SECURITY THREATS MANAGEMENT ALONG THE EASTERN FLANKS OF EU

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In today realities EU considers itself to be a global actor whose actions and strategies influence the whole international community. Therefore, internal and external security practices of the EU usually serve as an example for other states. Its enlargement toward east is characterized by facing numerous threats like unresolved conflicts in post-Soviet region, economic crises, hybrid threats. EU is contributing to their solution mainly through peacekeeping mission, sanctions and its special foreign policy – Eastern Partnership. The goal – to develop a theoretical and empirical study of the management of security threats on the eastern flanks of the EU. In order to accomplish the goal, the following objectives are necessary to have:

- to identify characteristics of the security threats along Eastern flanks of European Union;
- to describe strategies of security threats management along Eastern flanks of European Union;
- to assess the role of European Union in conflict settlement in post-Soviet region.

Republic of Moldova does not have a wide literature regarding security study and threats management, therefore this work is able to explain the role of well-developed security system of EU and the importance of threats control in international sustainability. Moreover, the study is showing the security issues of post-Soviet conflicts from a new perspective, mainly from the aspect of being a part of special security strategy of European Union. It also represents an analysis of successes and failures of these strategies.

Historiographical study is composed by:

Western researchers:

- **Brooks D., Smith C.** *The theory and practice of security.*
- **Fawn R.** *Managing Security Threats along the EU's Eastern Flanks.*

- **Koenig N.** *EU Security Policy and Crisis Management.*

Russian researchers:

- **Цыганков П.** *Теория международных отношений.*
- **Медушевский Н.** *Угрозы безопасности ЕС механизмы их преодоления.*
- **Троицкий Е.** *Политика Европейского Союза в отношении Приднестровского конфликта (1992-2015 гг.).*

National researchers:

- **Albu N.** *Securitatea nationala: aspecte teoretice si practice.*
- **Cebotari S.** *Securitatea regională în contextul vulnerabilității regiunii Mării Negre.*
- **Căldare G.** *Aspecte de asigurare a securităţii naţionale a Republicii Moldova în contextul agravării situaţiei geopolitice din regiune.*

The brief analysis of **EU's foreign security aspects** shows that there are more than 15 military and civilian mission abroad that have peacekeeping objectives. They are also located in the Eastern part of the EU in the states that are members of Eastern Partnership.

The Eastern Partnership is a joint policy initiative launched in 2009 which aims to deepen and strengthen relations between the EU and its six Eastern neighbors: Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine (who already signed Associative Agreement with EU), Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Belarus (who has Partnership Agreement). Through this initiative EU is trying to strengthen democracy, support reforms, political association and economic integration in eastern partners through simplified movement, creating jobs, increasing trade and business opportunities. Also, one of the priorities of the EU in this area is to contribute to the solution of regional conflicts.

In Georgia there is South Ossetia and Abkhazian conflicts that are the threat for the regional security. Thus, in 2008 was established EU Monitoring Mission – civilian peacekeepers whose objectives are:

- to ensure that there is no return to hostilities;
- to facilitate the resumption of a safe life for the local communities living on both sides;
- to build confidence among the conflict parties.

However, it is impossible to realize them completely because de facto authorities of Abkhazia and South Ossetia have so far denied

access to the territories under their control for the EU Mission. So, conflicts remain unresolved and a continuous tension persists in Georgia.

In Ukraine regarding the issue of annexation of Crimea and conflict in Donbass EU initiated EU Advisory Mission in 2014 and imposed several economic and diplomatic sanction to the territories of Crimea and Sevastopol as a response measures toward the crises. Despite of having EUAM who is trying to maintain a sustainable reform of the civilian security sector, the Russian control over the territory remains and Crimea is still annexed. The conflict of Donbass is unsolved and has military potential that is a threat for the neighboring states.

EU did not recognize presidential elections 2020 in **Belarus** and imposed economic and diplomatic sanctions in three levels. About 70 political representatives are sanctioned, together with the president A. Lukashenko and his son. Despite of this, there is a continuous unacceptable violence against peaceful protesters, intimidation arbitrary arrests and detentions.

The conflict of **Nagorno-Karabakh** between Armenia and Azerbaijan is trying to be resolved through EU Special Representative for South Caucasus that has the main mission to:

- to prevent conflicts in the region;
- to contribute to a peaceful settlement of conflict;
- to encourage and support further cooperation.

However, The Second Karabakh War emerged in September 2020 and the involvement of third parties in the conflict only made the situation worsed. Today there is no return to hostilities, but the tension persists.

EU is contributing to the solution of the **Transnistrian conflict** mainly through participating at the "5+2" format under the mediation of the OSCE. Moreover, it created the EU Border Assistance Mission that aims to:

- contributes to the peaceful settlement by supporting development of confidence-building in customs, trade, transport and transboundary management;
- assists Moldovan and Ukrainian authorities to combat cross border crime.

Both practices are supported by the Moldovan Government, but Transnistria still has Russian military potential and is serving as transit zone for smuggling and other crimes.

In order to see the **opinion about the support** of EU to our state were questioned 150 persons from 18 to 45 years and from different domains of activity. More than 50% consider that EU is helping us to democratized, however, economic situation did not ameliorate after 2014. More than 59% support the idea that EU should be involved more in the settlement of Transnistrian conflict.

Conclusion and recommendations for the Republic of Moldova.

EU is managing security threats form the eastern borders through:

- Support – economic, political and cultural support of states on its Eastern borders.
- Peacekeeping – EU contributes to conflict resolution through civilian missions and mediation
- Development – EU is reforming its strategies in order to eliminate its failures.

Republic of Moldova being a relatively new state has a great opportunity to develop itself based on the experience of the states from Eastern Partnership as well as archiving its obligations in Association Agreement with EU. It is important to:

- To follow EU path of democratization.
- To establish its own way of development and conflict resolution.
- To develop security strategy based on national and international experiences.

Recommended by
Vladimir STERPU, dr., lecturer