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MIGRATION DIPLOMACY AS A FOREIGN POLICY INSTRUMENT[1]

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ABSTRACT

Research on international migration in the field of political science and international relations has been relatively new. Research on the political aspects of migration in Slovakia has been even more recent. In our study, we focus on the relationship between international migration and international relations. The study aims to explain how some governments use the regulation of migration processes in their territory to advocate their domestic and foreign policy goals. We use the concept of migration diplomacy to explain the policies of national governments in relation to the European Union. Using the examples of three states – Libya, Turkey and Belarus – we seek to clarify how two basic categories of migration diplomacy operate: the cooperative and coercive ones. The study concludes that all three states used migration diplomacy as a tool of their foreign policy, although not always with the same success. Powerfully weaker states can be successful in using this strategy because, by regulating migration processes, they achieve influence over the decisions of the ruling elite of stronger states. Since political success in competitive democracies is determined by the mood of the electorate, democratic governments may be more willing to accept the demands of non-democratic countries that are able and, under certain conditions, willing to regulate migration processes on their territory or to stop them altogether. However, the case of Belarus shows that the pressure of one state on another through migration may not be successful if migration does not reach a mass character and if the state can ensure the successful protection of its borders.

Key words: migration, migration diplomacy, coercive, international relations, foreign policy

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Introduction

For many years, research on international migration has been the domain of demographers, sociologists, economists and anthropologists. In the environment of political science and international relations, research on migration processes started relatively late (Mitchell, 1989). The American political scientist **Freeman** (2016) saw the reason for the lesser interest of political scientists in the issue of migration primarily in its interdisciplinary nature and in the interest of other disciplines. He also saw the reason in the nature of political science, which in the past lacked a sense of theoretical analysis of the issues under study. Political science was supposed to be based on descriptive retelling without any ambition for an analytical dimension. The most important and influential works in the field of research on immigration policy and citizenship, which in fact should form the core of interest of political science research, have been produced by non-political scientists (Freeman, 2016). The lack of attention was also due to the lack of accurate statistical data on international migration.

Issues related to migration attracted the attention of political scientists only with the migration crisis, the problems in asylum policy on the European continent, and the rise in popularity of anti-immigration political parties in the individual countries of the European Union. For example, in Slovak political science, only a few authors were interested in this phenomenon for a long time; research on this issue received more attention only in the context of the refugee wave of 2015 and 2016 (Bolečeková, Androvičová, 2015; Přívara, Rievajová 2021). In addition to the analysis of statements and attitudes of radical parties on migration, the question of how the contradiction between liberal immigration policy on the one hand, and the predominantly negative attitude of political elites in the countries of migration destination on the other hand can be explained, is also at the centre of political science research. This phenomenon is usually referred to as the gap-hypothesis in the outputs of political scientists (Hollifield, 2000; Kolb, 2003; Liďák, Štefančík, 2020). When analysing this paradox, the question of why the presented measures aimed at limiting or even stopping immigration flows are not effective arises, or why there is an increase in the number of foreigners in the destination country. In the context of the increase in the number of foreigners, despite the negative attitude of the domestic elite, a debate emerges about the real capacities of nation-states to regulate migration processes in their sovereign territory (Bonjour, 2011).

According to **Hollifield** (2000), research on the politics of international

migration should consist of three sets of questions: The first should be issues related to (border) control, i.e., the role of the state in making the rules for entry and exit of the country. The second area of research falls within the field of international relations. These are questions of the impact of international migration on the sovereignty and security of nation-states and the resulting relationship between migration and foreign policy. According to **Gökalp Aras** and **Sahin Mencütek** (2015, p. 195), foreign policy making includes regulating border regimes, stricter asylum procedures, reducing the number of illegal immigrants or repatriating them, and refusing to grant asylum status. A third theme should be the integration of immigrants, specifically the impact of migration on norms governing the granting of citizenship, political behaviour and public policy. Within this area, the politics of international migration looks at the impact of migration on the political behaviour of individuals - both immigrants and members of the indigenous society.

We focus our reasoning on the second area of international migration policy, namely the correlation between international migration, international relations and foreign policy. This issue became particularly topical in 2015 and 2016 when some EU Member States (especially the V4 states) refused to participate in a common, European solution to the migration situation. In our text, we try to analyse the foreign policies of third states in relation to the European Union, paying attention to how some states, through migration, create pressure on the European Union to assert their own, particularistic national interests in this way.

We base our reasoning primarily on realistic approaches to international relations that place the role of the nation-state at the forefront. In particular, we make use of the concept of 'migration diplomacy', which is now considered an important object of research in international relations. We chose the concept of migration diplomacy because it provides an appropriate way to understand how migration processes impact international relations. This concept sheds light on the strategies of states that seek to gain some advantages (national and domestic security, economic interests or strengthening soft power in the cultural sphere) by regulating migration flows (Adamson, Tsourapas, 2019).

In Slovak political science, this issue is only rarely studied (Kiner, 2021). Migration diplomacy does not only presuppose a mutual agreement between two actors in international relations but can also be implemented in the form of coercion. **Greenhill** (2010, p. 12) defines coercion as "the practice of inducing or preventing changes in political behaviour through the use of threats, intimidation, or some other form of pressure -most commonly, military force". As this American

political scientist points out, the use of migration and refugee crises as tools of persuasion is one of the non-military methods of applying pressure from one state to another, or from one state to the whole international system. So-called weaker states have used and still use the threat of directed migration or the threat of mass refugee movements as a political tool (Gökalp Aras, Şahin Mencütek 2016; Teitelbaum, 1984). Of course, this form of migration diplomacy may not work in every case. Coercion is more likely to succeed if the governments of migration destination states assess the costs of concessions (and not only economic but also political as well) as less than the costs of resistance (Greenhill, 2010).

1. Migration diplomacy from the theoretical perspective

Research on international migration in conjunction with international relations has been a relatively new scholarly approach. According to **Duncan** (2020), although the topic gradually came to the attention of political scientists, academic journals tended to be dominated by texts analysing the effects of migration on domestic politics. Only sporadically did the authors address international migration in the context of foreign policy. Looking at the main theoretical approaches to international relations, we have to note the marginal interest in this issue. In the dominant approach to international relations in the second half of the 20th Century - realism - migration stood on the periphery of scholarly interest. **Meyers** (2000) sees the reason for this in the fact that realism focused primarily on security and less on social issues. Migration was given marginal importance in the foreign policy-making process or was considered only as a demographic element of military power. Classical realism underestimated the importance of international migration on international order (Şahin Mencütek, Gökalp Aras, Coskun, 2020). It was only with the advent of neorealism that interest in the topic of migration shifted more to the centre, with authors primarily emphasising its security aspect (Kucharčík, Zubro, 2021). **Weiner** (1993), for example, points out that migrants and refugees can pose potential threats to the security of states. In the current migration discourse, the dominant view is that international migration is a national security issue, and states adjust entry into their territory for nationals of other countries according to their own national (economic, political, or demographic) interests (Hollifield, 2000; Bolečeková, 2019). Given that the state does not act as a passive observer in relation to security, on the contrary, given its interests, it is active, thus claiming the right to use any means to eliminate the danger (Wæver, 2007).

Since the heightened interest in migration, we also observe, in the international relations research environment, an emphasis on the importance of migration in shaping the relationship between the two states between which migration occurs (Adamson, Tsourapas, 2019). In the case of strained relations, regulating migration processes can be seen as unwanted interference in the internal affairs of the other country. The authors cite several examples where migration becomes an important foreign policy tool for nation-states. In our geopolitical environment, we can point to the Cold War period, when the destination states of the emigration from the former socialist bloc used immigrants to obtain various information about the ideological rival from the Eastern side. In the Cold War logic, refugees from Central and Eastern Europe were seen as a manifestation of victory over communist ideology and were therefore generally welcomed positively in the West, but in the East, they were regarded as enemies and traitors to the ideas of communism (Štefančík, Nemcová, 2015).

One of the theoretical approaches that assumes the use of international migration in foreign policy and the possibility of creating pressure of one state on another, through the conscious management of migration processes, is the concept of migration diplomacy. **Adamson** and **Tsourapas** (2019) are considered to be the pioneers of this concept, who popularized it in international relations research. These authors point to the links between international migration and various forms and state diplomacy. In defining migration diplomacy, they take a realist approach that emphasises the interest and power of state actors in the management of international migration. They thus accentuate the relationship between migration, inter-state bargaining and diplomacy (Malit, Tsourapas, 2021). **Tsourapas** (2017, pp. 2367-2368) understands migration diplomacy as "the use of diplomatic tools, processes and procedures to manage cross-border population mobility, including both the strategic use of migration flows as a means to obtain other goals, and the use of diplomatic methods to achieve goals related to migration". States are developing different strategies to influence migration flows, generally using cooperative and coercive migration diplomacy. While cooperative migration diplomacy is based on a mutual agreement between states that have economic or political benefits for the actors of the agreement, coercive migration diplomacy implies the regulation of migration flows by one state or group of states towards another state or other states to punish the destination state of migration if it does not agree to some political or economic demands. However, as **Tsourapas** (2017) points out, the line between these two types of migration diplomacy is often blurred. Cooperative migration diplomacy is based

on inter-state negotiation that aims to reach mutually beneficial agreements without coercion or aggression. However, cooperative migration diplomacy will turn into coercive diplomacy if a state engages in some form of coercion or if it pursues a unilateral approach to inter-state negotiation.

According to Adamson and Tsourapas (2019), there are three factors to keep in mind when defining migration diplomacy. First, the state is still the most important actor in regulating the movement of population between states. The positions of some states in 2015 and 2016 have shown that states are unwilling to give up their sovereign right to control immigration into their territory. Secondly, migration policy and migration diplomacy are not synonymous. Migration policy encompasses a range of different immigration, asylum and integration measures and regulates, in particular, the entry and stay of foreigners on the territory of the nation state. Migration diplomacy is an instrument of international relations. Migration diplomacy is an instrument of international relations; it is the sum total of how one state achieves its objectives in relation to another state (a group of states or an international organisation) through the regulation of migration flows. Finally, this point is related to the last factor. Migration diplomacy is based on managing cross-border mobility as an international issue. For this reason, it is necessary to separate migration diplomacy from issues that do not affect inter-state relations.

Although the term migration diplomacy is relatively new, authors previously discussed the regulation of migration flows as a form of coercive foreign policy (Kohoutek, 2011). **Greenhill** (2002) uses the example of the 35 000 Cubans who emigrated from Cuba in August 1994 to illustrate how **Fidel Castro** used refugees "as coercive political weapons" against the United States. On one side was a small, economically and militarily insignificant state, opposed by an economic, political and military power. Despite this significant power asymmetry, the Cuban regime was able to influence U.S. government decision-making on the issue of Cuban refugees. In fact, with this crisis, **Castro** caused the U.S. population to fear illegal immigration from Cuba and thus changed their initially welcoming attitude towards Cuban immigrants. The positive attitude of the population and the government towards immigrants can act as an important pull factor in immigration processes (Onufrák, 2017). If immigrants are welcomed somewhere, if the government creates conditions for the rapid integration of immigrants, if it implements liberal immigration and asylum policies, or if it accommodates them in the labour market, the likelihood that migrants will be directed to that country increases. Conversely, fears triggered by mass migration processes may force

governments in advanced democracies to change their approach to migration policy. Cuba, like communist governments in Central and Eastern Europe in the past, wanted to prevent emigration. That is why, after various unsuccessful diplomatic protests, the **Castro** regime used engineered migration as a weapon against the US. As **Greenhill** (2002, p. 39) points out, this crisis "illustrated the potential potency of engineered migration as an asymmetric weapon of the weak". The response of the then the US government was to stop accepting Cuban refugees intercepted in the US territorial waters.

Weaker states can be successful in using this strategy because they can manipulate the political vulnerability of leaders, whose political success and the length of time in public office in competitive democracies depend on the mood of public opinion or the electorate. If fears arise and spread in the public mind, for example about illegal immigration, there is bound to be an actor in the political discourse who will exploit public fears in a populist way to his advantage to increase his electoral success. The problem in the countries of destination of migration arises when the government's decision-making is based not only on the mood of the electorate but also on international commitments. For example, commitments that guarantee the rights of political and war refugees and practically bind signatory states to the obligation to grant asylum to refugees. For this reason, too, this strategy is generally used by non-democratic regimes towards democratic governments which, on the one hand, are bound by international commitments but, on the other, are motivated to act and decide according to the mood of their electorate.

2. Migration diplomacy as exemplified by Libya, Turkey and Belarus

The use of coercive and cooperative migration diplomacy as a foreign policy tool in relation to the European Union can be quite clearly identified and directly demonstrated in Libya. According to **Tsourapas** (2017), Libya represents an 'extreme' case of a state that was able to use both cooperative and coercive migration diplomacy under **Gaddafi**. The Muammar Gaddafi-led government sought to exploit its strategic geopolitical location, which predisposed it to become a transit state, by threatening to unleash illegal migration from other African states, to put pressure on the EU Member States to gain advantages in its favour.

Libya was not just a transit state, already during the 1960s and 1970s, in the context of labour shortages in the booming construction and oil industries, Libya

was receiving migrants from neighbouring African states. The Libyan regime actively recruited foreign workers through the negotiations of 'contract packages', under which economic migrants came to Libya for limited periods. As **Paoletti** (2011) points out, Libya's open attitude towards migrants from Arab countries did not have exclusively economic reasons. Foreign policy ambitions played an important role, as did domestic political activities. In the foreign policy sphere, migration was used to exert pressure on countries of origin. Some North African states with higher unemployment rates benefited from the fact that part of their populations moved to Libya in search of work. However, when **Gaddafi** needed to put pressure on migrants' domestic states, he developed activities aimed at deporting migrants from Libya back to their countries of origin (Paoletti 2011). An estimated 1 450 000 illegal migrants were deported from Libya in forced repatriations between 2003 and 2005 alone (Satkova, 2012). **Grimaud** (1994, p. 32) referred to the use of migration to advance the foreign policy interests of the **Gaddafi** regime as 'Libyan cynicism'.

At the beginning of the 21st Century, Libya was not only a destination country for migrants from sub-Saharan Africa but also became an important transit state for migrants heading further to the southern EU countries. "Libya became a starting point of entry into Europe by sea" (Hamood, 2008, p. 19). As with its African neighbours, the **Gaddafi** regime pursued both cooperative and coercive migration diplomacy towards the European Union. During the first decade of the 21st Century, Libyan leader **M. Gaddafi** began to exert pressure first on southern European states and gradually on the entire European Union precisely through the regulation of migration flows to Europe. As early as 2004, he warned that if the European Union did not lift the sanctions imposed on his country, Libya would cease to function as a European coastguard and would not stop migrants heading north. Italy was sending refugee boats back to Libya since 2009, and so, during a visit to Italy in 2010, the Libyan leader openly asked for funding to tackle the problem and threatened that, if it was not forthcoming, Europe would soon be turned into a migratory battleground between the European population and incoming African immigrants as a result of illegal and uncontrolled migration. The **Gaddafi** regime has thus gradually become the European Union's main partner in dealing with migration issues, particularly the detention camps being built on the territory of this African country. The reward was EU financial support contracts amounting to tens of millions of euros for building the dictatorial regime's migration 'capacity' (Rozumek, 2011).

After the fall of the **Gaddafi** regime, we witnessed the biggest wave of

migration to Europe since 1990. The political and economic situation in the country today is unstable and not transparent. The UN (OCHA, 2022) estimates that around 823 000 people in Libya are still in need of humanitarian aid. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2019), there were approximately 636 000 refugees in Libya in 2019. It can be assumed that for many of them, Libya is not a destination state for migration and, if conditions are favourable, they will try to cross the Mediterranean Sea to reach the territory of EU Member States.

Another country that has openly worked to achieve national interests with the help of migration diplomacy and has directly articulated the threat of opening its borders with Europe (Altıok, Tosun, 2019) is Turkey. In the second half of the 20th Century, Turkey was an important source state of economic migrants for labour markets in Western Europe, especially Germany (Steinert, 2014). Thousands of invited migrants moved to Germany under bilateral agreements to help address labour shortages (Fassmann, Münz, 1994). However, the migration of Turkish citizens towards Germany continued even after the end of the treaty terms, despite the various restrictive measures taken by German immigration policy. At the end of 2020, more than 1.4 million foreigners of Turkish origin lived in Germany. However, this figure only includes those Turks who do not have German citizenship. The total population of Germany with a Turkish migrant background in 2020 stood at 2 757 000 (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2022). It is only since 2011, i.e. since the mass influx of migrants from Syria, that Turkey has also been regarded as an immigration country (Pusch, Sirkeci, 2016).

Due to the emigration of Turkish workers to Western European countries, Turkey has long been considered an emigration country. Yet since the 1980s, Turkey has received refugees from neighbouring states (Norman, 2020). In the context of the migration situation of 2015 and 2016, correlations between Turkey's migration and foreign policies are increasingly emerging. With its strategic location between Europe, Asia and Africa, the country is politically balancing between aspirations for EU membership on the one hand and regional great power ambitions on the other. At the same time, Turkey is one of the countries with the highest number of refugee admissions in the world. Analysing the movement of refugees and migrants is a means of understanding the expansion of Turkish influence abroad and the pursuit of Turkish national interests - particularly in the context of relations with the European Union, gaining financial benefits, accelerating the accession process or introducing visa-free travel. It should be noted that Turkey's importance as a buffer state in preventing mass

waves of migrants from third countries from entering the territory of the European Union has significantly strengthened Turkey's position as a European partner with which friendly relations must be maintained.

In the context of the routes through Turkey, the Asian route is of the greatest importance, mainly used by migrants from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Iran and Syria. The destination area is Istanbul, from where migrants follow the Eastern Mediterranean route to Greece and Bulgaria, and then the Western Balkan route to Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia. From Syria, which had a population of 22 million, about 6.6 million people have emigrated since 2011, according to UNHCR (2021). The vast majority - approximately 5.5 million refugees - emigrated to neighbouring countries, mainly Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt. Kaya (2021) projected that by the end of 2020 there were more than 3.5 million refugees from Syria in Turkey, with additional Syrians taking refuge in refugee camps in Jordan and Lebanon. These people live in extreme poverty and are dependent on humanitarian aid.

In 2015-2016, more than one million migrants crossed the territory of European Union member states through Turkey in one year. In 2015 alone, Frontex recorded 1.82 million irregular crossings of the EU's external borders, with the majority of the 885,386 on the Eastern Mediterranean route between Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria and Cyprus (Frontex, 2016). Turkey has used the aforementioned situation as a threat to the arrival of huge numbers of large groups of migrants to Europe. This automatically resulted in the diversification of society into two groups - pro-immigration and anti-immigration oriented, which has been fully confirmed in the case of EU Member States and which creates the potential for the emergence of value conflicts in the destination or transit states. Ultimately, the situation of 2015 and 2016 motivated individual governments and the European Union as a whole to take action to prevent similar situations.

Turkey's reactions to migration processes from Syria have evolved. **Şahin Mencütek, Gökalp Aras,** and **Coskun** (2020) distinguish four phases of the Turkish government's approach to Syrian refugees. In 2011, Turkey responded to the situation in Syria with an open-door policy. The open approach to Syrian refugees was based on the assumption of a temporary conflict in Syria and the early return of refugees to their country of origin. At this stage, the Turks treated Syrian refugees as "guests" (Gökalp Aras, Şahin Mencütek, 2015) rather than as refugees. At the level of multilateral relations, the Turkish government accentuated its humanitarian approach towards Syrian refugees, which was intended to underline its position as a strong regional power and at the same time

as a country with a policy based on a democratic foundation. However, this approach gradually lost its relevance as Turkey began to register security problems in Syria and failures in its foreign policy towards Middle Eastern states. In the second phase (between 2012 and 2015), Turkey was becoming internationally isolated. During this period, under the influence of the ongoing conflict in Syria, it changed its approach towards Syrian refugees and sought to slow immigration flows from the neighbouring country. Given the economic costs associated with the asylum procedure, the Turkish government began to push the issue of redistributing refugees among other states or international organisations in the international environment. In the third phase, from the second half of 2015 onwards, Turkey started to behave pragmatically and attempted to shift the substantial refugee burden to the European Union. Since this year, Turkey has taken an opportunistic approach to managing migration processes and using coercive diplomacy to promote mainly its interests (Gökalp Aras, 2019).

The basic document adopted during this extremely tense period was the EU-Turkey Declaration of 18 March 2016, which explicitly states that all new irregular migrants arriving from Turkey to the Greek islands will be returned to Turkey as of 20 March 2016. For every Syrian returned to Turkey from the Greek islands, another Syrian will be resettled from Turkey to the European Union. Subsequently, the statement says that Turkey's action is conditional on concessions on the EU side, which include the disbursement of the €3 billion initially allocated under the EU Refugee Facility to Turkey to fund projects for beneficiaries of temporary protection, as well as the provision of a further €3 billion by the end of 2018 once these resources were exhausted; accelerating Turkey's accession negotiations with the European Union, and finally, visa liberalisation with all participating Member States, to lift the visa requirement for Turkish citizens by the end of June 2016 at the latest (European Council, 2016). Although Turkey used active diplomacy towards the European Union, its discontent eventually led to the use of coercive migration diplomacy (Şahin Mencütek, Gökalp Aras, Coskun, 2020). A fourth phase is currently underway, characterised by programmes to encourage refugees to return to their country of origin. Some authors argue that Turkey and the European Union should return to cooperative diplomacy to resolve the tensions between the two sides of the conflict and to ensure that the final solution is beneficial for both Turkey and the EU (Irdem, Raychev, 2021).

Looking at Turkey's migration diplomacy, we can conclude that on the one hand, the government has managed to use the migration issue to restart the EU

accession process and accelerate the visa liberalisation process, but on the other hand, as the current state of the negotiations shows, Turkey cannot be expected to join the European Union in the short or medium term. An indisputable benefit and success for the European Union is the halting of mass migration from the Middle East area, as evidenced by the EU's external border agency Frontex's figures for 2021 when an increase in crossings was recorded on the Eastern Mediterranean route compared with the previous year, but these migration figures are opposed to 2015-2016. Specifically, some 40,200 illegal border crossings were intercepted, an increase of 117 per cent compared to the same period last year. In September alone, 10 400 illegal crossings were recorded along the route, which is 112 per cent more compared to September 2020. The main nationalities of migrants detected on this route were nationals of Syria, Afghanistan and Morocco (Frontex, 2021).[2]

According to **Adamson** and **Tsourapas** (2019), states can also use migration diplomacy to achieve economic objectives. An extreme form of coercive migration diplomacy motivated by economic interests could be observed at the end of 2021 in the example of Belarusian politics. This form of political pressure was used by Belarus for the first time in 2002 when negotiating economic aid from the European Union. In 2021, Belarus first allowed the passage of refugees from conflict areas such as Iraq, Syria, Yemen and Afghanistan by relaxing its visa policy, and then gathered them first at the borders with Lithuania and Latvia and later at the border with Poland. In this way, Belarus responded to the sanctions imposed by the European Union after the **Lukashenko** regime rigged the presidential elections and subsequently cracked down on demonstrators and political opponents in a brutal manner. The Belarusian president's office (2021) said it was "a response to unfriendly actions of the European Union and its member states towards Belarus". It can be argued that **Lukashenko** sought, in this way, to have the sanctions against the Belarusian political elite lifted and to have his legitimacy recognised. Small states with insufficient economic or political capacity can sometimes try to use migration processes to strengthen their bargaining position vis-à-vis stronger states or even a community of states such as the European Union (Greenhill 2010). In the context of Russia's aggression in

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[2] Please note that these figures refer to the number of detected illegal border crossings at the external borders of the European Union. The same person may attempt to cross the border several times at different points of the external border and therefore the statistics, although provided by the institution, are of limited predictive value.

Ukraine, we cannot rule out the hypothesis that Belarus, as a close ally of Russia, was interested in provoking tensions between the Member States of the European Union. Indeed, as the situation in 2015-2016 has shown, different approaches to migration have caused tensions between the old and some new EU states. This method of coercion and threats had greater resonance than it had had in 2002, as the issue of international migration has been much more resonating in the current period and mass refugee waves are a major social and European political issue. The way in which Belarus pressured its neighbours and the European Union as a whole has even been described as a 'hybrid war' (Pempel, Kiselyova, 2021).

Frontex statistics (2021) up to September 2021 show that the Eastern European migration route was the busiest during this period. In general, the number of illegal crossings of the EU's external borders in the first nine months of 2021 increased by 68 per cent to 133 900, according to preliminary calculations. This is 47 per cent higher than in 2019 before the COVID-19 pandemic broke out when the number of illegal border crossings reached 91 000. On September, 23 630 illegal border crossings were intercepted on Europe's main migration routes, 40 per cent more than in 2020, when pandemic-related border restrictions were in place. This is also an increase of 17 per cent compared to September 2019.

At the EU's eastern borders, the number of illegal border crossings from January to September 2021 reached almost 6 200. The border between Lithuania and Belarus continued to be the most affected with 4 170 intercepted crossings. The numbers started to fall after reaching an all-time high in July (2900 crossings per month). In September, the Lithuanian authorities registered 20 irregular crossings. Most of the migrants apprehended at this section of the border came from Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria.

In the case of Poland, 1 380 illegal crossings were recorded in the period in question, and the deployment of police and military units on the common border between Poland and Belarus must also be considered in this period. Again, the majority of migrants came from Iraq, Afghanistan, Russia and Syria. In September 2021, the Polish authorities registered 28 illegal border crossings (Frontex, 2021).

The conflict, which was provoked on the eastern borders of the European Union through coercive migration diplomacy, was not successful for the Belarusian President. This is because it was not a migratory wave on the scale that it was in 2015 and 2016. Tsourapas (2018) highlights that destination states

of migration can take advantage of their position vis-à-vis the sending state either by deploying various restrictive strategies, including by strengthening immigration controls and forcibly expelling citizens of the sending state. The success of this response will depend on the extent to which the sending state is vulnerable to the political and economic costs that arise as a result of the receiving states' strategy, namely if it is unable to absorb them on its territory and cannot rely on the support of other host states. Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, as the states neighbouring Belarus, deployed thousands of border guards, soldiers and police officers to close their borders to prevent migratory pressures from Belarus. The European Union responded to the situation by agreeing on new sanctions against Belarus. **Lukashenko** wanted to take advantage of a rather disunited European Union on the issue of the refugee influx. On the one hand, some states respect international obligations regarding refugees, on the other hand, there are some member states (e.g. the V4 ones) that present an interest in deciding on migration exclusively on their own. Thus, not only the V4's specific approach to the EU's migration policy could be exploited, but also Poland's gradual departure from the EU's common policy, as well as the existing contradictions between the European Union and Poland on the issue of the Polish judicial system, or the recognition of the rights of sexual minorities.

Conclusions

Based on our analysis, we can conclude that the use of migration processes can be an effective foreign policy tool in which one state applies the use of non-military coercion against another state or a community of states such as the European Union. Various terms are used today to describe this phenomenon, but we worked with the concept of migration diplomacy. This type of regulation of migration processes can be cooperative or coercive, but we primarily focused on the second category. We illustrated the category of coercive migration diplomacy by exemplifying the foreign policies of three states - Libya, Turkey and Belarus, but at the same time, we stress that this type of application of coercion has not been a new phenomenon in international politics.

In our study, we pointed out that coercive migration diplomacy usually occurs from a non-democratic regime to a democratic state, although this is not the rule. Pressure from Libya, Turkey or Belarus towards the European Union or its member states falls into this category. Based on the **Gaddafi** regime's influence on migration processes towards Libya's North African neighbours, it can be

argued that coercive migration diplomacy can also work between states with non-democratic political systems. In such cases, however, it is not political differences that are important, but the economic differences. Indeed, for economically less powerful states, mass migration can represent an increased economic burden, which in turn can be reflected in the political failure of the ruling elite.

A negative consequence of coercive migration diplomacy can be the inducement of instability in the destination countries of migration. Mass migration processes tend to provoke polarising public reactions (Škutová, Packa, 2021), as one part of society generally appeals to the principles of humanism and strict compliance with international obligations, including the right to protection from political persecution, while the other part of society will oppose migrants, even though the threat of persecution or threats to life and limb due to military conflicts may be very real.

Given that international migration often occurs when there are economic, political, security or social differences between the countries of origin and destination, we assume that the European Union, as a community of economically developed states (Gbúrová, 2010; Zagoršeková, Čiefová, Čambalíková, 2017), will continue to be confronted with migration processes in the future. Funding third states that will create barriers to the transit of refugees and detain them on their territory may be one strategy to counteract mass migration processes. However, we do not consider this approach to be sustainable in the long term, particularly because of the temporary nature of the regimes that have chosen to implement this type of policy. The example of Libya shows that with regime change, migration routes can be loosened and mass migration can occur.

The European Union will continue to be a destination of choice for migrants due to its economic performance, standard of living, and higher levels of security, but also due to the social networks already established by settled migrants. Shortly, we may witness a paradoxical situation. The community of European states, which, on the one hand, is based on respect for human rights and the protection of every individual from persecution, will, on the other hand, hinder migration processes into its territory, inter alia, by cooperating with states that either detain people threatened, inter alia, by war conflict, on their territory or send them back to their country of origin. An intensification of conflicts within the European Union cannot be ruled out either. The years 2015 and 2016 already showed that the European Union is not united on the issue of migration. There is only agreement on the admission of highly skilled labour, on strengthening control

mechanisms at common borders and on building detention capacities in often manifestly undemocratic countries. We assume that states seeking to reduce the cohesion of this European community will want to take advantage of the different attitudes of the Member States on migration policy and the resulting disagreements.

International migration and the problems associated with it represent a huge and extremely sensitive socio-political issue, on which the European Union states have not yet been able to find a common solution. It is precisely the internal contradictions and mutual tensions within the Union that are playing into the hands of the non-member states, which are trying to use the existing problems of the European community to their advantage using coercive migration diplomacy. In this paper, we tried to show that the threat of massive illegal migration is a rather effective political strategy. States that used it in the past were often successful. While they did not completely achieve all goals, they had sought to achieve in their foreign policy activities, it is undeniable that they succeeded in pushing quite a lot through. It follows that the use of the migrant or refugee threat is certainly a successful political tactic that we will continue to see and that states will continue to use more often shortly. The coercive migration diplomacy of the **Lukashenko** regime in 2021 was certainly not the last attempt by a third state to achieve its particularistic interests in relation to the European Union. Indeed, states can gain a relatively large number of political and economic benefits at a minimal cost. For this reason, we consider it important that the relationship between international migration and foreign policy receives more attention in the field of political science and international relations research.

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