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POLAND AS A DEMOCRACY EXPORTER TO THE EAST? THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE INTERNATIONAL ROLE IN THE EXAMPLE OF DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

This article assesses the effectiveness of Poland's development cooperation as a tool for realising the role of democracy (and broader – transition experiences) exporter. The assessment implements and adapts the framework presented by Justyna Zając, who indicated that an evaluation of the effectiveness of the international role must consider the rationality of its adopted concept, the feasibility and consistency of its implementation and the degree of its approval by other participants in international relations.

Keywords: international roles, Poland's foreign policy, democracy export, transition experience, development cooperation, ODA.

INTRODUCTION

The role theory remains an interesting perspective for analysing the state's foreign policy. Based on, in line with Kalevi J. Holsti's classification, role conceptions ("orientations towards the external environment and commitments to certain tasks or functions within various sets of international relations"¹), role prescriptions (expected by internal and external environment) and role performance (actual state's behaviour in international relations)², it presents descriptive,

¹ K.J. Holsti, *National Role Conceptions in the Study of Foreign Policy*, „International Studies Quarterly” 1970, vol. 14, no. 3, p. 307.

² *Ibidem*, p. 240.

organisational, explanatory³ and predictive⁴ values. As Cristian Cantir and Juliet Kaarbo pointed out, roles “say much about a country’s identity, its priorities and policies, and how it relates to other states”⁵. This framework is particularly beneficial when analysing the foreign policy of smaller countries. A specialisation in international activities may compensate for the deficits of influence on the global environment and, as a result, strengthen a given country’s position⁶. However, a role that has not gained broad acceptance in the country will not have a similar effect⁷.

Considering the fact that Poland is a medium-sized country, and “countries of this type have limited possibilities to shape their international roles”⁸, Ryszard Zięba has made the most widespread classification of roles declared, expected and performed by Poland. Among the declared roles, the researcher indicated: the role of the initiator and leader of democratic changes, the role of a regional leader, the role of an exporter of democracy to the East, the role of a faithful ally of the United States and the role of a strong European state. Among the roles expected from Poland by other participants of the international system, he included: the role of a state of successful democratic transformation, the role of a stabiliser of the situation in the region, the role of the “hall of the European salon”, the role of an active participant of European integration and the role of the US assistant⁹. In turn, focusing on practice and the roles actually played by the state, he mentioned: the role of a model for a successful political transformation, the role of a “weakener” of Russia’s imperial ambitions, the role of the US satellite and, depending on the constellation of the ruling political parties, the role of a brake on European integration or the role of a pragmatic and committed participant of European integration¹⁰.

³ S.G. Walker, *Role Theory and Foreign Policy Analysis: An Evaluation*, in: *Role Theory and Foreign Policy Analysis*, ed. S.G. Walker, Durham 1987, p. 241.

⁴ Z.J. Pietraś, *Międzynarodowa rola Chin*, Wydawnictwo UMCS, Lublin 1990, pp. 13–14.

⁵ C. Cantir, J. Kaarbo, *Contested Roles and Domestic Politics: Reflections on Role Theory in Foreign Policy Analysis and IR Theory*, „Foreign Policy Analysis” 2012, vol. 8, p. 19.

⁶ M. Breuning, *Role Theory in Foreign Policy*, in: *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*, 24.05.2017, <https://oxfordre.com/politics/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228637-e-334> [accessed: 22.02.2023].

⁷ C. Cantir, J. Kaarbo, *Contested Roles and Domestic Politics...*, pp. 12–16.

⁸ J. Zając, *Role międzynarodowe państwa średniego – aspekty teoretyczne*, „Kraakowskie Studia Międzynarodowe” 2013, nr 4, p. 25.

⁹ R. Zięba, *Polityka zagraniczna Polski w strefie euroatlantyckiej*, Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa 2013, pp. 286–294.

¹⁰ *Idem*, *Poszukiwanie międzynarodowej roli dla Polski – konceptualizacja roli państwa „średniej rangi”*, in: *Polityka zagraniczna Polski po wstąpieniu do NATO i Unii Europejskiej. Problemy tożsamości i adaptacji*, ed. S. Bieliń, Difin, Warszawa 2010, pp. 56–63.

Notably, the typology developed considering both internal and external conditions of the state's foreign policy does not lose its relevance despite the passage of time.

As can be seen, an essential determinant of the presented system of international roles in Poland is the experience gained by the state after 1989, related to political transformation (from socialist to democratic state) and economic transition (from centrally planned to free market economy). These experiences still condition Poland's position in the international arena and also shape its foreign policy. Decision-makers, referring to the value of solidarity (and Solidarity), have repeatedly emphasised the willingness and necessity to share this knowledge and experiences with other countries following a similar development path¹¹. Therefore, one of the tools supporting the realisation of the roles related to the successful systemic transformation and democracy exporter is development cooperation¹², especially Official Development Assistance (ODA), defined as "government aid that promotes and specifically targets the economic development and welfare of developing countries"¹³. In fact, the use of such experiences in the assistance provided to other countries is consistently indicated by the state's foreign policy decision-makers as a comparative advantage¹⁴ of Poland, participating in development cooperation.

¹¹ For example: Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych, *Priorytety polskiej polityki zagranicznej 2012–2016*, Warszawa 2012, p. 17; Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych, *Strategia polskiej polityki zagranicznej 2017–2021*, Warszawa 2017, pp. 21–22.

¹² In a realist perspective, it is one of the tools of the state's foreign policy, serving to implement the interests and goals of this policy.

¹³ OECD, *Official Development Assistance (ODA)*, <https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/official-development-assistance.htm> [accessed: 9.08.2022].

¹⁴ A term taken from classical economics, meaning the existence of objective conditions guaranteeing a higher quality of a specific product and greater efficiency in its production compared to other producers, determining, among others, the international division of labour and the direction of development of international trade. Concerning development cooperation, comparative advantage justifies the choice of specialisation of the undertaken activities based on specific competencies, skills or experiences of the donor, which increases their effectiveness compared to similar actions of other donors, improves the coordination of international aid and reduces its fragmentation, as well as promotes the realisation of particular donors' interests. Comparative advantage may be, e.g., geographical proximity, belonging to the same cultural or linguistic community, the competence of staff responsible for project application or expertise in a specific industry. S. Gupta, *Comparative Advantage and Competitive Advantage: An Economics Perspective and a Synthesis*, „Athens Journal of Business and Economics” 2015, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 10–14; K. Siddiqui, *David Ricardo's Comparative Advantage and Developing Countries: Myth and Reality*, „International Critical Thought” 2018, vol. 8, no. 3, pp. 426–452; M. Lawson, *Foreign Aid: International Donor Coordination of Development Assistance*, „Congressional Research Service Report” 2013, no. R41185, pp. 15–16.

Notably, identifying comparative advantage does not occur within the established and globally accepted methodology. Its foundation is an articulation of its specialisation by the donor and its acceptance by other international aid system participants, both donors and ODA beneficiaries¹⁵. Articulating such advantages in development cooperation is similar to the process of shaping international roles, e.g., due to the need to consider several internal and external factors that determine the activity of the donor state. As participation in development cooperation is one of the areas of the state's foreign policy, the conceptualisation of bilateral aid activity reflects, as a rule, mainly the international roles declared by the state.

Therefore, the main aim of this article is to assess the effectiveness of Poland's development cooperation as a tool for realising the role of democracy (and broader – transition experiences) exporter. The basis for this assessment is the framework presented by Justyna Zając, who indicated that the international role effectiveness evaluation must include the rationality of the adopted concept of the role, the ability and consistency in its implementation (the level of its performance) and the degree of its approval by other participants of international relations, especially by their addressees¹⁶. Accordingly, it became necessary to answer the following research questions: What is the official Polish development discourse focused on? What is declared as the core of Poland's development cooperation? What are the foundations of the comparative advantage, determining the thematic and geographical scope of Polish aid activities? Are the declared priorities in development cooperation reflected in ODA transfers? What is the international community's position towards the comparative advantage declared by Poland?

Research methods and techniques appropriate for the field of social sciences, especially political science, were used in the study. The first part of the article characterises democratisation and transformation as the core of Poland's development cooperation. Considering the specificity of comparative advantages – their discretion and mainly declarative character – official development discourse analysis was conducted. Regarding Poland's development cooperation, it included

¹⁵ P. Kugiel, *Specjalizacja Polski w międzynarodowej współpracy na rzecz rozwoju*, in: *Current Challenges to Peacebuilding Efforts and Development Assistance*, eds. K. Pędziwiatr, P. Kugiel, A. Dańda, Tischner European University, Cracow 2011, pp. 59–60.

¹⁶ J. Zając, *Role Unii Europejskiej w regionie Afryki Północnej i Bliskiego Wschodu*, Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa 2010, p. 39.

the *Development Cooperation Act* of 2011, official programming documents presented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) – two multiannual foreign policy strategies (issued in 2012 and 2017), multiannual development cooperation strategies (published in 2003, 2012, 2015 and 2021), development cooperation plans (annual from 2006 to 2021) and reports on the implementation of tasks in this area (annual from 2000 to 2019). Statements of representatives of this responsible for shaping Poland’s development cooperation ministry (annual *exposés* presenting the priorities of the state’s foreign policy; from 1998 to 2021) were also considered. Therefore, the source base was constructed on 76 documents from 1998 (when Poland transferred aid for the first time after 1989) to 2021 (when the new long-term strategy was initiated). The qualitative analysis was focused on identifying sectoral and geographical priorities and tasks of the assistance activities undertaken by the state and declarative justifications for them. Its result was the reconstruction of the importance of exporting democracy/ transition experience as a comparative advantage of Polish aid. The second part of the article assesses the development cooperation’s effectiveness as a tool for realising the state’s international role. Factor analysis was applied to identify the premises of rationality/irrationality of the Polish comparative advantage, considered both as a normative and strategic commitment. The secondary analysis of financial data on Polish ODA allocations served to determine the level and consistency in achieving the goals of development cooperation declared by decision-makers. Discourse analysis was also used to define the international community’s position on the specialisation of Polish development cooperation. Moreover, the analysis of the subject literature and content analysis was applied.

DEMOCRATISATION AND TRANSFORMATIONAL SUPPORT AS THE CORE OF POLAND’S DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

The Polish “brand”¹⁷ in development cooperation was announced in the early years of the state’s participation in aid activities as a donor. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Władysław Bartoszewski, in 2001 pointed out that “We have been trying to devise and

¹⁷ *Informacja Ministra Spraw Zagranicznych Radosława Sikorskiego dotycząca zadań polskiej polityki zagranicznej w 2009 r.*, 13.02.2009.

implement programmes, which draw from our own experience, but which more adequately meet the requirements and priorities of the recipient countries”¹⁸. In 2003, the MFA clearly emphasised that “Poland’s advantage in the field of development cooperation is its unique experience related to the effective transition from a planned to a market economy and building democracy. The success of the Polish transformation obliges Poland to share with other countries undergoing this process, especially with its neighbours, knowledge on how to achieve a market economy, create a civil society and respect human rights”¹⁹. In the following years, more importance was attached to the transfer of democratisation and transformational know-how, which Poland acquired after 1989 with considerable support from international donors, both states and international financial organisations²⁰. Because of the experience of political, economic and social transition, it was decided *a priori* and without in-depth analysis to raise it to a rank of a critical comparative advantage in the development cooperation conducted by Warsaw. Just having such experience was considered by decision-makers to be sufficient to shape further aid activities²¹.

Nevertheless, initially, a broad approach to the priorities of Poland’s development cooperation was dominant, reflected – *inter alia* – in *The Strategy of Polish Cooperation for Development*, adopted in 2003 by the Council of Ministers²². A significant reformulation of the areas where aid activities should be carried out took place in 2011 under the adopted *Development Cooperation Act*, which recognised the main goals of Polish development cooperation. The act indicated promoting and supporting the development of democracy and civil society (especially parliamentarism, the principles of good governance and respect for human rights) as the crucial aim of provided ODA²³. Reducing poverty and supporting the sustainable socio-economic progress of developing countries, resulting from the *Millennium*

¹⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Poland’s Development Co-operation. Annual Report 2000*, Warsaw 2001, p. 1.

¹⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Poland’s Development Co-operation. Annual Report 2002*, Warsaw 2003, p. 3.

²⁰ E. Drażkiewicz, *From Recipient to Donor: The Case of Polish Development Cooperation*, „Human Organization” 2013, vol. 72, no. 1, pp. 68–70.

²¹ P. Pospieszna, *When Recipients Become Donors. Polish Democracy Assistance in Belarus and Ukraine*, „Problems of Post-Communism” 2014, vol. 57, no. 4, pp. 3–15.

²² Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych, *Strategia polskiej współpracy na rzecz rozwoju*, Warszawa 2003, p. 7.

²³ Art. 2, *Ustawa z dnia 16 września 2011 r. o współpracy rozwojowej*, Dz. U. 2011 Nr 234, poz. 1386.

Declaration approved by the United Nations in 2000²⁴, were placed in the second position. Furthermore, during the parliamentary debate on the act, the activities supporting democratisation and promoting civil society, especially in Eastern Europe, were referred to as the Polish “*spécialité de la maison*”²⁵. On the one hand, it highlights the politicisation of development cooperation, i.e. its subordination to the objectives of foreign policy and its use as one of the tools of this policy. On the other, the depreciation of the importance of combating poverty in the least developed countries is a factor that distinguishes the Polish approach to development cooperation²⁶.

The primacy of actions for democratisation and transformation was subsequently demonstrated by all three multiannual development cooperation programmes adopted due to the statutory obligation. The first one, presented in 2012 (*Multiannual Development Cooperation Programme for 2012–2015. Solidarity – Democracy – Development*), indicated two cross-cutting thematic areas of assistance: democracy and human rights and systemic transformation²⁷. The second programme (*Multiannual Development Cooperation Programme for 2016–2020*), adopted in 2015, announced six priority areas for action in that period: good governance, democracy and human rights, human capital, entrepreneurship and the private sector, sustainable agriculture and rural development, and environmental protection²⁸. They were recognised as “areas which, thanks to the hitherto involvement of Polish development cooperation, have become a specialisation and recognised brand of Polish activity in the world”²⁹. Notably, both the abovementioned *Act on Development Cooperation* and two multiannual strategies were prepared by the liberal-conservative government of the Civic Platform and the Polish People’s Party coalition, which were in power from 2007 to 2015. Therefore, after the parliamentary election

²⁴ United Nations, *United Nations Millennium Declaration*, 18 September 2000, A/RES/55/2.

²⁵ For example: Sejm Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, Kadencja VI, *Sprawozdanie Komisji Spraw Zagranicznych o rządowym projekcie ustawy o współpracy rozwojowej* (druk 4469), 18.08.2011, Warszawa 2011, p. 3.

²⁶ Countries that belong to the group of the most generous ODA donors (United Kingdom, France, Germany, Denmark, Norway or Sweden) emphasise in their aid programmes primarily sustainable development and assisting LDCs. The priority of combating global poverty and hunger was also given by other countries that joined the group of ODA donors with the accession to the European Union in 2004, for example, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia, which also had the experience of systemic transformation.

²⁷ Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych, *Wieloletni program współpracy rozwojowej na lata 2012–2015. Solidarność – demokracja – rozwój*, Warszawa 2012, pp. 7–8.

²⁸ Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych, *Wieloletni program współpracy rozwojowej na lata 2016–2020*, Warszawa 2015, p. 9.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 8.

at the end of 2015, the winning far-right Law and Justice party, until 2020, implemented the programme of its predecessors (although it introduced minor changes in it in 2018). Only the third programme (*Multiannual Development Cooperation Programme for 2021–2030. Solidarity for Development*) was formulated by the new government. It was presented at the beginning of 2021. As the MFA highlighted, Polish activities for sustainable development reflect “our values, based on the idea of justice and the rule of law, democratisation of social life patterns, intergenerational solidarity and Christian moral and ethical principles”³⁰. This document introduced four priorities: peace, justice and strong institutions (framing activities concerning promoting good governance, professionalising public administration and protecting people persecuted for religious reasons), equal chances, health, climate and natural resources³¹. Thus, the authorities changed in 2015, despite aiming at fundamentally redefining the state’s internal and external policy³², at least declaratively maintained the current course of Polish aid. The priority of supporting democratisation and transformation through aid was claimed again. However, the experience gained by Poland after 1989, exposed before 2015, ceased to be the fundamental justification for this purpose. At the same time, the policymakers added new threads, primarily related to the support of persecuted Christians worldwide as protecting human rights³³.

The thematic priorities of multiannual programmes were, declaratively, adjusted to the specificity of individual partner countries and detailed. However, no country strategy papers were prepared for even selected beneficiaries, which should increase the project’s coherence and effectiveness³⁴. Moreover, the conducted research of the recipients’ needs and the analysis of Polish comparative advantage were at least superficial, and the priority areas presented in the strategic documents should be considered very general³⁵.

³⁰ Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych, *Wieloletni program współpracy rozwojowej na lata 2021–2030. Solidarność dla rozwoju*, Warszawa 2021, p. 7.

³¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 21–30.

³² A. Szeptycki, *Populist Foreign Policy and its Consequences: The Case of Poland Under the Rule of The Law and Justice Party*, „Siyasal: Journal of Political Sciences” 2022, vol. 31, pp. 546–556.

³³ Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych, *Wieloletni program współpracy rozwojowej na lata 2021–2030...*, p. 17.

³⁴ K. Kochanowicz, *Country Strategy Papers: A Policy Tool to Increase Effectiveness of Polish Development Cooperation*, „Minority Rights Group International – Institute of Global Responsibility Briefing Paper” 2012, pp. 1–24.

³⁵ Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych, *Specjalizacja Polski w międzynarodowej współpracy na rzecz rozwoju – szanse, wyzwania, zagrożenia. Raport z konferencji*, Warszawa 2010, pp. 11–13.

Furthermore, the selection of priority aid recipients corresponded with the thematic interests of Polish development cooperation. Even the first activities undertaken within the aid framework since 1998 indicated that countries undergoing systemic transformation, primarily located in the broadly understood neighbourhood of Poland, will gain preferential status³⁶. That approach was reflected in subsequent documents. The strategy of 2003 defined three crucial directions of Poland's development activities; among them countries (mainly Eastern European and Balkan) facing the challenges of systemic transformation were second³⁷. In the following years, a small group of countries were recognised as priority partners for development cooperation. From 2004 – among others, Georgia and Moldova and since 2005, also Belarus and Ukraine. At the turn of the first and the second decades of the 21st century, the focus was predominantly on the countries covered by the Eastern Partnership (EaP). Consequently, in 2011, Armenia and Azerbaijan were also given priority status. The first multiannual programme included six EaP countries as priority recipients of Polish ODA³⁸, the second concentrated on four of them (Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine)³⁹, and they were also announced as the priority partners at the beginning of the third decade of 21st century⁴⁰. Nevertheless, a specific two-track approach was noticeable in the second decade of the 21st century⁴¹. On the one hand,

³⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Poland's Development Cooperation. Annual Report 2000...*, p. 3.

³⁷ After developing countries maintaining "a significant level of political, economic and cultural relations" with Warsaw and before countries inhabited by groups of people of Polish origin. Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych, *Strategia polskiej współpracy na rzecz rozwoju...*, pp. 6–7.

³⁸ The second priority group included fourteen other developing countries (*inter alia* Libya and Tunisia, wherein 2012, in connection to the Arab Spring events, an opportunity to transfer Polish transformational know-how appeared. Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych, *Wieloletni program współpracy rozwojowej na lata 2012–2015...*, pp. 5–6.

³⁹ As priority partners were also indicated firstly six and then eight other developing countries (Ethiopia, Kenya, Myanmar, Palestine, Senegal, Tanzania and since 2018 also Lebanon and Uganda). Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych, *Wieloletni program współpracy rozwojowej na lata 2016–2020...*, p. 10; Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych, *Wieloletni program współpracy rozwojowej na lata 2016–2020*, Warszawa 2018, p. 10.

⁴⁰ MFA declared at the same time that a maximum of 10 countries would be granted the priority status. Apart from chosen European Partnership countries, that status has Lebanon, Palestine, Ethiopia, Kenya, Senegal and Tanzania. Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych, *Wieloletni program współpracy rozwojowej na lata 2021–2030...*, pp. 19–20; Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych, *Plan współpracy rozwojowej w 2021 roku*, Warszawa 2021, p. 3.

⁴¹ M. Smolaga, *Wschodzący donatorzy pomocy rozwojowej wśród członków UE: analiza porównawcza*, in: *Studia Europejskie w Polsce*, eds. T. Czapiewski, M. Smolaga, Instytut Politologii i Europeistyki Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego, Szczecin 2018, p. 261.

support was concentrated on countries where it was possible (in the decision-makers' perception) to transfer Poland's democratisation and transformational experience. On the other, the assistance framework must have been adapted to the requirements of the global aid agenda, focused on supporting the least developed countries (especially in sub-Saharan Africa) in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals. However, the legacy of the past is also visible in this respect, e.g. in selecting for priority partners countries with which Poland maintained good relations before 1989⁴².

To sum up, in declarations on development cooperation made by Polish representatives over the years as well as in the strategic documents connected to this area, regardless of the ruling political forces at any moment, there were frequent references to the activities of the opposition Solidarity movement and attempts to transform this symbol of Polish transformation at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s into a sign of the democratisation agenda promoted from the beginning of the 21st century as a part of international activity of Warsaw⁴³. A specific link between Poland's transformative past and the democratising mission of the future was the logo of the Polish Presidency in the Council of the European Union, which took place in the second half of 2011. The graphic sign was subsequently transferred to the Solidarity Fund PL, a quasi-executive agency in the Polish aid system⁴⁴. In general, the undertaken aid initiatives in the years 1998–2020 focused on selected experiences of systemic transformation: building a civil society and strengthening independent media, decentralisation reforms and regional development, developing efficient and transparent public administration, promoting respect for human rights, counteracting corruption, promoting entrepreneurship and implementing free-market standards.

⁴² B. Szent-Iványi, A. Tétényi, *Transition and Foreign Aid Policies in the Visegrad Countries: A Path Dependant Approach*, „Transition Studies Review” 2008, vol. 15, pp. 573–587.

⁴³ D. Ost, *The Defeat of Solidarity. Anger and Politics in Postcommunist Europe*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 2005, pp. 37–39.

⁴⁴ Fundacja Solidarności Międzynarodowej, *Logotyp polskiej prezydencji w UE przekazany Polskiej Fundacji Solidarności Międzynarodowej*, <https://solidarityfund.pl/2012/01/20/logotyp-polskiej-prezydencji-w-ue-przekazane-polskiej-fundacji-miedzy-narodowej/> [accessed: 9.08.2022].

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AS A TOOL FOR EXPORTING DEMOCRACY TO THE EAST

Assessing the effectiveness of a given international role is not an easy task. Difficulties arise, among others, because several international actors may play the same role, and the fact that all costs incurred in achieving the assumed goal are not measurable. However, applying the evaluation framework indicated by Justyna Zając, the assessment of the effectiveness of the implementation of Poland's international role as an exporter of democracy to the East on the example of state-led development cooperation requires analysis in three dimensions:

- 1) The rationality of choosing a comparative advantage and thematic/geographical specialisation of aid activities.
- 2) The level of implementation of the comparative advantage and thematic/geographical specialisation of aid activities.
- 3) Approval of comparative advantage and thematic/geographical specialisation by donors and beneficiaries of aid funds.

Therefore, the analysis of the effectiveness of the implementation of the declared international role of Poland related to the export of democracy to the East, taking development cooperation as an example, should begin with an assessment of the rationality of establishing democratisation and transformation experiences as Polish comparative advantage in this area of international relations and positioning them as the foundation of provided aid. It is worth emphasising that the transfer of transition experience is a broader category than promoting democracy. However, they are closely related, as transitional experience also includes political changes know-how⁴⁵.

As previously indicated, Polish decision-makers (*a priori* and without in-depth analysis) established the experience of systemic transformation and the political, economic and social changes as the state's comparative advantage in implementing development cooperation activities⁴⁶. Depending on whether decision-makers treat the promotion of democracy as a target itself or as a tool for achieving other foreign policy goals⁴⁷, it can be analysed from the perspective

⁴⁵ B. Szent-Iványi, S. Lightfoot, *Central and Eastern European Transition Experience. A Depoliticisation of Democracy Aid?*, in: *Democratization in EU Foreign Policy. New Member States as Drivers of Democracy Promotion*, eds. B. Berti, K. Mikulova, N. Popescu, Routledge, London – New York 2017, pp. 48–49.

⁴⁶ P. Kugiel, *Specializacja Polski...*, p. 59–60.

⁴⁷ Read more: T. Petrova, *From Solidarity to Geopolitics. Support for Democracy Among Postcommunist States*, Cambridge University Press, New York 2014.

of a normative or strategic commitment. The first approach assumes that the pro-democratisation foreign mission is motivated primarily by the internal values of the state, features of national identity or the conviction and attachment to the universal value of democracy. The second relates to the recognition of democracy export as a means of achieving other goals, for example, by building a favourable international environment⁴⁸.

The first perspective, therefore, refers primarily to pride in the achievements of the opposition Solidarity movement, which (in Polish perception) led not only to systemic changes in the state but also to the fall of communism, and became a permanent element of the national identity⁴⁹. Its foundations, however, go much further to the profoundly entrenched messianism that stems from the Jagiellonian idea that motivates the sense of duty towards the Eastern neighbourhood and is also the foundation of contemporary Poland's eastern policy⁵⁰. Equally important is the moral obligation to help, demonstrated, *inter alia*, in public opinion polls by the necessity of compensation for the aid obtained by Poland since 1989⁵¹. Thus, in this approach, Poland's comparative advantage in development cooperation is based on three factors: having the unique experience of systemic transformation, having the unique experience as both beneficiary and donor of aid, and exceptional knowledge of the specificity and needs of neighbouring countries⁵². The result is the conviction that Polish

⁴⁸ T. Petrova, *Trade and Freedom or Trading Freedom? How Strategic and Normative Interests Shape Foreign Policy and Democracy Assistance in Central and Eastern Europe*, in: *Democratization in EU Foreign Policy...*, p. 15.

⁴⁹ Such a view was presented, among others, by President Lech Kaczyński in 2006 at the UN General Assembly: "Solidarity brought Poland freedom and sovereignty and contributed to the fall of communism in Europe. Thanks to it, the wall dividing the world into two hostile blocks collapsed". *Wystąpienie Prezydenta RP Lecha Kaczyńskiego podczas Debaty Ogólnej na 61. sesji Zgromadzenia Ogólnego ONZ 19 września 2006 r.*, <https://www.unic.un.org.pl/aktualnosci/wystapienie-prezydenta-rp-lecha-kaczynskiego-podczas-debaty-ogolnej-na-61-sesji-zgromadzenia-ogolnego-onz/865> [accessed: 9.08.2022].

⁵⁰ Z. Najder, *Główne problemy polityki wschodniej Polski*, in: *Polityka wschodnia Polski. Uwarunkowania, koncepcje, realizacja*, eds. A. Gil, T. Kapuśniak, Instytut Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej, Lublin-Warszawa 2009, p. 173; P. Kowal, *Testament Prometeusza. Źródła polityki wschodniej III Rzeczypospolitej*, Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, KEW, Warszawa-Wojnowice 2018, pp. 93–109.

⁵¹ From 2004 to 2019, the moral obligation to assist less developed countries was the most frequently indicated justification for transfers by supporters of Poland's aid activity (44–65% of respondents). In the second place, they indicated the need to pay back for the aid received by Poland in the past (33–50%), although in the last opinion poll (2019), this reason was chosen by only 27% of interviewees. In this survey, for the first time, so many respondents indicated donor benefits, e.g. increasing prestige in the world, as the aid motivation (30%). Kantar, *Polacy o pomocy rozwojowej. Wyniki badania Kantar Polska dla Ministerstwa Spraw Zagranicznych*, Warszawa 2019, p. 9.

⁵² T. Petrova, *Trade and Freedom...*, p. 22.

pro-democratisation activities in the East are more effective than other donors⁵³.

However, it is not challenging to undermine these pillars. Firstly, the specificity of the changes introduced in Poland is questionable and problematic to define, as they were carried out based on the neo-liberal principles of the *Washington Consensus*, applied in various transforming countries around the world under the watchful eye of international financial organisations and Western donors⁵⁴. This results in attempts to pass on not so much the difficult to identify Polish democratisation and transformational know-how but to transfer the personal experiences of decision-makers who, as anti-communist opposition activists or leaders of social movements, were direct beneficiaries of foreign aid. In this way, the support for the construction of free media in Poland in the early 1990s evolved into the creation of independent television (Belsat TV) and radio stations (Belarusian Radio Racja, European Radio for Belarus) in Belarus. Moreover, the dissidents' benefits from foreign scholarships led to developing scholarship programmes which are the main expenditure of Polish ODA in the education sector⁵⁵. Secondly, it is wrong to rely on the belief that the situation in Poland at the beginning of the 1990s corresponds to the current conditions of development in the countries of the broadly understood Poland's Eastern neighbourhood⁵⁶. Although the experiences gained by Poland are not universal, it is through their prism that the needs of aid recipients are assessed (often incorrectly), which leads to the impossibility and/or ineffectiveness of the direct application of Polish solutions on foreign ground⁵⁷. Therefore, one should note the erroneous belief of Polish decision-makers that thanks to its own transformation experiences, Poland better understands the needs of the East. As a result, the local specificity of the diverse (politically, economically, socially and culturally) environments of the EaP countries is not taken into account⁵⁸. Moreover, the official Polish

⁵³ B. Szent-Iványi, S. Lightfoot, *Central and Eastern European Transition...*, p. 49.

⁵⁴ O. Horký, *The Transfer of the Central and Eastern European 'Transition Experience' to the South: Myth or Reality?*, in: *Development Policies of Central and Eastern European States. From Aid Recipients to Aid Donors*, eds. O. Horký-Hlucháň, S. Lightfoot, Routledge, London - New York 2015, p. 22.

⁵⁵ E. Drażkiewicz-Grodzicka, *Poland: Attempts at Defining Aid by Solidarity, Democracy and Development*, in: *Development Cooperation of the 'New' EU Member States. Beyond Europeanization*, eds. O. Horký-Hlucháň, S. Lightfoot, Palgrave Macmillan, London 2015, p. 53.

⁵⁶ O. Horký, *The Transfer...*, pp. 22-23.

⁵⁷ T. Petrova, *Trade and Freedom...*, p. 21.

⁵⁸ E. Drażkiewicz-Grodzicka, *Poland: Attempts...*, pp. 53-54.

development discourse also ignores such issues as the polarised opinion of Polish society on the effect of (unfair?) transformation⁵⁹, as well as the possibility of a hostile reception of Poland by the societies of ODA recipients. As Elżbieta Drażkiewicz-Grodzicka points out, the involvement of the state in the East, based on the mirage of “Great Poland” and the belief in its own superiority, for example in the case of Ukraine, “might be viewed not only as a positive act of solidarity but also as an echo of patronising and colonising attitudes”⁶⁰.

As part of the second approach, the rationality of articulated comparative advantage is based on the importance of the goals to be achieved thanks to it. These include: building a new identity of the state as a consequence of the changing international order, strengthening the credibility as an ally, participant and partner in Euro-Atlantic integration processes and organisations, confirmation of the country’s belonging to the West, building a stable and prosperous neighbourhood, postponing the threat from Russia, and as a result – increasing Poland’s security (including energetic) and developing beneficial economic ties. Therefore, the rationality of the idea of exporting democracy with the use of ODA is to contribute mainly to the realisation of the state’s interests – strategic, political, economic and security-related⁶¹.

In the context of achieving the indicated goals, the channels for transferring transformational (including democratisation) experiences play a crucial role. Ondřej Horký defined three (narrow) ways of transferring this know-how: technical (between governments, public administrations and local governments), political (direct support for the civil society of the recipient country) and hybrid (influencing changes in the EU’s foreign and development policy)⁶². Poland strives to use all these channels, but decision-makers seem to ignore the limited possibilities of influencing through them. Intergovernmental technical cooperation is carried out with the countries of the Eastern

⁵⁹ Public opinion polls conducted by CBOS from 1994 to 2019 show that the majority of respondents believe that it was worth changing the system in Poland (56–83%), but the percentage of people who believe that the transformation brought as many benefits as losses (17–40%) or that the losses were more than the gains (5–55%) is significant in individual years. CBOS, *Czy warto było zmieniać ustrój? Ocena przemian po 1989 roku. Komunikat z badań, nr 76/2019*, Warszawa 2019, pp. 2–5.

⁶⁰ E. Drażkiewicz-Grodzicka, *Poland: Attempts...*, p. 55.

⁶¹ Z. Opršal et al., *Polish and Czech Foreign Aid: a ‘Mélange’ of Geopolitical and Developmental Objectives*, „Journal of International Relations and Development” 2021, vol. 24, pp. 279–305.

⁶² O. Horký, *The Transfer...*, pp. 21–22.

neighbourhood (especially with the majority of the EaP states). However, Poland has a marginal share in the total aid provided to them by all donors. Concerning Belarus, aid is provided at the level of support for civil society, but the authoritarian regime of Aleksandr Lukashenka by force blocks the effectiveness of this support. In addition, Poland – and other CEE states – has limited opportunities to discount its democratisation and transformational advantage in the European Union forum, which also translates into a limited influence on the EU's foreign and development policy⁶³. The EaP programme, which combines in the Polish view – in various proportions over the years – messianism⁶⁴ with national interests – is assessed ambiguously.

From the Polish perspective, the programme is an undoubted success. It is proof of the efficiency of diplomacy, which managed to convince European partners to extend the EU's neighbourhood policy with a priority direction for Poland's foreign policy. In this way, Warsaw significantly expanded its possibilities of influencing Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus, acquiring the EU's instruments⁶⁵, mainly through “eastward *extrapolation* of EU values, norms and standards”⁶⁶. Moreover, there was a genuine rapprochement between the individual programme countries⁶⁷ and Brussels. In 2016, association agreements with Georgia and Moldova entered into force, and in 2017 – with Ukraine. In 2021, a comprehensive and enhanced partnership agreement came into effect. A similar one is negotiated with Azerbaijan. In addition to political dialogue, trade cooperation is intensifying. Cooperation conducted since 2009 under the programme, primarily in the face of Russia's full-scale aggression against Ukraine, which has been ongoing since 24 February 2022, has finally become a pillar of the pro-European orientation of the three countries (Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia) that have applied for membership in the European Union. In June 2022, the status of a candidate country was granted to Ukraine and Moldova, and

⁶³ S. Lightfoot, B. Szent-Iványi, K. Wolczuk, *Mesmerized by Enlargement: The EU's Eastern Neighbourhood Policy and New Member State Transition Experience*, „East European Politics and Societies: and Cultures” 2016, vol. 30, no. 3, pp. 672–679.

⁶⁴ M. Raś, *Poland's Perspective on the Eastern Neighbourhood*, in: *Ambiguities of Europe's Eastern Neighbourhood*, eds. W. Hilz, S. Minasyan, M. Raś, Springer, Wiesbaden 2020, pp. 19–20.

⁶⁵ T. Stępniewski, *The Eastern Policy of the European Union. The Role of Poland*, „Politeja” 2016, no. 2 (41), pp. 184–188; T. Sydoruk, D. Tyshchenko, *The Eastern Dimension of the EU's and Poland's Policy*, „Athenaeum. Polish Political Science Studies” 2016, no. 52, pp. 213–216.

⁶⁶ M. Raś, *Poland's Perspective...*, p. 19.

⁶⁷ Notably, Belarus suspended its participation in the programme in 2021.

representatives of the EU Member States recognised the European perspective for Georgia⁶⁸.

On the other hand, it is hard to resist the impression that the prospect of membership in the organisation being offered to these countries (although not guaranteed) was only the EU's reaction to Russia's brutal attack on Ukraine. Only a dramatic change in the region's security environment forced Brussels to define the point where EaP participation is heading. Previously, the lack of a reward (no membership perspective) for the effective implementation of EU-supported reforms was considered a crucial shortcoming of the initiative⁶⁹. The limited possibilities of the Union's influence – through the programme – on the internal situation of the countries covered by it were also repeatedly emphasised (mainly the powerlessness against authoritarianism in Belarus and Azerbaijan or the pro-Russian turn in Armenia)⁷⁰. The limited response to conflicts involving these states (lasting since 2014 war in eastern Ukraine or regular tensions between Yerevan and Baku) was also pointed out⁷¹. Over the years, the Partnership's priorities have also evolved: from democratisation and transformation promoted by Poland to differentiation and stabilisation⁷². This constitutes an additional barrier to the transfer of Polish experiences but does not exclude the benefits that Warsaw can gain thanks to the programme's performance.

Moreover, the rational assessment of the donor state's capabilities – especially as a medium-sized state and marginal ODA donor – suggests that the goal of stabilising the Eastern neighbourhood to limit Russia's influence on it and weaken Russia itself is too ambitious. The comparative advantage based on the export of democracy and the transfer of transition experience, as Ondřej Horký suggests, becomes a myth which is to obscure the actual inability of the donor to act effectively on a broader EU forum and the reluctance to meet the undertaken development commitments, contribute to the creation

⁶⁸ European Council, *Eastern Partnership*, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/eastern-partnership/> [accessed: 23.02.2023].

⁶⁹ J. Nixey, *The Eastern Partnership at 10. What is There to Celebrate?*, „New Eastern Europe” 2019, no. 3–4, pp. 33–37.

⁷⁰ K.L. Nielsen, M. Vilson, *The Eastern Partnership: Soft Power Strategy or Policy Failure?*, „European Foreign Affairs Review” 2014, vol. 19, no. 2, pp. 243–262; O. Barbarska, *Blaski i cienie Partnerstwa Wschodniego Unii Europejskiej*, „Studia Europejskie” 2015, no. 4, pp. 63–67.

⁷¹ B. Deen, W. Zweers, I. van Loon, *The Eastern Partnership. Three Dilemmas in a Time of Troubles*, „Clingendael Report” 2021, pp. 15–16.

⁷² B. Piskorska, *Partnerstwo Wschodnie po 10 latach: sukces czy porażka, realizm czy iluzja?*, „Rocznik Instytutu Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej” 2019, vol. 17, no. 2, p. 20.

of the identity of the “new donor” and mask the real (security and economic) interests promoted through development cooperation⁷³.

The analysis of the development discourse conducted by Balazs Szent-Iványi and Simon Lightfoot not only in Poland but also in other CEE countries shows that “CEE states rarely question the relevance of their experience in other contexts, but rather take it for granted”⁷⁴. This may be confirmed by the statement of Minister Radosław Sikorski in 2008: “Activity in the Eastern direction of the EU’s foreign policy should remain a Polish speciality. Precisely because of our location, historical experience, cultural ties with the East and finally, because of our potential and competencies, we not only feel predestined to the Eastern speciality, but we are even encouraged to do so by the main EU partners”⁷⁵. Meanwhile, the presented issues justify doubts about the rationality of the Polish comparative advantage. So the doubt arises whether the experience of changes and the experience of the recipient of pro-transformational ODA are sufficient to provide high-quality aid⁷⁶ and, thus – whether it predisposes the state to play the role of the exporter of democracy.

The analysis of the level of implementation of the comparative advantage and thematic specialisation of activities (and hence – also geographical specialisation) can be carried out based on the statistical data on the distribution of Polish ODA.

Firstly, it is worth checking whether the support for democracy and civil society displayed in the declarations on development cooperation dominates among the aid provided by Poland in individual sectors.

The OECD DAC had collected precise data on Polish sectoral support since 2013 – when Poland joined the Development Assistance Committee. They confirm that the most significant funds in 2013–2021 were spent on activities in the social infrastructure and services (USD 1194.95 million), including activities for good government and civil society (USD 259.22 million). Assistance for chosen production sectors absorbed USD 222.50 million, while only USD 40.64 million was allocated to infrastructure and financial services initiatives (Table 1).

⁷³ O. Horký, *The Transfer of the Central and Eastern European ‘Transition Experience’ to the South: Myth or Reality?*, „Perspectives on European Politics and Society” 2012, vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 27–28.

⁷⁴ B. Szent-Iványi, S. Lightfoot, *Central and Eastern European Transition...*, p. 52.

⁷⁵ *Informacja Ministra Spraw Zagranicznych Radosława Sikorskiego na temat polityki zagranicznej RP w 2008 roku*, 7.07.2008.

⁷⁶ B. Szent-Iványi, Z. Végh, *Is Transition Experience Enough? The Donor-Side Effectiveness of Czech and Polish Democracy Aid to Georgia*, „Democratization” 2018, vol. 25, no. 4, pp. 614–632.

TABLE 1
Sectoral allocations of Polish bilateral ODA, 2013–2021 (USD million)

Sector / Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
I. Social Infrastructure & Services	90.65	61.45	80.28	65.39	127.02	177.39	180.42	171.53	240.82	1194.95
I.1. Education	63.61	41.47	52.92	43.21	87.60	92.61	138.31	128.62	138.55	786.90
I.2. Health	1.11	0.69	0.98	0.94	0.70	1.22	12.92	12.56	57.40	88.52
I.3. Population Policies/Programmes & Reproductive Health	0.38	0.15	0.26	0.26	0.38	0.28	0.18	0.14	0.12	2.15
I.4. Water Supply & Sanitation	1.41	1.13	0.95	0.36	0.24	0.58	0.45	0.39	0.22	5.73
I.5. Government & Civil Society	21.07	13.73	20.58	15.92	22.60	77.18	23.93	25.38	38.83	259.22
I.6. Other Social Infrastructure & Services	3.07	4.28	4.58	4.70	15.51	5.53	4.64	4.43	5.69	52.43
II. Economic Infrastructure & Services	2.17	1.63	3.21	1.88	1.75	1.89	7.39	4.51	16.21	40.64
II.1. Transport & Storage	0.00	0.07	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.00	5.39	3.56	14.93	23.97
II.2. Communications	0.00	0.23	0.00	0.05	0.01	0.03	0.00	0.08	0.06	0.46
II.3. Energy	1.00	0.55	2.25	0.41	0.35	0.27	0.05	0.37	0.43	5.68
II.4. Banking & Financial Services	0.66	0.27	0.40	0.46	0.28	0.37	0.27	0.42	0.36	3.49
II.5. Business & Other Services	0.49	0.51	0.56	0.95	1.10	1.22	1.67	0.09	0.42	7.01
III. Production Sectors	1.35	22.77	30.34	82.87	15.14	36.19	19.83	9.88	4.13	222.50
III.1. Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing	1.32	22.14	29.90	81.47	14.80	34.91	18.67	9.49	3.40	216.10
III.2. Industry, Mining, Construction	0.02	0.48	0.21	1.20	0.02	0.37	0.60	0.38	0.63	3.91
IV. Multi-Sector / Cross-Cutting	5.85	1.77	1.08	0.83	60.39	4.31	5.59	2.37	2.62	84.81
V. Total Sector Allocable (I+II+III+IV)	100.01	87.62	114.90	150.96	204.31	219.78	213.24	188.30	263.78	1542.90

Source: OECD, *Aid (ODA) by Sector and Donor* [DAC5], <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=TABLE5> [accessed: 23.02.2023].

Therefore, referring to the most important sector of Poland's activity, i.e., democracy, the rule of law, and civil society, the available data (for 2013–2021) indicate that Poland spent only 16.80% of USD 1.54 billion in total bilateral aid by sector. Moreover, sectors with higher (education – 51.00%⁷⁷) or comparable (agriculture – 14.00%) financing may be indicated. Thus, democratisation support does not dominate the structure of aid expenditure in that period. It is worth emphasising that OECD DAC countries spent USD 126.50 billion on supporting democracy during that time, which accounted for 14.78% of sectoral aid (its total amount was USD 855.58 billion). Therefore, Warsaw's contribution oscillated around 0.20% of aid transferred by all Committee countries (Table 2). The reduction of the role of the promoter of democracy only to providing financial support implies a conclusion that the international role of Poland in this area is marginal compared to other countries interested in strengthening democracy in developing countries.

TABLE 2

Government & Civil society allocations – OECD DAC and Poland, 2013–2021 (USD million)

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
OECD DAC	12084.35	12497.7	12730.07	12575.48	13215.17	15856.95	16356.24	16344.53	14835.88	126496.38
Poland	21.07	13.73	20.58	15.92	22.60	77.18	23.93	25.38	38.83	259.22
Poland's share	0.17	0.11	0.16	0.13	0.17	0.49	0.15	0.16	0.26	0.20

Source: OECD, *Aid (ODA) by Sector and Donor [DAC5]*, <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=TABLE5> [accessed: 23.02.2023].

⁷⁷ During this period, the greatest support flowed to the education sector (USD 780.37 million) and primarily to the post-secondary education sector (USD 677.34 million). The foundation of this support was numerous scholarship programmes for citizens of developing countries, including Poland's Eastern neighbourhood.

At the same time, it is worth verifying whether the countries on the Eastern border of Poland are, in fact, the primary beneficiaries of the ODA transferred by Warsaw.

Based on the financial data from 1998–2021 presented by the OECD DAC concerning Poland's bilateral ODA, the main directions of activities carried out in this period can be distinguished. The most important beneficiaries of Polish aid are European countries (mainly three Eastern European states – Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova), followed by Asian countries (primarily Central and South Asia countries, including Afghanistan and the former Soviet republics) and African states (predominantly located in sub-Saharan Africa). A symbolic amount of aid was also directed to the countries of Central America, South America, the Caribbean and selected states of Oceania (Table 3).

TABLE 3

Geographical allocations of Polish bilateral ODA, 1998–2021 (USD million)

Region	Subregion	Total
Europe	Eastern Europe	982.04
	Western Balkans	67.57
	Other	103.41
	<i>Europe. regional</i>	12.37
	Total	1165.39
Asia	South and Central Asia	303.37
	Middle East	212.61
	Far East Asia	204.44
	<i>Asia. regional</i>	6.11
	Total	726.53
Africa	Northern Africa	18.92
	Sub-Saharan Africa	475.44
	▪ Eastern Africa	272.86
	▪ Middle Africa	178.63
	▪ Southern Africa	1.65
	▪ Western Africa	22.24
	<i>Africa. regional</i>	13.60
	Total	507.96
America	Caribbean and Central America	33.05
	South America	16.34
	<i>America. regional</i>	0.03
	Total	49.42
Oceania	Melanesia	0.38
	Total	0.38
Unspecified		134.53
Total		2584.21

Source: OECD, *Aid (ODA) Disbursements to Countries and Regions [DAC2a]*, <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=TABLE2A> [accessed: 23.02.2023].

Financial data confirm that the countries of Eastern Europe are the key recipients of Polish bilateral ODA. From 1998 to 2021, as much as 38.00% of bilateral aid was allocated to activities in only three countries in that region. This is a significant result, as the remaining resources have been divided into activities in 127 other developing countries.

Finally, it is worth checking whether the declared actions in the field of support for democratisation, civil society building and economic transformation were also prioritised in the countries that received priority status in Polish development cooperation. Taking three Eastern European countries as an example – Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine, and Georgia (also included in the EaP and enjoying the interest of Polish decision-makers), it should be stated that:

1) The aid provided to these countries from 2013 to 2021 was not directly aimed at improving the quality of public institutions, strengthening the rule of law or developing civil society (funds for government & civil society sector were not transferred).

2) Expenditures incurred in other sectors (other infrastructure and social services – mainly education, infrastructure and economic services, production sectors) may contribute to the system transformation in these countries.

3) Assistance in the area of government & civil society was also not financed by other OECD DAC members.

Therefore, it must be stated that development cooperation hardly contributes to the implementation of the declared role of Poland related to democracy promotion in the East. Moreover, the ODA transferred in this direction has a small transformational dimension. Considering the activity of other donors in these countries, Poland's share in them is marginal (Table 4). From 1998 to 2021⁷⁸, Poland contributed USD 1035.54 million to aid in the four mentioned EaP states, with USD 21.50 billion transferred in total by all OECD DAC countries. This represented a contribution of only 4.82%. Polish participation in aid to Ukraine (the largest beneficiary of Polish bilateral ODA) amounted to only 5.42% of the funds provided by all the members of the Committee. Concerning Moldova, it was 1.28%, and Georgia – only 0.71%. Such small participation in aid activities for these countries, with much higher activity of other donors, focused on supporting the same sectors, in practice makes it impossible to assess the effectiveness of

⁷⁸ Concerning Ukraine and Belarus – from 2005 to 2021.

TABLE 4
 OECD DAC and Poland – allocations to Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, 1989–2021 (USD million)

	Belarus			Georgia			Moldova			Ukraine		
	OECD DAC	Poland	%	OECD DAC	Poland	%	OECD DAC	Poland	%	OECD DAC	Poland	%
1998	-	-	-	112.39	0.03	0.03	31.85	0.19	0.60	-	-	-
1999	-	-	-	109.71	0.03	0.03	74.31	0.38	0.51	-	-	-
2000	-	-	-	175.38	0.12	0.07	94.14	0.50	0.53	-	-	-
2001	-	-	-	220.36	0.08	0.04	118.52	0.31	0.26	-	-	-
2002	-	-	-	298.85	0.11	0.04	125.31	0.36	0.29	-	-	-
2003	-	-	-	214.94	0.16	0.07	108.70	0.37	0.34	-	-	-
2004	-	-	-	260.22	0.33	0.13	96.00	0.36	0.38	-	-	-
2005	45.16	4.56	10.10	219.95	0.29	0.13	101.99	0.64	0.63	307.03	7.06	2.30
2006	52.76	7.32	13.87	248.29	0.56	0.23	98.20	1.35	1.37	342.01	7.67	2.24
2007	65.83	13.87	21.07	267.24	1.44	0.54	100.63	1.64	1.63	280.62	11.69	4.17
2008	72.65	14.48	19.93	650.97	2.28	0.35	120.90	1.83	1.51	310.38	11.03	3.55
2009	78.45	15.02	19.15	500.06	10.84	2.17	105.10	1.03	0.98	421.02	8.84	2.10
2010	100.42	13.95	13.89	395.93	5.72	1.44	99.61	1.05	1.05	452.41	10.17	2.25
2011	76.47	18.65	24.39	326.50	5.79	1.77	100.53	1.50	1.49	435.91	10.59	2.43
2012	60.93	15.00	24.62	366.86	2.43	0.66	124.73	1.82	1.46	425.94	11.63	2.73
2013	61.75	19.30	31.26	326.74	3.15	0.96	160.36	2.06	1.28	320.68	13.68	4.27
2014	66.37	18.17	27.38	267.87	2.30	0.86	241.93	2.89	1.19	785.76	19.92	2.54
2015	67.13	20.16	30.03	221.58	2.13	0.96	216.00	2.64	1.22	1200.64	30.99	2.58
2016	55.87	21.48	38.45	189.31	2.06	1.09	99.52	2.40	2.41	1028.91	26.99	2.62
2017	71.04	34.79	48.97	201.17	1.87	0.93	99.25	2.22	2.24	786.45	64.13	8.15
2018	69.53	33.98	48.87	359.45	2.36	0.66	96.54	2.42	2.51	780.33	66.89	8.57
2019	76.25	40.12	52.62	405.28	2.96	0.73	105.01	2.84	2.70	632.49	83.44	13.19
2020	136.41	62.64	45.92	680.66	2.04	0.30	95.56	1.86	1.95	589.31	64.82	11.00
2021	91.31	53.62	58.72	546.87	4.42	0.81	110.65	2.31	2.09	859.58	90.42	10.52
Total	1248.33	407.11	32.61	7566.58	53.50	0.71	2725.34	34.97	1.28	9959.47	539.96	5.42

Source: OECD, Aid (ODA) Disbursements to Countries and Regions [DAC2aj], <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=TABLE2A>
 [accessed: 23.02.2023].

implemented initiatives. The exception is Belarus, for which Poland is the largest donor of ODA – the state’s share in the aid transferred by the Committee amounts to as much as 32.61%. However, in this case, the effectiveness of aid activities undertaken by Poland is forcibly blocked by the regime.

It is also worth emphasising that since 1998, when Poland made bilateral aid transfers for the first time, only six countries received aid exceeding USD 100 million. The largest beneficiary of Polish ODA is Ukraine (in 2005-2021, bilateral ODA for this country was worth USD 539.96 million), followed by Belarus (USD 407.11 million). The following positions are taken by Angola (USD 173.53 million in 1998–2021), Ethiopia (USD 124.34 million), China (USD 105.64 million) and Türkiye (USD 103.41 million in 1999-2021). Among the most significant recipients of Polish ODA are countries – apart from Ukraine and Belarus – with which other (primarily economic, not political) interests are linked. Therefore, the mission of exporting democracy through development cooperation is not consistently pursued.

When analysing the position of the donor community towards the comparative advantage articulated by Poland, and consequently also the declared thematic and geographic specialisation in development cooperation, it must be stated that it has been generally accepted. The OECD DAC stated in its 2010 review of Polish development cooperation: “Polish development assistance focuses on enhancement and promotion of democracy and good governance, human rights, sustainable development, and civil society, particularly among its neighbours in Eastern Europe. Poland’s own recent experience of transformation gives it a clear comparative advantage in its neighbourhood in these sectors”⁷⁹. The Committee expressed a similar opinion in 2017, stating that: “In its Eastern Partnership priority countries (...), Poland adds value by sharing its transformation experience with the government and other development cooperation providers. These provide value and benefit from Poland’s deep knowledge of the context and its expert advice on institutional reform”⁸⁰.

It should be stated that the experience of systemic transformation as a comparative advantage has also been approved by the European Union, the largest donor of ODA. Moreover, it was expected that the

⁷⁹ OECD DAC, *DAC Special Review of Poland*, Paris 2010, p. 13, www.oecd.org/dac/peer-reviews/45362587.pdf [accessed: 9.08.2022].

⁸⁰ OECD DAC, *OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews: Poland 2017*, Paris 2017, p. 61, https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/oecd-development-co-operation-peer-reviews-poland-2017_9789264268869-en [accessed: 9.08.2022].

EU enlargement of 2004 might, in the long run, lead to a reorientation of the EU's development policy and an increase in the importance of countries in the Eastern neighbourhood of the new member states, also with a communist past⁸¹. In fact, Poland – participating in the decision-making process regarding programming and selecting the main directions of the organisation's development policy – has repeatedly signalled its attachment to activities for democratisation and transformation, especially beyond its Eastern border⁸². The state effectively strove to include the issue of using the transformational experiences of the EU Member States in its development cooperation, as exemplified by, *inter alia*, regulations on EU aid instruments⁸³ or Council conclusions concerning societies in transition⁸⁴. The document from 2006 – *The European Consensus on Development* – strategic for the EU's development policy – indicated that “The EU will capitalise on new Member States' experience (such as transition management)” while supporting the activities of these countries as new donors⁸⁵. The revised version of the Consensus (from 2017)⁸⁶ again refers to the use and sharing of the experience of the organisation and its members, detailing the experience of systemic transition⁸⁷.

⁸¹ M. Carbone, *Development Policy*, in: *European Union Enlargement*, ed. N. Nugent, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke – New York 2004, p. 251.

⁸² Also at the end of the second decade of the 21st century, e.g., during the debate about the EU's development policy after 2020. Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych, *Polska współpraca rozwojowa. Raport roczny 2018*, Warszawa 2019, pp. 18–19.

⁸³ This issue was finally addressed, *inter alia*, in the regulation on the EU's Development Cooperation Instrument: “In its development cooperation activities the Union shall, as appropriate, draw from and share the reform and transition experiences of Member States and the lessons learned”. *Regulation (EU) No 233/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 Establishing a Financing Instrument for Development Cooperation for the Period 2014–2020*, OJ L 77, 15.03.2014.

⁸⁴ Poland was working on provisions concerning, among others, the transfer of know-how related to transformation and the need to report on the progress achieved through reforms. *Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. EU Support for Sustainable Change in Transition Societies*, JOIN(2012) 27 final.

⁸⁵ *Joint Statement by the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States Meeting within the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission on European Union Development Policy: The European Consensus*, OJ C 46, 24.02.2006.

⁸⁶ During the work on the document, Poland – in particular – called for the need to maintain a balance between the geographical directions of EU's development cooperation and sought to strengthen it – as recipients of aid – the countries of the Eastern Partnership. Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych, *Polska współpraca rozwojowa. Raport roczny 2017*, Warszawa 2018, pp. 12–13.

⁸⁷ *Joint Statement by the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member State Meeting within the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission: The New European Consensus on Development 'Our World, Our Dignity, Our Future'*, OJ C 210, 30.06.2017.

Finally, the international community's approval for the Polish thematic speciality means including Poland in initiatives where it can actually share its broadly understood transformational experience. Examples of this are, among others, the involvement of experts of Poland's Ministry of Agriculture in the activities of the EU joint programming for Moldova⁸⁸, cooperation with Canada and Switzerland in support of decentralisation reforms in Ukraine, cooperation with the OECD in implementing PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) in Ukraine or technical cooperation in support of Georgia⁸⁹.

However, some doubts are raised by Poland's weakening international position in the context of the internal state of democracy, which is inextricably linked with the implementation of the role of the democracy exporter⁹⁰. Maintaining the credibility of comparative advantage should be considered one of the main challenges for future development cooperation and realising the role of democracy exporter. The internal reforms introduced since the end of 2015 by the ruling Law and Justice party (and its coalition partners) led to a gradual erosion of Poland's image as a model of successful transformation and, consequently, a decomposition of the international roles played by the state. Some changes are already visible in other indexes and rankings, considering the state of democracy, level of government stability, level of corruption or the media independence (Table 5).

Markedly, the state of the rule of law in Poland (strongly connected to other factors, such as corruption prevention or media independence) is currently one of the critical issues in relations between Warsaw and Brussels, as respect for the rule of law (such as human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality and human rights, including minority rights) is a fundamental value for the European Union⁹¹. Numerous reservations appeared in the reports on the rule of law in the EU presented by the European Commission concerning Poland. They, in particular, referred to the implemented reforms of the judicial system and the limitation of the independence of courts and judges, the appointment of the Constitutional Tribunal and the

⁸⁸ European Union, *Joint Programming Tracker. Moldova*, <https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/tei-jp-tracker/moldova?tab=jpt> [accessed: 9.08.2022].

⁸⁹ OECD DAC, *OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews: Poland 2017...*, p. 61.

⁹⁰ J. Zając, *Teoria ról międzynarodowych*, in: *Teorie i podejścia badawcze w nauce o stosunkach międzynarodowych*, eds. R. Zięba, S. Bielen, J. Zając, Wydział Dziennikarstwa i Nauk Politycznych UW, Warszawa 2015, pp. 133–134.

⁹¹ Art. 2, *Treaty on European Union (consolidated version)*, OJ C 326, 26.10.2012.

TABLE 5
Poland in independent indexes and ranks, 2015–2021

		2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
The Economist Intelligence Unit	Democracy Index	48 th	52 nd	53 rd	54 th	57 th	50 th	51 st
V-Dem Institute	Liberal Democracy Index	–	55 th	50 th	56 th	64 th	63 rd	80 th
World Bank (percentile rank)	Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism	75.24	63.33	64.29	63.21	65.09	63.21	–
	Government Effectiveness	74.04	73.56	72.12	73.56	72.12	66.35	–
	Rule of Law	76.44	73.08	66.35	66.83	65.87	69.23	–
	Control of Corruption	75.48	76.92	76.44	75.00	73.08	73.08	–
Transparency International	Corruption Perception Index	29 th	29 th	36 th	36 th	41 st	45 th	42 nd
Reporters without Borders	World Press Freedom	18 th	47 th	54 th	58 th	59 th	62 nd	64 th

Sources: The Economist Intelligence Unit, *Democracy Index 2015–2021*, <https://www.eiu.com/n/> [accessed: 9.08.2022]; V-Dem Institute, *Democracy Reports 2017–2022*, https://www.v-dem.net/democracy_reports.html [accessed: 9.08.2022]; World Bank, *Worldwide Governance Indicators 2015–2020*, <https://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/Home/Reports> [accessed: 9.08.2022]; Transparency International, *Corruption Perceptions Index 2015–2021*, <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi> [accessed: 9.08.2022]; Reporters without Borders, *World Press Freedom Index 2015–2022*, <https://rsf.org/en/index?year=2022> [accessed: 9.08.2022].

Supreme Court according to the political key, changes in the system of disciplinary measures for judges, the merger of the functions of the minister of justice and the general prosecutor, a relatively high level of corruption in the public sector and limited effectiveness of counteracting corruption, attempts to limit media pluralism and to intimidate journalists, limit access to public information and limiting the activities of civil society⁹². Against Poland, proceeding have been

⁹² European Commission, *Country Chapter on the rule of law situation in Poland. Accompanying the document Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. 2020 Rule of Law Report*, Brussels, 30.09.2020, SWD(2020) 320 final;

initiated under Art. 7 of the Treaty on European Union, concerning “a clear risk of a serious breach by a Member State of the values referred to in Article 2 [TEU]”⁹³. Moreover, the threats resulting from the implemented reforms of the judiciary and the violation of the rights of women and sexual minorities were also repeatedly pointed out by other international institutions, such as the Council of Europe⁹⁴.

Therefore, the variety of accusations made against the Polish government since the end of 2015 gives rise to justified doubts about the credibility of the priorities chosen by the state in development cooperation and declared focus on promoting democratisation and supporting transition in partner countries. The presented comparative advantage, as well as the declared role of democracy exporter to the East, is still accepted by the international community. However, it is difficult to base the international role and the thematic specialisation on the foundation of transformational experiences when the political activities carried out since the middle of the second decade of the 21st century reduce the quality of democracy in the state and question the effects of the reforms achieved after 1989. If the process of democratic erosion continues, less approval or even disapproval of such targeted development cooperation and, consequently, a reduction in the credibility of international roles related to setting a model for successful transformation, predestined to transfer transformational experiences abroad, should be expected.

However, it is worth emphasising, that actions to support democracy and transformation in the East may be undertaken by decision-makers in order to divert international attention from the internal situation of the state and as a defence against unfounded (in

European Commission, *Country Chapter on the rule of law situation in Poland. Accompanying the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. 2021 Rule of Law Report*, Brussels, 20.07.2021, SWD(2021) 722 final; European Commission, *Country Chapter on the rule of law situation in Poland. Accompanying the document Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. 2022 Rule of Law Report*, Luxembourg, 13.07.2022, SWD(2022) 521 final.

⁹³ Art. 7, *Treaty on European Union (consolidated version)*...

⁹⁴ Council of Europe, *Poland's authorities should shield judges from pressure, actively protect women's rights and step up policies for gender equality*, 27.07.2019, www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/-/poland-s-authorities-should-shield-judges-from-pressure-actively-protect-women-s-rights-and-step-up-policies-for-gender-equality [accessed: 9.08.2022]; Council of Europe, *Poland: New Council of Europe report criticizes increasing attacks and discrimination against LGBTI people*, 10.02.2021, www.coe.int/en/web/congress/-/poland-new-council-of-europe-report-criticizes-increasing-attacks-and-discrimination-against-lgbti-people [accessed: 9.08.2022].

their own perception) accusations. Notably, the coalition government of Law and Justice systematically declares its attachment to democratic principles and emphasises the need to support democracy worldwide. In 2016, Minister of Foreign Affairs Witold Waszczykowski pointed out: “The promotion of human rights and democracy was and remains one of the priorities of Polish foreign policy”⁹⁵, and he presented non-permanent membership in the UN Security Council as an opportunity to promote Polish transformation experiences. In 2019, Minister Jacek Czaputowicz indicated that “Poland supports human rights defenders and contacts between people working for democratic changes in the world”⁹⁶. Polish representatives especially stressed the need to support “an independent, democratic and stable Ukraine”⁹⁷ (primarily as part of restraining Russia’s aspirations) and advocated the enlargement of the EU (mainly towards the East)⁹⁸. In the *Strategy of Polish Foreign Policy 2017–2021*, the MFA presented the EU as a tool for promoting respect for democratic freedoms and human rights⁹⁹. Interestingly, however, in Poland’s reoriented foreign policy, the issue of promoting democracy has also taken on two new dimensions. Both are related to the conflict between Warsaw and Brussels and the Euroscepticism presented by the ruling party. Firstly (paradoxically), according to the Polish government’s perception, the European Union (as an organisation and its bodies) does not follow democratic procedures itself. Therefore, the task of Polish diplomacy is to exert retaliatory pressure on Brussels to restore and strengthen the EU’s democratic mandate and increase its legitimacy¹⁰⁰. Secondly, due to the ongoing conflict, promoting the “Polish democracy model” became the government’s priority, i.e., defending changes introduced in Poland since the end of 2015. This is also associated with exporting “improved” (in the perception of the authorities) democratic standards. Law and Justice approach to Polish transformation achievements is selective; it partially criticises and redefines them. According to

⁹⁵ *Informacja ministra spraw zagranicznych Witolda Waszczykowskiego o zadaniach polskiej polityki zagranicznej w 2016 roku*, 29.01.2016.

⁹⁶ *Informacja Ministra Spraw Zagranicznych Jacka Czaputowicza o zadaniach polskiej polityki zagranicznej w 2019 roku*, 14.03.2019.

⁹⁷ For example: *Informacja Ministra Spraw Zagranicznych Jacka Czaputowicza o zadaniach polskiej polityki zagranicznej w 2018 roku*, 21.03.2018.

⁹⁸ *Informacja Ministra Spraw Zagranicznych Witolda Waszczykowskiego o zadaniach polskiej polityki zagranicznej w 2017 roku*, 9.02.2017.

⁹⁹ Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych, *Strategia polskiej polityki zagranicznej 2017–2021...*, p. 22.

¹⁰⁰ P.J. Borkowski, *Unia Europejska: czas deficytu zaufania*, „Rocznik Strategiczny” 2019/2020, pp. 197–198.

the party's narrative, the undesirable effects of transformation were, among others, the creation of strong *pseudo-elites* operating against the Polish *raison d'état* and the state's sovereignty¹⁰¹ and excessive liberalism, harmful to "Polishness"¹⁰², and strengthened by media with significant participation of foreign capital¹⁰³.

Despite Ryszard Zięba's suggestion that after 2015 Poland abandoned the role of a democracy exporter to the East¹⁰⁴, the first studies indicate that even the Polish government drifting towards authoritarianism is involved in assisting democracy abroad. However, the support has changed. As Aleksandra Monkos indicated in the example of Ukraine, the shift is based on reducing aid for civil society and human rights and limiting the involvement of Polish NGOs experienced in promoting democratic values in partner countries¹⁰⁵. At the same time, the participation of conservative CSOs has increased, and individual ministries focused on technical assistance have a more significant share in the distribution of aid¹⁰⁶. Yet, this results more from the need to secure the national interests and achieve the state's foreign policy goals (neighbourhood stabilisation, economic cooperation, improving position in international community) than messianism or decision-makers' commitment to democracy¹⁰⁷. These interests may benefit from the approval of the recipients of the international role of democracy exporter. Its level is difficult to define, also due to the low financial commitment of Poland in assisting the EaP states. However, concerning the three countries of the programme – Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia – it can be assumed that they will be open to all of Warsaw's initiatives, as long as they will be associated with support for their ambitions of membership in the European Union.

¹⁰¹ Z. Kinowska-Mazaraki, *The Polish Paradox: From a Fight for Democracy to the Political Radicalization and Social Exclusion*, „Social Sciences” 2021, vol. 10, pp. 4–5.

¹⁰² S. Bill, B. Stanley, *Whose Poland Is It To Be? PiS and the Struggle between Monism and Pluralism*, „East European Politics” 2020, vol. 36, no. 3, pp. 387–389.

¹⁰³ E. Zgut, *Informal Exercise of Power: Undermining Democracy Under the EU's Radar in Hungary and Poland*, „Hague Journal on the Rule of Law” 2022, vol. 14, pp. 302–304.

¹⁰⁴ R. Zięba, *Poland's Foreign and Security Policy. Problems of Compatibility with the Changing International Order*, Springer, Cham 2020, p. 265.

¹⁰⁵ A. Monkos, *Democracy Promotion under Populist Rule? The Case of Poland's Democracy Aid in Ukraine*, „Cambridge Review of International Affairs” 2022, vol. 35, no. 4, pp. 459–477.

¹⁰⁶ T. Petrova, S. Aydin-Düzgit, *Democracy Support Without Democracy: The Cases of Poland and Turkey*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 5.01.2021, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/01/05/democracy-support-without-democracy-cases-of-poland-and-turkey-pub-83485> [accessed: 22.02.2023].

¹⁰⁷ T. Petrova, P. Pospieszna, *Democracy Promotion in Times of Autocratization: The Case of Poland, 1989–2019*, „Post-Soviet Affairs” 2021, vol. 37, no. 6, pp. 526–543.

This goal was articulated in 2022 when these countries submitted their applications¹⁰⁸. The situation is different in the case of Belarus, whose authorities treat all activities aimed at building a civil society or supporting independent media as interference in its internal affairs¹⁰⁹.

CONCLUSIONS

The concept of realising the role of democracy exporter to the East through development cooperation was consequently introduced by Polish foreign policy decision-makers despite changes in the ruling elites. The first aid initiatives with democratisation and transformational dimension (1998) were undertaken during the rule of a broad coalition of parties with a Solidarity past led by Jerzy Buzek. The first development cooperation strategy (2003) was developed under the rule of left-wing parties. President Lech Kaczyński emphasised the value of solidarity (2006) with the full support of the government of his Law and Justice Party. The *Act on Development Cooperation* (2011) was adopted by the parliament in which the coalition of the Civic Platform and the Polish People's Party held most of the seats. At that time, the first multiannual programme was presented (2012) as well as the second (2015), which the Law and Justice Party had to implement. Representatives of that party announced the third multiannual programme (2021). Therefore, it shows the continuation of the basic assumptions concerning the international role of democracy exporter, translated into development cooperation's thematic and geographical specialisation.

However, the analysis indicates that development cooperation is ineffective for realising that declared role. As indicated, the comparative

¹⁰⁸ Ukraine set its application for EU membership on 28 February 2022, and Georgia and Moldova did it on 3 March 2022. On 23 June 2022, all three countries were given a European perspective, but only Ukraine and Moldova were granted candidate status. European Commission, *Enlargement Policy*, https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy_en [accessed: 9.08.2022].

¹⁰⁹ For example: D. Mara, *Belarusian President Accuses Germany, Poland of Coup Plans*, 21.01.2011, <https://www.dw.com/en/belarusian-president-accuses-germany-poland-of-coup-plans/a-14777482> [accessed: 9.08.2022]; M. Wilczek, *Lukashenko Plays the Poland Card and Ratchets up Tensions with Warsaw*, 30.03.2021, <https://www.politico.eu/article/alexander-lukashenko-belarus-poland-activists-arrests-tension/> [accessed: 9.08.2022]; G. Barros, *Belarus Warning Update: Lukashenko Accuses Poland of Preparing Catholic Sectarian Subversion*, 2.11.2020, <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/belarus-warning-update-lukashenko-accuses-poland-preparing-catholic-sectarian> [accessed: 9.08.2022]. Such a narrative is reinforced by the pro-Kremlin media, e.g. during anti-regime protests in Belarus in 2020. Special Services, *Media Attacks on Poland Amid Protests in Belarus*, <https://www.gov.pl/web/sluzby-specjalne/media-attacks-on-poland-amid-protests-in-belarus> [accessed: 9.08.2022].

advantage in development cooperation, and thus the formation of its thematic and geographical specialisation, is based on fragile and controversial assumptions, which undermines its rationality. Poland also has limited possibilities to implement it through aid activities, mainly due to the financial factor and the position of marginal ODA donor. The international community (e.g. OECD, EU) indeed approves of the shape of Polish aid activities. Nonetheless, due to the ruling party's authoritarian drift, the approval level is expected to decrease, in line with the state's international position decline. Poland is listed among the ten countries where the quality of democracy decreased the most at the end of the second decade of the 21st century. The political system is called outright the "backsliding democracy"¹¹⁰, and the Law and Justice Party itself is quite sceptical about the post-1989 achievements¹¹¹. Moreover, the authority's approach to Polish transition experience changed after 2015. The party devalues the significance of transferring Polish know-how while declaring further promotion and support of democracy. Therefore, the crucial question is: what democracy Law and Justice intends to export? This dilemma becomes particularly important in the face of changes in Poland's international environment that took place on 24 February 2022.

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¹¹⁰ International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, *The Global State of Democracy 2021. Building Resilience in a Pandemic Era*, Stockholm 2021, pp. 6–7.

¹¹¹ B. Szent-Iványi, P. Kugiel, *The Challenge from Within: EU Development Cooperation and the Rise of Illiberalism in Hungary and Poland*, „Journal of Contemporary European Research” 2020, vol. 16, no. 2, p. 128.

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