

POLITICKÉ VEDY / POLITICAL SCIENCES

Časopis pre politológiu, najnovšie dejiny, medzinárodné vzťahy, bezpečnostné štúdiá / Journal for Political Sciences, Modern History, International Relations, security studies

URL of the journal / URL časopisu: <https://www.politickevedy.fpmv.umb.sk>

Author(s) / Autor(i): **Irah Kučerová**
Article / Článok: **The Wave of Broad-Spectrum Crises in the EU Over the Last Decade: The Effect of Chaos or the Arrival of the Black Swan? The Impact of Crises on Integration Dynamics**
Publisher / Vydavateľ: **Fakulta politických vied a medzinárodných vzťahov – UMB Banská Bystrica / Faculty of Political Sciences and International Relations – UMB Banská Bystrica**
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24040/politickevedy.2023.26.4.130-164>

Recommended form for quotation of the article / Odporúčaná forma citácie článku:

KUČEROVÁ, I. 2023. The Wave of Broad-Spectrum Crises in the EU Over the Last Decade: The Effect of Chaos or the Arrival of the Black Swan? The Impact of Crises on Integration Dynamics. In *Politické Vedy*. Vol. 26, no. 4, pp. 130-164. ISSN 1335 – 2741. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.24040/politickevedy.2023.26.4.130-164>

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THE WAVE OF BROAD-SPECTRUM CRISES IN THE EU OVER THE LAST DECADE: THE EFFECT OF CHAOS OR THE ARRIVAL OF THE BLACK SWAN? THE IMPACT OF CRISES ON INTEGRATION DYNAMICS¹

Irah Kučerová*

ABSTRACT

Since the beginning of the 21st century, the European Union has been undergoing a wave of broad-based crises. The Eurozone crisis, the effects of which are still being felt by the EU economy and the integration process as a whole, the subsequent so-called migration crisis with its impact on the integration dynamic, the British referendum on Brexit, and the pandemic crisis, which may change the integration slowdown. Open war conflict in Europe connected with Russian aggression towards Ukraine. Does this development correspond to the concept of chaos or is it the arrival of the black swan? What security challenges have these crises brought? Narrative comparison of the sensitivity of EU 's states as a chosen methodology targeting to internal system structure of the EU. Macroeconomic vulnerability, geo-economic vulnerability, polarisation of the EU member states, a decline in the Union unity and a return to national interests. But also, a rethinking of self-sufficiency in strategic zones and questions of strategic autonomy in critical infrastructure.

Key words: European Union, Eurozone Crisis, Migration Crisis, Brexit, Pandemic Crisis, Russia-Ukraine War, Chaos Theory, Black Swan Arrival

Introduction

The world does not develop continuously, gradually, but in leaps and bounds. Frequent interruptions in development are associated with crises of various types and manifestations. The crisis has become part of the normal life cycle as an omnipresent conflict gradating at a certain moment of escalation (Koper, 2022: 38). The development of international relations after 2001 is proof of this. The European Union had to face many problems that marked the dynamics of its

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24040/politickevedy.2023.26.4.130-164>

¹ This work was supported by the Cooperation Program, research area Political Science

development.

The very promising 1990's in the European area, coupled with the fall of the Iron Curtain and the gradual affiliation of some then post-communist countries to the European Union, the further expansion of the EU membership and the deepening of European integration were replaced at the very beginning of the new millennium by economic and geopolitical, security upheavals.

On the one hand, another reformulation of the founding treaties, the Treaty of Nice, was prepared in December 2000, which the Irish refused to accept for the first time in the June 2001 referendum. This was the first significant manifestation of the already predicted and slightly experienced *fatigue de l'integration* or spill-back effect (Lindberg-Scheingold, 1970: 137). The reason for rejecting further deepening of integration tends to be its overly strong intensity leading to the fears of the erosion of state sovereignty (Kučerová, 2015: 203). This was precisely the main reason for the 54% of Irish voters who rejected the Treaty of Nice, referring to the violation of Irish neutrality (Müller, 2002).

However, 2001 brings more problems. In the first quarter, the extraordinary rate of economic growth of the US economy is faltering until then, and the recession begins here. The onset of the first global recession during 2001 was exacerbated by the terrorist attack on the US on September 11, 2001; the economic recession dominated European economies in 2001-2003.

One cannot forget the so-called Big Bang associated with the unprecedented enlargement of the EU by ten new countries in May 2004, which then continued with three more new member states, increasing the number of member countries to 28. In any case, the expansion of the membership and thus the voter base has led to a slowdown in integration operations, especially in the implementation of the internal market.

The end of the first decade of the 21st century brings very strong turbulence in the world from both economical and geopolitical points of view, all with overlaps into the second decade of the century. In the US, a mortgage crisis erupts in 2007, i.e., a real estate market crisis instrumentally linked to the banking crisis. Given the advanced stage of globalisation and information technology, in early 2008 this originally American crisis is transforming into a global financial crisis, the effects of which on developments in the EU will be discussed below.

The Eurozone crisis of 2009-2013 as a specific manifestation of the global financial crisis of 2008-2010, which was its trigger, is the deepest complication of an otherwise highly successful integration process. It pointed to the weakness of the conditions of integration and, above all, the fragility or lack of real supervision

of compliance with adopted principles.

The European migration crisis culminating in 2015 was not the first migrant overflow at Europe's borders - Europe has been struggling with this for a long time, and the EU has been facing the former Yugoslav war, the Gulf War 1991, and increased migration from the Sahel region. However, this crisis was unique in its concentration within about two years due to the deteriorating situation in the Middle East and North Africa during the so-called Arab Spring. The fact is, however, that perhaps for the first time there was a clear differentiation of views on aid for immigrants or refugees between member states. While German Chancellor **Angela Merkel** actually opened the borders to them with the well-known motto *Wir schaffen das* - We can do it, France, Italy, Austria or the Visegrad countries immediately opposed it.

As the topic of this article is focused on the most significant crises, we cannot ignore others that originally looked like a national problem or its solution, but which have been fundamentally influencing the integration process for many years. Such as Brexit, when the voters' decision to withdraw from the Union brought an enormous burden on both economies - the UK and the EU.

The SARS-COVID-19 pandemic is another turning point not only in the evolution of the European Union, but in international relations in general. COVID is unique in many ways. First of all, in its virulence, mortality, and health consequences, but also in essential, unique economic, political, and security effects. For the first time in history, many countries in the world have locked economies with incalculable economic and social costs. Individual states and their political elites have handled pandemics differently, including the EU countries.

The last major crisis affecting not only development within the EU, but global development as well, is the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the onset of the Russian-Ukrainian war. This is not only a political, security, social and economic crisis, but a universal crisis of international relations, harming not only the participating states but also a wide range of countries affected by food and energy insufficiency. It is a flagrant violation of international law by the Russian Federation that affects the development of international relations in a wide range of dimensions.

So much for a brief outline of developments in Europe since 1990s. Indeed, the most prominent aspects of the EU's situation in the global context are also factors in the further genesis of the problems accumulating in the last decade, which we will address explicitly. But without understanding the roots of these

crises, the analysis could not be comprehensive.

Watching these developments raises many questions, such as: *How to perceive these crises affecting European integration? Can the EU's observed crises be assessed through the prism of the two concepts chosen, or are they systemic crises of European integration?*

To what extent did these deep crises affect the integration process? What security measures have prompted these crises?

The chosen methodology is the comparison of the narrative type of the sensitivity of the EU countries and the Union itself to the crisis manifestations of the development of the international system over the last decade. Related to this is the formulation of the main aim of this consideration, namely to find out whether the development of individual crises in the EU is caused or exacerbated by the systemic setting of integration policies or to what extent it was an external attack. The monitored crises are of such a different nature, from their cause to the focal point of the problems to the observed effects, that unfortunately it is not possible to create a single analytical structure valid for all five crises, even if the effort was there.

Every crisis is a deep intervention in the development of any organism, can slow down development or even lead to inverse development. But on the other hand, the crisis can be a springboard for innovation and, improvement of coordination of the establishment of policies and political order as such, which will strengthen that organism (Guasti, 2020: 57). Is that the case with the European Union?

1. Conceptual framework: chaos theory, black swan theory

The designation of the two approaches is ambiguous, as both can be found even under the term theory. Both chosen concepts lack some of the basic criteria that must be observed in the case of theories - e.g., they do not have general validity and they have neither an explanatory nor a predictive function, which the theory should have (Drbohlav - Uherek, 2007). Hence in this case we refer to them as the concepts, the models.

Given the diversity of crises that have taken place or persisted, it is difficult to find a common theoretical anchoring, nor in the economic sphere, but neither in the political or international relations theories. Let's try a different approach, namely to examine the presented crises through two concepts - the chaos effect or the black swan effect.

1.1 The theory of chaos

The concept/theory of chaos is offered in the case of a violation of the causality system. When even the cause and effect may be swapped, then we can talk about the paradox of chaos. The concept of chaos explains how a small change at the beginning can dramatically affect the behaviour of the whole system in terms of the disruption of originally considered determinism (Poincaré, 1890), hence deterministic chaos (although initially appearing randomly or outright chaotic, yet showing causal development) relative to the originally accepted theory of equilibrium. Determinism, like equilibrium theory, is associated with predictability, which is precisely opposed to the concept of chaos. The basic attributes of chaos, with which the theory works, are extraordinary sensitivity to initiating influence, so-called bifurcation points (turning points), non-linearity of development and a unique approach to solutions. Bifurcation points are critical points of change in the developmental trajectory beyond which predictability ends. That's why we talk about chaos, or non-linear development (Acikalin – Ercetin, 2022: 7).

Contemporary science perceives chaos as an unpredictable development, but nevertheless recognizes that chaos has its own rules, with which it explains a number of dynamic manifestations of reality (Tănasie - Drăcea – Lădaru, 2017). Chaos theory, originally included in the methodology of natural sciences, was developed by social sciences as one of the methods of investigating the unpredictability of social reality (Krasner, 1990), since the social sphere also has a non-linear structure.

In fact, the existence of chaos is a type of complex system - chaos theory and complexity theory are linked within nonlinear dynamical systems (Steward, 2009). In the end, a complex system that seems stable and robust can be fundamentally disrupted by a marginal change that we do not initially perceive as fundamental. It is crucial to know that these are nonlinear systems (i.e., the input is not directly proportional to the output), but with internal dynamics evolving within a certain internal structure, when the mutual interaction of system elements changes that internal structure. Then, even a small unexpected impulse can lead to a chaotic course, however, not a random, if not completely unpredictable, one. Poincaré even talks about a very minor, almost imperceptible cause that ultimately leads to large differences in outcome (Poincaré, 1890). In the natural order, most systems exhibit nonlinear trends, rather chaotic ones, thus being difficult to predict. Yet, based on acceptance of individuality of individual components, it can lead to the establishment or restoration of social order

(Winkler, 2014: 65-67), which is important for the analysis in the presented article.

One characteristic is significant, namely increased sensitivity to initial impulses (Lorenz, 1963). A fundamental characteristic is the butterfly effect, where a seemingly small stimulus - "butterfly fluttering" - can lead to a storm on the other side of the world and spread through the domino effect; or a slight deviation in the initial conditions can trigger large, sometimes crucial, changes in the future (Lorenz, 1963: 132-133, Lorenz, 1972). The chaos, thus, paradoxically explains how and why order is eventually created (Al-Khalili, 2014).

Chaos theory can be used to understand various phenomena of natural and social reality, from economic to social crises, so that we understand the essence of the dynamics of development and its consequences (Acikalin – Ercetin, 2022: 2). Chaos theory and macroeconomics, which is one of the reference frames for this analysis of the crises we are following, have long been at odds, as the practice of modelling the equilibrium state of the economy has long prevailed, which is in direct conflict with the concept of chaos; currently, it is already a case of nonlinear dynamic equilibrium models. Finally, chaos dynamics were discovered in ordinary macroeconomic models, e.g., **Nicholas Kaldor** in 1940 (non-linear business cycle model), but thanks to computer technology in the 1980s, the presence of chaotic dynamics in usual macroeconomic models was revealed (Benhadib - Day, 1981). It is about the possibility of explaining macroeconomic manifestations of instability such as fluctuations in the economic cycle, recession or depression. It is clear that methods for detecting chaos in dynamic systems had to be developed (Gilmore, 1993), but then we face the classic weaknesses of macroeconomic models, which must abstract from many variables (e.g., ignoring the fact of missing some data, replacing it with either a central characteristic or a whole trend). However, in order to use the chaos methodology in the development analysis, it is advisable not to interfere with the set of variables. Yet, theory is applicable to more social sciences because it is used, for example, in connection with research into the development of international relations as well as public opinion (Kiel - Elliot, 1997).

Nevertheless, the macroeconomic dynamics of chaos can be applied to developments within the European Union as a sui generis community, and let's try to test whether the observed crises show the dynamics of chaos.

1.2 Black swan effect concept

The other concept chosen is the **black swan effect**, where the black swan is a symbol of an initially impossible, highly unlikely phenomenon, or so-called

perfect storm (Paté-Cornell, 2012: 1823). For millennia, people in the northern hemisphere knew only white swans, yet two thousand years ago the Roman poet **Juvenalis** used the term as a metaphor for the unthinkable. It was not until the end of the 17th century that Europeans were confronted with the occurrence of black swans in Australia. The original conviction of impossibility was replaced by a subsequent rebuttal, and then the habit of retroactively trying to rationalize unexpected developments settled.

The arrival of the black swan is perceived as a metaphor for an unexpected change with very major implications for the functioning of society/system (Taleb, 2011: 8), as a surprising, extreme event in the situations with a high degree of uncertainty (Aven, 2013: 45). The difference between a normal event and an unexpected one, the black swan, is a certain degree of predictability of normal changes. In contrast, whereas we are practically unable to predict on the basis of past experience, such events that are extreme and sudden are thus having major impacts on society (Taleb, 2011: 358). The inability to acknowledge or even ignore the potential risk is a frequent cause of black swan visits (Adamec - Schüllerová, 2015: 94). The drama of the arrival of the black swan is connected with the overlooking of risks, which are evaluated as marginal (Aven, 2013: 47). Evidently, not only soldiers, but also economists are generals only after each battle, and they prepare for the next one according to the previous ones.

However, scientists are still convinced of the general validity of theories that will help them predict development and thus prepare for the expected changes. It has to be said, though, that in every extraordinary atypical event, i.e., the arrival of the black swan, we have less empirical data available and then we rely all the more on the theory, which we try to formulate as generally as possible (Taleb, 2011: 366, 368). The black swan symbolizes a completely unknown event not only for the public, but also for the scientific community, or indications of problems have been assessed as unlikely, unfortunately realistically but with extreme consequences (Aven, 2015).

Nevertheless, representatives of many fields are aware that the arrival of the black swan can disrupt the balance of systems that have so far not shown instability, mainly not expected (Adamec-Schüllerová, 2015). Eventually, the black swan analogy is also used as an excuse by politicians or economists before adequate crisis management measures are taken (Paté-Cornell, 2012). The author could not be closer to the truth in the context of the pandemic crisis 2020-2021. The concept of the black swan is commonly used today in relation to risk and security (Aven, 2013: 48-49).

In general, the black swan can be characterized by three basic attributes, namely unpredictability, significant developmental impact and then reverse explicability (Taleb, 2011: 181). To some extent, these characteristics of the black swan link it to the butterfly effect (Lorenz, 1963: 141; Taleb, 2011: 195-196). We should be concerned about unrepeatable solutions, regardless of their history as we know it (Lorenz, 1963: 130). In general, we should conceptualize the approach of governments, or their economic policies, to incorporate risks including the phenomenon of the black swan, i.e., to focus more on risk assessment (Aven, 2015).

1.3 Chaos theory or black swan concept?

To summarize, the question arises as to whether the two concepts have something in common. It follows from the above that there are certain manifestations of analogous features, namely randomness of manifestation, unpredictability, high improbability, the risk of disturbing the balance in systems that are still stable. The essence and effects are different, but in some respects both concepts seem to have a common denominator. Therefore, it is worth trying to methodologically use both models to explain the effects of the observed EU crisis.

The chosen theoretical framework makes it possible to formulate a hypothesis: **The susceptibility of EU countries to an external attack, be it by the "flapping of butterfly wings" or the "arrival of a black swan", is higher due to the structural and systemic setting of policies.**

2. Short literature review

Although crises are a common part of economic and social reality (Koper, 2022), we are always surprised by negative developments. Nevertheless, the crisis can be perceived as a springboard for changes, for shaping the future (Guasti, 2020; Liptáková, 2022). Due to the broad thematic scope of the study, the background literature cannot be exhaustive. Nevertheless, it is appropriate to mention the main authors and their reflections on the subject under investigation. The aim of the article is not the analysis of individual crises, but their impact on the development of the EU and its integration dynamics, therefore the resources used will be focused in this direction. The chosen theoretical concepts - the chaos theory and the arrival of the black swan have been frequented several times in the evaluation of specific crises.

The authors of the analysis of international migration **Tănasie - Drăcea - Lădaru**, 2017, use chaos theory, similar to **Steward**, 2009, to grasp chaos as a complex phenomenon. The essence of chaos theory is the dramatic disruption of the system by a small initial change - see **Poincaré**, 1890. The extraordinary sensitivity to the initial impulse is explained by the effect of butterfly wings (Lorenz, 1963, 1972), when a slight impulse can cause a storm through a domino effect. **Al-Khalili**, 2014, draws attention to the paradoxical impact of chaos, when one can see how the existing order changes.

Although chaos theory was originally assigned to the exact sciences, there is a clear shift in its applicability for the needs of a wider range of social sciences (Benhadib - Day, 1981; Kiel - Elliot, 1997; Tănasie - Drăcea - Lădaru, 2017; Yarovaya - Matkovskyy - Jalan, 2022; Acikalin – Ercetin, 2022).

The arrival of the black swan (Taleb, 2009; 2011) is a very often mentioned concept in an attempt to explain an unpredictable change of order, therefore it can also be described as a perfect storm (Junger, 1991; Paté-Cornell, 2012). The black swan as a symbol of the disturbance of balance (Aven, 2015; Adamec-Schüllerová, 2015).

For the analysis of individual crises, studies dealing primarily with their impact on the development of the EU were used - **Dabrowski**, 2010; **Catanach-Ragatz**, 2010; **Copelovitch - Frieden - Walter**, 2016; **Talani**, 2016; **Kučerová**, 2010; **Kučerová**, 2023).

Overall, most authors agree that the Eurozone crisis was not a case of a black swan, at most a lame duck (Blyth – Matthijs, 2017), with the warning signs of stress in the financial sector coming for a long time. No one in the know could have been surprised (Martin, 2009; Taleb, 2011; Kučerová, 2010; Copelovitch - Frieden - Walter, 2016; Kučerová, 2023).

The migration crisis as a topic is elaborated in great detail from many angles of perspective, in our case **Tănasie - Drăcea - Lădaru**, 2017; **Kovářová**, 2018; **Modebadze**, 2019; **Kučerová**, 2020; **Kunychka**, 2020, but earlier **Castle-Miller**, 1998. The question is, however, whether we can apply the concept of chaos to the so-called European migration crisis - see the analytical section.

Brexit, as an interruption of positive integration until then (creation of new degrees and institutions), is dealt with very intensively in the professional literature, both in terms of its causes and its effects (Phinnemore, 2016; Geoghegan, 2016; Gifford, 2016; Thompson, 2017; Kučerová, 2018; Rákosník, 2021, etc.).

The unprecedented multifactorial crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic,

leading to lockdowns (Cebre, 2020; Plevák, 2020) is often compared to manifestations of chaos (Acikalin – Ercetin, 2022) or black swans (Yarovaya – Matkovskyy – Jalan, 2022; Kučerová, 2022).

The Russian-Ukrainian war is too recent a topic, but it resonates daily in the mass media and the academic/political sphere (Ditych, 2022; Ferguson, 2022, Pravec, 2022 etc.). A symbol of the arrival of the black swan - however, clear signs of the Kremlin's neo-imperialism can be traced earlier, so we may view it as nothing unpredictable.

3. Analysis of five significant crises affecting the European Union

Eurozone crisis as a consequence of the global financial crisis. The specifics of the economic policies of the national as well as communitarian level and the economic and institutional asymmetry of the member countries made it difficult to solve the crisis; on the contrary, it contributed to its deepening and prolongation.

Another major crisis of societal, economic and security nature is the European migration crisis, which has clearly highlighted the limits of migration policies, as well as the willingness of Europeans to accept foreigners from other cultural backgrounds.

Brexit is a crisis of European integration, the first of its kind to disrupt the existing model of integration behaviour by rejecting the forms of cooperation achieved.

The COVID pandemic has expanded into a combined global crisis linking sanitary, social, security and economic risks in the context of lockdown economies.

Russia's aggression in Ukraine has sparked a new war on the European continent after many decades of peace. The effects of this war have fuelled the crisis of the international system, with consequences on many levels of international cooperation. Like the COVID pandemic, the Russian-Ukrainian war is a combined crisis that requires coordination of measures in multiple directions.

3.1 The global financial crisis and the EMU crisis

The global financial crisis evolved from the problems of the US mortgage-laden housing market, whose yields have steadily declined, all within the contours of economic neoliberalism and minimal central bank oversight. Adding an information revolution leading to the formation of new forms of international

cooperation to such a technological shift that we are talking about, and we are done with the mixture of hazardous ingredients.

Since the second half of the 1990s, the so-called B2B business, namely internet-trading, internet-banking and internet-investing, has proliferated. But their sale began to look positively like a **Ponzi** scheme or the principle of the aircraft (Taleb, 2011: 390). The basic problem was the higher risk of free-riders (Dabrowski, 2010), in this case banks behaving at risk and not following the basic rules of a prudent householder. The focus of the problem was the result of a combination of several factors - deregulation of the financial market with lax supervision of central banks against the background of innovations given by the information revolution (Catanach – Ragatz, 2010: 24).

At the turn of 2007 and 2008, the manifestations of the crisis reached Europe. The later protracted Eurozone crisis and the expansionary measures taken have thus contributed to the growth of Euroscepticism on British soil (Gifford, 2016: 779) and were reflected in the British referendum decision (Kučerová, 2018: 870).

The Eurozone crisis was supposed to come with full force in early 2009. Although EMU was built on mandatory conditions binding on all Eurozone candidates, the reality was different. The vulnerability to the EMU crisis was immanent at the very beginning of its implementation (CNB, 2014) - in the principle of solidarity, in the belief in accountability, in the absence of supervision of compliance with the criteria and in the absence of a real sanctions regime. Adding to the differing economic levels, the different dynamics of developments, and the performance of economies, the fragility of the monetary union is obvious.

This typifies not only Greece, which has re-admitted higher deficits (Copelovitch - Frieden - Walter, 2016), but also Hungary and Latvia, which were saved from bankruptcy by European institutions and the IMF. The so-called Troika - the ECB, the European Commission and the IMF have granted bridging loans to these non-EMU member countries.

It was also carried out in the contours of structural and institutional disparities between economies (Talani, 2016; Kučerová, 2010: 126-127; Kučerová, 2023: 16, 18-19) accompanying European integration from the very beginning and lasting to this day, even compared to the original member states. The EU is still heterogeneous despite 60 years of ongoing integration and billions invested in bridging regional and structural disparities.

The result was the deepest economic crisis since the 1970s accompanied by the rise of national conservatism in Western Europe, among other things, as a response to the painful effects of globalisation. There are many examples. Firstly,

it was the opening of economic scissors between the centres of education, innovation and, therefore, performance and the periphery with traditional production or even obsolete industry (Kučerová, 2023: 6, 13, 17). Secondly, the so-called "threat to national values" by increased migration, including legal migration - for work, study and, of course, the refugee crisis, where the shortcomings of material stability are being displaced by the so-called "globalisation". Finally, identity issues, growing nationalism not only in the population but also, unfortunately, among politicians. Conversely, a politics against policy style has gained ground, in which politicians, and often entire national governments make excuses for the EU and mobilise voters against it (Schmidt, 2019). Nationalism towards the EU has fully taken hold in Britain, so far. Attempts to advance national interests at the expense of European integration have been around for some time, though.

3.2 Migration crisis

Europe, the European Union as a whole, has been facing strong immigration for a long time, sometimes even mass immigration. Like in other advanced economies, in the case of Europe, the reality of not only political and economic stability, but also high social protection, plays into the decision-making process of migrants. As this latest wave has shown, however, this is often very distorted or even fabulous information about the amount and types of social guarantees (Kučerová, 2020: 509).

The so-called European migration crisis began to manifest itself more strongly in 2014, but peaked in 2015-2016. The polarisation of attitudes was more pronounced in the context of the immigration problem than in the financial crisis, where, after all, the degree of solidarity was higher. In this case, the emphasis was placed on national values, defending them against 'invaders from other cultures and religions threatening European values'. The growth of xenophobia, populism and nationalism is the main impact of this crisis (Modebadze, 2019). The biggest opponents of immigration and later quotas were not only the buffer states in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, but also the inherently transitional Central European countries of Visegrad and Austria.

In 2015, when 1.5-1.8 million refugees arrived in Europe (FRONTEX, 2019), disputes between EU member states over the form of settlement peaked, as EU countries received a total of 1,256,000 asylum applications in 2015, but only some states were asked to accept them. Interestingly, for 60% of all refugees in the world, only 10 countries provide refuge, the vast majority of them from Europe

(Eurostat, 2016).

The basic impetus for mass immigration to the EU was the so-called Arab Spring in 2011. The revolutionary movement swept across multiple countries in North Africa and the Middle East, and was so violent and widespread that Europe faced, perhaps for the first time in its history, such a strong current of immigration/rebellion. To this should be added economic migrants from other countries in Africa or Asia, often masquerading as war refugees, mainly from the sub-Saharan region (Kovářová, 2018: 822). This is often emigration from the most vulnerable landlocked states, which due to geographical isolation cannot draw on the positives of economic globalization (Kunychka, 2020: 452). Smuggling gangs specialising in transporting those interested to Europe and its social amenities has also played a bad role. The current practice is institutionalized in the so-called migration industry (Castle-Miller, 1998: 284) seeking only to maximize profits without considering the risks of transporting migrants across the sea.

The refugee crisis more or less passed after 2017: if in 2015 we talk about at least 1.5 million refugees, in 2017 we are talking about "only" 205 thousand, and a year later 150 thousand (Eurostat, 2019).

The migration crisis in the European Union has exposed the reluctance of many member states to stand in solidarity with others, populism, and burgeoning nationalism. It is precisely another example of politics against policy (Schmidt, 2019).

Russian aggression in Ukraine since February 2022 has given further impetus to the increase in migration to the EU. In this case, the largest recipients of war refugees were the buffer states of Central Europe. It should be added that, however, there has been a wave of solidarity across the Member States of the Union.

3.3 Brexit

Over time, Brexit is beginning to appear as a separate crisis of the European Union, as negotiating the terms of Brexit is a tough test for both parties involved, Britain and the EU.

Brexit is a direct consequence of a referendum announced by the then-British Prime Minister **David Cameron** to reassure traditional Tory voters who increasingly turned away from the Conservative Party towards UKIP - the United Kingdom Independence Party, whose main agenda was Britain's withdrawal from the EU. Before the 2014 elections, **Cameron** promised to call a referendum on

Britain's future in the EU within two years to appease his voters.

There were many reasons for the dissatisfaction of the British electorate, but four of them were not to be overlooked. Firstly, the identity problem of the British people in the context of European integration, when I fear they still follow **Benjamin Disraeli's** splendid isolation policy of the mid-19th century. The British have never identified with the ideas of European integration (Phinnemore, 2016; Geoghegan, 2016: 3).

A further amplifying factor was the impact of the global financial crisis on London City, and indeed the UK economy as a whole (Thompson, 2017: 434). In fact, London City had by then accounted for 25% of the UK's total output, so the overall economic decline was striking. The only result was a further rise in Euroscepticism (Gifford, 2016: 779).

The third perceived problem for a section of British society was increasing immigration, albeit mainly labour, but also social one. A peculiar fact is that the British started to define themselves against European immigrants, while people from former parts of the British Empire are more easily accepted. Lack of English proficiency played a role in this, so Brexit is also a linguistic reason. Although Britain is critically dependent on imports for many professions, including the highly skilled ones such as doctors, health professionals in general, or IT experts, the belief that migrants only do unskilled jobs has become entrenched in British society. And UKIP has come up with a brilliant slogan: migrants are taking our jobs.

The last, or rather the first, main argument for Leave was Britain's contributions to the common EU budget. It is undeniable that Britain, thanks to its efficiency, sent a lot to Brussels. It was the second largest net payer after Germany. But it is also true that in 1984 **Margaret Thatcher** negotiated the possibility of discounts on compulsory contributions, which all British prime ministers then willingly used. However, populist statements that this money will go to the healthcare sector instead of Brussels have taken hold, especially when Boris Johnson openly and repeatedly lied about the number of contributions (Kučerová, 2018: 871-872).

Other factors of the society's development also played a role in the decision. The change in the demographic structure in favour of a growing number of seniors has led to the unsustainability of the existing social system. This leads to a polarisation of society, where cosmopolitan urban liberals do not get along with rural or less educated or older populations more influenced by growing nationalism. The older the electorate, the more likely they were to vote for Britain

to leave. By contrast, the young and urban society voted roughly three-quarters to remain, with only a third in the over 65 age group (Rákosník, 2021). In essence, this is a structural conflict, where the crisis brings with it, among other things, intergenerational tensions, as the interests of the older generation conflict with those of the younger.

Initial assumptions envisaged large losses for the European Union, with smaller losses for the UK itself. However, the negotiation process showed the sheer ignorance to naivety of the British people, who did not anticipate the tough negotiations from the EU led by **Michel Barnier** (just for the record - he wrote a book about the negotiations, aptly titled *My Secret Brexit Diary: a glorious illusion*) and especially the number of items both sides had to agree on.

3.4 Pandemics and a combination of other crises

In early 2020, a pandemic of SARS-COVID-19 virus hit the world as declared by WHO, with "Patient 0" being identified as infected at the end of 2019. Like many previous influenza epidemics/pandemics, this virus started spreading from China, but this time with significant risks. First and foremost, its virulence proved alarming, then the health course, mortality rates, and eventual health complications and consequences, not only for the chronically ill but also for healthy and young patients.

As the development of the pandemic is an external attack, very unexpected for Europe, there was therefore no adequate ex ante protection against it, but the setting of its policies made the space of Europe and the Union ideal for the spread of the virus. The liberalisation of the movement of people not only within Schengen, but throughout the EU or other associated countries as well, coupled with the mass availability of air travel, increases the intensity of the spread of any contagious diseases.

Contrary to the crises analysed previously, these are not structural problems for the EU, as health policy is one of the only coordinated ones, i.e., the full competence of the member states. The fact is that solutions at the Community level have shown weaknesses and shortcomings in the competence type of European institutions (Webber, 2019), which needs to be changed and strengthened for the future. Nevertheless, the onset of a pandemic and the ensuing economic and social crisis is an obvious example of the arrival of the black swan, something sudden and unforeseen in its scale and impact. The enforced changes in the functioning of the state, international relations, economy, and society speak quite strongly of the black swan metaphor.

The rapid and aggressive rise of the epidemic leading to a global pandemic led to the lockdown of economies. Something historically unknown, a setting of economies or the state as such that no one has experienced. The economic and social consequences are absolutely unique. The world, Europe, since the beginning of 2020, has been in a combined global crisis joining a pandemic with a lockdown and an information crisis, with conspiracy theories running rampant, fake news spreading, social media on the rise.

The lockdown was associated with the closure of the service sector, which in advanced economies accounts for around 70% of employment and output. This means that the shutting of services, including education, has affected the vast majority of the population. As well as the revenue to the state budget and employment, low liquidity, rising insolvency rates and mass redundancies, and unnecessary bureaucratic burdens (Cebre, 2020). However, the main victims of the lockdown are schoolchildren and students. The economic costs are solvable, albeit with the risk of intergenerational cost shifting, but the social impacts will still be dealt with years after the pandemic within the affected generations. We are talking here not only about social problems, but psychological, educational, or relational ones, too.

The impact on integration dynamics should also be mentioned. They have been of both types, both the growth of national egoism, oh sorry - unilateralism, and the creation of many instruments to mitigate the mainly economic effects of the crisis. Of course, the Commission, as the main policy body, initiated and coordinated the cooperation of the member states, trying to secure unavailable health aids (Plevák, 2020). However, the Commission's roles and competences are limited. The pandemic crisis has contributed to further differentiation of the membership base.

3.5 Russia-Ukraine war

Although this conflict was intended by **Vladimir Putin** to take place only bilaterally, its core and, of course, its progression immediately affects other European states, not only neighbouring ones. The essence of the post-war international system has been disturbed. This is a major geopolitical turning point which, more than thirty years after the fall of the Iron Curtain, has interrupted the development of relations between the great powers, destabilising the entire international system – both political and economic.

Given not only the direct threat of military aggression from Russia to the EU's buffer countries, most notably the Baltic countries, but also other potential

casualties in Central Europe, the European Union leadership reacted unequivocally with the strong support of the member states whose leaders perceived the Russian invasion of the 24th February 2022 as a violation of the founding principles of the post-war international order. Most states openly support Ukraine, while Russia has fallen into international isolation. However, they are trying to keep their support below the escalation threshold so as not to actively engage in what has been a bilateral war. (Ditrych, 2022). But the question is how long the West will unite in support of Ukraine and against **Putin**. "**Putin** knows that Western unity on the war in Ukraine has run out" (Ferguson in Zadražilová, 2022). If we add to this the terrorist attacks of Hamas and the outbreak of another conflict in the Middle East - Yom Kippur War II, then the solution to Ukraine's defence of independence will have problems.

To what extent is the Russia-Ukraine war perceived in Europe as the arrival of the black swan? Or can the concept of chaos be detected in this war? Does the EU or the West bear a certain degree of blame for this war? If so, is there a systemic error? (for instance, inadequate reaction of the West to the occupation of part of Georgia by Russia in 2008, the annexation of Crimea in 2014, etc).

4. Empirical part: verification/falsification of the assumptions of both concepts

The European Union is a complex system internally organised by a set of policies and competences; yes - it can be fatally distorted by marginality of any type, i.e., the black swan, but in the crises the EU has gone through, or still is going through, some attributes do not fit.

As for the **global financial crisis** and the later **Eurozone crisis**, they were not by any means marginal, but a fundamental turning point in the functioning of the financial sector due to the confluence of several fundamental changes, namely the advent of the information revolution and the emergence of internet-banking and internet-investing, and at the same time the liberalisation of the financial sector, i.e., the reduction of central bank supervision of commercial entities - all of which led to irresponsible trading in financial products and, in effect, to the sponging on the whole - the free rider principle. According to Martin, the roots of the crisis were boringly old-fashioned and predictable (Martin, 2009).

If we add to this the irresponsibility of some EMU members in relation to non-compliance with the conditions of the Stability and Growth Pact, or the long-term falsification of their macroeconomic indicators, then the Eurozone crisis could not

have been the result of random events, but was a fundamental systemic error. Neither the concept of chaos (no seemingly tiny stimulus) nor the black swan (nothing improbable, on the contrary, expected). It means, therefore, that neither of the concepts under consideration was confirmed in this case. The Eurozone crisis was a structural crisis, but mainly a predictable one. Ever since the 2008 global financial crisis, other crisis manifestations are very often referred to expressively as a perfect storm, the arrival of a black swan or even a tipping point. There may be an attempt to abdicate responsibility for the crisis and chalk it up to extraordinary events behind these assigned verbiage (Catanach – Ragatz, 2010: 20). Consequently, the financial crisis cannot be associated with the symbol of the black swan, rather the lame duck, because for a long-time experts have been aware of signs of the risks of the deregulated financial sector (Blyth – Matthijs, 2017: 205). The term lame duck (originating in 1761 by Horace Walpole to denote a weak point in a system) is used figuratively for unsatisfactory, weak points in existing theories. Why not - the financial supervisory institutions really behaved like lame ducks at the time with limited options for solutions.

The migration crisis in Europe is a combination of an external effect (the Arab Spring as a triggering mechanism, the war in Syria, etc.) and the EU's internal policy settings, its institutional environment built primarily on solidarity. Therefore, it was not a matter of random changes as immanent characteristics of chaos. The Arab Spring erupted from a sudden impulse with a domino effect in response to the desperate act of the Tunisian shopkeeper - then we could describe the personal tragedy of the individual as a butterfly effect. In any case, the spread of protests in the Middle East or North Africa corresponded to the concept of chaos - not because of its chaotic course, but because the condition of the complexity of the institutional, and even political system (Islam as the main connecting characteristic, authoritarian regimes, the growing poverty and hopelessness of the population, their social exclusion) with the internal dynamics of development was fulfilled. It cannot be a black swan principle, not even in the eyes of the European Union, because it was not an improbable increase in migration.

Brexit is clearly the arrival of the black swan, despite the general awareness of British Euroscepticism. After all, leaving the integration bloc was seen as highly unlikely, even by virtually half of the British voter base. Brexit brings substantial changes to the functioning of the system of European integration, international trade, international law, etc. The effects on society and international relations are dramatic.

It should be added that five years after the referendum, British society was still polarised: 45% of respondents affirmed the correctness of the decision compared to 44% who still perceived the referendum result as wrong. Furthermore, 13% of Remain voters now rate the Leave decision as right!!!; when asked if they regret their choice 11% do and would vote differently today, but 82% have no regrets (Redfield & Wilton Strategies, 2021). Overall, the ratio of opponents to supporters of Britain's membership has not changed - even in June 2021 it was 52 % x 48 %, which largely legitimises Brexit. However, the situation has changed along with the real economic impacts of Brexit, with support for rejoining the EU rising to 62 % Rejoin x 38 % Brexit (Redfield and Wilton Strategies, August 2023).

The pandemic was clearly an external attack, very unexpected, against which there was no defence *ex ante*, so it is the arrival of the black swan. The spread of the infection was also facilitated by the liberalised movement of people within the Schengen area, but the high availability of air transport increases the intensity of the spread of any contagious disease. It was virtually free travel that was behind such a dramatic spread of the original Chinese pandemic. We can certainly describe the onset of the pandemic as the arrival of the black swan - it was a sudden attack of unlikely magnitude (earlier pandemics were more localised, more manageable and less devastating to populations and economies) and this strike led to major impacts on the functioning of society, the economy, and international relations.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to speak only of a **pandemic**, but more accurately of a pandemic crisis, which is a carrier of other crisis moments. It is therefore a **combined crisis with a synergistic effect**. The lockdowns imposed by many national governments have led to the shutdown of economies and restrictions on travel, including the transport of goods, which have driven many companies into bankruptcy. In turn, the fiscal stimulus by governments to the affected entities became the start of a debt spiral. Not only that, but also, paradoxically, rising inflation, as deferred demand during the first lockdown in the spring of 2020 and the subsequent further lockdown of economies in late 2020-2021 took their toll in increased demand for virtually anything, a clear upward pressure on inflation. Rising prices of inputs such as raw materials, semi-finished goods on a global scale, including rising labour costs, are complemented by quantitative easing policies by state institutions (various types of state compensation for the lockdown). Such a deep depression has not hit the world economy since the 1930s. What must be added to the accumulation of problems

at the level of a society-wide crisis is the **information crisis**, which did not start with the pandemic, but only deepened. Conspiracy theories, fake news - all this is linked to the growth of social networks, reinforced by lockdowns and home offices.

The pandemic crisis leading to the lockdowns of economies has become an unprecedented intervention in democratic development on a global scale, as the activities and competences of parliaments have been minimally transformed in the sense of strengthening the executive power of governments. The basic democratic rights of citizens have been curtailed - e.g., assembly bans, curfews, free movement of people, limited access to education, etc. On the other hand, however, the digitalization of economies and governments has accelerated (Afsahi-Beasoleil-Dean-Ercan-Gagnon, 2020: v).

Across the EU, the pandemic had corrosive effects on some already threatened democratic institutions, but only four member states violated some democratic norms during the declared state of emergency (Lürhmann et al. 2020, In Afsahi-Beasoleil-Dean-Ercan-Gagnon, 2020: vii).

The pandemic crisis of the present is an expression of the unparalleled stress test of liberal democracies undergoing the crises of recent years (Guasti, 2020: 48), which also applies to several European states. Indeed, the pandemic has become an opportunity to reinforce the power of politicians, but on the other hand it also offers an opportunity to reject populism and demonstrate the resilience of democracy (Guasti, 2020: 49). We shall see.

The Russia-Ukraine war was seen by most as a shock at the end of February 2022, despite the fact that US and UK intelligence agencies had been warning since December 2021 that Putin was plotting a war against Ukraine and was preparing intensively for it. Russia's invasion of Ukraine is still a shock to the West, to the Europeans, as practically seventy years of peace on the European continent (with the exception of further aggressions by Russia or the Soviet Union within its post-war sphere of influence) have led to a major belief that there will be no more wars in Europe. After all, European integration after 1945 developed primarily on the basis of solidarity, with reference to the need to prevent any further wars through closer economic cooperation (Schuman, 1950). Suddenly, Russia started a regular war in Europe, which was until then perceived by Europeans as an unimaginable way of solving any disputes. Russia's aggression against another sovereign state in the European region has fundamentally changed international relations - security and power, both politically and economically (Pravec, 2022). The Russian invasion and the resulting crisis

caused by Russia's neo-imperial policy is clearly the arrival of the black swan: an unexpected event, a turning point in the previous (77 year-long) development of the international system with extraordinary synergistic effects in the broad spectrum of human existence.

5. EU developments in response to the crisis

It is said that every crisis can be the final one, but also that a crisis can mark the beginning of a new one (Guasti, 2020: 57). Either it will turn attention in a completely new direction, or it will only intensify the dormant changes that society is about to undergo. We should not understand the crisis as an apocalyptic revelation of universal truths, but as a process of shaping the future (Liptáková, 2022: 85). Both are true for the current situation in the Union. Not only the member states, but the EU itself has prepared or already implemented a number of changes that are clearly a response to crises, but at the same time use the 'revolutionary ferment' to push forward strategic objectives, sometimes seemingly unrelated to the current problems (see, the Green Deal on carbon neutrality by 2050, e. g).

The financial crisis and the Eurozone crisis required extraordinary action by the European institutions, as developments were so rapid that several EU countries were in real danger of bankruptcy. The Eurozone crisis was clearly a debt crisis, i.e., subjectively caused (Copelovitch - Frieden - Walter, 2016: 815).

The response of the Union and its member states has been bailouts that have averted imminent bankruptcies. This is linked to the ad hoc Troika of this situation: the European Commission, the European Central Bank, and the International Monetary Fund. In May 2010, the European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF) was set up as a temporary crisis resolution instrument for EMU countries to protect them from destabilisation and indebtedness. Two years later, the EFSF was replaced by the European Stability Mechanism (ESM). This is again a rescue fund for EMU countries. Other ECB measures were also taken, notably in relation to the supervision of national banks, which had to undergo so-called stress tests to determine their resilience to financial market shocks.

The adoption of the Fiscal Compact in February 2012 for all EU countries, not just EMU, was a milestone. The Fiscal Compact was designed as a comprehensive instrument to ensure macroeconomic stability, including a sanctions regime for non-compliance by the member states. Another pillar of a functioning EMU is the Banking Union, which was established in December 2013

to stabilise the banking market and its activities and prevent potential bank failures.

It is not necessary to list here all the instruments that EU institutions have used to respond to the financial and banking crisis. This list simply illustrates the Union's activity in this area, and it is true that it has all contributed to increasing the resilience of the European financial sector.

Overall, the impact of the Eurozone crisis has been extraordinary and has led to a strengthening of integration activities, a strengthening of supranationalism, as the intergovernmental solution could not work - each member state was putting out its own fires with a severe recession.

The effect of the crisis was to strengthen the position of some integration institutions - especially the Commission or supranational body, but also the ECB as a fully sovereign institution. Yet the voice of individual countries did not quite fit - Germany, France, and Italy were the ones partially consulted by the ECB, although it has full financial and decision-making independence! Quite simply, the principle of cooperation and solidarity has once again become the guiding principle. In addition, participation in individual activities was not decided supranationally but went through an approval process within national parliaments, which often resulted in obstruction.

The obvious weakness of the EMU lay in the fact that it was primarily a political project and therefore did not strictly follow the entry criteria, which is why the Eurozone crisis was so deep and so protracted. Still, it can be said that the idea of a common currency was nevertheless a success, as even during the crisis EMU expanded by four more members.

The migration crisis is a long-standing problem for the European Union, as attempts to unify action towards migrants and to create a common asylum policy have consistently failed since the 1990s. Everything is failing on individual national solutions - states do not want to give up their authority in deciding whether or not to admit foreigners to their territory and to their legal and social order. Initially, through the lens of the civil war in Syria and also at the beginning of the migration wave, some European countries were at ease and had no problems with immigration management. However, from 2014 onwards, the migration routes started to heat up. Nevertheless, a wave of solidarity has risen among the citizens of the Union, but not between the member states.

One of the first reactions was to strengthen border controls at the borders of EU territory, in an attempt to provide relief to buffer states in the Mediterranean. In 2016, the European External Borders Agency was transformed into what is

known as FRONTEX, the agency for external border protection, including border and coast guard services. It strengthened its staffing and financial security (European Agenda on Migration: Securing Europe's External Borders, European Commission, 2015).

In April 2015, the Commission came up with the idea of mandatory relocation of asylum seekers (the so-called refugee and migration quota proposal) to give buffer states some relief (Refugee Crisis - Q&A on Emergency Relocation, 2015). However, a number of states, led by Central European countries, refused to do so, and the Commission thus took legal action against them.

While the financial crisis has brought the member states together, the migration crisis has divided them. Firstly, rebellious countries refused to accept a single migrant/refugee, secondly, there were legal actions initiated against the member states. The arguments against migrants are actually conducted in a nationalistic, populist spirit. The impact on integration developments here is rather negative, but the strengthening of FRONTEX is actually a positive integration (positive in the sense of an increase; new institutions or levels of integration are created) and also a strengthening of solidarity between the member states.

Brexit as a specific crisis of the European integration process itself began to be addressed almost immediately after the publication of the referendum results. On the British side, there was a change in the prime minister's post, as **David Cameron** immediately resigned because of his opposition to Brexit. He was replaced by **Theresa May**, who, although she also regretted Britain's departure from the European structures, expressed the need to fulfil the will of the British electorate. She did so when she triggered Article 50 of the EU Treaty in March 2017, officially beginning the process of Britain's exit from the Union. It was only in November 2018 that the withdrawal agreement was confirmed by the European Council. Originally, Britain's leaving was supposed to occur exactly 2 years after the article was activated, but the negotiation process stalled, so the UK had to ask for an extension twice. The problem was, on the one hand, the unpreparedness of the British political scene and the shocking realisation of all that needed to be divided and negotiated so that a successful break-up could happen. On the other hand, European politicians showed extraordinary matter-of-factness, and even toughness in negotiating, which the British had not counted on. The first phase of the Brexit process was completed with the real withdrawal of Britain from the EU on 31 January 2020, and the second phase, in which the future partnership was negotiated, was thus still a transitional period, which was concluded with the so-called New Year's Agreement.

There were several points of contention, to name a few of the most serious - the issue of the relationship between Northern Ireland and Ireland as a member of the EU, their mutual border and trade relations; issues of capital movement; movement and employment of persons, including study – matters.

The very intense negotiations led to the "Christmas Eve Agreement" on 24 December 2020 to agree on the wording of the final agreement, ending four and a half years of really tough negotiations. The de jure conclusion of the relationship was made possible by the "New Year's Eve Agreement", when on 31 December 2020 the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement was published in the Official Journal of the European Union, thus entering into legal force (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/content/news/Brexit-UK-withdrawal-from-the-eu.html?locale=cs>).

Brexit has dealt a heavy blow to the integration process, but it has led to increased coordination and cooperation within the European institutions and the member states, as the united stance of "Brussels" towards "London" has clearly paid off. Nevertheless, Brexit is perceived as a loss for both sides, even if the economic costs of Brexit are now significantly higher on the British side.

The pandemic crisis was indeed a major interference in the otherwise standard development of the European Union, and it should be added that practically from the very beginning the Commission was trying to secure medical supplies that were critical. In fact, the shortcomings in the provision of strategic tools, of aids, have come to light. This was a consequence of the development of economic globalisation, in the spirit of which non-lucrative production is being outsourced elsewhere. The time has come to rethink the extra liberal approach whereby economically and technologically uninteresting production is transferred to less developed countries, and then basic primary needs like disinfectants or drapes are missing.

One of the Commission's first steps was therefore a path towards strengthening strategic autonomy (Novotná, 2021). This is a state of the economy, of society, in this case the EU, where its critical dependence on imports of strategic commodities is declining. It is not full self-sufficiency nor independence, but it is a state that allows the Union to behave autonomously in a given area, i.e., without regard to limiting factors. It is a proper link between the liberal view of trade, protectionism, national interests, and self-sufficiency (Helwig, 2021). "The sobering up of excessive optimism and the liberal conception of the international order led to a discussion about the concept of strategic autonomy" (Kučerová, 2022: 354) as a lack of dependency (Borell,

2020). Strategic autonomy corresponds to the notion of security, e.g., energy or food security. It is clear that it is not about independence, but about setting up external relations in such a way that eliminates dependence on one supplier. This is what has been violated in the case of medical devices. Distribution is also a problem of strategic autonomy, because each state of the Union has a different distribution key. Both the EC and the states have underestimated their own protectionism, because in the case of medical devices the free market has not worked.

Another Commission's initiative in October 2010 was the establishment of the EU Health Union to coordinate medical work, even the possibility of declaring a pandemic regardless of WHO, which would lead to a strengthening of the EU in international relations. A new EU institution has been established within the "Health Union", namely the Hera (Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority) as a kind of "incubator" for dealing with epidemics, etc. From the original Cinderella integration, the health service reaches a level of coordination, yet it is a highly sensitive area that is strongly linked to national interests, hence the prevailing national solutions. Cross-border contact, however, where the permeability of the internal market makes it necessary to work together not only bilaterally but also community-wise - witnesses the purchase of vaccines, when the Commission acted in the interests of all member countries. Thanks to this approach and the vaccination requirements of around half a billion people, the Commission has achieved a very favourable price.

Part of the solution to the pandemic combined crisis is a fundamental change in the design of the Multi-Annual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021-2027. The health and economic crisis were fully reflected in the budget setup. The MFF contains an entirely new financial instrument, the so-called Next Generation, being actually the European Recovery Plan. It is a temporary instrument that provides the member countries with interest-free loans.

Yet, unfortunately, the pandemic has not shifted cooperation to a narrower form, a more intense one. Borders have been kept closed, violating the fluidity of the Schengen area. Coordination mechanisms are weak. The pandemic does not strengthen integration (despite a number of successfully agreed measures), rather it reinforces nationalism in defence of national interests.

The Russia-Ukraine war, like the pandemic, is a trigger for other crises that not only the European Union, but indeed the whole world, has to deal with. First and foremost, the energy crisis has erupted as a result of it, as the EU is highly dependent on imports of Russian gas and oil, which the EU is trying to wean itself

off in an effort not to support **Putin's** regime (and, of course, to reduce its existential dependence on a risky partner, which Russia undoubtedly is). Immediately resulting from Russia's occupation of Ukraine and its control of Ukrainian ports in the Black Sea is the looming global food crisis. Indeed, Russian armed forces are seizing not only Ukrainian ships but also Ukrainian grain, sunflower, and other food supplies. As a potential breadbasket for Europe, Ukraine is one of the world's largest exporters of cereals and sunflower oil. The problems associated with the withholding of Ukrainian exports on the one hand and the ostracism of Russian exports by the West on the other reinforce the rapidly growing inflationary spiral, on a global scale. The result is therefore not only macroeconomic destabilisation, but also a slowdown in the world economy, i.e., a looming recession. All of this after more than two years of pandemics and associated lockdowns. Of course, it is also necessary to emphasise the security crisis, when the very thick yarn of the security scheme of the post-war international system has been broken.

The social and economic consequences associated with another refugee crisis in Europe cannot be ignored, with 3.7 million Ukrainians registered for temporary protection in the EU alone at the end of July 2022, and almost 10 million refugees having crossed the borders of Ukraine since the invasion of the country (UNHCR, 26 July 2022). The developments triggered by Russian aggression are thus a combined crisis.

Regarding the EU's response to Russian aggression, this is a very live issue, involving shock on the one hand and the need for adequate measures on the other, both in the international environment and on domestic soil, i.e., addressing national interests and priorities. It is necessary to emphasise the unprecedented consensus of the member states of the Union on the need to condemn Russia's violation of international system, but also the lengthy search for an acceptable form of international sanctions that would punish Russia, but at the same time would not be too great of a burden on European economies so dependent on Russian gas (40% of consumption is of Russian origin) and oil (30%), in the conditions of the so-called Green Deal and the transition to emission-free energy sources.

Russia thus represents a threat to international security, and the EU, its institutions and member states perceive it as such. A clear effect of security destabilisation in the European region is the reassessment of arms spending, with most European NATO member states declaring accelerated fulfilment of defence spending commitments. This is also linked to a geopolitical shift, with some of the

new EU member states, Poland in particular, claiming the international stage.

As can be seen from the previous overview, the impact of crises on integration dynamics is diverse - on the one hand, there is a rise in national egoism/unilateralism, on the other hand, the Union adopts a number of measures to mitigate the effects of crises (Pekarčíková-Staničková, 2022: 134). Speaking with **Nassim Taleb** - none of these serious crises can be solved haphazardly and provisionally (Taleb, 2009: 13), but the only successful strategy can be a systemic approach to restructuring the environment in which the crises broke out and spread.

We should generally incorporate black swans as a symbol of crucial shocks into our plans so as to strengthen our resilience to sudden shocks (Taleb, 2011: 383-391). Specifically in the cases of the European reality that we have analysed, this should then look like the following:

Increase transparency of the financial sector, increase supervision, increase personal accountability of bankers;

A common approach to migration and solidarity in dealing with them within the EU to strengthen the Union's resilience;

To reduce import dependency in strategic areas, as globalisation reduces resilience - there may be a major epidemic which the health and social systems are not prepared for; after all, the war in Ukraine has necessitated the ostracization of Russia and Europe has to deal with the withdrawal from Russian energy supplies;

Not to underestimate the risky behaviour of the great powers, not to overlook neo-imperial policies towards weaker neighbours;

To reflect on the dynamics of integration - whether some steps are counterproductive and too hasty to avoid spill-back effects.

In the case of the European Union, a complicating factor is the blending of the community level of decision-making with the national level of the 27 member states, whose interests are not necessarily the same. Just as, after all, there is not the same, uniform setting of economic policies. This ensures diversity within the Union, but it slows down the possibilities of solutions, especially in the case of external attacks.

Conclusion

The development of the European Union in the 21st century has been and continues to be a truly turbulent period. The Union has been attacked by many

adverse external influences, but also by a number of its own internal development errors. Nevertheless, it seems to have weathered the adverse developments mainly through further institutionalisation of initially concrete measures. For the sake of order, however, it is also important not to forget the further deepening of integration and the progressive enlargement of the membership base.

All of the crises we have been looking at have been fundamental for the European Union and its member states and, in fact, are still unknown, at least in their scale. Chronologically, the first two of them - **the Eurozone crisis and the migration crisis** - are structural, systemic crises, i.e., the centre of gravity of the problems lies in the set-up of the EU's internal system. It is the economic, but above all institutional specificities that allow the crises to unfold and their broad impact on the functioning of the Union.

In the case of **the Eurozone crisis**, the concept of chaos or black swan has not been confirmed, as the systemic failures of the EMU have been the cause of the profound effects in addition to the external attack. The 2008 financial crisis shows that it cannot be regarded as the arrival of a black swan, as many experts have been pointing out for a long time the imbalance of financial markets and the risk-taking behaviour of investors, so the onset of the crisis was predictable. However, the prevailing neoliberal paradigm did not evaluate the signs of an approaching crisis, and therefore, according to the authors, the development shifted from the black swan phenomenon to the lame duck dominant theory (Blyth – Matthijs, 2017: 204) - i.e., that the authors use the term lame duck in a figurative sense as an existing theory, inadequate in the given conditions, because it was not verified twice in a short time, but actually failed.

The migration crisis meets the criteria of a chaos effect by virtue of the complexity of the institutional and political system; a sudden, initially perceived as marginal, impulse with robust effects on developments in the affected Middle Eastern countries. However, for Europe, the EU, we certainly cannot consider this to be the black swan arrival effect - the internal structure of the European Union encourages an increased drive for immigration.

Brexit seems to be a clear arrival of the black swan, despite the long recognized and openly declared isolationism of the British society, and the growing Euroscepticism, yet half of the British people wanted to stay in the EU and even the European societies did not foresee this development. Brexit is a shining example of the arrival of the black swan - a sudden development with far-reaching consequences for the whole of society.

The pandemic and the resulting combined crisis are also the black swan

- no one could have imagined, despite previous experience with some pandemics, the social and economic consequences on such a scale that the democratic rights of citizens and the labour force have been so severely curtailed under peaceful conditions.

Russia's aggression against Ukraine leading to an **open war** is clearly a symbol of the arrival of the black swan - a totally unexpected development in international relations in Europe after the Second World War and the fall of the Iron Curtain. All of this despite the warnings of the Western secret services. The effect of this war on the integration dynamics of the European Union is unprecedented - after a long time, the member states have been able to unite their positions significantly, though not unequivocally, and to present outward unity.

Chaotic systems methodology can be useful for predicting a potential episodic phenomenon in the complicated environment of the European Union (Tănăsie - Drăcea – Lădaru, 2017), where the community level can clash with national policies. Although the EU decision-making process may seem somewhat chaotic, it has its own strict rules without bifurcation points that would fundamentally divert development from the outlined trajectory. The essence of chaos is the nonlinearity of dynamic systems with extraordinary sensitivity to external influences. The considered concept of chaos in European contours cannot be confirmed in any of the analysed crises, because the institutional environment of the European Union creates conditions for more systemic, structural problems. The principle of solidarity, on which the idea of European integration is based, leads to a preference for political interests at the expense of compliance with the rules. On the other hand, however, some of the crises that the Union is affected by are to a large extent the arrival of a black swan, that is, an unlikely, unexpected development with far-reaching consequences.

When evaluating the monitored crises, the hypothesis could be partially verified in the sense of the specific institutional environment of the Union, which extends and deepens the possibilities of a timely response to external risks. The version that some crises could be explained on the background of the apparatus of chaos theory has not been confirmed, on the contrary, the arrival of a black swan corresponds to the second concept in some cases – see above.

These crises have mostly led to a coming together within the EU, with the principle of solidarity repeatedly emerging as a fundamental principle of integration in Europe. With the exception of the migration crisis, however, where the protection of national interests has become a mantra for voters in some

member states.

However, crisis resolution ultimately strengthens the supranational character of integration by reinforcing the power of European institutions - especially the European Commission and the European Parliament. However, more and more competences are being won by the member states in certain areas, for example in the case of dealing with immigration to the EU. This means that the age-old struggle between the supranationalism of the Community institutions and the intergovernmentalism of the member states is not settled. And that is probably a good thing.

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