CURRENT CHALLENGES TO THE EU INTEGRATION POLICY

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Abstract: The article explores the conceptual and applied aspects of the EU integration policy in the system of strategic risks in the functioning of a supranational organization. The political, economic, security, energy, social and climate factors under analysis have been perceived as asymmetric in the European space because the European countries with diverse economic and political potential are unable to simultaneously engage in several advanced forms of integration as leading Member States. The emergence of new leaders, new risks for supranational governance, new approaches to defining the common foreign and security policy, in particular in the context of threats to regional peace and stability, have been identified as the key challenges. While the political, social and cultural dimensions of the European integration were considered more important than economic and security stability but the large-scale protests of the European community related to widespread disturbances of public safety and clashes with police, as well as the EU internal contradictions caused by the migration crisis have demonstrated that the EU Member States adopt different approaches to the solution of political, economic and social challenges of the integration policy. Based on the English-language news collection in 'Media Cloud' that includes 1630 international and national media resources, the transformation of the main narratives in 2014-2019 about the changing media attention to the challenges facing EU integration policy has been investigated. The pan-European and international context related to Brexit, the EU economic relations, the EU energy security, the regional instability, terrorist attacks in the European countries, cybersecurity and climate change are identified as important topics for media discussions.

Introduction

Numerous political, economic and security challenges in the European region, the disturbance of social stability in Europe caused by the migration crisis, the Eurosceptic political

criticism of the necessity to improve the level of social protection of the European Communities, the rejection of European standards by refugees and increased crime have led to a transformation of the conceptual and practical principles of integration policy, as well as a revision of the activity priorities of the EU supranational institutions. The EU position, based on the need for regular monitoring of the current situation in Europe; deepening discussions on the contemporary political, economic and security development of the Union; harmonizing the European economic and security policy; strengthening the political responsibility of Member States for creating mechanisms to overcome social inequalities and assisting vulnerable society groups; coordinating the European actors' cooperation for the development of common approaches to addressing urgent problems, could be seen as an attempt to reform the European integration policy during 2014-2019.

The paper is structured as follows: Introduction; Section 1 discusses the conceptual background providing empirical foundations on the challenges to the EU; Section 2 draws the political and economic components of challenges to the European integration; Section 3 deals with the security aspects of the European integration policy; Section 4 indicates the empirical results of analysing media perceptions of the current challenges to the EU integration policy and Conclusions.

Methodology

The paper uses a descriptive and interpretative approach that is based on the review of previous research, documentary and institutional analysis, as well as interpretation of data prepared within the study. Among the special methods, the statistical method for collecting data on challenges to the EU integration policy in media space has been applied, as well as the content analysis for media monitoring over 2014-2019 regarding the formation of narratives about the issues and their impact on the public perception of the EU activity in the political, economic and security areas.

To study the media attention on the issues of the EU activity over the last five years, the digital platform 'Media Cloud' (2019) has been used to provide access to the raw data of examining challenges. Utilizing the platform, main themes published by specific sources have been examined; the dominant narratives on the challenges facing EU integration policy have been explored; the organizations and political leaders mentioned in media have been identified. These insights to

understanding mainstream news allowed to find out the regional distribution of media mentions on the challenges to the EU integration policy over 2014-2019.

Overview of previous research

Studying the issues of challenges transformation for the European integration policy requires the investigation of the political, economic and security components of current European integration processes by revealing the degree of trust to the supranational institutions in the context of increasing Euroscepticism, clarifying the influence of external and internal factors on the European identity and political consciousness, avoiding the contradictions in the perception of the EU's common foreign, economic and security strategies. The experience of the EU political activity has shown the aspiration of the supranational institutions to solve such problems as preserving the unity of regional space and the trust of national communities to the EU supranational institutions, improving the standards of the European identity, shaping the Europeanness ideas in the migration community, understanding the common European foreign and security policy in the broader context, supporting joint positions and approaches to the renewal of the European agenda for involving the interregional and international actors.

In general, researchers highlight several contemporary challenges to the EU after the European Parliamentary election 2019: the expected economic recession that could damage the eurozone and amount to a serious threat to the European integration process; the break of liberal democracy and the growing support for populist appeals, especially in the face of increasing challenges to the viability of the social model in Europe; the growing divide among the EU's liberal and illiberal governments; the structural challenge includes Brexit that is profoundly reshaping the EU (Palacio, 2019); the climate change, the ageing populations and the digital revolution that are the next challenges for deepening European regional cooperation and finding political and economic mutual understanding among the EU Member States (Valášek, 2019); the populism, the trade disagreement, the migration and the budget deficits continue to impact on Brexit negotiations, the trade dispute among the EU and the United States, as well as the growth of right-wing populist movements in Europe (Riegert, 2019).

It must be noted that the main priorities of the European Commission over 2014-2019 that could be used to solve the above issues included boosting investment and creating jobs; developing digital single market and unlocking online opportunities; making the EU more secure, affordable

and sustainable through an energy and climate union; transforming the internal market; combining stability with fairness and democratic accountability within the economic and monetary union; balancing trade policy without sacrificing Europe's standards; stepping up cooperation on security and justice in the EU and preserving the rule of law; improving the European agenda on migration; strengthening the global role of Europe and making the EU more transparent and democratically accountable (European Commission, 2014a).

The potential future of the Union, depending on the choice made by Europe, according to the EU Commission, may evolve in several directions – delivering the positive reform agenda, re-centring on the single market, allowing the willing Member States to do more in specific areas, focusing on selected urgent policy areas but doing much more together across all policy areas (European Commission, 2017c).

In addition, Ursula von der Leyen, newly elected European Commission president, also calls for addressing environmental and climate issues, providing socio-economic guarantees for Europeans and reforming the migration system as priorities for her future work (European Commission, 2019a). Among the short-term challenge to the European integration policy, the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the EU has been left. While among the long-term challenges, we can note solving the fallout of a trade conflict between the United States and China, boosting the EU digital competitiveness in economy, enhancing the European defence capabilities in the face of political volatility in the USA, as well as delivering on the EU pledge as the world's leader in efforts to fight climate change (Grajewski, 2019). The New Strategic Agenda 2019-2024 adopted by the European Council notes that over the next five years, the EU can strengthen its role in this changing environment and develop the existing political, economic and social model of the EU through protecting citizens and freedoms, developing a strong and vibrant economic base, building a climate-neutral, green, fair and social Europe, promoting European interests and values on the global stage (European Council, 2019).

Political and economic challenges to the EU integration policy

The development of the EU is based on the observance of the principles of social justice that involves the interaction of the supranational institutions and representatives of civil society, the fulfilment of the basic needs of all citizens of the European community, participation in the political and economic integration and strengthening European identity. At the same time, the

common historical heritage and the existence of successful nation-states should only contribute to the European integration and the improvement of the pan-European model of development of the united community.

However, despite the achievements in the integration policy, the EU is facing the contemporary challenges of intra-European and international character. Among the intra-European matters, we can note the political, economic and social issues that arise in the southern and the eastern Member States, the public protests in the EU Member States, the referendums in the UK on leaving the EU and in Spain on Catalonia's independence, the increase of populist scepticism about the prospects not only for the development of European integration but also for its existence as a whole. Among the international matters, the economic stagnation of the EU, the unresolved migration problem, the US-China trade confrontation and the threat of climate change can be highlighted.

An expert analysis of the EU's internal development, the complexity of negotiations with the UK on the Brexit agreement, the response of the European countries to the refugee crisis and the socio-environmental issues in the several European countries showed that it is necessary at the EU level to focus on solving the process of ensuring equal social opportunities and involving all citizens to the pan-European society. Besides, we could underline respect for the principles of gender equality, non-discrimination on all grounds, the implementation of access to education, the business support, the improvement of political and social dialogue, as well as the maintenance of the economic development balance for all Member States. Researchers (Vanhercke, Sabato, Bouget, 2017) note that, despite progress, the socio-economic governance in the EU still does not provide a balanced solution to macroeconomic, fiscal and social problems because the existing asymmetric economic growth of the EU Member States requires the considerable effort to political, economic and social rapprochement of the European political actors.

The migration pressure, associated with the EU discussions on the responsibility for sheltering migrants and providing them with social guarantees, remains the strategic challenge for the European community. The situation, caused by the uncontrolled influx of refugees, has put Europe ahead of the need to take action for overcoming the migration crisis generated by the escalation of hostilities in Syria and northern Iraq, instability in other countries in the Middle East, Central Asia, North and Central Africa. In particular, the European Commission promoted the establishment of a Trust Fund for Africa to stem the flow of refugees from North Africa and the

Middle East and provide financial assistance to Turkey for resolving the issue with Syrian refugees. Besides, France and Germany have established a separate special fund to address the refugee issues (Goodwin, Raines, 2017; European Commission, 2019b).

However, we observe the contradictory attitudes of some EU Member States to the political activities of the supranational institutions in setting quotas for receiving migrants because these actions lead to a limitation of social standards through funding assistance to refugees, intensifying anti-migrant sentiments, deepening political and cultural adaptation of the migrants. Such a situation is used by the nationalist parties or the right-wing movements and associations in Europe for deepening discussions on the appropriateness of the EU existence or European governance system.

At the same time, the economic forecasts from the European Commission also provide a positive assessment of the economic situation improvement through the arrival of migrants to the EU: in the middle-term, an additional effect is expected from an increase in labour supply, provided the implementation of the appropriate policy to facilitate migrants' access to the labour markets. Although increasing discordances are expected between the European countries regarding the allocation of refugee admission quotas and the costs of overcoming the migrant crisis (Fitisova, Solodko, 2016).

The inconsistency of the EU Member States' positions on the agricultural and environmental policy, due to the need to take the climate change into account, also affects the integration policy processes. The debate on developing a green economy, inching closer to net-zero carbon emissions, decreasing crop and livestock production (European Environment Agency, 2019; Rankin, 2019) has led to diverging views on common economic benefits because in the future less developed economies in Europe's southern and Mediterranean regions, as well as in Central Europe will have to abandon the agricultural production in full or in part and refurbish the industrial facilities for improving resilience to extreme events like drought, heatwaves and floods, as well as reducing environmental pollution.

Thus, there are the contradictions in the vision of a common European future by the stronger and weaker economies of the EU countries that contribute to the aggravation of the pan-European political and economic issues. In the long-term, a large part of the world economic growth will come from non-EU countries, therefore, the social stability of Europeans will depend on trade and investment, a strong internal market and an open international economic system

(European Commission, 2017b). These issues are also a need to be combined with the improvement of social standards, the UK's withdrawal from the EU, the general economic recession, the migration issues and disagreements on the EU climate policy. Within the political and economic challenges to the European integration process, the destructive potential of illegal migration also needs to be taken into account which could be used for internally destabilizing some European countries by creating new tension zones, spreading phobias and increasing anti-immigrant and radical sentiments.

Security challenges to the EU integration policy

The renewal of the European Security Strategy has resulted from both internal processes of deepening the EU political and economic integration and external factors, including strengthening the EU's role as an international actor, maintaining a balance of cooperation with NATO, changing the social environment following the terrorist attacks in Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Spain and Belgium, as well as the migration crisis in Europe caused by hostilities in Africa and the Middle East region as a whole. The general and targeted challenges to the EU integration policy can be identified in security. The common challenges relate to creating conditions for the full development of the EU and ensuring the security of the territory and the citizens of the community, while the targeted challenges include overcoming terrorist threats, combating cybercrime, protecting critical infrastructure against cyberattacks, resolving active or frozen conflicts and the EU energy security issues.

Recognizing the need to reform the common European security and defence policy, the European Commission adopted a renewed European Agenda on Security 2015-2020 for more effective cooperation among the EU Member States on particularly vulnerable challenges to the European citizens that are a transnational and require the action coordination by all EU Member States (European Commission, 2015d).

According to the tasks to address threats, the strategic plans have developed for engaging political, economic, diplomatic and military tools aimed at the formation of common security policy pillars, counter-terrorism, the EU participation in peacekeeping operations, including the Crisis Response Program, the modification of the Euro-Atlantic cooperation and NATO's role in the structure of European security, the possibilities of creating the European defence forces. It should be noted that the transformation of the European security policy is also conditioned on the

change of the EU's territorial borders, the appearance of the Middle East instability area, the dangerous conflicts in the post-Soviet space, therefore, the security strategy emphasizes both the need for an allied partnership with the US and the strengthening of the European security and defence system (European Commission, 2015c).

The cooperation of the EU Member States is based on such European security priorities as overcoming the threat of the terrorist acts in Europe that requires a reinforced EU response to terrorism and foreign terrorist mercenaries because the European citizens join the terrorist groups in conflict zones, shaping potential threats for European internal security on return; identifying and overcoming cross-border organized crime, including human and arms trafficking, drug smuggling, financial, economic and environmental crime; tackling cybercrime at the European level and identifying cyber threats to the security of the EU and its Member States beyond integration formation; improving the security of the dissemination, transmission and exchange of data on the Internet and the creating a single EU digital market to enhance digital competitiveness with the USA and Japan; intensifying the EU's global and regional influence on international issues (European Commission, 2015c).

The approach of the European Commission and the Member States aimed at addressing security concerns in Europe is based on counteracting radicalization through the creation of the Radicalisation Awareness Network in the EU; updating framework decisions on combating terrorism in order to provide a more coherent legal foundation that will enhance cooperation with the third countries on the prevention of terrorist threats; reducing the funding of criminal groups through the cooperation of national financial intelligence units affiliated to Europol; strengthening the dialogue with major IT corporations to combat terrorist propaganda on the Internet; introducing mechanisms for combating cybercrime and criminal investigations on the Internet (European Commission, 2015a; Immenkamp, Sgueo, Voronova, Dobreva, 2019).

The updated EU common security and defence strategy addresses such cybersecurity challenges and threats as combating information and cyber threats, tackling cyberterrorism and cybercrime which require finding an acceptable solution among the EU supranational institutions and the Member States regarding the need to improve the European cybersecurity program. Experts stress that there will be stronger the EU interaction with the UN Security Council on counteracting cyber threats; deepening partnerships with the USA, Japan, China, Canada and India in cyber defence; transforming the EU cybersecurity regulatory framework by adopting

conventions, directives, recommendations and resolutions on European cybersecurity and privacy of e-communications; identifying and evaluating information and cyber threats for critical life infrastructure of the European community as a whole and national communities in particular. The European Security Strategy also contains provisions on the need to overcome digital asymmetry among the EU countries, to prevent conflicts in the European region with the use of information weapons, to safeguard fundamental human rights and freedoms in the information space, to counteract destructive information influences on the moral values of the European communities (European Commission, 2015a).

The cross-border nature of the threats is forcing the EU countries to work closely at the pan-European level that is necessary not only to effectively prepare for counteracting cyberattacks but also to respond to them promptly. To support the EU Member States concerning the development of national cybersecurity policy, the European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA, 2019) has developed a special workshop that provides a brief analysis of the current state of cybersecurity strategies of the EU Member States and other countries, the common features and differences in national strategies, as well as the recommendations for implementation of a cybersecurity strategy in EU countries.

The security challenges also include active or frozen conflicts, in particular in the post-Soviet space, that prompt the EU to revise existing security strategy, formulate an updated common security policy and transform the Eastern Partnership policy. At present, the program of counteracting misinformation and anti-European propaganda is being actively implemented in Europe to unite efforts for overcoming Russian information pressure not only in the East of Europe but in every European country. In addition, the program has been launched in the EU to combat 'hate speech' on the Internet, and major IT companies, including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Microsoft, have signed a new code of conduct that obliges them to prevent the spread of hate speech, track the appearance of such words on social media and remove it within 24 hours.

The challenges to the EU integration policy in energy security linked to the need for a stable functioning of the European energy market, to support the security of energy supply to the EU, to integrate energy networks, to encourage the Member States to implement energy efficiency and energy savings policy, and to develop new and renewable sources of energy. The Treaty of Lisbon (European Union, 2007) provides for mandatory collective responsibility if an EU Member State has been the victim of aggression that requires other countries to provide it with assistance

and support by all possible means. Although this provision applies to the military sphere, we cannot exclude that such obligations may spread to EU energy security. It should be added that the correlation between the common energy policy and the common foreign policy of the EU has also been reflected in the strategy 'Energy 2020' (European Commission, 2011) that for the first time referred to ensuring uninterrupted access to energy products and services at an affordable price for all consumers. Thus, the need for conducting external and internal negotiations was identified between consumers, suppliers and transiters of energy resources to Europe.

Following another aggravation of bilateral relations between Ukraine and the Russian Federation in early 2014, the EU has developed the European energy security strategy and outlined the areas of energy interests among which we could distinguish the formation of European foreign energy policy and the review of intergovernmental energy agreements of the EU countries with other states for preventing suppliers' pressure; diversification of supplying countries and routes through enhanced cooperation with Norway and Saudi Arabia, as well as finding new partners in the Caspian region; the enhancement of internal energy production in the EU when achieving the right state of energy efficiency; the creation of missing infrastructure links to respond quickly to energy supply disruptions and to increase the level of critical infrastructure protection (European Commission, 2014b). These provisions were the basis for building the EU Energy Union's strategy (European Commission, 2015b) to reduce the energy import dependency and to overcome the existing energy monopoly by other countries. Current EU energy security challenges include the diversification of energy supplies, the renewal of nuclear energy with the use of modern technologies to ensure the safety of nuclear power plants, the development of alternative and renewable energy sources to reduce oil and gas consumption, the reduction of carbon emissions, as well as the implementation of energy saving technologies to reduce the energy intensity of the EU economy.

Results

Based on a study of global and regional political, economic and security trends, as well as the priorities of the EU supranational institutions, key challenges have been identified including Brexit, Terrorism in EU, Crisis of liberal democracy / Populism in EU, Economic crisis in EU, Cybersecurity and EU, War in Ukraine, European energy security and Russia, Immigrants and refugees in EU, Climate Change and EU. The selected topics were analyzed by means of the global

English language news collection, shaped in 'Media Cloud' and included 1630 international and national media resources, that allowed to qualitatively and quantitatively explore of news about the researched issues, as well as to comprehend major information trends on the EU integration policy from January 2014 to September 2019.
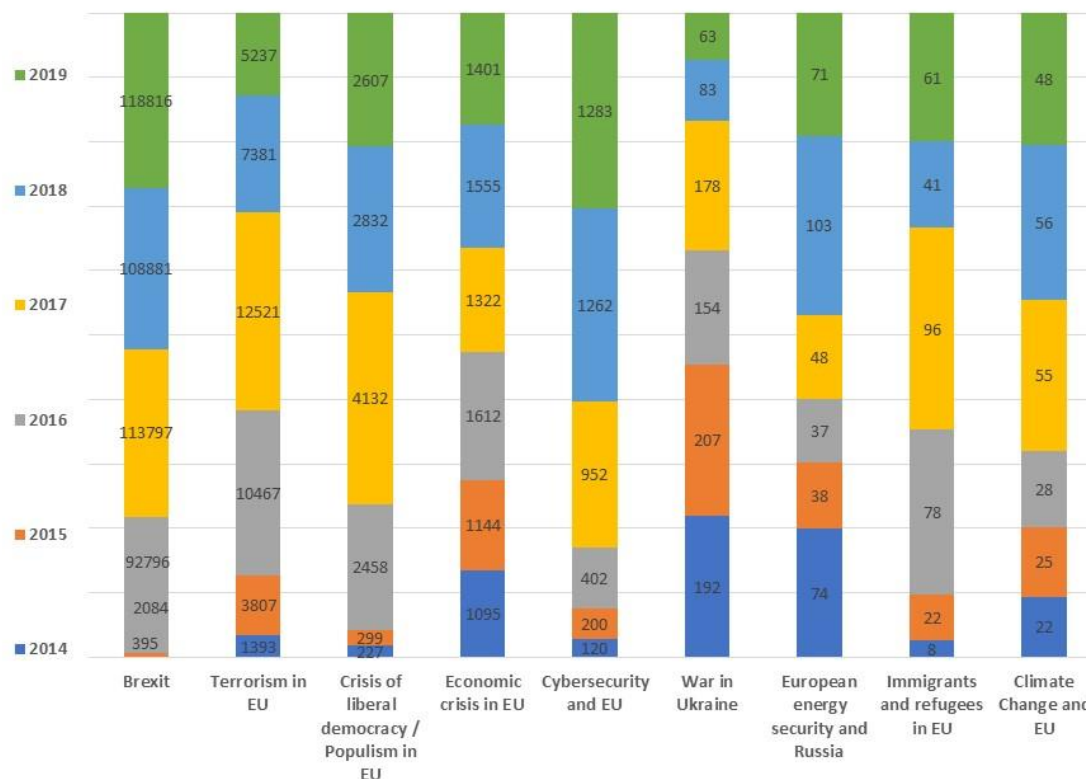
The media monitoring and evaluation of the foreign policy processes enabled to identify the political, economic and security trends in the EU integration policy, to observe the political attitudes of international actors and to determine the peculiarities of public opinion and the level of audience awareness about the EU regional and foreign policy activity. The interaction of international actors on current events and processes led to the filling of the information space with relevant thematic content, so comparing such indicators as time periods, news content, regional distribution of messages and dominant narratives made it possible to find out the degree of ideas dissemination, the involvement of political leaders and organizations, as well as main trends of media space with possibility to influence public awareness on researched issues.

The study of news over 2014-2019 has allowed concluding that media attention on the challenges to the EU integration policy has shifted (Figure 1), as a result, the messages could be divided into two groups:

- the first group includes the contemporary discussions that have not only the pan-European but also the international context. In particular, this applies to the following challenges listed in descending order: Brexit (total 436769 messages), Terrorism in EU (total 40806 messages), Crisis of liberal democracy / Populism in EU (total 12555 messages), Economic crisis in EU (total 8129 messages) and Cybersecurity and EU (total 4219 messages);

- the second group includes the situational discussions that can be considered as deriving from the aforecited challenges; moreover, such discussions could be used by political actors to 'stir up' interest or distract the audience attention. In particular, this applies to the following challenges listed in descending order: War in Ukraine (total 877 messages), European energy security and Russia (total 371 messages), Immigrants and refugees in EU (total 306 messages), as well as Climate Change and EU (total 234 messages).

Figure 1. Total attention to the selected topics over January 2014-September 2019

Source: compiled by authors according to online platform 'Media Cloud'.

Thus, the first group challenges can direct influence on the EU integration policy processes, while the second group challenges have an indirect impact on the European integration processes and can be considered as the tangents to the first group.

The news content on examining challenges to the EU integration policy over 2014-2019 consisted of the official events held at the regional and international levels with the participation, initiative or support of the EU, as well as the expert materials prepared for the media aimed at shaping public attitudes towards the political, economic, security and social processes taking place in the EU. Notably, the news coverage on the official events was predominantly informative, while the experts' evaluations contained their reflections on the events that took place and were not always objective. Thus, there is a tendency to increase the number of experts commenting on events but such reflections are not always professional and, therefore, can destructively or constructively influence the peculiarities of public opinion formation.

Within the first group of the contemporary discussions, the following subject lines can be distinguished:

- Close attention of the Global English Language Media to Brexit connected with the huge number of news about the EU break-up and the unresolved issue of the terms of the UK's exit from the EU. The media also reported on the financial and social consequences of Brexit for the UK citizens and other EU countries, the internal political crisis in the country due to the lack of a united position, as well as the prospects of British-American relations.

- The issue of 'Terrorism in the EU' was considered in the context of security instability in the Middle East, the terrorist attacks in European countries, the negative attitudes of the European community towards Muslims, the extension of NATO's funding for security, and a lack of unity in Europe regarding updating the common security policy. Some news also concerned the determination of Arab-EU leaders to fight terrorism, cultural and religious intolerance.

- 'Crisis of liberal democracy / Populism in EU' connected with such news lines as 'Europe's credibility is at stake', 'Labour cannot ride the Brexit wave to socialism', 'it must fight the nationalist right', 'refugees' drama goes on' and elections in the EU.

- 'Economic crisis in EU' concerned the countries' positions on reforming the euro area, promoting the greater economic development of Spain and Greece, negotiating US-EU trade agreement, cooperating within the G7 and G20, continuing US-China trade war and giving EU financial assistance to non-EU partner countries.

- 'Cybersecurity and EU' connected with such news lines as 'New Cybersecurity Rules in EU', 'EU lays out path to digital single market', 'China-EU Cooperation on Combatting Cybercrime', 'EU prepares for 'dark scenario' of cyberattacks', 'new data pact between the EU and USA', 'fighting fake news on Facebook', 'bolster cybersecurity', 'protect data privacy' and 'fight with Huawei in Europe'.

Within the second group of the situational discussions, the following subject lines can be distinguished:

- The media rhetoric on 'War in Ukraine' was reduced to comparing armed confrontation in Ukraine with other conflict zones in Europe and the world, talking about Minsk agreements on the truce in Eastern Ukraine, strengthening Russian influence on the Balkans, extending European blacklists of Russian diplomats and defining impact of the USA on the European regional policy and Germany and France's position in this context.

- Concerning 'European energy security and Russia', media attention focused on EU/USA sanctions, gas transit to Europe through Ukraine and Europe's dependence on this process, gas security and supplies of energy resources from the USA and Asian countries, gas talks between Kyiv and Moscow. Other media messages were connected with such topics as attempts to construct additional Russian pipelines bypassing Ukraine (especially North Stream-2 and South Stream); abusing market position by Gazprom; energy interconnection among Russia and Greece, Turkey, Serbia; joining forces of the European countries for sharing energy resources to overcome security risks; using energy resources as a 'weapon' of hybrid warfare and defining the European space as US-Russia battleground.

- Discussions on 'Immigrants and Refugees in EU' is related to such news as 'Europe must be truly social', the position of European states to restricting the reception of migrants within their territory (Hungary's anti-migrant referendum), 'the cultural poison of Europe's immigration policies' and unwillingness by the EU citizens to adopt non-European cultural traditions. Besides, some media emphasized that the political elite of European states sometimes resort to 'using refugee's tragedy for political gain', as well as how these processes affect the European integration.

- Regarding climate change and the EU's role, the media actively covered issues of global warming impact, climate talks, the annual Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Paris Agreement on Climate Change, impact of climate change on disease risk in Europe, using community for fighting climate change. The other news about 'Climate Change and EU' in the following years included the protection of human rights in climate change, the safety of the regional environment in Europe, the agriculture and food security policy, the carbon colonialism and climate corruption, the European farmers, the emissions, the floods and the climate refugee debate.

Thus, the dominant narratives that shaped the interpretations of the challenges to the EU integration policy from a certain viewpoint, subsequently, generated in public opinion a set of concepts, ideas, symbols or schemes regarding the political, economic and security trends in the EU or the whole region. It should be emphasized that through using the Internet such ideas on the interpretation of the European integration policy can be spread, as well as commented on an infinite number of times, leading to the huge information stream, when the target audience may lose touch with reality, live in a virtual world and make decisions (especially during referendums or elections) focusing on misconceptions about the EU regional and international activity.

Within the first group of the contemporary discussions (Brexit, Terrorism in EU, Crisis of liberal democracy / Populism in EU, Economic crisis in EU, Cybersecurity and EU), we could highlight such blocks of dominant narratives as the political block that focuses on 'politics and government', 'elections' and 'US politics and government'; the economic block that focuses on 'economic conditions and trends', 'finances', 'credit'; the international block that focuses on 'international relations' and 'international trade and world market'; the legal block that focuses on 'law and legislation', 'freedom and human rights', 'legislatures and parliaments'; the technical block that focuses on 'computers and the internet', 'telephones and telecommunications'. Notably, the narrative 'terrorism' simultaneously combines political, economic, international, legal and technical blocks (Tab. 1).

Table 1: Narratives on the first group of the contemporary discussions, January 2014-September 2019

Challenges	Dominant Narratives, % of total messages	
Brexit	international trade and world market	14
	economic conditions and trends	18
	elections	20
	finances	25
	politics and government	75
Terrorism in EU	US politics and government	27
	international relations	41
	terrorism	41
	politics and government	79
Crisis of liberal democracy / Populism in EU	US politics and government	24
	legislatures and parliaments	25
	freedom and human rights	25

Challenges	Dominant Narratives, % of total messages	
	economic conditions and trends	25
	elections	30
	politics and government	89
Economic crisis in EU	elections	17
	credit	17
	international relations	26
	finances	36
	economic conditions and trends	52
Cybersecurity and EU	telephones and telecommunications	19
	US politics and government	20
	international relations	23
	finances	25
	law and legislation	33
	politics and government	48
	computers and the internet	54

Source: compiled by authors according to online platform 'Media Cloud'.

Within the second group of the situational discussions (War in Ukraine, European energy security and Russia, Immigrants and refugees in EU, Climate Change and EU), the dominant narratives were narrowly thematic that allowed to purposefully shape the public perception of issues related to the EU internal and external activity (Tab. 2). The studied discussions also were socially sensitive for the European community and, therefore, required the targeted explanations or interpretations. At the same time, only such blocks of narratives as the political (politics and government, US politics and government) and international (international relations, international

trade and world market, US international relations) and partly economic (economic conditions and trends) have been identified in almost all examining challenges of the second group.

Table 2: Narratives on the second group of the situational discussions, January 2014-September 2019

Challenges	Dominant Narratives, % of total messages	
War in Ukraine	armament, defence and military forces	32
	US international relations	35
	US politics and government	41
	international relations	61
	politics and government	89
European energy security and Russia	gas (fuel)	49
	international trade and world market	54
	oil (petroleum) and gasoline	65
	politics and government	65
	energy and power	69
Immigrants and refugees in EU	international relations	20
	elections	23
	travel and vacations	24
	economic conditions and trends	25
	US politics and government	25
	religion and churches	33
	immigration and refugees	48
	politics and government	77
	food	20

Challenges	Dominant Narratives, % of total messages	
Climate Change and EU	economic conditions and trends	25
	weather	26
	global warming	31
	environment	32
	politics and government	42

Source: compiled by authors according to online platform 'Media Cloud'.

Political leaders who were the most average mentioned in the context of examining challenges in 2014 were Barack Obama (13% messages), Angela Merkel (13%), David Cameron (18%), John Kerry (10%), Nigel Farage (23%) and Vladimir Putin (30%); in 2015 – Angela Merkel (18%), Barack Obama (16%), David Cameron (28%), John Kerry (9%), Francois Hollande (14%), Jean-Claude Juncker (11%) and Vladimir Putin (21%); in 2016 – Angela Merkel (14%), Barack Obama (10%), Boris Johnson (9%), David Cameron (19%), Donald Trump (19%), Hillary Clinton (13%), Nigel Farage (11%), Theresa May (10%) and Vladimir Putin (22%); in 2017 – Angela Merkel (9%), Barack Obama (6%), Boris Johnson (5%), Donald Trump (11%), Emmanuel Macron (7%), Jean-Claude Juncker (5%), Jeremy Corbyn (6%), Marine Le Pen (10%), Petro Poroshenko (10%), Theresa May (9%) and Vladimir Putin (11%); in 2018 – Angela Merkel (11%), Boris Johnson (11%), Donald Trump (17%), Emmanuel Macron (11%), Federica Mogherini (10%), Theresa May (13%) and Vladimir Putin (21%); in 2019 – Angela Merkel (10%), Boris Johnson (14%), Donald Trump (18%), Emmanuel Macron (13%), Jean-Claude Juncker (5%), Mike Pompeo (6%), Theresa May (13%), Vladimir Putin (27%) and Volodymyr Zelenskiy (15%).

Using the frequency of mentions of the political leader in the news, we can distinguish the international political leaders who have been mentioned in the context of almost all examining challenges to the EU integration policy and the regional (European) leaders who have been mentioned only in the narrow research topics. Thus, within the first group (Brexit, Terrorism in EU, Crisis of liberal democracy / Populism in EU, Economic crisis in EU, Cybersecurity and EU), the main political leaders most frequently mentioned were Angela Merkel, the Chancellor of

Germany; Barack Obama, the 44th President of the United States; Boris Johnson, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom since 2019; David Cameron, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 2010 to 2016; Donald Trump, the 45th President of the United States; Emmanuel Macron, the President of the Fifth Republic of France; Jean-Claude Juncker, the President of the European Commission from 2014 to 2019; and Theresa May, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 2016 to 2019.

Within the second group (War in Ukraine, European energy security and Russia, Immigrants and refugees in EU, Climate Change and EU), the most frequently mentioned political leaders were Angela Merkel, the Chancellor of Germany; Barack Obama, the 44th President of the United States; Donald Trump, the 45th President of the United States; David Cameron, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 2010 to 2016; Donald Trump, the 45th President of the United States; Emmanuel Macron, the President of the Fifth Republic of France; John Kerry, the 68th United States Secretary of State; Jean-Claude Juncker, the President of the European Commission from 2014 to 2019; Nigel Farage, the Leader of the Brexit Party; Petro Poroshenko, the 5th President of Ukraine, and Vladimir Putin, the President of the Russian Federation.
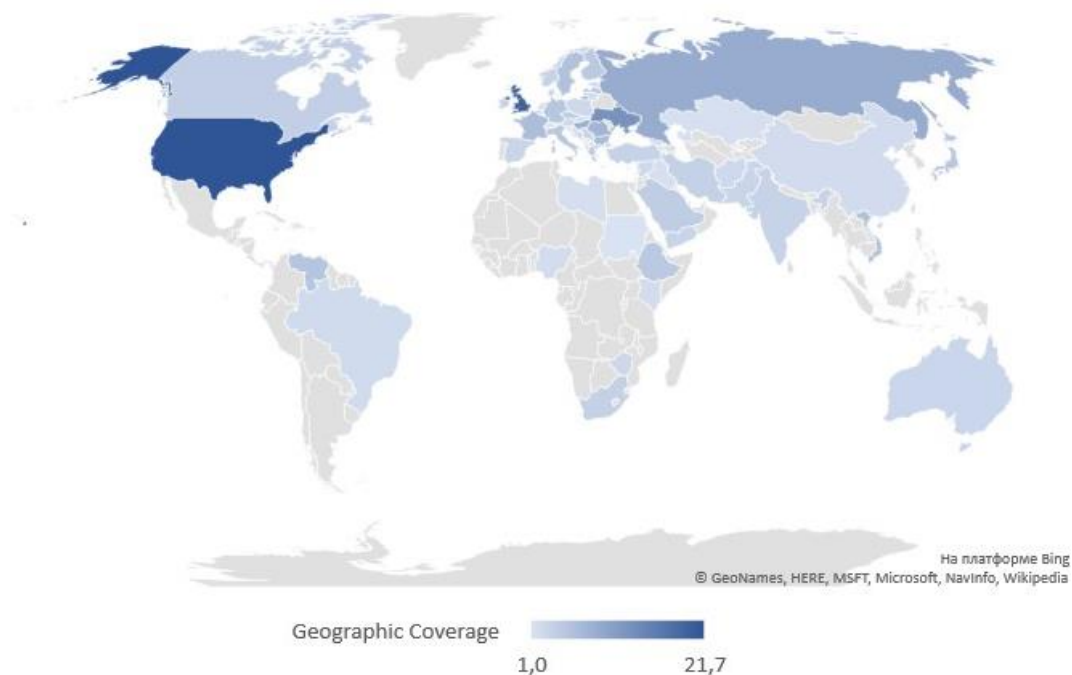
During the coverage of the challenges to the EU integration policy, media referred to directly EU and its supranational institutions (the European Council, the European Commission, the European Parliament) and also the activities of several international institutions – the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, NATO and OSCE. In addition, the mention of the White House, the Congress, the Senate (the USA) and the Kremlin (the Russian Federation) can be distinguished among the government institutions of other states. Reuters, New York Times, Associated Press, BBC and Agence France-Presse were among the media that have become the main platform for spreading thematic issues.

The trends of the regional distribution of mentions on the challenges to the EU integration policy over 2014-2019 (Pic. 2) have shown that:

- at the political and economic level: not only the leading states of the world, the EU's partners but also the countries trying to develop relations with the EU Member States are mentioned in the covering of the issues related to the EU activity; the discussions about the UK's withdrawal from the EU and its political and economic implications for different countries received wide international coverage; there is a tendency on the social instability in the Member States, leading to street protests of dissatisfied people, which can be used to 'stoke up' negative

attitudes towards the authorities and create conditions for dissatisfaction with their activities; public attention have been attracted to discuss the environmental issues at the pan-European and international levels; there is a tendency to focus on addressing migration issues at the EU level and the distribution of migrants among the Member States, although some European countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Hungary) issue particular demands on such a process; the rise of populist sentiments in Europe led to increased doubts on the effectiveness of the EU supranational institutions and the need to further expand the integration process; also, the slowdown in the growth of the EU economy could aggravate the political and social issues in the future.

Figure 2. Geographic coverage of mentions on the challenges to the EU integration policy over 2014-2019; %

Source: compiled by authors according to online platform 'Media Cloud'.

- at the security level: there is a situational involvement of states in the discussion of security issues, that is, a direct correlation between acts of terrorism committed in a country or the level of a terrorist threat and countries discussed in this context in the information space; the general public may have misconceptions about the states and the security level (a person has heard

or read about it), although essentially such a threat may not exist or its occurrence is low; the countries that have been attacked by terrorists should pay more attention to the internal and external audiences, as well as allocate more financial and political resources to overcome the prejudice regarding staying safely in the country; such measures should also be implemented by countries with active armed conflicts; public attention to security issues is also linked to countries that have had territorial problems in recent years; there is a change of involved countries in addressing energy security in consequence of the transformation of the EU's energy diversification policy through increased interaction with energy suppliers, the construction of additional pipelines and attempts of solutions the energy transit through Ukraine.

Conclusions

Summarizing the analysis of the current challenges to the EU integration policy, we can note that the essential characteristics of the organization's activities are the formation of a constructive dialogue on the matters of joint interaction at the European level, the EU's desire to solve political, economic and security issues through deepening the European dialogue and aligning the vectors of the common development strategy since the dynamics of attitudes towards the European integration depend on the international and political situation, in particular at the EU borders, and on internal factors – economic stability, social protection, migration settlement, etc.

In prospect, the Member States and the supranational institutions will have to update common political, economic and security cooperation programs aimed at solving European countries' development issues considering their economic potential and effectiveness of the European actors' activity. The EU position will be based on the need to regularly monitor the current situation in Europe, to deepen discussions on the development of the EU economic, security and defence policy for maintaining the competitiveness of all Member States. At the same time, the fight against terrorism, cyberattacks, as well as counteracting external information influences will remain urgent challenges for the EU integration processes.

The EU initiatives to tackle regional issues related to the UK's exit from the EU, terrorism, assistance to third countries in counter-terrorism operations, combating cybercrime and destructive propaganda, as well as economic and social instability within the EU, will become the strategic interests of the European community since solution of these issues will strengthen the international and regional leadership and demonstrate the political potential of the EU.

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