The EU's Evolving Economic Diplomacy in Ukraine and its Ramifications

Oana - Antonia Colibășanu[1]

Abstract: *This paper discusses the way the European Union (EU) needs to adapt its economic diplomacy toolbox to tackle current challenges pertaining to the Russian war on Ukraine. It investigates the way in which the EU has developed its economic diplomacy in Ukraine, focusing on the scope of this diplomacy and its efficacy in responding to Russia's assertiveness and, ultimately, to Russia's aggression. The research identifies those initiatives that may be part of the priority toolkit used for sustaining the EU's strategic goals in Ukraine and beyond, considering the evolving global economic environment. The paper concludes with a comprehensive listing of the EU's challenges and opportunities for further developing its economic diplomacy, including as a solution or a response to the Ukrainian reconstruction needs.*

Keywords: *EU economic diplomacy, Ukraine's reconstruction, Ukraine's war with Russia, Solidarity Lanes, Three Seas Initiative.*

Introduction

The conflict in Ukraine has underscored the significance of economic diplomacy for the European Union. Economic diplomacy refers to the strategic utilisation of a nation's foreign policy in order to advance and safeguard its economic interests (Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Explainer and Definition of Economic Diplomacy). The European Union (EU) is not a nation state, but it is a global economic power. Therefore, the EU possesses a range of economic diplomacy instruments, which encompass trade agreements (trade policy), development assistance, and the promotion of foreign direct investment according to its economic interests.

Hence, the economic diplomacy of the European Union is founded on several fundamental ideas. These include open regionalism (a concept that refers to the European Union's steadfast dedication to promoting free and fair trade and investment), but also multilateralism, since the EU holds the belief that the most effective approach to global challenges lies in the collaborative efforts for finding a common goal shared by many nations. Last but not least, the European Union (EU) upholds a rules-based global order, that is founded on the principles of international law and the establishment of international institutions.

Before addressing the manner in which the Russian war on Ukraine has shaped the EU's economic diplomacy, we have to mention the pillars and toolkit that the EU uses for sustaining its economic interests, internationally. Thus, the EU's economic diplomacy is carried out through a diverse range of channels. First, the European Union conducts

[1] **Oana - Antonia Colibășanu** is lecturer at the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration, Department of International Relations and European Integration.
E-mail: antonia.colibasanu@dri.snspa.ro.

trade negotiations with various countries across the globe in order to establish trade agreements. Secondly, development cooperation, including the provision of development aid is a key aspect of the European Union's agenda, as the EU actively engages in offering development assistance to many countries across the world. Thirdly, the European Union (EU) actively promotes foreign direct investment (FDI) among its member states as well as in emerging nations. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) plays a pivotal role in fostering economic growth and in facilitating the process of development, but also good relations between nation states (providers and beneficiaries alike) (Bouyala Imbert, 2023).

To advance its economic interests, the EU is also using, along with the traditional economic diplomacy tools, specific elements pertaining to public diplomacy. The latter implies the act of engaging in communication with both the general public and the commercial entities situated in foreign countries, and it has become increasingly complex in time, partly due to the increased digitalisation of the international environment (European Commission - Overview of EU Instruments Contributing to the Internationalisation of European Business, 2023).

The European Union's economic diplomacy has been successful in engaging in negotiations to establish trade agreements with numerous countries. This has resulted in a notable enhancement of commerce and investments, especially from the end of the Cold War until the present times, a trend increased also by the EU's political expansion. Meanwhile, the European Union's development aid has contributed to worldwide poverty reduction. Nevertheless, the European Union's economic diplomacy has also encountered several obstacles. One notable criticism directed at the European Union (EU) regards its capacity to decide on the protection of its interests in specific sectors – notably in the agricultural one (Onorati, 2023). At the same time, the European Union (EU) has also faced criticism for the way it is addressing emerging economic difficulties - notably the ascent of China (Schaus and Lannoo, 2023).

Considering that the global environment is currently confronted with a multitude of economic difficulties (generated by the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, growing levels of inflation, and supply chains disruptions), the global economy in its entirety, and the European Union's economy, in particular, are undergoing a restructuring process. Moreover, taking into account that the potential repercussions of the war in Ukraine might stretch beyond Europe's security risks and have ramifications that impact the Union's agricultural sector and its relationship with both the US and China (the other global economic players), the EU's challenges in adapting its economic diplomacy toolkit have become complex. This makes the argument for a systematic research into the current multi-layered reshaping of the EU's economic diplomacy.

If the war waged by Russia in Ukraine is a pivotal factor not only for the EU's economic diplomacy, but also for the EU's global posture (Brzozowski, 2023), an investigation into the way this conflict affects the EU's ability to respond to Ukraine's needs is required. It would enable us to understand the key drivers of the EU's economic diplomacy towards Ukraine, on the one hand, and towards its neighbourhood, on the other. Given the EU's relations with Ukraine (in light of Russia's influence prior to the 2022 conflict), and assessing the EU's economic diplomacy towards Ukraine, before and after the war, will therefore provide a compelling starting point to understand its existing and future challenges. Such an investigation also relates to the current strategy of turning the EU into a major geopolitical player (De Gruyter, 2023). One of the major goals associated with this aim has been the decrease of the EU's reliance on Russian energy resources, while maintaining good relations with its neighbours and extending its partners' network.

Therefore, this paper seeks to facilitate the understanding of the defining elements of the EU's economic diplomacy toolbox towards Ukraine prior to 2014, when the latter was subjected to the Russian aggression. It then explores how the EU adapted its policies toward the current conflict in Ukraine by implementing development aid and trade policy in order to safeguard its interests in the neighbourhood and those of tackling a resurgent Russia. Finally, we have examined the current economic diplomacy toolbox – while trying to identify the EU's key challenges in implementing new, adaptive tools for tackling the war in Ukraine. The research method primarily consisted in consulting academic literature and EU official documents and our qualitative analysis aims to highlight the EU's future priorities for sustaining its interests. In this context, we have considered a short-term perspective versus a long-term perspective, while examining the characteristics of the EU-Ukraine Solidarity Lanes initiative and the Three Seas Initiative (an EU-backed platform that has diplomatic and economic value for the future of the bloc).

The paper concludes with the significance of enhancing the European Union's economic diplomacy in the current context and with reference to the war in Ukraine, whose repercussions seem to have a durable, restructuring effect on the global economy (Faulconbridge, 2023; Jenkins, 2023). Therefore, this research highlights primarily how the European Union's economic diplomacy is seeking to safeguard the Union's economic interests in its neighbourhood and beyond. The EU holds a prominent position as a significant player in the global trade. Hence, the significance of securing the EU's access to international markets is underscored. Furthermore, by stepping up its economic diplomacy, the EU will be able to establish more robust alliances with nations across the globe.

The conflict in Ukraine has not only underscored the significance of economic diplomacy for the European Union but has also triggered the EU's need to increase its capability to adapt to emergency situations, including by making use of its global partnerships and by developing them in order to maintain its economic stability and pursue its strategy of becoming a global geopolitical player. In the process, however, the EU needs to tackle specific challenges pertaining to its own political and economic structure.

1. **Literature review**

The literature on the EU economic diplomacy starts with an examination of the conceptual framework. Scholars have struggled to define the economic diplomacy in the context of the EU, by emphasising its multidimensional nature (Smith *et al.*, 2015; Leblond and Viju-Miljusevic, 2019). Early views have focused on trade and investment promotion, although more current interpretations include a broader range of economic tools, such as penalties, financial regulation, and competition policy. More recently, a key aspect brought forward is the increased politicising of the EU's trade policy and of its specific tools (Hutter and Kriesi, 2019). Before the pandemic, the financial sector was a priority when it came to research about the EU's economic policy and generally, about the way the EU could further develop the tools of economic diplomacy (Steinbach, 2018) to tackle contemporary challenges. Lately, considering the pandemic, the academic literature subsumed to the larger topic of economic diplomacy has covered specific effects (Tisdell, 2020) or areas (Mišík and Nosko, 2023) that the EU policymaking needs to tackle. These include the spillover effects (Kominers, 2012) that have become increasingly visible since 2020: e.g., the cyber risks to the critical infrastructure (Tokat, 2023), or the way the pandemic has put pressure on EU's member states to increase their innovation capabilities and implement new technologies (De Nardis and Parente, 2021). The energy sector was considered one of the main areas of interest for the EU's economic diplomacy (Dusciac and Robu, 2019; Braun, 2012; Knopf *et al.*, 2014), since it was perceived as an area where the EU could support, develop, and project power, as required by its latest strategy (The EU as a Global Actor | EEAS, n.d.). With the outbreak of the pandemic (Zakeri *et al.*, 2022) and of the war in Ukraine (Mišík and Nosko, 2023), the energy sector gained even more attention from the academic community, especially considering the green transition that is part of the EU's long-term strategic goals. Although a substantial body of academic literature argues that the EU's energy and digital sectors should serve the overall strategic objectives of the bloc and indirectly contribute to the EU's economic diplomacy, there is an increasing focus on the way the war in Ukraine has shaped the Union politically, economically, and geopolitically. However, there is little research on how the European economic diplomacy is actually applied to enhance Ukraine's war capabilities in fighting back the Russian Federation. Moreover, its influence on Ukraine's economy and, in the long term, on the country's social resilience has not been assessed.

2. **The EU's economic diplomacy for Ukraine before the war (2014-2022)**

The historical evolution of the economic diplomacy within the European Union refers to the bloc's efforts in view of the economic integration, which led to the introduction of the Euro, and the ensuing expansion of its economic toolbox. The Single European Act, the Maastricht Treaty, and the Lisbon Treaty are seen as pivotal in influencing the European Union's capabilities in terms of economic diplomacy, if one considers the reforms, and the policy and political implications brought forward by each of these treaties.

The European Union's function as a prominent global economic actor is discussed in relationship (Hilpold, 2003) to its leverage in international economic debates. The EU gained this leverage due to its extensive internal market, its regulatory authority, and its capacity to engage in collective bargaining (especially when it comes to its role in the World Trade Organisation). Nevertheless, the coordination between its member states in addressing complex economic issues has not always been easy: it's imperative to strike a delicate equilibrium between national interests and the collective objectives of the European Union, and this has led to the adoption of specific tools for several areas that require the member states' coordination at particular moments in time (Petersmann, 2018).

In this spirit, the EU's response to the increased Russian aggression towards Ukraine (that culminated with Moscow launching kinetic warfare in Ukraine in 2022) has come in several stages. First, the EU set the goal of decreasing its energy dependency on the Russian Federation. The energy transition was also seen as an additional way to reduce this dependency (Romanova, 2021), even if some argued that the green transition could offer Russia new opportunities to cooperate with the EU and thus increase its share on the energy market (Konoplyanik, 2022). At the same time, the relations between the EU and the Russian Federation were influenced by the particular calculations on the natural gas market (Zakeri *et al.*, 2022), a fact which shaped the EU's position on the Russian war on Ukraine.

Second, the EU responded to Russia's attempt to expand its influence by supporting Ukraine through various policies. Each of them has had an economic dimension – both in terms of economic assistance for development and elements pertaining to trade policy (Petrov, 2009). A summary of the EU policies and initiatives that have Ukraine (among other states) as a beneficiary is provided in *Table 1*. The information below comprises specific elements that the policies refer to.

Table 1. Current EU policies in Ukraine

EU Policies and Initiatives for Ukraine	Launch Year	Description and Benefits
European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)	2004	Framework for cooperation, stability, and shared values.
Eastern Partnership	2009	Platform for dialogue and cooperation with the Eastern European partners.
Association Agreement (including DCFTA)	2014	Comprehensive agreement covering trade, political, and regulatory alignment.
Visa Liberalisation	2017	Allows Ukrainian citizens to travel to the EU countries without a visa.
Based on the above, the EU policies that also aim at supporting the EU's goals in Ukraine		
Financial Assistance	Ongoing	Funding for economic development, governance reforms, and infrastructure.
Civil Society Support	Ongoing	Support for civil society organisations advocating for democracy and human rights.
Energy Cooperation	Ongoing	Enhances energy security, efficiency, and diversification of energy sources.
Humanitarian Aid	Ongoing	Provides aid for humanitarian needs arising from the Eastern Ukraine conflict.
Rule of Law and Justice Reform	Ongoing	Assists in strengthening the judicial system and combating corruption.
Digital Transformation	Ongoing	Supports digitalisation, e-governance, and innovation.
Environmental Cooperation	Ongoing	Addresses environmental challenges and implements environmental provisions.
Education and Research (Erasmus+, Horizon Europe, etc.)	Ongoing	Promotes academic and research cooperation, student exchanges, and innovation.

Source: Author's synthesis, based on the EU's official communications and documents.

Most, if not all, policies that the EU has implemented to address Russia's growing influence in Ukraine, and at the same time to respond to Kyiv-specific problems (discussed in various formats in Brussels, either directly with the representatives of the EU institutions, such as the European Commission or various committees from the Parliament, or indirectly, by engaging in bilateral diplomacy with the EU member states), have had special economic goals that harmonise with the broader, strategic economic interests of the EU to maintain peace within its borders and to support the economic development of its neighbours, thus reducing to a minimum conflict-associated risks (Petrov, 2009). While all policy elements have a dimension that is particular to Ukraine, they are not uniquely designed to tackle the current challenges that Ukraine is dealing with and certainly not able to support the Ukrainian reconstruction needs.

The third aspect of the EU's policy towards Ukraine refers to timing. Prior to 2014, when the Russian Federation invaded and annexed Crimea, the EU implemented trade policy and sent aid to Ukraine within the framework of the European Neighbourhood Partnership and, especially, through its Eastern dimension – the Eastern Partnership. Financial assistance was part of the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), replaced by the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) in 2014 (European Court of Auditors, 2016). The majority of ENPI-ENI assistance, namely 65%, was allocated through the utilisation of a sector budget support strategy. Ukraine has also been a recipient of grants in the form of subsidies from the European Union through the Instrument for Nuclear Safety Cooperation (INSC) and the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP). Besides these instruments, the EU has also approved loans to Ukraine through the macro-financial assistance (MFA). Those funds have been released, once the conditions set by the EU have been fulfilled in various targeted sectors (Krayevska, 2020). When Crimea became de facto Russian territory and the southern infrastructure was affected alongside with the Ukrainian territory, the European Commission released a proposed support package for Ukraine totalling 11.2 billion euros – to be spent until 2020. Then, for the first time, the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) involved in managing the funds for Ukraine, and they technically turned the European development aid into investment. Not only the rhetoric surrounding the EU's assistance to Ukraine had changed, but also the rationale of this assistance (Kuryłowicz and Rogozińska-Mitrut, 2023).

Table 2. The EU's assistance to Ukraine – amounts and political endorsement

	2007 - 2014	2014-2022	2022 - 2023
Overall EU assistance to Ukraine (including MFA) in mil. EUR	**5019**	**17345**	**65000**
Total grants	1609		
ENPI/ENI of which	1330		
Budget support	794		
Other ENPI/ENI grants	536		
Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace	54		

Instrument for Nuclear Safety Cooperation	225		
Total macro-financial assistance (MFA) loans	**3410**	**5600**	
Foreign policy instruments		355	
EIB & EBRD loans		9500	
Bilateral cooperation		1700	
Humanitarian aid		190	

Source: Author's synthesis based on EU official documents.

The structural change in the kind of aid delivered by the EU and in the nature of investments made it clearer that the EU chose to be more active in supporting Kyiv's development goals. Meanwhile, the fact that the "foreign policy instruments" appear to be a specific category, since 2014, highlights that the EU's economic diplomacy toolbox has developed with regard to Ukraine (Braha, 2019). Moreover, humanitarian aid is the least that Ukraine received from the EU. Starting from 2007, most of the EU funding and support for Ukraine had an economic and political dimension, and the economic dimension has visibly increased since 2014 (Fabbrini, 2023).

The fourth element of the EU's policy towards Ukraine regards the way the EU sought to engage with Kyiv during and after the war, with a focus on the reconstruction period. It is obvious that, from the onset of the war, the EU's involvement has outpaced all previous support in terms of financial, humanitarian, and military aid. In many ways, the war in Ukraine had fuelled European unity in unexpected and unprecedented ways. While during the initial year subsequent to the invasion, the European Union's assistance to Ukraine amounted to a sum exceeding €67 billion, the EU has also been developing its policy toolbox (Recovery and Reconstruction of Ukraine, n.d.), including by reconsidering its budget priorities and working with its strategic allies – NATO and the U.S. In fact, most academic literature written so far (Swoboda, 2023; Anghel and Jones, 2022; Yarmolenko, 2023; Maslov, 2023) and think tank research on this topic (Raik *et al.*, 2023; Ciurtin, 2023) touches upon the needs of a multidimensional reconstruction and discusses the administration, governance, and investment aspects of the process without highlighting the Western policy toolbox (either that of the US, NATO or of the EU) allowing to support these efforts.

3. **The EU's vision for the reconstruction in the making**

Since 2022, the European Union has taken a number of steps that have not only increased its cohesion and its geopolitical status at the global level but have also boosted the use of economic diplomacy tools designed to support its interests. If during the first year of the war in Ukraine, the EU focused on negotiating sanctions packages (Grözinger, 2022) and on synchronising its measures with those of the US, the winter of 2022 and the first half of 2023 brought to the fore the matter of the disruptions in the food supply chain caused by the war. The agreement between Ukraine, the United Nations, and the Russian Federation regarding the grain exportation via the Black Sea represents a significant milestone in that respect. The agreement was facilitated by the United Nations and Turkey in July of 2022, and it has proven effective in transporting substantial quantities of grain to other nations around the globe.

The agreement was significant as it served to mitigate the worldwide food shortage resulting from the conflict in Ukraine, a prominent exporter of wheat and various grains (Lang and McKee, 2023). For Europe, there are at least two strategic implications of the current situation in the Black Sea (Luchian, 2022). First, most nations that have experienced food shortages and soaring food prices because of the war in Ukraine are from Africa and, in the event of a food crisis, the already unstable African continent will likely send more migrants to Europe, leaving the EU to deal with another migration crisis at a time when it already faces problems of its own. Secondly, making sure that Ukraine can export the last year's cereal production and that it maintains its potential of agricultural products provider in the aftermath of the war is key for keeping the Ukrainian economy going. Thus, the socio-economic risks coming from a warring and post-war Ukraine would be limited. All this is no easy task – especially because the EU does not have a say in the future of the Grain Deal (Colibășanu, 2023). Instead, the matter is primarily in Russia's hands.

On September 4, 2023, the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, seemingly indicated that the resurrection of the Black Sea Grain Initiative is unlikely to occur. During a joint press conference with his Turkish counterpart, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, in Sochi, Putin suggested that Russia would rejoin the deal, provided that the Western nations cease to impede the Russian agricultural exports and restore the connection between the Russian Agricultural Bank and SWIFT (Lowe *et al.*, 2023). In reacting to that statement, Erdogan asserted that the expectations of Russia were widely known and suggested that engaging in additional discussions may potentially address these expectations (Reuters – "Turkey's Erdogan Says Black Sea Grain Deal Can Be Restored Soon", 2023). Additionally, he urged Ukraine to adopt a more accommodating position during the negotiations for revitalising the grain agreement, thereby facilitating increased cereal exports to Africa.

Nevertheless, Ukraine is unable to contemplate such a possibility. President Erdogan's request for Kyiv to adopt a more conciliatory stance in negotiations coincided with a recent incident involving a Russian drone strike on a Ukrainian port, mainly engaged in grain exports. This event took place on the eve of the meeting of President Putin with President Erdogan in Sochi. The port of Izmail, located in southern Odesa, along the Danube River, was subject to a hostile incursion resulting in the destruction of warehouses and the ignition of several other facilities (Walker and Borger, 2023). According to the Ukrainian government, following Russia's withdrawal from the Grain Deal, there have been reports of Russian military strikes on Ukrainian grain export ports that caused significant damage to around 220,000 tonnes of grain and long-term destruction to about 105 port infrastructure facilities (Goncharova, 2023). This implies that Russia does not really intend to initiate discussions regarding the revival of the Grain Agreement. Instead, it appears to be actively pursuing a long-term strategy aimed at impeding, or perhaps preventing, Ukraine from exporting its goods to global markets via port facilities.

This would effectively bar the access of Ukraine to cost-effective transportation routes in the Black Sea region (Welsh *et al.*, 2023). Consequently, Ukraine would find itself in a state of complete reliance on the Western nations, particularly on the European Union, for the establishment of alternative transportation channels (both on land and sea) to enable its export activities. The transportation of the Ukrainian merchandise to global markets has predominantly relied on routes passing through Poland or Romania (Turker, 2023). However, due to the limited availability of naval shipping routes in the Black Sea during the ongoing conflict, this process has encountered significant challenges.

It is noteworthy that Ukraine was given the opportunity to use for its merchandise transit routes via the European Union (EU) and to sell its cereals on the EU market until April 2023. These circumstances generated market distortions and significant distress among the agricultural producers in Central and Eastern Europe, particularly inside the EU. In November 2022, the European Commission received initial notifications from Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia, and Hungary. Ukrainian producers and traders, not bound by the rigorous quality requirements imposed by the European Union, had engaged in the practice of price dumping in these countries and this had a negative impact on the local farmers. The latter were compelled to exert pressure on their respective governments to impose a ban on the Ukrainian products, in order to safeguard their agricultural sector against the influx of lower quality food competitively priced on the internal market.

That ban, previously extended, expired on the 15th of September 2023. However, Poland, Slovakia, and Hungary have announced the introduction of unilateral import restrictions (Ives and Gupta, 2023). It is unclear whether such unilateral restrictions violate the common trade rules of the European Union. In response, Ukraine has expressed its intention to bring the matter before the World Trade Organization (WTO). In doing so, it would target Brussels and the EU member states that opposed the removal of the export restrictions (Hanke Vela, 2023). Ukraine has issued a warning about the subsidies provided by Poland to its farmers, in reaction to the increased grain exports from Ukraine, following the European Union's imposition of an export embargo. It is argued that these subsidies are not compliant with the regulations set forth by the World Trade Organisation.

Kyiv's threat to resort to the WTO dispute settlement mechanism is a political move. Should it do so, Kyiv would end up in complex and lengthy negotiations with Brussels and the EU member states at a time when it needs their support against the Russian Federation. Those negotiations would be time-consuming and would regard trade with agricultural products only. Yet Ukraine could obtain a long-term advantage and use it when it will need something else from these countries and/or Brussels (Limenta, 2012). On principle, the EU avoids disputes with third parties. Moreover, it seeks to establish free trade agreements and to negotiate preferential agreements with countries around the world (taking into account the current international economic war and the global restructuring). Having an open dispute at the WTO would be troubling for the EU (it would diminish its negotiation power), especially when dealing with other members (Kim, 2022).

Simultaneously, this threat would further complicate at EU level the ongoing discussions regarding the "Ukraine Facility", in line with the European Commission's official statement (European Commission - Ukraine Facility, 2023). The aforementioned facility represents the European Union's proposed resolution for the reconstruction of Ukraine, as well as its commitment to assist Ukraine in countering Russia's persistent hostilities and to progress towards eventual EU membership. In summary, the European

Commission, which put forth the proposal for the creation of the "Ukraine Facility", will have to get a total of 50 billion euros for this financial instrument from the EU member states. This amount will be allocated to Ukraine between the years 2024 and 2027, as stated by the proposal on the Ukraine Facility.

To achieve this objective, the European Commission has formally requested the approval of the European Parliament for its proposal to amend the budget. That proposal entails an additional allocation of 50 billion euros to the Ukraine Facility, along with an allocation of 50 billion euros to address migration concerns, establish a European Sovereignty Fund for the industrial strategy, cover pandemic recovery loan interests, address staff costs, and create a contingency reserve. The Commission's proposal to adjust the budget has been approved by the Parliament, and discussions on this topic are ongoing. However, it is highly probable that the ensuing decision of the European Parliament will face opposition from the Council of the EU, who is the final authority responsible for approving budget revisions, and whose decisions require the unanimous agreement of all the member states.

With the impending European Parliament elections of 2024, and the concurrent national-level elections, it is anticipated that the discourse on the possibility to augment the EU budget would occupy a prominent position within the realm of political deliberation. According to the most recent data from Eurostat, it can be observed that the Eurozone has entered a technical recession (Eurostat, 2023). Consequently, it is likely that the ongoing debate on the member states' willingness to contribute more funds to the European Union's financial resources will intensify. Given the geographical coverage of the Eurozone, which mostly encompasses Western Europe, the population residing in this area is somewhat at a safe distance from the Ukrainian frontline and the shadow of war. As a result, there is a high probability that voters from the Eurozone will exhibit a limited inclination to maintain their support for the Ukrainian state. Their stance can be justified by the potential increase in the costs associated with the assistance provided to Ukraine. The inadvertent repercussions of the budget debate may amplify the populist sentiments, especially because some of the challenges currently faced by the European Union have not been foreseen in 2020, during the initial discussions.

The aforementioned debate may also have an indirect impact on the European Union's response to the prevailing transit requirements of Ukraine, which have put a lot of strain on the EU's infrastructure (Ivanov, 2023). In May 2022, the Commission implemented the Solidarity Lanes Action Plan, designed to establish alternative logistical routes (encompassing rail, road, and inland canal transportation), so as to facilitate the export of goods from Ukraine. Approximately €220 million have been allocated for military mobility initiatives, aimed at consolidating the infrastructure along the Solidarity Lanes in Germany, Poland, and Romania. Additionally, €250 million have been invested in nine projects aimed at enhancing cross-border linkages between Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, and the European Union (European Commission - Solidarity Lanes, 2022).

Building infrastructure may take time. And yet, within the economic diplomacy toolbox that the EU has diversified, the Solidarity Lanes seem to be most urgent measure for implementation, given the needs of Ukraine. Thus, Europe can secure Ukraine's grain transit. Another relevant tool at the EU's disposal is the Three Seas Initiative (3SI), which has an important focus on infrastructure. However, considering that the 3SI is more of a business platform and not the outcome of an EU policy, one can perceive the 3SI and the Solidarity Lanes as two complementary tools, that are not competing with each other.

For research purposes, we have read the EU's official documents, as well as open-source information regarding the Three Seas Initiative and the Solidarity Lanes, deemed to be major measures or tools for economic diplomacy in Europe, in the broad sense of the word. We should consider their potential to support both the Ukrainian reconstruction goals and the solutions that the EU must implement to prevent a major security crisis generated by a possible disruption of the food supply chain.

Table 3. A basic comparison between the Three Seas Initiative and the Solidarity Lanes, as part of the European economic diplomacy toolbox

Feature	Three Seas Initiative (3SI)	Solidarity Lanes
Purpose	Promote cooperation and economic development among Central and Eastern European countries	Facilitate the flow of goods and people between Ukraine and the European Union (EU)
Membership	Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia	EU member states - Commission initiative
Role in Ukraine	Provide a business platform that can bring financial and political support to Ukraine	Facilitate the transport of goods and people, including by building logistic chains with reduced vulnerability to exceptional events
Key initiatives	Investing in infrastructure, energy, and digitalisation	Integrating Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova in the European transport area and increasing the capacity of the export corridors for the Ukrainian goods

Source: Author's synthesis based on EU official documents.

The major difference between the two lies in their strategic goals. The Three Seas Initiative is aimed at offering sustained economic support over an extended period of time, whereas the Solidarity Lanes are designed to provide immediate humanitarian and economic aid primarily on a short-term basis, while the build-up and the modernisation of the new supply chains are meant to provide long-term resilience. It is imperative to acknowledge that albeit the 3SI does not constitute a military alliance, it could support military interoperability, considering its focus on critical infrastructure. This platform represents a venue for fostering collaboration among nations in Central and Eastern Europe, encompassing many areas such as economic advancement, infrastructure development, and energy-related matters. This is why states like the US (Chojan, 2019) or Germany (Dahl, 2019) have had their own vision on how the platform may serve their interests, independent of those of the international organisations taking part in the 3SI (the EU included). Conversely, the Solidarity Lanes are a direct reaction to the conflict in Ukraine and prioritise the provision of humanitarian aid and the facilitation of the Ukrainian exports.

However, it is important to examine, in detail, the role of both in supporting the EU's strategic goals with reference to Ukraine, in order to understand how they could complement each other. First, the Solidarity Lanes play a crucial role in sustaining the Ukrainian economy by promoting the exportation of Ukrainian goods. The implementation of the Solidarity Lanes has been vital for mitigating the adverse effects of the war on the European Union's economy. This measure helped the EU cope with the war repercussions and to influence their evolution, through the infrastructure build-up. Moreover, since the Solidarity Lanes imply the development of new projects that require political endorsement from multiple countries, and funding from the European Commission, this initiative steps up the overall European convergence and cohesion (some of the most important strategic goals at the heart of the European Union).

In its turn, the Three Seas Initiative serves as a significant instrument of economic diplomacy for the European Union (EU) and the West in general, being also supported by the United States. This platform is meant to enhance economic linkages between nations in Central and Eastern Europe, by facilitating and encouraging the exchange of goods and services, as well as the allocation of financial resources among the 3SI member countries. For the EU, this is a way to increase the convergence of its Eastern, less developed, member states with the rest of its members, by enabling the spillover effects of economic growth and the creation of employment opportunities (Kurečić, 2018). At the same time, the 3SI is also meant to diminish the reliance on Russia as a primary provider of energy sources for this region, in particular, and for the EU in general. The 3SI aims to support strategic investments in the energy infrastructure, fact which would enhance the energy security and mitigate the region's susceptibility to the geopolitical influence of Russia.

In addition, the Three Seas Initiative promotes the idea of cooperation between the EU member states and non-EU members, by inviting the US to invest in the region and beyond. During the last 3SI Summit in Bucharest, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine became associated states to the Initiative, while Greece became a member of the 3SI (Mihai and Mandilara, 2023). The Three Seas Initiative is actively fostering investment through wider collaboration, while ensuring that the platform remains EU-based. Meanwhile, it is sending a diplomatic message – by confirming the use of the 3SI for reaching out to its Eastern partners.

Moreover, the Three Seas Initiative Investment Fund (3SIIF), launched by the 3SI in 2019, is a substantial financial resource amounting to €5 billion (Three Seas Initiative Investment Fund, n.d.), dedicated to the purpose of investing in infrastructure projects in the region of the Adriatic, Black, and Baltic seas (3SI). However, it exceeds the scope of the EU's economic diplomacy goals in this area, as it considers the Transatlantic security links and the evolving geopolitical environment. In this sense, the 3SI is engaged in supporting the collaborative efforts of the European Union and the United States in practical matters, such as developing synergies in the energy or the digital sector. Thus, the 3SI could serve as a crucial instrument for both the EU and the US, and generally, for the Western nations in their competition with China.

Until the EU-sponsored Ukraine Facility takes shape (once political negotiations over this issue come to an end), the Solidarity Lanes and the Three Seas Initiative will be the primary "tools" of the EU's economic diplomacy with regard to Ukraine. They represent the main avenues for the EU (if not for the West in general) to support its economic objectives and play an active role in the reconstruction of Ukraine. The manner in which the European Union endorses both the Solidarity Lanes and the Three Seas Initiative will significantly influence the position that it will assume in Ukraine's reconstruction efforts, which encompass the social and economic development.

4. **Conclusions**

The European Union has reached a milestone. On the one hand, the war in Ukraine has increased its unity in standing against a common threat: it determined the EU to provide support to Ukraine (in its war against the Russian Federation), and to build on the geopolitical role that it had announced it wants to assume at the global level. On the other hand, it has brought forward complex problems that Brussels and all the other capitals of the EU member states need to tackle. The following months will be challenging for the European political life: the upcoming elections for the European Parliament, as well as the elections at national, regional, and local levels make 2024 a hectic year. The election campaigns will give rise to discussions about the social and economic stability. The renewed debate on the EU budget, that started in September 2023, will emphasise the need either for more EU unity or, for a more pragmatic take on what should be a priority for the EU member states, depending on the campaigning strategy of each political party. This will heighten the tension and will put pressure on the EU to shape accordingly its response to the urgent and long-term problems that Ukraine is facing. The European voters will ultimately decide on the way the EU will further develop ties with Ukraine.

Therefore, there are some realities that will be shaped by the voting process. The economic interest is the driver of economic diplomacy, and, in the case of the EU, it determines the Union's geopolitical strategy (which is, ultimately, more of a geoeconomic nature). Without prosperity and the potential for growth, the EU would lose much of its political substance. For that reason, the European Commission sees in the reconstruction of Ukraine an opportunity, a way out of the multiple problems that the EU is coping with since 2010. The reconstruction of Ukraine is a long-term project in which the EU and the US could cooperate to create economic value. However, the possibility, the timing, and the manner of this cooperation, depend on the way the kinetic war evolves and, ultimately, ends. Until then, the EU can only kindle Ukraine's hope for a better future, including by creating and sustaining economic opportunities.

Though the EU has invested many funds in future infrastructure that will ensure the interconnectivity of the Ukrainian (and Moldovan) transport systems with those of the EU, the build-up process requires a significant amount of time and effort, not only for Ukraine, but also for the EU member states. Despite efforts to enhance the infrastructure capacity, port congestion has remained a persistent issue for the grain shipments, with the majority of the Ukrainian exports being transported via Romanian waterways, due to the close proximity of the Southern Ukrainian grain infrastructure. Furthermore, the closure of the Ukrainian land routes for the transit of Asian goods imported by Europe has increased the importance of the Middle Corridor. There is a surge in the traffic from Asia, which now crosses Central Asia and the South Caucasus to reach Europe through the Black Sea. This situation further justifies the EU's objective to build up and modernise infrastructure in Southeast Europe, even if these infrastructure plans will take time to come to fruition.

It is imperative that these projects benefit from a certain degree of political convergence, in order to yield the desired outcomes. As part of the Solidarity Lanes, the European Union (EU) has initiated a study to explore the integration of the railway systems of Ukraine and of the Republic of Moldova with those of the EU. This study aims to assess the feasibility and attractiveness of potential projects that facilitate the integration process. The projects should be both viable and appealing to companies, and particular emphasis will be given to the possibility of their efficient and expeditious implementation.

In that sense, the EU could make use of the other tool of economic diplomacy - the Three Seas Initiative, which stands out as the sole instrument within the European Union that operates independently of the electoral cycles and actively engages the business community. The 3SI may play a significant role in deterring Russia's ambitions in Europe, while providing support for the Ukrainian reconstruction needs. The necessity to invest in infrastructure extends beyond Ukraine's national interests, as it represents an effective means of post-pandemic recovery and fosters convergence among the countries in the region, including among those that are members of the European Union (EU) and of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO).

However, to effectively support the implementation of such a platform at the EU level (or at national level), it is imperative to undergo a paradigm shift, wherein one comprehends the multifaceted requirements and obstacles posed by the Ukraine conflict and acknowledges the weight of commercial interests. Ultimately, the nations that proposed the Three Seas Initiative have emerged as the foundational elements of a novel demarcation barrier that separates the Western and Eastern regions of Europe, and connects the Baltic, the Adriatic, and the Black Sea, forming thus a new kind of European frontier, which has become a de facto containment line in 2022.

The conflict in Ukraine is in a closer proximity to these countries (and has a greater impact on their population) than to those of Western Europe. Nevertheless, it holds a unique importance for the future of the eurozone, as the developments in Eastern Europe and in the Eastern neighbourhood have indirect ramifications on Western Europe and the world economy. In shaping up the EU tools for economic diplomacy or in using cooperation platforms, such as the 3SI, the states of Western Europe need to comprehend that, when it comes to the implementation of such tools, it is essential to secure the build-up of new infrastructure, because Moscow's hybrid warfare tactics will hit hard and fast, especially in the Eastern regions of Europe, in an attempt to weaken the containment line that stretches from the Baltic and the Black seas to the Adriatic Sea and even to the Mediterranean Sea.

All this should make the EU understand it needs to invest in developing its creativity and its agility in terms of economic diplomacy. At the same time, it must foster the coordination and cooperation of its member states – perhaps the greatest challenge in 2024, considering the upcoming election campaigns at both national and European levels.

References:

- Anghel, V., and Jones, E., (2022, November 11), "Is Europe really forged through crisis? Pandemic EU and the Russia – Ukraine war", *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 30 (Issue 4), pp. 766–786. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2022.2140820.
- Asarite, L., (2013, October 15), "European Union Economic Diplomacy: The Role of the EU in External Economic Relations", *Journal of Contemporary European Research*, Vol. 9 (No. 4), pp. 675-676. Available at: https://doi.org/10.30950/jcer.v9i4.595.
- Bouyala Imbert, F., (2017, March 3), In Depth Analysis: *EU Economic Diplomacy Strategy*, European Parliament, Directorate-General for External Policies (DG EXPO), Policy Department. Available at: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2017/570483/EXPO_IDA(2017)570483_EN.pdf.
- Braha, S., (2019), "Ukraine–EU Dialogue: 'Homework' on Reforms and Maintenance of Anti-Russian Sanctions", *Diplomatic Ukraine*, Issue XX, pp. 768–771. Available at: https://doi.org/10.37837/2707-7683-2019-51.
- Braun, J., (2012, February 9), *EU Energy Policy Under the Treaty of Lisbon Rules: Between a New Policy and Business as Usual*, EPIN Working Paper No. 31. Available at https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2001357.
- Brzozowski, A., (2023, September 17), "The West's 'special diplomatic operation'", euractiv.com. Available at: https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/the-west-special-diplomatic-operation/.
- Chojan, A., (2019, December), "The United States on the Three Seas Initiative", Rocznik Instytutu Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej, Vol. 17 (No. 3), pp. 79–92. Available at: https://doi.org/10.36874/riesw.2019.3.5.
- Ciurtin, H., (2023), *Throughout the Winters of our Discontent: A Synchronous Approach to the Reconstruction of Ukraine*, New Strategy Center. Available at: https://newstrategycenter.ro/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Horia-Ciurtin-Reconstruction-of-Ukraine-v4_prev-4.pdf. Accessed on: September 18, 2023.
- Colibășanu, A., (2023, July 24), "Much Hangs in the Balance of the Grain Deal", *Geopolitical Futures*. Available at: https://geopoliticalfutures.com/much-hangs-in-the-balance-of-the-grain-deal/.
- Dahl, M., (2019, December), "Evolution of Germany's Stance Regarding the Three Seas Initiative", Rocznik Instytutu Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej, Vol. 17 (No. 3), pp. 65–77. Available at: https://doi.org/10.36874/riesw.2019.3.4.
- De Gruyter, C., (2023, July 18), "Europe's Very Long Road to Geopolitics",

Foreign Policy. Available at: https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/07/18/europe-eu-ukraine-geopolitics-military-strategy/. Accessed on: September 18, 2023.

- De Nardis, S., and Parente, F., (2021, December 26), "Technology and task changes in the major EU countries", *Contemporary Economic Policy*, Vol. 40 (Issue 2), pp. 391–413. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1111/coep.12558.
- Dusciac, D., and Robu, A., (2019, June 17), "Economic Diplomacy in the Energy Sector in EU's Eastern Vicinity", *Politické Vedy*, Vol. 22 (Issue 2), pp. 42–60. DOI:10.24040/politickevedy.2019.22.2.42-60.
- Euractiv.com (2023, September 16), "Poland, Hungary, Slovakia to introduce own bans on Ukraine grains". Available at: https://www.euractiv.com/section/europe-s-east/news/poland-hungary-slovakia-to-introduce-own-bans-on-ukraine-grains/. Accessed on: September 18, 2023.
- European Commission (2022, June 1), *EU-Ukraine Solidarity Lanes*. Available at: https://eu-solidarity-ukraine.ec.europa.eu/eu-assistance-ukraine/eu-ukraine-solidarity-lanes_en. Accessed on: September 18, 2023.
- European Commission Press corner (2023), *Ukraine Facility*. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/home/en. Accessed on: September 18, 2023.
- European Commission (2023), *Recovery and reconstruction of Ukraine*. Available at: https://eu-solidarity-ukraine.ec.europa.eu/eu-assistance-ukraine/recovery-and-reconstruction-ukraine_en.
- European Commission (2023, July), *Overview of EU Instruments Contributing to the Internationalisation of European Businesses*. Available at: https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-07/overview%20of%20EU%20instruments%20to%20support%20internationalisation%20of%20European%20Business.pdf.
- European Court of Auditors (2016), *EU Assistance to Ukraine (Special Report No. 32)*, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Available at: https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/SR16_32/SR_UKRAINE_EN.pdf.
- European External Action Service (2023, March 17), *The EU as a global actor*. Available at: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-global-actor_en.
- Eurostat (2023, June 8), *GDP down by 0.1% and employment up by 0.6% in the euro area*. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/web/products-euro-indicators/w/2-08062023-AP. Accessed on: September 18, 2023.
- Fabbrini, F., (2023, July 11), "Funding the War in Ukraine: The European Peace Facility, the Macro-Financial Assistance Instrument, and the Slow Rise of an EU Fiscal Capacity", *Politics and Governance*, Vol. 11 (No. 4). Available at: https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v11i4.7174.
- Faulconbridge, G., (2023, August 23), "Blood and billions: the cost of Russia's war in Ukraine", *Reuters*. Available at: https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/blood-billions-cost-russias-war-ukraine-2023-08-23/.

- Ferran, E., (2012, January), "New Regulation of Remuneration in the Financial Sector in the EU", *European Company and Financial Law Review*, Vol. 9 (Issue 1), pp. 1–34. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1515/ecfr-2012-0001.
- Ghilès, F., (2022, March 7), "War in Ukraine and the gas crisis force a rethink of EU foreign policy", *Notes internacionals CIDOB*, No. 268, pp. 1–5. Available at: https://doi.org/10.24241/notesint.2022/268/en.
- Goncharova, O., (2023, September 13), "Minister: Russia's attacks on Ukrainian ports damage 105 port infrastructure facilities in 2 months", *The Kyiv Independent*. Available at: https://kyivindependent.com/minister-russias-attacks-on-ukrainian-ports-damage-105-port-infrastructure-facilities-in-2-months/. Accessed on: September 18, 2023.
- Grözinger, G., (2022, March), "War in Ukraine: Effective sanctions". *Wirtschaftsdienst*, Vol. 102 (Issue 3), pg. 156. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/s10273-022-3121-8.
- Hanke Vela, J., (2023, September 18), "Ukraine will sue Poland, Hungary and Slovakia over agricultural bans", *POLITICO*. Available at: https://www.politico.eu/article/ukraine-will-sue-poland-hungary-and-slovakia-over-agricultural-bans/. Accessed on: September 18, 2023.
- Hilpold, P., (2003, February 1), "Review: The EU and the WTO. Legal and Constitutional Issues", *European Journal of International Law*, Vol. 14 (Issue 1), pp. 201–205, https://doi.org/10.1093/ejil/14.1.201.
- Horiunova, Y.O., (2022), "EU Foreign Policy on the Russia-Ukraine War (2014–2022)", *Politicus*, pp. 45–51. Available at: https://doi.org/10.24195/2414-9616.2022-spec.7.
- Hutter, S., and Kriesi, H., (2019, May 30), "Politicizing Europe in times of crisis", *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 26 (Issue 7), pp. 996–1017. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2019.1619801.
- Ivanov, Y., (2023, August 31), "Solidarity taxes: the latest EU experience and prospects for Ukraine", *Fìnansi Ukraïni/ Finance of Ukraine*, No. 7, pp. 80–98. Available at: https://doi.org/10.33763/finukr2023.07.080.
- Ives, M., Gupta, G., (2023, September 16), "Poland, Hungary and Slovakia Ban Ukrainian Grain Exports", *The New York Times*. Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2023/09/16/world/europe/ukraine-grain-ban-poland-hungary-slovakia.html#:~:text=The%20E.U.,the%20end%20of%20the%20ban. Accessed on: September 18, 2023.
- Jenkins, B.M., (2023, March 7), "*Consequences of the War in Ukraine: The Economic Fallout*", *The RAND Blog*, Available at: https://www.rand.org/pubs/commentary/2023/03/consequences-of-the-war-in-ukraine-the-economic-fallout.html. Accessed on: September 18, 2023.
- Kim, M., (2022, March 31), "An Analysis of the Russia-Ukraine WTO TBT Dispute over Trade in Railway Equipment", *Korean Journal of International Economic Law*, Vol. 20 (Issue 1), pp. 7–38. Available at: https://doi.org/10.46271/kjiel.2022.03.20.1.7.

- Knopf, B., Koch, N., Grosjean, G., Fuss, S., Flachsland, C., Pahle, M., Jakob, M., and Edenhofer, O., (2014, September 23), *The European Emissions Trading System (EU ETS): Ex-Post Analysis, the Market Stability Reserve and Options for a Comprehensive Reform*, FEEM Working Paper No. 79. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2499457.
- Kominers, P., (2012, May 31), *Interoperability Case Study: Internet of Things (IoT)*, Berkman Center Research Publication No. 2012-10. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2046984.
- Konoplyanik, A., (2022, January 18), "Energy transition and green energy: the struggle for climate and for a new redivision of the world—and the proposal for a balanced Russia–EU solution", *Journal of World Energy Law and Business*, Vol. 15 (Issue 1), pp. 59–73. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1093/jwelb/jwab031.
- Krayevska, O., (2020, September 15), "Implementation of the EU Horizontal Policies in Ukraine in the Framework of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement", *Studia Politologiczne*, Vol. 57, pp. 169–187. Available at: https://doi.org/10.33896/spolit.2020.57.10.
- Kurečić, P., (2018, June 29), "The Three Seas Initiative: geographical determinants, geopolitical foundations, and prospective challenges", *Hrvatski Geografski Glasnik/Croatian Geographical Bulletin*, Vol. 80 (No. 1), pp. 99–124. Available at: https://doi.org/10.21861/hgg.2018.80.01.05.
- Kuryłowicz, M., and Rogozińska-Mitrut, J., (2023, July 21), "New Generation Leadership in Shaping EU Foreign Policy in the Face of the Crisis in Ukraine and the Annexation of Crimea", *Journal of Security and Sustainability Issues*, Vol. 13 (Issue 1), pp. 219–229. Available at: https://doi.org/10.47459/jssi.2023.13.24.
- Lang, T., and McKee, M., (2023, August 4), "Russia's withdrawal from the Ukraine grain deal is weaponising hunger", BMJ, Vol. 382, pg. 1815. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.p1815.
- Leblond, P., and Viju-Miljusevic, C., (2019, October 28), "EU trade policy in the twenty-first century: change, continuity and challenges", *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 26 (Issue 12), pp. 1836–1846. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2019.1678059.
- Limenta, M., (2012), "Non-Compliance in WTO Dispute Settlement: The Multiple Purposes of WTO Retaliation", *SSRN Electronic Journal*. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2091199.
- Lowe, Y., Ambrose, T., and Livingstone, H., (2023, September 4), "Putin says no grain deal until west meets obligations; Kyiv reports advances in east and south – as it happened", *The Guardian*. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/live/2023/sep/04/russia-ukraine-war-live-updates-izmail-port-attack-putin-erdogan-talks-wheat. Accessed on: September 18, 2023.
- Luchian, V., (2022), "The Impact of the 'Grain Deal' on Global Food Commodities Exports: Northern Black Sea Region Case (Romania, Russia,

Ukraine)", *International Agricultural Journal*, Vol. 65 (Issue 5). Available at: https://doi.org/10.55186/25876740_2022_6_5_50.

- Maslov, S., (2023), "Development of Public-Private Partnership through Reconstruction in War and Post-War Times", *Public Management and Administration in Ukraine*, Issue 34, pp. 104–107. Available at: https://doi.org/10.32782/pma2663-5240-2023.34.20.
- Mihai, C., (2023, September 8), "Ukraine and Moldova – associated states in three seas initiative", euractiv.com. Available at: https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/news/ukraine-and-moldova-associated-states-in-three-seas-initiative/. Accessed on: September 18, 2023.
- Mišík, M., and Nosko, A., (2023, June), "Post-pandemic lessons for EU energy and climate policy after the Russian invasion of Ukraine: Introduction to a special issue on EU green recovery in the post-Covid-19 period", *Energy Policy*, Vol. 177. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.enpol.2023.113546.
- Onorati, A., (2023, April 14), "EU needs land reform to stop Big Agri swallowing up small farms", *EUobserver*. Available at: https://euobserver.com/opinion/156919. Accessed on: September 18, 2023.
- Petersmann, E.-U., (2018), "How Should the EU and Other WTO Members React to Their WTO Governance and WTO Appellate Body Crises?", *SSRN Electronic Journal*. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3300738.
- Petrov, R., (2009), "The New EU-Ukraine Enhanced Agreement versus the EU-Ukraine Partnership and Cooperation Agreement: Transitional Path or Final Destination?", *SSRN Electronic Journal*. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1408216.
- Piattoni, S., (2022, June 27), "The EU through multiple crises. Representation and cohesion dilemmas for a 'sui generis' polity", *Contemporary Italian Politics*, Vol. 15 (Issue 1), pp. 111–113. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/23248823.2022.2091257.
- Raik, K., Blockmans, S., Dandashly, A., Noutcheva, G., Osypchuk, A., and Suslov. A., (2023, April), *Tackling the Constraints on EU Foreign Policy towards Ukraine: From Strategic Denial to Geopolitical Awakening*, JOINT Research Papers No. 20, CEPS. Available at: https://www.ceps.eu/ceps-publications/tackling-the-constraints-on-eu-foreign-policy-towards-ukraine/. Accessed on: September 18, 2023.
- Reuters (2023, September 5), "Turkey's Erdogan says Black Sea grain deal can be restored soon". Available at: https://www.reuters.com/markets/commodities/with-grain-deal-focus-putin-meet-erdogan-russia-2023-09-04/. Accessed on: September 18, 2023.
- Romanian Government - Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania (n.d.), *Economic Diplomacy*. Available at: https://www.mae.ro/en/node/2069.
- Romanian Government – Ministry of Interior (2023), *Grupul operativ UE-NATO: Raport de evaluare final privind consolidarea rezilienței și protecția infrastructurii critice [EU-NATO Task Force on the resilience of critical*

infrastructure. Final assessment report], CNCPIC. Available at: https://cncpic.mai.gov.ro/raport_de_evaluare_finala_06.2023.

- Romanova, T., (2021, July), "Russia's political discourse on the EU's energy transition (2014–2019) and its effect on EU-Russia energy relations", *Energy Policy*, Vol. 154. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.enpol.2021.112309.
- Schaus, M., Lannoo, K., (2023, September 7), "The EU's aim to de-risk itself from China is risky… yet necessary", CEPS Commentary. Available at: https://www.ceps.eu/the-eus-aim-to-de-risk-itself-from-china-is-risky-yet-necessary/. Accessed on: September 18, 2023.
- Smith, M., Keukeleire, S., and Vanhoonacker, S., (eds.) (2015, June 12), *The Diplomatic System of the European Union: Evolution, Change and Challenges*, Routledge, New York.
- Steinbach, A., (2018, September 13), "EU economic governance after the crisis: revisiting the accountability shift in EU economic governance", *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 26 (Issue 9), pp. 1354–1372. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2018.1520912.
- Swoboda, J., (2023), "Challenges for EU Accession and the War Against Ukraine", *Foreign Policy Review*, Vol. 16 (Issue 1), pp. 21–31. Available at: https://doi.org/10.47706/kkifpr.2023.1.21-31.
- Three Seas Initiative Investment Fund (n.d.). Available at: https://3siif.eu/.
- Tisdell, C. A., (2020, December), "Economic, social and political issues raised by the COVID-19 pandemic", *Economic Analysis and Policy*, Vol. 68, pp. 17–28. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eap.2020.08.002.
- Tokat, Y., (2023, August 18), "Cyber Threats to Hospitals and Critical Infrastructure in Times of COVID-19 Pandemic", SSRN. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4539458.
- Turker, H., (2023, July 25), "Behind the Demise of the Black Sea Grain Deal", *Geopolitical Monitor*. Available at: https://www.geopoliticalmonitor.com/behind-the-demise-of-the-black-sea-grain-deal/. Accessed on: September 18, 2023.
- Uyar Okcu, E., Franchino, F., and Arisoy, I. A., (2020, January 10), "The Role of EU Institutions in Common Trade Policy: An Assessment on EU-Canada Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement", *International Review of Economics and Management*, Vol. 7 (Issue 2), pp. 83–104. Available at: https://doi.org/10.18825/iremjournal.615846.
- Walker, S., and Borger, J., (2023, September 7), "Russia launches fourth drone attack in five days on Ukrainian food exports", *The Guardian*. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/sep/07/russia-launches-fourth-drone-attack-in-five-days-on-ukrainian-food-exports. Accessed on: September 18, 2023.
- Welsh, C., Glauber, J., and Dodd, E., (2023, September 15), "Why Is Russia Blocking Ukraine's Food Exports?", Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). Available at: https://www.csis.org/analysis/why-russia-blocking-ukraines-food-exports. Accessed on: September 18, 2023.

- Woolcock, S., (2011, January), "EU Economic Diplomacy: The Factors Shaping Common Action", *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, Vol. 6 (Issue 1–2), pp. 83–99. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1163/187119111x576949.
- Yarmolenko, V. V., (2023, June 30), "Investment Prospects in the Reconstruction of Ukraine", *Таврійський Науковий Вісник. Серія: Економіка [Taurian Scientific Bulletin. Series: Economy]*, Issue 16, pp. 36–43. Available at: https://doi.org/10.32782/2708-0366/2023.16.5.
- Youngs, R., (2009, February 5), "Europe's External Energy Policy: Between Geopolitics and the Market", CEPS Working Documents No. 278. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1337975.
- Zakeri, B., Staffell, I., Dodds, P., Grubb, M., Ekins, P., Jääskeläinen, J., Cross, S., Helin, K., and Castagneto-Gissey, G., (2022, August 8), "Energy Transitions in Europe – Role of Natural Gas in Electricity Prices". Available at: https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4170906.