STUDIA UNIVERSITATIS MOLDAVIAE
*Revista științifică a Universtității de Stat din Moldova, 2023, nr. 8(168)*

**CZU: 341.7(4-6 UE):342.34** **http://doi.org/10.59295/sum8(168)2023_36**

# THE EUROPEAN UNION'S MULTILATERAL DIPLOMACY: PARTNERSHIPS FOR PROMOTING DEMOCRACY

***Selena STEJARU,***

*Universitatea de Stat din Moldova*

The article addresses the European Union's efforts to forge a new generation of partnerships aimed at strengthening international cooperation, collaborating in and with multilateral and regional organizations, as well as other stakeholders who share democratic values. In this context, it offers an overview of a broad, diverse, and important field of modern diplomatic practice, elucidating the concepts of „multilateral diplomacy" and „multilateralism". Moreover, drawing upon the International Relations theories, realism and liberalism perspectives, our research objective is to outline the EU's commitment to ally and support partners in more effectively engaging with the multilateral system. As democratic principles and respect for human rights are the core elements of the EU's identity, and deeply rooted in its foreign policy, the Union moved forward on important internal and external initiatives. This involves ensuring a systematic monitoring and pursuit of bilateral commitments with partner countries to advance the multilateral agenda and promote the safeguarding of democracy and human rights at global scale.

***Keywords:*** *European Union, multilateral diplomacy, multilateralism, partnership, democracy, human rights.*

**DIPLOMAȚIA MULTILATERALĂ A UNIUNII EUROPENE: PARTENERIATE PENTRU PROMOVAREA DEMOCRAȚIEI**

Prezentul articol supune analizei efortul Uniunii Europene de a contribui la o nouă generație de parteneriate menite să consolideze cooperarea internațională prin colaborarea în și cu organizațiile multilaterale și regionale, precum și alți parteneri care împărtășesc valori democratice. În acest context, articolul oferă o imagine de ansamblu asupra unui domeniu larg, divers și important al practicii diplomatice moderne, elucidând conceptele de „diplomație multilaterală" și „multilateralism". Pornind de la teoriile relațiilor internaționale, din perspectiva realismului și liberalismului, obiectivul de cercetare rezidă în reliefarea angajamentului Uniunii Europene de a sprijini partenerii săi și a contribui la multilateralismul bazat pe norme. Întrucât principiile democratice și protejarea drepturilor omului sunt elementele de bază ale identității UE și sunt adânc înrădăcinate în politica sa externă, Uniunea a promovat inițiative importante la nivel intern, cât și extern. Acestea vizează o monitorizare sistematică, dar și urmărirea angajamentelor bilaterale cu țările partenere pentru a promova agenda multilaterală și a promova protejarea democrației și a drepturilor omului la nivel global.

***Cuvinte-cheie:*** *Uniunea Europeană, diplomație multilaterală, multilateralism, parteneriat, democrație, drepturile omului.*

## Introduction

The current global challenges and imminent threats to peace, security, and democratic development have affected nearly all regions, necessitating global solutions that depend on international cooperation and underscore multilateralism as the imperative approach to international diplomacy. However, the literature review emphasizes that multilateralism is often characterized as a study of contrasts. Referring to the erosion of „principled multilateralism" in recent times, J. C. Morse and R. O. Keohane denoted the phenomenon „contested multilateralism" [1], and J. Rüland termed as „diminished multilateralism" [2]. Certainly, scholars argue that the controversy does not center on multilateralism as a diplomatic procedure, but rather on the question of which principles, values, and organizations should define the international order and consequently influence international politics, suggests H. Maull [3]. The intrinsic challenges and limitations of multilateralism are frequently underestimated while its potential overstated. Thus, to make multilateralism effective it is essential to conduct realistic evaluation of its prerequisites and comprehension of the complexity of multilateral politics.

The EU's commitment to strengthening multilateralism and promoting a global system for human rights and democracy is consistent with its values and principles. In this view, the Union advocates for holistic

solutions to global issues that could be reached through more effective multilateral governance and rules-based international cooperation. Human rights and democracy are core elements of the EU's identity, and deeply rooted in its foreign policy. In this vein, the Union promoted and moved forward on important initiatives in internal and external democracy support. Among them to mention the *EU Action Plan on Democracy and Human Rights 2020–2024*, as response to new challenges for democracy and democratic development. EU institutions and delegations agreed on strategies to implement, also has identified priorities and specific objectives. This inclusive process is achieved through dialogue with partner countries, member states, civil society organizations, women and youth organizations, local authorities, private sector, the United Nations and other international and regional organizations. In line with the commitment to build a strong response to address the defense of democracy around the world, EU launched the *Team Europe Democracy* initiative. It aims to bring together fragmented EU and member state democracy-support actions into a coherent whole.

The European Union works very closely *with* and *in* other international organizations to promote international peace, and development, and to support a multilateral approach to security. Provisions of the *Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council on strengthening the EU's contribution to rules-based multilateralism* (JOIN/2021/3 final) reiterates the EU support of the reform process initiated by the UN Secretary-General to make the UN „fit for purpose" [4]. The EU was instrumental in securing the adoption of the General Assembly resolutions that have enabled progress on the reform's three strands – management, peace and security architecture, and development system. The EU therefore is prepared to support addressing outstanding issues, the implementation, and the impact on the ground, considering the revitalization of the General Assembly, as well as a comprehensive reform of the UN Security Council, are crucial to ensure that the United Nations can genuinely fulfill its responsibilities under its Charter in the 21st century.

The EU is a natural ally of the UN and regional organizations, such as the Council of Europe, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, in supporting democracy, promoting and protecting human rights, fundamental freedoms and the respect for human dignity, including gender equality. The EU is committed to stand up against any attempt to backtrack on the principle that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated. In this respect, it stands ready to team up with partners supporting democracy, access to justice and accountable and inclusive institutions.

The arguments in favor of multilateralism generally pertain to three contextual assumptions that concern: the scale of forthcoming global challenges, the dynamics of power distribution in international relations, and the substantial potential of cooperative strategies. In this context, based on the concept of multilateralism, which encompasses foreign and security policies aimed at establishing, preserving, and advancing a normative international order through specialized forms of international diplomacy, this article underscores the European Union's multilateral diplomatic efforts and its significant endeavors and contributions to international organizations' reforms, particularly in the context of forging partnerships to advance democracy promotion.

**IR theories of cooperation**

The contemporary world is pragmatic and heterogeneous in terms of socio-economic and technological development. The most influential IR theories realism, liberalism, the concept of democratic peace claim to explain the emergent transformations in the structure of international relations based on the premise that states are motivated in their actions by power and security interests.

In realist perspective, states act rationally, assessing conditions and promoting the regional and global foreign policy projects that lead to the strengthening of their power and security. States are rational, unitary actors pursuing their own interests and survival, that could be achieved in a system of coalitions, diversifying forms of economic, political, socio-cultural, and environmental cooperation. An essential concept of realism is the international distribution of power in a system of polarity. Polarity refers to the number of blocs of states that exercise power in an international system. Realists believe there are no universal principles that all states should be guided in their actions, rather, a state has always to be aware on actions of neigh-

boring states and consider the pragmatic approach to solve the problems. Realists recognize that facing challenges and various problems, states around the world seek to increase their power and influence, joining and creating alliances. Stephen M. Walt defines alliance as ,,a formal or informal relationship of security cooperation between two or more sovereign states" [5]. To H. J. Morgenthau alliances ,,are a necessary function of the balance of power operating in a multiple state system" [6]. G. Snyder termed an alliance as a ,,formal association of states for the use (or non-use) of military force, in specified circumstances, against states outside their own membership'' [7].

According to liberal theory, the war could be eliminated from international life if building up democratic political regimes, promoting the advantages of international trade, and creating institutional mechanisms of international character to manage peace and prosperity. The liberalism optimistic vision of international politics is based on three fundamental beliefs, advanced by Woodrow Wilson, and shared by many eminent scientists: the main international actors should be institutions and organizations with commitments to peace and security, but not the states; the crucial role of the internal political organization in the behavior of states in relations with other actors; peace and security could be reached if in world predominate ,,good" states.

Particularly, liberalism emphasizes the importance of international cooperation, institutions, and norms in maintaining peace and promoting global stability. Aligned with these principles, multilateral diplomacy seeks to address international issues through the involvement of multiple states within international organizations and forums. Multilateral diplomacy according to liberal theory encourages states to work together to achieve shared goals, placing great emphasis on international institutions, such as the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, and regional organizations as the European Union that serve as forums for states to negotiate agreements and resolve disputes. Liberals argue for a rule-based international order where states adhere to international laws, treaties, and norms. Thus, multilateral diplomacy is seen as a means to reinforce and strengthen the rules-based system, promoting stability and predictability in international relations. Multilateral diplomacy plays a crucial role in building consensus and coordinating collective responses to security challenges. Liberalism recognizes the influence of soft power, that encompasses state's culture, values and policies, thus multilateral diplomacy is promoting liberal democratic norms and values on the international stage.

The notion of soft power bears a close alignment with the liberal tradition, despite the contention that ,,there exists no inherent contradiction between realism and the concept of soft power" [8, p. 82]. In contrast to hard power, soft power emphasizes not the perpetual specter of war but rather the potential for cooperation, shifting the focus from military might to the power of ideas. More specifically, soft power pertains to the remedies proposed by liberals: democratic nations are disinclined to engage in armed conflict with each other; in a democratic system the populace wields influence over the state and can advocate for peaceful objectives. Furthermore, J. Nye argues that even in the face of challenges, a democratic state retains its capacity for wielding soft power. Nye agrees with R. Keohane, that the simple establishment of institutions enables them to last: ,,a set of networks, norms and institutions, once established, will be difficult either to eradicate or drastically rearrange" [9]. Moreover, Nye affirms that 'institutions can enhance a country's soft power'. Indeed, they are likely to promote a country's values, ideas, policies, both with other members and countries outside the institution. Therefore, ,,if a country can shape international rules that are consistent with its interests and values, its actions will more likely appear legitimate in the eyes of others" [10, p. 10].

**Conceptual framework**

In this section the aim is to explicate the correlation of terms *multilateralism* and *multilateral diplomacy.* Since early analysis concerning multilateral cooperation, scholars centered the debates explaining is multilateralism an objective or mechanism. The distinction between multilateral institutions and the institution of multilateralism is based on two levels of corelated international activity. Multilateral institutions focus on formal organizational elements of international life, while the institution of multilateralism may take the format of concrete organizations, its significance is deeper and appeals to the less formal, less codified habits, practices, ideas, and norms of international society [11, p. 602]. The challenge to multilateralism is in part the challenge to the state. For example, trade and economic relations are increasingly non-state and

present mounting regulatory challenges; civil society and other networks and communities are significant generators and enforcers of global norms, and in many cases are directly challenging and even outperforming multilateral institutions on normative grounds [12, p. 3].

From instrumentalists' perspective, cooperation would be a process by which states adjust their politics, considering the preferences of others. Instrumentalism explains the multitude of international organizations in various sectors, which have the same member states. Based on game theory, a cooperative option is considering the interests of other players, even if the prevailing interest is to exit the game with one's own gain. From the liberal institutionalists' point of view, multilateralism could build relations of stability, reciprocity, and connectedness. In the framework of interdependence, states encounter comparable vulnerabilities while pursuing shared benefits and collectively providing public goods.

In R. Keohane terms, multilateralism is the practice of coordinating national policies in groups of three or more states, through ad hoc arrangements or by means of institutions; in the long term, successful multilateralism should generate „diffuse reciprocity” [13]. The Keohane' definition explicitly emphasizes the state-centric nature of multilateral diplomacy. J. Ruggie outlines multilateralism as the institutional form that coordinates relations among three or more states based on „generalized principles” of conduct that should apply to all states without regard to their particularistic interests (14 p. 11). The difference between these definitions points out the consequences for analyzing multilateral diplomacy, as one definition focuses on numbers of informal and formal arrangements, the second one includes the principles that guide multilateral diplomacy and highlight the distinction between interests. Regarding the character of multilateral diplomacy, E. Haas argued that multilateral institutions are established to address issues demanding cooperative actions for resolution [15]. The essence of such collaborative action is multilateral diplomacy, thus being a subcategory of the broader field of diplomacy.

Multilateral diplomacy is the broadest concept that explains diplomatic practice within the multilateral system, at the same time, it may refer to parliamentary diplomacy, collective diplomacy, summit diplomacy, conference diplomacy, regional diplomacy. The author of the in-depth analysis *Multilateralism and Democracy: European Parliament perspective* emphasizes that nowadays, together all the different kinds of multilateral meetings and cooperation formats are referred to as „multilateralism”. Thus, M. Damen reiterates that multilateralism in the modern sense refers to an international mode of operation of peaceful negotiations and diplomacy, along with the „rules-based international order” or „rules-based multilateralism” [16].

Since the very existence, the EU is reliant on the multilateral order, thus the crisis of multilateralism is of critical consequences. The mechanism of multilateral diplomacy stands as a pivotal strategy for the European Union's prosperity. Nevertheless, in present the studies on this subject remain relatively limited predominantly on the EU's involvement in multilateral institutions and its instruments to promote internal standards and democratic values beyond its borders.

**Reforming multilateral institutions**

The European Security Strategy [17] defined „effective multilateralism” as one of the major priorities of the EU's external action and aimed to „promote multilateral solutions to common problems, in particular in the framework of the United Nations” as according to the provisions of Article 21 of the Treaty on European Union. The European Security Strategy (ESS) was rather optimistic regarding the global „progressive spread of the rule of law and democracy”, enabling authoritarian regimes to transform into „secure, stable and dynamic democracies”. Later, the EU Global Strategy (2016) signals the increasing complexity and controversy in the international environment and has been regarded as embodying the „paradigm change' in the worldview behind the EU's foreign policy [18]. The EU Global Strategy (EUGS) expresses the ambition to transform rather than just sustain the existing system based on rules and multilateralism. In this context, S. Biscop mentions about the transition from „effective multilateralism” of the ESS to „principled pragmatism” of the EUGS [19].

The EU Global Strategy [20] delineates the importance of the multilateral dimension, not only within the framework of the UN and global financial governance institutions such as the IMF and WTO, but also in

addressing emerging issues that necessitate collective responses at the global level. The realization of these principles involves a specific set of measures and commitments. These tasks pertain to various aspects, including European legislation, the adoption of particular policy frameworks (such as the coordination of community diplomatic efforts, interoperability of armed forces, and economic policies of member states), as well as the allocation of budgetary resources, especially in the context of defense spending, development assistance, and coordinated investments.

The European Union has developed in 2019 important policy documents that indicated strategic change, recognizing the imminent risk for the multilateral institutions. Thus, the EU committed to address the major global challenges of our era by working in partnership with others, whether states, international and regional organisations, civil society, the private sector, social partners and other stakeholders and by supporting the reform of the multilateral system. The Council elaborated concrete conclusions to strengthen multilateralism based on three strands of action: Upholding international norms and agreements; Extending multilateralism to new global realities; and Reform: making multilateral organisations fit for purpose [21]. The EU–China Strategic Outlook (JOIN/2019/5) defined China along with a „cooperation partner" and „economic competitor" also as a „systemic rival promoting alternative models of governance". The document emphasizes EU's commitment cooperating with China to support effective multilateralism, while pointing out that China's engagement in favour of multilateralism is sometimes selective and based on a different understanding of the rules-based international order. [22]. The European External Action Service (EEAS) third annual review of the EUGS *The European Union's Global Strategy-three years on, looking forward*, specifies that „multilateralism should be preserved and strengthened, inside and outside the EU" [23]. A meaningful change refers to go beyond partnerships with traditional allies and reach out to other actors for building new collaborations.

In year 2022 the European Union approved the *Strategic Compass - For a European Union that protects its citizens, values and interests and contributes to international peace and security*, that gives an ambitious plan of action for strengthening the EU's security and defense policy by 2030. The document makes concrete and actionable proposals, a precise timetable for implementation and is structured around four pillars: Act, Invest, Partner and Secure [24]. The Annual Progress Report on the Implementation of the Strategic Compass for 2023, reveals that the EU over the preceding year, continued to staunchly defend and uphold the international rules-based order by fostering and expanding the relationships with crucial multilateral actors [25]. The strength of the strategic partnership with NATO has been clearly demonstrated by the steadfast unity and cooperation in support of Ukraine in its fight against Russia's war of aggression. The third Joint Declaration on EU-NATO cooperation [26] sends a strong message of transatlantic unity and paves the way for taking the strategic EU-NATO partnership to the next level, including by expanding the cooperation on areas such as resilience, emerging and disruptive technologies, outer space, the security implications of climate change, and countering foreign information manipulation and interference. In the same vein, recognizing the principles of the United Nations Charter have been challenged by Russia's blatant disregard for the rules-based international order, the EU upholds and defends this order underpinning the strategic partnership with the UN, remaining on the course towards the agreed priorities for 2022-2024 and intensifying strategic exchanges. As well, it reiterates the strengthened cooperation with the OSCE on conflict prevention and mediation support, including through trilateral exchanges with the UN.

The EU and member- states have developed a more functional approach to international cooperation that identifies multilateralism not just as a goal, but as instrument to reach objectives and facilitate results-based partnerships. The „Alliance for Multilateralism" launched by France and Germany as an informal network of countries calls for new formats that could be instrumental in attaining goals on specific issues, ranging from new challenges in health, climate, cyberspace, international law, human rights, and democracy. In 2019 the EU High Representative Federica Mogherini has firmly committed the Union to join and support the Franco-German initiative, as it aims to promote international cooperation at a time of rising nationalism and isolationism and „precisely because we all share the same goal: to protect, reform and expand the multilateral system of global governance" [27].

**EU's new initiatives on democracy support**

Since the adoption of the EU Strategic Framework on Human Rights and Democracy in 2012, the first two EU action plans on human rights and democracy (2012 -2014 and 2015 -2019), the appointment of the first EU Special Representative for Human Rights (2012), the Council conclusions on democracy (2019), the EU has become more coordinated, effective in its interactions with third countries and more prominently engaged at multilateral level. The EU Action Plan on Democracy and Human Rights 2020–2024 is the third adopted by the Union [28]. As operational from 2021, more than 140 EU delegations and embassies of member state across the world contribute to the implementation through a range of actions tailored for local needs and circumstances. The Action Plan places particular emphasis on the development of "a new geopolitical agenda on human rights and democracy", focusing on the European Union's responses to emerging challenges stemming from the erosion of democratic values, climate change, and the digital transition. Accordingly, the EU institutions and delegations agreed on strategies, including Civil Society Roadmaps, Thematic and Country Multiannual Indicative Programs, and Human Rights and Democracy Country Strategies. The multi-annual indicative programming for the thematic programme on human rights and democracy closely mirrors the priorities in the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024, links policy objectives with financing and axes of action over the period 2021-2027 [29].

In December 2021 the EU launched the Team Europe Democracy (TED) initiative, as a commitment to build a strong response to defend democracy around the world. EU Member States involved in TED are, Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Spain, and Sweden, aiming to bring together fragmented EU and member-state democracy-support actions into a coherent whole, ensuring that actions are better targeted and more strategic. The development of the Team Europe Democracy initiative is a key for EU efforts in three priority areas: Accountability and Rule of Law; Political and Civic Participation; Media and Digital. The research component of the TED, implemented by International-IDEA, the European Partnership for Democracy, Carnegie International and Reporters without Borders, started providing evidence for informed decision making. It supported financially projects like the *European Democracy Hub*, the *Case for Democracy* (a platform in defense of Democracy to translate and distribute knowledge and ideas from the academic sphere to policymakers and practitioners), the *World Press Freedom Index,* etc., to explore the state of democracy, look for tailored responses and produce reports on the democracy support extended by the EU and its Member States.

In the context of deepening democracy and the rule of law in the enlargement and neighborhood regions, the EU continued to support reforms aimed at strengthening justice, tackling corruption and reinforcing the protection of human rights. In year 2022, the European Commission adopted a new multi-country action plan, which focuses on four actions. Among them are the action ,,EU-Council of Europe Horizontal Facility for Western Balkans and Türkiye – Phase III". Similarly, in 2023 the European Commission launched the ,,EU - Council of Europe Partnership for Good Governance for Eastern Partnership countries – Phase III". It supports the Eastern Partnership countries to implement domestic reforms in the jointly defined priority areas, also their progress on the European path, taking into consideration Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova's candidate status and Georgia's European perspective. PGG III also contributes to the domestic implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), notably to the goal 5 –gender equality and empowering all women and girls; the goal 10 – reducing inequality within and among countries; and the goal 16 – promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice for all and building effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels.

In the context of strengthening the capacity of parliaments, the flagship project ,,INTER PARES Parliaments in Partnership – EU Global Project to Strengthen the Capacity of Parliaments" which ended in December 2022 has promoted parliamentary democracy around the world, through peer-to-peer engagement and in a Team Europe approach by facilitating exchanges with EU Member States' parliaments. In its four years of implementation, INTER PARES supported 15 parliaments in partner countries across all continents. EU support to the parliaments will continue through a follow-up project managed by the EU Delegations at country level, the second phase of INTER PARES runs for 2023 - 2025.

At the same time, several European governments published new democracy strategies. To mention among a series of achievements the following. The Washington Declaration signed by Germany and USA, promising that countries will coordinate against democratic backsliding around the world. France chaired the 2021 edition of the Summit for Information and Democracy and contributed to the creation of an International Observatory on Information and Democracy, which aims to evaluate the information and communication space and its impact on democracy; organized the Generation Equality Forum in Paris; launched a new Fund for Democracy in Africa; the new Indo-Pacific strategy included a formal commitment to supporting democratic values. Spain joined countries that have placed gender equality and empowerment of women at the center of their foreign policy. The strategy includes five priority lines of action: women, peace, and security; violence against women and girls; human rights; the participation of women at the decision-making level; and economic justice and empowerment.

Slovakia approved its first Concept for the Promotion of Human Rights and Democracy in the World. It focuses thematically on supporting civil society and the establishment of rule-of-law institutions, protecting freedom of media and religion, and promoting gender equality, and regionally on the Western Balkans and the Eastern Partnership states. Poland's government adopted the Multiannual Programme for Development Cooperation for 2021–2030: Solidarity for Development, that includes a formal commitment to democracy and human rights. Bulgaria adopted a new Mid-term Programme for Development Assistance and Humanitarian Aid 2020–2024. Promoting democratic processes based on the values of democracy, the rule of law, transparency, and the efficiency of institutions are central to it, but they are not at the top of development aid priorities, ranking lower than education and healthcare. Good governance and building inclusive societies are the priorities under Romania's Annual Plan for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid.

Russia's brutal war against Ukraine had not only a devastating impact on human rights in Ukraine but also broader complications, as subsequent food, energy, and the economy crises affecting millions of people globally. Moreover, it engendered repercussions for collaborative efforts within multilateral forums. At the same time, both multilateral forums and regional organizations served as significant public platforms for addressing and condemning the war and its repercussions. They facilitated the adoption of explicit resolutions and the establishment of responsive mechanisms, most notably exemplified by the creation of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, garnering substantial support from the Human Rights Council. The International Commission was established by the Human Rights Council on 4 March 2022 according to resolution 49/1 (extended on 4 April 2023 for a further period of one year in resolution 52/32) to investigate all alleged abuses of human rights, violations of international humanitarian law and related crimes.

The EU together with member states and like-minded partners worldwide continued to spearhead thematic and country specific initiatives in the UN human rights fora. The EU has proactively enhanced cross-regional collaboration within forums, aiming to secure robust outcomes. This proactive stance is taken within the increasingly complex context characterized by challenges to multilateral institutions and a multitude of adverse trends worldwide pertaining to human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. Given that Russia blocked any action within the UN Security Council concerning Ukraine, the UN General Assembly with the support and facilitation of the European Union, passed five resolutions in 2022 after February 24th. These resolutions affirmed the EU engagement to condemn Russia's aggression against Ukraine as a severe violation of the principles enshrined in the UN Charter. Notably, Resolution ES-11/3, dated April 7, 2022, pertaining to the „Suspension of the rights of membership of the Russian Federation in the Human Rights Council," garnered 97 affirmative votes. This outcome underscored the alignment with the UNGA resolution that originally established the Human Rights Council in 2006, thereby establishing a rigorous standard for Council membership.

Simultaneously, the CoE Committee of Ministers reached a determination that the Russian Federation would no longer maintain its membership within the Council of Europe, a decision unanimously supported by all 27 EU Member States. The European Union persisted in collaborating closely with the Council of Europe (CoE) to promote human rights, the rule of law, and democracy as part of the ongoing execution

of the Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy for the period 2020-2024. The Council of Europe's indispensable expertise and substantial consultations with CoE entities, specifically the Venice Commission and GRECO, are crucially important in the preparation of the EU's annual Enlargement Package and the European Rule of Law Mechanism. This role extends to the development of successive editions of the European Commission's annual Rule of Law Report.

Collaborative efforts, including those conducted at the grassroots level, continued to be pivotal in maximizing the effectiveness of EU involvement and mitigating the pervasive trend of diminishing space for civil society. The EU coordinated its action with partners through dedicated consultations and within various multilateral fora, including but not limited to the G7, the Community of Democracies, and at the United Nations level. The EU took a firm stance against the conditionality, as evidenced by its successful voting record on measures aimed at restricting the involvement of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in determining the procedural framework for General Assembly events. These votes were largely won and ended a flawed practice according to which any Member State could request the removal of certain organizations from the list of participants. In the same vein, most of EU Member States, who are also members of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), rallied behind initiatives undertaken twice in 2022 to extend accreditation to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that had been unjustly barred from participation for an extended duration. Furthermore, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) continued to constitute the primary beneficiaries of support, particularly through the EU's Global Europe Human Rights and Democracy Programme. In year 2022, this program allocated over EUR 100 million for projects focused on human rights at the country level, with a predominant emphasis on collaborative efforts with CSOs.

The European Union demonstrated a robust commitment to the defense and promotion of human rights and democracy on a global scale and continued to employ a spectrum of unique instruments and tools at its disposal to implement the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy. The EU has significantly mobilized its efforts on multiple fronts and across various levels, leveraging its influence within multilateral forums, engaging in bilateral dialogues, expediting thematic initiatives, and further enhancing collaboration with a diverse array of stakeholders, particularly human rights defenders. These activities are planned, closely monitored, and systematically reviewed with the EU Member States in the Council Working Party on Human Rights (COHOM). The structure addresses the human rights dimensions inherent in the external relations of the EU and provides support to the Council's deliberative and decision-making procedures. Its principal function involves the support to identify the strategic priorities for EU in both thematic and geographically specific contexts. As well it serves as a coordinating body for harmonizing the positions of EU member states on these specific matters within multilateral forums, including the UN General Assembly Third Committee and the UN Human Rights Council. Moreover, COHOM promotes the development and oversees the worldwide implementation of EU policy in the field of human rights and democracy.

**Conclusions**

The multilateral diplomacy mechanism provides pivotal strategies and tools for EU to promote the rules-based multilateralism and to support democracy across the world. Nevertheless, studies on the EU in multilateral diplomacy remain limited, mostly focused on how it performed in multilateral institutions and crafted a multilateral role for itself. The aim of this article was to highlight a general understanding of the EU's current approach to the crisis of multilateralism that requires new strategies towards the sustainability of its institutions. In this manner, to comprehend the EU endeavor to sustain multilateral institutions, were emphasized a range of strategies and policy documents developed by EU and member states, considering new generation of partnerships for democracy and agenda for renewed multilateralism.

The European Union was relatively successful in its attempt to defend specific institutions under pressure, nevertheless, on the other hand EU has proven less ability to reform or extend multilateral institutions. In other words, it did prevent the failure of the multilateral order, but many of the profound risks and challenges remain advanced. For a reinvention of multilateralism, European Union will have to shift from sustaining mode to the transformation one.

The European Democracy Action Plan represents a significant step forward in endeavors to safeguard European democracy and is considered as the EU has come to having a democracy strategy as such. At the same time, the EU reallocated funding to support its recently introduced Democracy and Human Rights Action Plan, the member states developed new initiatives and endorsed various commitments, such as the Team Europe Democracy framework, the Summit for Democracy and other multilateral instruments and platforms. Consequently, these cooperative efforts could prove to be the foundations of stronger and more effective democracy support in the years to come.

**References**

1. MORSE, J. C., KEOHANE, R. O. *Contested Multilateralism.* In: *Review of International Organizations,* 2014, 9:385–412. ISSN 1559-7431.
2. RUELAND, J., *The Rise of „Diminished Multilateralism": East Asian and European Forum Shopping in Global Governance.* In: *Asia Europe Journal.* 2012, vol. 9, issue 2, 255-270. ISSN 1612-1031.
3. MAULL H. W. *Multilateralism. Variants, Potential, Constraints and Conditions for Success.* In: *SWP Comment*, no. 9/2020, ISSN 1861-1761.
4. *Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council on strengthening the EU's contribution to rules-based multilateralism (JOIN/2021/3 final).* [Accessed 10.09.2023] Available: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A52021JC0003
5. WALT, S. M. *The Origins of Alliance*. Cornell University, 1987, 336 p. ISBN ‍978-0801494185.
6. MORGENTHAU, H. J. *Alliances in Theory and Practice*. In: *Alliance Policy in the Cold War* / Arnold Wolfers Ed. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1959, pp. 184–212. ISBN‍978-0801806872.
7. SNYDER, G. *Alliance Politics*. Cornell University Press, 2007, 414 p. ISBN 978-0801484285.
8. NYE, J. S. The *Future of Power*. New York: PublicAffairs, 2011, 320 p. ISBN ‍978-1610390699.
9. KEOHANE, R. O., NYE, J. *Power and Interdependence in the Information Age.* In: *Foreign Affairs,* 1998, Vol. 77, no. 5, pp. 81–94. ISSN 0015-7120.
10. NYE, J. S. *Soft Power: the means to succeed in world politics*. New York: PublicAffairs, 2004, 208 p. ISBN 978-1586482251.
11. CAPORASO, J. *International relations theory and multilateralism: The search for foundations*. In: *International Organization*, 46, no. 3 (1992): 599–632. ISSN 1531-5088.
12. NEWMAN, E., THAKUR, R., TIRMAN, J. *Multilateralism Under Challenge? Power, International Order, and Structural Change*. New York: United Nations University Press, 2006, 563 p. ISBN/ ISSN 9280811290.
13. KEOHANE, R. O. *Multilateralism: An Agenda for Research.* In: *International Journal,* Vol. 45, No. 4, Multilateralism: Old & New (Autumn, 1990), pp. 731-764. ISSN 00207020.
14. RUGGIE, J. G. *Multilateralism Matters: The Theory and Praxis of an Institutional Form*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993, 479 p. ISBN ‍978-0231079815.
15. HAAS, E. B. *When Knowledge is Power: Three Models of Change in International Organizations*. University of California Press, Berkeley 1990, 266 p. ISBN: 9780520074026.
16. DAMEN, M. *Multilateralism and Democracy. A European Parliament perspective*. In-Depth Analysis. Policy Department for External Relations Directorate General for External Policies of the Union, PE 639.319 – June 2022. ISBN 978-92-846-9586-7.
17. *European Security Strategy: A secure Europe in a better world.* General Secretariat of the Council (Council of the European Union), 2009. ISBN 978-92-824-2421-6.
18. RABINOVYCH, M., REPTOVA, Z. *The future of values in the EU Global Strategy 2020.* Elcano Royal Institute, Madrid, 2019. [Accessed 10.09.2023] Available: https://media.realinstitutoelcano.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/ari112-2019-rabinovych-reptova-the-future-of-values-in-the-eu-global-strategy-2020.pdf
19. BISCOP, S. *The EU Global Strategy: Realipolitik with European Characteristics.* In: *Egmont Security Policy Brief* No. 75 June 2016. [Accessed 10.09.2023] Available: https://www.egmontinstitute.be/eu-global-strategy/
20. *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe - A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy.* European External Action Service. *Publications Office*, 2016. ISBN 978-92-9238-408-1.

21. *EU action to strengthen rules-based multilateralism - Council conclusions (17 June 2019).* [Accessed 11.09.2023] Available: https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-10341-2019-INIT/en/pdf
22. *Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council Eu-China – A Strategic Outlook (JOIN(2019) 5 final).* [Accessed 11.09.2023] Available: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A52019JC0005
23. *From Vision to Action: The EU Global Strategy in Practice - Three years on, looking forward. The third progress report on the implementation of the European Union Global Strategy (2019)*. [Accessed 11.09.2023] Available: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/vision-action-eu-global-strategy-practice-three-years-looking-forward_en
24. *A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence - For a European Union that protects its citizens, values and interests and contributes to international peace and security. 21 March 2022 (7371/22)*. [Accessed 11.09.2023] Available: https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7371-2022-INIT/en/pdf
25. *Annual Progress Report on the Implementation of the Strategic Compass for Security and Defence, March 2023.* [Accessed 12.09.2023] Available: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/2023/StrategicCompass_1stYear_Report.pdf
26. *Joint Declaration on EU-NATO Cooperation. European Council Press release, 10 Jan. 2023.* [Accessed 12.09.2023] Available: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2023/01/10/eu-nato-joint-declaration-10-january-2023/
27. *Alliance for Multilateralism to promote global cooperation.* [Accessed 12.09.2023] Available: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/alliance-multilateralism-promote-global-cooperation_en
28. *Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024 (JOIN/2020/5 final).* [Accessed 12.09.2023] Available: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52020JC0005&rid=3
29. *Thematic Programme on Human Rights and Democracy Multi-Annual Indicative Programming 2021-2027.* [Accessed 12.09.2023] Available: https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-01/mip-2021-c2021-9620-human-rights-democracy-annex_en.pdf

**Date despre autor:**
***Selena STEJARU***, doctorandă, Facultatea Relații Internaționale, Științe Politice și Administrative, Universitatea de Stat din Moldova.
**E-mail:** selena.stejaru@gmail.com
**ORCID:** 0000-0003-2778-2068

*Prezentat la 09.10. 2023*