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## EU - Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Russia. Their Power Relations in the Contemporary History

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**Abstract:** *The change of the informational paradigm, being the consequence of the effects of the evolution of today's post-modernism, and the appeal of more actors for the hybrid methods of asymmetric struggle, imposes on the nation states to increase the ability to defend the informational, identity and educational space, including the cyber space, to reduce the effects of hybrid warfare<sup>1</sup>.*

**Keywords:** *EU - Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Russia, cold war, neighbourhood policy, alliance, regional conflicts, separatism.*

**W**ith the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Eastern Communist Bloc dominated by the Soviet Union, the victorious Western organizations, the North Atlantic Alliance and the European Union, adapted to consolidate the prosperity and security of their own members, as well as to ensure stability on the scale of the entire European continent and to “fill” the security vacuum produced by the implosion of the Soviet Union and the disappearance of its alliances<sup>2</sup>.

In a globalized world, under the conditions in which the development of the means of communication and transport have experienced an unprecedented development, along with the obvious evolutions in the matter of weapons and military equipment, the proximity factor is present in any type of identifiable threat. We are talking about cyber-attacks, about the energy dependence of the member states of the alliance on other states, about terrorist attacks, about organized crime. The source of all these threats is often far from the borders of the targeted state, but the improvements in the technical field and infrastructures have been favoured by globalization.<sup>3</sup>

The paradigm of the contemporary international security environment over the course of the last decade has transformed in a way that it has imposed more points of view on the future of the international order in debates of the international system of collective security, as well as the modality of ensuring national security by nation states. Regrettably, the strategic vision of the 1990s EU regarding the development and consolidation of a stable international space of international collective security, from Vancouver to Vladivostok could not be implemented. In today's international environment, the multitude of crisis-type events in Syria and the Mediterranean Sea, the annexation of Crimea and the military conflict in eastern Ukraine, with the effects of heightened military tensions in the Black Sea, the recent military conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, the launch of new hybrid strategies to destabilize nation-states with an asymmetric method resulting from information technologies, and the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic require national states and international collective security organizations to re-evaluate

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<sup>1</sup> Frunzeti T., Zodian V. (coord.), Lumea 2005. *Enciclopedie politică si militară (studii strategice si de securitate)*. - Bucuresti, Editura Centrului Tehnic-Editorial al Armatei, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Brucan Silviu, *Secolul XX: Viitorul Uniunii Europene. Războaiele în secolul XXI*, Polirom, Iași, 2005, p 89.

<sup>3</sup> Frunzeti T., Zodian V. (coord.). Op.cit

and develop preventive strategies<sup>4</sup> and new countermeasures to respond to the challenges that have arisen. Thus, increasing the resilience<sup>5</sup> and consolidating a national community within the state, based on common values, principles, and identities, as well as amplifying the multilateral factor of international organizations and collective security, based on the principle of community solidarity, become imperative in facing the new challenges<sup>6</sup>. One thing that is obvious in the analysis of multidimensional and multilateral options, in the complexity of the circumstances of the international security environment, which produces the effect on nation states, is the vital point regarding the fortification of the area of national strategic communication capabilities. The change of the informational paradigm, being the consequence of the effects of the evolution of today's post-modernism, and the appeal of more actors for the hybrid methods of asymmetric struggle, imposes on the nation states to increase the ability to defend the informational, identity and educational space, including the cyber space, to reduce the effects of hybrid warfare<sup>7</sup>.

The end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century is characterized, for the most part, by profound transformations of the security environment and by the emergence of new challenges and risks for states and societies. Political instability, regional conflicts, separatism, social unrest, terrorism, cross-border crime, proliferation of conventional and unconventional weapons, the unilateral use of external energy resources, massive migratory movements, natural cataclysms represent contemporary threats to national and international security. I have chosen to take into consideration external security challenges through the prism of the mentioned phenomena as they play an important role in national, regional, and international security<sup>8</sup>.

The large-scale and diverse changes in contemporary history have brought profound changes of a political, diplomatic, social, financial, economic, technical, and technological, religious, informational, legal, ecological, and military nature<sup>9</sup>.

The European Union has a huge responsibility for maintaining global peace and human security. In this work I will try to present how much the EU has progressed to become an actor in conflict management, but also how difficult and contradictory this process continues to be<sup>10</sup>.

The fate of actors in the Eastern EU continues to be marked by the history and consequences of the Cold War. Frozen conflicts are characteristic of the states that, after 1991, broke away from the former USSR, but remained under the strong influence of the Russian Federation. Even now, these states are in search of autonomy, manifesting more or less strongly the tendency to approach and consolidate relations with Western actors, which determines efforts on the part of the Kremlin to keep them in its own sphere of influence<sup>11</sup>. The Black Sea Basin includes four such conflicts that have already been established. On the territory of Georgia, two separatist republics - Abkhazia and South Ossetia - are the subject of similar conflicts, the Republic of Moldova faces an obvious separatist tendency of Transnistria, while Nagorno Karabakh is still the subject of heated dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The respective separatist entities have not been recognized at the international level as states, but, at present, they are under the control of authorities distinct from

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<sup>4</sup> Mihaela Daciana Natea, Mihai Daniel Aniței, *Reshaping European and national security in a post COVID – 19 context*, *Acta Marisiensis*, Seria Oeconomica, an 2019, vol II, pp. 49-64

<sup>5</sup> Mihaela Daciana Natea, *Reshaping European Security in a Post COVID-19 World*, L'Harmattan, Paris France, 2023

<sup>6</sup> Gh. Ciascai, „Parteneriatul Estic și limitele procesului de „europenizare” a Estului”, *Polis*, Iași, vol. III, No 4 (10) 2015.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>8</sup> Cristina Bogzeanu, „Crizele politico-militare din Zona Extinsă a Mării Negre: de la cronicizare la acutizare”, în *Impact Strategic*, nr. 4[53]/2014.

<sup>9</sup> *Parteneriatul Estic – între pragmatism și scepticism*, accesat la data de 06.12.2022 la adresa Parteneriatul Estic – între pragmatism și scepticism | Moldova | DW | 26.09.2017

<sup>10</sup> *Strategia europeană de securitate, o Europă sigură într-o lume mai bună*, accesat la data de 26.04.2022 la adresa, untitled (europa.eu).

<sup>11</sup> Mureșan, Mircea, Văduvă, Gheorghe, *Războiul viitorului – viitorul războiului*, București, Editura U.N.Ap., 2004.

those of the states of which they are a part of. Although they have been attributed the character of frozen conflicts, recent history has shown unequivocally that they tend to re-ignite under certain circumstances<sup>12</sup>.

European integration was conceived in the 1950s largely as a conflict resolution exercise. The means of action were of an economic nature, but the declared objective was rather political: the pacification of Europe. With the advancement of integration and the decrease of the potential for conflict in Western Europe, the concern of the European Union towards the conflict has become more and more externalized. From the Balkans to the Middle East and from the South Caucasus to Western Sahara, the European Union is surrounded by conflicts that affect European security. In a difficult environment, the EU has become increasingly active in managing the surrounding conflicts, even if there have been hesitations. The main objective in the neighbourhood is to consolidate a ring of well-governed, prosperous and democratic states<sup>13</sup>.

But the EU cannot do much in its eastern neighbourhood without having a policy towards the secessionist conflicts in Transnistria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Nagorno-Karabakh. It is hard to bet on good governance and functional state institutions when some of the poorest European states invest massively in the military and do not have control over important sections of the border. In this area, smuggling and corruption flourish. This situation has persisted for almost two decades. The August 2008 war in Georgia tragically highlighted a fact contrary to popular opinion: these conflicts are not “frozen”, only their solution. Sometimes they erupt to the surface, leading to new bloodshed, as in Abkhazia in 1998 or South Ossetia in 2008<sup>14</sup>.

These conflict zones may be invisible on the world map, but they are real political phenomena that affect the development of foreign policy and European security, as well as relations within the EU and almost all his partners from extended Europe: Russia, Ukraine, Republic of Moldova, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia. With the launch of the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2003, the EU implemented a series of international policy instruments aimed at influencing the resolution of conflicts in this troubled area. Altogether, the EU has carried out several missions, with over 400 people involved, and spent hundreds of millions of euros in conflict management in the post-Soviet space. However, the ever-longer list of EU international political actions is counterbalanced by a parallel list of potential EU actions, which in the end did not materialize. Among them were the Union's failure to send peacekeeping forces to the Republic of Moldova and Nagorno-Karabakh and monitors on the Georgian border. In addition, the EU has an added value in the resolution of international conflicts, and this is partly due to its size. A union of half a billion people that managed to maintain a peaceful Europe in the last 60 years<sup>15</sup>.

As the 2004 enlargement of the Union approached, member states feared that instability at the new border would undermine EU security. Under the ENP, the EU has offered its neighbours a strong political partnership, assistance, visa facilities, trade liberalization, inclusion in certain agencies and European programs in exchange for reforms and the gradual implementation of the acquisition. The EU also expressed its interest in contributing to the resolution of conflicts in the neighbourhood<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The grand chessboard. American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives*, Basic Books, New York, 1998, p.57.

<sup>13</sup> Bidilean Vidu, *Uniunea Europeană. Instituții, Politici, Activități*, Editura Universitară, București, 2011, p 76.

<sup>14</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>15</sup> Conflictul din Georgia va determina Moldova sa accepte o solutie ruseasca la conflictul transnistrean | Global | DW | 21.11.2008, accesat la data de 27.04.2022.

<sup>16</sup> *Parteneriatul Estic – între pragmatism și scepticism*, accesat la data de 06.12.2022 la adresa Parteneriatul Estic – între pragmatism și scepticism | Moldova | DW | 26.09.2017.

The conflicts and political division in the Mediterranean area of the last fifty years have seriously slowed down the development of the region<sup>17</sup>. Small unrecognized regions like Transnistria are a magnet for organized crime and can destabilize or block the process of state building, political consolidation, and sustainable development. Despite some declarative promises, in an attempt to help resolve the conflicts in the neighbourhood, the EU has not been sufficiently involved in conflict management until now. The security dimension of the ENP was focused more on conflict prevention and post-conflict rehabilitation, not on the direct involvement of the EU in conflict resolution<sup>18</sup>.

The European Neighbourhood Policy is an instrument of the European Union through which it ensures its security and creates good neighbourly relations with neighbouring states, in fact it pursues the goal of creating a “ring of friends” - an area of prosperity and good neighbourliness. This policy constitutes a framework for consolidating neighbourhood relations and aims at intensifying cooperation with the neighbouring states of the enlarged EU.<sup>19</sup> This policy is based on objectives, goals that guide its consolidation and that are to be implemented by the partner states. The ENP was designed to avoid the appearance of dividing lines between Europe and its neighbours, giving neighbouring states the possibility to participate in EU activities through political and economic collaboration. Thanks to the ENP, the EU governs relations with 16 neighbouring countries to the east and south<sup>20</sup>.

EU-Russia relations have been strained since 2014, due to the following reasons: Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea, support for the rebels in eastern Ukraine, neighbourhood politics, sedition campaigns formation and negative internal developments. Tensions were also accentuated after Russia's intervention in Syria, Libya, and sub-Saharan Africa. Since 2014, the EU has periodically renewed the sanctions against Russia. With all this, the EU and Russia remain closely interdependent, and the EU practices “selective collaboration”.<sup>21</sup> Another source of tension are disinformation campaigns and cyber-attacks, as well as attempts to interfere in democratic processes in the states west of Russia. Since the annexation of Crimea in 2014, EU economic sanctions against Russia target the financial, defence and energy sectors. Russia responded with sanctions, banning almost half of the agri-food imports from the EU bloc. Before Christmas 2020, EU leaders unanimously decided to extend the sanctions until 31 July 2021. The measures, which are renewed twice a year, hit Russia hard: it is assumed that by the end of 2018 its economy was reduced by 6%

<sup>17</sup> Costea, Simion, (et Michel Labori) *Le Management des Politiques de l'Union Européenne/ The Management of EU Policies*, Paris, Prodi multimedia, 2011, p. 39.

<sup>18</sup> Politica Europeană de Vecinătate | Ministry of Foreign Affairs (mae.ro) , accesat la data de 28.04.2022.

<sup>19</sup> Costea, Maria, Costea, Simion (2015, ISI Journal article) “Ukraine between EU and Eurasian Regional Project in 2013”, p.113-131, in *Transylvanian Review* (Center for Transylvanian Studies and the Romanian Academy), Vol. XXIV, Supplement No. 1, 2015. Costea, Maria, Costea Simion (2011, ISI journal article), „The Management of the EU’s Eastern Partnership Project: A New Stage in the European Neighbourhood Policy”, p.409-433, in *Transylvanian Review* (Center for Transylvanian Studies and the Romanian Academy), Vol. XX, Supplement No. 4, 2011. Costea, Maria, Costea, Simion, (2015, ISI proceedings article), „Challenges of the EU in the migrant/Refugee Crisis in 2015”, p.166-175, in vol. *Discourse as a form of multiculturalism in literature and communication. History ad cultural mentalities Tîrgu-Mureş, Arhipelag XXI Press*, 2015. Costea, Simion (2014, ISI Proceedings article), „The Culture of the European Accession Negotiations”, p.50-56, in vol. *Globalization and intercultural dialogue: multidisciplinary perspectives Tîrgu-Mureş, Arhipelag XXI*, 2014. Costea, Simion (2011, SCOPUS article), “EU-Ukraine Relations and the Eastern Partnership: Challenges, Progress and Potential”, p.259-276, in *European Foreign Affairs Review* (College of Europe BRUGGE and University of Montreal), volume 16, issue 2, 2011. Costea, Simion (2012), “The European Union’s Eastern Partnership: the objective of regional cooperation”, p.51-60, in vol. *The Eastern Partnership and the Europe 2020 Strategy: Visions of leading policy-makers and academics*, LUXEMBOURG, Publications Office of the European Union, 2012.

<sup>20</sup> Politica Europeană de Vecinătate | Ministry of Foreign Affairs (mae.ro) , accesat la data de 28.04.2022..

<sup>21</sup> Relațiile UE-Rusia: Comisia și Înalțul Reprezentant propun calea de urmat, accesat la data de 23.06.2022, la adresa Relațiile UE-Rusia: Comisia și Înalțul Reprezentant propun calea de urmat — Cotidianul,

following EU and US sanctions. EU restrictive measures have different forms. The diplomatic measures consisted in the exclusion of Russia from the G8, the suspension of Russia's accession process to the OECD and the International Energy Agency, and the interruption of regular EU-Russian bilateral summits<sup>22</sup>.

The world we live in is transforming and re-dimensioning. Confrontation strategies are combined with political-economic partnership strategies and international crisis and conflict management actions. In this context, the complexity of the political, economic, social, military, and cultural aspects of the current security environment tend to transform any attempt to understand them into an analytical approach that requires, above all, a clear dissociation between real and hypothetical facts<sup>23</sup>.

## CONCLUSIONS

After the end of the cold war, the world witnessed a series of significant changes, the disappearance of bipolarity, the collapse of the socialist system, the collapse of the USSR, the abolition of the Warsaw Treaty, which led to changes in the structure, organization, and nature of the missions of the armed forces. Thus, almost all the armed forces have experienced great processes and phenomena that accompanied their transformation, both as organizations and as state institutions.

At the same time, after the end of the cold war, there have been an increase in the number of interstate conflicts, which, in turn, increased the need for protection and guarding of people and their goods both in the area of conflict, as well as in its immediate vicinity. At the same time, we can observe the manifestation of the state's tendency to narrow its area of responsibility regarding human security, especially by reducing its intervention in the provision of public services such as education such as health, public transport, energy, water, etc<sup>24</sup>.

At the same time with the aforementioned changes, the concern of the international community regarding human security has increased. As the danger of an armed conflict between the two military blocs, imminent during the Cold War, seemed to have disappeared, the democratic states of the world have turned their attention to the promotion, guarantee and defence of the human security at the individual, group, local and national community level, as well as at the global level<sup>25</sup>.

The paradigm of the contemporary international security environment, over the course of the last decade, has become transformed in such a way that it has imposed more points of view on the future of the international order in debates of the international system of collective security, as well as the modality of ensuring national security by nation states.

Thus, increasing the resilience and consolidating a national community within the state, based on common values, principles, and identities, as well as amplifying the multilateral factor of international organizations and collective security, based on the principle of community solidarity, become imperative when facing new challenges.

The successive Enlargements of the European Union, starting with those of the 70s and up to those of the 2000s, all had a geographical and geopolitical logic. Moscow perceived the EU's Enlargement plan as an open threat, because it was losing the former Soviet republics under its influence. Therefore, any initiative of the EU was heavily attacked by Kremlin. One of the most punished countries for its European aspirations is Ukraine. In the context of internal political conflicts, Ukrainians came out on the Maidan, trying to turn the course towards European integration.

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<sup>22</sup> Extinderea parteneriatului UE-Rusia, accesat la data de 25.06.2022, la adresa , BBC Romanian.

<sup>23</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>24</sup> Rebegea, L., *Terorism și contra-terorism în UE: lecții din trecut*, Ed. Mica Valahie, București, 2017, p 109.

<sup>25</sup> Ibidem.

This led to the change of power in the state, but also to the annexation of Crimea and the outbreak of a bloody conflict in eastern Ukraine, which continues today. With all this, Kyiv managed to sign the Association Agreement with the EU and obtain a liberalized visa regime for its citizens.

The conflict in Ukraine called into question the basis on which the Eastern policy of the EU has been built until now. The Russian Federation's military aggression against Ukraine led to the collapse of the international and regional security system, as well as the system of international law, in 2014. Practically all international guarantees regarding the security of Ukraine can be considered unreal, in the conditions in which the main aggressor is pronounced as the main guarantor - the Russian Federation. Starting with 2014, we are in a new stage of "hybrid war". The character of the new hybrid war can be observed in the process of annexation of Crimea in the spring of 2014 by the Russian Federation, and later also in the support of the separatist elements in the east of Ukraine. Hybrid war is not a new war, but an actual one, in which one of the warring parties carries out, in the name of another force the activity of special formations and information techniques for the purpose of disinformation on the enemy territory, actively using propaganda<sup>26</sup>.

Human security represents an important objective of the international community. As the risks, dangers, and threats to human security at the local, national, regional, and global level grow, security has become an increasingly relevant issue.

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<sup>26</sup> Natea Mihaela Daciana, “From social media to security. Why the war in Ukraine proves the need for a more complex approach towards disinformation?”, in coord. Natea Mihaela Daciana *Disinformation crossing borders. The Multilayered Disinformation Concerning the War in Ukraine*, L'Harmattan, Paris France, 2022.

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