‘On Information, Information Technologies and Information Protection’ (Rossiyskaya Gazeta, 2019), which require internet providers to install special equipment to monitor, filter and redirect internet traffic, enabling Roskomnadzor to independently and extra-judicially block access to content the government deems threatening. Instead, the US information security democratic model is based on the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA, 2016) which enshrines the accountability of government to the people it serves, since an informed electorate is critical to the proper functioning of a democracy. Therefore, information security aims to ensure, on the one hand, the functioning of information systems for the proper activity of the executive power and its reporting to the people, and, on the other hand, the inviolability of information that belongs to a person in the same way as any other private property. The Privacy Act (US Department of Justice, 2022) establishes a code of fair information practices governing the collection, maintenance, use and distribution of personal information about individuals maintained in federal records systems. Also in the USA, freedom of expression and freedom of speech are guaranteed by the first amendment to the Constitution. In Ukraine, the right to freedom of information is guaranteed in Part 2 of Article 34 of the Constitution of Ukraine (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 1996), but today there are temporary measures of information control during martial law due to the Russian military invasion.

Russian laws on ‘the sovereign internet’ mentioned above also determine the state management of the internet; the Federal Service of Supervision in the field of communications, information technologies and mass communications carries out the functions of control and supervision. By contrast, the Western model of multi-stakeholder internet management is implemented in the USA by the National Cyber Strategy (The White House, 2018) and in the EU by the Cybersecurity Strategy for the Digital Decade (European Commission, 2020). In Ukraine, this vision is present in foreign policy documents that support the Western approach. In particular, this is the official position of Ukraine agreed with civil society organisations at the 54th Conference of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), a second round of consultations on the review of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS+10), 2015, the 10th World Forum on Internet Governance (2015) and the WSIS+10 review process in the framework of the GA UN (European Media Platform, 2015).

In Russia, the information security concept is based on the Draft Convention on International Information Security (MFARF, 2011) and the Russian vision for a Convention of the UN on Ensuring International Information Security (UNODA, 2023), Fundamentals

of the state policy of the Russian Federation in the field of international information security (Decree of the President of the Russian Federation, 2021). These acts establish the regime of ‘international information security’ which defines Russian foreign policy in the security context. The EU’s security position is fully disclosed in its Cybersecurity Strategy for the Digital Decade (European Commission, 2020). In Ukraine, the pro-Western position is outlined in the Cyber Security Strategy (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2021) and the Law on Cyber Security (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2017).

The USA does not support the Russian concept of ‘international information security’, as stated in Resolution 73/266 Advancing responsible state behaviour in cyberspace in the context of international security (United Nations, 2018a) and other similar acts. The US also carried out work in the UN GGE referred to above. This confrontation between the US and Russia continues (Weber, 2023).

Regarding ‘information sovereignty’, Russia’s clear and unambiguous position is reflected in the above-mentioned acts on the ‘sovereign internet’ and the resolutions it offered on Developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security (United Nations 1999; United Nations 2018). This approach does not exist in the legislation of Western democratic states; it does not belong to the principles applied in human rights treaties. In Ukraine, the norm on information sovereignty was removed from the old version of the Law on Information back in 2011, but it is still being discussed among lawmakers and researchers.

The Russian idea of a national information space is based on the norms of the UN General Assembly on Developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security (United Nations 1999; United Nations 2018), while the Western perception of information space as single and universal, not divided between countries, is based on the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (United Nations, 1967). In Ukraine, the idea to single out a certain national cluster of the information space has long prevailed and has become more vital in the security context in wartime. Ukraine’s Cyber Security Strategy (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2021) is its confirmation.

Russia persistently promotes the idea of creating a special domain of international information security law and developing ‘rules of conduct’ for states, in particular, through the above-mentioned resolutions. Western states are guided by the Tallinn Manual on the International Law Applicable to Cyber Warfare (Schmitt, 2013), UN Resolution 73/266 Advancing responsible state behaviour in cyberspace in the context of international security (United Nations, 2018a) and other similar acts. Ukraine supports the Western stance. In 2021, there was an attempt to ‘reconcile’ the Russian and US positions when Resolution 76/19 (United Nations, 2021) combined the opposing visions, but the real ‘reconciliation’ is still a long way off.

The objects of information threats are clearly defined in official and regulatory documents: the Doctrine of Information Security of the Russian Federation (Rossiyskaya Gazeta, 2016), the ENISA Threat Landscape Report (ENISA, 2022) and Ukraine’s Information Security Strategy (President of Ukraine, 2021).

Understanding cyber terrorism is a bit more complicated. Its Russian interpretation as a threat to ‘the person, society and the state’, widespread in the scientific literature, is not

reflected in the legislation, and a purely utilitarian and specific interpretation is also found in US departmental documents – e.g., *Terrorism Report 2002–2005* (US Department of Justice, 2015). In Ukraine, it is also not defined normatively, but the concept is mentioned in the national Cyber Security Strategy (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2021) in a context as close as possible to the American treatment.

The Russian understanding of threats of a military and political nature is normatively reflected in the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation (*Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 2014) and the strategic planning document of the Russian Ministry of Defence – *Conceptual views on the activities of the armed forces of the Russian Federation in the information space* (Ministry of Defence, 2011). Regarding Western countries' approach, the final design of the strategic communications system is fixed in the March 2023 NATO standard – *Allied Joint Doctrine for Strategic Communications* (NATO, 2023), which also summarises previously adopted acts. In Ukraine, similar documents have been adopted by the Ministry of Defence and the Information Security Strategy defined the corresponding directions of strategic communications development (President of Ukraine, 2021).

## 5. Conclusion

For a long time, Ukraine has not shown subjectivity in information (cyber) security on major international platforms. National communications, particularly in media and scientific discourses, have included frequent narratives consistent with Russia's concept of 'information security' and 'international information security'. Since 2014, Ukraine has significantly strengthened its strategic partnership with the United States and intensified its partnership in cyber security. This has resulted in developing primary national strategic planning documents that set out conceptual positions in line with Western views. At the UN level, Ukraine favoured the draft resolution A/RES/73/266 submitted by the United States. And since the launch of the Programme of Action for Responsible Behaviour in Cyberspace, Ukraine has supported this initiative. This state has also officially announced it will take an active international position in support of Western principles, to strengthen partnerships with stakeholders who share a vision of the future of cyberspace as global, open, free, stable and secure, based on human rights and fundamental freedoms and democratic values.

As of the beginning of the third decade of the 21st century, Ukraine generally demonstrates actions representing the approaches to information security typical of Western countries. However, there is no precise positioning of national policy in this area regarding the strategic priorities of cooperation with major international partners, i.e., the United States, the EU and other NATO member states. Ukraine does not take an active part in the main negotiating tracks at the UN level, particularly within its First Committee. And it does not formulate the state's position in the context of the current UN GGE, neither has it joined the Open-ended Working Group (OEWG). Such participation would be expected if Ukraine chose a clearer position on international cooperation in information security. Despite the strategic course to join the European Union, Ukraine lacks a proactive stance

on the Programme of Action on Responsible Behaviour in Cyberspace, in coordination with decision-making centres in the EU.

In the scientific context, there is a phenomenon of following the narratives, which are widespread in the Russian information field and, in general, correspond to the strategic and foreign policy priorities of Russia, particularly regarding the establishment of an 'international information security' regime. Such concepts as 'national information space', 'information sovereignty', 'information security' etc., which are promoted by authoritarian states, are relevant among scholars and lawmakers in Ukraine. At the level of international platforms and in the area of public diplomacy, international processes of confrontation increase, but Ukraine does not have a sufficient level of adequate scientific and legal analysis of Russia (and China) to promote drafts of international legal acts on international information security. Specifically, it refers to the following issues: the development of rules of conduct; establishing a separate domain of international law in the field of information security; authoritarian governance of the internet; information sovereignty; and a particular concept of combating cyber crime, different from positions set in the Budapest Convention. In this context, one should also expect a more specific idea of information security in domestic information policy in accordance with the state's positions on international platforms, particularly public communication, media and scientific discourses.

In addition, in the area of international cooperation on information security, significant changes are associated with the implementation of foreign policy and global strategies of leading international actors (US, Russia, China, EU). This will result in the need for the careful study of related processes. The intensification of relations between Ukraine and these actors, especially the European Union, is particularly relevant and could be the topic of further research.

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# EU Solidarity in the Face of External Security Threats: the Example of the Crimea Platform Initiative

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## Abstract

The Crimea Platform is a diplomatic initiative of Ukraine, designed as an international coordination mechanism to reverse the 2014 annexation of the Crimean Peninsula by the Russian Federation. The initiative attracted the attention of EU member states, due to the very nature of the annexation – a result of Russia's aggressive and assertive foreign policy. However, attitudes to the issue of the annexation and the perception of its impact on the security of the EU vary greatly from one Crimea Platform participant to another, which leads to numerous discussions on the level of the security threat to the EU and the support to be provided to its eastern neighbours. For this article, I have used process tracing to track the formation of the attitudes to the annexation of EU members participating in the Crimea Platform, which is an essential step in conducting a comprehensive analysis of European solidarity in the face of external security threats.

*Keywords:* Process tracing; European Union; Crimea Platform; annexation of Crimea; Ukraine

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## 1. Introduction

Recently, the balance of power between geopolitical actors and their strategic security policies has been changing rapidly, resulting in the creation of new political alliances and the intensification of contradictions and confrontations between numerous participants in the international arena. To understand this changing picture, it is necessary to take into account a number of important factors that influence and alter the alignment of relevant political forces, such as Brexit, the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan and disputes over the political status of Taiwan. Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 can be

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considered the most important change in the geopolitical situation and a catalyst for the emergence of threats to the security of the world order. This war primarily affects Europe, because it is taking place in Ukraine, which, according to Matti Maasilta, the head of the EU delegation to Ukraine, 'has always belonged historically, geographically and from a cultural point of view [to Europe]. And during the full-scale Russian war, the European Union, which has declared the values of peace and sovereignty to be defining for itself, stands side by side with Ukraine' (Delegation of the European Union to Ukraine, 2023).

It is important to identify clearly the roles the major geopolitical actors play on the international stage and, in particular, the most important one, the European Union (EU). The EU maintains a common foreign and security policy, which gives member states the opportunity to act together on the world stage for the sake of stability, cooperation and mutual understanding. By helping to build security and stability around the world, the EU aims to make life safer for the people living within its borders. The EU is particularly active in promoting the human aspects of international relations, such as solidarity, human rights and democracy. This policy aims to raise people's living standards, build a common European market, maintain a single currency and strengthen Europe's voice around the world. Economic and political integration between the countries of the European Union allows them to make joint decisions on various issues. The policy covers a very wide range of fields from agriculture to culture, from consumer rights to transparent competition, from environmental protection and energy use to transport and trade.

The political orientation of the EU is of utmost importance, especially its ability to represent either a single strategically cohesive force on the world stage or a union of states, where the priority of the domestic interests of each state member prevails over the need to act together as a united front, which is ready to face and counter potential threats.

An example of such cohesion is the participation of EU countries in the Crimea Platform – an international consultation and coordination format initiated by Ukraine, and launched at an inaugural summit in Kyiv on 23 August 2021 (Crimea Platform, n.d.). The annexation of Crimean peninsula by Russian Federation was chosen as a case for conducting a comprehensive analysis of the conflict, and most importantly, as an assessment of the attitude to the annexation of other geopolitical actors, namely the EU as a whole and each EU member state individually. Such an assessment allows to track changes in the rhetoric of the EU countries participating in the Crimea Platform after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

The list of participants is of particular interest due to its diversity in terms of the level of representation. It includes 47 states and international organisations, including Ukraine and all member states of the EU and NATO:

- At the presidential level: Ukraine, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Poland, Hungary, Moldova, Slovenia and Finland.
- At the level of prime minister: Romania, Georgia, Croatia, Slovakia and Sweden.
- At the level of head of parliament: Switzerland and the Czech Republic.
- At the ministerial level: Turkey, Austria, Luxembourg, Ireland, Bulgaria, Montenegro, North Macedonia, the United Kingdom, the United States, Portugal, Germany, France, Netherlands, Albania and Italy.

- At the state secretary level: Norway is represented by the state secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Spain by the state secretary for the EU affairs.
- At the level of the ambassador to Ukraine: Belgium, Denmark, New Zealand, Malta, Japan, Australia, Cyprus, Canada, Greece and Iceland.
- The EU is represented by the President of the European Council, the Vice president of the European Commission and the Secretary General of the Council of Europe.
- North Atlantic Treaty Organisation is represented by the Deputy Secretary General of NATO.
- The GUAM Organisation for Democracy and Economic Development (GUAM) is represented by the GUAM Secretary General. (Crimea Platform, 2021).

The second Crimea Platform summit took place in October 2022 in Zagreb, the capital of Croatia. Heads of parliaments and committees of inter-parliamentary relations discussed issues related not only to the current situation in Crimea with respect to human rights, freedom of navigation, the problem of the militarisation of the peninsula and the use of Crimea as a resource and military base for Russian aggression against Ukraine, but also to the steps Ukraine was taking in the process of de-occupying Crimea (Pecherskyi, 2022).

Such a significant number of participants clearly demonstrates the interest of the international community in Russia's aggression in Crimea and in the threat that Russia's foreign policy presents for the general security of Europe. The involvement of such a wide range of participants allows me comprehensively to analyse the responses of EU and NATO member states to Russia's assertive and aggressive policy and their willingness to act as a united front against potential threats and challenges.

## 2. Approaches and methodology

The goal of the research described in this article is to analyse the EU's ability to represent a single cohesive force in the international arena, capable of providing a unanimous response to security threats and other potential challenges common to EU member states. As an example, I analysed and assessed the attitudes to the annexation of Crimea of states participating in the Crimea Platform, with the aim of providing a comprehensive presentation of the initiative in its effort to address security threats and accentuate tendencies in the statements and actions of EU countries in the face of military aggression by Russia in Ukraine.

My methodology was to use qualitative comparison, complemented by process tracing, which is employed by international relations scholars and described elsewhere (van Evera, 1997; Collier, 1997; Bennett, 2010).

I considered process mechanisms as theoretical systems capable of linking causes and results (Beach & Pedersen, 2013; Rohlfing, 2012). In this understanding, a causal mechanism is defined as a theory of a system of interconnected parts that transfers causal forces between a cause (or set of causes) and an effect (Bhaskar, 1978; Bunge, 1997, 2004;

Glennan, 1996, 2002; Machamer et al., 2000; Machamer, 2004; Waskan, 2011), based on Hernes's definition of a mechanism as a set of interacting parts, ergo a set of elements that produces an effect which is not inherent in any of them. (Hernes, 1998, pp. 74–101). The theoretical causal mechanism by which an effect influencing an outcome is created describes each part of the mechanism by which causal forces are transmitted from cause to effect.

I suggest that, in research, parts of causal mechanisms can be usefully defined in terms of actors that engage in activities capable of transmitting causal forces from cause to effect (Beach & Pedersen, 2013; Machamer et al. 2000; Machamer 2004; Rohlfing 2012). I have taken factors (subjects, organisations or structures) involved in the activity as entities, where the activity is the producer of change or the element that transmits causal forces through the mechanism. At the same time, the actions in which entities are involved move the mechanism from the initial causal condition through various parts to the result (Beach, 2016, pp. 3–4). If we consider the EU member states that took part in the Crimea Platform as factors participating in the operation of the process, then the assessment of the event by participating states gives an impact on the result of the process of uniting these countries in the face of security threats. Therefore, the main part of the article is a thorough review and analysis of the official responses and comments of the state bodies of the countries participating in the Crimea Platform that aims to demonstrate the presence or absence of a tendency to mobilise EU members to face an aggressive and assertive Russian foreign policy.

In a theoretical analysis of the Crimea Platform participants as parts of a causal mechanism, they should show productive continuity, meaning that each part logically leads to the next part, and there are no large logical gaps. In this case, even such a description of the process tracing mechanism as an analysis of the responses of the subjects (participating countries) of the mechanism in terms of entities and actions is better than the complete absence of information about the mechanism. Thus, in conceptualising a causal mechanism, we must be able clearly to identify the various parts and how they are related through the nature of the evaluation of the process during research. In this case, the chosen methodology required the statements of Crimea Platform participants to be sorted and grouped according to their evaluation of the security environment in Crimea. It should be noted that the prevailing common feature of these statements demonstrates an attempt by the EU member states to resolve the conflict by purely diplomatic means, while ignoring or rejecting approaches aimed at changing and improving the security situation in the region in their own favour. The crisis has shown us that, without a common army, the EU cannot advance its interests in strategic regions, but only by using financial and diplomatic tools, which are often insufficient. Thus, the crisis has drawn attention to the future of the EU's common defence and security policy and the possibility of creating its own European army (Vlčej & Blažek, 2019, p. 64).

The research materials used in the article were designed to make explicit each part of the causal relationship between cause and effect, which allowed the causal logic of each of the relationships in the causal process to be studied in detail. (Russo & Williamson, 2007; Illari, 2011). It is important to note that this template for theorising causal mechanisms as theoretical systems can be applied to many different types of theoretical explanations.

Naturally, entities and activities depend on the type of causal explanation, the level at which the mechanism operates and the period of its operation. In this article, I identify certain moments in the process of the event under study, when the key actions (official statements of the participating countries) directed the case to certain results, and not to others. The article focuses on those moments when small changes in these circumstances could have caused the case to go the other way and influence the outcome of such an event.

To generalise the researched information and form logical conclusions, I have used an inductive method of reasoning, as is often employed to obtain scientific knowledge in information and analytical activities. The method of induction is associated with the movement of thought from the partial to the general, from individual facts to general causes. At the same time, among the set of previous circumstances, a similar and repeated notion in each case is singled out, which is the probable cause of the phenomenon (Copi, Cohen & Flage, 2006). Among inductive generalisations, an important role belongs to scientific induction. In addition to formal justification, a generalisation obtained by inductive means provides additional meaningful justification of its truth. Scientific induction provides a reliable conclusion due to the fact that the emphasis is on necessary, regular and causal relationships (Govier, 2013). Using the induction method as a logical method of research related to the generalisation of the results of observation and experiment and the movement of thought from the singular to the general, I have formed a holistic picture that reflects the behaviour of the actors (EU countries) towards Russian aggression in general and the annexation of Crimea in particular.

Based on these points, the process tracing method traces back the causal process that produces the case outcome, at each stage inferring from the context what caused each cause. Process tracing emphasises the temporal sequence of events and requires fine-grained case knowledge (Collier, 1997, pp. 823–830). The traced process is represented by the statements of the Crimea Platform participants and their attitudes to the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014. Statements of Crimea Platform participants after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, namely the EU in general and each EU member state in particular, are an essential part of conducting a comprehensive analysis of the EU member states' degree of involvement in the Crimea Platform.

Naturally, the degree of involvement is represented by different forms and means, and therefore it is necessary to answer the following questions:

- What is the overall assessment of the Russian aggression associated with the annexation of Crimea given by EU member states participating in the Crimea Platform?
- Do the differences in approach to the mitigation and deterrence of the aggressor state among EU member states participating in the Crimea Platform influence the overall assessment of the annexation of Crimea as the threat to the security of the world order?
- How did Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 influence the attitude of the EU countries to the annexation of Crimea and did these events serve as a factor aimed at uniting the EU countries in the face of a military threat?

In the next section, I analyse examples of statements by representatives of the EU countries that took part in the 2021 and 2022 Crimea Platform summits to track changes in the rhetoric of assessments of Russia's actions in Crimea against the backdrop of a full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in order to make the research relevant and give full answers to the research questions above. To answer these questions, data need to be collected from various sources, including official statements made by EU member states participating in the Crimea Platform, comments and remarks by political experts and scholars and a declaration signed during the initial summit of the Crimea Platform by all participating states. Such a wide range of sources provides an adequate and balanced approach to process tracing and theory testing together with observations within the case of the support of the Crimea Platform initiative by EU member states.

### 3. Statements by EU member states at the first Crimea Platform summit, 2021

At the first summit of the Crimea Platform, each co-founder issued a statement, in which they expressed their views on the annexation of Crimea, concerns about the prospects for Ukraine's potential membership in the EU and NATO and recommendations for further tasks of the Crimea Platform initiative, including important areas such as the de-occupation and reintegration of Crimea into Ukraine and the restoration and transformation of infrastructure in Crimea.

One of the issues raised during the conference was that Ukraine would not be able to resist aggression from Russia alone and would need to unite the efforts of the international community to confront security threats jointly at the regional and global levels. In his opening speech, the president of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky said that Ukraine would never be able to regain Crimea alone and, therefore, required effective support at the international level and at a new level of de-occupation of the Ukrainian peninsula. According to the president, the synergy of joint efforts resulted in withstanding Russian military aggression in Donbas and now this synergy should urge Russia to join in negotiations on the return of Crimea: 'The occupation of Crimea started in Moscow, the de-occupation of Crimea we will start in Kyiv' (President of Ukraine, 2021a).

All participants in the Crimea Platform expressed their support for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine and for further adherence to the policy of not recognising Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea (Crimea Platform, 2021). The Crimea Platform is viewed as a format designed to constantly remind the international community of the crisis in Ukraine and to remind Russia of the illegal annexation of Crimea, which contradicted the official statement of Russia on the legal status of Crimea, according to which the act of transferring Crimea to Russian control was legalised by a referendum on the peninsula and therefore closed to further international discussion (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russian Federation, 2021). The creation of the Crimea Platform is an attempt to attract the overwhelming majority of geopolitical players, especially the G7 and NATO members, as the most influential and, therefore, those capable of

providing continuous and effective support for Ukraine and keeping the Crimea issue on the international agenda. The president of Estonia, Kersti Kaljulaid mentioned this in her statement. She acknowledged the ongoing conflict in eastern Ukraine, as well as the partial occupation of Ukrainian territory, and stressed the importance of having a constant reminder of the situation in Ukraine: 'Ukraine's territorial integrity must be restored, and until that happens, the question should be raised about how the situation in Ukraine is to be remembered all over the world. It is important that the Minsk rules are followed and that the rest of the countries maintain unity regarding the sanctions imposed against Russia.' It was noted that the strengthening of the Russian military presence posed a serious threat to the security of Ukraine and the Black Sea region (Office of the President of the Republic, 2021).

Representatives of the participating countries discussed the importance of observing international law in resolving territorial conflicts. The prime minister of Slovakia, Eduard Heger defined the annexation of Crimea as illegal and assured delegates that 'time will not relieve Russia of its responsibility for its actions or the international community's need to pay attention to Ukraine' (Government of the Slovak Republic, 2021).

Relevant statements on the violation of international law were made by representatives of other countries at the summit. In particular, the importance of crucial measures aimed at the defence of international law was stressed by the president of Poland (Official website of the President of the Republic of Poland, 2021), the president of Latvia (President of the Republic of Latvia, 2021), the minister of foreign affairs of Austria (Federal Ministry of the Republic of Austria: European and International Affairs, 2021), the president of Finland (President of the Republic of Finland, 2021), the president of Slovenia (President of the Republic of Slovenia, 2021) and the minister of foreign affairs of North Macedonia (Republic of North Macedonia: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021).

Many leaders emphasised the important role of joint action by the world community against Russia's aggression, which provided the opportunity to resolve the issue of the annexation of Crimea by peaceful diplomatic means.

In particular, two participants addressed the significance of preserving the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine, namely, the prime minister of Croatia (Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2021) and the minister of foreign affairs of Italy (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy, 2021).

These statements reflect the determination of these states to insist on abiding by international law and to demonstrate that the illegal annexation of Crimea will remain the focus of international attention.

My research identified numerous differences in the approach to further cooperation with Ukraine following the annexation of Crimea. The main geopolitical players showed significant interest in economic cooperation and financial investment in energy projects in Ukraine. For example, the United States and Germany were committed to investing in the Green Fund for Ukraine to promote and support programmes aimed at developing its renewable energy sector and the modernisation of its gas transmission systems, thus ensuring the energy security of Ukraine as well as of Central and Eastern Europe. According to a joint statement by the US and Germany, such investments would not only contribute to the fight against climate change but would also support European

energy security by reducing demand for Russian energy (German Federal Foreign Office, 2021).

Germany's minister of the economy and energy, Peter Altmaier stated that his country did not and would not recognise Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea; the EU had imposed sanctions and would prolong these continuously until the reason for sanctions ceased to exist (Yevropeyska Pravda, 2021). The minister assured delegates that Germany together with Ukraine called for peaceful negotiations and the restoration of international order. Particular attention was devoted to the topic of energy security in the context of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, the joint statement by the US and Germany on support for Ukraine, European energy security and our climate goals. According to the minister, the statement was a strong and important message that Germany acknowledged the strategic significance of Nord Stream 2 for Ukraine and the commitments of Germany, enshrined in the statement, opened up great and, above all, sustainable opportunities for Ukraine. Germany was committed to protecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, not only in international law, but also in energy security (German Federal Foreign Office, 2021).

Several participants pointed out that the annexation of Crimea posed a threat to the security of the Black Sea region. Bulgaria, together with NATO and GUAM, expressed concern about the militarisation of the Crimean peninsula, which posed a security challenge. These participants were interested in maintaining free navigation in the Black Sea and access to Ukrainian ports in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. NATO helps ensure the security of the Black Sea by conducting military exercises such as Breeze 2021 in the region, which aim to enhance interoperability among participating units and strengthen NATO's readiness in the region (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, 2021).

The problem of the security of the Black Sea region and the militarisation of the Crimean peninsula by Russia were mentioned in the statements of many national leaders at the summit, as well as by representatives of international organisations and unions. Thus, the president of the European Council, Charles Michel reaffirmed the EU's refusal to recognise the illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia. According to the president, the EU had dedicated more than €16 billion in its effort to mitigate negative consequences of the annexation for Ukraine. The Crimea Platform was perceived as an international forum, the main goal of which was to remind the international community about the illegal annexation of Crimea and its violation of international law and rule-based order, in order to keep this issue on the international agenda. The president addressed the ongoing militarisation of the peninsula by Russian forces, which greatly affects the security situation in the Black Sea region, persecutes Crimean Tatars and violates their rights by an occupant (European Council, 2021).

The minister of foreign affairs of Bulgaria, Svetlan Stoev reaffirmed his country's consistent support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, including territorial waters. He expressed concern about the increasing militarisation of Crimea and the Black Sea region (The Republic of Bulgaria: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021).

The general secretary of the Council of Europe, Marija Pejčinović Burić stressed that the Council of Europe was the first international organisation to condemn the annexation of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol. The general secretary supported the fulfilment of the

Minsk Protocol and decisions of the Paris Summit to stop the armed conflict in Donbas (Council of Europe, 2021).

Analysing the statements of national representatives, in particular their assessment of the results of the summit, I found that some participants saw the summit as an opportunity to pursue their own goals. For example, some leaders, while comprehensively condemning Russia's actions in Crimea, said they wanted to see Ukraine fulfil certain conditions and obligations, reflecting nuances in relations between their states and Ukraine.

Thus, the prime minister of Romania, Florin Cîțu supported the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine and expressed adherence to the non-recognition policy of the annexation of Crimea. At the same time, the prime minister said that Ukraine's aspiration to join the European and transatlantic communities should be reinforced by boosting economic and social reforms to achieve democratic transformations of Ukrainian society and its future prosperity. According to the prime minister, the strengthening of democracy, full support of the human rights of every citizen and the proper functioning of state institutions were the key to the challenges and threats that Ukraine currently faced (Government of Romania, 2021).

The president of Lithuania, Gitanas Nauseda stated that Lithuania 'has never recognised and will not recognise the occupation and annexation of Crimea'. The president stated that the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine correlate with the interests of the entire democratic world. Special attention was paid to the reforms in Ukraine, directed at strengthening of governmental institutions, ensuring the rule of law, battling corruption and creating a competitive economy (President of the Republic of Lithuania, 2021).

The president of Hungary, János Áder supported Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity. However, he made a critical remark about the poor treatment of national minorities in Ukraine, citing the ban on their mother tongue in schools and the restrictions on the language in public life, which act as an obstacle for a country that strives to build a democracy and violate the interests of the country that represents the majority of the nation (About Hungary, 2021).

The minister of foreign affairs of Montenegro, Đorđe Radulović approved efforts undertaken by Kyiv to find sustainable diplomatic solutions to the issues that Ukraine currently faced. The minister stressed that diplomacy was the best answer and there was no alternative to finding diplomatic solutions to important global challenges. The minister stated that Montenegro and Ukraine had a traditional friendship and close bilateral ties, and cooperated closely in tourism and the economy (Government of Montenegro, 2021).

The state secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway, Audun Halvorsen stated that Norway had aligned itself with the EU's restrictive measures against Russia in response to its illegal annexation of Crimea and violations of international law. He stressed that Norway supported Ukraine's chosen Euro-Atlantic path by providing approximately 200 million kroner per year to assist Ukraine's European integration. This required that Ukraine implement necessary reforms and continue the fight against corruption. Norway's agenda also included large investments in renewable energy in Ukraine and an agreement (MoU) on nuclear safety cooperation (Government of Norway, 2021).

Comments on the results of the summit from the American political scientist and political economist Francis Fukuyama (2021) are relevant here. His view was that the Platform was not designed to change Russian thinking but was rather aimed at Western audiences, giving Ukraine's friends an opportunity to register their support. However, the strongest representation at the Platform came from countries that had experienced Russian occupation themselves, been part of the former Eastern Bloc or of a state, such as the Soviet Union or Yugoslavia: Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia, Moldova and Finland. At the summit, these states were represented at the head-of-state level by their presidents, unlike the US and Germany, which were represented by ministers of energy, rather than by the secretary of state or the vice president.

The summit ended with the adoption of a joint declaration signed by all the participants condemning the annexation of the Crimean peninsula by the Russian Federation and continuing political and economic pressure on Russia. Further sanctions against Russia are envisaged, and called Russia for a dialogue to end the occupation and consider the possibility of supporting economic and infrastructure projects aimed at the development of regions adjacent to Crimea.

The summit established an office of the Crimea Platform, the main tasks of which are to monitor the human rights situation on a daily basis, collect information on the growth of military activity on the peninsula, and monitor the environmental and economic situation in the temporarily occupied territory (President of Ukraine, 2021b).

The president of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky summarised the results of the Crimea Platform founding summit by stating that world had not switched to an 'every man for himself' format. In fact, the world will continue to unite against injustice. He was, is and will be on the side of Ukraine – that is, on the side of truth, on the side of the principles of international law (President of Ukraine, 2021c).

The security policy of the EU is currently guided by NATO, which is led by the US, not by EU member states. According to the Biden administration's report on the current state of EU security and defence policy, this has created a defence division in Europe between a public that is acutely aware of geopolitical threats and those more isolated and focused on other external threats, such as security in the Mediterranean (Bergmann, Cicarelli & Lamond, 2021). This gap within the EU between Central Europe, the Baltic States and Western Europe is reflected in the statements made at the Crimea Platform summit. For example, Central European states perceived the annexation of Crimea as an open threat to the EU's security and defence policy, which called into question the ability of the EU to provide an effective long-term security and defence policy, not only in maintaining internal affairs, but also in addressing external threats, such as the promotion of their interests and basic values in the international arena.

When it comes to Russian sanctions, the divide defines not only the EU's foreign and security policy on Russia, but also its continuing relationship with Ukraine. Naturally, debates on such an important issue revealed different perspectives on sanctions policy held by two opposing latent coalitions. The first, Coalition 1, consists of Estonia, Germany, the UK, the EU (the president of the Commission and the president of the European Council), Finland, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Sweden and thus includes some of the politically and economically most powerful EU member states. By sheer numbers, let alone

by population and economic power, Coalition 1 is by several degrees of magnitude more powerful than Coalition 2, which consists of Slovakia, Hungary and Italy. This means that sanctions policy towards Russia birthed two potential, or latent coalitions of countries, pushing for opposing policies (Karlović, Čepo & Bienkendorf, 2021).

The alarming signs of diverging opinions within the EU on sanctions policy allow the US to argue that the EU is in crisis and therefore requires support and further consolidation of its security and defence policies within NATO (Bergmann, Cicarelli & Lamond, 2021). Both the EU and NATO revised their policies on Russia following the Crimea Platform summit, which led to the development of new recommendations and resolutions, including major changes in the EU's security and defence strategy.

Overall, the presence on the EU's daily agenda of recommendations and resolutions on new strategies and approaches to forming a new relationship with Russia demonstrates the cohesive and unified policy of the EU and NATO in a rapidly changing geopolitical environment. These moves are aimed to mitigate differences between EU member states in their perception of Russia's foreign policy, caused by different historical backgrounds and national interests. The Crimea Platform acts as a catalyst for further alteration and adaptation of the security and defence strategies of both the EU and NATO to the changes not only in the external policy of major geopolitical actors such as Russia, but also in the global security environment.

#### 4. Statements by EU member states at the first Crimea Platform parliamentary summit, 2022

The first Crimea Platform parliamentary summit was held in October 2022 in Zagreb, Croatia, against the backdrop of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. This summit established and implemented an effective parliamentary dimension of cooperation between the participants of the Crimea Platform to promote global and domestic awareness of the situation on the Crimean Peninsula under the temporary occupation of Russia (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2022).

This context had a strong influence on the agenda of the summit, and was reflected in the statements of its participants. The rhetoric of the summit participants became unambiguous. The change of the Crimea Platform summit status to parliamentary testifies to the importance of its role for the participating countries and their representatives.

According to the summit organisers, the purpose of the event was to 'cover important issues concerning the occupied Crimean peninsula, namely: the prospects of bringing Russia and Russian officials to justice for international crimes committed in occupied Crimea; the issue of the future reintegration of Crimea after de-occupation; Croatian experience of territorial reintegration and the possibility of its application in Ukrainian realities in the future' (Zmina, 2022).

Summit participants expressed their position on the annexation of Crimea, taking into account new political threats and realities.

The president of the European Council, Charles Michel said that the EU did not recognise the annexation of the Crimean peninsula, noting that, since February 2022, Russia had been using Crimea as a springboard to invade other regions of Ukraine using missiles, and as a transit point to send Ukrainian people to filtration camps (Lysohor, 2022).

Chancellor Olaf Scholz of Germany said that the Ukrainians were bravely resisting the enemy, which deserved respect all over the world. The chancellor explained that the German and Canadian governments had agreed on a joint package of military aid for Ukraine, which would include air defence, missile systems and ammunition. In addition, Mr Scholz said that Germany, together with Japan, would provide Ukraine with aid to create additional grain storage facilities (Oliynyk, 2022).

The prime minister of the Netherlands, Mark Rutte stated that the Crimea Platform had become an instrument for uniting many countries in support of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine as well as for the return of human rights, democracy and international law to Crimea (Suspilne Noviny, 2022a).

The prime minister of Belgium, Alexander De Croo reminded delegates that Russia continued to violate the rights of the indigenous population of Crimea and said that the Russian president would bear responsibility for the violation of international law.

The president of France, Emmanuel Macron stated that Russia had violated the principles of international law by launching an invasion of Ukraine and assured participants that the EU and other allies of Ukraine would support the fight against Russian aggression (Suspilne Noviny, 2022b).

The prime minister of Italy, Mario Draghi expressed unwavering support for the Crimea Platform initiative and for Ukraine. Mr Draghi condemned the illegal annexation of Crimea and its gradual militarisation (Oliynyk, 2022).

The president of Poland, Andrzej Duda said that the West should reconsider its relations with Russia after its attack on Ukraine; he stated that Crimea was, is and will be a part of Ukraine just as Gdansk or Lublin is part of Poland (Oliynyk, 2022).

The prime minister of the Czech Republic, Petr Fiala noted that the interests of Ukraine, Europe and the world in the de-occupation of the Crimean peninsula were moral and pragmatic because they contributed to the protection of the rights and freedoms of the Crimean population and ensured stability in the Black Sea region. According to the prime minister, the common mistake of the international community was that it did not react strongly enough to violations of international law, ignored many warnings and acted passively. Finally, Mr Fiala added that the Czech Republic had joined in supporting and helping Ukraine and the issue was now its highest priority (Simochko, 2022).

The president of Slovakia, Zuzana Čaputová noted that Russia's aggression in Ukraine may spread to EU countries, therefore Slovakia would continue to provide political, humanitarian, financial and military aid to Ukraine. The president stressed that the future of Ukraine could be decided only by the people of Ukraine without any external influence or political pressure (Simochko, 2022).

The president of Slovenia, Borut Pahor said that Ukraine was defending international democracy and freedom, and that the war in Ukraine had a direct impact on the security of Europe and, in particular, on the Western Balkan countries. The president assured participants that Slovenia would continue to deliver political and economic

support to Ukraine, and provide humanitarian aid and other necessary assistance (Simochko, 2022).

The prime minister of Croatia, Andrej Plenković said that his country continued to provide Ukraine with economic and humanitarian support and stressed that the war in Ukraine was a confrontation between democracy and autocracy (Simochko, 2022).

The prime minister of Romania, Nicolae Ionel Ciucă noted that, with its attack on Ukraine, Russia had created the biggest crisis in Europe since the Second World War with huge consequences for the whole world. According to the prime minister, with this brutal war, Russia was openly pursuing a policy of intimidation towards other countries (Suspilne Noviny, 2022a).

The president of Estonia, Alar Karis called for the trial of all those involved in crimes in Russia's war against Ukraine, and for efforts to make Russia's aggressive actions more costly – in particular to increase sanctions pressure (Suspilne Noviny, 2022a).

The president of Lithuania, Gitanas Nausėda noted that Russia's invasion of Ukraine challenged the architecture of global security and the rule-based international order. The Crimea Platform provided an opportunity for the international community not only to discuss the de-occupation of Crimea but also to condemn Russia's violation of international law and further impose sanctions on Russia (Suspilne Noviny, 2022a).

Following the summit, the participants adopted a joint declaration condemning the serious and systematic violations of human rights and abuses by Russia in the temporarily occupied Crimean peninsula, and the illegal attempt by Russia and its proxies to falsify democratic tools and mechanisms, such as the recent so-called 'referendums' in regions of Ukraine.

The declaration also condemned the long-term militarisation of Crimea, attempts to illegally export stolen Ukrainian grain, obstacles to the realisation of the rights and freedoms of navigation in accordance with international law, the long-term change of the demographic structure in the temporarily occupied Crimea through the resettlement of Russian citizens and the expulsion of pro-Ukrainian activists from the peninsula (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2022).

In their speeches at the summit and in the joint declaration, the participants stated that they intended to continue political, diplomatic, financial, humanitarian and other support to Ukraine, in accordance with the procedures and legal jurisdiction of each participant, with the aim of restoring the territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders, at the same time increasing pressure on Russia to end its temporary occupation of Crimea (Zmina, 2022).

## 5. Conclusion

The decision to establish the Crimea Platform summit can be regarded as a landmark step in world politics. My research provides sufficient data for the assessment of causal factors that affect the outcome of the decision and allow a comprehensive analysis of the degree of involvement of the EU member states in working together to face a security threat. The significance of the Platform lies in the fact that it is an example of an international political

initiative involving the consolidation of democratic states in the face of a threat to the security of the world order. This international solidarity allows a collective assessment of the Russian aggression associated with the annexation of Crimea, given by the countries participating in the Crimea Platform, to be made.

A review of the official statements shows that the participating states, despite some disagreements in the perception of the processes in Ukraine that affected the relations of these countries with Ukraine, acted as a united front and condemned the annexation of Crimea by Russia. An analysis of the statements of the national leaders and representatives, as well as representatives of international organisations and unions, given in this article makes it possible to state unequivocally that all signatories of the Crimea Platform Declaration condemned the violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Crimea, the militarisation of Crimea that undermined security and stability in Crimea and the Black Sea region, the violation of international law and changes to the demographic structure in the peninsula after the resettlement of Russian citizens there. My research demonstrates that differences in the approaches to the mitigation of the impact and deterrence of Russia among the participating states influenced the overall assessment of the annexation of Crimea as a threat to the security of the world order.

The unified statement to address the situation in the international arena, caused by the assertive policy of the aggressor state, faced an obstacle in the form of differences of opinion of EU members on the annexation and measures aimed at mitigating and hindering Russia's aggressive and assertive policy. However, against the backdrop of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the main scope of the summit goals broadened from a need to protect the basic principles of international law to the protection of security and stability in the region. The 2022 summit showed the ability of the EU countries to come up with a common political position, which was not only announced but also entailed certain decisions and actions that were to be carried out jointly by the participating countries.

At the 2021 Crimea Platform summit, major EU member states such as Germany, France and Italy were represented at the ministerial level and made mostly declarative statements that did not imply an active interest in conflicts outside the EU. The conflict between Ukraine and Russia was considered a private matter that took place solely between these two states, where the EU acted as a mediator between the two parties to the conflict, supervising negotiations in the form of treaties such as the Minsk agreements. However, during the 2022 Crimea Platform summit, these countries were represented at a higher level and the rhetoric of their representatives demonstrated a direct response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine in the form of imposing sanctions on Russia and providing humanitarian, political, financial and military aid to Ukraine. It also showed unity among the EU member states in their readiness to support Ukraine in its fight against the aggressor, since the assessment of the scale of Russian hostilities in Ukraine went beyond the scope of a local conflict between the two countries and as a result, posed a threat to the security and stability of the EU. The shift in rhetoric of the representatives of the EU member states between the 2021 and 2022 Crimea Platform summits shows the ability of the EU member states to act as a united front in the political arena, positioning the EU on the international stage as a strong political player capable of having a unified response to global security issues.

As a format for discussing the de-occupation of Crimea and providing support and aid to protect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine, the Crimea Platform has significant potential for development and expansion. The 2023 Crimea Platform summit, which is expected to be a second parliamentary one, will take place in Prague, Czech Republic, in the autumn (Radio Svoboda, 2022). According to the first deputy minister of foreign affairs of Ukraine, this unique format now unites more than 60 states and international organisations from Europe, North and South America, Asia and Africa, with Costa Rica becoming the newest participant in January 2023 (Kizilov, 2023).

Overall, the Crimea Platform summit format allowed EU countries to mobilise around the support of Ukraine and the liberation of the Crimea peninsula. By participating in the Crimea Platform after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the EU demonstrated both an instant reaction to a violation of human rights, democratic principles and international law, and the determination to ensure the protection of the principles of state sovereignty, territorial integrity and global security. The resolution of issues arising from the Russo-Ukrainian war, consolidation around the protection of democratic values, and the norms of international law require broader involvement of all state mechanisms in the world. The Crimea Platform as a political and diplomatic international component is important for the de-occupation of Crimea. The introduction of a parliamentary format to the summit plays an important role in continuing to repel Russian aggression, as well as in establishing security guarantees not only in the Black Sea area, but also in the region adjoining the EU. Interparliamentary summits are not only a tool for advocating further support for Ukraine against the backdrop of full-scale Russian invasion and the liberation of Crimea, but also a way to the next stage of developing mechanisms and forms of peace in the post-war period. The interparliamentary dimension of the Crimea Platform may act as an additional guarantee of an exclusively democratic path of development for Ukraine. After Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, a diplomatic way of liberating Crimea is no longer relevant. Further summits will show this; it remains to be seen whether the participants will be able to see and mark the specific role of the Ukrainians and indigenous population of Crimea in the issue of de-occupation and reintegration of Crimea.

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**Ben Ansell:**

## WHY POLITICS FAILS

New York, NY: PublicAffairs. 2023,  
352 pages.

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I have long searched for a book about political science that I can recommend to friends who want to learn about the field. Ideally, the book should give them a sense of how political scientists view the world and set out some of their main findings. Economists tend to produce such books fairly regularly (from *Freakonomics* on down) and there are some in sociology as well (from C. Wright Mills to Duncan Watts).

It is harder to think of examples by political scientists. One of our few bestsellers is Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt's *How Democracy Dies*, but it is more speculative and focused on historical analogies than based on well-confirmed theories. Another is Robert Dahl's *How Democratic Is the American Constitution?*, which nicely blends normative and empirical thinking though on a narrow subject.

Ben Ansell's *Why Politics Fails* is a good contender for one of the first works broadly based on good political science research that you could also recommend to your friends. Ansell takes an explicitly political economy approach that begins with the problem of individuals whose self-interested actions prevent the achievement of collective goals. Politics is necessary because of our tendency to disagree, dissent and defect, yet any political solution inevitably creates problems.

The difficulty of writing a pop political science book is that practitioners in our field don't have a simple, distinctive point of view

on the world in the way that economists and sociologists do. We are more of a mongrel field without a figure like Adam Smith or Emile Durkheim to provide 'one simple idea' with many variations.

Ansell's version of the one simple idea (besides individual rationality versus collective irrationality) is that there are tradeoffs (or in his terms 'traps') in achieving the five major goals of politics. This might be a good motto for our field. One of the messages that many of us took from grad school was 'Not all good things go together'. This perhaps counteracts a natural tendency to believe that there is an ideal political system that provides everything we want. Of course, tradeoffs are central in the self-conceptions of other academics, particularly economists, but Ansell provides a distinctive political spin on them.

His specific tradeoffs, which provide the organising structure of the book, are:

- Democracy: There is no such thing as the will of the people;
- Equality: Equal rights and equal outcomes undermine each other;
- Solidarity: We only care about solidarity when we need it ourselves;
- Security: We can't avoid anarchy without risking tyranny;
- Prosperity: What makes us richer in the short run makes us poorer over the long haul.

It is hard to argue with these, though one could imagine others – for example, the tradeoffs between effectiveness and representation; stability and change; and providing what the people want versus what the people need. How much our choices here depend on values or normative perspectives as opposed to empirics is another issue that Ansell hints at (he recognises the inevitability of disagreement and sometimes lays out alternative

positions, for example, on solidarity), but doesn't treat as systematically. Nevertheless, these topics and tradeoffs provide a strong framework for a package tour of political science.

The substantive parts of the book give a breezy summary of political science research on these areas with many applications to current events. After introductory anecdotes, each section is organised as What is X?; the X Trap; and Escaping the X rap. Most of the material will be familiar to practising political scientists, but we are all also likely to pick up one or two new ideas. Some readers may find it a faithful review of their long-forgotten comprehensive exam preparations. To give a sense of the material (leaving out the applications to current politics):

- The democracy chapters cover the Schumpeterian definition, a brief history of democracy (from Athens to the Third Wave), majoritarian versus consensus designs, Condorcet cycles, Arrow's impossibility theorem, strategic voting, median voter theory and polarisation.
- On equality, Ansell considers the question of equality of what, the agrarian origins of inequality and Pikettyian theories of its evolution, the Meltzer-Richard model, Cohen's egalitarian ethos, the equality/efficiency tradeoff, the relationship between inequality and polarisation, the Swedish model, the Great Gatsby curve, redistributivist versus elite competition theories of democracy, gender inequality and assortative mating.
- The solidarity sections discuss Durkheim, ethical perspectives on what we owe each other, decommodification, the emergence of the solidaristic state, informational limits to solidarity, how welfare became black in the US and ethnic tension over welfare, and moral hazard and adverse selection.

- On security, the key theories/theorists are Hobbes, the emergence of modern police forces and incarceration (this was relatively new to me), the debate on the decline of violence, solutions to the problems of tyranny and anarchy, and the dark side of social capital.
- Finally, in the section on prosperity, the author analyses measures of prosperity, the Malthusian trap and the Great Divergence, inclusive institutions, credible commitments, collective action problems along with selective incentives and encompassing organisations, the prisoner's dilemma and tit-for-tat, the resource curse and manias.

It would be hard to cram more material into just under 300 pages. I would need to ask a layperson if it is too much or if the main tradeoffs allow them to make sense of it all.

What sets Ansell's book apart for me is the focus on the solutions to some of these tradeoffs. Elsewhere, I have criticised political science for failing to adopt an engineering mindset. We tend not to create new solutions in the way that economists, for example, have a sub-field of mechanism design. I give credit to Ansell for searching for original Pareto improvements to the status quo in the US and elsewhere.

To improve democracy, he thus probes ways to constrain democracy to avoid the Scylla of chaos and the Charybdis of polarisation. Pragmatically, he suggests quadratic voting, citizens' assemblies, online deliberation (for example, vTaiwan), open primaries, compulsory voting, heresthetics and proportional representation. To reduce inequality, he probes ways to make a wealth tax more palatable (mainly by finding areas where wealth is attributed to luck) and considers policies on minimum wage, unionisation, low interest rates and social investment. These overlap with the solutions to the solidarity trap that

include a universal basic income and providing benefits to the middle class.

The security solutions are both more controversial (improving monitoring with speed cameras and data science algorithms as in China's social credit scheme) and less controversial (body cameras for police). At the international level, Ansell's proposals include democracy promotion and collective security arrangements like NATO, and even lethal autonomous weapons systems. Finally, escaping the prosperity trap could be mitigated through the coordinated market economy, the entrepreneurial state (for example, innovation agencies and sovereign wealth funds), higher taxes, bank regulation and carbon taxes. This is not to say that Ansell endorses any of these solutions uncritically; even here he is alert to tradeoffs.

Ultimately, Ansell makes an argument for the inevitability and even centrality of politics. Trying to take conflict and self-interest out of politics (through techno-libertarianism or populism) will lead it to emerge elsewhere. Again, this might be the one simple idea of political science. He suggests that an appreciation of this idea could lead to better politics, though it is hard to see how self-interested actors will come to such an understanding. But if you had to choose one book to recommend to friends to give them an appreciation of politics and political science, *Why Politics Fails* may be the best choice.

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**Michael J. Sandel:**

## **THE TYRANNY OF MERIT: WHAT'S BECOME OF THE COMMON GOOD?**

New York, NY: Farrar, Straus  
and Giroux. 2020, 288 pages.

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Michael J. Sandel is a distinguished political philosopher and one of the world's most prominent public intellectuals. In his career, he has proven himself capable of writing dense and precise philosophical texts that resonate strongly with the leading figures in the field. However, he has been writing for a broader general audience for some time now. His books have a tremendous appeal primarily because they deal with critical philosophical issues and arguments in accessible language while at the same time not devaluing their substance, a true rarity among (contemporary) intellectuals. Thus, every time he publishes a new text, it resonates.

Sandel offers a timely intervention into contemporary debates on meritocracy in his latest book, *The Tyranny of Merit: What's Become of the Common Good?* The work is a critique of the modern trend of credentialism and the societal pursuit of individual success, which, he argues, has come at the cost of the collective good.

The author strongly opposes the established dogmas of meritocracy. He believes that our societal reverence for individual achievement – epitomised by the adoration of elite educational qualifications – has fostered a toxic culture. In his view, this creates two interconnected problems:

- 1) Those who succeed (often) succumb to pride, believing that they have earned their status solely through their own efforts; he calls this *meritocratic hubris*.
- 2) Those who do not share in this success are left behind and feel humiliated and unvalued.

Sandel claims that Western societies no longer have a value system that emphasises the dignity of work and the importance of roles in a community. He says they have shifted from this and nowadays prioritise individual success, measured monetarily or by educational credentials. He also argues that the 'winners' in this system (often) forget the roles of luck and collective effort in their success, which leads to a lack of societal empathy and a fracture between the elite and the working class.

Sandel also deals with the way meritocracy has permeated the political landscape. He observes – in what I consider the book's central point – that politicians have become increasingly technocratic and rely heavily on the credentials and expertise of elites. While this may seem a recipe for informed decisions, it also sidelines a significant part of the population and alienates them from the political process. This, he argues, has contributed to a rise of populism and anti-establishment sentiment.

Economically, Sandel draws attention to the widening gap between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' because a system that rewards certain skill sets, which are very frequently tied to advanced educational degrees, results in an inherent inequality that grows over time. In fact, children from wealthy families are significantly more likely to be admitted to elite American universities, largely due to their ability to afford expensive preparatory courses.

*'More than 70 percent of those who attend the hundred or so most competitive colleges in the United States come from the top quarter of the income scale; only 3 percent come from the*

*bottom quarter. [...] If you come from a rich family (top 1 percent), your chances of attending an Ivy League school are 77 times greater than if you come from a poor family (bottom 20 percent).'*' (pp. 156–157)

Therefore, Sandel is, in essence, saying that a system that was supposed to be based on meritocratic principles has degenerated, leading to the above-mentioned meritocratic hubris, individualism and a situation in which elites no longer feel the need to give back to society. In this context, it is important to stress that selective colleges often favour children of alumni (Harvard admits one out of three 'legacy applicants', compared to one in twenty from the general pool), reinforcing the assessment of college admissions set out above. Prioritising the children of graduates looks even worse from my perspective in the context of the recent overturning of affirmative action in universities by the US Supreme Court.

Beyond the economic and political, Sandel touches on the moral implications of such a system. By placing individual merit above all else, society often disregards virtues like humility, empathy and collective responsibility. And the narrative that success is purely the result of hard work overlooks the role of luck in one's life trajectory. It can be argued that a system that honours 'the best geniuses' tends to denigrate others as trash\*, which is directly connected to the rise of the populist backlash described above.

Sandel does not merely critique but also offers possible paths forward through reinvigorating the dignity of work, by recognising roles, in other words, that might not require elite educational credentials but are essential for the functioning of society, which is in line

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\* Sandel evidences this with quotes, including Hillary Clinton's statement from 2016 that Donald Trump's supporters are 'a basket of deplorables'.

with his communitarian philosophy. In this context, it is important to recall the unvalued professions that proved to be so important for society as a whole during the coronavirus pandemic crisis. He also stresses the need for civic education that emphasises collective responsibilities and shared destinies rather than individual triumphs.

Sandel offers only one specific suggestion. He proposes that admissions to prestigious universities should be managed in such a way that a third or half of the worst applicants (based on test results) are eliminated, and the accepted applicants are chosen by lot from the rest. I do not consider this to be a very reasonable proposal. I see the solution in broader social acceptance of the above-mentioned value of the dignity of work and awareness of the mutual interdependence of citizens in the contemporary world, which necessarily leads to a reduction of individualism and a greater sense of humility, which is something of great importance in current times when we are seeing a backlash of people feeling left behind.

A shortcoming of Sandel's work is the almost exclusive focus of the text on the United States, which is common among American authors. There is nothing wrong with this in

itself. However, if the author presents facts to support his arguments almost entirely from the US, he cannot generalise the phenomenon under analysis to the whole of Western civilisation, which is what Sandel does (as do many other American authors). To generalise his thesis, it would be necessary to bolster the argument presented in his book with more empirical evidence from a non-American Western environment.

Nevertheless, in general, *The Tyranny of Merit* is another of Sandel's brilliant, insightful, and widely accessible works on the central societal challenges of our time, which, along with his previous writings (*What Money Can't Buy* and *Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?*) – as well as dealing with his main topic – non-explicitly presents and develops his communitarian philosophy. Thus, the book is essential reading for not just social science scholars but every thoughtful person who is concerned by the discontent or even frustration of many that is politically manifested by the rise of populism and radicalism, not only in the United States.

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