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The G20 at a Critical Juncture. Indonesia's 2022 Presidency: Internal and External Shocks, Risks of Power Rebalancing and Eventual Demise, Causes of Resilience and Re-Equilibrium¹

M. Larionova

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Abstract

The 2022 Indonesian presidency was a critical juncture in the history of the Group of 20 (G20). Indonesia took over the presidency at a time when surging tensions between the U.S., China and Russia impeded concerted action by the G20 essential to secure sustainable and equitable recovery and long-term growth. Following the launch of the special military operation in Ukraine, the Group of 7 (G7) put immense pressure on the presidency to expel Russia from G20 activities. Emerging market countries wanted Russia to remain a member and regarded the pressure as an effort to enhance the G7's dominance in the forum's decision-making. Their choice was in favour of the G20, which can cooperate as an institute equally owned by emerging market and advanced countries, thus driving reform and restoring multilateralism. The G20 was deeply split. The presidency managed to save the agenda and ensured that the G20 remained a premier forum of cooperation between advanced and emerging economies in which the voice of the emerging economies at the negotiating table was strong and pluralism prevailed.

This article analyzes how the G20 survived the crisis activated by exogenous and endogenous shocks in 2022 and whether and how it transformed in the course of this critical juncture. The article presents a qualitative case study of G20 dynamics in 2022, tracing interactions of the interdependent variables—actors, institutions and agendas. The study applies a systemic process analysis and content analysis of the key actors' narratives.

The article starts with a review of the G20's state-of-play at the Indonesian presidency's takeover from Italy and examines the new presidency's agenda. It then outlines the main challenges the world and the G20 faced in early 2022, just before the eruption of the crisis. It goes on to explore the tensions within the G20, the roles played by the presidency, the G7, and the BRICS group formed by Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. The author focuses on the endeavor by Joko Widodo's team to steer the G20 through the external pressures and internal confrontations, forge collective decisions on the presidency's priorities, save the institution as a catalyst for global economic recovery, and advance an agenda that would respond to developing countries' interests. It concludes by summing up variables affecting the G20's performance and development in 2022 and the causes of its resilience.

Keywords: G20, critical juncture, Indonesia's G20 Presidency, G7, BRICS

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¹ This article was submitted 23.12.2022.

Introduction

The Group of 20 (G20) has been extensively criticized for its inability to deliver on the pledges to reform global governance architecture and advance a forward-looking agenda (see, for instance, A. Berger, A.F. Cooper, and S. Grimm [2019] and C. Monticelli [2019]), as well as its failure to provide an adequate response to the COVID-19 outbreak [Bernes, 2020; Johnstone, 2021; Larionova, Kirton 2020]. However, although belatedly, in 2020 the G20 did act as a driver and coordinator of anti-crisis actions [Demekas, 2021; Lukash, 2021]. It managed to harness the members' and international organizations' (IOs) resources, forge collective decisions, and partially deliver on the commitments² to counter the pandemic and its consequences [Görlich, Stein-Zalai, 2020; Greco, Botti, Bilotta, 2021].

The extraordinary G20 summit under Saudi Arabia's presidency pledged to strengthen the capacity of the World Health Organization (WHO) to coordinate the response to the pandemic and close the financing gap in the WHO Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan; to counteract the social, economic, and financial impacts of the pandemic by injecting over \$5 trillion into the global economy, as part of targeted fiscal policy and economic measures; and to strengthen the global financial safety nets to support emerging and developing countries facing the health, economic, and social shocks of COVID-19 [G20, 2020a]. The modest success of the G20 Riyadh summit included commitments to support extensive immunization as a global public good, provide \$4.5 billion for the Access to COVID-19 (ACT) Tools Accelerator Initiative, continue unprecedented fiscal, monetary, and financial stability actions, extend the Debt Service Suspension Initiative to June 2021, and accelerate efforts to end poverty and tackle inequalities exacerbated by the pandemic [G20, 2020b].

The G20 did not meet many of these expectations and fell far beyond the proposals for a sizable International Monetary Fund (IMF) special drawing rights (SDRs) allocation to boost global liquidity³ and a debt relief initiative to release resources of indebted low-income countries (LICs) to fight COVID-19 and its consequences. Nevertheless, despite the failure to provide a visionary leadership or transformative governance agenda at the critical juncture engendered by the triple health, economic, and social crisis, the G20 retained its role as a premier forum for economic cooperation between the key advanced and emerging market countries and proved its value as a crucial hub of economic governance. The returns from the early decisions, global public goods generated by collective actions, established agendas, embedded norms, patterns of engagement, extensive cooperation networks, capability to adjust the narrative in response to endogenous and exogenous pressures, and the members' vested interests acted as sources of the G20's resilience and sustained its dynamics in the face of crumbling multilateralism and COVID-19 shocks [Larionova, 2022]. In historical institutionalist (HI) terms, in 2020 these internal stability factors reinforced in numerous ongoing loops in the course of the G20 institutional dynamics were consolidated and preserved its equilibrium. At the same time, contingency on past choices and processes constrained its transformation and capacity to innovate [Kirton, Larionova, 2022].

This path dependency warrants further analysis of the G20's institutional equilibrium and its members' agency in sustaining its development dynamics through the critical juncture concept within the HI tradition.

² With an average compliance score of 86%, it was higher than the average of 76% for the preceding summits [Dawe et al., 2021].

³ Prominent economists and politicians called for an issue of 1 to 3 trillion SDRs (for a review see M. Plant [2020]). The IMF proposed a sizable general allocation of SDRs in spring 2020, but the G20 endorsed the IMF's proposal of 453 billion SDRs allocation a year later.

Giovanni Capoccia and R. Daniel Kelemen define “critical junctures as relatively short periods of time during which there is a substantially heightened probability that agents’ choices will affect the outcome of interest” [2011, p. 348]. Critical junctures should not be equated with change, as the contingency does not exclude return to equilibrium, as confirmed by the G20’s performance in 2020. In other words, a critical juncture denotes a rare and relatively short period of momentous political, social, or economic upheaval that creates a need for an institutional response and an impetus for an evolution that may produce a long-lasting legacy, but may result in a re-equilibration [Hogan, 2019]. The COVID-19 crisis generated significant literature on its assessment as a critical juncture in the lives/behaviours of societies, institutions and states [Ameyaw-Brobbe, 2021; Dupont, Oberthür, von Homeyer, 2020; Twigg, 2020; Xu, Mei, Lu, 2021]. Some authors explored the G20’s performance during the COVID-19 period through the critical juncture lens [Johnstone, 2021].

This article seeks to analyze if and why the G20 survived yet another crisis, activated by new exogenous and deep endogenous shocks in 2022. It explores what role the key actors played, foremost Indonesia as the 2022 G20 presidency, the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) and other emerging economies—members of the G20 and the Group of 7 (G7)—and whether and how the G20 transformed in the course of this critical juncture.

Building on the HI tradition, the article presents a qualitative case study of the G20’s institutional development tracing interactions of the interdependent variables (actors, institutions, agendas). The study applies systemic process analysis and content analysis of the key actors’ narratives⁴ to reconstruct the “decision-making process, identify which decisions were most influential and what options were available and viable to the actors who took them” [Capoccia, Kelemen, 2011, p. 355].

The article starts with a brief outline of the G20’s state-of-play at the Indonesian presidency’s takeover from Italy and the presidency’s agenda. It goes on to highlight the main challenges faced by the world and the G20 in early 2022, just before the eruption of the crisis. It then traces the tensions within the G20. The article focuses on the presidency’s efforts to steer the G20 through the external and internal pressures, forge collective decisions on the presidency’s priorities, save the institution as a premier forum for economic coordination of major emerging market and advanced countries, and advance an agenda that would respond to developing countries’ interests. It concludes by summing up variables affecting the G20’s performance and development in 2022 and the causes of its resilience.

G20 at the Launch of Indonesia’s Presidency and the Presidency’s Priorities

During 2021 the G20 worked in conditions of uneven recovery and risks of rising inflation, debt, and resurging pandemic. Under the Italian presidency the G20 continued coordinated policy actions to sustain recovery, supported the global goals of vaccinating at least 40% of the population in all countries by the end of 2021 and 70% by mid-2022, reaffirmed commitment to the Paris Agreement goal to hold the global average temperature increase well below 2°C and pursue efforts to limit it to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, supported the IMF’s general allocation of SDRs in an amount equivalent to \$650 billion and establishment of a new Resilience and Sustainability Trust to help vulnerable countries, endorsed the Organisation for Economic

⁴ Covering the official documents of the institutions, statements of the leaders, ministers, sherpas, and other participants of G20/BRICS/G7 processes, documents prepared by international organizations, briefs and proposals from participants of the engagement groups, and articles and commentaries of the members’ think tanks.

Co-operation and Development (OECD)/G20's Inclusive Framework agreement on a minimum level of taxation and on the rules for the reallocation across jurisdictions of taxes on multinationals' excess profits [Banca d'Italia, 2022], extended the G20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) until December 2021, and agreed to operationalize the Common Framework for debt treatment beyond the DSSI. These were important decisions.

Yet, the G20 was unable to promote progress on mobilizing \$100 billion climate finance annually through 2025 to address the needs of developing countries for mitigation actions as committed by the developed countries at COP 21. It failed to raise the \$15 billion a year needed for pandemic preparedness measures [The Independent Panel, 2021]. The G20 did not even discuss a framework for debt restructuring to avoid sovereign debt crisis in low-income countries. The members did not go beyond recognition of the need for cooperation to create an enabling, inclusive, open, fair, and non-discriminatory digital economy and did not come to a consensus on the target date for achieving global net zero greenhouse gas emissions. No progress was made on the reform of the World Trade Organization (WTO) or the IMF [Derviş, Ocampo, 2022].

The Italian government's intent to "leverage the US's renewed multilateral impetus to empower the G20" [Greco, 2021], drive relaunching of transatlantic relations [Marchetti, 2021], and align the G20's agenda with the European Union (EU) Green Deal and digital transformation goals brought controversial results. Indeed the "G7-fication" of the negotiations process (to the extent that the draft of the leaders' declaration was first discussed by the G7 and then circulated to the other members [Embassy of the RF to the UK, 2021] exacerbated divisions between the G7 and emerging market economies and did not contribute to deescalating geo-strategic tensions between the western countries and Russia and China [de Benedetto, 2021]. In fact, the increasingly western-driven nature of the G20 eroded trust in the forum's capacity to facilitate intergovernmental cooperation and policy coordination amongst economically significant advanced and emerging market states. The feature central to the G20's role in advancing a balance of power and equitable representation of developing and emerging market economies in global governance was impaired.

Nevertheless, though unable to "meet the soaring demand for global solutions" [Kirton, 2021] the G20 remained the world's most essential economic governance body [Bhatia, 2022].

Transition to Indonesia's leadership, with its plans to make the G20 "relevant to developing nations and those who are in the most vulnerable situations" [MIKTA, 2021], was an important (turning) point but not a guarantee of a rebalancing within the G20 itself. Indonesia had been a consistent promoter of developing countries' interests in the G20. In particular, being the only G20 country from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) group, Indonesia sought to represent the whole Southeast Asian region [Weck, 2011]. Since the Pittsburgh summit, Indonesia had urged the developed countries to take account of the stimulus packages' spillover effects in G20 members' decision-making, proposed the Global Financial Safety Net as the second line of defence, and advocated for a development agenda and infrastructure investment as G20 priorities despite strong initial reservations of the developed countries [Hermawan, n.d.].

The 2022 G20 presidency and the ASEAN chair in 2023 potentially allowed Indonesia, an economic and political powerhouse in Southeast Asia and the driving force behind political and security community building in ASEAN and Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), to articulate its middle-power status and regional development priorities in the G20, linking global and regional agendas [Al-Fadhat, 2022].

The Indonesian presidency's theme "Recover Together, Recover Stronger" emphasized the need for stronger partnerships to enable an inclusive and resilient post-pandemic recovery. It also underscored Indonesia's commitment to ASEAN's spirit of togetherness underlined by

the 2022 ASEAN chair, Cambodia [ASEAN, 2022]. President Joko Widodo stressed that inclusiveness was the priority of Indonesia's leadership in the G20. Expectations were high that Indonesia would take the lead to "craft the agenda, speak at the global negotiating table and bring the voice of developing countries, emerging economies and island nations into the room at such a vulnerable time" [Mokak, 2021]. Indeed, none of the three sectoral priorities the presidency, announced in October 2021, were feasible without inclusive partnerships. Indonesia's focus on a strong and sustainable recovery included ambitious goals of:

- strengthening the global health architecture to prepare the world to respond better and to have the capacity to deal with future health crises;
- inclusive digital transformation as a new source of economic growth through enhancing digital skills and digital literacy;
- transition to lower carbon energy systems while prioritizing energy security, accessibility, and affordability to ensure a green and sustainable future [Government of the Republic of Indonesia, 2022h].

These priorities reflected the global demand for G20 action and responded to Indonesia's domestic needs and aspirations. Given President Widodo's focus on domestic issues the government tried "to make the most of its strategic position in the G20 presidency and 'prioritise national interests'. Translating how the G20 presidency will benefit the country has been a main part of the government's effort to ensure domestic support and success" [Muhibat, 2022]. In the political field, the presidency provided an opportunity for Indonesia to earn authority and trust in leading global recovery efforts. In the economic realm, the presidency aspired to push for more inward investment, create new opportunities for business, and provide a boost for digital economy growth [Al-Fadhat, 2022].

The priorities were strongly aligned with the domestic goals. Thus, Indonesia's digital road map for 2021–24 aims to accelerate Indonesia's digital transformation through expansion of infrastructure, with an estimated budget of \$31.1 billion, establishing an e-government system and One Data Indonesia platform, helping 30 million micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) to go digital by 2024 and implementing numerous programmes for digital skills development such as Digital Literacy and Digital Talent scholarships [ITA, n.d.].

Though for several years before the pandemic the country steadily increased investment in building healthcare capacity, introduced a number of reforms to different aspects of the health system, including universal health coverage by 2019 and various social insurance programmes for health [Mahendradhata et al., 2017], COVID-19 revealed country's numerous healthcare system problems [Mahendradhata et al., 2021]. To address the impact of the pandemic and build healthcare capacity, the government assigned a budget of Rp255.3 trillion (around 9.4% of the total of the 2022 state budget) to the health sector. To ensure resilience of the healthcare system, the government planned to expand bilateral and multilateral cooperation, inter alia, for encouraging domestic production of vaccines, medical equipment, and pharmaceuticals to ensure their access and affordability [Government of the Republic of Indonesia, 2021a].

An archipelago of 17,504 islands and the eighth largest carbon emitter, in 2021 Indonesia set the target of net zero emissions by 2060. To advance the transition, the government adopted a plan for gradual retirement of coal plants and development of renewable energy infrastructure, including solar, wind, and hydropower. To implement the plan the country will need "about USD 8 billion in additional investment per year by 2030 in the net zero by 2060 pathway. By 2050, around one-quarter of the reductions need to be achieved through technologies that are currently not commercially available in Indonesia, including hydrogen and hydrogen-based fuels, nuclear, and carbon capture, utilisation and storage. Deployment of these options requires innovation at the global level to bring down technology costs" [IEA, n.d.]. The G20 presidency was a unique opportunity to negotiate and establish partnerships that could facilitate the de-

ployment of innovative clean energy technologies, including multi-donor mechanisms such as the Just Energy Transition Partnership promoted by the G7 [G7, 2022a].

The presidency agenda was much broader than these three core topics. Taking account of other domestic interests and ensuring continuity with the G20's legacy it covered coordination on macroeconomic policies, development finance and support to implement the sustainable development goals (SDGs), international tax, central banks digital currencies and regulation of stablecoins, strengthening the multilateral trading system, facilitating trade and investment, sustainability of agriculture and food systems, recovery of tourism, anti-corruption, and gender empowerment.

Invited participants included regular guests (Spain, Netherlands, Singapore as the governor of the Global Governance Group (3G), Senegal⁵ as the chair of the African Union, the chair of the African Union Development Agency-NEPAD (AU-NEPAD),⁶ Cambodia as chair of ASEAN,⁷ United Arab Emirates as presidency of the the Gulf Cooperation Council Supreme Council, and 10 international organizations⁸) and newcomers (chair of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM)⁹ and chair of the Pacific Island Forum (PIF)).¹⁰ In addition to reflecting the spirit of inclusiveness, their involvement was intended to consolidate the G20's representativeness and legitimacy.

The 7–8 December 2021 inaugural sherpa meeting, which launched an impressive 180-event work plan, was held in the context of cautious optimism as the global economy was slowly recovering. With the revival imbalanced, inflation, debt, food and energy costs rising, supply chain bottlenecks, and labour shortages persisting [OECD, 2021], the G20's transformative power was vital to secure sustainable and equitable recovery and long-term growth. The proposed policy mix included (but was not limited to) continued monetary policy support with due account of inflationary risks and spillover effects, fiscal policy support, mindful of the public finances sustainability goal, supply of vaccines and resources for health systems in low-income countries, dealing with structural challenges such as uneven digitalization, climate change policy, which ensures equitable burden sharing, reform of the international trade system, and taxation [IMF, 2022a]. The comprehensive agenda demanded concerted actions by the G20 members and other international institutions, an ambitious task which was becoming more and more difficult in the face of surging tensions between the U.S., China, and Russia.

The presidency was very much aware of the confrontation. Indonesian foreign minister Retno Marsudi, in her 2022 annual press foreign policy statement, indicated that “the clash between great powers still worries many countries, especially following the trade war between Washington and Beijing as well as their competition over the South China Sea in the past five years” [Al-Fadhat, 2022]. It was clear that Indonesia faced “an uphill battle in ensuring that the strategic competition among large economies like the US, China and Russia can be converted into constructive and healthy outcomes during its G20 year” [Modak, 2021].

⁵ H.E. Macky Sall, President of the Republic of Senegal.

⁶ Newly elected Ms. Bekele-Thomas.

⁷ Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo HUN SEN, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia.

⁸ The Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Financial Stability Board (FSB), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the World Bank, the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the United Nations (UN).

⁹ Chan Santokhi, President of Suriname.

¹⁰ Fijian prime minister, Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama.

The Context and the Challenges

The perspective at the beginning of 2022 was bleak. Due to continued spread of the new COVID-19 variants and related mobility restrictions, supply chains disruptions, rising energy and food prices, and increasing inflation, the global growth forecasts were revised half a percentage point downward from October 2021 to 4.4% for 2022.¹¹ With the exception of Germany, Japan, Indonesia, and Saudi Arabia, the gross domestic product (GDP) of all G20 economies was projected to slow for two consecutive years in 2022 and 2023 [IMF-G20, 2022a]. The goal of vaccinating 40% of the population in all countries was not met, though “there was sufficient supply if COVID-19 vaccines had been equitably distributed” [WHO, 2022]. The pandemic and economic crises undermined progress across all SDGs, enhanced income inequalities between countries, and exacerbated digital divides [UN, 2022e]. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) WGII Sixth Assessment Report released in February 2022 assessed the likelihood that global warming will reach or exceed 1.5°C in the near-term as greater than 50% even according to the very-low greenhouse gas emissions scenario and warned of widespread, pervasive impacts to ecosystems, people, settlements, and infrastructure from increases in the frequency and intensity of climate and weather extremes [IPCC, 2022, p. 10]. These and many other challenges required strong concerted actions, yet multilateralism had been weakening.

Calls for strengthening multilateralism and accelerating inclusive governance did not translate into actions. The United Nations (UN) focused on a broad reflection process about future governance arrangements to be discussed at the Summit of the Future [ISD, n.d.] including proposals for a global digital compact and a biennial summit between the G20 members and the Economic and Social Council, the secretary-general, and the heads of the international financial institutions [UN, n.d.], with little productive political engagement due to the divisions between the permanent members of the Security Council. The WTO continued to lose centrality in global trade governance as a result of its failure to address systemic problems of its work: dispute settlement, development, decision-making, transparency, the role of markets in international trade, subsidies, and environment and climate change [Low, 2022]. The long promised and much needed reform of the international monetary system [UN, 2011] stalled with the system becoming less and less sustainable as the result [Sheng, Geng, 2022].

Against this backdrop of crises, geopolitical tensions escalated between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and Russia. At the end of 2021, Russia made several attempts to mitigate threats stemming from the U.S. withdrawal from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty [Pompeo, 2019] (on claims of alleged Russia’s violations of the Treaty) [Bugos, 2019], and the Open Skies Treaty [Sokov, 2021]; NATO’s expansion to Russia’s borders, refusing to respect Russia’s security concerns explicitly stated by Russian officials [President of the RF, 2007] and repeatedly warned against by experts [Carpenter, 1994; Cohen, 2015; Mearsheimer, 2014] and politicians (see R.T. Davies [1995], T.L. Friedman [1998], G.F. Kennan [1997], and J.F. Matlock Jr. [1995]); and the NATO allies’ systemic support of Ukraine’s NATO accession [NATO, 2022a], boosted since the toppling of the Yanukovich government, which had been heading Ukraine toward neutrality [Allison, 2022]. In 2021, the Biden administration reaffirmed all elements of the 2008 NATO Bucharest summit decision and doubled down on support for Ukraine’s rapid move toward joining the alliance [Mearsheimer, 2022]. The allies were consistently enhancing assistance for capability development and capacity building in Ukraine through the Comprehensive Assistance Pack-

¹¹ Inflation was expected to average 3.9% in advanced economies and 5.9% in emerging market and developing economies in 2022 and oil and gas prices were projected to rise about 12% and about 58% respectively; forecasted food prices increase was more moderate at the pace of about 4.5% in 2022 [IMF, 2022b].

age, participation in the NATO Response Force, annual collective cyber defence and military exercises (including in the Black Sea area), exchange of information and situational awareness, and the Enhanced Opportunity Partner status [NATO, 2022b], as well as \$19.6 billion support in security assistance by the U.S. since 2014 [U.S. Department of State, 2023].

At the June 2021 meeting in Brussels, NATO reasserted its 2008 Bucharest summit commitment that Ukraine will become a member of the alliance. In August 2021, the U.S. secretary of defense and the Ukrainian minister of defense signed the U.S.–Ukraine Strategic Defense Framework. In November, the U.S. secretary of state and the Ukrainian foreign minister signed the U.S.-Ukraine Charter on Strategic Partnership. The documents operationalized NATO's declarations of 2008 and 2021 bilaterally and immediately, regardless of what happened with NATO. Ukraine was becoming a *de facto* NATO member.

In the absence of the INF treaty, the U.S. dismissal of the Russian Federation's proposal for a moratorium on missile deployments, the threat of imminent deployment of offensive-capable anti-ballistic missile (ABM) launchers Aegis in Ukraine on Russia's doorsteps [Deveraux, 2022], Ukraine's fast-tracked integration into NATO, and weapons pouring into Ukraine, Russia began mobilizing its army on Ukraine's border to signal its resolve to Washington to eliminate the existential threat the U.S. and its NATO partners had been advancing to its doorsteps since 1997 [Abelow, 2022].

In December 2021, Russia initiated negotiations that did not have a chance, but which, had they been given a chance, might have started a diplomatic process toward a new global strategic regime in a context in which the extended START [U.S. Department of State, n.d.] remained the only element of nuclear deterrence [Trenin, 2020]. Russia put forward proposals on treaties with the U.S. and NATO [Government of the RF, 2021] that would provide security guarantees with the central demand that NATO expansion stops. The U.S. and its allies rejected the draft treaties [Ryan, 2022]. Simultaneously the U.S. increased military presence in the eastern part of Europe [Garamone, 2022], while the alliance members continued reinforcement of NATO's eastern flank [NATO, 2022c] and bolstered military support to Ukraine [Singh, Bikhchandani, 2022], underscoring the resolution to make Ukraine its political and military bulwark at the Russian border even at the cost of Ukrainians' lives [Carpenter, 2022] and the country's destruction.

President Joko Widodo was acutely aware of the risks these geopolitical confrontations posed to global recovery and the world. On 17 February 2022, at the opening of the first G20 finance ministers and central bank governors (FMCBG) meeting he asked “that every party puts an end to rivalry and frictions” to focus “on synergy and collaboration to save and build back the world we are living in...” [G20, 2022c]. Despite the geopolitical divide between members, the G20 finance ministers and central bank governors agreed on a concrete set of commitments. The pledges mostly reiterated earlier decisions, such as the promises to strengthen the resilience of global supply chains, continue targeted policy support, preserve financial stability and long-term fiscal sustainability, implement well-calibrated, well-planned, and well-communicated exit strategies, monitor inflation, support vulnerable countries affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, undertake a more systematic analysis of macroeconomic risks stemming from climate change and the costs and benefits of different transitions, maintain an effective global financial safety net with a strong, quota-based, and adequately resourced IMF at its centre, and increase digital infrastructure and infratech investments to narrow the digital divide [G20, 2022d]. The Indonesian initiative to promote the use of local currency settlement (LCS) in cross-border trade and investment as an effort to reduce dependency on the U.S. dollar [Xinhua, 2022] did not find a reflection in the communiqué. This document was the last ministerial communiqué in the Indonesian presidency.

The day after it was adopted, the G7 foreign ministers made a statement on Ukraine requesting Russia to withdraw and reduce its military forces on Russia's territory along the border with Ukraine, declaring their resolve to protect the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and economic and financial stability of Ukraine. The diplomats' message was much more emphatic on threats to deploy concerted economic and financial sanctions with severe and unprecedented costs on the Russian economy, than on preparedness "to explore diplomatic solutions to address Russia's legitimate security concerns." The rhetorical reference to the "Minsk Agreements as the only way forward for a lasting political solution to the conflict in eastern Ukraine" [G7, 2022b] was not coupled with an urge to Vladimir Zelensky to constructively engage in the process, which was long dead due to the Ukrainian obstruction of most of the Protocol 11 points, including implementation of inclusive national dialogue, power decentralization, adoption of the law on the interim status of local self-government, and holding local elections in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions [UN Peacemaker, 2014]. In fact, it became known later that Ukraine and the EU sponsors of the process signed the 2014 Minsk Agreement to buy time for Ukraine and never intended to implement it.¹² New military commitments, including lethal weapons, to support the armed forces of Ukraine were made at the same time by Canada, Denmark, Norway, Germany, Netherlands, Poland, and the UK [Antezza et al., 2022], and the United States' resort to the Excess Defense Articles programme to transfer Mi-17 helicopters to Ukraine [U.S. Department of State, 2023] clearly pushed the process away from the negotiations.

On 21 February, the president of Russia signed the executive orders on the recognition of the Donetsk People's Republic and the Lugansk People's Republic and agreements with the heads of the republics [President of the RF, 2022a]. Any hope of negotiations and peaceful resolution the last bastion of optimists might have held at that point was shuttered by the G7 and the EU states' immediate response with a torrent of new pledges for military support to Ukraine [Antezza et al., 2022] and sanctions on the Russian Federation, including travel bans, exports bans, asset freezes and suspended certification of Nord Stream 2 [Bown, 2022]. On 24 February 2022, President Putin declared a special military operation [President of the RF, 2022b]. The U.S. and its allies unleashed a sanctions war against Russia [see, for example, Ashurst [n.d.]] and bolstered military support. The world stepped into a critical juncture.

An Uphill Journey to the Bali Summit

The Indonesian presidency was confronted with tough choices. The G20's governance leadership was put to a severe test. The G20 was split—it was neither together, nor had prospects of recovering stronger. The G7 members, resolute to isolate Russia from international institutions, put immense pressure on the presidency to expel Russia from the G20's activities, threatening to boycott meetings (see, for example, M.G. Hernandez [2022] and D. Lawder and D. Burns [2022]) and jeopardizing the agenda. The BRICS members, Indonesia, Mexico, Argentina, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Korea, and Japan were against Russia's expulsion [Alifandi et al., 2022]. The presidency was committed to saving its agenda and ensuring "that the G20 remains a catalyst for global economic recovery."¹³ Indonesia tried to balance the relationship among major

¹² Angela Merkel's interview for *Die Zeit*, published on 7 December: "The 2014 Minsk Agreement was an attempt to buy time for Ukraine. Ukraine used this time to become stronger, as you can see today. Ukraine in 2014–2015 and Ukraine today are not the same... it was exactly what gave Ukraine the priceless time" [Hildebrandt, di Lorenzo, 2022].

¹³ "Indonesia makes adjustments to ensure that the G20 remains a catalyst for global economic recovery," said Minister Retno Marsudi in her opening speech [Government of the Republic of Indonesia, 2022a].

powers. The country invested a lot into presidency preparations and intended to make it a success, which meant that the forum should act as a G20, “not G19, or other combinations of Gs” [Llewellyn, 2022]. But this aspiration was not the only factor driving Indonesia’s policy choice in managing the crisis.

In defining the line of action the presidency weighed a combination of factors, including Indonesia’s economic ties with Russia as one of its important trading partners and source of investment [Government of the Republic of Indonesia, 2021b], the non-alignment movement’s doctrine of “free” and “active” foreign policy, historical public perception of Russia as a natural ally for Indonesia [Institut Montaigne, 2022], public opinion of the U.S. policy as hypocritical,¹⁴ concerns over the risks of commodity and food price surges, and responsibility for regional stability and security as *primus inter pares* in ASEAN [Mantong, Kembara, 2022], as well as Ukraine’s role as a major exporter of wheat to the country [Manurung, 2021]. Though Indonesia voted in favour of the UN General Assembly resolution on 2 March 2022, which condemned the Russian attack on Ukraine [UN, 2022a], during a virtual press conference, the Indonesian foreign minister did not call the attack a “Russian invasion” and expressed No intention of imposing sanctions against Moscow [Al-Fadhat, 2022]. Indonesia abstained in UN General Assembly voting to suspend Russia from the Human Rights Council.¹⁵ The presidency held consultations with all members and sought to adapt “the existing agenda to enable the G20 to address the economic impact of the war while also maintaining a commitment to address pre-existing global challenges and lead the world back to strong, sustainable, inclusive and balanced growth” [G20, 2022e].

While the G20 sherpa, Minister for Foreign Affairs Retno L. P. Marsudi, led intensive negotiations in numerous bilateral and multilateral formats, President Joko Widodo’s February–April schedule and statements seemed dominated by domestic issues. The G20’s agenda and meetings were also dealt with through the prism of domestic priorities. At the same time, the president was actively pursuing unity of the G20 and a peaceful solution to the war. Systemically, he held talks with German chancellor Olaf Scholz, prime minister of Japan, Fumio Kishida, prime minister of Canada, Justin Trudeau, French president Emmanuel Macron, Dutch prime minister Mark Rutte, the UN secretary-general Antonio Guterres, Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Portuguese president Marcelo de Sousa, and Russian president Vladimir Putin [Government of the Republic of Indonesia, 2022a].

Following the logic of an independent foreign policy, the Indonesian team regarded it as its duty to invite all G20 members to the meetings [Sulaiman, 2022]. In the spirit of an active policy the invitation to the summit was extended to Volodymyr Zelenskyy as a compromise and a step toward a peaceful solution. At the same time, President Joko Widodo rejected Zelenskyy’s request for weaponry assistance, stating that “... in accordance with the mandate of the Indonesian Constitution and the principles of Indonesia’s foreign policy, we are not allowed to deploy weaponry assistance to any country. However, Indonesia is ready to provide humanitarian assistance” [Government of the Republic of Indonesia, 2022b].

To explain its position to the public, the government appointed Maudy Ayunda, an actress and activist, as a spokesperson for the G20 Indonesian presidency to reach out to the Indonesian people and international community to explain the goals and substance of the presidency’s agenda [Ibid., 2022c].

¹⁴ “Many Indonesians reject the moral framing of the US response, asking how Russia’s invasion of Ukraine differs from the US war against Iraq. US policy toward the Middle East—particularly its support for Israel despite its refusal to implement a two-state solution to the Palestinian issue—underscores perceptions of the United States as hypocritical” [Murphy, 2022].

¹⁵ The other G20 abstainers included India, Brazil, South Africa, Mexico, and Saudi Arabia [UN, 2022b].

In the finance track, the ministers of finance and central bank governors worked to prepare the second FMCBG meeting in negotiations with all members. Though several finance ministers and central bank governors¹⁶ walked out of the meeting, it was clear that the presidency managed to withstand the G7's demand that "International organisations and multilateral fora should No longer conduct their activities with Russia in a business-as-usual manner" [G7, 2022b]. As Minister of Finance Sri Mulyani Indrawati said at the press conference following the meeting, the walk out did not disrupt the discussion and did not affect its substance. Though the meeting was not business as usual, the G20's effectiveness was not eroded as all members regarded it as the right forum to address the persistent risks arising from the pandemic and the new risks that stemmed from the war and hindered the recovery [IMF, 2022c]. In the loss column for the presidency were a failure to agree to a communiqué and a deprecation from the G7 stating regret over "participation by Russia in international fora, including G20, International Monetary Fund and World Bank meetings this week" [G7, 2022b]. In the win column were the reaffirmed commitment on well- calibrated, well-planned, and well-communicated exit strategy to support recovery and reduce potential spillovers, consensus to address the financing gap for pandemic preparedness by establishing a new financial mechanism (a financial intermediary fund housed at the World Bank), and an agreement to ensure the implementation of the G20 Sustainable Finance Roadmap. An important takeaway from the meeting was the confirmation, stated in a joint press release by the Ministry of Finance of Indonesia and Bank Indonesia, that the "Presidency has an obligation to invite all G20 members to attend the meetings and have effective discussions to find solutions. It requires views from all members. Indonesia has received full support from members to work together to overcome global challenges, while still carrying the main agenda of the Indonesian presidency, *Recover Together, Recover Stronger*. In the spirit of multilateralism, the members were able to reach a consensus at the second FM-CBG meeting today" [G20, 2022e]. In the spirit of free and active foreign policy, the presidency sailed between Scylla (a fiasco made of the presidency) and Charybdis (irrelevance or demise of the G20 as premier forum for economic cooperation of major advanced and emerging market economies). But it was only a part of the journey.

In June and July, G20 negotiations took place in the context of continuing war, a deteriorating economic outlook, surging food and energy prices, scaling up of military and economic support to Ukraine, building up of sanctions, raging western mainstream media propaganda trumpeting the U.S. and its allies' narrative [Pilger, 2022], and key tech monopolies exercising "their censorship power in full alignment with the foreign policy interests of the U.S. Government" [Greenwalk, 2022]. This narrative enabled "the most Russophobic and militaristic of European NATO leaders, as well as those with the least guts to stand up to misguided American policies. The narrative clouds the minds of American and European citizens, leading to jingoism and war-mongering" [Abelow, 2022]. The Indonesian presidency team had the guts to stick to its own policies and plans and continue diplomatic actions at all levels, from the ground to the summit.

At the summit level, in June, President Joko Widodo made a trip to Germany, Ukraine, and Russia. The visit to Germany allowed him to attend the G7 summit as a guest leader and was an opportunity to consult with the heads of states of the G7 countries, as well as other invited leaders¹⁷ and international organizations.¹⁸ Being in the meetings and referenced as a party

¹⁶ G7 including Treasury Secretary Janet L. Yellen, Jerome H. Powell, the Federal Reserve chair, Christine Lagarde, the president of the European Central Bank, Andrew Bailey, the governor of the Bank of England and Christia Freeland, Canada's deputy prime minister and minister of finance [Rapport, 2022].

¹⁷ Argentina: Alberta Fernández, India: Narendra Modi, Senegal: Macky Sall: South Africa: Cyril Ramaphosa.

¹⁸ International Energy Agency: Fatih Birol, International Labour Organization: Guy Ryder, International Monetary Fund: Kristalina Georgieva, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development:

of the communiqué also implied endorsement/support of the G7's collective commitments, including condemnation of Russia and G7 coordinated sanctions, actions to curb food and energy prices, sustained financial, humanitarian, military, and diplomatic support to Ukraine [G7, 2022a]. The president might have felt little empathy with regard to the sanctions or military support to Ukraine, but the association with them was a price he had to pay for accelerating access to financing for energy transition through Just Energy Transition Partnerships (JETPs) promised by the G7 Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII) and securing the G7 attendance necessary for a successful G20 summit. Though the G7 boycott stance may have shifted, as the members feared that “Western absence would provide Russia with a free platform to engage with the rest of the G20 leaders” [Muhibat, 2022, p. 21], Joko Widodo's diplomatic efforts were vital for G20's continued communication. Part of the deal was the president's trip to Kiev to invite Volodymyr Zelenskyy to the summit [Government of the Republic of Indonesia, 2022d]. The trip to Moscow to extend a personal invitation to President Putin, deliver a message from Zelenskyy, help move toward a peace settlement, and “rediscover the spirit of multilateralism” was as much about the foreign policy and success of the G20 as about the domestic policy seeking to stabilize regional markets by reintegrating “Russian food products and fertilisers, and Ukrainian food products into the global supply chains” and deepen bilateral economic cooperation including in tourism, nuclear technology and railway infrastructure [President of the RF, 2022c]. Despite sceptical assessments of the visit, it was a vital diplomatic endeavour for ensuring that the G20 remains functional [The Conversation, 2022].

Less known and talked about, but not less important, was President Joko Widodo's participation in the BRICS+ summit hosted by Chinese president Xi Jinping on 24 June and the visit to China on 25–26 July 2022. The High-level Dialogue on Global Development, bringing together the BRICS and 12 major Asian and African countries' leaders,¹⁹ affirmed the commitment to multilateralism, development, inclusiveness, enhancing cooperation and making the international order more just and equitable, ensuring poverty eradication, energy access, sustainable agriculture and stable food supply, and vaccine accessibility and affordability [BRICS, 2022a]. These goals aligned with the core of Joko Widodo's domestic and G20 agenda. The BRICS leaders' position supported the Indonesian presidency on two crucial issues: G20 unity and peace negotiations. The BRICS declaration emphasized the G20's leading role in global economic governance, underlining that the G20 should remain intact and respond to current global challenges [Ibid., 2022b, para 10 XIV], and urged for talks between Russia and Ukraine [Ibid., para 22]. Joko Widodo and Xi Jinping's meeting was a milestone both with regard to bilateral and multilateral cooperation, including advance on strategic documents such as the new Five-Year Action Plan for the Implementation of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between China and Indonesia (2022–2026) and a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on Jointly Promoting Cooperation within the Framework on the Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road Initiative and Global Maritime Fulcrum, as well as concrete projects such as the commitment on completion of the Jakarta-Bandung high-speed railway.

Mathias Cormann, United Nations: António Guterres, World Bank: David Malpass, World Health Organization: Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, World Trade Organization: Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala.

¹⁹ President Abdelmadjid Tebboune of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, President Alberto Fernández of the Republic of Argentina, President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi of the Arab Republic of Egypt, President Seyyed Ebrahim Raeisi of the Islamic Republic of Iran, President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev of the Republic of Kazakhstan, President Macky Sall of the Republic of Senegal, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Prime Minister Hun Sen of the Kingdom of Cambodia, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Prime Minister Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama of the Republic of Fiji, Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob of Malaysia, and Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha of the Kingdom of Thailand.

Xi Jinping reaffirmed full support of Indonesia's G20 presidency and ASEAN's chair in 2023 [Government of the Republic of Indonesia, 2022e].

At the other levels, the working groups, task forces, and sherpas continued preparations for the ministerial meetings and the leaders' summit. Focal events of the period included the sherpas meeting, the G20 foreign ministers meeting and the FMCBG meeting. Little is known of the challenges and outcomes of the sherpas meeting as information for the public is limited given the closed nature of their negotiations.

The G20 foreign ministers meeting (FMM) was intended to discuss two blocks of issues: steps toward strengthening multilateralism, global collaboration, and building mutual trust among countries to create an enabling environment for world stability, peace, and development, and steps to overcome the food crisis, fertilizers shortage, rising global commodity prices, and to ensure food and energy security. The presidency hoped that the G20, as an economic forum, would harness its power to discuss these issues and find sustainable socio-economic solutions [Government of the Republic of Indonesia, 2022f]. Indonesian foreign minister Retno Marsudi said that she expected that the FMM would "build a bridge of communication for all parties and enhance respect and mutual trust, and all parties will abide by the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, uphold peace and justice, promote friendly cooperation, oppose unilateralism and building walls of isolation, and work together for a peaceful, stable and prosperous future" [Government of the PRC, 2022]. The media made much ado about the Russian foreign minister's walkout of the meeting, G7 ministers' boycotts of the reception, dinner and the photo op, and the failure to agree a final document (though the G20 FMMs do not have a practice of adopting communiqués). Indeed, the meeting definitely failed in building bridges or remedying trust, but it was not the presidency's fault. The U.S. and its allies took the opportunity to state accusations of Russia's aggression, put the blame for food and energy prices on Russia [Government of the French Republic, 2022], and confirm the support to Ukraine to enable it to triumph over Russia [Government of the RF, 2022], deranging the agenda and breaking Retno Marsudi's expectations. However, the meeting was useful. The presence of all G20 foreign ministers amid a challenging world situation demonstrated the G20's relevance. It confirmed the presidency's commitment and will to ensure G20 unity and allowed Retno Marsudi to hold many bilateral meetings to gauge future steps and compromises. It created a platform where the G7 ministers were confronted with the views of their colleagues from the emerging economies countries arguing for "peace through dialogue and consultation, a ceasefire and cessation of hostilities as soon as possible, and the prevention of a protracted and escalating conflict... Serious and comprehensive dialogue ... to jointly build a balanced, effective and sustainable European security architecture [Government of the PRC, 2022].

A week later the FMCBG agenda was dominated by food and energy insecurity, rising inflation and debt, slowing recovery, and a darkening economic outlook, which many members blamed on "Russia's war against Ukraine," ignoring the point made by Russia that these problems were exacerbated by sanctions.²⁰ The IMF Surveillance Note to the G20 warned of the risks stemming from the prolonged war in Ukraine, increased global fragmentation pressures, and inequalities potentially leading to social tensions, and called for joint multilateral actions to address the multiple challenges, restoring peace [IMF-G20, 2022b], and reversing restrictions on food exports [Georgieva, 2022]. Tensions between members prevented adoption of a communiqué. However, most of the core finance track commitments were confirmed in the chair's summary, including commitments to support orderly, just, and affordable transitions to

²⁰ The summary does not name the member who made the point, stating that "One member expressed the view that the sanctions are adding to existing challenges", the author makes the assumption that it was Russia [G20, 2022f].

achieve the objectives of Agenda 2030 and the Paris Agreement, implement the OECD/G20 two-pillar international tax package (awarding of the taxing rights to the market jurisdictions and introducing a minimum global tax level on multinational enterprises (MNEs)), implement the Common Framework for Debt Treatment beyond the DSSI, continue the process of IMF governance reform, and address structural vulnerabilities in non-bank financial intermediation. The hosts were able to moderate consensus despite deep differences. The members' "support for the Indonesian G20 Presidency's efforts to maintain an effective system of multilateralism through the G20" [G20, 2022f] was an explicit acknowledgement of the presidency's role in maintaining the G20 as a premier forum for economic cooperation between major advanced and emerging economies.

The September–October ministerial meetings were held under the pressure of confrontations between members, and none concluded with a joint communiqué. Key takeaways put forward in the chairs' summaries were based on the texts which the members drafted but were unable to adopt. The 70-paragraph chair's summary following the environment and climate ministerial meeting stressed a broad agreement to scale up efforts to implement the climate and environment-related goals of Agenda 2030 and achieve the Paris Agreement targets of "holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels ... reflecting equity and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in light of different national circumstances" [G20, 2022g]. The G20 presidency's initiative on a voluntary G20 Partnership for Ocean-Based Actions for Climate Mitigation and Adaptation was left for further discussions. Given that the text confirms many of the members' previous commitments made in the G20 and UN frameworks, it can be assumed that the communiqué was not adopted because of the disagreements over the statement regarding the war in Ukraine, which registered contradictions: some members condemned Russia, some members expressed views that the forum was not the place to discuss geopolitical issues, and other members called for peace, cessation of hostilities, and an end to war.

The statement recurred in all subsequent ministerial summaries, invariably underscoring that varying views were expressed with regard to the geopolitical tension, underlying support to the G20 Indonesia presidency and its actions to achieve the deliverables, and affirming consensus reached on substantive issues.²¹ A remarkable deviation is noted in the chair's summary of the G20 agriculture ministers meeting "Balancing Food Production and Trade to Fulfil Food for All" commending the past G20 presidencies rather than the host for the consistent focus on enhancing food security and sustainable agriculture and food systems [G20, 2022i], though the presidency's work in this area was dedicated to building consensus-based commitments on the three priority issues of resilient and sustainable agriculture, an open, fair, predictable, transparent, and non-discriminatory agricultural trade, and innovative agri-preneurship through digital agriculture.

The first joint finance and agriculture ministers meeting in the history of the G20 focused on actions to counter food insecurity. It welcomed multiple multilateral initiatives to address food insecurity and reiterated support for open, transparent, inclusive, predictable, and non-discriminatory rules-based multilateral trading systems. At the same time, in response to the argument that "unilateral sanctions are negatively impacting global food insecurity," the sanctioning states objected that sanctions were not targeted at agricultural goods or fertilizers, ignoring the impact of financial sanctions, insurance restrictions, and other economic uncertainties on exports from Russia, disregarding the fact that agri-food sector is highly energy intensive, thus, "rising energy and fertiliser prices are translating into higher production costs and contributing to food price increases" [OECD, 2022] and neglecting the UN warning that there

²¹ As an example, see G20 [2022h].

“will be No effective solution to the food crisis without reintegrating Ukraine’s food production, as well as the food and fertilizer produced by the Russian Federation into world markets – despite the war” [UN, 2022c, p. 4].²² Divisions prevented achieving consensus on actions that could stabilize the markets.

On the digital economy, the meeting made modest progress on each of the three topics on the agenda. On digital infrastructure the presidency proposed the concept of people-centred digital connectivity. On digital literacy, it introduced the G20 Toolkit for Measuring Digital Skills and Digital Literacy and the Compendium of Practices and Policies on Advanced Digital Skills and Digital Literacy. On Data Free Flow with Trust (DFFT), the G20 continued the dialogue for “identifying commonalities, complementarities, and elements of convergence between existing regulatory and policy approaches and instruments, including the existing regional and multilateral arrangements that enable data free flow with trust and cross-border data flows.” The presidency also initiated discussion on principles of lawfulness, fairness, and transparency to promote DFFT and cross-border data flows [G20, 2022n].

The education ministers committed to harness digital technologies and overcome the digital divide to ensure inclusive, equitable, and quality education and to promote lifelong learning opportunities for all in the spirit of *gotong royong*.²³ The labour and employment ministers meeting reaffirmed the G20’s core commitments to reduce the gender gap in the labour market participation rate by 25% by 2025, the share of young people at risk of being left behind in the labour market by 15% by 2025, and to ensure access to adequate social protection for all. The members focused on policies and skills to integrate people with disabilities into the labour market, and to enhance labour protection and occupational safety and health in the context of the rapid transformation of the world of work due to economic, social, environmental changes, the rise of automation, digital technologies, and platform-based employment.

Key takeaways from the energy transitions meeting were the G20’s reiteration of the commitments to achieve access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all by 2030 (as stated in SDG 7) and global net zero greenhouse gas emissions by/or around mid-century as stated in the Rome G20 declaration. The members adopted Bali Energy Transitions Roadmap outlining a set of actions for securing energy accessibility, scaling up smart and clean energy technologies, and advancing clean energy financing [G20, 2022k]. Reflecting the presidency’s priorities, special emphasis was made on the energy access challenges of archipelagic island states and remote and isolated communities and partnerships for just and inclusive energy transitions. In view of the adverse impact on energy access and market stability of the restrictive measures imposed by the G7 on Russia’s oil and gas, including “comprehensive prohibition of all services, which enable transportation of Russian seaborne crude oil and petroleum products globally, unless the oil is purchased at or below a price to be agreed in consultation with international partners” [G7, 2022a, p. 5], many “members stressed the need to refrain from unilateral restrictions” [G20, 2021]. While the statement that “energy should never be used as tools of political coercion” might have been initiated by the G7, it might very well be the BRICS members’ call on the G7, whose bans and phasing-out of fossil fuel imports from Russia resulted in price surges which affected global growth “lowering global output by a cumulative 0.8% by 2023” [WB, 2022].

In line with Indonesia’s goal of advancing sustainable development, the trade, investment, and industry ministers focused on WTO reform, the role of the multilateral trading system,

²² Also neglecting the fact that the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) food price index had reached a record high in February 2022 before the war started and retreated slightly in April and May 2022 [Ibid., p. 3].

²³ *gotong royong* is an Indonesian term which means working together to overcome difficulties and achieve results [G20, 2022j].

including digital trade and global value chains, and inclusive investment in promoting achievement of the SDGs. Though the summary does not contain an explicit statement on improving access to markets, finance, investment, technologies, and solutions, the Non-Binding Guiding Principles to Support the Multilateral Trading System (MTS) for the Achievement of Sustainable Development Goals prepared by the presidency are very straightforward in this regard, stating that keeping markets open and resisting trade protectionism in all its forms, as well as ensuring that trade's benefits are equitably spread among the population, is essential for the SDGs' implementation [G20, 2022h].

The G20 tourism ministers discussed policies to expedite an inclusive, sustainable, and resilient tourism recovery including harmonizing safe travel procedures with possible cross-border recognition of COVID-19 vaccine certificates, creating resilient and sustainable communities and MSMEs, and developing synergies between the tourism, cultural, and creative sectors [G20, 2022m].

As the summit was coming closer, intensifying war, escalating military support to Ukraine, scaling up of the NATO forces in Europe,²⁴ and spiralling sanctions continued to push up energy and food prices, driving inflation and slowing economic growth.²⁵ In the face of growing financial stability risks, projected global output loss of about \$4 trillion (the size of the German economy) [IMF, 2022e], and irreversible setback for sustainable development, the presidency tried to forge G20 policy coordination to mitigate adverse and growth-disrupting spillovers to emerging market and developing economies (EMDEs) of rapid monetary policy tightening, as dollar appreciation was already putting a strain on many countries, increasing the debt and inflation pressures [Ibid., 2022f]. The commitment to enhance macroeconomic policy cooperation, preserve financial stability and long-term fiscal sustainability, and safeguard against downside risks and negative spillovers was one of the deliverables of the October FMCBG meeting.

Most of the other FMCBG July meeting commitments were reiterated, including promises to fight protectionism, encourage concerted efforts for reform of the WTO, and continue the IMF governance reform process. As always, the promise to review the adequacy of quotas was vague, avoiding details spelt out by the Intergovernmental Group of Twenty-Four on International Monetary Affairs and Development a couple of days earlier.²⁶ Despite the continued push for carbon pricing from the G7, the G20 did not go beyond recognizing the need for a balanced policy mix to achieve carbon neutrality, including a full range of fiscal, market, and regulatory mechanisms. While the Financial Stability Board (FSB), the Committee on Payments and Market Infrastructures (CPMI), the Bank for International Settlements (BIS), the IMF,

²⁴ The NATO military exercises that kicked off on 21 February intensified across Europe, including the March Cold Response 2022 in Norway, a series of major military drills in the Baltic, Adriatic, and Mediterranean Seas in May, the largest integrated air and missile defence exercise across Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland in June, BALTOPS 22 assembly exercise on the Swedish island of Gotland in the Baltic Sea in July, joint flights "Thracian Viper" over Bulgaria and complex multi-national exercises over Slovakia in August, enhanced readiness multinational exercise Silver Arrow 2022 in Latvia in September and nuclear deterrence exercise involving dozens of aircraft over north-western Europe from 17–30 October [NATO, n.d.].

²⁵ According to the IMF forecast, global growth was expected to slow from 6.0% in 2021 to 3.2% in 2022 and 2.7% in 2023. Global inflation was forecast to rise from 4.7% in 2021 to 8.8% in 2022 but to decline to 6.5% in 2023 and to 4.1% by 2024 [IMF, 2022d].

²⁶ "We ask to consider an increase in the weight of the GDP blend and correct biases within the [revised quota] formula. The realignment of quota shares must protect the shares of the PRGT-eligible members and small developing states and should not be at the expense of other EMDEs. The 16th GRQ should deepen governance reforms to improve the voice and representation of EMDEs in the IMF's Executive Board, including through an addition of a third Chair for Sub-Saharan Africa, without this being at the expense of another EMDE chair" [IMF, 2022g].

and the World Bank produced reports on priorities for the next phase of the G20 Roadmap for Enhancing Cross-Border Payments and Options for access to and interoperability of central bank digital currencies (CBDCs) for cross-border payments, the presidency and its regional partners made a tangible step toward practical implementation of the G20 Roadmap, announcing the General Agreement on Payment Connectivity among ASEAN-5 central banks to be signed at the sidelines of G20 leaders' summit in November 2022 [Bank Indonesia, 2022]. Finance Minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati and CBG Perry Warjiyo managed to maintain the G20's functioning despite the disruptive impact of the members' divisions and continued efforts of the U.S. and its partners "to rally the global coalition of allies and partners holding Russia accountable throughout the IMF/WB annual meetings" [U.S. Department of the Treasury, 2022a]. The members disagreed on the causes of rising commodities prices and inflation but agreed on the importance of global cooperation and expressed "appreciation to the Indonesian G20 Presidency for its efforts to maintain an effective system of multilateralism through the G20."²⁷

Establishment of the Pandemic Fund (initiated in 2021 as a pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response financial intermediary fund) hosted by the World Bank (also acting as a trustee) and voluntary pledges amounting to over \$1.4 billion became a joint achievement of the Finance-Health Task Force and two joint finance-health ministerial meetings. Ensuring that the fund is capitalized to the \$31.1 billion required for pandemic preparedness and response (PPR) [WHO-WB, 2022] with additional resources, rather than diverted funds intended for strengthening the health sector, will be key for its success as a meaningful contribution to global health architecture. Launching of the fund confirmed that the G20 was functional in spite of the members' divisions. In the words of the Health Minister Budi Gunadi Sadikin, following the health ministers meeting "Despite our differences, the G20 member states have come together to speak the same language—the language of humanity above all, the language of health that knows No border" [CISION PR Newswire, 2022].

The agreement on the G20's declaration at the sherpa level became a breakthrough and the presidency deserved a lot of credit for this accomplishment. However, the divisions continued to rage high. Calls from the IIs to end restrictions on food and fertilizers [UN, 2022d; WTO, 2022a] met new self-justifications and blame-shifting.²⁸ Despite the threat of at least a 1.5% loss of GDP annually as a result of the drift into blocks [IMF, 2022h], the risks of deepening rifts between advanced and developing countries loomed large due to the G7's effort to instrumentalize the G20 for their interest and turn it into a fighting ring to play out their rivalry [Sidiropoulos, 2022] at a time when cooperation was most needed.

The Summit Outcomes

The summit was held against the backdrop of rising food and energy prices, economic slowdown, and geopolitical confrontations. A month before the summit, NATO launched a two-week nuclear deterrence capabilities exercise over north-western Europe [NATO, 2022b]. At the end of October Russia carried out an exercise of retaliatory nuclear forces response [RIA Novosti, 2022]. As the G20 sherpas were negotiating the text of the declaration, the U.S., UK, and Australian troops began a fortnight exercise at a U.S. military base simulating a Russian invasion of Europe [Grylls, 2022].

²⁷ The G20 finance ministers and central bank governors met in Bali on 15–16 July 2022 for the third time under the Indonesian G20 presidency [G20, 2022f].

²⁸ For example, see the routine argument that the EU sanctions adopted against Russia do not target agriculture and food products and they do not target the export of fertilizer from Russia [European Council, 2022].

Adoption of the declaration was a major, and almost unexpected, outcome of the summit, an achievement of the presidency, a demonstration of the G20 emerging market countries' influence, their capacity to consolidate positions in defence of true multilateralism, and a proof of the G20's resilience and value to its members and the world. In his opening statement at the G20 plenary, Joko Widodo called on all members not to add another failure to the long list of challenges and to set aside differences to produce the concrete results the world needed [Sansad TV, 2022].

A compromise on the statements regarding the war in Ukraine referring to the differences in assessments of the situation and sanctions, including in the UN Security Council and General Assembly, acknowledging that "the G20 is not the forum to resolve security issues" though "security issues can have significant consequences for the global economy" and emphasizing the priority of international law, the UN Charter, peaceful resolution of conflicts, diplomacy and dialogue, allowed movement forward with key decisions for a strong, inclusive, and resilient global recovery and sustainable development. The declaration lived up to the presidency's aspiration to accelerate achievement of the SDGs. Half of the 223 commitments declared actions intended to resolve the crises disrupting progress toward Agenda 2030, advance implementation of specific SDGs, and support developing countries, particularly the least developed and small island developing states, in achieving the SDGs.

To address food insecurity, the G20 committed to ensuring accessibility, affordability, and sustainability of food and food products for those in need, particularly in developing and least developed countries. This included implementation of the UN-Turkey-mediated July 2022 Initiative on the Safe Transportation of Grain and Foodstuffs from Ukrainian Ports and the MoU between the UN Secretariat and Russia on Promoting Russian Food Products and Fertilizers to the World Markets. Food security would be more attainable if the G20 members deliver on the Bali promises to facilitate trade in agricultural and food products, strengthen global, regional, and local food value chains, refrain from imposing export prohibitions or restrictions on food and fertilizers in a manner inconsistent with relevant WTO provisions, support innovative practices and technologies to enhance productivity, and strengthen the Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS) as an early warning tool enhancing food and fertilizer market transparency.

In the context of energy prices volatility and energy supply disruptions, the G20 reaffirmed the commitment to achieve SDG 7 targets, to close the gaps in energy access, eradicate energy poverty, achieve energy markets stability and transparency, and strengthen energy security by enhancing energy efficiency and diversifying energy mixes and systems. To support just transition to low emission generation, the G20 promised to accelerate dissemination and deployment of innovative technologies, promote investment into sustainable infrastructure and industry, and use a wide range of fiscal, market, and regulatory mechanisms, including the use of carbon pricing and non-pricing mechanisms and incentives. As always, the 2009 Pittsburgh commitment on phasing-out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies while providing targeted support for the poorest and the most vulnerable was reiterated. The leaders stated their resolve to pursue efforts to achieve global net zero greenhouse gas emissions by or around mid-century and limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C with due account of different national circumstances and assessment of the macro-economic risks stemming from climate change, as well as costs and benefits of different transition models. The declaration not only emphasized the urgency of delivering on the developed countries' commitments to jointly mobilize \$100 billion per year by 2020 and through to 2025 for mitigation action but also called for a new ambitious collective quantified goal of climate finance from the current floor of \$100 billion to support developing countries.

Commitments to support implementation of health-related SDGs included a wide range of actions, from achieving universal health coverage to strengthening PPR through the Pan-

dem Fund, implementation of the International Health Regulations (2005), ensuring extensive COVID-19 immunization and timely, equitable, and universal access to safe, affordable, quality, and effective vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics (VTD). To facilitate better access to VTDs and strengthen local and regional health product manufacturing, the G20 noted the WTO ministerial decision that eligible developing countries may manufacture the COVID-19 vaccine “without the consent of the right holder to the extent necessary to address the COVID-19 pandemic,” provided the possibility that members may “decide on its extension to cover the production and supply of COVID-19 diagnostics and therapeutics” [WTO, 2022b]. Thus, the presidency’s priority on strengthening global health governance and setting health SDGs on track were adequately addressed. However, the G20 did not make any commitments on shared technical standards and verification methods, merely acknowledging their importance for facilitating interoperability and international travel.

Very few concrete decisions were agreed on digital transformation. Given the importance of digitalization in reaching the SDGs, the leaders promised to further develop digital skills and digital literacy and advance a more inclusive, human-centric, empowering, and sustainable digital transformation. The G20 reaffirmed the role of data for development, economic growth, and social well-being, committed to enable DFDT, and promote cross-border data flows. But they did not go any further and the declaration made no reference to the principles of lawfulness, fairness, and transparency to promote DFDT and cross-border data flows initiated by the presidency.

To recover stronger and ensure sustainable development the G20 reiterated the promises to enhance macro policy cooperation and preserve financial stability and long-term fiscal sustainability taking into account spillover impacts of monetary policy tightening and carefully managing exchange rates and inflation risks.

Yet again the leaders reaffirmed the commitment to strengthen the resilience of the international financial architecture, including by implementing the long-term promise of IMF governance reform and more recent pledges on promoting sustainable capital flows, developing local currency capital markets as proposed by the presidency, and enhancing cross-border payments as initiated by Saudi Arabia in 2020, including consideration of possible options for access to and interoperability of CBDCs to facilitate cross-border payments. Though the G20 agreed that it would be critical for the financial system resilience to establish “a comprehensive international framework for the regulation of crypto-asset activities based on the principle of ‘same activity, same risk, same regulation’” and ensure that the Principles for Financial Market Infrastructures apply to systematically important stablecoin arrangements, the members neither made any commitments in this regard nor delegated new mandates to the FSB, BIS or the International Organization of Securities Commissions (IOSCO).

The declaration routinely reaffirmed the commitments to “the rules-based, non-discriminatory, free, fair, open, inclusive, equitable, sustainable and transparent multilateral trading system, with the WTO at its core,” and to reforming the WTO, including the dispute settlement mechanism. As acts speak louder than words²⁹ there is little hope that the G20 will be able to deliver on the promise. Almost word for word with the Rome Declaration, the G20 emphasized that trade and climate/environmental policies should be mutually supportive and WTO-consistent. Gone was the Rome Declaration’s reference to the need of tackling distortions, which was an echo of the G7’s accusation of China’s excessive state subsidies, especially in the steel industry. A non-committal recognition of the importance of inclusive international coopera-

²⁹ Two controversial 2022 examples would suffice—Countering Malign Russian Activities in Africa Act with major implications for African Countries [Fabricus, 2022] and the U.S.’ Inflation Reduction Act with serious risks for the EU economies [European Parliament, 2022; Wright, 2022].

tion on digital trade referred to the ongoing discussions on the Joint Statement Initiative (JSI) on electronic commerce, hinting at persistent differences between members as India and South Africa argue that the attempts to introduce new rules resulting from the JSI negotiations into the WTO would be contrary to the fundamental principles and objectives of the multilateral system, enshrined in the Marrakesh Agreement.³⁰

The declaration addressed most of the SDGs. Thus, G20 committed to support vulnerable countries through the newly established Resilience and Sustainability Trust (RST) and the Common Framework for Debt Treatment beyond the Debt Service Suspension Initiative, inter alia (SDG 1); protect those most affected from hunger; promote food security and resilient agriculture and food systems (SDG 2); enhance equitable access to healthcare and pandemic medical countermeasures (SDG 3); support developing countries in rebuilding more resilient, tech-enabled, accessible, and effective education systems (SDG 4); bridge the gender employment and gender pay gaps (SDG 5); accelerate just, affordable, and inclusive energy transitions (SDG 7); advance job creation through entrepreneurship; develop digital skills for the future of work and accelerate integration of young people into the labour market (SDG 8); promote investment in sustainable infrastructure and industry, as well as innovative technologies (SDG 9); and pursue inclusive labour market policies and universal social protection for all by 2030 (SDG 10).

The leaders promised to improve resilience of local tourism communities; promote an inclusive and equitable ecosystem at all levels; protect and preserve the cultural heritage, including local communities and indigenous peoples (SDG 11); reduce environmental impacts by changing unsustainable consumption and production patterns as well as to enhance environmentally sound waste management (SDG 12); implement the Paris Agreement (SDG 13); make progress on the ocean-based climate action, including an ambitious and balanced agreement on an international legally binding instrument under the UN Convention on the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS) on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (SDG 14); scale up efforts to combat biodiversity loss, deforestation, desertification, land degradation, and drought, as well as restoring degraded land to achieve land degradation neutrality by 2030 (SDG 15); implement zero tolerance for corruption policy and step up efforts to effectively combat money laundering, terrorism financing, and proliferation financing (SDG 16); strengthen inclusive and sustainable recovery and build resilience in all developing countries, including SIDS in the Pacific and Caribbean, with continued support to Africa through the G20 Compact with Africa and the G20 Initiative on Supporting Industrialization in Africa and LDCs (SDG 17).

The leaders committed to reinvigorate a more inclusive multilateralism and reform aimed at implementing the 2030 Agenda (SDG 17) and underlined their appreciation to the Indonesian presidency for its efforts to maintain an effective system of multilateralism through the G20. The presidency indeed set a very high standard for diplomacy.

However, enmities remained deep, and the gap between the rhetoric and reality was huge. Two eloquent examples would suffice. The commitment to achieve energy markets stability, transparency, and affordability was soon followed up by the U.S. Treasury's prohibition on the import of Russian crude oil and petroleum products exceeding a price cap,³¹ which aimed to prevent a price surge when the EU ban on purchase, import, or transfer takes effect on

³⁰ Including principles of consensus-based decision-making and procedures for amendments of rules, see WTO [2021].

³¹ The policy backed up by the price cap coalition (G7 and Australia) introduced a ban on trading/commodities brokering; financing; shipping; insurance, including reinsurance and protection and indemnity; flagging; and customs brokering and provided that any person who purchases Russian oil above the price cap could be subject to civil or criminal enforcement action [U.S. Department of the Treasury, 2022b].

5 December 2022 for crude oil and from 5 February 2023 for other refined petroleum products [European Council, n.d.]. The bans would add further pressure on global oil balances [IEA, 2022] and push world oil prices higher [Verleger, 2022]. Despite the pledge to address food security challenges, including price surges and shortage of food commodities and fertilizers globally, vessels with Russian fertilizers remained stuck in the European ports and supplies to global market were impeded due to restrictions on bank payments, insurance, freight of ships, transportation, and transshipments, posing food security risks especially to African countries dependent on Russian fertilizers [Shipani, Terazono, Saleh, 2022].

Conclusion

The Indonesian presidency occurred at a critical juncture in the life of the G20. Over a relatively short period the probability was extreme that the actors' interests and choices would change the path of the G20's development, putting it on a new trajectory, defining and constraining its future choices. The temporal leverage of the juncture was very high—a ten-month duration could have propelled a transition to a new equilibrium of an indefinite time horizon. The probability jump that the G2's nature and role in global governance would be affected as the result of the members' divisions was even higher. Unlike in 2020, the trigger was endogenous. The G20 was deeply divided. The G7 and Australia wanted Russia expelled from the G20 and put enormous pressure on the presidency, threatening to boycott the summit, turning the meetings into fighting rings, paralyzing the G20's ability to agree joint statements. Emerging market countries wanted Russia to remain a member. Moreover, they regarded the U.S. and its allies' coercion as an endeavour to instrumentalize the G20 and enhance the G7's dominance in the forum's decision-making, thus consolidating the U.S. rules-based world order. Their choice was in favour of the G20, which could cooperate as an institution equally owned by emerging market and advanced countries, driving reform and restoring multilateralism.

The presidency's agency was crucial in defining G20 dynamics at this critical juncture. The Indonesian team wanted to ensure the presidency's success, which meant producing concrete decisions on the presidency's agenda. Simultaneously the presidency was absolutely committed to ensuring that the G20 acted as the G20, not any other G, respecting views of all members, retaining its status as a premier economic cooperation forum and its value and trustworthiness in the eyes of developing countries beyond the G20, and remaining able to come up with decisions which can deal with imminent shocks, promote peace and diplomatic solutions, and generate global public goods. As ministerial meetings successively ended with chair's statements it was evident that the U.S. and its partners were willing to jeopardize the G20's performance. It was equally clear that the presidency was prepared to put at stake the delivery of outcomes on its agenda, rather than take the risk of further rebalancing power in the G20, leading to the G20's de facto transition to a G7+, and ultimately to its demise due to widening credibility gap.

In pursuing G20 unity, Joko Widodo's team made painful choices for the presidency. These choices were determined by a unique combination of factors that proved decisive in affecting the G20's performance: Indonesia's commitment to a truly inclusive multilateralism that respects the developing countries' interests, its "free" and "active" foreign policy, responsibility for regional security and stability, rejection of the policies of containment and alienation, explicit refusal to be a pawn in a new cold war and a part of proxy wars, dedication to a search for transformative solutions and a meaningful engagement for peaceful settlement [Government of the Republic of Indonesia, 2022g], determined and skillful diplomacy, as well as overwhelmingly negative perceptions of the U.S. and its impact on global order, and a net positive perception of Russia among Indonesians [Latana, 2022]. These features, coupled with the

key emerging economies countries' resolution not to let the G20 fall victim to the great power rivalry became significant sources of the G20's resilience. Supported by the BRICS+, Indonesia steered the G20 toward a new equilibrium. Had it weakened the line, paradigmatic changes in the G20's nature might have occurred. The members' interests also acted as sources of the G20's resilience. Both the BRICS and the G7 need the G20 to exercise influence over global economic governance. The BRICS+ needs the G20 to advance reform of the multilateral institutions system and make it more inclusive and representative of contemporary world realities. The G7 needs the G20 to exert influence and control over decisions related to the international financial and monetary system. The presidency's outcomes confirmed the G20's value as a viable coordination platform. The G20 emerged from the Bali summit on a new footing—as a forum of cooperation between advanced and emerging economies where the voice of the emerging economies at the negotiating table was strong and pluralism prevailed.

Where would the G20 be now had the Indonesian presidency acted differently? It is hard to say. There is a high probability that had Italy been in the driver's seat, with its strong EU-transatlantic bonds, the new G geometry would have been almost inevitable.

The new equilibrium is very fragile. On the one hand, the chain of the developing countries' presidencies is a good opportunity for consolidating the G20 as a forum of equal players. On the other hand, the U.S. establishment is determined to pursue further exclusion of Russia from the key economic institutions, including the G20, making budgetary and legislative provisions to underpin these activities [U.S. Congress, 2022]. Continued tensions will deepen the rifts and broaden the trust gap between members, putting the G20's functionality and role at new risks. India's political will to make India's 2023 G20 presidency inclusive, ambitious, decisive, and action-oriented [Government of India, 2022] gives hope that India will be able to build on its commitment to multipolarity, harnessing its authority as the second fastest growing economy in the G20, a regional power with a strategic autonomy in geopolitics, a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, BRICS, the IBSA (India, Brazil, and South Africa) Dialogue Forum, the East Asia Summit, and the ASEAN Regional Forum, and strengthening the Indonesian presidency's legacy.

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The BRICS Sustainable Development Index: Findings¹

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Abstract

This article discusses the results of the study on the formation of the BRICS Sustainable Development Index. The authors describe the methodology of the index, the indicator selection process, and methodological problems and challenges, and also provide a detailed analysis of the dynamics of sustainable development goal (SDG) indicators for BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) in 2015–20.

The results of the study indicate both the overall progress of BRICS countries toward SDG implementation and the presence of negative trends in a number of areas and for some countries. For 53 of the 64 indicators selected for the analysis, positive trends were recorded, on average, across BRICS. Nevertheless, the index identified several negative trends across a number of issue areas for individual states and for the group as a whole. These trends include: an increase in the average prevalence of malnutrition, an increase in the number of people in need of treatment for tropical diseases, increasing pressure on water ecosystems in BRICS countries amid a decrease in their area, a decrease in the share of research and development expenditures of gross national product (GDP), and a decline in biodiversity indicators.

Keywords: Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, sustainable development, BRICS

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Introduction

In recent years, the prospects for achieving the United Nations (UN) sustainable development goals (SDGs) have been hampered greatly by the current interlocking economic, geopolitical, energy, and social crises. With the time remaining before the end of the implementation period of the UN Sustainable Development Agenda (Agenda 2030) running out, there is a growing

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need to assess the achievements and the prospects of the global community and individual states in the field of sustainable development and to identify specific areas of greatest concern.

The BRICS Sustainable Development Index was designed to meet this challenge. The index was conceived as a mechanism for assessing the progress of the five countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) in achieving the SDGs in the period of 2015–20. This article highlights the results of the index and present the findings of the study. The methodology of the study and the approaches used by the authors, based on the experience of similar indices and rankings, are covered in detail in the article “BRICS Sustainable Development Index: Methodological Aspects” [Andronova, Sakharov, 2022]. In the present article the authors focus primarily on the results of the study.

The work on the assessment of the implementation of the SDGs remains relevant for all BRICS states in an environment characterized by significant economic constraints caused by interconnected global crises. The need to achieve national development goals and the corresponding SDGs not only persists, but acquires additional urgency. In order to maintain the sustainable functioning of society, it is necessary to strike a balance between short-term goals and the implementation of long-term social and environmental priorities outlined both in the SDGs and in national strategic planning documents. There is also a growing need for intra-BRICS cooperation on tackling the priority sustainable development challenges.

Studying the experience of these countries in overcoming entrenched development problems, developing remote regions, creating quality infrastructure, and introducing new solutions in the sphere of public administration is in line with the focus of Agenda 2030. Adjusting for country specifics, this experience can be taken into account in the implementation of national development goals.

In contrast to similar international comparative studies, this article reflects the national specificities and priority goals of BRICS countries in the field of sustainability and expands the coverage of the UN framework by incorporating additional indicators into the Index, including in issue areas not covered by Agenda 2030.

The article concludes by highlighting the key problems and challenges associated with the implementation of the study’s objectives. These include both the substantive issues, inherent to the set of SDGs, and the methodological ones, reflecting the problems in the system for collecting statistical information for BRICS countries. In particular, the absence of important areas such as digitalization and pandemic resilience in Agenda 2030 raises the question of whether it is appropriate to include indicators from new thematic areas that fall outside the scope of the agenda, but which have become more relevant in recent years. New, large-scale trends in global development are shifting national priorities toward addressing emerging challenges in the above areas and their role in achieving sustainable development, making it necessary to understand and correctly reflect these challenges within the framework of this study.

Methodology of the BRICS Sustainable Development Index

Sixty-four indicators were selected for the index, with the primary selection criteria being the availability of data for all BRICS countries for 2015–16 for the “early” year, the availability of data for all BRICS countries for 2017–21 for the “latest available” year, and an indicator that is not an estimate nor implies a binary outcome (that is, yes/no).

In the first phase of the study, the goal was to ensure maximum compliance of the set of selected indicators with the SDG Indicator System and to minimize cases of indicator substitution. In this regard, the distribution of indicators according to the SDGs was also carried out in accordance with the parameters of the approved UN framework. As a result, 49 indicators

were selected directly from the SDG indicator framework [UN, 2016] for all goals except for SDG 4, quality education, and SDG 16, peace and justice. In order to close the data gap for SDG 4, three indicators reflecting the completion rates of primary and secondary education, as well as education expenditures as a share of GDP, were also included in the analysis. At the second stage of the study, additional indicators, reflecting individual areas of implementation of Agenda 2030, were added to the set of indicators from the UN list in order to fill the gaps. Data were collected on 15 additional indicators. The full list of indicators is available in the Appendix.

The collected data on the 64 selected indicators generated two data sets, one for each of the two chronological groups—“2015” and “2020” (the beginning and the end of the monitoring period). The obvious differences in the measurement units of the various SDG indicators, as well as the presence of “negative” indicators (negative values for which actually mean progress toward sustainable development) necessitated the normalization of data to ensure the comparability of results.

Data normalization for each of the two arrays was conducted using the z-score method for the “early” year (2015–16) and the “latest available” year (2017–21), using the formula:

$$z = \frac{x - \bar{X}}{S_x},$$

where x is the indicator value for each BRICS country; \bar{X} is the average value of the indicator of all BRICS countries; S_x is the standard deviation calculated for the set of indicator values of all BRICS countries. The z-score allowed the countries’ results for each of the chronological groups to be put to a single scale, with a mean value equal to 0. In the interest of increasing the comprehensibility of the final results, as well as making the results comparable, the normalization procedure for the “negative” indicators was supplemented by changing the sign of such indicators’ values ($z^* - 1$). This procedure made it possible to avoid distortions in the average scores for a group of indicators within each SDG for each of the BRICS countries. The resulting values formed static indices of the BRICS countries’ sustainable development for the beginning and the end of the monitoring period.

The sustainability progress index, reflecting the dynamics of the SDG indicators in BRICS countries over the period 2015–20 relative to each other, was calculated using a similar formula:

$$z_{\Delta x} = \frac{\Delta x - \overline{\Delta x}}{S_{\Delta x}},$$

where Δx is the difference between the values of the indicator of each of the BRICS countries in the “late” and “early” chronological groups; $\overline{\Delta x}$ is the mean value for Δx of all BRICS countries; $S_{\Delta x}$ is the standard deviation calculated for the set of $\overline{\Delta x}$ values of all BRICS countries. The resulting z-score made it possible to bring the results of the countries’ progress to a single scale, with a mean value equal to 0. The formation of the final dynamic progress index was also supplemented by adjusting the values of the “negative” indicators ($Z\Delta x^* - 1$), as was the case with the static indices described above.

Thus, the static indices of BRICS countries for the “early” and “late” stages and the dynamic progress index were formed.

The final stage of the index’s development incorporated national priorities of the five countries in the field of sustainable development into the scores. To this end, an expert assessment of the extent to which the selected 64 sustainability indicators were reflected in the BRICS strategic planning documents was carried out based on the analysis of the national strategic planning documents. The assessment was conducted on a three-point scale, where 0 equates to the absence of relevant priority from the system of strategic planning documents, 0.5 implies

partial incorporation of relevant sustainable development priority in national documents, and 1 indicates full incorporation. Full incorporation means that BRICS strategic planning documents contain goals, objectives, and targets on the issues covered by the analyzed element of Agenda 2030. Partial incorporation implies the presence of goals, targets, and indicators on topics related to those affected by Agenda 2030, or which have an indirect impact on the potential change in the SDG indicators under consideration.

If the expert score amounts to 0, 15% of the difference between the highest and lowest index value for a particular indicator was subtracted from the progress index value. If the score is 0.5 the index value remained unchanged. If the score is 1, 15% of the difference between the highest and lowest index value for a particular index was added to the progress index. The 15% value of the modifier was chosen to ensure a moderate impact of subjective assessment on the objective changes in the absolute values of the indicators selected for analysis. On the one hand, a modifier with this value is able to affect the relative positions of countries in the final distribution, but on the other hand, it will not force a defining change for the index value.

Thus, the final index is formed by applying the expert assessment (prioritization) modifier to the progress index. This modifier is designed to link sustainable development indicators with the national agenda of BRICS countries, including in terms of prioritizing the directions of Agenda 2030 for the five countries in recent years and for the foreseeable future.

Given that the majority of the indicators selected for the analysis, are taken account of in the strategic planning documents of BRICS countries at least to some extent, the effect of the modifier is, on average, positive. There are, however, a number of exceptions. This mostly concerns the so-called negative indicators. For example, indicators 3.4.2 “Suicide mortality rate,” 3.7.2 “Birth rate among adolescent girls (10–14 years old and 15–19 years old) per 1000 teenage girls,” and 3.9.3 “Unintentional poisoning deaths” are practically not reflected in the BRICS documents. For such indicators, application of the modifier led to a drop in final scores.

Data Sources

In the interest of ensuring a clear link between the index and Agenda 2030, the UN’s Global Sustainable Development Goals Indicators Database [n.d.] was used as the source base for the study. Forty-eight unique indicators met all three selection criteria:

For SDG 1, poverty eradication, there are four indicators:

1.1.1 Proportion of the population living below the international poverty line by sex, age, employment status and geographic location (urban/rural);

1.3.1 Proportion of population covered by social protection floors/systems, by sex, distinguishing children, unemployed persons, older persons, persons with disabilities, pregnant women, newborns, work-injury victims and the poor and the vulnerable;

1.4.1 Proportion of population living in households with access to basic services;

1.5.1 Number of deaths, missing persons and directly affected persons attributed to disasters per 100,000 population;

For SDG 2, eradicate hunger, there are two indicators:

2.1.1 Prevalence of undernourishment;

2.2.3 Prevalence of anaemia in women aged 15 to 49 years, by pregnancy status (percentage);

For SDG 3, good health and well-being, there are 11 indicators:

3.1.1 Maternal mortality ratio

3.2.1 Under-5 mortality rate

3.2.2 Neonatal mortality rate

- 3.3.2 Tuberculosis incidence per 100,000 population
- 3.3.5 Number of people requiring interventions against neglected tropical diseases
- 3.4.1 Mortality rate attributed to cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes or chronic respiratory disease
- 3.4.2 Suicide mortality rate
- 3.5.2 Alcohol per capita consumption (aged 15 years and older) within a calendar year in litres of pure alcohol
- 3.6.1 Death rate due to road traffic injuries
- 3.7.2 Adolescent birth rate (aged 10–14 years; aged 15–19 years) per 1,000 women in that age group
- 3.8.1 Coverage of essential health services
- 3.9.3 Mortality rate attributed to unintentional poisoning;
- For SDG 4, quality education, there are three indicators:
 - Primary education completion rate;
 - Completion rate of complete secondary education;
 - Share of public spending on education as a share of GDP;
- For SDG 5, gender equality, there is one indicator:
 - 5.5.1 Proportion of seats held by women in (a) national parliaments and (b) local governments
- For SDG 6, clean water and sanitation, there are five indicators:
 - 6.1.1 Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services;
 - 6.2.1 Proportion of population using (a) safely managed sanitation services and (b) a hand-washing facility with soap and water;
 - 6.4.1 Change in water-use efficiency over time;
 - 6.4.2 Level of water stress: freshwater withdrawal as a proportion of available freshwater resources;
 - 6.6.1 Change in the extent of water-related ecosystems over time;
- For SDG 7, low-cost and clean energy, there are three indicators:
 - 7.1.1 Proportion of population with access to electricity;
 - 7.2.1 Renewable energy share in the total final energy consumption;
 - 7.3.1 Energy intensity measured in terms of primary energy and GDP;
- For SDG 8, decent work and economic growth, there are two indicators:
 - 8.1.1 Annual growth rate of real GDP per capita;
 - 8.2.1 Annual growth rate of real GDP per employed person;
- For SDG 9, industrialization, innovations, and infrastructure, there are four indicators:
 - 9.4.1 CO2 emissions per unit of value added;
 - 9.5.1 Research and development expenditure as a proportion of GDP;
 - 9.b.1 Proportion of medium and high-tech industry value added in total value added;
 - 9.c.1 Proportion of population covered by a mobile network, by technology;
- For SDG 10, reduction of inequality, there are five indicators:
 - 10.4.1 Labour share of GDP;
 - 10.7.3 Number of people who died or disappeared in the process of migration towards an international destination;
 - 10.7.4 Proportion of the population who are refugees, by country of origin;
 - 10.a.1 Proportion of tariff lines applied to imports from least developed countries and developing countries with zero-tariff;
 - 10.b.1 Total resource flows for development, by recipient and donor countries and type of flow (e.g. official development assistance, foreign direct investment and other flows);

For SDG 11, sustainable cities and human settlements, there are two indicators:

11.5.1 Number of deaths, missing persons and directly affected persons attributed to disasters per 100,000 population;

11.6.2 Annual mean levels of fine particulate matter (e.g. PM2.5 and PM10) in cities (population weighted);

For SDG 12, responsible consumption and production, there are two indicators:

12.c.1 Amount of fossil-fuel subsidies per unit of GDP (production and consumption);

12.2.2 Domestic material consumption, domestic material consumption per capita, and domestic material consumption per GDP;

For SDG 13, combat climate change, there is one indicator:

13.1.1 Number of deaths, missing persons and directly affected persons attributed to disasters per 100,000 population;

Under SDG 14, conserve marine ecosystems, there is one indicator:

14.1.1 (a) Index of coastal eutrophication; and (b) plastic debris density;

Under SDG 15, conservation of terrestrial ecosystems, there are three indicators:

15.1.1 Forest area as a proportion of total land area;

15.4.1 Coverage by protected areas of important sites for mountain biodiversity;

15.5.1 Red List Index;

For SDG 17, Partnership for Sustainable Development, there is one indicator:

17.1.1 Total government revenue as a percentage of GDP, by source.

Additionally, nine indicators from the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics Database [n.d.] were used:

1. GDP per capita, PPP;
2. Debt service as percentage of GDP;
3. School life expectancy, pre-primary education
4. School life expectancy, primary education
5. School life expectancy, tertiary education
6. School life expectancy, post-secondary (non-tertiary) (both sexes) (years)
7. Fertility rate, total. births per woman
8. Life expectancy at birth
9. Mortality rate, infant (per 1000 live births)

As well as six indicators from the International Energy Agency database [n.d.]:

1. CO2 emissions per unit of GDP;
2. CO2 emissions per capita;
3. Carbon intensity of final energy consumption;
4. Carbon intensity of energy consumption in industry;
5. Share of low-carbon sources in electricity production;
6. Share of renewable energy sources in electricity generation;

Finally, one indicator from the BRICS 2021 statistical compilation—the share of education expenditures as a share of GDP—was used [BRICS, 2022].

Results of the BRICS Sustainable Development Index

The selection of 64 sustainable development indicators and the collection of statistical information on them for the five BRICS countries resulted in a data set that enables the identification of relative positions of the BRICS countries for 2015 and 2020 and the tracing of their relative progress over this period.

The indicators can be grouped both by individual SDGs and by thematic areas reflecting the main pillars of Agenda 2030—social, economic, and environmental. For the purposes of this article, the results are presented by thematic areas. The relative (in comparison with each other) positions of the BRICS countries are reflected in two static sustainable development indices for each pillar at the beginning and end of the monitoring period. These indices were calculated on the basis of the absolute values of the indicators. The relative (relative to each other) progress achieved by each of the BRICS countries during the monitoring period is reflected in the dynamic progress index, calculated based on the difference between the absolute values of the indicators at the end and beginning of the monitoring period. A 0 on the vertical scale denotes the average BRICS result. Positive values of the index reflect values above the BRICS average, while negative values reflect values below the average.

Figures 1 and 2 reflect the current index scores for 2015 and 2020, as well as the resulting progress index for social indicators. India and China's progress toward achieving the social objectives of the SDGs was the fastest among the BRICS countries in 2015–20. Despite continuing to lag behind the other BRICS countries in absolute terms, India managed to achieve the greatest rate of improvement. For example, the share of people living on less than \$1.25 a day fell from 13.6% to 8.4%, the share of people living in households with access to basic services rose from 57% to 71%, and coverage of basic health services increased from 55% to 61% during the monitoring period.

Growth of the absolute index values was also recorded for Russia, with the progress index dropping to slightly below the average level, due to impressive progress made by India and China. On two social block indicators—"The share of the population covered by the minimum level/system of social protection..." and "Fertility rate"—regress was registered for Russia, from 90.4% to 90.1% and from 1.8 to 1.5 children per woman, respectively. In addition, stagnation was observed on two other indicators. "Proportion of the population using safe water services" was recorded at 76%, lower than in Brazil (86%), China (95%), and South Africa (81%). "Life expectancy at birth" remained 71 years, while the other BRICS countries managed to achieve at least some progress over the same period.

The indices for Brazil and South Africa showed a decline due to a period of economic crisis and the degradation of some key indicators. In particular, both countries recorded an increase in the share of the population living below the international poverty line. In Brazil, this indicator increased from 3.2% to 4.6%, and in South Africa from 5.7% to 6.3% between 2015 and 2020. Negative trends were also recorded in health. In particular, the incidence of tuberculosis in Brazil increased during the monitoring period, from 43 to 46 cases per 100,000 people. In South Africa, the neonatal mortality rate increased from 11 to 11.5.

The social targets of BRICS countries have a relatively high level of prioritization in such areas as poverty reduction (SDG 1), health (SDG 3), and education (SDG 4). At the same time, there is a low level of prioritization of gender issues (SDG 5) and of combating inequality (SDG 10) (Fig. 3).

In the environmental sphere, the highest absolute values of the index are observed for Brazil (Fig. 4 and 5). Moreover, the country managed to consolidate its leadership in this area between 2015 and 2020. For example, Brazil, among others, increased the share of renewable energy in total final energy consumption from 43.7% to 47.1%, reduced CO₂ emissions per unit of GDP from 0.3 to 0.2 kg. CO₂ per USD, and carbon intensity of final energy consumption from 47.9 to 43.2 kg of CO₂ per USD.

Nevertheless, it was China that showed the most rapid progress over the five-year period, with the fastest improvements in GDP energy intensity (down from 7.2 to 6.3 MJ per USD), CO₂ emissions per unit of value added (down from 0.52 to 0.45 kg CO₂ per USD), the share of forested area (up from 22.3% to 23.3%), and protected mountain areas (up from 11% to 11.8%).

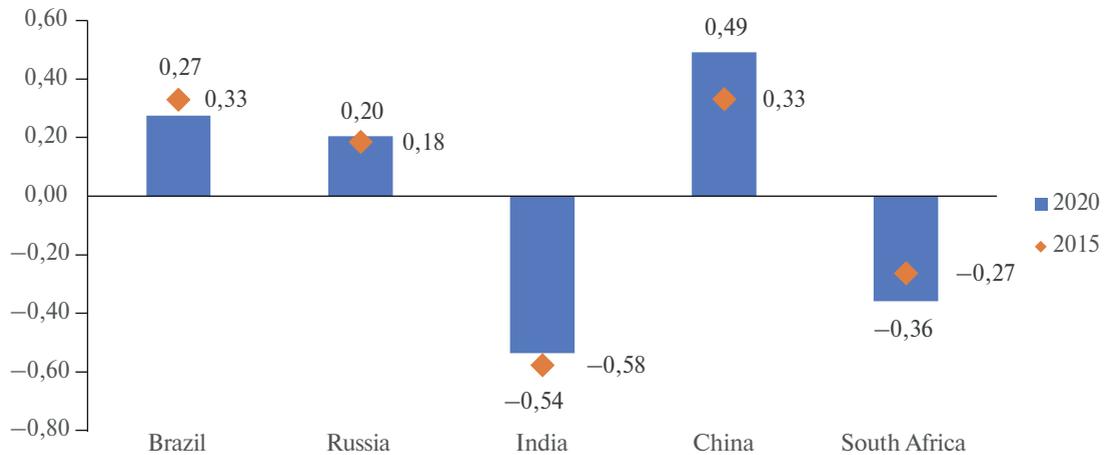


Fig. 1. BRICS Sustainable Development Index at the Beginning and End of the Monitoring Period: Social Sphere

Source: Compiled by the authors.

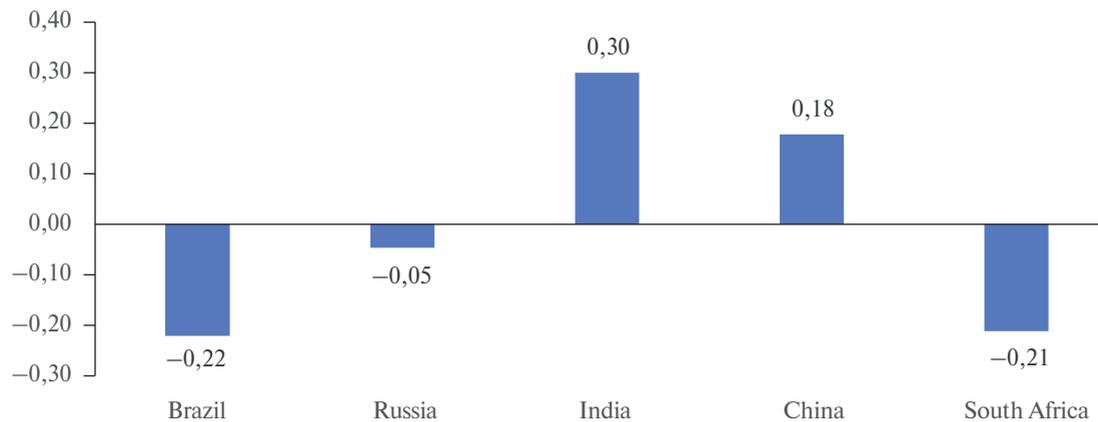


Fig. 2. Progress Index: Social Sphere

Source: Compiled by the authors.

Given Brazil's high performance, Russia's results are below the average on the relative performance distribution scale. In terms of average absolute values of the static index for 2015 Russia was in second place after Brazil. In 2020, Russia fell to third place. The regression of absolute values was observed only for one indicator from the environmental sphere, "the share of renewable energy sources in total final energy consumption," which decreased from 3.2% to 3.18% during the monitoring period.

South Africa showed the worst results in both static and dynamic indices. Regression was observed for seven of the 18 indicators (see Appendix). In particular, the SDG 6 indicators related to the use of water resources showed negative dynamics. The level of pressure on water resources expressed in the freshwater intake as a percentage of available reserves increased from

59.75% to 63.56%. At the same time, the area of water-related ecosystems decreased by 0.6% in 2015 and by 15.4% in 2020.

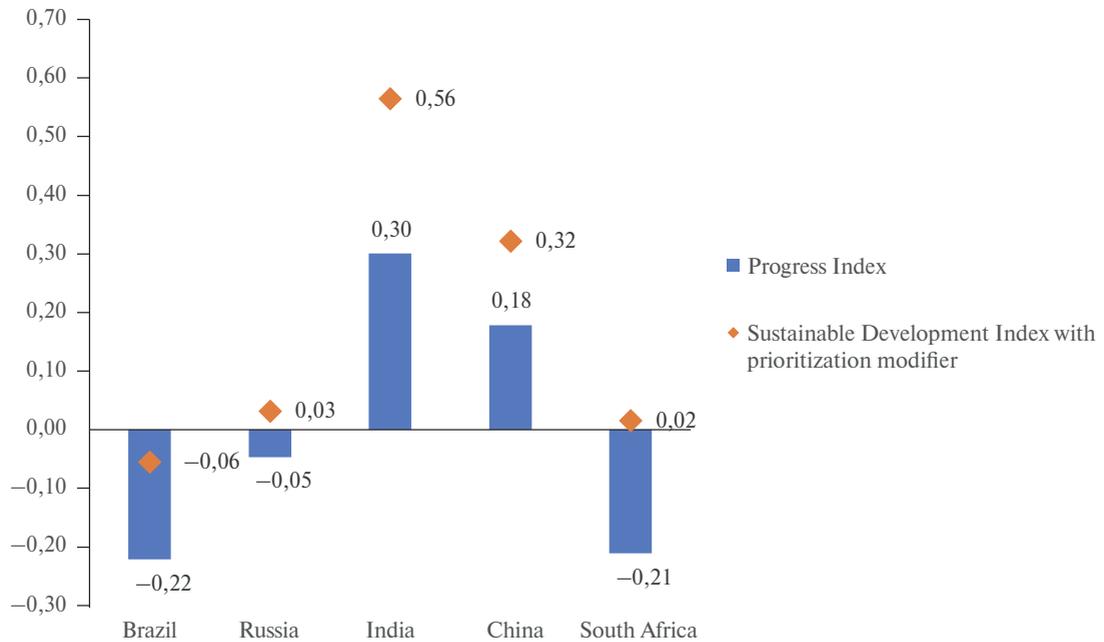


Fig. 3. Aggregate BRICS Sustainable Development Index: Social Sphere

Source: Compiled by the authors.

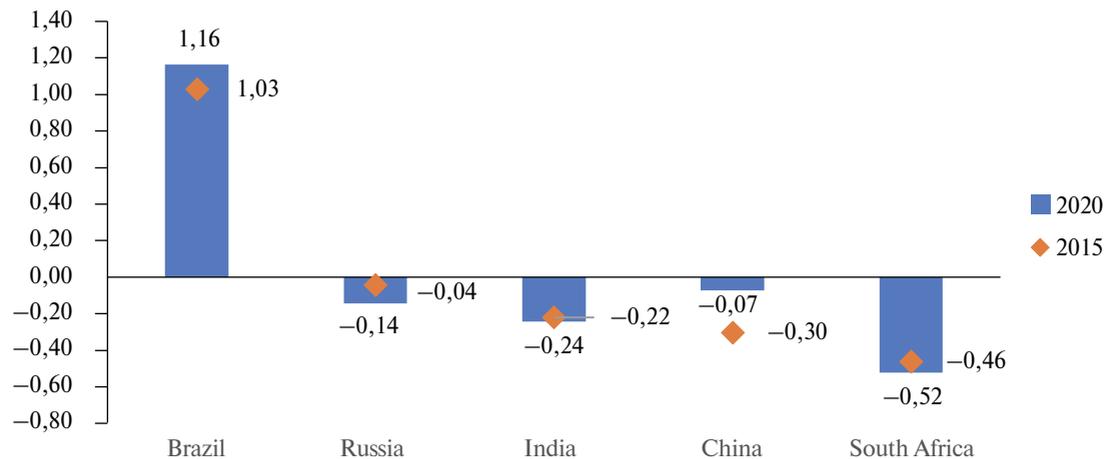


Fig. 4. BRICS Sustainable Development Index at the Beginning and End of the Monitoring Period: Environment

Source: Compiled by the authors.

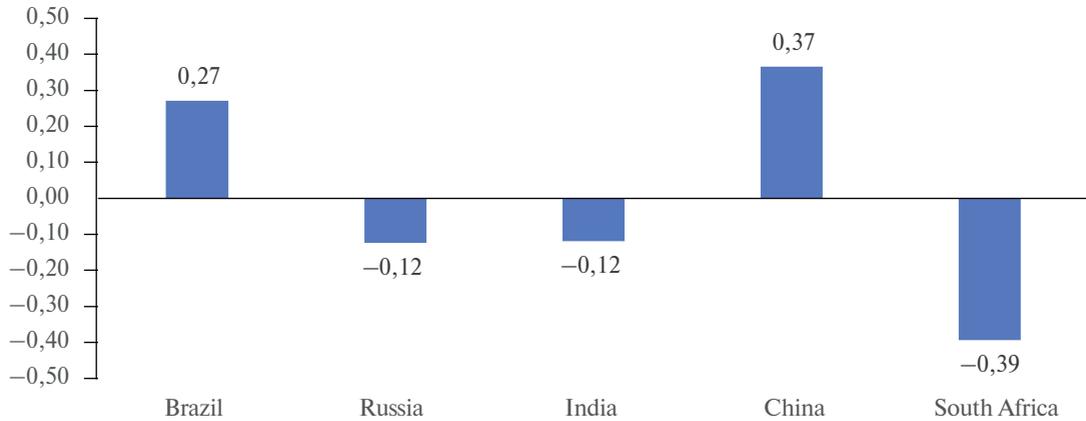


Fig. 5. Progress Index: Environment

Source: Compiled by the authors.

In terms of prioritizing environmental issues in BRICS' national policies, a high level of reflection of sustainability issues in national documents was observed. Notable exceptions include the elimination of fossil fuel subsidies and the fight against the pollution of coastal areas by scrap plastics. Other issue areas, such as the fight against greenhouse gas emissions, energy efficiency, water use efficiency, and ecosystem and biodiversity restoration, were covered extensively with relevant indicators, targets, and objectives in national documents, as well as in international commitments, including the one on the implementation of the Paris Agreement. The overall effect of the prioritization modifier was, thus, positive (Fig. 6).

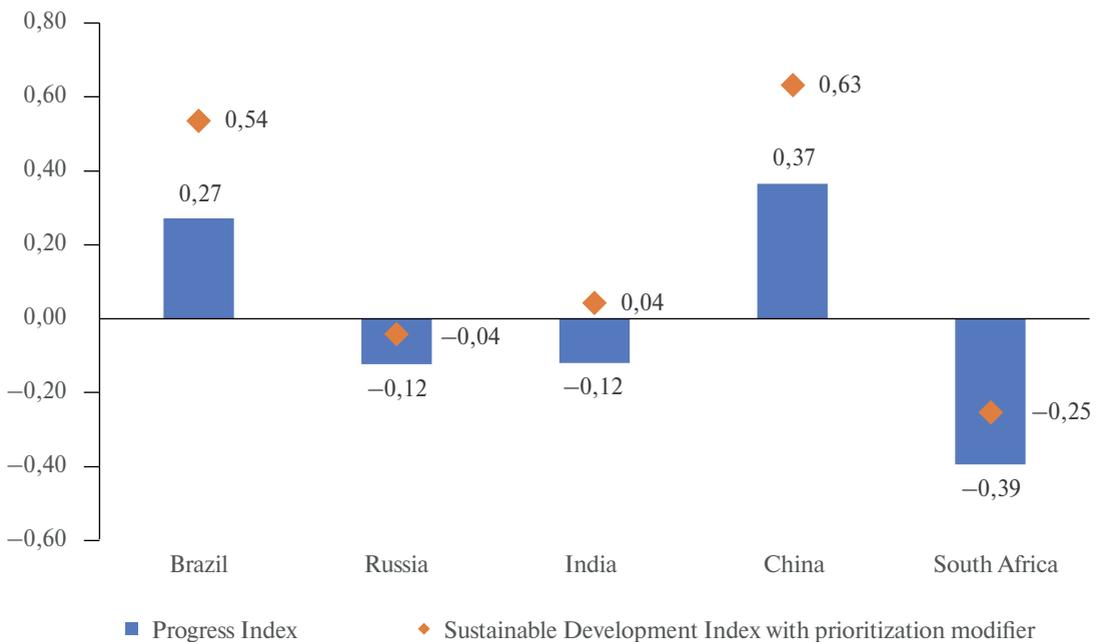


Fig. 6. Aggregate BRICS Sustainable Development Index: Environment

Source: Compiled by the authors.

The significant positive difference between the indicator values in post-crisis 2015 and in 2020 determined Russia's leadership in the progress index on economic issues (Fig. 8). Nevertheless, in absolute terms, China demonstrated the greatest rate of improvement; its GDP per capita indicator rose from \$12,612 to \$17,603. In addition, the country registered the highest research and development (R&D) expenditure to GDP ratio among BRICS (2.14% in 2020).

Brazil, which experienced a period of economic crisis in 2015–20, suffered the largest drop in the index (Fig. 7 and 8). Negative trends were observed in nine of the 12 indicators (see Appendix).

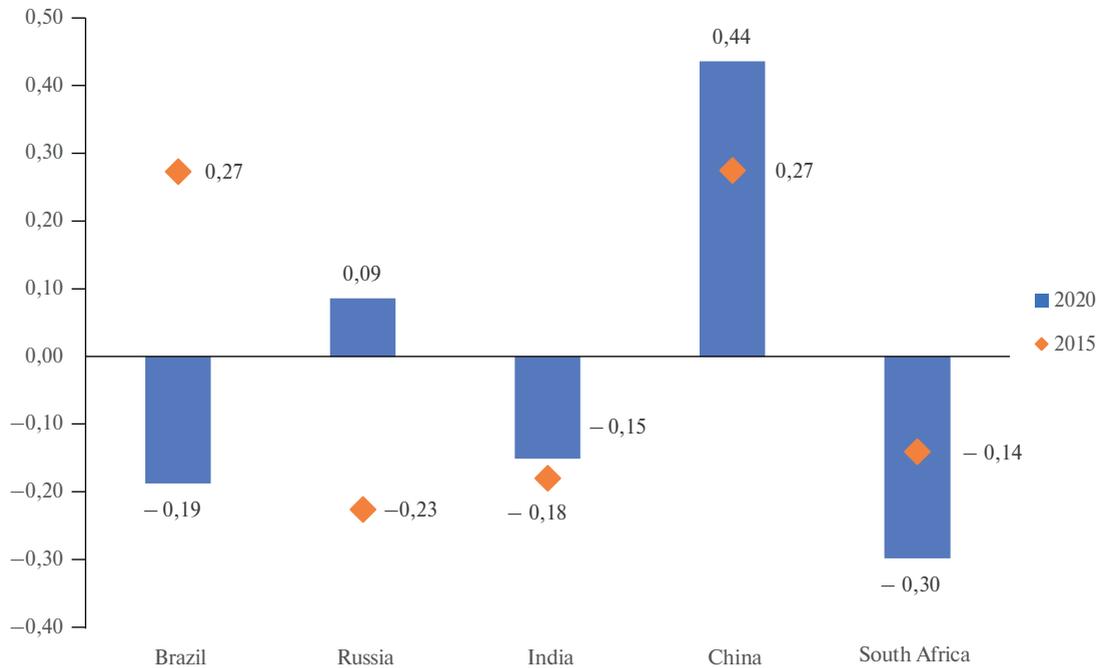


Fig. 7. BRICS Sustainable Development Index at the Beginning and End of the Monitoring Period: Economy.

Source: Compiled by the authors.

The economic aspects of Agenda 2030, which are directly related to the sustainable functioning of national economies, are naturally reflected in the BRICS nations' strategic policy documents. A notable exception in this area is the low incorporation of objectives related to international aid into Russia's national planning documents, for example, SDG 10.a.1 and SDG 10.b.1 (Fig. 9).

Figure 10 shows the final Sustainable Development Index values for the BRICS countries and their relative positions.

Figure 11 demonstrates the distribution of indicators across the SDGs. China made the most significant progress in all key SDG areas in 2015–20, with the highest scores in SDG 6, clean water and sanitation, SDG 10, reducing inequality, and SDG 14, preserving marine ecosystems. India, in second place, has progressed faster than other countries on SDG 1, eradicate

poverty, SDG 4, quality education, and SDG 13, combating climate change. Russia, ranked third, led in SDG 8, decent work and economic growth, and SDG 9, industrialization, innovation, and infrastructure. Brazil scored highest in SDG 2, ending hunger, and SDG 5, gender equality. Finally, South Africa made the most progress on SDG 15, preserving terrestrial ecosystems.

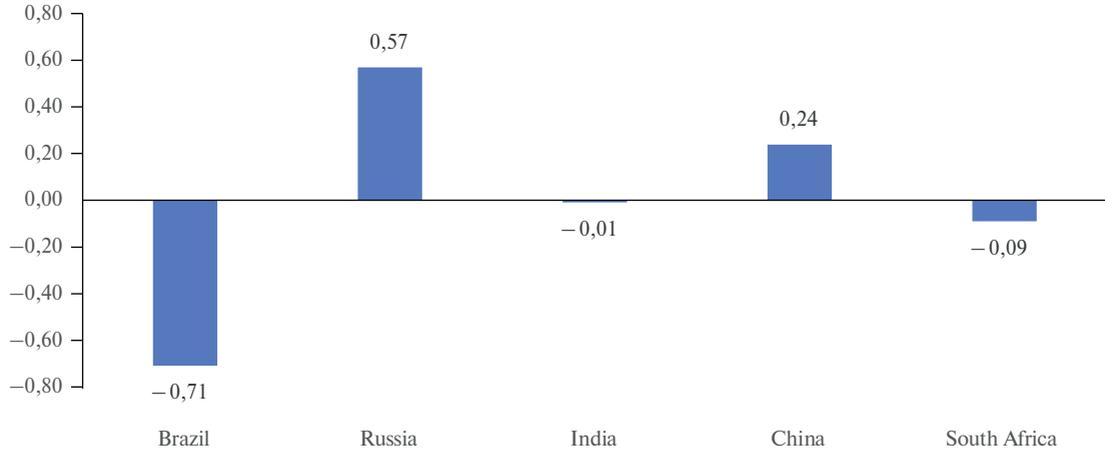


Fig. 8. Progress Index: Economy

Source: Compiled by the authors.

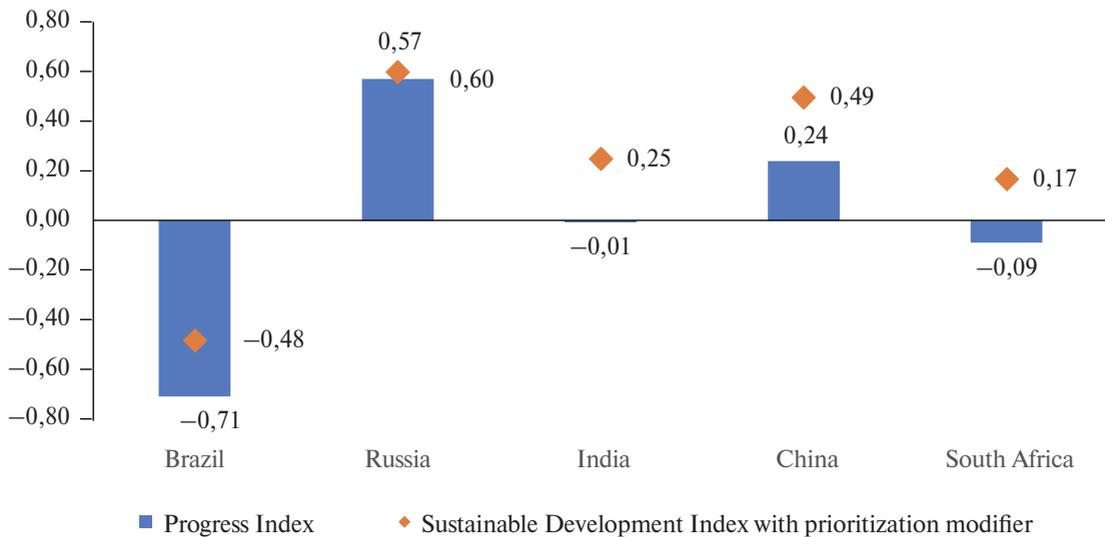


Fig. 9. Aggregate BRICS Sustainable Development Index: Economy

Source: Compiled by the authors.

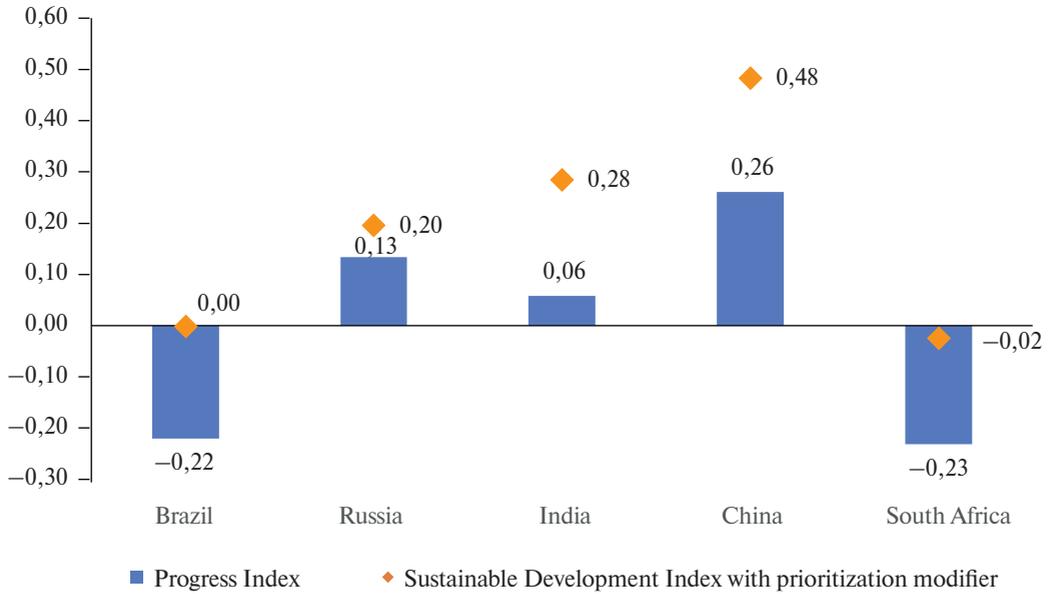


Fig. 10. Aggregate BRICS Sustainable Development Index: All indicators (#64)

Source: Compiled by the authors.

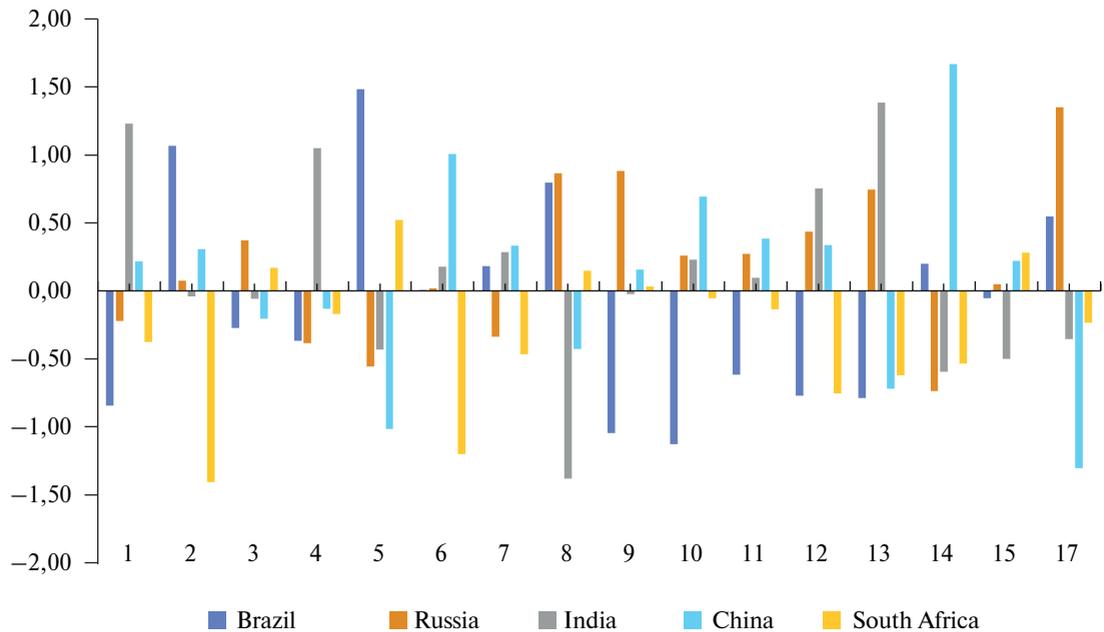


Fig. 11. 2015–2020 Aggregate Progress Index by SDG

Source: Compiled by the authors.

Challenges and Prospects for the Development of the Research Methodology

The authors faced a number of challenges and limitations in the process of forming the BRICS Sustainable Development Index. A key limitation, as for many other similar studies, was the low availability of data on SDG indicators. The study made an effort to ensure the greatest comparability of country data and, therefore, selected only indicators with available relevant data for all BRICS countries. In order to fill data gaps, in particular for goals 4 (education) and 7 (energy), additional indicators not contained in the UN system were introduced.

In addition, while the distribution of indicators across the SDGs was carried out according to the parameters of the UN indicator framework, a number of indicators were repeated for several SDGs. For example, the indicator “Number of deaths, missing persons and directly affected persons attributed to disasters per 100,000 population” is used under three as SDG 1.5.1, 11.5.1, and 13.1.1 indicators. The grouping of results under the three pillars of Agenda 2030 allows for these indicators to be taken into account only once, within the social area, thus eliminating the issue of double counting.

The time lag in obtaining data for the SDG indicators (ranging on average from one to two years) necessitates the inclusion of more recent BRICS actions that are not reflected in the statistics in the analysis. In this regard, the question of transforming qualitative data on the actions of BRICS countries undertaken in 2020–22 into quantitative indicators and integrating them into the index has been considered. The main problem in this case seems to be the incompatibility of the two data sets. To ensure that the index is linked to the national circumstances, priorities, and actions of BRICS countries, a component for the prioritization of sustainability issues within the BRICS countries’ national strategic planning documents was introduced. Thus, at the second stage of the study, an expert assessment of the extent to which the indicators selected for analysis were included in the national strategic planning documents of the five countries was conducted. The strategic documents and actions of the BRICS countries were monitored and, based on the priority of a particular task in the country’s national policy, a three-point scale was assigned. At the final stage of the study, expert assessments were integrated as modifiers for the index indicators in order to reflect the place of individual elements of Agenda 2030 in the BRICS countries’ system of priorities and prospects for their development in the future.

Another significant challenge is the distortion of the index due to the inclusion of indicators for specific years. For example, 2020 (the last year available for most indicators at the time of the index’s formation), for obvious reasons related to the coronavirus pandemic, did not reflect sustainable development trends for BRICS countries in all areas. The short-term impact of individual crises in any given year cannot be ruled out. In this regard, in the course of further work, the possibility of taking into account the averaged values of sustainability indicators over three-year time periods as baseline data for the formation of the index will be considered.

The inclusion of new indicators that reflect current trends in sustainability is also an important area of effort to improve the index. In the future, the index will integrate digitalization indicators, perhaps as modifiers for achieving the SDGs in certain areas. However, determining the specific degree of impact of digital solutions on processes across the entire spectrum of Agenda 2030 remains an unresolved research challenge.

Continued research in the coming years will also ensure the accumulation of data over a longer period of time, allowing for a multi-year comparative analysis of BRICS countries’ progress in transitioning to more sustainable growth models.

Conclusion

The results of the study indicate both the overall progress of BRICS countries toward the SDGs, and the presence of negative trends in a number of areas and for a number of countries. Fifty-three of the 64 indicators selected for analysis registered positive dynamics on average across BRICS. Nevertheless, the index identified a number of problem areas for individual states and for BRICS as a whole. These include: a rise in the average prevalence of malnutrition, an increase in the number of people in need of treatment for tropical diseases, increasing pressure on water ecosystems in BRICS countries amid a decrease in their surface area, a decrease in the share of R&D expenditures as a share of GDP, and a decline in biodiversity indicators.

The social block of indicators saw the fastest progress recorded for India and China. An increase in the absolute values of the index was also recorded for Russia, but the progress index was slightly below the average. The results of Brazil and South Africa showed a decline due to the period of economic crisis and degradation of some key indicators.

In the environmental area, the highest absolute scores of the sustainability index were recorded for Brazil, which consolidated its leadership in this area in 2015–20. Nevertheless, China has made the most progress over the five-year period, improving its performance on indicators such as the energy intensity of GDP, emissions per unit of GDP, forested area, and protected mountain areas.

The significant difference between the post-crisis 2015 and 2020 indicators accounted for Russia's lead in the economic progress index. Nevertheless, in absolute terms, China demonstrates the highest rate of progress on the economic indicators under consideration among BRICS countries.

The ranking of countries on the aggregate BRICS Sustainable Development Index, which reflects the relative degree of improvement in sustainability performance between 2015 and 2020, taking into account national priorities, is as follows:

- 1st place: China: 0.48 points;
- 2nd place: India: 0.28 points;
- 3rd place: Russia: 0.20 points;
- 4th place: Brazil: 0 points;
- 5th place: South Africa: -0.02 points.

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Appendix

Table 1. Sustainable Development Indicator Values for Brazil (2015–20)

Indicator	Brazil	
	2015	2020
1.1.1 Proportion of the population living below the international poverty line by sex, age, employment status and geographic location (urban/rural)	3,200	4,600
1.3.1 Proportion of population covered by social protection floors/systems, by sex, distinguishing children, unemployed persons, older persons, persons with disabilities, pregnant women, newborns, work-injury victims and the poor and the vulnerable	74,900	69,900
1.4.1 Proportion of population living in households with access to basic services	86,000	90,000
1.5.1 Number of deaths, missing persons and directly affected persons attributed to disasters per 100,000 population	0,072	0,078
2.1.1 Prevalence of undernourishment	2,500	2,500
2.2.3 Prevalence of anaemia in women aged 15 to 49 years, by pregnancy status (percentage)	16,800	16,100
3.1.1 Maternal mortality ratio	63,000	60,000
3.2.1 Under-5 mortality rate	16,400	13,900
3.2.2 Neonatal mortality rate	9,400	7,900
3.3.2 Tuberculosis incidence per 100,000 population	43,000	46,000
3.3.5 Number of people requiring interventions against neglected tropical diseases	11067291,000	9560959,000
3.4.1 Mortality rate attributed to cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes or chronic respiratory disease	16,200	15,500
3.4.2 Suicide mortality rate	5,900	6,900
3.5.2 Alcohol per capita consumption (aged 15 years and older) within a calendar year in litres of pure alcohol	7,900	7,321
3.6.1 Death rate due to road traffic injuries	20,800	16,000
3.7.2 Adolescent birth rate (aged 10–14 years; aged 15–19 years) per 1,000 women in that age group	61,700	49,100
3.8.1 Coverage of essential health services	75,000	75,000
3.9.3 Mortality rate attributed to unintentional poisoning	0,200	0,100
4.1.1 Proportion of children and young people (a) in grades 2/3; (b) at the end of primary; and (c) at the end of lower secondary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in (i) reading and (ii) mathematics, by sex	97,000	95,160
4.1.2 Completion rate (primary education, lower secondary education, upper secondary education)	69,710	67,320
Share of public spending on education as a percentage of GDP	5,200	6,200
5.5.1 Proportion of seats held by women in (a) national parliaments and (b) local governments	8,970	15,200
6.1.1 Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services	82,000	86,000
6.2.1 Proportion of population using (a) safely managed sanitation services and (b) a hand-washing facility with soap and water	44,000	44,000
7.1.1 Proportion of population with access to electricity	100,000	100,000

Indicator	Brazil	
	2015	2020
10.7.3 Number of people who died or disappeared in the process of migration towards an international destination	0,000	0,000
10.7.4 Proportion of the population who are refugees, by country of origin	0,437	0,747
School life expectancy, pre-primary education	1,660	1,730
School life expectancy, primary education	5,400	5,240
School life expectancy, tertiary education	2,230	2,410
School life expectancy, post-secondary (non-tertiary) (both sexes) (years)	0,300	0,280
Fertility rate, total. births per woman	1,800	1,700
Life expectancy at birth	75,000	76,000
Mortality rate, infant (per 1000 live births)	14,000	13,000
6.4.1 Change in water-use efficiency over time	23,210	22,620
6.4.2 Level of water stress: freshwater withdrawal as a proportion of available freshwater resources	3,020	3,050
6.6.1 Change in the extent of water-related ecosystems over time	0,571	-2,118
7.2.1 Renewable energy share in the total final energy consumption	43,741	47,062
7.3.1 Energy intensity measured in terms of primary energy and GDP	4,030	3,930
9.4.1 CO2 emission per unit of value added	0,459	0,435
11.6.2 Annual mean levels of fine particulate matter (e.g. PM2.5 and PM10) in cities (population weighted)	11,771	11,624
CO2 emissions per unit of GDP	0,300	0,200
CO2 emissions per capita	2,200	1,800
Final energy carbon intensity (gCO2/MJ)	47,900	43,200
Carbon intensity of industry energy consumption (gCO2/MJ)	29,200	27,600
Share of low-carbon sources in power generation	76,500	86,300
Share of renewables in power generation	74,000	84,100
12.c.1 Amount of fossil-fuel subsidies per unit of GDP (production and consumption)	0,095	0,119
14.1.1 (a) Index of coastal eutrophication; and (b) plastic debris density	5410680,000	4741,000
15.1.1 Forest area as a proportion of total land area	60,287	59,417
15.4.1 Coverage by protected areas of important sites for mountain biodiversity	48,827	49,895
15.5.1 Red List Index	0,901	0,898
8.1.1 Annual growth rate of real GDP per capita	-4,350	0,380
8.2.1 Annual growth rate of real GDP per employed person	-3,300	-1,100
9.5.1 Research and development expenditure as a proportion of GDP	1,343	1,160
9.b.1 Proportion of medium and high-tech industry value added in total value added	35,460	35,020
9.c.1 Proportion of population covered by a mobile network, by technology	93,530	91,220
10.4.1 Labour share of GDP	61,900	60,400
10.a.1 Proportion of tariff lines applied to imports from least developed countries and developing countries with zero-tariff	56,354	54,962

Indicator	Brazil	
	2015	2020
10.b.1 Total resource flows for development, by recipient and donor countries and type of flow (e.g. official development assistance, foreign direct investment and other flows)	40889,000	10184,000
12.2.2 Domestic material consumption, domestic material consumption per capita, and domestic material consumption per GDP	1,466	1,600
17.1.1 Total government revenue as a proportion of GDP, by source	40,421	42,559
GDP per capita, PPP (2011 USD)	15064,000	14615,000
Debt service as percentage of GDP	5,100	9,300

Sources: Compiled by the authors on the basis of BRICS [2022], IEA [n.d.], UN [n.d.], and UNESCO [n.d.].

Table 2. Sustainable Development Indicator Values for Russia (2015–20)

Indicator	Russia	
	2015	2020
1.1.1 Proportion of the population living below the international poverty line by sex, age, employment status and geographic location (urban/rural)	0,000	0,000
1.3.1 Proportion of population covered by social protection floors/systems, by sex, distinguishing children, unemployed persons, older persons, persons with disabilities, pregnant women, newborns, work-injury victims and the poor and the vulnerable	90,400	90,100
1.4.1 Proportion of population living in households with access to basic services	88,000	89,000
1.5.1 Number of deaths, missing persons and directly affected persons attributed to disasters per 100,000 population	0,478	0,222
2.1.1 Prevalence of undernourishment	2,500	2,500
2.2.3 Prevalence of anaemia in women aged 15 to 49 years, by pregnancy status (percentage)	20,100	21,100
3.1.1 Maternal mortality ratio	18,000	17,000
3.2.1 Under-5 mortality rate	8,200	5,800
3.2.2 Neonatal mortality rate	3,900	2,600
3.3.2 Tuberculosis incidence per 100,000 population	67,000	50,000
3.3.5 Number of people requiring interventions against neglected tropical diseases	6,000	1,000
3.4.1 Mortality rate attributed to cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes or chronic respiratory disease	26,400	24,200
3.4.2 Suicide mortality rate	32,000	25,100
3.5.2 Alcohol per capita consumption (aged 15 years and older) within a calendar year in litres of pure alcohol	11,909	10,504
3.6.1 Death rate due to road traffic injuries	17,500	12,000
3.7.2 Adolescent birth rate (aged 10–14 years; aged 15–19 years) per 1,000 women in that age group	24,000	21,500
3.8.1 Coverage of essential health services	71,000	75,000
3.9.3 Mortality rate attributed to unintentional poisoning	4,500	3,800

Indicator	Russia	
	2015	2020
4.1.1 Proportion of children and young people (a) in grades 2/3; (b) at the end of primary; and (c) at the end of lower secondary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in (i) reading and (ii) mathematics, by sex	99,300	99,400
4.1.2 Completion rate (primary education, lower secondary education, upper secondary education)	99,300	99,400
Share of public spending on education as a percentage of GDP	3,800	4,000
5.5.1 Proportion of seats held by women in (a) national parliaments and (b) local governments	13,560	15,780
6.1.1 Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services	76,000	76,000
6.2.1 Proportion of population using (a) safely managed sanitation services and (b) a hand-washing facility with soap and water	60,000	61,000
7.1.1 Proportion of population with access to electricity	96,000	100,000
10.7.3 Number of people who died or disappeared in the process of migration towards an international destination	0,000	1,000
10.7.4 Proportion of the population who are refugees, by country of origin	46,196	36,111
School life expectancy, pre-primary education	3,410	3,450
School life expectancy, primary education	3,960	4,170
School life expectancy, tertiary education	4,020	4,320
School life expectancy, post-secondary (non-tertiary) (both sexes) (years)	0,040	0,020
Fertility rate, total. births per woman	1,800	1,500
Life expectancy at birth	71,000	71,000
Mortality rate, infant (per 1000 live births)	7,000	4,000
6.4.1 Change in water-use efficiency over time	18,780	19,290
6.4.2 Level of water stress: freshwater withdrawal as a proportion of available freshwater resources	3,970	4,040
6.6.1 Change in the extent of water-related ecosystems over time	4,604	7,932
7.2.1 Renewable energy share in the total final energy consumption	3,200	3,181
7.3.1 Energy intensity measured in terms of primary energy and GDP	7,750	8,120
9.4.1 CO2 emission per unit of value added	1,373	1,258
11.6.2 Annual mean levels of fine particulate matter (e.g. PM2.5 and PM10) in cities (population weighted)	10,511	9,803
CO2 emissions per unit of GDP	1,100	1,100
CO2 emissions per capita	10,600	10,800
Final energy carbon intensity (gCO2/MJ)	80,900	75,100
Carbon intensity of industry energy consumption (gCO2/MJ)	42,900	45,900
Share of low-carbon sources in power generation	15,000	17,600
Share of renewables in power generation	7,000	8,800
12.c.1 Amount of fossil-fuel subsidies per unit of GDP (production and consumption)	2,540	1,660
14.1.1 (a) Index of coastal eutrophication; and (b) plastic debris density	555747,000	681338,000
15.1.1 Forest area as a proportion of total land area	49,761	49,784
15.4.1 Coverage by protected areas of important sites for mountain biodiversity	35,572	35,572

Indicator	Russia	
	2015	2020
15.5.1 Red List Index	0,952	0,952
8.1.1 Annual growth rate of real GDP per capita	−2,170	1,240
8.2.1 Annual growth rate of real GDP per employed person	−1,300	2,500
9.5.1 Research and development expenditure as a proportion of GDP	1,101	0,983
9.b.1 Proportion of medium and high-tech industry value added in total value added	28,560	30,490
9.c.1 Proportion of population covered by a mobile network, by technology	89,000	98,900
10.4.1 Labour share of GDP	51,000	52,000
10.a.1 Proportion of tariff lines applied to imports from least developed countries and developing countries with zero-tariff	60,206	61,976
10.b.1 Total resource flows for development, by recipient and donor countries and type of flow (e.g. official development assistance, foreign direct investment and other flows)	745,000	802,000
12.2.2 Domestic material consumption, domestic material consumption per capita, and domestic material consumption per GDP	1,411	1,441
17.1.1 Total government revenue as a proportion of GDP, by source	37,442	40,841
GDP per capita, PPP (2011 USD)	25488,000	27970,000
Debt service as percentage of GDP	7,800	6,700

Sources: Compiled by the authors on the basis of BRICS [2022], IEA [n.d.], UN [n.d.], and UNESCO [n.d.].

Table 3. Sustainable Development Indicator Values for India (2015–20)

Indicator	India	
	2015	2020
1.1.1 Proportion of the population living below the international poverty line by sex, age, employment status and geographic location (urban/rural)	13,600	8,400
1.3.1 Proportion of population covered by social protection floors/systems, by sex, distinguishing children, unemployed persons, older persons, persons with disabilities, pregnant women, newborns, work-injury victims and the poor and the vulnerable	22,000	24,400
1.4.1 Proportion of population living in households with access to basic services	57,000	71,000
1.5.1 Number of deaths, missing persons and directly affected persons attributed to disasters per 100,000 population	0,574	0,209
2.1.1 Prevalence of undernourishment	14,700	15,300
2.2.3 Prevalence of anaemia in women aged 15 to 49 years, by pregnancy status (percentage)	52,700	53,000
3.1.1 Maternal mortality ratio	158,000	145,000
3.2.1 Under-5 mortality rate	43,500	34,300
3.2.2 Neonatal mortality rate	25,900	21,700
3.3.2 Tuberculosis incidence per 100,000 population	217,000	193,000

Indicator	India	
	2015	2020
3.3.5 Number of people requiring interventions against neglected tropical diseases	667768672,000	733660997,000
3.4.1 Mortality rate attributed to cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes or chronic respiratory disease	22,600	21,900
3.4.2 Suicide mortality rate	12,300	12,700
3.5.2 Alcohol per capita consumption (aged 15 years and older) within a calendar year in litres of pure alcohol	5,521	5,605
3.6.1 Death rate due to road traffic injuries	15,600	15,600
3.7.2 Adolescent birth rate (aged 10–14 years; aged 15–19 years) per 1,000 women in that age group	11,100	12,200
3.8.1 Coverage of essential health services	55,000	61,000
3.9.3 Mortality rate attributed to unintentional poisoning	0,300	0,300
4.1.1 Proportion of children and young people (a) in grades 2/3; (b) at the end of primary; and (c) at the end of lower secondary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in (i) reading and (ii) mathematics, by sex	90,900	93,600
4.1.2 Completion rate (primary education, lower secondary education, upper secondary education)	52,100	61,000
Share of public spending on education as a percentage of GDP	3,000	3,500
5.5.1 Proportion of seats held by women in (a) national parliaments and (b) local governments	11,970	14,440
6.1.1 Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services	51,000	56,000
6.2.1 Proportion of population using (a) safely managed sanitation services and (b) a hand-washing facility with soap and water	67,000	68,000
7.1.1 Proportion of population with access to electricity	88,000	98,000
10.7.3 Number of people who died or disappeared in the process of migration towards an international destination	8,000	9,000
10.7.4 Proportion of the population who are refugees, by country of origin	0,754	0,939
School life expectancy, pre-primary education	1,820	1,830
School life expectancy, primary education	5,430	5,010
School life expectancy, tertiary education	1,340	1,570
School life expectancy, post-secondary (non-tertiary) (both sexes) (years)	0,020	0,110
Fertility rate, total. births per woman	2,300	2,200
Life expectancy at birth	69,000	70,000
Mortality rate, infant (per 1000 live births)	35,000	27,000
6.4.1 Change in water-use efficiency over time	2,450	3,020
6.4.2 Level of water stress: freshwater withdrawal as a proportion of available freshwater resources	66,490	66,490
6.6.1 Change in the extent of water-related ecosystems over time	9,476	6,475
7.2.1 Renewable energy share in the total final energy consumption	34,396	31,689
7.3.1 Energy intensity measured in terms of primary energy and GDP	4,890	4,380
9.4.1 CO2 emission per unit of value added	1,487	1,385
11.6.2 Annual mean levels of fine particulate matter (e.g. PM2.5 and PM10) in cities (population weighted)	67,217	68,755

Indicator	India	
	2015	2020
CO2 emissions per unit of GDP	1,000	0,900
CO2 emissions per capita	1,600	1,700
Final energy carbon intensity (gCO ₂ /MJ)	89,100	87,600
Carbon intensity of industry energy consumption (gCO ₂ /MJ)	59,300	56,400
Share of low-carbon sources in power generation	18,100	22,900
Share of renewables in power generation	15,300	20,000
12.c.1 Amount of fossil-fuel subsidies per unit of GDP (production and consumption)	1,124	0,794
14.1.1 (a) Index of coastal eutrophication; and (b) plastic debris density	883222,000	172809,000
15.1.1 Forest area as a proportion of total land area	23,822	24,270
15.4.1 Coverage by protected areas of important sites for mountain biodiversity	28,070	28,081
15.5.1 Red List Index	0,693	0,671
8.1.1 Annual growth rate of real GDP per capita	6,800	3,180
8.2.1 Annual growth rate of real GDP per employed person	7,100	3,500
9.5.1 Research and development expenditure as a proportion of GDP	0,693	0,653
9.b.1 Proportion of medium and high-tech industry value added in total value added	42,880	41,470
9.c.1 Proportion of population covered by a mobile network, by technology	95,000	99,060
10.4.1 Labour share of GDP	53,400	56,000
10.a.1 Proportion of tariff lines applied to imports from least developed countries and developing countries with zero-tariff	35,139	37,997
10.b.1 Total resource flows for development, by recipient and donor countries and type of flow (e.g. official development assistance, foreign direct investment and other flows)	12274,000	24002,000
12.2.2 Domestic material consumption, domestic material consumption per capita, and domestic material consumption per GDP	3,056	2,834
17.1.1 Total government revenue as a proportion of GDP, by source	12,429	13,153
GDP per capita, PPP (2011 USD)	5464,000	6675,000
Debt service as percentage of GDP	2,400	2,900

Sources: Compiled by the authors on the basis of BRICS [2022], IEA [n.d.], UN [n.d.], and UNESCO [n.d.].

Table 4. Sustainable Development Indicator Values for China (2015–20)

Indicator	China	
	2015	2020
1.1.1 Proportion of the population living below the international poverty line by sex, age, employment status and geographic location (urban/rural)	0,700	0,500
1.3.1 Proportion of population covered by social protection floors/systems, by sex, distinguishing children, unemployed persons, older persons, persons with disabilities, pregnant women, newborns, work-injury victims and the poor and the vulnerable	63,000	70,800
1.4.1 Proportion of population living in households with access to basic services	84,000	92,000
1.5.1 Number of deaths, missing persons and directly affected persons attributed to disasters per 100,000 population	0,070	0,065
2.1.1 Prevalence of undernourishment	3,000	3,000
2.2.3 Prevalence of anaemia in women aged 15 to 49 years, by pregnancy status (percentage)	14,900	15,500
3.1.1 Maternal mortality ratio	30,000	29,000
3.2.1 Under-5 mortality rate	10,700	7,900
3.2.2 Neonatal mortality rate	5,400	3,900
3.3.2 Tuberculosis incidence per 100,000 population	65,000	58,000
3.3.5 Number of people requiring interventions against neglected tropical diseases	26100630,000	22841,000
3.4.1 Mortality rate attributed to cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes or chronic respiratory disease	16,800	15,900
3.4.2 Suicide mortality rate	8,100	8,100
3.5.2 Alcohol per capita consumption (aged 15 years and older) within a calendar year in litres of pure alcohol	7,101	6,040
3.6.1 Death rate due to road traffic injuries	18,300	17,400
3.7.2 Adolescent birth rate (aged 10–14 years; aged 15–19 years) per 1,000 women in that age group	9,200	9,300
3.8.1 Coverage of essential health services	76,000	79,000
3.9.3 Mortality rate attributed to unintentional poisoning	2,000	1,800
4.1.1 Proportion of children and young people (a) in grades 2/3; (b) at the end of primary; and (c) at the end of lower secondary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in (i) reading and (ii) mathematics, by sex	94,600	95,600
4.1.2 Completion rate (primary education, lower secondary education, upper secondary education)	55,400	59,300
Share of public spending on education as a percentage of GDP	4,200	4,100
5.5.1 Proportion of seats held by women in (a) national parliaments and (b) local governments	23,620	24,940
6.1.1 Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services	93,000	95,000
6.2.1 Proportion of population using (a) safely managed sanitation services and (b) a hand-washing facility with soap and water	52,000	70,000
7.1.1 Proportion of population with access to electricity	100,000	100,000
10.7.3 Number of people who died or disappeared in the process of migration towards an international destination	15,000	0,000

Indicator	China	
	2015	2020
10.7.4 Proportion of the population who are refugees, by country of origin	16,202	13,070
School life expectancy, pre-primary education	2,360	2,790
School life expectancy, primary education	5,780	6,250
School life expectancy, tertiary education	2,270	3,150
School life expectancy, post-secondary (non-tertiary) (both sexes) (years)	0,070	0,060
Fertility rate, total. births per woman	1,700	1,700
Life expectancy at birth	76,000	77,000
Mortality rate, infant (per 1000 live births)	8,000	6,000
6.4.1 Change in water-use efficiency over time	18,070	23,540
6.4.2 Level of water stress: freshwater withdrawal as a proportion of available freshwater resources	43,200	43,200
6.6.1 Change in the extent of water-related ecosystems over time	7,546	11,996
7.2.1 Renewable energy share in the total final energy consumption	12,245	13,124
7.3.1 Energy intensity measured in terms of primary energy and GDP	7,200	6,300
9.4.1 CO2 emission per unit of value added	0,523	0,449
11.6.2 Annual mean levels of fine particulate matter (e.g. PM2.5 and PM10) in cities (population weighted)	50,283	45,756
CO2 emissions per unit of GDP	0,800	0,700
CO2 emissions per capita	6,700	7,100
Final energy carbon intensity (gCO2/MJ)	110,700	112,700
Carbon intensity of industry energy consumption (gCO2/MJ)	70,100	64,700
Share of low-carbon sources in power generation	22,500	26,300
Share of renewables in power generation	20,100	22,400
12.c.1 Amount of fossil-fuel subsidies per unit of GDP (production and consumption)	0,218	0,213
14.1.1 (a) Index of coastal eutrophication; and (b) plastic debris density	14219138,000	134588,000
15.1.1 Forest area as a proportion of total land area	22,313	23,341
15.4.1 Coverage by protected areas of important sites for mountain biodiversity	11,005	11,821
15.5.1 Red List Index	0,752	0,735
8.1.1 Annual growth rate of real GDP per capita	6,480	5,650
8.2.1 Annual growth rate of real GDP per employed person	6,900	6,600
9.5.1 Research and development expenditure as a proportion of GDP	2,057	2,141
9.b.1 Proportion of medium and high-tech industry value added in total value added	41,450	41,450
9.c.1 Proportion of population covered by a mobile network, by technology	99,500	99,900
10.4.1 Labour share of GDP	51,600	51,300
10.a.1 Proportion of tariff lines applied to imports from least developed countries and developing countries with zero-tariff	34,597	38,344
10.b.1 Total resource flows for development, by recipient and donor countries and type of flow (e.g. official development assistance, foreign direct investment and other flows)	18063,000	42379,000

Indicator	China	
	2015	2020
12.2.2 Domestic material consumption, domestic material consumption per capita, and domestic material consumption per GDP	3,653	3,464
17.1.1 Total government revenue as a proportion of GDP, by source	28,916	28,148
GDP per capita, PPP (2011 USD)	12612,000	17603,000
Debt service as percentage of GDP	1,200	1,900

Sources: Compiled by the authors on the basis of BRICS [2022], IEA [n.d.], UN [n.d.], and UNESCO [n.d.].

Table 5. Sustainable Development Indicator Values for South Africa (2015–20)

Indicator	South Africa	
	2015	2020
1.1.1 Proportion of the population living below the international poverty line by sex, age, employment status and geographic location (urban/rural)	5,700	6,300
1.3.1 Proportion of population covered by social protection floors/systems, by sex, distinguishing children, unemployed persons, older persons, persons with disabilities, pregnant women, newborns, work-injury victims and the poor and the vulnerable	47,800	49,300
1.4.1 Proportion of population living in households with access to basic services	74,000	78,000
1.5.1 Number of deaths, missing persons and directly affected persons attributed to disasters per 100,000 population	0,559	0,537
2.1.1 Prevalence of undernourishment	5,200	6,500
2.2.3 Prevalence of anaemia in women aged 15 to 49 years, by pregnancy status (percentage)	28,900	30,500
3.1.1 Maternal mortality ratio	125,000	119,000
3.2.1 Under-5 mortality rate	37,100	34,500
3.2.2 Neonatal mortality rate	11,000	11,500
3.3.2 Tuberculosis incidence per 100,000 population	988,000	615,000
3.3.5 Number of people requiring interventions against neglected tropical diseases	6696701,000	18807465,000
3.4.1 Mortality rate attributed to cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes or chronic respiratory disease	28,800	24,100
3.4.2 Suicide mortality rate	24,500	23,500
3.5.2 Alcohol per capita consumption (aged 15 years and older) within a calendar year in litres of pure alcohol	9,460	9,451
3.6.1 Death rate due to road traffic injuries	24,100	22,200
3.7.2 Adolescent birth rate (aged 10–14 years; aged 15–19 years) per 1,000 women in that age group	71,100	40,900
3.8.1 Coverage of essential health services	64,000	67,000
3.9.3 Mortality rate attributed to unintentional poisoning	1,900	1,700
4.1.1 Proportion of children and young people (a) in grades 2/3; (b) at the end of primary; and (c) at the end of lower secondary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in (i) reading and (ii) mathematics, by sex	96,900	98,000

Indicator	South Africa	
	2015	2020
4.1.2 Completion rate (primary education, lower secondary education, upper secondary education)	45,400	47,600
Share of public spending on education as a percentage of GDP	6,900	6,900
5.5.1 Proportion of seats held by women in (a) national parliaments and (b) local governments	41,500	45,840
6.1.1 Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services	84,000	81,000
6.2.1 Proportion of population using (a) safely managed sanitation services and (b) a hand-washing facility with soap and water	44,000	44,000
7.1.1 Proportion of population with access to electricity	85,000	85,000
10.7.3 Number of people who died or disappeared in the process of migration towards an international destination	3,000	0,000
10.7.4 Proportion of the population who are refugees, by country of origin	0,807	0,833
School life expectancy, pre-primary education	0,770	0,700
School life expectancy, primary education	7,300	6,850
School life expectancy, tertiary education	1,130	1,240
School life expectancy, post-secondary (non-tertiary) (both sexes) (years)	0,340	0,370
Fertility rate, total. births per woman	2,500	2,400
Life expectancy at birth	63,000	64,000
Mortality rate, infant (per 1000 live births)	29,000	26,000
6.4.1 Change in water-use efficiency over time	14,940	14,320
6.4.2 Level of water stress: freshwater withdrawal as a proportion of available freshwater resources	59,750	63,560
6.6.1 Change in the extent of water-related ecosystems over time	-0,619	-15,397
7.2.1 Renewable energy share in the total final energy consumption	10,292	10,343
7.3.1 Energy intensity measured in terms of primary energy and GDP	7,580	7,700
9.4.1 CO2 emission per unit of value added	1,137	1,062
11.6.2 Annual mean levels of fine particulate matter (e.g. PM2.5 and PM10) in cities (population weighted)	27,106	25,148
CO2 emissions per unit of GDP	1,300	1,300
CO2 emissions per capita	7,600	7,400
Final energy carbon intensity (gCO2/MJ)	151,400	149,900
Carbon intensity of industry energy consumption (gCO2/MJ)	46,600	44,200
Share of low-carbon sources in power generation	7,300	10,400
Share of renewables in power generation	2,400	5,100
12.c.1 Amount of fossil-fuel subsidies per unit of GDP (production and consumption)	0,773	1,334
14.1.1 (a) Index of coastal eutrophication; and (b) plastic debris density	1059365,000	304,000
15.1.1 Forest area as a proportion of total land area	14,205	14,055
15.4.1 Coverage by protected areas of important sites for mountain biodiversity	29,694	31,906
15.5.1 Red List Index	0,785	0,770
8.1.1 Annual growth rate of real GDP per capita	-0,340	-1,160

Indicator	South Africa	
	2015	2020
8.2.1 Annual growth rate of real GDP per employed person	-2,500	0,700
9.5.1 Research and development expenditure as a proportion of GDP	0,798	0,832
9.b.1 Proportion of medium and high-tech industry value added in total value added	24,430	24,430
9.c.1 Proportion of population covered by a mobile network, by technology	99,900	99,970
10.4.1 Labour share of GDP	53,000	54,100
10.a.1 Proportion of tariff lines applied to imports from least developed countries and developing countries with zero-tariff	59,021	60,988
10.b.1 Total resource flows for development, by recipient and donor countries and type of flow (e.g. official development assistance, foreign direct investment and other flows)	6330,000	5239,000
12.2.2 Domestic material consumption, domestic material consumption per capita, and domestic material consumption per GDP	1,521	1,499
17.1.1 Total government revenue as a proportion of GDP, by source	37,766	38,679
GDP per capita, PPP (2011 USD)	14010,000	13126,000
Debt service as percentage of GDP	6,400	8,700

Sources: Compiled by the authors on the basis of BRICS [2022], IEA [n.d.], UN [n.d.], and UNESCO [n.d.].

Why Is Multilateralism Losing Ground in Audiovisual Services in the WTO?¹

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Abstract

Trade in audiovisual services achieves economic goals and has an impact on the social values of host countries. That is why this area, in which the opposing approaches of the U.S. and the European Union (EU) collide, has traditionally been one of the most difficult issues in the negotiations of the World Trade Organization (WTO). The author shows that measures related to cultural policy can form protectionist trade barriers to support national companies. The rapid development of technology has expanded the possibilities for the transmission and distribution of audio and video content. At the same time, existing multilateral trade rules, as well as the applicable classification of audiovisual services, are becoming increasingly irrelevant. The article concludes that, on the one hand, the growing market for audiovisual services requires clearer rules for cross-border trade; however, on the other hand, the trend toward the formation of regional blocs with specific rules complicates negotiations (or even a general understanding) on the rules of trade in audiovisual services within the WTO.

Keywords: audiovisual services, liberalization, GATS, technological neutrality, trade barriers

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Introduction

Audiovisual services (films, slide presentations, television programmes, cinema services and corporate conferences) have traditionally been one of the most contentious issues in the World

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Trade Organization (WTO). An important role in the development of trade in audiovisual services is played by national policy in the field of culture, science, and education. Audiovisual services always carry double content. On the one hand, the companies operating in this area are commercial enterprises that seek to make a profit. On the other hand, many countries consider such companies as conductors of a foreign social, political, and economic culture in their national markets. This dual nature of audiovisual services has largely influenced approaches to their regulation in international trade and has led to the great caution that many countries adopt regarding attempts to liberalize these services.

At present, under the plurilateral joint initiative format, 87 WTO members carry out negotiations on e-commerce. The members, including many developing countries, participate in this initiative to develop baseline rules to govern the global digital economy. In particular, members seek common disciplines to facilitate remote transactions and strengthen trust in digital markets while helping to tackle digital trade barriers [WTO, 2023]. Future arrangements will affect the regulation of digital services with audiovisual content (Internet access, voice over Internet protocol, video on demand, distribution of content through online services, intelligent network services, and so on). This requires a careful understanding of how the existing WTO rules regulate trade in audiovisual services and also of the policy approaches taken to these issues by members.

The urgency of this topic is linked to the arrival of large online platforms, which represent an unprecedented change in production, distribution, broadcasting, and consumption of audiovisual content [Nieborg, Poell, 2018]. The presence of these intermediaries in the everyday lives of citizens and consumers is raising major policy issues [Mansell, 2015].

The purpose of this article is to review existing WTO rules that affect audiovisual services, as well as to assess the prospects for negotiating new deals in this fast-moving and technologically sophisticated sector. The article analyzes how WTO rules (primarily the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS)) govern trade in audiovisual services and explores how the normative dichotomy between “free trade” and adherence to “cultural exceptions” influences U.S. and EU priorities on the global audiovisual policy agenda. The special role of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Convention in opposing these approaches is noted. Examples of barriers in international trade in audiovisual services are given. The article then analyzes the evolution of regulations in the EU as a key exporter of audiovisual services and concludes that there are no strong prerequisites for achieving a multilateral trade deal on audiovisual services in the near future.

Regulation of Audiovisual Services in GATT and GATS Rules

The problem of regulating the trade of motion pictures existed while GATT was being drafted in 1947. Fearing the aggressive expansion of the American film industry, Great Britain and France proposed Article IV “Special Provisions Relating to Cinematograph Films” for GATT. This provision permits the use of screen quotas for films of domestic origin. Based on this article, Great Britain, Germany, France, and Japan subsequently allocated part (about a third) of screen time for showing national films, a third for American films, and a third for films from other countries.

In the early nineties of the last century GATT was institutionalized in the form of the WTO, which extended its action to areas of trade other than in commodities. In 1995, GATS came into force—the first multilateral agreement covering trade in service sectors, including audiovisual services. It was predicated upon the notion that secure access to markets and pro-

gressive liberalization could stimulate the growth of services trade in the same way as GATT has done since 1947 for trade in goods. GATS allows for the possibility of exercising domestic regulatory and policy autonomy through various avenues: an issue of key relevance in the case of a sector, such as the audio-visual one, which carries particular importance for the culture and identity of WTO members [Zampetti, 2003].

As with the creation of the WTO, GATT, which regulates trade in goods (including its Article IV on films), was preserved and GATS, regulating services, was added, so a twofold situation could arise when interpreting WTO members' obligations in relation to such a category as motion picture films. On the one hand, they are subject to the national treatment obligations spelled out in Article III of GATT. On the other hand, they can be scheduled in the commitments on audiovisual services under GATS.

The GATS approach implies flexibility with regard to liberalization, that is, members' schedules of specific commitments are individualized. As a result, members such as the EU, Canada, and Switzerland did not include the audiovisual services sector in their services commitments in order to be able to maintain national regulatory measures related to cultural policy [Graber, 2006].

The flip side of the compromise was that all WTO members had to agree to the objective of pursuing progressive liberalization under GATS.³ Consequently, the issue of opening the film and television markets was to reappear on the agenda of future trade negotiations. However, during the Doha development round, where the services sector was also addressed, no agreement was reached on market access in audiovisual services.

Today, films are rarely considered to be physical goods, which are subject to tariffs. Therefore, if a member has No commitments under GATS with respect to audiovisual services, it is free to impose market access and national treatment restrictions on the production, distribution, and exhibition of films, including subsidies for national films. However, even if films are treated as physical goods, challenging subsidies to the national film industry under GATT is difficult. In such a case, a complainant party must be able to prove that the subsidies provided to service providers affect competition between similar domestic and imported goods to the detriment of the imported goods.

Definition of the Audiovisual Sector in the WTO and Technological Neutrality

GATS does not contain any classification itself. In order to inscribe the commitments in services trade in their schedules, WTO members have mainly used the Services Sectoral Classification List [WTO, 1991]. This document contains references to the corresponding Central Product Classification (CPC) categories on the basis of the Provisional Central Product Classification—the version published by the United Nations in 1991). The list is not obligatory, but in practice many WTO members have followed its classification in their schedules of specific commitments. It should be noted that the list categories are supposed to be mutually exclusive [WTO, 2005a, para. 180]. According to this list, the audio-visual services sector is a part of the broader category of “communication services.”

The list has been repeatedly criticized for containing errors, shortcomings, and inaccuracies and for its inadequacy in capturing market realities. Moreover, many types of digital services did not previously exist and therefore were not classified in the UN document of that time; as a result, they are not indicated in the list. At the same time, there is No alternative document

³ GATS, Art. XIX:1; Marrakesh Agreement, preamble.

in the WTO, and all attempts to clarify the classification of services in the working bodies of the organization have been frozen in recent years. This is because the classification of services is a very sensitive and technically complex issue for members, since it is directly related to the interpretation of existing commitments and the definition of new types of services, often of high technological and commercial importance.

In the list, audiovisual services fall under item 2.D. Notably, it does not disclose two categories of audiovisual services (“others” and “sound recording”) because they do not have references to the CPC. It is also important that audiovisual services can be found not only in section 2.D, but also in other sections of the list; in fact, their scope is much wider and explicitly defined. Thus, for example, audiovisual services include the performance of live concerts (Section 10.A: Entertainment Services, CPC 9619), rental of videotapes (Section 1: Business Services, CPC 83202), and wholesale and retail of merchandise (Section 4: Distribution Services, CPC 62263), if we are talking, for example, about the wholesale of cinematographic films [WTO, 2010].

The list, having been developed more than 25 years ago, does not adequately reflect the technological changes that have taken place in the industry such as, for example, the fact that audiovisual content can now be transmitted through a much wider range of media. This means that, depending on how one distinguishes the main technical characteristics, over-the-top (OTT) video streaming services can be considered both as video services and as Internet services or as electronic data retrieval services, and thus be assigned to three different categories in the schedule of specific commitments of WTO members: audiovisual services, computer services, and telecommunications services [Kwak, Kim, 2020]. Accordingly, the legal categorization of OTT video streaming services will automatically determine the WTO member’s mandatory level of market access and national treatment commitments for foreign companies.

The development of technologies and business models has led to the fact that many services, which appeared relatively recently, are not explicitly mentioned in the list. These include, for example, cloud computing, web hosting, social networks, search engines, call centres, mobile applications, and online video or games. There is No definition of “new” services in GATS [Zhang, 2015]. Since the creation of the WTO, its members have not come to a common understanding of how to differentiate between a new service and an existing service provided with the use of new technologies. At the same time, this question is fundamental to the interpretation of members’ market access commitments and national treatment in trade in services. It is necessary to determine whether a country has obligations in trade in certain services or whether these are new services for which a WTO member has full room for maneuver with regard to their regulation.

In the context of digital transformation, one of the solutions to the question of the application of international law is often considered the principle of technological neutrality, which allows the use of accepted regulatory rules in relation to new technologies [Shadikhodjaev, 2021]. However, in the WTO agreements, the attitude toward this principle is ambiguous. For instance, Article 27 of the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights Agreement contains an obligation on technological neutrality; the Technical Barriers to Trade Agreement uses advisory language, while the status of this principle is not clear at all in GATS [Gagliani, 2020].

The concept of technological neutrality was used in relation to GATS in the progress report adopted by the Council for Trade in Services under the Work Programme on Electronic Commerce on 19 July 1999 [WTO, 1999]. This report stated that GATS is technologically neutral in the sense that it does not contain provisions establishing a differentiation between the various technologies through which the delivery of services can be carried out. With regard to new technologies, this means that GATS extends to those that appeared after the creation of the agreement.

The technological neutrality of GATS has been addressed to some extent in WTO disputes. In the report on the case *U.S.-Gambling*, the panel pointed out that a market access commitment for mode 1 implies the right for other members' suppliers to supply a service through all means of delivery, whether by mail, telephone, Internet, and so on, unless otherwise specified in a member's schedule. This statement, according to the panel position, is in line with the principle of technological neutrality that seems to be largely shared among WTO members. [WTO, 2004, para. 6.285.].

In the case of *China-Publications and Audiovisual Products*, the United States directly referred to the principle of technological neutrality, justifying its position that GATS does not limit the technologically possible means of delivery of a service [WTO, 2009, para. 4.476]. China, in turn, pointed out that the principle of technological neutrality was under consideration by WTO members at the time of the dispute, and the panel's conclusions on the principle in the case *U.S. Gambling* were not confirmed (considered) by the appellate body. Moreover, according to China's position, the U.S.' arguments on the principle of technological neutrality contradict the position that adding new services to the schedule of specific commitments is possible only through negotiations service [WTO, 2009, para. 4.477].

China also referred to the fact that the principle in question is irrelevant to the dispute under consideration [WTO, 2009, para. 4.478]. The panel concluded that it had No need to invoke a principle of technological neutrality in that dispute. At the same time, the wording applied to the principle "whatever its status within the WTO" is of interest [WTO, 2009, para. 7.1264]. That is, the panel left the question of the status of the principle open—it noted that under certain circumstances, the principle could be taken into account.

Thus, the relevance of technological neutrality depends on the context, and WTO law does not give a clear answer as to whether it is a guiding principle, a mandatory rule, or just one of several options for considering the situation.

EU and U.S. Negotiating Positions on Liberalization of Audiovisual Services in the WTO

The negotiating history demonstrates the existence of polar views on the liberalization of audiovisual services among two key members.

The U.S., driven by its significant export interests in the audiovisual industry, has strongly advocated liberalization over the past decades and insisted that the audiovisual services sector be subject to WTO negotiations. In its view, the fact that the audiovisual sector may have special cultural significance does not mean that the sector should not be subject to trade rules applicable to other services sectors, which may also have unique characteristics for social policies. GATS contains rather flexible rules on trade in services that take into account the specifics of individual sectors. For example, the GATS Annex on Financial Services gives regulators exclusive authority to adopt prudential measures to ensure, inter alia, the integrity of the financial system of WTO members [WTO, 2000].

During the Doha round, the U.S. proposed a major change in the classification of the audiovisual services sector in order to streamline the liberalization process. One of the most notable proposals was to break down the subcategory "motion picture and videotape production and distribution services" in the schedule into four sub-sectors: promotion or advertising services, motion picture or videotape production services, motion picture or videotape distribution services, and other services in connection with motion picture and videotape production and distribution [WTO, 2005].

In addition, a new classification called “other communication services” was proposed by the U.S. and is not on the list. The new classification was proposed to include cable services provided over a cable system; one-way satellite transmission of direct-to-home and direct broadcast satellite television services and digital audio services, programme and television broadcast transmission services, radio broadcast transmission services, and radio and television combined programme making and broadcasting services. The proposed approach to classification separated the broadcasting element from the content element in audiovisual services.

As for the position of European countries (France and Great Britain), they have strongly insisted on cultural exceptions since the conclusion of GATT in 1947. Subsequently, the European Union has consistently advocated the protection and development of the domestic media industry [Garrett, 1994], which is necessary to promote cultural diversity [EU, 2002]. Following this logic, Brussels has never made any commitments regarding audiovisual services in order to maintain maximum discretion in domestic cultural policy. Moreover, it has planned a number of exemptions for the granting of most-favoured-nation (MFN) status. This approach continues in the ongoing negotiations on e-commerce under the joint initiative [EU, 2019]. The EU, which advocates market access commitments in sectors related to digital trade, proposed the liberalization of computer and telecommunications services [Biryukova, 2022], while completely ignoring the audiovisual sector, despite their technological convergence. At the same time, Washington, which views cross-border data flows as an important objective, is willing to go further and advocates opening up a broader set of services sectors to facilitate digital trade. Overall, the EU’s cautious strategy does not do justice to its image as a leading developer of advanced rules in the field of e-commerce.

The Interplay of Cultural and Trade Issues

The standoff among WTO members regarding the regulation of audiovisual services was repeated on another forum—UNESCO [Voon, 2006]. In view of the potential tensions between trade and culture within the WTO, the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, adopted on 20 October 2005 at the 33rd General Conference of UNESCO is of paramount importance for interpreting the situation [UNESCO, 2005]. Of all the countries voting on the convention, 148 voted in favour, with opposing votes by Israel and U.S., and abstentions by Australia, Honduras, Liberia, and Nigeria.

The United States opposed the new document from the very beginning. The main reason for U.S. opposition was that it did not want UNESCO to be involved in trade policy. Washington insisted that the regulation of trade falls exclusively under the jurisdiction of the WTO. Besides criticizing the convention as an instrument of disguised protectionism, the United States claimed that the signatories to the convention violated their citizens’ rights to free expression and information [U.S.Mission to UNESCO, 2005].

The main objectives of the convention were to recognize the dual nature of cultural expressions as objects of trade and as artefacts of cultural value and to recognize the legitimate right of governments to formulate and implement cultural policies and to introduce measures to protect and promote cultural diversity. In fact, the convention, filling the existing gap in the regulation of cultural aspects in public international law, was intended to create a counterbalance to the WTO platform in future conflicts between measures of trade and protection of culture.

The convention is broad in scope and applies to the policies and measures adopted by the parties related to the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions (Article 3).

A number of provisions of the convention may be in dissonance with the obligations of WTO members. Article 6 states that the parties may adopt measures aimed at protecting and promoting the diversity of cultural expressions on their territory, such as public financial assistance, and to provide opportunities for the creation, production, dissemination, distribution, and enjoyment of domestic cultural activities, goods, and services. Another striking illustration is Article 8, which allows the application of measures to protect cultural expressions. It states that a party may determine that there are special situations where cultural expressions on its territory are at risk of extinction, under serious threat, or otherwise in need of urgent safeguarding. In such a situation, a party may take all appropriate measures to protect and preserve cultural expressions.

Other provisions of the convention may contradict the spirit of the MFN inherent in the WTO. Thus, Article 12 calls on parties “to strengthen bilateral, regional and international cooperation for the creation of conditions conducive to the promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions ... notably in order ... to encourage the conclusion of co-production and co-distribution agreements.”

Article 20.2 states that nothing in it shall be interpreted as modifying rights and obligations of the parties under any other treaties to which they are parties. This indicates that the convention as it stands cannot protect one WTO member from an apparent violation of WTO law by another member, even though Article 20.1 states that it is not subject to any other treaty.

On the one hand, the convention can be used to clarify various exceptions to the basic WTO rules and disciplines, such as national treatment and MFN in the regulation of cultural products. For example, Article XX(f) of GATT 1994 provides an exception to the basic WTO rules, such as national treatment, for measures to protect national treasures of artistic, historical, or archaeological value, subject to the chapeau of that article. In addition, the convention can be used to further the argument that cultural goods and services may be relevant to “public morals” (GATS Article XIV(a) and GATT Article XX(a)). In any event, however, such evidence would be considered on a dispute-by-dispute basis. But on the other hand, the appeal to the convention for interpretation may undermine some individual member’s understanding of the scope of rights and obligations in the sensitive field of audiovisual services.

In general, the convention is unlikely to be a defensive tool to justify violations of WTO agreements. However, in the context of potential tensions between trade and culture, the convention can be used to protect a country in matters of cultural expression.

International Trade and Domestic Regulations in Audiovisual Services

Statistics on international trade in audiovisual services have limitations, but nevertheless highlight certain key trends. Global export of audiovisual services is characterized by a high geographical concentration. The leaders are the EUM with a share of more than one third of the total, followed by the U.S., Canada, and the UK. The shares of other countries are less than 3%. The U.S. and the EU are also at the top of the world imports (see Table 1). Audiovisual services are highly concentrated and are provided by a small group of large, competing companies. In many cases, in this struggle, political, cultural, and educational processes remain far behind their commercial interests.

Table 1. Major Exporters and Importers of Audiovisual and Related Services (\$ Million, %)

Exporters	2020	2021	Share in 10 Economies in 2020	Importers	2020	2021	Share in 10 Economies in 2020
European Union	17071	19516	40.4	United States	21692	25370	46.7
Extra-EU exports	9203	10471	21.8	European Union	16942	18124	36.4
United States	15254	16695	36.1	Extra-EU exports	7717	7623	16.6
Canada	3688	4402	8.7	Canada	2965	3430	6.4
United Kingdom	2119	1821	5	Australia	886	1139	1.9
Japan	1041	1293	2.5	United Kingdom	787	953	1.7
Republic of Korea	810	1152	1.9	Russian Federation	768	1010	1.7
India	774	1132	1.8	Norway	662	1063	1.4
Singapore	691	720	1.6	Japan	627	1317	1.3
Australia	410	467	1	Republic of Korea	607	421	1.3
United Arab Emirates	408	490	1	Argentina	556	566	1.2
Above 10	42265	47690	100	Above 10	46492	53395	100

Source: WTO [2022].

The film and television market is the most important segment of the audiovisual services. The most competitive are the U.S. companies, whose financial and technical capabilities exceed those of their European rivals, not to mention companies in developing countries. American interests in the world clash with the collective European television and film industry. The European model is based on a system of subsidizing the activities of public television companies and film companies.

Multinational video on demand (VOD) platforms, such as Netflix or Disney Plus, associated with the advance of digital capitalism [Vlassis, 2021], are changing the dynamics of transnational video distribution. Although having subscribers and offices and commissioning content from many countries are obvious measures of these services' multinational status, the extent to which the distinct affordances of these services diminish the national lens through which all other international television trade occurs may be the most profound measure [Lotz, 2020].

The European audiovisual industry is an important integrated feature of the U.S. economy. The weight of U.S. interests in the top 100 European audiovisual companies increased to a 30% market share by the end of 2021 mainly due to the rise of the pure subscription video on demand (SVOD) players but also of the SVOD services of U.S.-backed broadcasters such as Sky, Paramount+, and Disney+. U.S. players tend to start prioritizing expansion through direct investments by launching SVOD platforms, acquiring European assets, and producing content locally [Ene, 2023].

There are numerous barriers to trade in audiovisual services that are specific to this sector. An important tool is content quotas, in which a certain share of television or radio broadcasting time or screen time in cinemas is reserved for internal content, be it music, television programmes, movies, or advertising.

For example, France continues to apply the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) and other content laws restrictively in order to promote the local industry. France requires that 60% of television programming in France be of EU origin, thus exceeding the AVMSD threshold (30%). In addition, 40% of the programming devoted to EU origin must include original content in French. These quotas apply to both regular and programme slots in prime time, while the definition of prime time varies from network to network [USTR, 2022].

Another actively used tool for promoting national producers of audiovisual services are subsidies (including in the form of tax benefits, grants, or loans on preferential terms). Subsidies usually relate to the film industry but are also used in other segments of the sector, especially in the production of television programmes. Subsidies are often provided on a discriminatory basis. Thus, almost all European funds, including EU and British ones, require satisfaction of nationality or establishment criteria related to the applicant [European Audiovisual Observatory 2019a].

There are No internationally comparable statistics on subsidies. Available information suggests that subsidies are a key feature of the film industry in both developed and developing countries, although in the former they are much higher. For example, in the EU, the share of public financing is 28% of the total cost of film production, followed by investments by producers and broadcasters (both types—18% each) [European Audiovisual Observatory, 2019b].

Among the widely used trade barriers in the sector, restrictions on foreign capital should be highlighted, especially in the areas of television and radio broadcasting.

Other tools include limits on the number of operators, the capacity of foreign channels, and restrictions on targeted advertising in the local market, as well as restrictions on the movement of personnel, for example, requirements that foreign investors hire a certain proportion of local personnel.

The audiovisual sector is undergoing significant change as a result of the technological revolution, which, for its part, is also driving the cross-border transfer of large amounts of content, reducing financial and time costs. New technologies have also made it possible to distribute content across different platforms and to exercise control over users [Warren, Hanson, Yuan, 2021]. Obviously, such technological changes pose a challenge not only for economic operators, but also for regulators. Developed countries prioritize their financial support for the production of audiovisual content available for digital distribution, while developing countries focus their financial support on the promotion of digital infrastructure [Biryukova, Matiukhina, 2019].

The EU Experience in Regulating Certain Aspects of Audiovisual Services

In the European Union, audiovisual services are generally governed by a wide range of state regulations due to the high social, cultural, and economic importance of the sector. Regulatory rules may relate, for example, to intellectual property protection, competition, protection against illegal or offensive content, advertising, and language requirements for subtitles and dubbing. States may also adopt measures to achieve cultural objectives, including the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions.

State-owned companies also play an important role in television and radio broadcasting, and they are usually regulated by special rules. Such operators are often given a mandate to provide public services to, for example, promote national cohesion. Governments sometimes propose or prescribe the type of content that public operators must provide to the public.

The field of audiovisual services is under the scrutiny of the European Commission and its regulation, following technological developments, is undergoing change.

EU broadcast quotas are derived from the 1989 Television Without Frontiers Directive. The document was a response to European weakness and American dominance of the broadcast market [Karpe, 1995]. Article 4 referred to a cultural quota, requiring European broadcasters to give most of the broadcast time to so-called “European works.”

The AVMSD 2007 also established minimum content quotas for broadcasting with which all EU states had to comply. At the same time, EU states could exceed this minimum quota for content from the EU.

In 2018, the EU adopted amendments to the AVMSD 2007 [EU, 2018], which were aimed at protecting the domestic market from foreign presence. The amendments included provisions that prescribe Internet video-on-demand providers a minimum 30% threshold for EU content in their catalogues and require them to pay special attention to EU content in their offerings. The AVMSD 2018 also gave states the ability to require so-called on-demand service providers that are not based in their territory but whose target audience is in their territory to contribute financially to European works based on revenues generated in that state. In addition, the new rules extended the scope of the AVMSD to video sharing platforms that systematize content, which can have an impact on the activities of social media platforms.

The 2018 AVMSD was presented by authors and broadcasters who lobbied for it as a framework for European audiovisual regulation and a means of distributing and promoting European works that provides “opportunity to promote European cultural content worldwide” [Society of Audiovisual Services, 2020].

For the development of the audiovisual industry, the Creative Europe 2021–27 programme plays an important role. Its budget is about 2.5 billion euros, an increase of 80% compared to the previous period (2014–20) [EC, 2021]. The programme is expected to promote European cooperation on cultural diversity and the competitiveness of the cultural and creative sectors.

On 23 April 2022, the Council of the European Union reached a political agreement with the European Parliament regarding the Digital Services Act (DSA) that will apply to all online intermediaries providing services in the EU [Council of the EU, 2022]. The DSA includes specific requirements for the protection of minors, online marketplaces, online platforms, and search engines, with stricter requirements implemented proportionately for “very large online platforms” and “very large online search engines.” The DSA also includes rules for the use of misleading interfaces, including dark patterns, and for transparency in the use of recommender systems. The agreement represents a step forward for the digital services package introduced by the European Commission in December 2020, which also included the Digital Markets Act (DMA). The package aimed to define a framework to address the challenges posed by large digital organizations and the protection of their users.

These regulations will shape, likely quite dramatically, the environment for doing digital business in Europe and beyond. They will have profound implications on the audiovisual service providers that are expected to adhere to regulatory requirements. The DMA and DSA could have severe, negative impacts on U.S. digital service providers through new compliance and operational costs and by forcing them to forego critical business opportunities. These immediate losses could be exacerbated by the dynamic effects resulting from the higher digital services costs incurred by European firms. [Suominen, 2022].

Decision-makers and lead negotiators need to think deeply and reflect about the practical implementation of the “digital package” to make sure that the rush to bring this to life does not unintentionally undermine the very rights that they were tasked to protect.

Conclusion

The regulation of audiovisual services has always attracted close attention from WTO members. Some key participants seek to protect their national culture and consider measures in this area as non-trade oriented. At the same time, instruments that aim to protect the commercial interests of national audiovisual companies are very difficult to separate from measures aimed at protecting national cultural and educational heritage. Audiovisual services have always been a sensitive area in the WTO's negotiations, where the EU and U.S. have taken diametrically opposed approaches.

Technological advances have a significant impact on the way audiovisual services are consumed, distributed, and traded. The WTO classification of services does not reflect the current structure of digital transmission and supply of digital content. Apart from some imperfections at the time of its creation, the GATS classification has become increasingly less reflective of new market realities over time, at least in some important services, as dramatic technological and commercial changes have taken place over the past two decades.

Technological convergence confronts governments with the challenge of reconciling previously distinct regulatory frameworks. In the past, each type of content had a dedicated network. Television content was delivered over one technology, but now, in addition to traditional broadcasters, the same content can be transmitted by cable, mobile, phone companies, or Internet access providers.

The WTO members' commitments on audiovisual services vary widely and are not universalized, so the findings of conflict situations may be case-by-case and could differ depending on the context.

The UNESCO convention was an attempt to fill the gap in public international law in reconciling the regulation of cultural property and economic liberalization. By ratifying this convention, the parties demonstrated their conviction that the protection of cultural diversity must be taken into account when ensuring the achievement of economic objectives.

The EU and U.S., being the main proponents of the joint initiative on e-commerce under the WTO, advocate the need to open market access in a number of services sectors in order to ensure the effective implementation of e-commerce rules in the future. However, these two WTO members, due to different priorities, have not settled among themselves the exhausted list of such services sectors to negotiate. It seems that the prospects for trade liberalization of audiovisual services in the context of the current e-commerce negotiations are extremely low.

In the EU, integration activities aimed at the creation of the European audiovisual space are increasing. The EU countries have made almost no commitments to audiovisual services in the WTO, but continue to develop supranational regulation in this area with an eye to tightening entry conditions for foreign companies and increasing the requirements for accountability of foreign investors, mainly of big tech companies.

Fragmentation of regulation, rather than multilateral liberalization, is at the forefront of trade policy in the field of digital services enabling and providing content. The formation of regulatory blocs in trade policy poses new challenges for participants in the multilateral trading system. The WTO is increasingly failing as a détente mechanism that could help level the playing field for market access and domestic regulation in audiovisual services. On the one hand, some might say that it is objectively too early to multilateralize technically complex issues for which regulatory policymaking is still in its active phase. On the other hand, strengthening regionalization with specific regulations for such important issues as cross-border trade in audiovisual services under the context of digitalization will make it difficult to develop universal rules in a multilateral format in the future.

One thing is obvious. The WTO members should invest significantly more in discussing this topical issue if they want to develop transparent, predictable, and non-discriminatory trade rules in this area—assuming they really want to get them.

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Integration Strategies of the Post-Soviet Countries: Analysis Using the Social Graph Approach¹

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Abstract

In connection with the current trends restructuring the global world order, the task of creating regional zones of trust, including in the format of integration trade associations between states, is coming to the fore. These trends play an important role in the foreign policy of states, including Russia. In this regard, this article analyzes the strategies of the states of the post-Soviet space in relation to regional economic integration.

The article uses the method of constructing a social graph. Data on the concluded regional trade agreements between the states of the post-Soviet bloc with trading partners was analyzed. The model was also tested and compared against data on value chains and investment flows. Based on this analysis, a model for the distribution of countries' strategies for regional economic integration was created along two parameters: active/passive and centrifugal/centripetal. Four variants of strategies were identified: active centrifugal, active centripetal, passive centrifugal, and passive centripetal. The article presents the results of checking the obtained model and draws conclusions regarding the prospects for the development of regional economic integration in the post-Soviet space.

Keywords: post-Soviet space; FTA; economic integration; social graph; foreign economic strategy

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Introduction

In the current geopolitical context, we are witnessing a radical restructuring of the system of international relations that is establishing the foundation for economic integration in the Eurasian space. Since 2020, there has been a general decline in international economic activity (a decrease in the dynamics of world gross domestic product (GDP), a decrease in the intensity of foreign direct investment, and an increase in trade and economic protectionism and trade

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wars) [Kravchenko, Spartak, 2021, p. 7]. The coronavirus pandemic was also a serious challenge to the development of Eurasian integration [Knobel', Pyzhikov, Kutovaja, 2020]. This was followed by the development of the crisis in Ukraine and the threat of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) expansion to the East. At the same time, the scientific community views the potential of Eurasian integration as far from fully exhausted [Grinberg, Pylin, 2020]. Given the current sanctions pressure from the West, the prospects for the development of economic integration within the region are becoming increasingly relevant [Makhmutova, 2019]. However, Eurasian integration is not the only option for implementing the foreign economic strategy of the countries of the region. New leaders, including from China, Turkey and Iran, are emerging who claim influence in the post-Soviet space, and there is active intervention in the region from the European Union (EU) and the U.S. [Bezrukov, Ivanov, Chimiris, 2021]. There is competition among integration associations in the post-Soviet space, which further intensifies the struggle between major regional players for countries that are not yet sufficiently involved in regional integration processes [Osadchej, 2021, p. 5]. There is a trend toward diversity in foreign policy strategies and approaches to the implementation of foreign policy goals and objectives, which reduces the efficiency and speed of integration processes within the region [Vinokurov, Libman, 2012, p. 6]. Until the 2000s, one of the topical issues in the development of the post-Soviet space was the process of integration within the framework of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) [Zijadullaev, 2002]. Integration within the framework of the Customs Union and subsequently the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) then came to the fore.

Regional economic integration is a trend that remains relevant in the post-Soviet space as a scientific study [Kuzmina, 2017; Osadchej, 2018] and as an element of public discourse [Putin, 2011]. The ability to predict the readiness of certain countries for the development of economic integration would be an important tool that could not only influence the global economic agenda, but also provoke a conflict situation in the political sphere. As the case of Ukraine-Russia conflicts in 2014 showed, the economic agreement on integration with the EU (and its contradictions with the contractual legal framework of CIS) was one of the key reasons for the deployment of a large-scale political confrontation, which continues to this day.

The ability to evaluate and predict the integration strategies of the countries of the post-Soviet space would offer an advantage in strategic planning. In this regard, we have set a *goal* to develop a model for analyzing and predicting the strategies of the states of the post-Soviet space. To what extent are the states focused on cooperation within the region? To what extent is it important for them to develop cooperation outside the region? What indicators can give us a comprehensive picture?

To address these questions, we systematized data from agreements on the free trade zones (FTZs) of the countries of the post-Soviet space (except for the Baltic countries). In this regard, it was important to find an analytical tool that, at least in some approximation, could help predict the formation of the configuration of integration projects. In this study, we applied the social network analysis method, or the analysis of social graphs, to typify the strategies of the countries of the post-Soviet space in relation to regional economic integration.

The *hypothesis* with which we approached the analysis of the data was that the strategy of the states of the post-Soviet space, expressed as the desire to conclude a free trade agreement (FTA), is mainly political in nature. At the same time, data on investments and value chains form a picture that differs from the current foreign economic strategies of the states of the region.

Previous Investigations

Researchers have often raised the question of reducing Russia's influence in the post-Soviet space. In this regard, the intensification of efforts to develop economic integration in the region can become an alternative to declining political and strategic influence [Petrovich-Belkin, Yerminev, Bokeriya, 2019]. Trade agreements of the countries in the region, as well as other agreements, form such a complex, multidimensional structure that it has been called a "spaghetti bowl" [Schüle, Kleisinger, 2016]. This metaphor describes the situation of multi-term, complex intersections of various free trade agreements between two or more players in the region [Baldwin, 2018].

We concluded that it is necessary to select a tool that will allow us to systematize the available information and build an analytical model. The method of constructing and analyzing a social graph for the study of international economic relations is already proven. An attempt to use network metrics was made in relation to the trade of countries in Latin America and Asia [Zaclicever, 2019]. A successful application of a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to analyze the foreign policy strategies of the CIS countries was accomplished by Russian scientists [Kurylev et al., 2018]. The authors of this study took, as a basis, data on the membership of CIS countries in international organizations and their voting in the United Nations (UN). Studies of integration processes in the post-Soviet space using quantitative methods and modelling based on a social graph have not yet been carried out. Thus, we offer our study for consideration.

The model was built using data on the agreements on trade and economic cooperation of the countries of the post-Soviet space, as well as on data on value chains and investment flows. There are two approaches to comprehensive analysis of economic integration: first, an economic approach that considers FTAs and customs unions, and second, an international political economy approach that draws attention to interstate organizations, even with a rudimentary institutional structure.

Within the framework of the economic approach, the World Trade Organization (WTO) database of regional trade agreements serves as a source of data on economic integration [RTA Tracker, n.d]. It includes agreements about which the organization has been informed. Types of agreements include customs unions, free trade areas, partial scope agreements, and free trade agreements (liberalization of trade in services). However, this database has some limitations. It does not contain treaties of countries that are not members of the WTO, and the accuracy of the data depends on the accuracy of the information provided by the states themselves. "Often integration projects are associated not so much with agreements that determine the mode of trade in goods and services, but, for example, with the creation of a joint infrastructure, financing of common projects, protection of investors' rights, or with "soft" forms of harmonization of standards and rules. All these organizations are absent in the WTO database" [EDB, 2014, p. 10]. One important characteristic of this framework is that "regional" treaties are all those that are not global in nature. The database of regional trade agreements of the WTO, unfortunately, does not give a complete picture of the existing agreements. Therefore, for this study, we refined the data from additional sources [VAVT, 2019]. If the countries were repeated in several treaties, we left only one link. We designate the EU as a single actor since this integration association has a high degree of both economic and political integration.

Data on value chains are presented in a systematic way in the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) database [IAP, n.d.]. We have identified for each country of the post-Soviet space TOP-5 partners in incoming and outgoing value chains. Investment data was taken from the websites of the central banks of the post-Soviet countries, as well as the European Economic Community (EEC) [EEC, n.d.].

Methodology

The method of analyzing social networks in the form of social graphs opens new opportunities for a systematic analysis of trade and economic relations between countries. As part of this study, we applied the social network analysis (SNA) method to model and analyze relations within the post-Soviet space. We tested various criteria for constructing a social graph. Among these criteria, we highlight:

- 1) the existence of an agreement on free trade zones,
- 2) indicators of the development of industrial cooperation between countries (in this case we take data on value chains, because they primarily determine the need and prospects for economic integration between countries), and
- 3) indicators on foreign direct investment flows.

We propose several models based on social graphs, both in a static and dynamic context. Data on the formation of value chains allow us to show the dynamics of development. We also face the task of identifying the main strategies of countries regarding integration in the period after the collapse of the USSR based on an analysis of the structure of the created model. We paid attention to two indicators—the activity in concluding an FTA and the direction of integration: inside the region or outside. The current cross-section of the concluded FTAs in the region allows us to get closer to identifying the patterns of countries' integration strategies at the present stage.

The network approach to the analysis of FTAs allows a different approach to the analysis of the structure, in contrast to the tabular presentation of information. It allows the calculation of quantitative indicators—which country has more trade agreements—and also reveals the structure of these relationships. Thus, we analyzed the relations between countries in the field of FTA not by looking at pairs of countries, but by considering the complex structure. Graph analysis opens similar opportunities when building models based on value chain data and investment flows. We can see not only the dynamics of bilateral contacts, but also to identify the general structure of existing chains in the region.

Creation of Model and Analysis

Degree Centrality: The Degree of Integration Into the Networks of the Region's Free Trade Area

The relations of countries within the framework of an FTA are displayed on the model in the form of a non-directional unweighted relationship. The sample of countries includes 12 states of the post-Soviet space (as well as several countries external to the region with which FTAs have been concluded).

The degree of centrality of the vertex tells us about the activity of the state in the process of forming trade agreements. The degree of network clustering shows us the potential for the formation of new integration associations in the region. Betweenness centrality shows whether a country is a potential “broker” in relations between other countries. The degree centrality for each vertex shows the extent to which the country is involved in the network of FTAs within the region. In this model, we get a connected graph (Fig. 1). Note that countries are indicated by numbers on the model. Explanation is given in the notes.² It is worth paying attention to the high degree of trade integration within the CIS space and, so far, their less developed relations

² 1—Azerbaijan, 2—Armenia, 3—Belarus, 4—Georgia, 5—Moldova, 6—Kazakhstan, 7—Kyrgyzstan, 8—Russia, 9—Tajikistan, 10—Turkmenistan, 11—Uzbekistan, 12—Ukraine.

with external players. In addition to the well-known EAEU agreements with Vietnam and Iran, as well as a new FTA with Serbia, some CIS countries also have agreements with the European Free Trade Association (Georgia and Ukraine), Turkey (Georgia and Moldova), China and Hong Kong (Georgia). Contractual relations with the Balkan region are developing rather densely. Russia (as part of the EAEU) has an FTA with Serbia, Ukraine, Montenegro, and North Macedonia. Also due to close ties and a large diaspora, Ukraine has a free trade agreement with Canada.

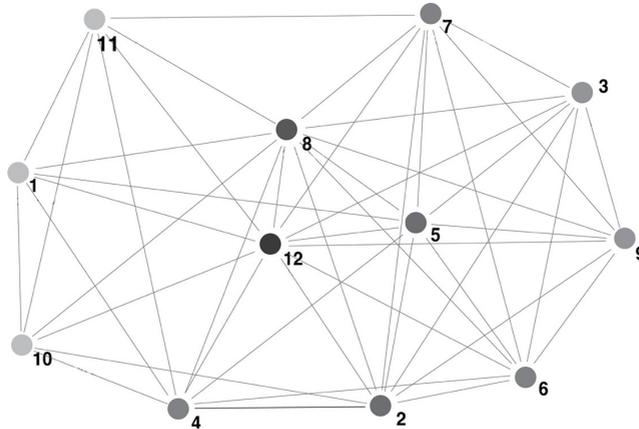


Fig. 1. The Network of Free Trade Zones Within the Region of the Post-Soviet Space (Degree Centrality)

Source: [WTO, n.d.].

In terms of degree centrality, the model distinguishes six classes: Ukraine has the highest index—11, followed by Russia—10, Armenia and Moldova have a centrality of 9 (see Table 1). The next most important class includes Georgia, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan (centrality—8). Belarus and Tajikistan are in the same class with centrality of 7. The last class with centrality of 6 includes Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. These models show that Ukraine, until recently, formed the largest number of agreements on free trade zones in the post-Soviet space. Russia, Moldova, and Armenia also developed contacts rather intensively.

Table 1. Centrality Indicators for the Countries of the Post-Soviet Region

Node	Label	DC
12	Ukraine	11.000000
8	Russia	10.000000
2	Armenia	9.000000
5	Moldova	9.000000
4	Georgia	8.000000
6	Kazakhstan	8.000000
7	Kyrgyzstan	8.000000
3	Belarus	7.000000
9	Tajikistan	7.000000

Node	Label	DC
1	Azerbaijan	6.000000
10	Turkmenistan	6.000000
11	Uzbekistan	6.000000

Source: Compiled by the authors.

An analysis of the structure of the graph (Table 1) containing data on free trade zones within the region shows the degree of involvement of a particular country in the free trade zone network in the post-Soviet space. We can use the analysis of these data to determine the degree of activity of the country in the region, but we cannot determine whether the integration strategy is directed inside the region or outside. In this regard, we need to expand the model by adding data on FTAs of the countries of the region with external partners.

Degree Centrality: FTA of the Region Together With External FTAs

At the second stage of the analysis, we supplemented the matrix with data on FTZs outside the region and looked at the change in centrality. Let us make the reservation that in this model we do not consider the free trade zones that exist in countries external to the post-Soviet region. We are only interested in their relations with the countries of the post-Soviet space, which give us additional parameters for assessing the position of countries within the model (Fig. 2).

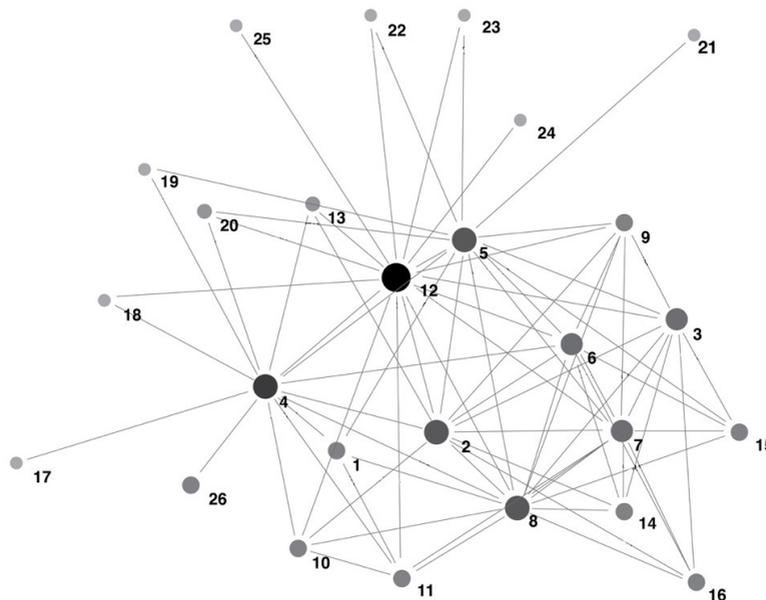


Fig. 2. Model of the FTA Network in the Post-Soviet Region and External Partners (Degree Centrality)³

Source: [WTO, n.d.].

³ Nodes: 1—Azerbaijan, 2—Armenia, 3—Belarus, 4—Georgia, 5—Moldova, 6—Kazakhstan, 7—Kyrgyzstan, 8—Russia, 9—Tajikistan, 10—Turkmenistan, 11—Uzbekistan, 12—Ukraine, 13—EU, 14—Iran, 15—Serbia, 16—Vietnam, 17—China, 18—EFTA, 19—Turkey, 20—Great Britain, 21—CEFTA, 22—Montenegro, 23—North Macedonia, 24—Canada, 25—Israel, 26—Hong Kong.

The indicators of the centrality of the countries of the region have changed, and within the framework of this model, we have identified 12 classes (Table 2). Ukraine has the highest indicator of centrality, which means that it not only has active intra-regional, but also extra-regional contacts. The second class is formed by Russia, Moldova and Armenia. The fourth is Georgia. Fifth is Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Belarus. Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, and Uzbekistan are sixth class. The rest of the classes include external ones for the region of the country and for this analytical task they are of secondary importance.

Table 2. Indicators of the Centrality of the Countries of the Region and External Players (Breakdown by Class)

Node	Label	DC
12	Ukraine	18.000000
4	Georgia	14.000000
2	Armenia	13.000000
5	Moldova	13.000000
8	Russia	13.000000
6	Kazakhstan	11.000000
7	Kyrgyzstan	11.000000
3	Belarus	10.000000
9	Tajikistan	7.000000
1	Azerbaijan	6.000000
10	Turkmenistan	6.000000
11	Uzbekistan	6.000000
15	Serbia	6.000000
14	Iran	5.000000
16	Vietnam	5.000000
13	EU	4.000000
20	Great Britain	3.000000
18	EFTA ⁴	2.000000
19	Turkey	2.000000
22	Montenegro	2.000000
23	North Makedonia	2.000000
17	China	1.000000
21	CEFTA ⁵	1.000000
24	Canada	1.000000
25	Israel	1.000000
26	Hong Kong	1.000000

Source: Compiled by the authors.

As one of the results of the study, we propose a variant of the typology of the integration strategies of the countries of the post-Soviet region. For a typology creation we need to com-

⁴ EFTA—European Free Trade Agreement.

⁵ CEFTA—Central European Free Trade Agreement.

pare several obtained parameters—the degree centrality of the country within the social graph (the complete graph, considering all free trade zones) and the number of free trade zones in the country, both inside and outside the region.

Table 3. Comparison of External and Internal FTAs for the Countries of the Region (Quantitative Indicators)

Country	Degree Centrality	FTA Inside the Region	FTA Outside the Region
Ukraine	18	11	7
Georgia	14	8	6
Moldova	13	9	4
Armenia	13	9	4
Russia	13	10	3
Kazakhstan	11	8	3
Kyrgyzstan	11	8	3
Belarus	10	7	3
Tajikistan	7	7	0
Azerbaijan	6	6	0
Turkmenistan	6	6	0
Uzbekistan	6	6	0

Source: Compiled by the authors.

Based on this comparison (Table 3), we can present the model on two scales— activity/passivity and centrifugal/centripetal (Fig. 3). The line between active and passive actors runs along line 10, above 10 represents an active position, below 10 is passive. In this situation, Belarus finds itself on the verge of an active and passive foreign policy position regarding the formation of an FTA. Regarding centripetalism, Armenia is in a borderline state. In this model, we still attribute it more to centripetal actors since the country is a member of the EAEU (Fig. 3). However, any agreement with external players may tip the scales toward centrifugal tendencies.

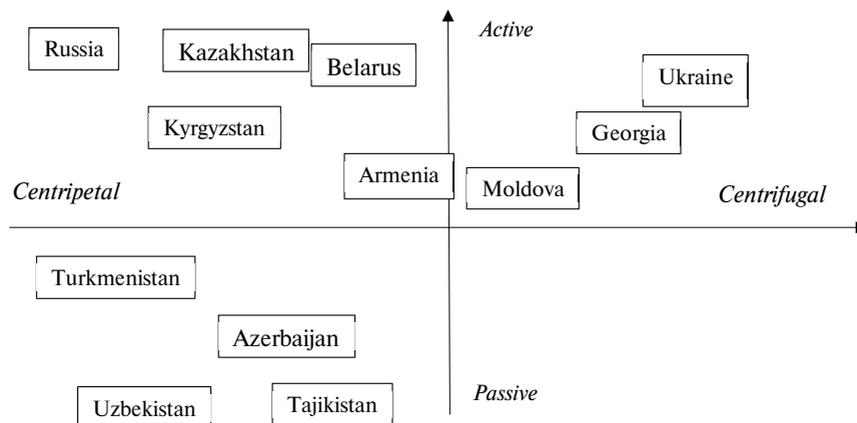


Fig. 3. Model of the Strategies of the States of the Post-Soviet Space in Relation to Economic Integration

Source: Compiled by the authors.

Integration strategies of states:

1. Active and centrifugal (Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova)
2. Active and centripetal (Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, and Armenia)
3. Passive and centripetal (Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan)
4. Passive and centrifugal (-)

The type of passive centrifugal states in this model turned out to be empty. In other words, the states of the region have not sought to develop trade integration outside the region before they have been able to develop cooperation within. This thesis also confirms the fact that countries with an active external position have many agreements within the region. Ukraine was quite active within the region (before the crisis), but recently it has become more active in the direction of cooperation with external players. A similar situation occurs with Armenia and Georgia.

The FTA model describes the situation after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The overwhelming majority of the analyzed FTAs are, in one way or another, bilateral free trade agreements between the republics of the former USSR, concluded at the initial stage of the creation of CIS. Even though, on 15 April 1994, the presidents of Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Ukraine signed an agreement on a free trade zone aimed at the abolition of tariff and non-tariff restrictions in mutual trade, a multilateral free trade regime was never formed. The regime fixed in bilateral agreements continued to operate between the CIS partners. According to the CIS Executive Committee [n.d.], in total, about 110 agreements on mutual trade between the CIS countries were concluded, which prevented full integration due to the different volume of agreements and obligations.

On 18 October 2011, the heads of government of eight CIS member states (Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, and Ukraine) signed a free trade agreement. On 31 May 2013, Uzbekistan acceded to the treaty by signing the Protocol on the Application of the Treaty on the CIS Free Trade Area dated 18 October 2011. Consultations on Azerbaijan's and Turkmenistan's accession to the treaty are ongoing, and a network of bilateral agreements is being applied pending their decision. To form closer integration, from 2001 to 2014 there was the Eurasian Economic Community, based on which, in accordance with the treaty of 29 May 2014, the Eurasian Economic Union was formed.

However, since the early 2000s, some CIS states have shown a tendency to conclude non-bloc free trade agreements. Thus, Georgia, having left CIS in 2009 but retaining the operation of bilateral free trade agreements with some CIS member states, by now has the largest network of free trade and integration agreements with such blocs and countries as the EU, EFTA, Turkey, China, Hong Kong, and acted, along with Ukraine and Uzbekistan, as one of the founders of the GUAM regional bloc. Since the early 2000s, Ukraine has also had a rich trade liberalization agenda with countries outside CIS: agreements on free trade in goods have been signed with Montenegro, north Macedonia, Israel, the EU, EFTA, Canada, and Turkey, and consultations are underway on trade liberalization with Serbia and Singapore. Moldova is negotiating a free trade area with China and has already signed free trade agreements with the EAEU countries, Turkey, and the UK. At the same time, Moldova is interested in economic integration and harmonization of its norms and rules with EU legislation, in connection with which, in 2014, it signed an agreement on economic integration with this bloc. Armenia has a similar agreement with the EU, signed before joining the EAEU in 2015.

At the same time, a number of CIS/EAEU states are actively cooperating with new regional associations, for example, with the Organization of Turkic States and the China-Central Asia Forum, and continue to interact within the framework of the Eastern Partnership with the EU, which is not based on a free trade regime, but on infrastructural and economic projects being

implemented on their sites, which may eventually lead to the formation of new regional zones. This is especially true for those countries that, for some reason, have not yet joined the Eurasian Economic Union, because one of its key rules is a coordinated foreign trade policy with third countries. Thus, the described model does not consider the rapidly changing situation and requires verification using additional data. To clarify the conclusions based on the FTA, we used value chains (TOP-5 partners of the post-Soviet countries in different periods—1995, 2013, and 2020), as well as investment data.

Centrality Indicators for the Countries of the Region Based on Value Chains

To build models based on value chains, we took data for three control years—1995, 2013, and 2020—and built models based on these data according to a single principle, comparing the dynamics of centrality indicators for the states of the post-Soviet space. Note that in this case we have built a weighted graph, that is, connections between vertices (countries) have different intensities, which affects the centrality indicators. The connection weight parameters are set as a percentage indicator of what share in the total flow of value chains is occupied by a particular country. Also, the graph is directed—we considered the factor of movement of goods from one country to another. Accordingly, if a two-way relationship is formed between countries (value chains go both ways), we classified the relationship as strong and analyzed it further.

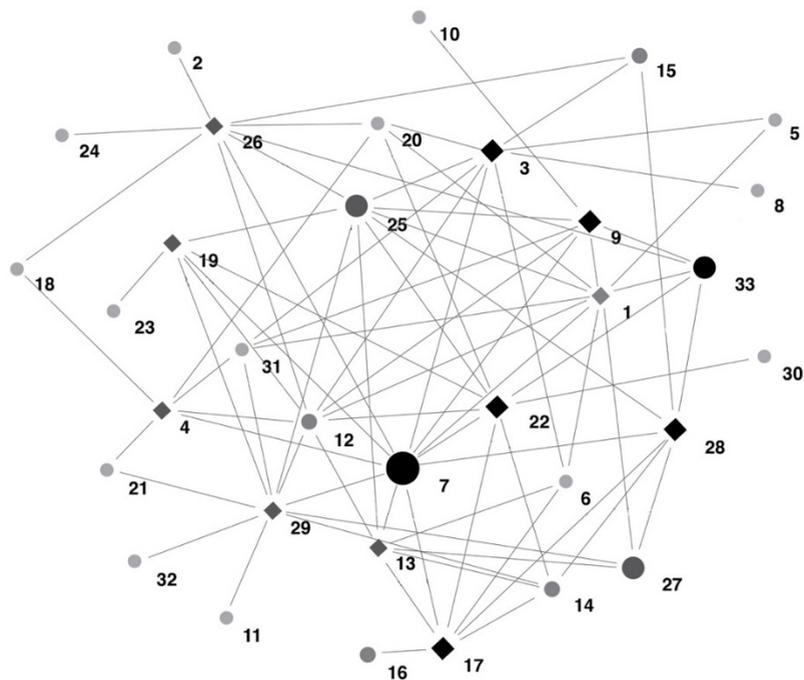


Fig. 4. Model of Links in the Region of the Post-Soviet Space Based on Value Chains (1995)⁶

Source: [IAP, n.d.].

⁶ 1—Azerbaijan, 2—Algeria, 3—Armenia, 4—Belarus, 5—Belgium, 6—Great Britain, 7—Germany, 8—Greece, 9—Georgia, 10—Israel, 11—India, 12—Italy, 13—Kazakhstan, 14—China, 15—Korea, 16—Cuba, 17—Kyrgyzstan, 18—Lithuania, 19—Moldova, 20—Netherlands, 21—Poland, 22—Russia, 23—Romania, 24—Slovakia, 25—U.S., 26—Tajikistan, 27—Turkey, 28—Uzbekistan, 29—Ukraine, 30—Finland, 31—France, 32—Czech Republic, 33—Japan.

In 1995, the most powerful role in building value chains with the countries of the post-Soviet region was held by Germany. Russia and China occupied a much less significant place. The United States also had a high centrality indicator within this model. In terms of centrality, Russia was outperformed by such countries as Armenia, Georgia, and Uzbekistan (Table 4).

Table 4. Indicators of Centrality in the Social Graph: Models of Value Chains of the States of the Post-Soviet Space (1995)

Node	Label	DC
7	Germany	171.000000
25	U.S.	99.000000
28	Uzbekistan	97.000000
3	Armenia	96.000000
9	Georgia	87.000000
22	Russia	87.000000
17	Kyrgyzstan	83.000000
27	Turkey	75.000000
29	Ukraine	66.000000
13	Kazakhstan	64.000000
26	Tajikistan	64.000000
19	Moldova	62.000000
4	Belarus	60.000000
1	Azerbaijan	45.000000
12	Italy	45.000000

Source: Compiled by the authors.

At the beginning of the section, we noted that it is also important to pay attention to the configuration of strong (two-way ties), so we looked at the configuration of such ties in 1995 (Fig. 5).

In 1995, the region did not form a single network based on strong (mutual) ties. Azerbaijan and Armenia dropped out of the connected network, while Germany, Turkey, Italy, and the United States became significant links. Russia had strong bilateral ties in 1995 with Moldova and Kyrgyzstan.

In 2013, Russia began to play a more significant role in value chains in the region (Fig. 6).

China also occupied an important place, while Germany faded into the background. Of the countries in the region, high indicators of centrality (that is, a large number of partners in value chains) were shown by Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan (Table 5).

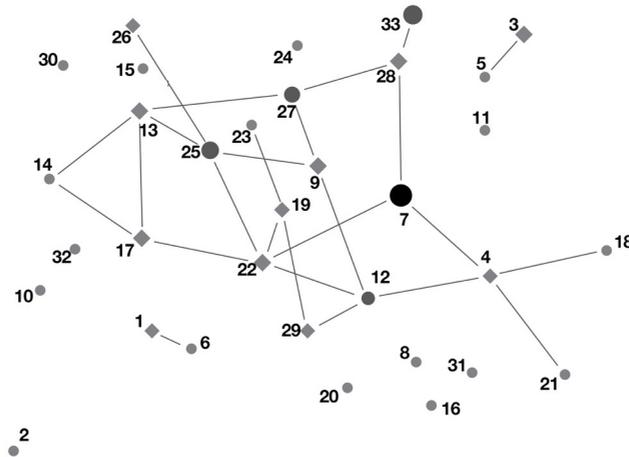


Fig. 5. Model of Links in the Region of the Post-Soviet Space Based on Value Chains (1995): Strong Bilateral Ties⁷

Source: [IAP, n.d.].

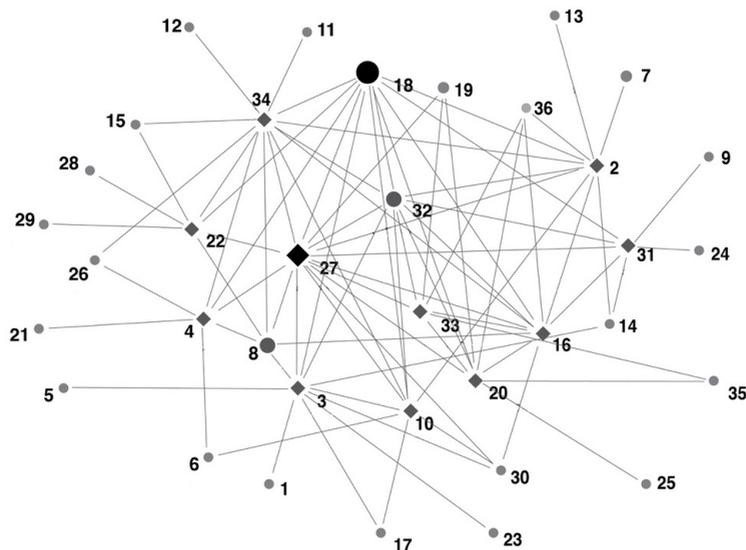


Fig. 6. Model of Links in the Region of the Post-Soviet Space Based on Value Chains (2013)⁸

Source: [IAP, n.d.].

⁷ 1—Azerbaijan, 2—Algeria, 3—Armenia, 4—Belarus, 5—Belgium, 6—Great Britain, 7—Germany, 8—Greece, 9—Georgia, 10—Israel, 11—India, 12—Italy, 13—Kazakhstan, 14—China, 15—Korea, 16—Cuba, 17—Kyrgyzstan, 18—Lithuania, 19—Moldova, 20—Netherlands, 21—Poland, 22—Russia, 23—Romania, 24—Slovakia, 25—U.S., 26—Tajikistan, 27—Turkey, 28—Uzbekistan, 29—Ukraine, 30—Finland, 31—France, 32—Czech Republic, 33—Japan.

⁸ 1—Austria, 2—Azerbaijan, 3—Armenia, 4—Belarus, 5—Belgium, 6—Brazil, 7—Great Britain, 8—Germany, 9—Greece, 10—Georgia, 11—Egypt, 12—India, 13—Iraq, 14—Iran, 15—Italy, 16—Kazakhstan, 17—Canada, 18—China, 19—Korea, 20—Kyrgyzstan, 21—Lithuania, 22—Moldova, 23—Netherlands, 24—Norway, 25—UAE, 26—Poland, 27—Russia, 28—Romania, 29—Serbia, 30—U.S., 31—Tajikistan, 32—Turkey, 33—Uzbekistan, 34—Ukraine, 35—France, 36—Switzerland.

Table 5. Indicators of Centrality in the Social Graph: Models of Value Chains of the States of the Post-Soviet Space (2013)

Node	Label	DC
27	Russia	233.000000
18	China	208.000000
34	Ukraine	98.000000
16	Kazakhstan	92.000000
31	Tajikistan	91.000000
20	Kyrgyzstan	84.000000
33	Uzbekistan	79.000000
22	Moldova	76.000000
3	Armenia	75.000000
2	Azerbaijan	74.000000
32	Turkey	72.000000
4	Belarus	70.000000
10	Georgia	59.000000
8	Germany	49.000000
19	Korea	28.000000
26	Poland	17.000000
7	Great Britain	16.000000
14	Iran	16.000000
28	Romania	13.000000
1	Austria	8.000000
6	Brasilia	6.000000
30	U.S.	3.000000

Source: Compiled by the authors.

If we consider the 2013 model with only strong ties (Fig. 7), we see that the picture changed compared to 1995.

From the point of view of strong ties, the post-Soviet space became more connected, only Armenia fell out. Russia became an important source and centre of attraction for trade chains. China also began to play a significant role, Turkey retained its position, and Germany and Italy No longer formed strong bilateral ties with the countries of the region.

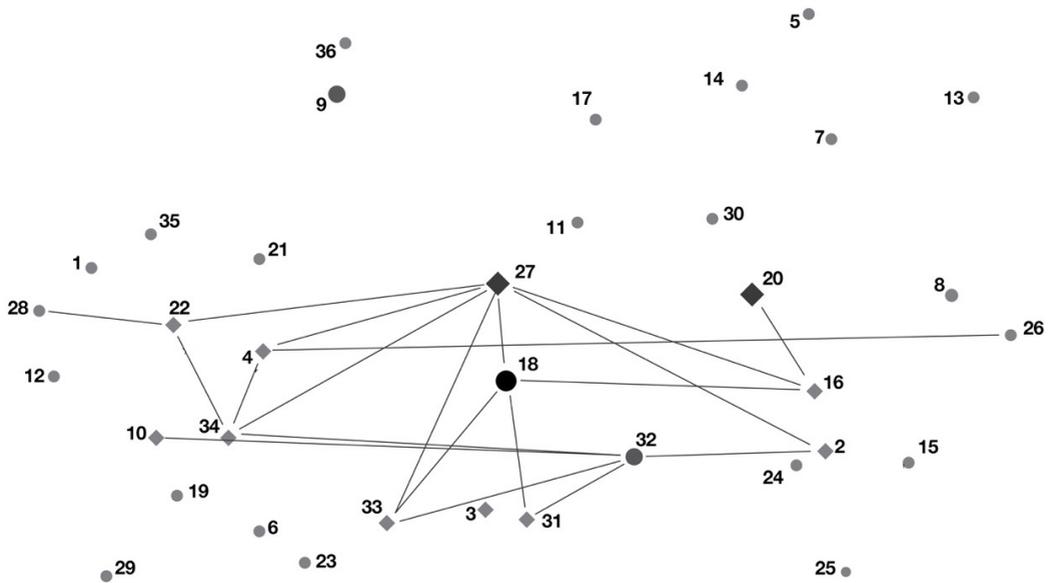


Fig. 7. Linkage Model in the Post-Soviet Region Based on Value Chains (2013): Strong Bilateral Ties⁹

Source: [IAP, n.d.].

By 2020, we see how Russia and China firmly occupied their central positions within the model of value chains in the post-Soviet space. European countries and the U.S. still retained their positions, but they were not as significant as in 1995 (Table 6).

Table 6. Indicators of Centrality in the Social Graph: Models of Value Chains of the States of the Post-Soviet Space (2020)

Node	Label	DC
20	Russia	280.000000
13	China	199.000000
12	Kazakhstan	107.000000
25	Uzbekistan	105.000000
14	Kyrgyzstan	97.000000
23	Tajikistan	89.000000
1	Azerbaijan	77.000000
2	Armenia	77.000000
4	Belarus	73.000000
24	Turkey	69.000000

⁹ 1—Austria, 2—Azerbaijan, 3—Armenia, 4—Belarus, 5—Belgium, 6—Brazil, 7—Great Britain, 8—Germany, 9—Greece, 10—Georgia, 11—Egypt, 12—India, 13—Iraq, 14—Iran, 15—Italy, 16—Kazakhstan, 17—Canada, 18—China, 19—Korea, 20—Kyrgyzstan, 21—Lithuania, 22—Moldova, 23—Netherlands, 24—Norway, 25—UAE, 26—Poland, 27—Russia, 28—Romania, 29—Serbia, 30—U.S., 31—Tajikistan, 32—Turkey, 33—Uzbekistan, 34—Ukraine, 35—France, 36—Switzerland.

The model of strong bilateral ties in 2020 shows that the region is finally becoming connected—all countries in the region are directly or through intermediaries connected by strong bilateral ties. And here China, Turkey, and Germany play an important role.

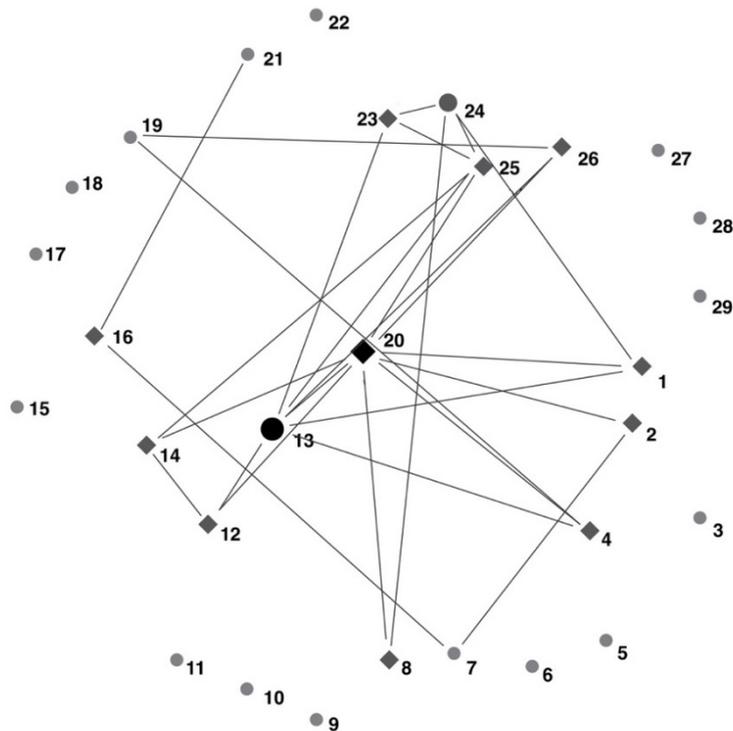


Fig. 9. Model of Links in the Post-Soviet Region Based on Value Chains (2020): Strong Bilateral Ties¹¹

Source: [IAP, n.d.].

Thus, three time slices—1995, 2013, and 2020—show us the evolution of economic relations between the countries of the region, inside and outside. In 1995, the region was quite fragmented in terms of the formation of value chains. Relations with Germany and Italy played the main role in the region. The role of Russia and China was insignificant. Starting in 2013, the situation began to change; Russia and China gradually increased their positions and were able to maintain centrality until 2020.

Centrality Indicators for Countries in the Region Based on Foreign Direct Investment Data

Investment chains also give us the opportunity to test the model for its correlation with real economic contacts that are being built in the post-Soviet space.

¹¹ 1—Azerbaijan, 2—Armenia, 3—Afghanistan, 4—Belarus, 5—Belgium, 6—Great Britain, 7—Germany, 8—Georgia, 9—India, 10—Iran, 11—Italy, 12—Kazakhstan, 13—China, 14—Kyrgyzstan, 15—Lithuania, 16—Moldova, 17—Netherlands, 18—UAE, 19—Poland, 20—Russia, 21—Romania, 22—U.S., 23—Tajikistan, 24—Turkey, 25—Uzbekistan, 26—Ukraine, 27—Czech Republic, 28—Switzerland, 29—Korea.

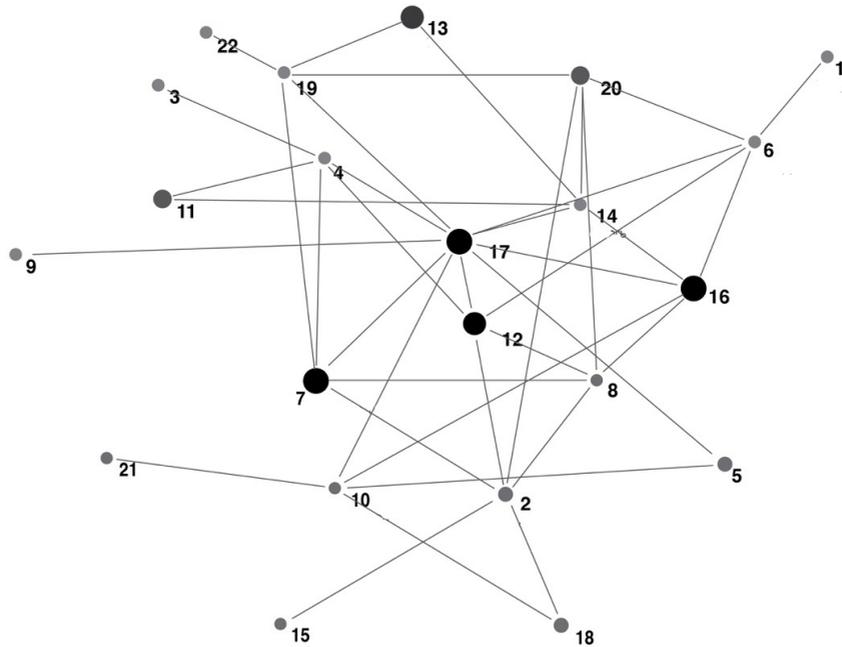


Fig. 10. Model of Connections in the Post-Soviet Region Based on Data on Investment Flows (2021)¹²

Source: [EEC, n.d.].

Russia was both an active donor of investments (Fig. 10), mainly to the countries of the post-Soviet space and accepted investments from third countries (Great Britain, the Netherlands, Cyprus, and Bermuda). In terms of centrality indicators, Russia was the leader in terms of investment in the region in 2021 (Table 7).

Table 7. Indicators of Centrality in the Social Graph: Models of Investment Flows of the States of the Post-Soviet Space (2021)

Node	Label	DC
17	Russian	89.000000
12	Cyprus	75.000000
7	Great Britain	73.000000
13	China	70.000000
16	Netherland	63.000000
11	Canada	43.000000
20	Turkey	41.000000
18	U.S.	33.000000
2	Azerbaijan	20.000000

¹² 1—Austria, 2—Azerbaijan, 3—Argentina, 4—Armenia, 5—Bermuda, 6—Belarus, 7—Great Britain, 8—Georgia, 9—Ireland, 10—Kazakhstan, 11—Canada, 12—Cyprus, 13—China, 14—Kyrgyzstan, 15—Moldova, 16—Netherlands, 17—Russia, 18—U.S., 19—Tajikistan, 20—Turkey, 21—France, 22—Switzerland.

Node	Label	DC
5	Bermuda	16.000000
15	Malaysia	9.000000
21	France	8.000000
9	Ireland	6.000000
3	Argentina	5.000000
1	Austria	4.000000
22	Switzerland	4.000000

Source: Compiled by the authors.

It is significant that Cyprus and the UK also acted as significant sources of investment for the countries of the post-Soviet space, which is likely due to the way Russian large capital is distributed (however, this case is not the subject of our consideration in this article).

Conclusion

In this article, we described the static model for the distribution of strategies of the states of the post-Soviet space regarding regional economic integration. The model was built on the analysis of interrelations within the system of agreements on free trade zones. It was further tested against data on value chains and foreign direct investment. The distribution of strategies is as follows: active and centrifugal (Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova); active and centripetal (Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, and Armenia); passive and centripetal (Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan); passive and centrifugal.

Several results are observed in identifying the four basic trends. First, the strategy of building up international economic contacts for the countries of the post-Soviet space is focused on Eurasia. At the same time, it is impossible to state a clear division of countries into western and eastern orientations.

The countries with an active strategy include Ukraine and Russia. However, if Russia is focused on closer intra-bloc integration, then Ukraine is oriented toward non-bloc integration with a decrease in the importance of intra-bloc economic ties. An active and centripetal position is typical for Armenia and Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Belarus (EAEU states). Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan are of the greatest prospective interest in the field of regional integration. The international economic strategy of these countries is at the stage of formation and now it is important to develop the closest possible cooperation with these countries.

Second, the most active external centres interested in integration with the countries of the post-Soviet region include the EU, China, and Turkey. At the same time, the EU, along with the “regulated” free trade regime, promotes economic integration by implementing such countries with their own rules and state regulations. China aims to promote its infrastructure projects and create a favourable trade regime for their development. The role of Turkey in the liberalization of the terms of trade with the countries of the post-Soviet space has not yet been fully revealed: this country is very reservedly involved in both industrial cooperation and investment development in the countries of the former USSR. It is possible that the implementation of the free trade agreements concluded by Turkey with Georgia and Ukraine in the early 2020s will contribute to changing this situation.

And, finally, since 2013, Russia and China have become the main players in the field of value chains and investments in the development of the economies of countries. Russia remains a key partner in industrial cooperation and a centre of investment for the countries of the post-Soviet region. This indicates that most free trade agreements with countries outside CIS have not had the effect of deepening cooperation chains with countries outside the post-Soviet space. This leads to the conclusion that foreign economic integration strategies are mainly political in nature and do not correlate with the economic realities reflected in investment flows and value chains.

To evaluate some distant time perspective and make a forecast up to 2025–30, we can assume that the most active competition will unfold for the attention of states that show a passive centripetal strategy (Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan). In particular, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan are attractive to Turkey, especially since the latter is actively involved in value chains and investment flows in the post-Soviet space. China is also active in the Central Asian region, so it has a chance to increase its influence through chains and investments.

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How Kazakhstani Multivector Foreign Policy Works: Analysis of Its Voting in UNGA¹

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Abstract

The concept of multivectorism underlies the foreign policy strategy of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Kazakhstani foreign policy within international organizations and integrational institutions is also carried out within the framework of multivectorism. However, the implementation of that foreign policy within the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) has not yet been studied. To study the concept of multivectorism, the author analyzes the voting cohesion in the UNGA of Kazakhstan, Russia, China, the U.S., Turkey, and Germany from 2007–22. For this purpose, the author also studies the behaviour of Kazakhstan in cases of opposite voting of these countries. Among other things, this article analyzes the voting cohesion of Kazakhstan and other countries under study on certain topics (disarmament, decolonization, human rights, development issues, armed conflicts, and so on), as well as voting on key resolutions relating to armed conflicts involving the Russian Federation. As a result of quantitative and qualitative analysis of more than 1,300 resolutions, the author concludes that the main vector of Kazakhstani foreign policy is China, not Russia, which is formally a key ally of Kazakhstan. The greatest coincidence of Kazakhstan's foreign policy positions is found with China (the lesser is found with Russia, Turkey, and Germany, and minimally with the United States). Moreover, in the case of the opposite voting of China and the other three countries under consideration, the votes of Kazakhstan coincided more often with the Chinese. The author argues that Kazakhstan avoids explicit support for the Russian Federation in voting on resolutions related to armed conflicts involving Russia. This is also manifested in the voting of the Republic of Kazakhstan on resolutions related to the war in Ukraine. However, the reasons behind the high level of voting cohesion between China and Kazakhstan in the UNGA require further research.

Keywords: Kazakhstan, Russia, U.S., China, Germany, Turkey, UNGA, voting, multi-vector foreign policy

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In May 1992, Nursultan Nazarbaev gave definition to the foundation of Kazakhstan's foreign policy programme in his article, "The Strategy of the Formation and Development of Kazakhstan as a Sovereign State." The security of this new Kazakhstan was the primary declared goal of its foreign policy, requiring, amongst other things, strategic partnerships with its neighbours, Russia and the People's Republic of China (PRC), as well as tight cooperation with the states of Central Asia, Turkey, Pakistan, and India [Nazarbaev, 1922]. This foreign policy imperative demanded an orientation toward several centres of power, an approach later described as "multivectorism."

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The Republic of Kazakhstan's recent request to the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CTSO) for assistance in regulating its internal crisis and the beginning of the Russian Federation's Special Military Operation (SMO) in Ukraine raise questions about the future of multivectorism as the concept guiding Kazakhstan's foreign policy. This makes it even more important to understand how said concept has historically manifested.

Despite Kazakhstan's de facto adherence to a policy of multivectorism throughout the entirety of its existence as a sovereign state, multivectorism was first officially announced as a concept in 2007 in the Address of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the People of Kazakhstan [President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2007]. Later, multivectorism was again defined as the guiding principle of Kazakhstani foreign policy in Concepts of the Republic of Kazakhstan's Foreign Policy from 2014 to 2020 [Ibid., 2014; 2020]. The foreign policy officially carried out by the Republic of Kazakhstan is described as a "diplomatic strategy based on building relationships with the international community as a whole and with neighbouring countries in particular on a pragmatic and balanced basis" [Ibid., 2020]. In his official article in 2021, Kassym-Jomart Tokaev also confirmed Kazakhstan's dedication to multivectorism in foreign policy as a necessary condition for the maintenance of the country's independence [Kazhastanskaya Pravda, 2021]. Overall, even after its change in government, the country continues to follow this policy, at least declaratively.

To a certain extent, multivectorism is characteristic of the foreign policy of many post-Soviet countries. For example, a similar policy in Armenia is called "complimentarism," and under Islam Karimov, Uzbekistan also declared its dedication to a multi-vectored foreign policy [Minasyan, 2012, p. 268; Nomerovchenko, Kim, Kang, 2018, p. 401]. Multivectorism can also be understood as a state's readiness to cooperate "with everyone"—that is, with several, often conflicting, centres of power in a given region. Minsk, for example, officially supports this interpretation of multivectorism.

According to M. Hanks, multi-vectored foreign policy is one in which relationships with other countries are built on a pragmatic rather than ideological basis [2009, p. 259]. This interpretation of multi-vectored politics makes it synonymous to the foreign policy of a state in general (in a neorealist context). However, scholar E. Gnedina asserted that the basis of a policy of multivectorism is "neither balancing nor bandwagoning" and that it is instead a special manner in which post-Soviet elites maximize their own benefit in the short-term by taking advantage of conflicts and contradictions between large states [2015]. Such an approach raises the question about the similarities between multivectorism and a policy of hedging, which, as defined by C. Kuik, uses strategies located along the spectrum between bandwagoning and balancing in order to maintain the safety of a state and maximize the profits of its ruling elite [2008, p. 163].

Despite the lack of political manoeuvrability that small and medium-sized states face when confronted with large-scale actors in various regions, the term multivectorism is primarily used to refer to states in the post-Soviet space. In addition, the particular reasons for a multi-vectored foreign policy may vary state by state. Thus, for example, one of the reasons that the Republic of Kazakhstan embraced multivectorism in its foreign policy might have been the need to legitimize its statehood in both the eyes of Russians and Kazakhs [Cummings, 2003, p. 150]. Nevertheless, for all post-Soviet states, multivectorism acts as a means to assert one's own sovereignty vis-à-vis Russia in one way or another.

The concept of multivectorism in the Republic of Kazakhstan's foreign policy is a relatively well-studied area. When the term was first introduced, attention was given to its introduction and the reasons behind it [Bastas, 2013; Kassen, 2018]. Practical applications of multivectorism in terms of balancing between China and Russia have been studied [Diyarbakirlioglu, Yigit, 2014], as have the applications of multi-vectored policies in the politics surrounding the economy and energy [Nurgaliyeva, 2016]. The works of C. Sullivan and M. Clarke deserve par-

ticular attention in this regard. They defined multivectorism as policies defending a sovereign Kazakhstan from the domination of the Russian Federation and pointed out the unpredictable future prospects of such policies due to the continuing opposition between Russia and the West [Clarke, 2015; Sullivan, 2019]. In this context, multi-vectored politics is, at its heart, a policy of balancing against Russia.

Nevertheless, Kazakhstan's multi-vectored approach to the primary questions of international politics has not yet been well-studied. Therefore, it is important to establish the cohesion between the foreign policy of Kazakhstan and that of several other key powers. To begin, the extent to which Kazakhstan's positions are in conformity with those of the U.S., Russia, China, Turkey, and the European Union (EU)—the main foreign actors in Central Asia—must be established.

This examination was carried out based on an analysis of voting habits in resolutions in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). E. Voeten, one of the leading modern scholars of country voting patterns in the UNGA, noted that the results of such an analysis can show “to which degree countries share foreign policy interests or preferences” [2013, p. 13]. In turn, Russian scholar D. Khachatryan used a qualitative analysis of UNGA voting to draw conclusions about the type of relationships (“allied” and “privileged”) and voting cohesion in the UNGA between Armenia and Russia/France [Khachatryan, 2017].

Voting patterns are examined for a country both as a sovereign actor and as a member of an alliance in order to determine the true existence and extent of foreign policy cohesion [Lijphart, 1963, pp. 902–17]. Moreover, the extent to which countries within a block align with the foreign policy aims of large individual actors can be determined based on their UNGA resolution voting. For example, on the basis of an analysis of the voting of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries compared to the voting practices of Japan, China, and the U.S., one can assert that these countries' foreign policies are closer to those of China than to those of Japan or the U.S. [Burmester, Jankowski, 2014].

The majority of works dedicated to an analysis of Kazakhstan's voting in the UNGA look at the Republic of Kazakhstan in the context of Central Asia or the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) as a region. For example, the alignment between Kazakhstan's foreign policy and the foreign policy of other CIS countries on the basis of their UNGA voting cohesion has been studied several times [Degterev et al., 2018; Hansen, 2015; Kurylev et al., 2018]. In his article entitled “May We Have a Say? Central Asian States in the UN General Assembly,” F. Costa-Buranelli also studied the results of the Republic of Kazakhstan's voting—only in the context of the cohesion of its foreign policies with those of the other countries of Central Asia and Russia. He drew the conclusion that Central Asian countries have more cohesion amongst themselves than with the Russian Federation [2014].

G. Kozlov's study of Kazakhstan's and the United States' votes in the UNGA deserves separate attention as one of few works that is dedicated to establishing the alignment between Kazakhstan's positions and those of a large-scale international actor [Kozlov, 2020]. The author qualitatively analyzed the results of Kazakhstani and American voting in UNGA resolutions and concluded that there is a significant difference between the two countries' positions (and a greater cohesion of positions between Kazakhstan and Russian) [Ibid., p. 584].

Nevertheless, Kazakhstan's voting cohesion with China, Turkey, and Germany (as one of the leading EU countries that is most active in the Central Asian region) has not yet been studied. Additionally, the voting patterns shared between Kazakhstan and Russia have only been studied in general terms. In order to understand the politics of multivectorism, we must undertake a holistic examination of Kazakhstan's voting in the UNGA compared with that of other key regional actors: Russia, the EU, the U.S., China, and Turkey.

It is also important to study UNGA cohesion when considering the “shared foreign policy” that Russia and Kazakhstan formally announced in the fourth article of the Treaty on Good-Neighborliness and Alliance in the XXI Century [Dogovor, 2013]. Kazakhstan has no such agreements about a shared foreign policy with the other states in question. Therefore, to understand the reality of this treaty, one must study the position the Republic of Kazakhstan has taken in situations when Russia’s votes have been in opposition to those of the other states in question.

This study will thus examine Kazakhstan’s voting cohesion in UNGA resolutions with five main countries: Russia, the U.S., the PRC, Turkey, and Germany. Only resolutions voted on during sessions of the General Assembly from 2007 through 2022 were taken into account, from the 63rd to 77th sessions (1,320 resolutions in total). The year 2007 was chosen as a chronological boundary as it was the year in which the term “multivectorism” was introduced into official discourse, and also the second launch of the Eurasian integration project and the signing of the Customs Alliance. Using 2022 as a chronological boundary allows for this study to include UNGA voting with regard to the Russian SMO in Ukraine. Within these chronological boundaries, the periods 2007–13 and 2014–22 will be analyzed separately in order to follow the evolution of the Republic of Kazakhstan’s voting patterns before and after the beginning of the active phase of confrontation between Russia and the West. Any change in Kazakhstan’s voting patterns before or after the reincorporation of Crimea into the Russian Federation would be worthy of note. The growing antagonism between Russia and the United States/Germany could additionally have led to a decrease in Kazakhstan’s support for the Russian position in UNGA voting.

All the following data for analysis of voting results were taken from the Digital Library of the United Nations [n.d.]. In the following analysis of resolutions, a strict approach was used for calculating voting cohesion: only situations where there was a complete alignment of positions (four positions are possible: “yes”, “no”, “abstained”, and “did not participate in voting”) were counted, and their total was then divided by the total number of resolutions over the time period and multiplied by 100 in order to obtain a number in terms of percentage. The result of this calculation is the voting cohesion percentage between two countries. Moreover, votes were only considered to oppose one another when two countries voted completely opposite one another (only the positions “yes” and “no” were counted).

Analysis of Voting on UNGA Resolutions

The table below shows the results of an analysis of the voting of Kazakhstan, Russia, the U.S., China, Turkey, and Germany at the UN General Assembly in terms of voting cohesion from 2007–13 on relevant topics. It includes the total number of resolutions that were voted on and a description of the topics in question.

Using the given table, the following conclusions may be drawn:

- the voting cohesion between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation is fairly high, oscillating between 64% and 82%, but has significantly decreased over the time period in question;
- despite the Russian Federation’s officially declared role as the Republic of Kazakhstan’s main foreign policy ally, and despite the existence of an official shared foreign policy, Kazakhstan’s votes are more often in alignment with the Chinese position (from 76% to 89% of the time) than with the Russian position, and this cohesion with China has not decreased over the time period in question;

- Kazakhstan often votes the same as Germany (from 55% to 68% of the time) and in the vast majority of cases votes differently from the United States—their voting cohesion varies from 9% to 25%;
- over the course of the entire period in question, there is a high, stable level of voting cohesion between Kazakhstan and Turkey—by the end of this time period, their overall level of cohesion is similar to voting cohesion between Kazakhstan and Russia.

Table 1. Kazakhstan's Voting Cohesion With Russia, the U.S., China, Germany, and Turkey in UN General Assembly Resolutions, 2007–13 (%)

Year	Number of Resolutions	RUS, %	U.S., %	PCR, %	GER, %	TUR, %	Main Resolution Topics
2007	79	82	9	84	68	72	Palestine Nuclear proliferation Arms sales Sanctions
2008	78	78	12	82	65	71	Palestine Nuclear proliferation Arms sales Human rights in Syria
2009	68	78	16	87	59	65	Palestine Nuclear proliferation Arms sales Human rights in North Korea Refugees from Abkhazia and Ossetia
2010	72	75	17	83	60	72	Palestine Nuclear proliferation Arms sales Human rights in North Korea Refugees from Abkhazia and Ossetia International trade
2011	69	74	25	86	62	71	Palestine Nuclear proliferation Arms sales Human rights in Myanmar
2012	74	69	16%	76	57	69	Palestine Arms sales Refugees from Abkhazia and Ossetia
2013	64	64	17	83	55	64	Palestine Ending the embargo of Cuba Nuclear proliferation and acquisition

Source: Author's calculations based on data from the UN [n.d.].

Overall, these voting patterns are to be expected considering the larger roles played by China and Russia (when compared to the U.S. and Germany) in Kazakhstan's foreign policy. Voting cohesion with Turkey is of interest as Turkey is trying to deepen its relationship with Kazakhstan and is already at the same level of the voting cohesion with Kazakhstan as Russia, officially declared to be Kazakhstan's key ally. Nevertheless, that the voting cohesion between the Republic of Kazakhstan and China is higher than that with Russia seems surprising. Kazakh-

stan does practice balancing against Russia by leaning against China, but this balancing takes place primarily in the economic sphere [Nurgaliyeva, 2016, p. 93]. Moreover, Kazakhstan and Russia are part of a typical asymmetrical military and political alliance (CTSO), within which symbolic gestures from the lesser power in support of the foreign policy of the bigger country are traditionally of great importance [Istomin, Baykov, 2019, p. 39].

Thus, it follows that one should only consider the votes where Russia's position was directly opposed to one of those other four countries (for example, one country for and the other against a given resolution), as shown below:

Table 2. Cases in Which Kazakhstan Supported the Russian Position When Russia Was Voting in Opposition to a Different Country Under Examination, 2007–13 (%)

	Supported Russia, %	Total Cases
Russia—U.S.	91	293
Russia—China	31	13
Russia—Germany	67	88
Russia—Turkey	67	86

Source: Author's calculations based on data from the UN [n.d.].

From this table, it is apparent that in the vast majority of votes where Russia and the United States voted in opposition to one another, Kazakhstan supported Russia. In analogous situations with Germany and Turkey, it supported Russia two thirds of the time. However, when China was opposed to Russia, Kazakhstan supported Russia only 31% of the time (though the number of votes in question is too small to draw convincingly strong conclusions).

For further analysis, one must examine the topics in question where Kazakhstan chose for or against supporting the Russian position when it was in opposition to those of the PRC, the U.S., Turkey, or Germany.

The Republic of Kazakhstan voted in support of the Russian Federation in situations where Russia and the U.S. opposed one another the vast majority of the time. However, despite that, Kazakhstan supported the U.S. and Turkey when voting on a resolution about the situation in Syria in 2012 (resolution 67/183), even though the Russian Federation voted against it. Additionally, Kazakhstan voted for resolutions regarding human rights in North Korea and Myanmar (for example, resolutions 64/238 and 65/225) between 2007 and 2013.

Furthermore, in some of the cases where Russia and the U.S. voted opposed to one another, Kazakhstan abstained from voting. This was the case with resolutions initiated by western countries about the situation with refugees from Abkhazia and South Ossetia (64/296 and 66/283), and, beginning in 2013, with resolutions regarding the Syrian conflict. Here one must note that once the Syrian question became important to both the Russian Federation and the United States, Kazakhstan switched its tactic of voting "for" to "abstained." This switch is a reflection of its multi-vectored politics, where Kazakhstan tries to maintain neutrality in questions dividing foreign centres of power.

In cases where Germany and Russia were in opposition, Kazakhstan chose not to lend Russia its support in one third of cases. In addition to the resolutions already mentioned—resolutions regarding the conflicts in Georgia and Syria (in which Germany and the United States often voted the same way)—Kazakhstan also supported the German position in opposition to Russia in support of resolutions about nuclear non-proliferation (67/55 and 68/39).

When the positions of the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China were opposed, Kazakhstan lent its vote more frequently to China (though there were only 13 total cases where China and Russia thus diverged in the period under study). Kazakhstan's votes aligned with the Chinese position in questions of nuclear non-proliferation (67/46), and with the Russian position in questions of the repeal of the death penalty (65/206). Kazakhstan voted in cohesion with Turkey in resolutions regarding North Korea, Myanmar, and nuclear non-proliferation.

It should be noted that from 2007 to 2013, Kazakhstan voted in opposition to all of the above—Russia, China, the U.S., Turkey and Germany—more than 20 times, primarily in questions of nuclear security. Kazakhstan supported resolutions aimed at restricting the proliferation and use of nuclear weapons, such as 65/60, 66/58, and 67/45. This is to be expected, as Kazakhstan has, since independence, positioned itself as a country fighting for nuclear disarmament [Kazinform, 2020]. Among other things, such positioning is necessary to symbolically support its sovereignty as a relatively young state.

Overall, during this time period and among these five countries, Kazakhstan shared the highest voting cohesion with China. In addition, Kazakhstan's voting cohesion with Russia and Germany decreased significantly across this time period—by 18% and 13% respectively—while maintaining a low level of voting cohesion with the United States. Kazakhstan's voting cohesion with Turkey remained at a stable, high level, a level that by the end of the time period was comparable with Kazakhstan's voting cohesion with Russia. Moreover, Kazakhstan abstained from voting on key resolutions for Russia such as those about the conflict in Abkhazia and South Ossetia and voted in complete opposition to the Russian position on questions of nuclear disarmament and human rights in North Korea and Myanmar.

Table 3. Kazakhstan's Voting Cohesion With Russia, the U.S., China, Germany, and Turkey in UN General Assembly Resolutions, 2014–22 (%)

Year	Resolution Count	UR, %	U.S., %	PRC, %	GER, %	TUR, %	Main Resolution Topics
2014	80	64	21	81	59	66	Palestine Nuclear proliferation The Ukrainian conflict Human rights in Syria
2015	78	62	19	78	47	56	Palestine Nuclear proliferation Sanctions against Cuba Human rights in Iran
2016	81	64	23	74	57	62	Palestine Nuclear proliferation Human rights in Syria Refugees from Abkhazia and Ossetia
2017	94	69	15	82	56	60	Palestine Nuclear proliferation Human rights in Syria Human rights in Iran International trade

Year	Resolution Count	UR, %	U.S., %	PRC, %	GER, %	TUR, %	Main Resolution Topics
2018	107	65	13	78	61	64	Palestine Nuclear proliferation The Ukrainian conflict Human rights in Syria
2019	100	65	14	79	50	60	Palestine Nuclear proliferation State cooperation in space and in the cyber-sphere The international financial system
2020	100	68	15	78	57	67	The coronavirus pandemic The conflict in Ukraine The conflict in Syria
2021	86	62	21	76	52	55	Ecology and sustainable development The conflict in Ukraine The conflict in Syria
2022	90	52	22	69	42	53	The special military operation in Ukraine Ecology and sustainable development Disarmament

Source: Author's calculations based on data from the UN [n.d.].

In examining voting on UNGA resolutions from 2014–22, the Republic of Kazakhstan voted in agreement with the Russian Federation in 62–9% of cases, except in 2022. In 2022, this percentage fell to 52%. The same year also showed a decline in voting cohesion with Germany and China. These simultaneous declines were caused by the increased frequency with which Kazakhstan abstained from voting in that year. Nevertheless, Kazakhstan's voting cohesion with China remained higher than its cohesion with the Russian Federation, varying over the time period around 69–82%. Overall, Kazakhstan shared a stable, high voting cohesion with Turkey in the range of 53–67%, and a stable, low level of voting cohesion with the U.S.: 14–23%.

Table 4. Cases in Which Kazakhstan Supported the Russian Position When Russia Was Voting in Opposition to a Different Country Under Examination, 2014–22 (%)

	Supported Russia, %	Total Cases
Russia—U.S.	82	474
Russia—China	15	53
Russia—Germany	56	198
Russia—Turkey	50	149

Source: Author's calculations based on data from the UN [n.d.].

In votes where Russia's position was diametrically opposed to the position of the U.S., China, Turkey, or Germany, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- in the vast majority of cases in which Russia and the U.S. voted in opposition to one another, Kazakhstan continued to vote in support of the Russian position;
- in around half of disputed votes between Russia and Germany or Russia and Turkey, Kazakhstan voted in support of the Russian position;
- in only 15% of the cases between 2014–22 in which Russia and China voted in opposition to one another did Kazakhstan vote in support of the Russian position and in opposition to the Chinese position;
- in comparison with the previous period, the percent of times that Kazakhstan supported Russia in votes disputed with any of the other four countries decreased significantly –7% for votes against the position of the U.S., –11% for Germany, –16% for China, and –17% for Turkey. The total number of situations where these pairs of countries voted in opposition to one another increased for all country-pairs in question.

In UNGA resolutions on which the positions of the U.S. and the Russian Federation were in opposition, Kazakhstan voted against the Russian position 16% of the time. In particular, as in the previous period, this occurred in votes about human rights in North Korea and Myanmar (69/188 and 73/264). In addition, this was the case for resolutions regarding non-proliferation of chemical and nuclear weapons (72/43 and 74/50). Kazakhstan further abstained in more than 30 resolutions over this time period on which Russia and the U.S. voted in opposition to one another: on resolutions regarding the situation in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, the militarization of Crimea (74/17) and the withdrawal of military forces from Moldova (72/282). Kazakhstan also abstained from voting on Resolution 68/262, On the Territorial Integrity of Ukraine.

It is worth noting that Russia's CTSO-allies, Armenia and Belarus, supported Russia's position on Resolution 68/262, and China also supported Russia's position on Resolutions 74/17 and 72/282—Kazakhstan abstained in all three of these votes. It is interesting to note that Kazakhstan voted against resolutions fewer than 30 times from 2007–22. Nevertheless, in 2019, Kazakhstan voted against 74/167 and 74/168—resolutions on human rights in Iran and Crimea. Thus, one cannot assert that an abstention from Kazakhstan is the expression of a political position against a resolution in the aforementioned votes on resolutions about armed conflicts of particular importance to Russia.

It is also worth noting that the Republic of Kazakhstan has abstained from voting on all UN resolutions regarding the conflict in Syria (for example, 73/182, 71/130, and 68/182) since 2013. Meanwhile, both China and Russia voted against these resolutions, and Germany and the U.S. voted for them. This example once again demonstrates that Kazakhstan leans toward hedging policies during a confrontation of several centres of power and takes a neutral position (on the Syrian question in particular).

After the beginning of the SMO, Kazakhstan abstained from voting on key UNGA resolutions, continuing its traditional voting tactics on highly disputed resolutions (ES-11/1 and ES-11/2). Nevertheless, Kazakhstan voted against the UNGA resolution for excluding Russia from the Committee on Human Rights, supporting the Russian Federation's position (ES-11/3). It is possible that Kazakhstan chose to vote against because it felt it necessary to compensate for the harsh statements of the head of the administration of the president of Kazakhstan against aiding Russia in circumventing western sanctions.

When Germany and Russia voted in opposition to one another (besides the votes already examined where Russia and the U.S. were opposed), Kazakhstan voted in agreement with Germany in the following situations: opposition to the proliferation of cluster munitions (74/62), nuclear non-proliferation (71/51), and environmental protection (72/277). Kazakhstan and

Turkey also voted together primarily on resolutions about nuclear and regular disarmament (76/54 and 73/264).

From 2014–21, China and Russia voted in opposition to one another 46 times. Kazakhstan continued to support China more than Russia in these conflict situations. Thus, the Republic of Kazakhstan supported Russia in votes on the death penalty (71/187) and decolonization (70/231) but supported China in votes about nuclear non-proliferation (73/60 and 74/45) and environmental protection (72/277).

There are several factors that could have influenced these voting cohesion patterns. First, nuclear disarmament is a key policy for Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan votes consistently every year for all resolutions dedicated to this topic. Second, over this time period Russia and China once again did not have a direct, important conflict at the UNGA that would have forced Kazakhstan to decide between their positions. Questions of environmental protection and nuclear non-proliferation are not key foreign policy areas for the Russian Federation, which allows Kazakhstan noticeable freedom for manoeuvring.

In this context, Kazakhstan's behaviour in this small and not particularly high-tension number of conflict situations is less notable than Kazakhstan's overall voting patterns as a whole, which are closer to those of China than to those of Russia. Taking into account the existence of agreements on cooperation and collective security between Kazakhstan and Russia (and the lack of such agreements between Kazakhstan and China), this pattern seems unusual. It is difficult to understand the exact reason for this voting cohesion—it could reflect a concordance in the two countries' foreign policy agendas or an attempt by Kazakhstan to use UNGA voting as an arena in which to practice balancing policies against Russia. A serious conflict between Russia and China at the UNGA would give clarity to this situation as it would force Kazakhstan to choose between them.

From 2014–22, there were more than 80 times when Kazakhstan voted differently from all the countries examined in the given work. Among these were more than 40 resolutions regarding the topics of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament (for example: 74/41, 73/57, and 72/41). The Republic of Kazakhstan voted for these resolutions while China, Germany, the U.S., Turkey, and the Russian Federation either abstained from voting or voted against. Kazakhstan did not change its overall position from 2007–13, continuing to defend its agenda of nuclear disarmament despite possible disagreements with large actors in Central Asia.

In general, Kazakhstan continued its policies from 2007–13: it refused to directly support Russia in resolutions on conflicts in Georgia and Ukraine and also voted for all resolutions connected to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Though Kazakhstan's overall UNGA voting pattern did not change after 2014, the voting cohesion between the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan continued to decline, especially in situations where Russia was voting in opposition to China, Turkey, Germany, or the United States. Moreover, in 2022, Kazakhstan's voting cohesion decreased with all countries except the United States (already low) due to Kazakhstan's more frequent abstentions from voting in questions about international conflicts (primarily about the SMO in Ukraine).

As demonstrated above, Kazakhstan votes in agreement with China—its (supposedly) second most important regional partner—more frequently than the other countries examined. Moreover, since 2010, Kazakhstan's voting cohesion with Russia has been at around the same level as its voting cohesion with Turkey. Though Turkey is increasing its presence in Central Asia, it still plays a smaller role in the region's security and economy than do Russia or China. This chart also demonstrates that Kazakhstan's votes have, over time, begun to differ more and more from the votes of all the other countries except the United States. Overall, Russia's position has changed significantly: while at the start of this period Russia and China vied for the top position of partner with the highest voting cohesion with

Kazakhstan, recently Russia is closer to competing with Germany and Turkey for second or third place.

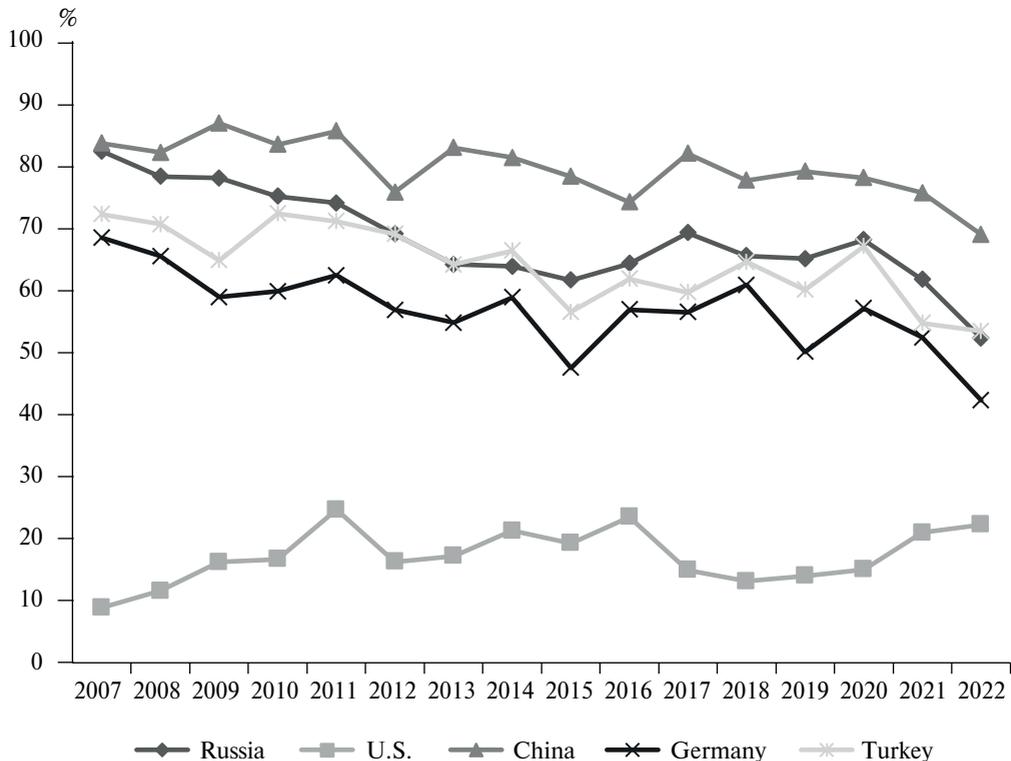


Fig. 1. Kazakhstan' Voting Cohesion With Russia, the U.S., China, Germany, and Turkey in UNGA Resolutions, 2007–22

Source: Author's calculations based on data from the UN [n.d.].

Kazakhstan's voting cohesion with these other countries also varied based on resolution topic, raising questions of changes in resolution frequency by topic over time. Kazakhstan's UNGA votes were in agreement with the Russian position more than 80% of the time on resolutions regarding human rights, development, the Palestinian conflict, and decolonization (89% cohesion, see Fig. 2). However, on resolutions regarding military conflicts and disarmament, the positions of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Kazakhstan were in agreement only half the time, and on questions of nuclear disarmament, only one third of the time.

Kazakhstan and China were in almost complete agreement on the Palestinian conflict (where their votes aligned 97% of the time), as well as on questions of development and disarmament (where their votes aligned more than 80% of the time). On all other questions, the positions of Kazakhstan and China were in agreement No less than 60% of the time. It is notable that the positions of Kazakhstan were significantly more aligned with those of China on questions of military conflicts and nuclear disarmament than with those of the Russian Federation, Turkey, or Germany.

Kazakhstan and Turkey often voted in agreement (over 75% of the time) on resolutions about the Palestinian conflict, disarmament, and decolonization. However, they were only in agreement on one third of resolutions about military conflicts, nuclear disarmament, and human rights.

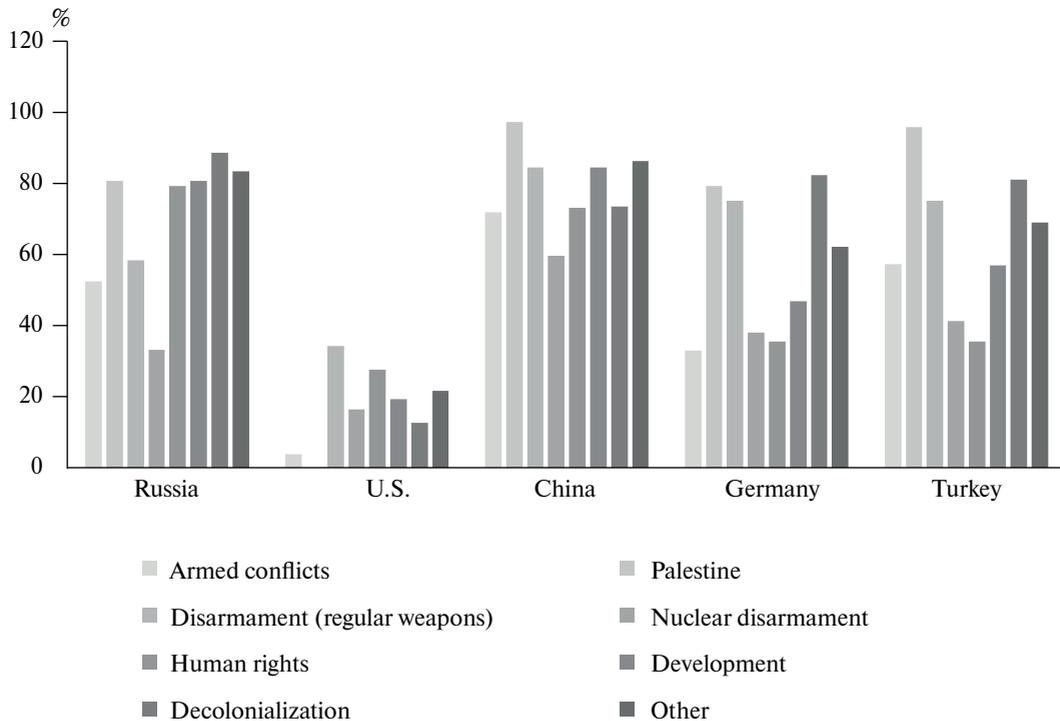


Fig. 2. Kazakhstan UNGA Voting Cohesion With Russia, the U.S., China, Turkey, and Germany by Resolution Category, 2007–22 (%)

Source: Author's calculations based on data from the UN [n.d.].

The positions of Kazakhstan and Turkey were almost completely in agreement on resolutions regarding the Palestinian conflict (96% of votes) and significantly in agreement on questions of decolonization and disarmament. Nevertheless, they disagreed frequently on questions of nuclear disarmament and human rights (only 41% and 36% agreement, respectively). Kazakhstan's voting cohesion with the United States remained low, from 0% on votes related to the Palestinian question to 34% on votes regarding disarmament.

Within separate categories of resolutions, Kazakhstan was most closely aligned (among all five countries examined) with China on questions of military conflicts, including the Palestinian conflict, and disarmament, including nuclear disarmament, as well as questions of development. It was most closely aligned with Russia on questions of decolonization and human rights. Overall, when examining UNGA resolutions divided by category, the same patterns are evident: Kazakhstan has the strongest voting cohesion with China overall, and, sometimes, in particular areas, with Russia.

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Multivectorism in the Republic of Kazakhstan's foreign policy is reflected in and realized through its voting on UNGA resolutions. First, Kazakhstan applies its multi-vector policies to the very act of voting—it abstained from resolutions regarding Ukraine and Syria that were important both to Russia as well as to the U.S./Germany. Second, the multivectorism that Kazakhstan practices is displayed through its high level of voting cohesion with China, despite Russia remaining its key regional ally.

A clear hierarchy of vectors is apparent in Kazakhstan's relationship to key players from outside its region, at least in terms of the most important international questions. Kazakhstan's main vector is not the Russian Federation, its CTSO partner, but the People's Republic of China. Kazakhstan and China have a significantly higher voting cohesion than Kazakhstan has with Russia, Turkey, Germany, or, especially, the United States (with whom Kazakhstan shares a very low level of voting cohesion). This overall view remains consistent when one examines voting cohesion on a more detailed level in terms of categories of international issues. In the majority of categories, Kazakhstan has the strongest voting cohesion with China—this is particularly true in resolutions on armed conflicts, disarmament, and development. However, Kazakhstan has the highest voting cohesion with Russia in categories of resolutions dedicated to human rights and decolonization.

Despite an officially declared shared foreign policy between Kazakhstan and Russia, their voting cohesion decreased over the time period in question and remained consistently lower than the cohesion observed between the voting patterns of Kazakhstan and China. Moreover, in situations where Russia and China voted in opposition to one another, Kazakhstan voted in support of China the vast majority of the time. Despite the fact that, in analogous situations between Russia and the U.S., Kazakhstan supported Russia more frequently, in analogous situations with Germany and Turkey, Kazakhstan only took the Russian side in slightly over half of cases (from 2014–22). This leads one to assert that there cannot be a shared foreign policy for Russia and Kazakhstan in UNGA resolution voting practices. Of course, neither is there a shared foreign policy with Turkey, a state currently pretending at the role of leader of the Turkic world (except in resolutions regarding the Palestinian question).

To determine the exact reasons for such a level of voting cohesion with China in particular would go beyond the scope of this work. Nevertheless, one can assert that such cohesion could proceed from similarities in the Kazakhstani and Chinese foreign policy agendas and could be underpinned by the absence of a direct conflict between the PCR and the Russian Federation that would force Kazakhstan to make a difficult choice. In addition, internal political factors should be taken into account: from the turn of the millennium into the 2020s, the leadership of Kazakhstan considered its independence (primarily politically) as its key value and the foundation of its nation-building [Kazahstanskaya Pravda, 2021]. Any statements about the history and sovereignty of Kazakhstan on the part of Russian officials (even those without any ties to foreign policy) were perceived extremely poorly by society in Kazakhstan [Savostyanov, 2020]. These factors could lead to the necessity of political distancing from Russia and could possibly affect Kazakhstan's UNGA voting patterns. In any case, the surprisingly low cohesion in the voting patterns of Kazakhstan and Russia, despite the fact that Kazakhstan is joined to Russia in a military and political alliance, demands the reassessment and further study of the specifics and dynamics of the Russian-Kazakhstani alliance.

Overall, when examining multivectorism in terms of UNGA voting, it seems that multivectorism in practice is closer to a policy of hedging than to its official definition. On one hand, Kazakhstan is in a defensive alliance with Russia that has recently proven its vitality in times of internal crisis. On the other hand, Kazakhstan abstained from the majority of resolutions that were truly key to Russia regarding armed conflicts (Syria, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Crimea, and Ukraine). Kazakhstan abstained from voting even in cases where both Russia and China voted against—demonstrating that the relationships between Kazakhstan and other leading powers are more complicated than a simple policy of balancing between Russia and China. Kazakhstan simultaneously employs a bandwagoning policy in regard to Russia from the security perspective and a balancing policy on political questions by taking a neutral position.

The Republic of Kazakhstan's consistency in defending an agenda of nuclear disarmament in UNGA voting should be separately noted as part of a necessary agenda for self-assertion as an independent, sovereign actor on the international stage.

The trends above held true across the entirety of the period in question, 2007–22. The intensification of the confrontation between Russia and the West after the reincorporation of Crimea (2014) does not seem to have affected Kazakhstan's overall UNGA voting patterns. Only after the conflict escalated to a new level with the beginning of the SMO did Kazakhstan's voting cohesion with all countries in question decrease (except for the United States). Further observation is necessary to understand if Kazakhstan's UNGA voting patterns as a whole will have changed moving forward, or if this decrease reflects a temporary anomaly.

In conclusion, though an analysis of UNGA resolution voting patterns cannot give a full picture of Kazakhstan's relationships with key actors outside of its region, it certainly demands a re-examination of relationships between Russia and Kazakhstan as well as Kazakhstan and China for scholars of the post-Soviet space. An analysis of the internal and external reasons for Kazakhstan's UNGA voting behaviour would require its own further study.

In a time of political changes in Central Asia, growing Chinese influence, and declining U.S. military presence, multivectorism might undergo significant changes in the near future. The policies enacted in a multi-vectorized framework can change over time, bringing Kazakhstan closer to one of the power centres around it, or, quite the contrary, provoking a conflict between two or more actors in the region. In any case, due to the changes in Russia's international position since the beginning of the SMO in Ukraine, Kazakhstan's policy of multivectorism is likely to undergo significant changes in the near future.

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The Conflict Between Ecowas and Mali: International Legal and Political Aspects¹

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Abstract

In recent decades, Mali has faced an unprecedented political and economic crisis due to coups, terrorist and separatist threats, and international sanctions. The role of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) as a subregional organization involved in the management of the Malian conflict is paramount. However, the influence of France in decision-making in the context of sanctions imposed on Mali by ECOWAS affected the authority of the West African organization. The role of France, as a former colonial power in this crisis, is indisputable in the context of its geopolitical engagement with its former colonies in Africa and particularly in West Africa.

This article analyzes the course of the crisis, the role of the actors involved (ECOWAS, Mali, and France), and the political and legal scopes of the crisis. On the basis of structural, qualitative, and quantitative methods of assessment and comparative analyses of the ECOWAS Authority's decisions, their legal and political meanings, the political situation on the ground, the history of conflict management in neighbouring countries such as Côte d'Ivoire and other West African states by ECOWAS, the African Union (AU), and the United Nations (UN), and the role of France in the crisis, the authors conclude that the ECOWAS Authority has played an important role in restoring political order in Mali. However, the authors note the failure of the Authority to reach a political agreement. Moreover, the authors agree that the ECOWAS Authority has reacted ultra vires to the Malian crisis vis-a-vis the power that is conferred by the ECOWAS instruments. And, the Authority's blunder was not without French interference.

Keywords: ECOWAS; Mali; sanctions; crisis management, military coup; transitional governments, ultra vires

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Introduction

Mali is affected by unprecedented separatist and terrorist attacks that have threatened its territorial integrity and national sovereignty. The events during the legislative general elections in April 2020 led to the general contestation and popular subversion of the results. The crisis

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caused the death of dozens of people and hundreds of people were injured. The contestation has opened the way to political crisis in the country. The situation provoked subversion within the national army and led to a military coup against President Ibrahima Boubakar Keita (IBK) on 18 August 2020. The coup was spearheaded by Colonel Assimi Goita. Consequently, President IBK, along with many other officials, was arrested. This development provoked the anger of the Authority of Heads of States of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) (Authority), which is the supreme body of the West African organization. A day later, on 19 August, during a virtual video conference for this purpose, the ECOWAS Authority imposed sanctions on the military junta as stipulated in the ECOWAS treaties. The Authority required the immediate release of President IBK and other officials, as well as a civilian transition and the instauration of the constitutional order within a schedule of 18 months that should lead to general elections.

On 9 January 2022, during the summit held in Accra, the Authority decided to impose sanctions against Mali due to the unwillingness of the military junta to conform with ECOWAS' schedule for general elections.

France, the former colonial power of Mali, has played an important role in the imposition of sanctions on Mali. As a result, the diplomatic relationship between them has seriously deteriorated and have declared each other's ambassadors to be *persona non grata*.

This article examines the chronological course of interaction between the ECOWAS Authority and the military junta that led to unprecedented sanctions, which seriously affected Mali, as well the role of France in this crisis. The authors also analyze the situation from political and legal points of view. The article uses legal, historical, deductive, and descriptive methods to analyze the special decisions of the Authority on the Malian crisis during the period 2020 to 2022 as well as the Malian government's attitude toward the Authority, including the analysis of declarations of different actors. The legal method involves the study of the decisions of the Authority that seem to be *ultra vires*. The historical aspect of the methodology is based on the examination of the evolution of the crisis in comparison to other identical situations in the region (the cases of Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire).

Historical Background of the Conflict in Mali

The Republic of Mali has been affected by several secessionist movements in the northern part of the country perpetrated by different ethnic groups, such as Touareg [Filippov, 2012] and other tribes, with the aim of creating Azawad state. As a result, different armed groups are operating in the northern part of the country. Meanwhile, terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda in Maghreb (AQIM), Ansar Eddine, and the Movement for Unity and Jihadism in West Africa (MUJAO) are creating havoc for civilian and state infrastructures and threatening the existence of the Malian republic [Filippov, 2021]. However, the situation in the northern part of Mali became exacerbated after the fall of Muammar Gaddafi's administration in 2011 following the intervention by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The killing of Gaddafi triggered the proliferation of arms and munitions in the region by terrorist groups. Moreover, many Touareg who defected from the Libyan army have found refuge in North Mali, including terrorist groups. The Malian government, in an attempt to salvage the situation, called on France to join hands in eliminating the terrorist groups and the offensive of Touareg rebels against the capital territory, Bamako.

To this end, France, on 11 January 2013, launched Operation Serval, which stopped the movement of terrorist groups and separatists to Bamako. On 25 April, United Nations Security Council Resolution 2100 [UN, 2013] created the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated

Mission in Mali (MISMA). MISMA was composed of French and ECOWAS troops, including other African countries named after the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA). Accordingly, on 1 July, MISMA was transformed into the United Nations Multi-dimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) with the aim of stabilizing the situation in the country.

From the moment of their deployment to Mali until 2020, French troops and MINUSMA were not able to defeat the terrorist groups or enforce the national reconciliation agreement between the separatists and the central government, despite several efforts and strategies employed by both parties. The situation became more complicated between the new transitional military government and France after the latter unilaterally decided to withdraw its military forces from northern Mali, where terrorist groups are active.

Massive contestations after the legislative general elections in April 2020 led to riots in the country. The crisis caused the death of dozens of people and hundreds of people were injured. Notably, these protests opened the way to a political crisis in the country. The situation provoked subversion within the national army and led to a military coup against President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita (IBK) on 18 August. The military coup was spearheaded by Colonel Assimi Goita. President IBK and many other officials were arrested and detained by the military junta. This development provoked the anger of the Authority, which is the supreme body of the West African organization to which Mali and other West African countries are parties. A day later, on 19 August, during a virtual video conference held in Niamey for this purpose, the ECOWAS Authority imposed sanctions on the military junta as stipulated in the ECOWAS treaties [ECOWAS, 2001]. The Authority required the immediate release of President IBK and other officials, as well as a civilian transition and the instauration of the constitutional order in the country within a schedule of eighteen months (from September 2020 to February 2022). On 9 January 2022, during the summit held in Accra (Ghana), the ECOWAS Authority decided to impose unprecedented sanctions on the Republic of Mali due to the unwillingness of the local authorities to conform with the electoral schedule of the ECOWAS Authority. The sanctions include the following:

- a) Recall for consultations by ECOWAS Member States of their Ambassadors accredited to Mali;
- b) Closure of land and air borders between ECOWAS countries and Mali;
- c) Suspension of all commercial and financial transactions between ECOWAS Member States and Mali, with the exception of food products, pharmaceutical products, medical supplies and equipment, including materials for the control of COVID-19, petroleum products and electricity;
- d) Freeze of assets of the Republic of Mali in ECOWAS Central Banks;
- e) Freeze of assets of the Malian State and the State Enterprises and Parastatals in Commercial Banks;
- f) Suspension of Mali from all financial assistance and transactions with all financial institutions, particularly, EBID and BOAD. [ECOWAS, 2022d].

It is important to highlight the capital role of France in the imposition of these sanctions. Before the ECOWAS Authority summit, French officials, including President Emmanuel Macron [Bendhaou, 2022], Minister of Foreign Affairs Jean-Yves Le Drian [Le Point, 2022], and Minister of Defence Florence Parly [Perelman, Alexandre, 2021] declared that France would use all measures together with the ECOWAS to counter the military junta in the crisis. The military junta ordered France to leave the country after the unilateral decision of President Macron to withdraw from northern Mali. One of the main causes of the crisis between Mali and France was the suspicion of the transitional power that French armed forces might collaborate with terrorist groups in Mali. It is important to note that French troops in Mali, on several oc-

casions, obstructed successes made by Malian forces against rebels and terrorists and even, in some cases, prevented Malian military aircraft from taking off [Bamako, 2022]. The Malian authority also accused French troops of training and empowering terrorist groups [IRIS, 2021]. The situation became exacerbated when Malian authorities decided to cooperate with other foreign military powers, particularly with the Russian Federation, to handle the security situation in the country. France, the former colonial power of Mali, considered the decision made by the Malian government to employ Russian military services inappropriate and unacceptable. Therefore, France used its influence on the ECOWAS Authority to counter the military government of Mali. As such, France became one of the main actors of the crisis that opposed ECOWAS and Mali.

International Legal and Political Meaning of the Crisis

To understand the legal and political meaning of the crisis between ECOWAS and Mali, it is important to analyze the chronological aspects of the interactions between both sides that have led to such a critical situation.

On 5 June 2020, a sociopolitical crisis resulted from the controversial constitutional court rulings on 30 contested seats in favour of the ruling party. Meanwhile, on 5 June, the Rally of Patriotic Forces Movement (M5-RFP), composed of different opposition forces, religious organizations, and civil society [Government of the Republic of Mali, 2021b], was established. On 20 June, due to the persistence and nature of the protests in Mali, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, while expressing his concerns over the situation, called on the parties involved to calm down and embrace peace [UN, 2020]. On 10–12 July, a massive protest in Bamako against the results of the legislative elections led to the death of dozens of protesters and hundreds of injured. On 15–19 July, the ECOWAS Authority mandated its mediators, the former president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Goodluck Johnathan, and the president of the ECOWAS Commission, Jean Claude Kassi Brou, to restore dialogue in Mali among the political actors. During their mission, the mediators met with the Malian president IBK, his cabinet members, and other political actors involved in the crisis. The mediators called on the parties to dialog and expressed the willingness of ECOWAS to assist Mali [ECOWAS, 2020c].

During their meeting, the opposition expressed their views on the sociopolitical situation and made further propositions as follows:

1. Retirement of President IBK;
2. Dissolution of the Constitutional Court
3. Instauration of a transitional regime in Mali;
4. Instauration of an independent investigational commission to clarify causes of death of protesters during the protests on July 10, 11, and 12, 2020; and
5. Liberation of the oppositional leader Soumaila Cisse who was kidnapped during the legislative elections [ECOWAS, 2020c].

On 23 July, the High Panel of ECOWAS Heads of States and Government, which comprises the president of Niger, President Mahamadou Issoufou, as ECOWAS Authority chair, President Nana Addo Akufo of Ghana, President Alassane Outtara of Côte d'Ivoire, President Muhammadu Buhari of Nigeria, and President Macky Sall of Senegal, visited Bamako. During the visit, the panel had several meetings with the Malian president, IBK, and his cabinet members as well as the opposition and civil society actors. Due to the urgency required in resolving the situation, the panel decided to reach a resolution on attending to the most vital issues in their next meeting [ECOWAS, 2020b]. In relation to the objection raised by the opposition, the Authority reached the following propositions:

1. The Authority recommends the exclusion of the elected parliamentarians whose mandates are contested by political actors;
2. Concerning the Constitutional Court dissolution, the Authority recommends its amendment (recomposition);
3. Regarding the retirement of President IBK, the Authority pledged for a new opened Government for all actors: 50% of seats for the ruling party, 30% for opposition parties and 20% for civil society.
4. Concerning the independent investigational commission on clarifying the causes of death of protesters during contestations made on July 10, 11 and 12, 2020, the Authority asked for an immediate investigation to determine the causes and point out the responsibilities of parties and called on President IBK to take all necessary measures to assist the victims, including financial compensation and support [ECOWAS, 2020c].

The Authority urged the government of Mali to take all necessary measures to free the opposition leader, Soumaila Cisse. Moreover, the Authority requested that all parties implement all recommendations within 10 days or face sanctions from the ECOWAS Commission [ECOWAS, 2020b].

On 18 August, because of the deterioration of the sociopolitical situation, a military coup occurred in Mali, in which President IBK and other officials were arrested and detained. The ECOWAS Authority immediately, by its communiqué on this date, condemned the coup and requested the military junta to return to barracks. The ECOWAS Authority called on the political actors to maintain the terms stated in the dialogue to find an optimal solution to the problem. The Authority reiterated its opposition to the military coup and the unconstitutional change of power [ECOWAS, 2020d]. On 20 August, referring to its communiqué of 18 August, the Authority convened an extraordinary video conference to address the situation in Mali. During the conference, the Authority adopted several measures, including general and special sanctions on Mali and the members of the military government. The sanctions are detailed as follows:

- 1) suspension of Mali from all decision-making processes in ECOWAS;
- 2) closing of land and air borders of ECOWAS member states with Mali;
- 3) stop all financial and economic flows and transitions among ECOWAS Member states and Mali, except on basic essential products and calling for targeted sanctions against the military junta [ECOWAS, 2020e].

On 28 August, following on the 20 August meeting, the Authority reconvened for another extraordinary session to view the situation in Mali. In the earlier meeting, the Authority had agreed to dispatch a fact-finding mission to Mali led by an ECOWAS mediator from 22–24 of the same month. In the report to the Authority, the mediator noted that the decision made by the Malian president, IBK, to resign was uncalled for; however, welcomed his release by the military junta, called for a civilian transition with a president and prime minister, and for the quick establishment of a transitional government that should organize presidential and general legislative elections within 12 months. The Authority noted that after the execution of these requirements, the above sanctions could be gradually lifted [ECOWAS, 2020f].

On 7 September, during the 57th Extraordinary Session of ECOWAS in Niamey (Niger), the Authority expressed its concern over the unpleasant situation in Mali. However, it congratulated the transitional authority for its quest to find a lasting solution to the issue. The Authority urged the National Council for Public Salvation (CNSP) to implement the 28 August general decision on civilian transition [ECOWAS, 2021c].

On 8 September, an extraordinary session of the Authority was held regarding the situation in the Republic of Guinea, where a military coup had taken place against the president

of Guinea, Alpha Conde, on 5 September. In response, the Authority adopted the following measures against Guinea:

- a) to suspend Guinea from all ECOWAS governing bodies with immediate effect;
- b) to immediately dispatch a high-level ECOWAS mission to Guinea to assess the situation;
- c) The Authority was assigned to review the situation in light of the development in the Republic of Guinea and the Assessment mission report [ECOWAS, 2021c].

Nevertheless, it is ascertained that the sanctions adopted by the Authority are fair compared to the sanctions imposed on Mali. During the conference on Guinea, the sanctions imposed on Mali were reexamined. The Authority expressed its satisfaction with the lifting of restrictions imposed on the former President IBK and the former prime minister by the military junta [ECOWAS, 2020a].

On 21 September, Bah N'Daw was appointed as the president of the transitional power and Moctar Ouane as the prime minister. They were sworn into office on 25 September. From 23–25 September the special mediators on conflict resolution in Mali met with different authorities of the transition to assess the progress and the decisions reached on 20 and 28 August. During the mission, the mediator reiterated his concerns about the situation in the country and took note of evolution made on the ground. According to the mediator, sanctions should be lifted after the swearing-in of the civilian transitional president [ECOWAS, 2020g]. At the same time, the mediator welcomed the adoption of the transitional charter on 1 October [Government of the Republic of Mali, 2020].

On 11 October, pursuant to the mediation of the ECOWAS to deal with the unconstitutional order in Mali, the Authority chair, President of the Republic of Ghana Nana Addo D. Akufo-Addo and ECOWAS officials paid a visit to the transitional authority in Mali to express the support of ECOWAS to the political process in the country. During the visit, the mediators met with the president of the transition, Bah N'Daw, Vice President Assimi Goita and Prime Minister Moctar Ouane. During their meeting, the chair noted that the progress realized by the transitional authority by freeing the political prisoners, establishing the civilian transitional authority, and adopting the transitional charter was positive. The chair also noted the creation of the National Transitional Council, and he encouraged the process.

On 23 January, the Authority, during its extraordinary session, expressed concerns about the situation in Mali and further noted the establishment of the transitional bodies. However, the Authority condemned the arrest of people suspected of breaching national security. The Authority also called for a peaceful transition in Mali and urged the military junta to comply with the electoral calendar. The Authority further expressed its concern over the failure to dissolve the National Committee for the Salvation of the People (NCSP) [ECOWAS, 2021e]. On 25 May 2021, the arrest of the transitional authorities, President Bah N'Daw and Prime Minister Moctar Ouane, by the military junta for suspicion of withdrawing military staff from the new transitional government led to the resignation of the transitional government on the same day [Government of the Republic of Mali, 2021b]. On 30 May, an extraordinary summit of the Authority took place in Accra (Ghana) to evaluate the situation in Mali after the arrest of the civil transitional president, the prime minister, and other officials on 26 May by the military junta. The Authority urged the immediate release of the detainees, while condemning the action as contrary to the transitional charter of Mali and international engagements of Mali. Again, the Authority urged all parties to maintain the status quo and respect the electoral system [Abashidze et al., 2023] as had been suggested before Mali was suspended from ECOWAS [2021b].

On 7 June, the military coup leader, Colonel Assimi Goita, was officially appointed as the transitional president by the constitutional court, while Choguel Kokalla Maïga was nominated

as prime minister [Government of the Republic of Mali, 2021a]. From 8–9 June, as recommended by the ECOWAS Authority during the summit on 30 May, the mediator visited the country to examine the strategy used by the newly local government and how they had implemented the agreements reached in their previous summits. During the visit, the mediator met with different stakeholders and encouraged them to work together in restoring democracy in accordance with ECOWAS principles [ECOWAS, 2021d]. On 19 June, the mediator submitted a report to the Authority during the fifty-ninth extraordinary session held in Accra. The Authority took note of the appointment of the civilian prime minister, Choguel Kokalla Maïga, the formation of a new government, and the engagement to respect the electoral calendar in February 2022. Finally, the Authority advised the commission to create an electoral mechanism that would be free from electoral malpractice [ECOWAS, 2021d]. The Authority recommended that all parties respect the Algiers Agreement [Algiers Treaty, 2015].

From 5–7 September, the mediators visited Mali to ascertain the progress made in the preparation of the political transition and to affirm ECOWAS' engagement to support local authorities. The mediators also visited the president of the transition as well as the prime minister. The mediators expressed satisfaction over the release of former transitional president, Bah N'Daw, and his prime minister, Mr. Moctar Ouane. Furthermore, they expressed their concerns over the delay in providing concrete measures or a schedule for the purported election. Notwithstanding this, the mediators expressed their satisfaction with the transitional authority for accepting the decision made by the ECOWAS Authority [ECOWAS, 2021a]. On 8 September, after receiving the report of the mediators over their findings in Mali from 5–7 September, the Authority expressed satisfaction with the relative calm and stability prevailing in the country and particularly about the release of some detained political actors. Nevertheless, the Authority expressed its concerns over the lack of planning and preparation for the implementation of the presidential election schedule on 22 February 2022. In this light, the Authority urged the transitional authority to put every machinery in place to deliver a peaceful, free, and fair presidential election [ECOWAS, 2021e]. On 16 September, during the extraordinary session of the ECOWAS Authority held in Accra, the ECOWAS leaders considered two important cases concerning the sociopolitical situation in Guinea and Mali. In relation to Mali, the Authority expressed its concern over the slow pace of the electoral process and urged the transitional authority to submit a schedule for the forthcoming presidential elections. The ECOWAS Authority decided to impose targeted sanctions on individuals who tempered or obstructed the timetable set for the elections. The Authority also condemned the continued arrest and detention of political actors by the transitional power and called on the parties involved to respect international law and human rights. At the same time, the Authority expressed its concerns about the decision of Mali to hire a private security company (the Wagner Group) in the country, as that could deteriorate the security apparatus in the region [ECOWAS, 2022]. On 20 October, the National Commission for Refoundation in Mali (ANR) was officially created to tackle the problems of Mali during the transitional period [Government of the Republic of Mali, 2021b]. On 30 December, the ANR recommended a transitional period from six months to five years [Government of the Republic of Mali, 2021b].

On 9 January 2022, the Authority held an extraordinary session on Mali in response to the proposition of the transitional power to schedule a presidential election in December 2025, as presented in the report of the ANR during its meetings held on 30 December 2021. The Authority considered the new electoral schedule to be unacceptable. The Authority thus maintained the sanctions imposed on the transitional power members. Additionally, the Authority decided to impose other economic and financial sanctions with immediate effects on Mali, which included the following:

- a) Recall for consultations by ECOWAS Member States of their Ambassadors accredited to Mali;
- b) Closure of land and air borders between ECOWAS countries and Mali;
- c) Suspension of all commercial and financial transactions between ECOWAS Member States and Mali, with the exception of food products, pharmaceutical products, medical supplies and equipment, including materials for the control of COVID-19, petroleum products and electricity;
- d) Freeze of assets of the Republic of Mali in ECOWAS Central Banks;
- e) Freeze of assets of the Malian State and the State Enterprises and Parastatals in Commercial Banks;
- f) Suspension of Mali from all financial assistance and transactions with all financial institutions, particularly, EBID and BOAD [2022d].

International Legal Aspects of the Crisis Between ECOWAS and Mali

The legal issue of the crisis consists in the nature of various sanctions imposed on Mali by the ECOWAS Authority in light of the conflict that opposed both sides after the military coup in 2020, as demonstrated above. On 9 January 2022, after the imposition of unprecedented sanctions on Mali by the ECOWAS Authority, we note the indignation of many African people all over the world in support of the military regime. This was expressed in different meetings held in different African and European capitals. In this light, some logical questions are raised as follows:

1. Was the ECOWAS Authority invested with the power to impose sanctions?
2. What kind of sanctions could be imposed on country members for violation according to ECOWAS treaties?
3. Did the Authority act *ultra vires* by imposing such sanctions against Mali?

The Power Invested in the Authority to Impose Sanctions on Mali

The Authority is the highest organ of ECOWAS according to the treaty [ECOWAS, 1993] establishing the subregional organization. As such: “The Authority shall be responsible for the general direction and control of the Community and shall take all measures to ensure its progressive development and the realization of its objectives.”

In Article 7 (2), the ECOWAS treaty grants a superior power to the Authority to act as a supreme organ if the majority of the members decides so: “Unless otherwise provided in this Treaty or in a Protocol, decisions of the Authority shall be adopted, depending on the subject matter under consideration by unanimity consensus or by a two-thirds majority of the Member States.”

Article 77 of the treaty also declares: “Where a Member State fails to fulfil its obligations to the Community, the Authority may decide to impose sanctions on that Member State.”

Pursuant to Article 45 (2) of the Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance: “The sanctions shall be decided by the Authority...” if a state does not comply with the provisions of the protocol. In other words, as an answer to the first question, the Authority as the supreme body of the ECOWAS has invested power to impose sanctions on Mali if it ascertains that the country did not conform to its international obligations as stipulated by the ECOWAS instruments.

Nature of Sanctions Imposed by ECOWAS

Mali ratified the ECOWAS Revised Treaty of 1993 [ECOWAS, 1993]. The Revised Treaty, by its provision of Article 77, specifies that in the case of nonfulfilment of the treaty, the Authority may impose sanctions. These sanctions may include the following:

- a) suspension of new Community loans or assistance;
- b) suspension of disbursement on on-going Community projects or assistance programmes;
- c) exclusion from presenting candidates for statutory and professional posts;
- d) suspension of voting rights; and
- e) suspension from participating in the activities of the Community [ECOWAS, 1993].

Mali is also party to the ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance of December 2001 [ECOWAS, 2001], as mentioned before. The protocol provides guarantees for human rights, rule of law, and democracy that are obligatory to member countries. The protocol condemns any unconstitutional change of power and imposes sanctions on the country violators of such norms. In this context, Article 45 of Chapter II of the protocol stipulates that:

- 1). In the event that democracy is abruptly brought to an end by any means or where there is a massive violation of human rights in a member state, ECOWAS may impose sanctions on the state concerned.
- 2). The sanctions that shall be decided by the Authority may take the following forms, in increasing order of severity:
 - a) Refusal to support the candidates presented by the member state concerned for elective posts in international organizations;
 - b) Refusal to organize ECOWAS meetings in the Member State concerned;
 - c) Suspension of the member state concerned from all ECOWAS decision-making bodies [ECOWAS, 2001].

The above-listed protocol justified the ECOWAS Authority decision for imposing sanctions on Mali.

Indeed, the above treaty and protocol specified the main sanctions that could be imposed by the Authority in accordance with the ECOWAS treaties. The imposition of any other restrictions that are not provided by the ECOWAS instrument could be considered an over-power and could be challenged by Mali in the ECOWAS tribunal.

ECOWAS Authority Acted Ultra Vires

In light of the previewed paragraph, the ECOWAS treaties do not contain the following sanctions as decided by the Authority:

- a) Recall for consultations by ECOWAS Member States of their Ambassadors accredited to Mali [2022d]. No provision of ECOWAS instruments provides such a kind of sanction. However, “recall for consultations of ambassadors of the ECOWAS member states” is the prerogative of each state as practiced in international relations. In other words, that constituted a political decision.
- b) Closure of land and air borders between ECOWAS countries and Mali. No provision of the ECOWAS instrument confers to the Authority the right to adopt such sanctions. However, we can remark that such sanctions are used regularly by the UN and the AU, which usually act as global and regional organizations with competences [Asaala, Tladi, 2022]. For instance, during the civil wars [Lazutin, Likhachev, 2020] in Côte d’Ivoire, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, and Sierra-Leone, these countries ex-

perienced sanctions imposed by the UN and AU together with the ECOWAS. Moreover, in the case of Mali, the Authority substitutes itself for the UN or AU, which have invested such power [Tolstykh, 2021].

c) Suspension of all commercial and financial transactions between ECOWAS Member States and Mali, with the exception of food products, pharmaceutical products, medical supplies and equipment, including materials for the control of COVID-19, petroleum products and electricity [2022d].

The treaty in its provisions refers to loans and financial assistance but not the prohibition of commercial transactions. Notwithstanding, this sanction contradicted the ECOWAS treaty provisions.

d) Freeze of assets of the Republic of Mali in ECOWAS Central Banks [2022d].

The assets of Mali in ECOWAS central banks are not constituted loans and assistance. However, they are Malian properties. In this case, they cannot be frozen, as the ECOWAS instruments do not provide so.

e) Freeze of assets of the Malian State and the State Enterprises and Parastatals in Commercial Banks [2022d]. See paragraph (e) above.

f) Suspension of Mali from all financial assistance and transactions with all financial institutions, particularly EBID and BOAD [2022d].

The ECOWAS treaties stipulate suspension of the country violator from all assistance and loans within ECOWAS financial institutions but not all financial institutions. Worldwide, there are many financial institutions independent from ECOWAS. In this case, this sanction does not conform to the ECOWAS treaties.

Thus, there are many sanctions imposed on Mali that do not conform to the ECOWAS treaties. It was ascertained that the Authority acted *ultra vires* [Abashidze et al., 2022]. Moreover, these sanctions did not get confirmation (adoption) by the UN Security Council [Adu, 2016] as provided by Article 53 of the UN Charter: "...No enforcement action shall be taken under regional arrangements or by regional agencies without the authorization of the Security Council...".

In these cases of litigation between Mali and the Authority, some propositions could be made.

1. Mali should refer to the ECOWAS Court of Justice or any other international arbitrator to contest the irregularity of the sanctions imposed on it and ask for reparation. This is always possible for damages caused to Mali, even after the Authority lifted the sanctions [ECOWAS, 2022];
2. Mali has the right to withdraw from the ECOWAS treaties. However, that solution should be avoided taking into account the interdependence of the ECOWAS mechanisms and states in the economic sphere. Thus, this option could be more destructive for the Malian economy.

Political Aspects of the Relations Between ECOWAS and Mali

Analysis of the political aspect of the crisis allows us to understand how the Authority could deal with the case without any excess in the conflict that opposes it to Mali. The imposition of sanctions should be applied after politics (diplomacy) has failed. To understand the source of the conflict, it is important to analyze the grievances between the Authority and Mali and the response of Mali to accusations made against it. The Authority requires the Malian transitional power to put an end to the unconstitutional order in the country by organizing presidential elec-

tions and the transfer of power to civilians. That absolutely conforms to the ECOWAS treaties and other international obligations of Mali.

Thus, the Authority imposed a strict schedule of 12 months to Malian transitional power to organize the presidential elections.

Meanwhile, the local authorities estimated that due to the crisis in the country, it would be impossible to organize a free and fair presidential election within a short time as stipulated. For emphasis, they estimated that more than 80% of Malian territory is out of the control of the Malian government because of terrorism and separatist attacks. Apparently, it would be completely impossible to organize a fair presidential election that could cover the whole country and satisfy all parties and bring peace to the country. As such, the Malian transitional power recommended creating a conducive atmosphere for peaceful elections with a delay from six months to five years [Bamako, 2022].

From this point of view, the approach of Malian authorities is more pertinent as the previous presidential election in Mali, which was organized in 2013 under the same conditions of terroristic attacks and separatist hostilities, did not bring peace to the country. Moreover, the presidential elections of 2018 also did not bring peace due to the lack of security in the country.

Moreover, the same ECOWAS decision caused considerable damage and catastrophe after the presidential elections in the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire because of the Ouagadougou Agreement [Ougadougou Agreement, 2007] under the auspices of the AU and UN. The agreement called for the organization of presidential elections while the country was divided into two parties between belligerents: the North under the control of pro-President Alassane Ouattara rebel groups and the South under the regular national forces of President Laurent Gbagbo. President Laurent Gbagbo contested this situation, arguing that it is completely impossible to organize presidential elections in these conditions and urged the ECOWAS Authority to disarm the rebels and reunify the country before any election. However, under the injunction and pressure of international organizations and particularly the ECOWAS, President Laurent Gbagbo abdicated. After the second round of the presidential elections that had opposed him to Alassane Ouattara, President Laurent Gbagbo contested the result of the North, under the control of pro-Alassane Ouattara rebels. He claimed that the number of voters in the northern part was more than the number of people registered on the electoral list. Unfortunately, he could not prove it, as the North was still controlled by the rebels. Moreover, the international community, and particularly the UN, were opposed to such an approach, despite the fact that there have been such international practices. For this reason, President Laurent Gbagbo refused to recognize the results of the election and insisted that the electoral commission recount the votes. This situation led to what is known as the post electoral crisis [Bukuru, 2021] in Côte d'Ivoire, which led to the death of thousands of people: officially, more than 3,000 Ivoirians were killed in the crisis.

Taking into account all these cases, could Mali truly organize presidential elections when more than 80% of the country was not controlled by the government and national forces? The answer to this question is clearly not. In this case, it is imperative and in the interest of ECOWAS to solve the Malian problem by taking into account the domestic factors (Malian opinion) in order to achieve a sustainable solution and peace.

The Role of France in the Political Crisis Between ECOWAS and Mali

France has played an important role in the crisis that opposed ECOWAS and Mali. France has been invited by the Malian government as mentioned before to tackle the problem of terrorism and separatism that has jeopardized the national security of the country, and France always

protects its geopolitical interest in the region [Lachica, 2021; Magadeev, 2022]. However, several years later, more than 80% of Malian territory remains out of control of national authorities. This situation calls for urgent interrogation of France's counterterrorist approaches not only in Mali but in other West African countries as well.

Today, it is clear that Malian authorities do not want the French army in their territory. At least this is the opinion of the majority of Malian and African peoples because of France's geopolitical approach to Africa as a whole. However, the transitional power, for several reasons, does not want to worsen the situation on the ground. As noted at the beginning of this article, the grievances between Mali and France related to the ambivalent role of France [Magadeev, 2022] in the management of the conflict (that is, the suspicion that France was collaborating with terrorist groups in Mali and training them, obstructing Malian forces from fighting against rebels and terrorist groups, and sometimes impeding Malian military aircraft from taking off). This reminds us of the ambivalent role of France in the Rwandan [Mezyaev, 2005] crisis [Ancel, 2018; Lachica, 2021] and the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire. The situation became exacerbated when Malian authorities decided to cooperate with other military powers and particularly with Russia to handle the situation. France considered the Malian option for employing the military services of the Russian private military company, Wagner Group, unacceptable [Magadeev, 2022]. France is trying to contend with the situation by involving the UN, the EU, the AU and particularly ECOWAS in the conflict that opposed it against Mali. Under the pressure of France, the EU adopted a series of sanctions against Mali and the Wagner Group [EU, 2021]. Sanctions against Mali by the ECOWAS Authority were also dictated and adopted under the pressure of France, as the French minister of defence, Florence Parly, announced them even before the meeting of the ECOWAS Authority decided to do so [Perelman, Alexandre, 2021]. France also uses its status, including its position as a penholder on the draft resolution on Mali in the UN Security Council, to conduct its geopolitical agenda in Mali [Bokeriya, 2022; Strakes, 2016]. As confirmed by the current Malian prime minister, Choguel Kokalla Maiga, Mali did not participate in the elaboration of the Security Council resolutions on Mali. France has substituted itself with the Malian government using its position as a UN Security Council member [Bamako, 2022]. Today, the relationship between Mali and France is degraded as it has never been. The ambassadors from each country have been declared *persona non grata*, and France definitively retired its military forces from Mali to neighbouring Niger.

It seems that this is only the beginning of what will be a long conflict, because France mainly depends on the resources of its colonial possessions. France is not ready to abdicate, as the example of Mali can serve as a bad signal for other former colonies. This situation reminds us of the case between France and Guinea in 1958 after Sekou Toure denied General de Gaulle's proposition of *la Communauté française d'Afrique* [Migani, 2012].

Conclusion

The ECOWAS Authority has invested all power conferred by the ECOWAS treaties to restore the constitutional order in Mali and West Africa as a whole [Abashidze et al., 2017]. More instruments of the AU also embody such guarantees.

However, the decision to impose sanctions on Mali for violating its international obligations must be made only in conformity with the existing ECOWAS treaties and in the interest of the Malian people [Abashidze et al., 2021] without any external influence. Therefore, the decision of the Authority to lift sanctions imposed on Mali seven months later is a salvation for the interest of the Malian people.

The causes of the current crisis in Mali are not only terrorism and separatism, but also the neocolonial policy of France in Africa [Glaser, 2016]. France is using all means, including international organizations and particularly ECOWAS, as an instrument to consolidate its position in the region [Filippov, 2013].

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