

CASE OF UKRAINE AND INTERESTS OF THE MAJOR PLAYERS

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ABSTRACT

THE UKRAINE CRISIS IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES INVOLVING THE SECURITY ENVIRONMENT OF THE XXITH CENTURY, CHARACTERIZED BY MANY TRANSFORMATIONS AND THREATS AND INVOLVING SOME OF THE MAJOR ACTORS ON THE GLOBAL SCENE. IN RESPONSE TO THE SECURITY THREATS, BOTH ACTORS - NATO AND THE EUROPEAN UNION, MUST ADAPT THEIR VISION, DOCTRINE AND BEHAVIOR TO NEW REALITIES. RECENT, CASES LIKE RUSSO-GEORGIAN WAR IN 2008 AND UKRAINE CRISIS IN PRESENT, ARE REAL TESTS OF BOTH NATO CAPACITY AND EUROPEAN UNION CREDIBILITY. RUSSIA WILL CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN ITS SPHERE OF INFLUENCE AND WON'T ACCEPT INVOLVEMENT OF OTHER ACTORS, IN ORDER TO CHANGE THIS STATUS QUO.

KEYWORDS: CRISIS, SECURITY, EASTERN PARTNERSHIP, RUSSIA, UKRAINE, EUROPEAN NEIGHBORHOOD POLICY, REALISM THEORY

INTRODUCTION

Ongoing events in Ukraine are important because they show a constant behavior in the neighborhood of the Russian Federation, generating concern among major global actors. The purpose of this analysis is descriptive and explanatory one, but rather by identifying causal relations that led to the attention this tense reality. The main thesis is that the maintaining interests of the major actors on stage of the international relations generates the inability to solving or improve the crisis. This justifies the realistic optics applied to issue and the choice of case study as an research method is based on epistemological value wich it has.

We can notice a lack of substantial security guarantees issued by the main actors amid the plurality of interests that guide their actions. Russian Federation intends to dominate the neighborhood and defines the power in terms of interests. Thus, theoretically defined ideals are far from a reality where the power struggle involves all the capabilities and resources.

THE REALISTIC OPTICS ON THE UKRAINE CRISIS

Everything observed in the EU Eastern neighborhood generated an general regional and global concern. The meeting in Minsk, although it has been defined as an attempt negotiation between leader of Russian Federation, leader of Ukraine and representatives of

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OSCE has a consequence the alarming and tense situation by the end of August with change the balance of power in favor of the separatists and moving front. A new meeting in Minsk, in September exposed an armistice signed by Kiev and pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine. However, the EU is seen to be forced to respond with new sanctions against Russian Federation since it found the recently signed armistice failure. European officials have reported the serious reason of undermining the sovereignty of Ukraine.

It is difficult to predict how much this plan will have the intended effect of sanctions on the Russian Federation, most likely consequences will be felt in the short or medium term. It is clear that Russian interest is not to have peace, but rather to create instability and a real lack of cohesion in the area. Mobilized military forces of both sides were very considerable, which can be a real factor of concern. Russian leader, Vladimir Putin intends to carry on the offensive, in the context which stability in Ukraine would be a favorable factor in development of NATO and EU interests in the area.

The hostile attitude of the Russian Federation in relation to Ukraine's rapprochement with the West is clear and is visible, both, in words and in fact, considering the ongoing actions and attacks. The action of the Russian side is not surprising, because it wants to rebuild its sphere of influence. To deny in declarative level and then, to confirm aggressive policy lines is a constant offensive attitude of the Russian Federation on the international relation stage. On the other hand, NATO and EU officials have expressed disagreement with the eventual membership of Ukraine bringing to attention the complexity of the problems it faces today and will persist in the future if hostilities in the East will not end. Political and security realities today confirm that "the material and ideal interests and not ideas dominate directly the people's actions, but the images of the world created by these ideas have often served as a indicator for directions which the dynamism of interests has guided those actions"².

The complex, interdependent and dynamic challenges from international environment and physiognomy of security environment, too, in the EU Eastern neighborhood determines certain requirements. One of these wants to define a security and defence policy able to harmonize the security interests of the member states. NATO's role continues to present itself as one very important internationally, while EU lies only a complementary role to the soft power in terms of security. A difficulty in achieving the objective of a common security policy consists of unequal military capabilities of member states and the lack of consensus on the definition of defence within the organization.

Moreover, amid ongoing tensions in Ukraine another challenge to security, becomes energetic aspect. This problem can be defined in terms of dependence of member states on imported gas and oil. What is needed on the EU agenda is finding an alternative to dependence on Russian supplier, especially given the heightened demand for gas in the future. All these demands generated by the current, dynamic and unpredictable security environment are permanent imperatives on the EU agenda. The need to identify an appropriate response to the new security challenges determines redefining the EU as a major actor globally, not regionally only. The recently, conflict reality in the eastern neighborhood of the EU in the case of Georgia in 2008 and the current crisis in Ukraine confirms this objective.

RECONFIGURING THE EUROPEAN UNION'S ROLE AS A GLOBAL SECURITY ACTOR AMID NEW CHALLENGES

Resorting to an incursion, into the area of the European Union's efforts, to improve the tense situation in the neighborhood, it is important to recall The European Neighborhood Policy or, in another way, in 2003, the new ENP. This has become necessary in the context of

² Max Weber, *Etica protestantă și spiritul capitalismului*, (București: Editura Humanitas, 2007), 260

considerable expansion with new ten members. The enlargement has had important implications on the stability and security, creating new tasks, for the EU as a global security actor. This should solve different and complex problems derived from the enlargement process: terrorism, ethnic conflicts, migration, arms trafficking, need for help in Central and Southeastern Europe, plus the frozen conflicts.

Unresolved conflicts in the eastern neighborhood brought a permanent dimension of security issues on the EU agenda. Experience in Georgia, in 2008, raised fears among member states on possible impediments in political or economic field, that may derive from the EU's non involvement in area in the context of lack of cooperation with directly affected partners.

To increase the ENP's contribution, to regional security, it is vital to define a real confidence between states. This goal is difficult in a context where is not a convergence in economic, political, legislative, meaning the favorable conditions for social inclusion. In this context it is very important to analyze how much the combination of efforts for border assistance for Ukraine and Moldova is effective. Watching how is the evolution of crisis in Ukraine, it is important to note if the EU turns out to be able to assume a greater role in conflict's solution in neighborhood. An effective way would be represented by the political dialogue between the EU and each member state of the ENP and, surely the dialogue between the EU and other international actors.

It also requires reconciling the positions of the Commission and the Council on the possibilities for resolving conflicts. The unanimous opinions of EU's officials and specialists since 2006 that emphasizes the eastern neighborhood states have not received a consistent support from the organization. Defining relations with the countries of this region eliminated from the calculation or diminished importance of frozen conflicts, with the threat potential to stability and democratization of ENP's members, but also to the EU. Current Ukraine issues also represent a consequence of inefficient EU behavior in the neighborhood, regarding security. Observing a lack of concerted efforts of the EU states, as well as a clear strategy, the attitude of the Russian Federation becomes firmer and more adapted to an expansion policy of widening and accentuation of their sphere of influence. This policy considers the Eastern Partnership (EaP) as the expression of a real threat to the Russian sphere of influence.

EASTERN PARTNERSHIP, A REAL THREAT TO THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

The problems proposed on the EU agenda by the former Soviet Republic (referring to those who "signed on May 7, 2009, in Prague, the EaP Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine"³) are complex, with unpredictable potential in evolution, highly dynamic and require concerted efforts. This cooperation agreement between the mentioned republics and EU Member States intend bringing the eastern neighbors to a level of democratization and economic development, freedom of movement, as close as possible to the requirements of the organization. This initiative has not been approved by the Russian Federation so the context of their delimitation was tensed and defined by post-conflict realities with Georgia in 2008 and outcome of Ukraine gas crisis in 2009.

It is important to observe to what extent the Eastern Partnership has exerted influences on the EU-Russian Federation. The fact is that this cooperation agreement was perceived by Russian leaders as an attempt of the EU to define the sphere of influence or even outline a partnership against Russia. Russian attitude in relation to the EaP, is different from previous ones in the context of adopting ENP or EU accession of former Soviet republics (Estonia,

³ *What is the EaP?*, <http://www.easternpartnership.org/content/eastern-partnership-glance>, accesat la data de 10.09.2014

Latvia, Lithuania). Russian fears were defined by relation to NATO's intentions to expand the sphere of Soviet influence.

The conflict in Georgia illustrates again the hostile attitude of the Russian Federation to NATO behavior by military intervention in the region, qualifying the revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine (roses and orange) as expressions of US mixture in former Soviet spheres of influence. It is interesting to see whether the EaP is a tool able to diminish Russian influence in eastern EU's neighborhood and facilitate states road to accession. Indeed, if the EaP goals become reality, the former Soviet Union's Eastern neighborhood states will be characterized by greater stability and independence, related to the Russian Federation. By looking carefully to the EaP goals, we can see that they are similar to the Copenhagen criteria, needed to be implemented by all the states who want to be EU members.

The partnership aims to be a neoliberal institution, but the realistic perception of the Russian Federation defines it as a threat to its interests. Thus, the prospect of cooperation with the EU is excluded. It should be noted that the Russian Federation has accused the EU that by this EaP aims mixture in its sphere of influence, for which considered reasonable amending a law that enables national defense by armed interventions in other neighboring countries, in order to ensure the security of Russian citizens. This represents the expression of the EU's desire to ensure stability in the eastern border and also an initiative confidently received by former Soviet states, which tend towards a detachment of Russian Federation and its influence in the region. The EU's strength does not come from military power, so it is a hard power, rather than a soft one, based on values.

Russian Federation relates to the former Soviet republics that tend to get closer to the EU, with an aggressive attitude, proofed by the recent situation in Ukraine or Russian-Georgian conflict in 2008. The trust of ex-Soviet Russian Federation is doubted, in the context of its policy defined by self-interest and by preventing this entities from exiting its sphere of influence.

THE CASE OF GEORGIA AND UKRAINE: RUSSIA'S SAME GOAL AND NATO'S ATTITUDE CHANGE

A proper definition to NATO's attitude towards the tensed realities in the neighborhood involve bringing to attention its conduct in Georgia's conflict in 2008. It is also important to notice the permanent hostile behavior of the Russian Federation in relation to the near NATO states in its sphere of influence. Its permanent susceptibility to a potential threat from NATO or the EU characterizes its actions in relation to the major players on the global and regional security scene. This explains the fact that this unreported and unrecognized Russian war aims to destabilize Ukraine so this is no longer an entity of great interest that receives attention from NATO or the EU.

The NATO Summit in Bucharest in 2008 has a great significance in this analytical framework, where the hopes of Georgia and Ukraine to become members of the alliance have not materialized. There were invoked "difficulties which have prevented the approval of both NATO aspiring applicants"⁴. Currently, the Ukrainian problem becomes more pronounced since there is not a clear choice in favor of the alliance. NATO's reaction to the tensions in Ukraine is more appropriate than its reaction involving the conflict in Georgia in 2008. In this direction, the recent NATO Summit in Wales drew clear lines for future actions. An important aspect is the inclusion of cyber-attacks in military category, realizing the fact that this security environment requires a reconsideration of the dangers and threats, a redefinition

⁴ *Bucharest Summit Declaration*, http://www.summitbucharest.ro/en/doc_201.html, accesat la data de 08.09.2014

of the dimensions on which they act. Amid these tensions in Ukraine, moving a NATO rapid reaction force in Eastern Europe, was another important element of the summit.

Only in this context, based on the current tensions, the 2008 Bucharest Summit is of great importance. Ukraine must make its option known to NATO and to the EU, in order to facilitate the identification of a concrete plan to resolve or at least improve this situation. In response to Russia's intention to expand and enhance its sphere of influence in the neighborhood, NATO's project emphasizes the effort to pull these states that have not yet defined a clear option. By the time they express such an option, NATO has declared its availability to provide military and technical support to Ukraine.

The example of Abkhazia as a proclaimed state, more exactly "a static formation unrecognized internationally, created after a secessionist rebellion"⁵, has to be mentioned for relevance regarding NATO's attitude in relation to Russian ambition to maintain instability in its neighborhood. The Russian Federation behavior regarding the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict can be considered as a characteristic one, in relation to the neighborhood. Its attitudes in 2008 and 2014 are part of the great project of maintaining and accentuation of the Russian influence in the region. Problems in Georgia and the Ukraine can be considered as "a result of the threats of the environment correlated with the weakness of a system"⁶, when threats from the environment interact with the weaknesses of the system.

Also, it can be stated that the behavior of Russian aggression against the Occident was influenced by the decision to postpone granting the MAP status to the applicants from Tbilisi, as seen at the NATO Summit in Bucharest, by increasing Georgia's vulnerability near Russian power. Thus, this vulnerability constitutes a favorable ground for Russian hostilities against Georgia's desire to join the Occident security structures. It is important to note that the Occident have often ruled in favor of maintaining peaceful relations with the Russian Federation, a solution preferred in relation to the alternative of its international isolation. The Occident therefore rejected the internationalization of peacekeeping in the breakaway province of Georgia, and the isolation of the Russian Federation on the global geopolitical scene. EU involvement in Russian-Georgian conflict has illustrated its role as the main diplomat, while the current crisis in Ukraine exhibits a disconcertingly fragile diplomatic activity coming from European leaders. Russian's intention is not to provide an alternative to Ukraine, but only the option to accept control from Moscow. Thus, without the option of EU or NATO, Ukraine would depend on Russian factor. In both cases, however, the Russian Federation has received favorable contexts for displaying its military might and "to claim a sphere of influence in order to inspire fear to its neighbors"⁷. The Ukraine Crisis and the frozen conflicts gave Russia the opportunity to become the most important player in the region, confirming the thesis that maintaining the interests of a security actor causes hindrances in effective resolution of a dispute or conflict freezing.

The following developments in the region under analysis will show to what extent a freeze of the conflict in Ukraine will be possible and how justified is the characterization of Cold War for the conduct of both parties involved: NATO and EU on the one hand and the Russian Federation, on the other hand. Analyzing and linking present data on the realities of the EU's eastern neighborhood and the range of actions and behaviors, challenges and responses of all stakeholders, there can be outlined some conclusions and directions for future actions.

⁵ Oleg Serebrian, *Dicționar de geopolitică*, (Iași: Editura Polirom, 2006), 265

⁶ Thierry Pauchant, Ian Mitroff, *Transforming the crisis prone organisation*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1992), 447

⁷ Robert English, *Power, Ideas, and New Evidence on The Cold War's End*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 72

FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Recent historical and political experience shows that the types of the crisis and political-military conflicts is rooted in the dynamics and interests of various players, keeping their interrelation footprint. There are often observed merges of conflicts coordinates in a region: coordinate resources, establishing borders, the identity issue, that generate considerable difficulties in the area of management, both conceptually and especially in the empirical area and effective management. The current security context is one of the fluctuations and the reconfiguration of international relations as a new formula, with several power poles.

NATO was formed as an entity designed to establish and implement an effective crisis management and political-military conflicts, while providing real support to the EU in its interventions in the neighborhood. What is missing “is the unity of views absolutely necessary in this regard”⁸. Without a convergence in the EU Member States regarding security agenda, we can’t clearly delineate a framework for action designed to resolve or at least improve the eastern neighborhood tensions, faced with various and serious problems. Moreover, the question about the chances of dialogue between the players in Ukrainian crisis arises. The answer points the impossibility of short term solutions, since there is no clear choice of Ukraine in relation to the EU, and its persisting doubts regarding the support of the Union.

EU as a soft power that “has considerable potential in pursuit of a positive impact in the area of conflict, in terms of situation improvement”⁹. Although it became active through the ENP, it didn’t show enough determination in resolving the situation in Ukraine. Germany has demonstrated involvement and activism in tension easing towards the Eastern neighborhood of the EU, by its Chancellor Angela Merkel. She pointed the need for awareness among European states on geopolitical importance of the EU Eastern neighborhood, and the costs of non-involvement. The series of sanctions against the Russian Federation will not have the desired effect if this initiative will be accompanied by an effort of a real high-level dialogue, with the reflection about EU’s decision-making process, in security terms. It is this lack of consensus, specific to EU and serious economic problems of Ukraine that are considered vulnerabilities which the Russian Federation uses in his own interest, and basing its behavior upon. What matters in this new context is the energy problem, which discloses a European cohesion amid the awareness of Russian Federation energy dependence. We desire a strategy of regional and global peace building through the sustained efforts of the players involved in the conflict. National and international security practices diversify amid global scene dynamics and complexity, so it began to take shape a requirement of reconfiguration of the analytical foundation and terminology in the field of political dynamics and security studies. It should be noted that based on recent developments on the security scene is required to review the conceptual and empirical basis of conflict management, especially because of the insufficiency and incoherence of the management in various conflicts until present times by the players involved, at state and organizational level.

European Union should accelerate efforts to portray the eastern neighborhood and help to stabilize other regions, concentrating attention both, on old frozen conflicts and the new points of conflict. It excludes, surely, the focus on short term sanctions targeting Russian factor. It should be noted than the EU could not win the final and immediate peace, but could

⁸ Cristian Băhnăreanu, *Actualități și perspective în Politica Europeană de Securitate și Apărare*, (București: Editura Universității Naționale de Apărare, Carol I, 2006), 32

⁹ Hans Binnendijk, Richard Kugler, *Transforming European Forces*, (Washington D.C., National Defence University, 2006), 128

help to improve the situation in the future, not by punishing the Russian Federation, but through effective engagement. As the wars in Balkans, as the Russian-Georgian conflict, crisis in Ukraine is a direct threat to a European project which aims to replace old paradigms such as balance of power, spheres of influence, military conquest with integration, negotiation and rule of law. From a Russian perspective limited cooperation in the future is more threatening than diplomatic sanctions from the West, in the short term. The EU strategy should include answers to the situation in Ukraine and integrate turn into a more comprehensive strategy for the entire eastern neighborhood. Regarding NATO, it will have to demonstrate, if possibly, a unity of views on the challenges and ways to respond to them, in the new security environment, under the sign of unpredictability and dynamics.

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