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THE EU DEFENCE POLICY AND CAUCASUS-CASPIAN REGIONAL SECURITY - TRACING FROM CRISIS MANAGEMENT TILL STABILITY: GEORGIA'S CASE

Abstract:

A geopolitical situation in the region, labelled 'the Caucasus-Caspian Region' remains unstable since the period of the 'New Cold War' entered into force. The region is predisposed toward bloody conflicts and regional war scenarios that still persist. A vivid example of the situation is the brief Russo-Georgia war of 2008, when Russian Armed Forces occupied Georgian territories and Georgia was catapulted into the centre of the international arena as a post-Soviet country struggling against the 'Giant Actor'. These consequences outlined the urgent need of European support and security for Georgians. Backing the ceasefire agreement, between the EU, Georgia and the Russian Federation known as the 'Sarkozy-Saakashvili-Medvedev Peace Accord', the EU Military Monitoring Mission in aegis of the EU Defence Policy provision has supervised and overseen how the Accord has been implemented by the involved parties. After having considered the Kremlin decision an imposition of the A2/AD system over the whole Black Sea Basin, including the Caucasus-Caspian region, the stalemate between the USA and Russia is being detonated. The confrontation between Great Powers over the regional hegemony determination tailored with security perils – military power and energy security instruments directly hit the European security environment where the EU defence policy could be infrangibly and non-attainable. This might be particularly important as it will cause the key risks and outline the urgent need for emergency of threats. Therefore, the Caucasus-Caspian region generates

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those threat perceptions that can easily endanger the EU security and defence policy implications or swart the community efforts to deal with crises management outside the area of responsibility.

Keywords:

the EU, the Caucasus-Caspian region, EU defence policy, A2/AD, Great Power, EU military monitoring mission, European security

Introduction

The EU has taken several steps in order to boost its military capabilities and promote its foreign policy. The application is to coincide with the concrete foreign policy doctrine principles, notably within the ‘EU Neighbourhood Policy’ and the ‘Eastern Partnership’ Incentive. A document review of EU foreign policy missions in those areas which are geopolitically important from the European security perspective reveals that Georgia's accession to the European Union is an important priority and one of the main tasks of our country's foreign policy. It needs to be outlined that the majority of Georgian society supports this aspiration. Although many scientists are working over the political and economic issues of European integration, the so-called ‘content’ of the EU military-political still has not been discussed nor completely studied. The European Union is represented by its military-political component in Georgia, and it's worth mentioning that the Military Monitoring Mission was established on August 12, 2008, on the basis of the Russian-Georgian-French ceasefire agreement. Europe's unified foreign security policy is one of the three most important priorities set by the European Union. Within the framework, the EU member states have also promoted the development of common defence and since 2003 they have been carrying out various military or civilian operations under the auspices of the European Union in the field of defence and security. As a result, the EU is emerging as one of the most important actors in the international arena, and the expectations of the international community towards it are growing. In the wake of the Cold War, the European Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), based on the Treaty of Maastricht (1992), entered into force in 1993 and was further strengthened by treaties such as the Amsterdam Treaty (1999), the Nice Treaty (2003) and the Lisbon Treaty (2007). Under these agreements, the EU has also acquired the status of an international organization.

In the early 1990s, when Georgia gained independence, the country faced the most difficult challenge. It was necessary to build a democratic state and to move into a market economy. In spite of the difficult geopolitical situation, which was accompanied by conflicts, the country made an historic choice and steadily took a pro-Western course. In terms of achieving the ambitious goal of gradual integration into the European Union, the role of the Eastern

Partnership, which opens important prospects for Georgia's further rapprochement with the European Union, is noteworthy.

The Eastern Partnership agreement at the Vilnius Summit determined that closer co-operation, conflict resolutions, confidence building and good neighbourly relations would be needed to ensure stability and prosperity on the European continent, which would contribute to economic and social development in the region as well as with visa facilitation and readmission agreements³.

The aim of this article is to study the EU's defence and security policy in the process of resolving the conflicts in Georgia. It's task is to analyze the relations between the European Union and Georgia and to highlight the factors through which conflicts are regulated. It sets the questions and provides the results of research about these main issues: what is the EU's main strategy? How effective is the EU in resolving crisis situations?

To answer these questions, it is more sufficient to conduct a qualitative research method, namely document analysis of papers, legal acts, reports and documents on the EU's defence and security policy. According to the existing scientific literature on conflicts, the EU approach toward conflict resolution toward Georgia seems to be uncertain, as military monitoring on its own, is not enough to prevent aggressive steps taken by the local Ossetia separatist militants and the Russian Federation Armed Force representatives in the manner of so-called 'Creeping Occupation', a typical example of hybrid warfare.

EU Defence and Security Policy

Defence and security are especially relevant in the era of globalization, when informatization, economization, democratization create unprecedented opportunities for development. With this challenge, the European Union has become one of the most important guarantors of peace and stability on the continent.

The Common Security and Defence Policy is an integral part of the Common Foreign and Security Policy and is regulated by Articles 42 and 46 of the European Union. The purpose of the Common Security and Defence Policy is to ensure the European Union's operational capacity through the use of civilian and military means. It's tasks include joint disarmament measures, humanitarian, rescue and peacekeeping, the use of armed forces to manage crisis situations, the establishment of peace and the management of post-conflict situations. These tasks are consistent with the 'Petersburg Problems',

³ *Eastern Partnership: What is the Eastern Partnership?*, <<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/eastern-partnership/>> (30.06.2020).

however, with the support of Lisbon, the task of combating terrorism has been added, as well as the article of solidarity⁴.

The EU's Foreign and Security Policy was established at the at the same time as the EU Treaty in 1993 and aims to maintain peace, strengthen international security, promote international cooperation and develop democratic principles. Its fundamental values are based on the rule of law and respect for human rights.

While the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam proved to be more effective in making decisions, however, it is worth noting, as already mentioned, the 2009 Lisbon Treaty, which gave the EU legal subjectivity. This agreement was primarily aimed at establishing such a universal system among the EU member states, which would be based on a relatively simple system of decision-making⁵.

According to the Lisbon Treaty, the posts of President of the Council of the European Union, as well as the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, have agreed to facilitate decision-making at the EU level, which has become increasingly difficult over time. Also, changes were made in the voting procedures: the principle of unanimity in more than 45 areas was changed on the principle of clairvoyance⁶.

On January 8, 2016, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini presented the Global Strategy for EU Foreign and Security Policy, according to which the EU has identified six main priorities:

- 1) Security of the Union;
- 2) Building State and Social Resilience;
- 3) Integrated Approach to Conflicts;
- 4) Cooperation Regional Orders;
- 5) A Rules-based Global Governance;
- 6) Public Diplomacy⁷.

In order to implement the new strategy, the European Union has reviewed and developed new geographical strategies; it also provides a sectorial strategy that defines the EU's level of civic integration, it's tasks, requirements and capabilities. On November 14, 2016, the Council of Foreign Affairs presented a plan for the implementation of the European Union's unified and foreign security policy, in order to review the visions related to the EU's defence and security issues. As a result, three components were identified. Appropriate

⁴ G. Gabrichidze, *The EU Law*, Tbilisi 2012, p. 23.

⁵ J. Legrand, T. Turunen, *Foreign policy: aims, instruments and achievements*, European Parliament, 2002, <<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/158/foreign-policy-aims-instruments-and-achievements>> (20.05.2020).

⁶ *Information Center on NATO and EU*, <<http://infocenter.gov.ge/45-struqtura.html>> (30.06.2020).

⁷ *A Global Strategy for the European Union*, <https://eeas.europa.eu/topics/eu-global-strategy/49323/global-strategy-european-union_en> (20.05.2020).

response to external conflicts and crises; possibility to increase partners; protect the citizens of the European Union and its member states⁸.

The EU, in terms of conflict prevention, is mainly concerned with the so-called ‘Soft Power’ tools to intervene in conflict situations without coercion, such as political dialogue, mediation, and more. Because the EU is not a military organization. It is mainly focused on the transformation of conflicts and not on traditional, forceful defence. Its main purpose is to support peace.

A peacekeeping mission requires efficient military capabilities and combat training, which can be used when involved in combat. The 1998 meeting of St. Malo went down in history as a turning point in the EU's overall defence. The EU sometimes needed to develop a ‘tough force’. If necessary, the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) was established, under which military operations are carried out by the EU Rapid Reaction Forces⁹.

The European Union does not have its own armed forces, and as part of its common security and defence policy, it uses troops from member states to carry out its activities. In 1999, the European Council in Helsinki decided to establish a Rapid Reaction Force. With this decision, the member states should be able to mobilize up to 60,000 military personnel within 60 days, who would take part in the operation for at least one year in order to fulfil the tasks of Petersburg. In addition, since 2005 there has been a mobile group of 1,500 to 2,000 military personnel who will be able to mobilize within 10-15 days and participate in operations for 30 to 120 days¹⁰.

Cooperation with the European Union within the framework of the Common Security and Defence Policy includes areas such as participation in EU missions and sharing of experience, cyber security capabilities, strategic communications, support for educational institutions in the defence and security sector, raising skills and more. To date, the EU has conducted a number of peaceful stabilization operations around the world. The European Union is involved in crisis management, not only in the member states, but also in the non-EU countries. Participation in EU missions increases the professional capacity and compatibility of military personnel with the armed forces of European countries. At this stage, the Georgian Defence Forces platoon size unit (35 s/m) is taking part in the EU Training Mission to Central Africa (EUTM RCA). Also, one Georgian officer is involved in the EU Training Mission in Mali, in the position of Allied Officer¹¹.

⁸ J. Haine, *The EU Soft Power – Not Hard Enough*, “Georgetown Journal of International Affairs”, Vol. 5, No. 1, Winter/Spring 2004, p. 69.

⁹ *Franco-British St. Malo Declaration (4.12. 1998)*, <https://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/2008/3/31/f3cd16fb-fc37-4d52-936f-c8e9bc80f24f/publishable_en.pdf> (25.06.2020).

¹⁰ M. McCray, *Rapid Reaction Capability of the European Union: Taking that Last Big Step*, “CONNECTIONS” Vol. 13, No. 4, Fall 2014, pp. 6-8.

¹¹ *Mission in Mali*, Ministry of Defence of Georgia, <<https://mod.gov.ge/en/mission/59/mission-in-mali>> (15.06.2020).

In June 2015, the Council of the European Union noted that the main challenges facing the European Security Policy, renewed by the European Security Agenda, include among other priorities, the fight against terrorism and the prevention of radicalization, as well as the fight against corruption, improving co-operation in justice and criminal justice, and cybercrime. New European Neighbourhood Policy also focuses on migration issues such as migrant trafficking, social equality and border protection/management.

There are some theoretical reasonings about conflicts. Twenty years after the Cold War, the European Union is increasingly contributing to the resolution of crises and conflicts (for example, in Afghanistan and Georgia). Globalization, along with new opportunities, has increased threats and Europe is facing more complex threats and challenges as conflicts remain unresolved in the Middle East and other parts of the world, and new threats such as terrorism, trafficking, and migration are emerging.

Hence, conflict management is of paramount importance in modern international relations. Conflict resolution, according to theorists, is unrealistic. What can be done is to manage and sometimes reach a historical compromise. Conflict management is the implementation of appropriate intervention by strong actors as they have both the power and resources to put pressure on the parties involved to resolve the conflict¹².

Conflict prevention means minimizing or stopping the actions of the participants in the conflict. In such cases, actions are taken by a third party or any party and objective and subjective reasons are revealed and the disputed issue is resolved in a non-conflicting way. Prevention is the best way to stop the dynamics and escalation of the conflict. With this help, the conflict is diagnosed in time. By stopping the conflict, responding to the situation and influencing the opposing sides, active actions are taken to resolve the conflict peacefully. Such actions help to avoid tension. Violent methods may also be used or sanctions may be imposed on the opposing parties, with the third party largely preventing the conflict. Opposing parties give up their tough stances and slowly, given their interests, the relationship normalizes.

One definition of conflict prevention has agreement from different researchers. Conflictologists E. Erik Melander and K. Claire Pigache's conflict prevention is discussed in a linear model where it is separated – peace consolidation and conflict management. In the first case, we are dealing with violent conflicts. The second is the escalation of the conflict, which includes the transformation of the conflict, the third is the building of peace, which includes social change, and the fourth is the change that must take place in the process of conflict resolution. Prevention is done before the conflict begins and requires crisis management.

¹² H. Maill, *Conflict Transformation: A Multi-Dimensional Task*, “Berghof Research Centre for Constructive Conflict Management”, March 2001, pp. 3-4.

Fig. 1. Strengthening Peace and Conflict Management.



Source: Own work.

The above model (Figure 1) illustrates well the actions of the United Nations and the European Union on prevention. Europe's security and defence policy allows for conflict prevention. Activation in this direction has been going on since 1990 for overall security. Decisions made concern specific regions and dispute resolution issues. Conflict prevention measures are set out in laws, declarations and other agreements. Also an example of prevention could be finding facts, monitoring, negotiating, meditating, and restoring trust. According to the Carnegie Commission's classification, there are four broad categories of such measures: 'early response' to 'early warning', preventive diplomacy (political, non-violent measures), economic measures (sanctions, challenge, economic dispute resolution mechanisms) and forceful measures¹³.

At the 1992 Lisbon meeting, the focus was on security in Central and Eastern European countries (mainly developments in the Balkans), after which the European Commission Monitoring Mission (ECMM) began operations in various regions (mainly the former Yugoslavia). In Bosnia, for example, economic projects have been implemented in Kosovo, and its missions have focused mainly on humanitarian aid and conflict resolution. In the following years, enlargement took place in a number of Middle Eastern countries. The EU's Common Defence and Security Policy covers not only military but also civilian issues, and there is a Committee on Civil Aspects for Crisis

¹³ E. Melander, C. Pigache, *Conflict Prevention: Concepts and Challenges*, [in:] *Konfliktprävention zwischen Anspruch und Wirklichkeit*, ed. W. Feichtinger, P. Jurekovic, Vienna 2007, pp. 9-17.

Management¹⁴. As of 2018, more than 4.000 people are participating in EU peacekeeping missions in Africa, the Western Balkans, Eastern Europe and the Middle East. Their goal is to stabilize and secure the countries of the world¹⁵.

The EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia is a specific tool used to prevent conflict and build peace. The EU Monitoring Mission is active only in situations where there is a crisis and it is necessary to respond quickly. Although the EUMM has limited rights to operate on the other side of the border within separatist regions, its influence is still very significant.

The Real Geopolitical Contours of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy: Crisis Management and Military Monitoring Operations

Georgia's European integration is the top priority of our country's foreign policy. This event is fully supported by the majority of the Georgian society. The so-called political and economic integration of European integration. The 'content' is quite well presented, but less discussed and perceived as the military-political 'content' of the European Union. The European Union is represented in Georgia by its military-political component, or military monitoring mission, which was established on August 12, 2008 on the basis of the Russian-Georgian-French ceasefire agreement. Today, the development of a unified European foreign security policy is one of the three top priorities set by the European Union, under which the EU countries have developed common defence and since 2003 have launched various military or civilian operations under the auspices of the EU. As a result, the European Union is emerging as one of the most important actors in the international arena, and the expectations of the international community are growing.

After the failed attempt to form the European Defence Union in 1950, it took the European Union many decades to develop a rigid force.

These new challenges for the EU include construction of hybrid, asymmetric and transnational conflicts which involve state and non-state actors as insurgents and terrorists¹⁶.

The Russia-Georgia war has once again shown the security risks in the region of the Black Sea region of the world, they are related to the unresolved conflicts in the region. The origins of the violence have prompted key players in world politics, both inside and outside the region, to question how fragile the so-called 'balance of power' in so-called 'frozen conflicts' in the region and how little control there is from the international community. Since 2008, the European Union Monitoring Mission has been working near the administrative

¹⁴ *The Common Security and and Defense Policy (CSDP)*, <https://eeas.europa.eu/topics/common-security-and-defence-policy-csdp_en> (22.06.2020).

¹⁵ *A stronger EU on security and defence*, <https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/35285/eu-strengthens-cooperation-security-and-defence_en> (12.06.2020).

¹⁶ M. Masili, *European Border Conflicts: Failures Inabilities of EU Foreign and Security Policy*, Lisbon 2019, pp. 10-11.

borders of Georgia. In addition, the EU has initiated more active cooperation through the Black Sea Synergy (BSS) to address broader regional environmental issues related to the Black Sea region.

In June 2014, the European Union and Georgia signed the Association Agreement (AA) (Union, 2014), which, together with the Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA), lays the groundwork for Georgia's far-reaching political and economic integration into the European Union. The Association Agreement is the result of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). Relations between Georgia and the European Union are very close and positive. The Association Agreement entered into force in July 2016. It's goal is political association and economic integration between Georgia and the European Union¹⁷.

On September 15, 2008, the European Union (EUMM) launched an unarmed civilian surveillance mission in Georgia to monitor the ceasefire agreement, meaning that the EU has become a major player in Georgia's security in both conflict regions since October 1, 2008. However, due to the Kremlin's efforts, this mission was not allowed to enter either Tskhinvali or Sukhumi, and their bases were located in Tbilisi, Gori and Zugdidi¹⁸. After the August 2008 war, the format of the Geneva International Talks between Georgia and Russia were established. In addition to Georgia and Russia, the talks were attended by US officials and co-chairs from the OSCE, the European Union and the United Nations with international talks in Geneva being held in two parallel working groups. In the first case, security issues are discussed, and in the second case, the return of IDPs and refugees, as well as other humanitarian issues. The EU continues its traditional model for the peaceful resolution of conflicts, but the conflicts in the South Caucasus are much more deeply rooted than those understood in Europe. The EU enlargement led to the collapse of the Black Sea coast in 2007. The Black Sea region is an area rich in natural resources and cultural diversity. It has great potential as a transit corridor between Asia and Europe. At the same time, it is characterized by persistent state weakness, devastating nationalism, and unresolved conflicts, which have repeatedly led to crises such as the 2008 Russia-Georgia war¹⁹.

The Black Sea region, which forms the largest transit corridor between Europe and Asia, is rich in natural resources and cultural diversity. At the same time, the region is characterized by persistent state weakness, destructive actions and unresolved conflicts, which have been exacerbated in the aftermath of the 2008 Russia-Georgia war. The EU's security policy in the Black Sea region is noteworthy²⁰.

¹⁷ See in detail: *Association agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and Georgia, of the other part* <<https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/2496959?publication=0>> (30.06.2020).

¹⁸ See in detail: *European Union Monitoring Mission*, <https://eumm.eu/> (16.06.2020).

¹⁹ S. Fisher, *The European Union and security in the Black Sea region after the Georgia crisis*, "Southeast European and Black Sea Studies", Vol. 9(3), Brussels, 2009, pp. 335-336.

²⁰ K. Gogolashvili, *EU Black Sea Policy and Enlargement*, Tbilisi 2018, p. 5-6.

The Black Sea region has become particularly attractive to the EU over the last few years. EU enlargement in 2004 and 2007 brought the organization closer to the borders of the Black Sea. The new member states of the East, including the Black Sea region, have a growing interest in actively cooperating with the European Union, which has been echoed in their economic policies. At the same time, the further escalation of the Russian-Georgian war in the post-Soviet space has sharply worsened Russian-EU relations, forcing the EU to seek new ways and strategies for its Eastern partners. The document, published by the European Commission in April 2007, defines the Black Sea region as follows: "A distinctly geographical area rich in natural resources and a major link between Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East. With a growing population, the region faces many important problems or challenges. It is characterized by great development potential and is a significant transport hub. However, it is also a region of unresolved conflicts, with environmental problems and inadequate border controls, which in turn contributes to illegal migration and organized crime"²¹.

This definition demonstrates the EU's motives for engaging deeply in issues related to the Black Sea region and the challenges facing the region. However, given the reality of this problem or the prevailing reality during the Cold War, some researchers are still debating whether it is right to call the Black Sea region a so-called 'Connecting Region'.

The Russia-Georgia war has once again shown the risks to world security in the Black Sea region due to the unresolved conflicts in the region. The origins of the violence have prompted key players in world politics, both inside and outside the region, to wonder how fragile the so-called 'balance of power' in 'frozen conflicts' in the region and how little control the international community has over these. On the other hand, the nature of the conflicts in Dnepropetrovsk, Abkhazia, South Ossetia suggest that the events in Georgia in August 2008 are not a precedent for other unresolved conflicts in the region. Tensions between the Russian-speaking population of Transnistria and Moldova have been rising since the second half of the 1980s, despite growing social and economic ties between the two countries.

While Chisinau is actively trying to establish trade relations with the European Union and warm the political climate with Russia, a member state of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Russia is cooperating with Moldova on the one hand and political and economic pressure on it on the other²². South Ossetia has retained the so-called 'mixed formation' system in the period after the 1992-1993 civil war, which lasted until the 2008 Russia-Georgia August war. However, the ethno-political conflict in South

²¹ *Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, Black Sea Synergy: A new regional cooperation initiative*, EU Commission paper, Brussels 2007, p. 160.

²² D. Schorkowitz, *Postkommunismus und verordneter Nationalismus: Gedächtnis, Gewalt und Geschichtspolitik im nördlichen Schwarzmeergebiet*, Frankfurt am Main 2007, p. 170.

Ossetia differs in nature from the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict, which also erupted in Georgia in parallel with the South Ossetian war²³. The Rose Revolution has significantly changed Georgian politics in resolving conflicts. Then President Saakashvili made the country's reintegration a top priority and pursued a more active and nationalist policy to achieve his goal. Georgia's pro-Western orientation has led to a deterioration in Russian-Georgian relations. Official Moscow, for its part, has been heavily involved in domestic politics in the South Ossetian and Abkhazian regions. Given that the South Ossetian and Russian authorities have close ties to North Ossetia, Russia has deliberately tried to link the two regions. After the break-up of the Soviet Union, the North Caucasus factor went on playing its role in the set-up of Russian-Georgian relations, being actively involved in the Georgian-Abkhazian and Georgian-South Ossetian conflicts which, in their own turn, had a significant impact upon processes on-going in the North Caucasus²⁴. One of the most important actions taken by Russia is the so-called 'reporting policy' taken place in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, which began in 2002. By 2008, 80-90% of the population in both regions already had Russian citizenship, which not only increased Russia's political influence in the region but also ensured that the Kremlin protected its 'legal rights' from Georgian aggression²⁵.

Due to its position as a transit country for energy exports, the developments in Georgia have become a central point of Western policy and debate. Western political actors have gradually strengthened their involvement in resolving the conflicts in Georgia. The United States has backed Georgia's military reforms, encouraged the formation of a Georgian army, and called on the country to join NATO. The European Union (EU) has intensified its European Neighbourhood Policy Action Plan through the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus. However, these facts did not prevent the war. On the contrary, Georgia's rapprochement with the West has exacerbated the political situation in the conflict zone and irritated Georgia's northern neighbour, Russia. By acknowledging Russia's independence from Abkhazia and South Ossetia, official Moscow, Tskhinvali and Sukhumi believe the conflict is settled, which the Georgian government certainly does not share. Tensions and destabilization become uncontrollable beyond administrative boundaries, which in turn threatens the next escalation²⁶.

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict can be paralleled with the conflict in Abkhazia, and the determinants of both Armenia's and Azerbaijan's domestic politics can be seen in their joint nationalist rhetoric. The military prosperity of

²³ B. Coppieters, *The Georgian-Abkhaz Conflict*, "JEMIE - Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe", Vol. 1, 2004, pp. 1-29.

²⁴ T. Sharashenidze, I. Sukhov, *North Caucasus from the Standpoint of Russian-Georgian Relations*, [in:] *Search of Way Out, Documents of social policy developed by Russian and Georgian experts*, Tbilisi 2011, p. 23.

²⁵ S. Fisher, op. cit., pp. 344-345.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 347.

these countries had a great impact, which even threatened to escalate the conflict before August 2008. At the same time, Armenia and Azerbaijan are trying to balance the influence of Russia and the West. Unlike Georgia, they do not seek immediate integration with Western international structures. Armenia, as a 'closed' country that does not have access to the sea, depends on Russian support. It has close ties with the United States and France and is seeking cooperation with the European Union. Azerbaijan, as an energy supplier and transit country, enjoys special strategic importance in the South Caucasus region. Unlike Russian-Armenian relations, Azerbaijan's policy in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is relatively remote and seeks to maintain strategic alliances with Turkey.

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is characterized by a dangerous regional dimension. The conflict involves not only two South Caucasus states, Armenia and Azerbaijan, but also two important regional actors, Russia and Turkey, along with the Collective Security Treaty Organization (GSTO), of which Armenia is a member. Moreover, military escalation may affect Iran as well, given the Azerbaijani minority living on the South Azerbaijani-Iranian border. These and other factors also affected Russia's attitude. Following Russia's conflict in Georgia, the Crimean peninsula became the next hotspot in the region. The annexation of the Crimean peninsula by the Russian Federation after a bloody confrontation in eastern Ukraine has strained relations between Crimea and Kiev, which has fuelled a potential conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

Researcher Esmira Japarova developed a conditional periodization in her article to better explain the role of the European Union. The EU's role in resolving the conflicts in the South Caucasus region is divided into two periods. The first period was seen as a 'reduced role' and lasted until 2003, when the EU's special envoy to the South Caucasus was appointed. The second period is characterized by 'increased role/facilitation-mediation activity', which includes 2003 from today. Mitigating potential threats posed by unresolved conflicts in the South Caucasus remains one of the important issues on the EU's foreign policy agenda. Moreover, she indicates that relations between the EU and states in the South Ossetia region have long been on the back burner of the academic research world, with little attention devoted to the analysis of EU policy in this part of Europe²⁷.

All post-Soviet states in the Black Sea region are characterized by a common feature, which is manifested in political instability and high levels of corruption. After the colour revolutions in Ukraine and Georgia, it is true that countries have embarked on a path of internal reform and democratic principles aimed at building a relatively active civil society, but political instability, confrontation between elites and corrupt practices remain a major challenge in

²⁷ E. Japarova, *EU Conflict Resolution Policy Towards the South Caucasus*, "CONNECTIONS", Vol. 10, No. 3, Summer 2011, pp. 59-60.

the post-Soviet era. This is exacerbated by the economic and financial crisis in Georgia and Ukraine following the Russian occupation. Political demonstrations in the Republic of Armenia in recent years deserve special mention. The growth of Azerbaijan's energy resources is accompanied by the emergence of particularly corrupt political regimes in the country.

The aim of the EU-Georgia Joint Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) Dialogue and Cooperation is to gradually bring closer issues, including the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). Also, security, conflict prevention and crisis management, regional stability, disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation, arms and export control. In light of the above, persistent state weakness in the Black Sea region creates authoritarian tendencies, instability, and corruption. Destructive actions and brutal nationalism, a tense political climate, and unresolved conflicts further complicate internal reforms, divide the political elite into two parts, and hinder domestic and foreign stability. This threat creates security not only for the Black Sea region but also for Europe. Thus, against the background of the tense political climate in the region, the EU's crisis management and military monitoring policy plays a major role in maintaining security and stability in the region. The European Union is one of the most important actors in the international arena, and the expectations of both the international community and Georgia are growing day by day.

Russian Reinforcement toward Arctic Direction: 'NORTH' Operational-Strategic Command and Nuclear Confrontation Scenario with the NATO and EU on edge of the Europe

One case to demonstrate how the Russian Federation traces its defence and foreign politics in real life and how it reflects on security challenges toward European Union stability and real military challenges from a Northern origin toward the Eastern European territories is to be reviewed pertaining to Arctic threat perception. The Arctic military threat is a vivid case-study for reviewing concrete military intervention plan perception planned and organized by the Russian military strategic leadership. The 'Northern' threat could be considered either as large-scale geostrategic ambiguity and emergence as new strategy to increase geopolitical dominance in line of 'North-South' direction, targeted also the Caucasus region. In 2014 the Russian Federation high-political leadership set up new Strategic-Operational Command 'NORTH' in aegis of the Northern Fleet HQ that is absolutely novelty in fomenting military goals and missions at the strategic level. With the decision, the Russian military-operational Command's number reaches five entities together with the same Commands of 'South', 'Central', 'East' and 'West' HQs. At large, the Russian Federation tries to identify new Geostrategic Areas – as for, the Caucasus Geostrategic Area (North Caucasus Military District and South Caucasus Russian Military Army Group HG, plus operated in autonomous regime 4th and 7th Bases) to create so-called 'Strategic-Operational Triangle' Line Modality. In order to

draw up a common strife line between 4th and 7th Military bases in the South Caucasus – in conjunction to 102nd Military Base ‘linkage’ with creation of independently acted Army-Operational HQ to operate very independently and its usage against concrete military foes (for example, against 9th Army Corp HQ of 2nd Field Army of Turkish Armed Forces, or against NATO South-Eastern Army Command, USA European Strategic Command, etc.), Russia will set up proper strategic defence space to promote ‘forward defence’ strategy to cope with threats and challenges, how the Kremlin authority perceives, from the NATO and the USA analogies strategy implementation. Regarding the Arctic direction underscored in new version of the military doctrine of Russia in 2015²⁸ and reinforcement of the Russian Armed Forces in that one, in aegis of the ‘North’ Command HQ were set up special Air-Defence and Air Force units with armament of most modern type weaponry systems – air jets MIG-31 and anti-craft missile system ‘C-400’. The territorial-geographical area of the ‘NORTH’ HQ is to be included lands stretched from Murmansk till Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky and till Chukotka region, the territory contains more than 8 thousand kilometres and includes four different time zones. Additionally into operational command of the ‘NORTH’ HQ entered a division of anti-aircraft defence and the mixed aviation regiment with various types of combat jets.

At the time being, the military infrastructure construction implementation plan have been 70% fulfilled with 30% remaining and scheduled to be completed in 2017. It is very interesting to note that the Arctic zone could be a spot where the USA and Russia will be engaging in an arms race process with nuclear stalemate provisions. What does this mean? According to some sources, notably Germany’s ZDF public television network headlines on Tuesday September 22nd, *New U.S. Atomic Weapons to Be Stationed in Germany*, and reports that the U.S. will bring 20 new nuclear bombs into Germany, each being four times the destructive power of the one that was used on Hiroshima. Hans Kristensen, the Director of the Nuclear Information Project at the Federation of American Scientists, says, “With the new bombs the boundaries blur between tactical and strategic nuclear weapons. Based on other sources, the base in Rhineland-Palatinate in western Germany hosts German Panavia Tornado multipurpose aircraft that are capable to deploy the USAF nuclear bombs stored there under a nuclear sharing deal. The base is the only location in Germany that has nuclear weapons since 2007 and has 20 of them, according to the Royal United Services Institute. The US is currently working on a new variant of the B61, Mod 12, which would be more accurate and have smaller yield than modifications 3 and 4 currently deployed in Europe”²⁹.

²⁸ *Nowaja wojennaja doktrina Rossiskoj Fiedieracyi, 13 janwaria 2015 goda*, <<https://topwar.ru/66527-novaya-voennaya-doktrina-rossiyskoy-federacii.html>> (30.06.2020).

²⁹ *U.S. Will Station New Nuclear Weapons in Germany Against Russia*, <<https://www.zerohedge.com/news/2015-09-22/us-will-station-new-nuclear-weapons-germany-against-russia>> (30.06.2020).

ZDF cites budget documents indicating that in the third quarter of this year the base would receive funding for the future storage and deployment of the new B61-12s³⁰. That includes the upgrade of the Tornado aircraft. Russia has become furious as a result of this implementation plan and via it's Ministry of Foreign Affairs representative conveys it's threat to "The so-called practice of 'joint use of nuclear weapons' within NATO also raises concerns. Training (exercises) associated with the preparation and use of nuclear weapons of the armed forces of states that do not possess such weapons, are a direct violation of Articles 1 and 2 of the NPT. This abnormal situation has persisted for more than forty years, but that does not make it more acceptable. Moreover, the action harms the regional stability and threatens Russia's national security"³¹. Russia exposes that it will be retaliating on its own turn.

It means that the 'New Cold War' steadily has been transforming into a 'nuclear arms muscle' game where Russia and USA are competing and threaten to demonstrate how strong they are in this time. According to analytical magazine 'Value Walk' – even though there is a mutual nuclear disarmament since the end of the Cold War, Moscow and Washington still own about a thousand ready-to-go nuclear warheads each. It was reported in 2014 that the entire stockpile of U.S. intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) – about 448 active warheads – are aimed mainly against Russia. The U.S. possesses 1.597 strategic nuclear warheads deployed on 785 ICBMs, SLBMs, and strategic bombers, according to the March 2015 New START numbers. The U.S. possessed as many as 4.717 active nuclear warheads as of September 30, 2014, according to the U.S. State Department. Other warheads are retired and are awaiting dismantlement. Russia, for its part, has 1.582 strategic warheads deployed on 515 ICBMs, SLBMs, and strategic bombers, according to the March 2015 New START numbers³². On top of that, Russia has additional 3.200 that are awaiting dismantlement.

How could Russia respond to these concrete plans from the Arctic deployed 'NORTH' Command HQ? Namely, the Russians are planning to restore ex-Soviet nuclear secret polygon and base with code name 'Object-700' and strategic airfield 'Rogachovo' in Novaya Zemlia where it is possible to deploy the strategic combat air jets armed with nuclear warheads and rockets like modernized MIG-31BM jets with 'air-air' long range P-33 missiles. In the 'NORTH' HQ command supervision could be handed over strategic ballistic missile system 'TOPOL-M' that directly aimed to strike down the NATO conventional and nuclear capabilities in the European theatre of warfare

³⁰ *Ibidem.*

³¹ *Russian Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Maria Zakharova's interview with the German ZDF TV Company regarding the modernization of US nuclear weapons in Europe, Moscow, 22.09.2015* <http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/international_safety/regprla/asset_publisher/YCxLFJnKuD1W/content/id/1760991> (30.06.2020).

³² K. Reif, *New Start Glance*, <<https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/NewSTART>> (22.06.2020).

activities. Russia even created an Arctic special force destination to promote its military missions here³³.

Riga EU Partnership Summit: New Trends in Defence and Foreign Policy Implications toward the Caucasus Region

On 21-22 May 2015, EU leaders met representatives of the Eastern Partnership countries at the fourth Eastern Partnership summit in Riga to reconfirm the importance the EU attachment to its Eastern Partnership. Summit participants took stock of the achievements made since the Vilnius summit in 2013 and set out a positive agenda for the future. The summit was the occasion to demonstrate EU's determination to pursue closer, differentiated relations with its independent and sovereign partners. The EU is strongly engaged with all six partners, whatever their individual level of ambition in terms of relations with the EU. The scope and depth of cooperation are determined by:

- the EU's and partners' ambitions and needs;
- the pace of reform;
- Geopolitical implications at the regional level in aegis of the Black Sea space where the most 6 partner nations located – East European and South Caucasus ones;
- The possibility of EU enlargement policy development;
- Conflict resolution in the region was also high on the agenda of the summit. All summit participants agreed to pursue all efforts aiming at de-escalation and a political solutions to the crisis in Ukraine, and the peaceful settlement of other unresolved conflicts in the region.

The European aspirations and European choice of the partners concerned are acknowledged, as stated in the Association Agreements. Leaders also reaffirmed the importance of the reform agenda in the eastern partners and the need to establish both strengthened and additional transparent institutions, free from corruption. Discussions focused on multilateral cooperation projects aiming at:

- 1) *strengthening institutions and good governance*, the EU confirmed its engagement to help partner countries to strengthen institutions and their resilience to external challenge;
- 2) *enhancing mobility and contacts between people*;
- 3) *developing market opportunities* by improving the business environment and legal certainty in Eastern European partners to SMEs and businesses and focusing on the *digital economy* field;

³³ *Missija niewypolnima – eto nie ob arkticzskom spiecznaze, 15 Maja 2019 goda,* <<http://topwar.ru/157840-missija-nevypolnima-jeto-ne-ob-arkticheskom-specnaze.html>> (23.05.2020).

- 4) ensuring *energy security* and improving the *interconnections* for energy but also transport³⁴.

The summit in Riga was accompanied by a number of side events, demonstrating that the Eastern Partnership goes beyond intergovernmental relations to involve civil society, media, business and other stakeholders. The Summit has sparked many expectations to those nations who are participating with the EU in aegis of the Eastern Partnership initiative launched in 2009 and aimed to foster dialogue between the EU member-nations with their closest neighbourhood. However since 2009 many waters have been flowed away and new Cold War erupted between the West (the EU+NATO) and Russia and many countries even lost their ambitions to even join the EU as full-pledge members. Two partner-nations, Belarus and Armenia opted for membership into rival project to the EU in Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) and Azerbaijan has even refused to attend the Riga Summit at high political official level – the President Ilham Aliyev rejected an invitation to come to the Riga Summit. Only three nations: Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine have decided to sign -an Associated Agreement with the EU and expressed much hopes in further promoting the strategic partnership with the EU. Based on the expectations these three strategic partners have considered to reach some geopolitical breakthrough in relations with these nations from the EU perspective, mostly in front of the most dangerous threat emanated from the incumbent Kremlin leadership of the Russian Federation. By and large, prior to the Riga EU Eastern Partnership Summit, there were three main geopolitical approaches to fostering a future strategic partnership links between the parties. The three approaches encompass the following:

- 1) Identify which partner nation is to be declared as regional leader in that strategic partnership frame;
- 2) Recognition of European foreign policy orientation and adherence to the European democratic values;
- 3) Acceptance a bid for promotion of Visa Liberalization regime perspective to the remaining strategic partners, for instance, to Georgia and to Ukraine (Moldova has granted the status in 2010 and since 2013 the regime came into action and force and all Moldovan citizens without any hindrance can travel back and forth to the EU member-countries)³⁵

Certainly due to concrete substantial reasons among the strategic partners declared and recognized by the EU high-level authorities the leadership status of Moldova, due to it's implementation of all requirements of the EU to the strategic partnership, including successfully dealing with conflict resolution modality. The success was determined in the Riga Summit Declaration: "The

³⁴ V. Maisaia, *Riga EU Partnership Summit: Too Much Expectations and Too Little Hope*, "The Georgian Times", No. 10(1553), 30.05.2015, p. 2.

³⁵ *Ibidem*.

Summit participants welcome the EU's contribution to further promoting stability and confidence building, and underline the need for stronger EU engagement in this regard. They welcome the EU's strengthened role in conflict resolution and confidence building efforts in the framework or in support of existing agreed formats and processes, including through field presence when appropriate. They highlight the importance of advancing the negotiations in the 5+2 format on a comprehensive political settlement of the Transnistrian conflict and welcome intensified Chisinau-Tiraspol dialogue in all formats³⁶.

Moreover, Ukraine was criticized not so sharply due to high corruption and miserable economic and financial conditions and poor political governance. As for the Georgia case, it was defined as inconsistent in restoration of justice, incomplete fulfilment of rule of law and insufficiency in political governance. Moreover, regarding the conflict resolution modality was mentioned in the 5th paragraph of the Declaration: "Recalling the need to fully implement the 12 August 2008 Ceasefire Agreement, Summit participants reiterated their commitment to conflict resolution efforts in Georgia, including through the co-chairmanship of the Geneva International Discussions by the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia and the full implementation of the mandate of the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia. Participants stress the specific role of the OSCE, as an inclusive organization, in conflict resolution in the region. The Summit participants also agree to intensify cooperation between the EU and Eastern European partners in international fora"³⁷. Unfortunately such so-called 'mild expression' looked very strange mostly in conjunction with Russia's aggressive foreign policy implications in the region and imposition of so-called 'Hybrid Wars' against Georgia and Ukraine. It is too strange and unpredictable and even non-interpretable to the local societies. On second item, the EU Summit has supported and recognized Georgia and Ukraine adherence to the democratic values and European foreign policy orientation with concrete passages from the Declaration: "The participants of the Summit reviewed and welcomed the significant achievements in the Eastern Partnership since the Vilnius Summit in 2013, notably the signing and provisional application of the Association Agreements (AA) with Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, which constitute a major step in accelerating these partners' political association and economic integration with the EU. The Summit participants stress that implementation of AA/DCFTAs will be a top priority of the EU and the partners concerned for the coming years. It is the key means of achieving sustainable democracy and the deep modernization of these partners' economies and societies for which their citizens are calling"³⁸.

³⁶ *Joint Declaration of the Eastern Partnership Summit (Riga, 21-22 May 2015)*, p. 3, <<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/21526/riga-declaration-220515-final.pdf>> (27.06.2020).

³⁷ *Ibidem*.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 4.

As for the third posture, the EU leaders unfortunately denied providing free visa liberalization perspective for an undefined period of time and this is a very sad story for Georgian and Ukrainian policy forwarding implications. The Riga Declaration stresses on the following: “The Summit participants reconfirm that enhanced mobility of citizens in a secure and well managed environment remains a core objective of the Eastern Partnership. This will facilitate easier and more frequent travel, business and people to people contacts. They welcome the fact that the visa free regime for citizens from the Republic of Moldova holding a biometric passport, in place since April 2014, has been operating effectively facilitating travel, business and people to people contacts. They warmly welcome the progress made by Georgia and Ukraine respectively in the implementation of their Visa Liberalisation Action Plans as described in the latest Progress Reports by the European Commission. They look forward to completion by Ukraine and Georgia of the implementation of the 2nd phase of their Visa Liberalization Action Plans once all benchmarks are fulfilled through the implementation of all required reforms, and welcome the Commission's readiness to do its utmost to support Ukraine and Georgia in the implementation of their VLAPs and its intention to report on progress by Ukraine and Georgia respectively by the end of 2015. Fulfilment of all benchmarks would allow to conclude the VLAP process and the Commission to propose to the European Parliament and to the Council to exempt Ukrainian and Georgian citizens respectively from the visa requirement in line with the criteria of the Regulation 539/2001”³⁹.

Hence it means that Georgia and Ukraine were clarified as non-relevant nations to provide visa liberalization regime status. However, as a consolation prize, the EU leaders have allocated to Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine a *€2 billion bonus as are an investment to make these economies more competitive and an investment into local companies that will create more jobs for the population*. The financial means for the investments will be largely coming from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the European Investment Bank (EIB). “*This is a concrete example of the EU's commitment to Eastern Partnership and of our determination to build closer economic relations with the partner countries*” – said Commissioner for European Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations Johannes Hahn⁴⁰. That is all what were expected from the Riga Summit and how was successful is another case.

Conclusion

The European Union Monitoring Mission is in favour of informal dialogue and problem solving, which aims to establish relations between the government and civil society leaders and restore public confidence. The European Union, as

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 9.

⁴⁰ *EU to unlock EURO 2 billion worth of investment for small business in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine*, <https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_15_5012> (30.06.2020).

a participant in global politics, has the military potential to engage in global security, peacekeeping missions and military operations. The EU's containment policy, which acts as a regional power, can effectively influence the situation in neighbouring countries. As a well-armed police officer, the EU as international organization in aegis of the 'Humanitarian Intervention' military operation can intervene in conflicts with high intensity, for humanitarian purposes (one example of this is Libya, 2011). Through sufficient and sustainable force, the EU's global achievement gives it the right to decide whether to engage in the process of solving and avoiding problems that are vital to the world. The EU supports Georgia's territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, and is also involved in resolving long-running conflicts between the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The foreign policy-making procedure in aegis of the EU leadership is still complicating process and staggered in several ways, including tailoring some kind of the EU 'soft power' instruments and tools. It includes peculiar approach by the EU toward breakaway regions of Georgia – Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The EU provided huge financial assistance to the regions (an estimated in EUR 25 million) despite having a non-political background, the assistance could be considered as one of the mechanism for achieving concrete foreign policy missions – promote peace and stability near the EU border and enhancing geopolitical peace resolution, in the case of Georgia⁴¹. The policy implications have been shared with other regional states and even introduced in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, causing serious inter-state conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. In some cases even debated an issue how the EU could be involved as peacekeeper actor, including performing peace keeping operations in the region, mostly in conflict zones of the region, for instance in the case of Abkhazia and South Ossetia⁴².

The Georgian side implicated some ideas to flatter realization on spots but how the EU has the capability even in aegis of the Common Defence and Security Policy provision is a distinct issue. Nevertheless, as a Georgian national proverb says: 'Hope dies at last time' and the Georgian authority and society do believe that the mission could be feasibly accomplished if not in short-time duration but at least in the long-term perspective. Meanwhile, the Russian military expansion is being broadened and expanded and Russia is being stalled with having considered the EU further expansion itself to the East, including the 'Caucasus' geopolitical direction⁴³. The process certainly plays an

⁴¹ *Conflict Resolution in the South Caucasus: The EU's Role*, International Crisis Group, Europe Report No. 173, Brussels, 20.03.2013, pp. 16-18.

⁴² G. Lomsadze, *Georgia: A Solitary Peacekeeping Mission on the edge of Europe*, <<https://eurasianet.org/georgia-a-solitary-peacekeeping-mission-on-the-edge-of-europe>> (27.05.2020).

⁴³ S. Pezard, A. Radin, T. Szayna, S. Larrabee, *European Relations with Russia: Threat Perceptions, Responses and Strategies in the Wake of the Ukrainian Crisis*, Santa Monica 2017, p. 77.

enormous role for making a more plausible European security environment and the EU has to broaden its consideration around regional security stability mission achievement to include balancing with the Russian Federation intrusion to the Caucasus region.

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