



THE ROLE OF EUROATLANTIC SECURITY ORGANIZATIONS IN PREVENTING AND COUNTERING THE EFFECTS OF ARMED CONFLICTS NEAR THE EUROPEAN AREA

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Addressing current conflicts of any kind, whether conventional or unconventional, symmetric or asymmetric, classical or hybrid, can only be adequately achieved through synergistic action with international participation. Implicitly, the effects generated by conflicts, whether they are of social, economic, legal, military or any other nature, also require a collaborative, conjugate action. Cooperation in the field of counteracting the effects of conflicts has gained increasing importance in recent years, determined by the dynamics and complexity of the international security environment and the need for combined approaches. The involvement of Euro-Atlantic organizations in conflict resolution and mitigating their effects are based on ideology, adherence to a set of common rules, principles and interests, without which the current developments in the security environment and relations among states could not be explained. However, the export or import of the security is generally carried out within the same family. Involvement develops starting from the establishment of common, convergent objectives of the partners, but based on strategic interests of each actor involved. The efficiency of the cooperation of Euro-Atlantic security organizations in countering the effects of conflicts in the vicinity of the European space is an essential element in ensuring the continuity and consolidation of the European Union.

Keywords: security; conflict; prevention; cooperation; effect.

Armed conflicts are a mirror of regional and global trends. The relations among the great powers, the magnitude of the competition among them and the intensity of the ambitions of the regional actors are often translated into conflicts and reflect how they break out, unfold and are resolved. In most cases, these conflicts either highlight issues that the international community is obsessed with or those that it is indifferent to. When we refer to the regional level, especially to the European space, we notice that today, these conflicts tell the story of a system caught in the spiral of fundamental changes and regional leaders are both encouraged and frightened by the challenges that such a spiral offers it. Conflicts in the vicinity of Europe, from Asia to Africa, are a constant concern of the leaders of the Euro-Atlantic area, both in terms of the fact that they can affect economic, political and military relations, and in the fact that they can export instability to Europe by the large number of immigrants.

Euro-Atlantic organizations have an important role to play in resolving international disputes,

but especially with focus on those in the vicinity of Europe. The close link with the UN in terms of regional peace and security policy has become an essential condition, as an effect of globalization. They are called upon to regulate balance local or regional disputes on the basis of the UN Charter, which requires the Security Council to encourage the peaceful settlement of local disputes through international regional organizations, either at the initiative of Member States or by the Security Council. Therefore, regional international organizations have an obligation to act and to inform the Security Council of their actions in order to maintain international peace and security. The UN Charter through the special chapter which provides for the peaceful settlement of international disputes, establishing in art. 33 the obligation and the means of peaceful settlement of disputes, gives legitimacy and consistency to the actions taken by Euro-Atlantic organizations in the various situations in which they have intervened¹.

Armed conflicts in the vicinity of the European space

The limits of cooperation in the field of regional security depend to a large extent on the contribution and political will of the states. The tragic events in

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the Balkans have opened new paths for European states to take on security issues². The own interests of states which are not motivated to cooperate in an allied format may constitute impediments. The lack of services, capabilities or resources to meet NATO requirements does not make cooperation impossible. NATO integrates the contribution of 30 members, and what one of the members cannot offer is offered by another, thus ensuring a complementarity of efforts. Even a synthetic analysis and a selective approach to conflicts can provide us with conclusive information about the efforts that can be generated by a conflict, starting from the idea of a cause-effect-response approach.

For example, the *Georgia Conflict* (South Ossetia and Abkhazia), frozen since the early 1990s, took a new turn in late summer 2008. The separatist movements in the two provinces, South Ossetia and Abkhazia, were initially considered a Georgia's internal problem, overnight, becomes an issue of global interest that will produce important changes in international relations. The implications from the directly involved Washington to Moscow became obvious. At that time, the mediation of the conflict did not find a sense of finality or achieve a result in an international forum, therefore, it was necessary to hire a third actor. America, through its then president, George Bush, was determined not to let the Russian-Georgian confrontation escalate into a Cold War-type Russian-American confrontation. Therefore, the United States took on an active role in resolving the crisis, but only by providing political support for mediation behind the curtain.

The role of mediator was assumed by the then President of France, Nicolas Sarkozy, who was in Beijing, along with other world leaders, including Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, at the opening of the Olympic Games. The attempt to mediate the conflict was met with opposition from Putin, with the French president realizing that the Russian leader did not intend to end the conflict in that situation but was prepared to teach Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili a lesson. The role of mediator of the European Union, through the direct mediator in the person of the President of France, Nicolas Sarkozy, who held the rotating presidency of the European Union was a limited success, keeping open the line of negotiation but failing to avoid total loss of life.

From a NATO perspective, it seems that Georgia was the perfect and preferred place where Russia gave a firm response to the expansion of the Alliance. More than a decade after the end of the conflict, the authorities' attempts to join NATO and the EU continue to face opposition from Russian officials, with Dimitri Medvedev saying in 2018 that a possible decision to integrate Georgia into NATO could have disastrous consequences, expressing the hope that the leaders of the Alliance will have enough intelligence not to take steps in this direction³. So for now, only the dialogue remains open.

Most of the solutions proposed by the Association Agenda for the resolution of frozen conflicts are developed along the same lines as long-term solutions, in which the maintenance of constructive participation and support from the EU, the UN and the OSCE, in our case agreed in the Geneva identifying concrete ways to involve representatives of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in deepening EU-Georgia relations, intensifying contacts with the people of the two separatist republics for reconciliation and concrete measures to encourage travel, investment and trade across the administrative border.⁴

The *conflict in Syria* began with the Arab Spring, in 2011, first expressed through several demonstrations across the country. Even if the protesters were severely punished by the regime, the repression of the peaceful movement only intensified and spread the protest. According to Western intelligence services, those responsible for degenerating the peaceful protests into a violent conflict were Syrian rebels and members of the Al-Qaeda network.

The violence would have allowed the regime to regain legitimacy by stopping brutality. After the involvement of the Al-Assad regime, which accused the demonstrators of being Sunni terrorists, from the escalation of the conflict until the evolution towards the 2012 civil war there was only a step. The conflict evolved in the form of local wars between the army and the opposition for the occupation of certain cities and neighborhoods. The lack of journalists and international presence made it difficult to accurately assess the circumstances in Syria, a country of strategic importance to several countries, both in the Middle East and beyond. Thus, various powers, each with its own agenda,



provided support to either the official regime or the rebels. Currently, the Al-Assad regime, with the support of the Russian Federation, has managed to regain control of Syria in large part, annihilating ISIS forces in Syria⁵.

However, the worst thing is that from a humanitarian point of view the situation is critical. In addition to crimes against humanity, from the abduction and killing of civilians to widespread massacres, the war has forced some 2.8 million people to flee abroad, from Jordan, Turkey or Iraq to Europe, while a triple number of refugees seek to survive inside the borders.

In this context, the United Nations Security Council is paralyzed by the conflict, perhaps due to the fact that Russia and China have vetoed three times against an intervention resolution. Therefore, both Europe and NATO are somewhat reserved about the conflict, its effects now being exported across borders, the most affected country being Turkey, a NATO member country. Thus, the EU has adopted the diplomatic route, trying to achieve a dual game, more precisely, on the one hand not to affect too much the partnership with NATO, and on the other hand to be reserved in relation to Turkey, knowing that there is a great need of stability at the south-eastern border of the union. Instead, NATO expresses its solidarity with Turkey and seeks a solution to the conflict, using consultations on Article 4 of the Treaty⁶, after Turkey suffered losses following the conflict, and calls on the parties to return immediately to a ceasefire. Although the situation is far from resolved, the attention paid to the region can avoid further aggravation of the situation and allow humanitarian access.

The 2011 *Libyan Civil War* began as a series of protests and clashes in the North African state against Muammar Gaddafi, Libya's 42-year-old leader. Most nations strongly condemned the use of force against civilians. The United States imposed sanctions on Gaddafi. The UN Security Council adopted a resolution freezing the assets of Gaddafi and 10 other members of his circle entourage. The resolution also imposed a travel ban and referred Libya to the International Criminal Court for investigations. Despite UN efforts, a substantial step towards normalizing the situation has not yet been achieved. The latest action plan to resolve the crisis, announced by the UN envoy to Libya on September 20, 2017, faced a lot of obstacles,

which raises the question of whether it will ever be successful (the initial deadline was the end of 2018, long overdue).

After NATO contributed militarily to the victory of various heterogeneous armed groups against dictator Muammar Gaddafi eight years ago, Libya is today a failed state in which the authority of the internationally recognized government is reduced to the capital Tripoli, surrounded by Khalifa Haftar's troops, while the east of the country is controlled by the latter, and many armed groups are vying for supremacy and are financed by smuggling operations, especially trafficking in migrants seeking to reach Europe⁷.

Even if the situation in the *Crimean Peninsula* is not an eloquent example of armed conflict, the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation is also a historic event, with a major and direct influence on the Euro-Atlantic area, which, according to some analysts, marks the transition from the "post-Cold War" period to a more difficult, multi-polar one in which the new powers, including Russia, are exerting increasing geopolitical influence.

The security environment in the Black Sea basin has deteriorated significantly, with 2014 marking a turning point in recent post-Soviet history, a reaffirmation of Russia's claims to former areas of influence, supported by an accelerated arms process focused on modernizing the strategic nuclear arsenal one hundred percent by 2020. Russia justifies the annexation of Crimea on the basis of the fundamental democratic principle, the right of peoples to self-determination but also for historical reasons, including the precedent of Kosovo.

The centrifugal tendencies of the former Soviet states to move out of Moscow's sphere of influence have generated a prompt military reaction from Russia, with profound implications not only for the Black Sea area but also globally. The invasion of Crimea by Russia and its accelerated militarization pose a major threat to Europe's security environment, by extension, forcing the reshaping of security strategies on the European continent. The prospect of deploying nuclear weapons on the peninsula jeopardizes the negotiation process in order to restore a climate of mutual trust between the two blocs of power, namely NATO and the Russian Federation. Russia does not seem willing to lose control over Ukraine in the medium and long

term, so the area foreshadows the establishment of a "cold front" between NATO and Russia, which, unfortunately, has Romania on the demarcation line.

All these conflicts briefly described above represent humanitarian crises, usually characterized by: prolonged violence and loss of life; massive population movements; the disaster is transmitted to society as a whole and to the economy; the need for humanitarian assistance in many forms and on a large scale; obstacles or impediment of humanitarian assistance by military and political constraints; very high security risks for those providing humanitarian assistance in certain areas⁸. If for the natural phenomena measures can be applied to prevent or limit the negative consequences, in the situation of humanitarian crises, caused by armed conflicts or only by the human factor, the situation is more dramatic.

For extreme violence in armed conflicts, civilians are the ones who pay the ultimate price, either with their own lives or by abandoning their homes for a life in exile. Increasingly, armed conflict, epidemics, famine, natural disasters and other major emergencies can all lead to humanitarian crises that go beyond the mandate or capacity of a single international entity or state to intervene.

In order to be able to assess the extent to which Euro-Atlantic security organizations effectively and efficiently address and resolve the multiple issues on their agenda, we need to consider the ongoing changes in the security environment and, consequently, the challenges they face. Political leaders in the Euro-Atlantic area today face a complex problem: on the one hand citizens want the authorities to find solutions, on the other hand their trust in institutions is limited⁹.

During the Cold War, major threats to state security were perceived to be particularly external in nature, and even when internal problems arose, they were often blamed on external challenges. The state of security was defined as a security of the state. In this context, the internal problems of the states were seen to have less to do with the policy of the state itself and with the errors of domestic policy, and more with the influence and support of "extremist", "capitalist" or "communist", as the case may be. In fact, this vision was not entirely unmotivated, as rivalry and competition between superpowers led to an exacerbation of conflict in

all components of social life. At the end of the Cold War, it turned out that, in fact the nature of the conflicts in the world in the late 1990s, was mainly internal in nature¹⁰. As a result, Euro-Atlantic organizations have become much more aware of this new situation and have begun to redefine the real causes of conflict.

As a result, some Euro-Atlantic organizations have managed to make progress in adapting their mandates while others have not. In order to be able to develop a new methodology for the prevention of intra-state conflicts, a deeper understanding of the causes of this distinct type of conflict was needed. The ideological approach specific to the Cold War had to be overcome and the ethnic and religious causes of the conflicts had to be studied. It has also been shown in practice that the type and quality of governance are directly related to the prevention of internal conflicts within states. Conflicts are less likely to break out where different identity groups have unrestricted access to opportunities for participation in political, economic and cultural life, as well as religious expression, and they have a better chance where these basic human needs are oppressed especially where some identity groups perceive that they are subject to discrimination and injustice, compared to other groups in the same society.

Conclusions

Promoting dialogue and cooperation are key elements in strengthening the efforts of Euro-Atlantic security organizations to respond effectively to the challenges of today's security environment. There are no perfect solutions in international cooperation, just as there are no perfect solutions for managing crisis situations. It is difficult to reach consensus on directions of action, to level national priorities, but it is important for states to promote international cooperation within the framework of their own security interests and to intensify formal and informal cooperation, both bilaterally and multilateral, as complementary forms of cooperation.

Euro-Atlantic security organizations, as the main institutions that ensure the stability of the European space and its proximity, can cooperate to capitalize on experience, expertise and capabilities. The North Atlantic Alliance is the organization that offers perhaps the most effective framework for



security consultations, dialogue and cooperation, and its potential can be further exploited by strengthening the key role in the security equation and ensuring civil-military synergy.

Human security refers to the need for an individual-centered approach to security, as the only way to achieve national, regional and even global stability¹¹. Summarizing the analysis of the concept of "human security" as the best foundation on which to base "state security", practice shows that states that are able to provide the highest level of human security to their population also have the highest level of state security but in a context of cooperation. The cooperative approach to security is based on four factors. The first involves efforts at the regional level to establish standards, norms and rules at the regional level, based on internationally recognized principles.

The second factor is the establishment of structures that encourage compliance with the rules established within those groups and to shape the behavior of those who initially tended to reject these standards. The third factor involves assisting states to meet their commitments. The fourth factor is finding solutions that lead to problem solving and annihilate differences in approach, both at the intra-state and interstate levels, before they generate conflicts. These methods of security through cooperation can generate constructive, gradual changes at regional level and can direct periods of rapid transition at transnational level. Thus, both the North Atlantic Alliance and the European Union must lay the foundations for this cooperation, by printing a flexible, practical dimension that responds effectively to common security interests.

NOTES:

1 *** *Carta Națiunilor Unite*, art. 33.

2 Marius Valeriu Păunescu, *Sistemul Uniunii Europene în contextual cooperării civil-militare*, "Carol I" National Defence University Publishing House, Bucharest, 2017, p. 98.

3 https://www.defenceromania.ro/georgia-zece-ani-de-la-razboiul-care-a-zguduit-caucazul_592830.html, accessed on 06.05.2020.

4 Cristina Bogzeanu, *Rolul Uniunii Europene în gestionarea conflictelor înghețate din vecinătatea granițelor*

sale, "Carol I" National Defence University Publishing House, Bucharest, 2015, p. 48.

5 <https://www.historia.ro/sectiune/general/articol/conflictul-din-siria-lipsa-de-solutii-si-dezastru-umanitar>, accessed on 13.05.2020.

6 https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_173939.htm, accessed on 06.05.2020.

7 <https://www.nationalisti.ro/bomba-noptii-incepe-razboiul-chiar-la-granita-europei-au-intervenit-trupele/>, accessed on 13.05.2020.

8 <https://www.humanitariancoalition.ca/info-portal/factsheets/what-is-a-humanitarian-crisis>, accessed on 06.05.2020.

9 Constantin Iordache, *Politici ale Uniunii Europene pentru aplicarea normelor dreptului internațional umanitar*, "Carol I" National Defence University Publishing House, Bucharest, 2017, p. 102.

10 K. Booth, T. Dunne (coordinators), *Worlds in Collision, Terror and the Future of Global Order*, Palgrave, Macmillan, 2005, pp. 1-26.

11 Alexandra Sarcinschi, *Operațiile de stabilitate și securitatea umană*, "Carol I" National Defence University Publishing House, Bucharest, 2008, p. 7.

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