

Position paper

Reference Points for the Eastern Partnership Security Agenda

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On 5 March 2015, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini together with the Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and Enlargement Negotiations Johannes Hahn launched a consultation process concerning the European Neighbourhood Policy, of which the Eastern Partnership is an integral part. The joint consultation document calls to carry out wide-ranging consultation with all the parties concerned. It allows representatives of civil societies from the partner countries, members of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF), and representatives of the expert community to contribute to the development of the region.

The biggest problem in the Eastern Partnership region, which is not reflected in the EU policy in a proper manner and has no instruments of solving it, is the security issue. In April, in its conclusions regarding the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy, the Council of the EU underlined the importance of a special relationship with the EU neighbours that needs to be as effective as possible in order to develop an area of shared stability, security, and prosperity¹.

Also, it should be noted that the Declaration of the Eastern Partnership Summit in Riga considerably differs as for its content and evaluation of the events in the region from the projections for the future made by the participants of the Vilnius Summit in 2013. Currently, the question of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Eastern Partnership countries and the need for some progress in the solution of "frozen" conflicts are primary targets.

Security needs have become a characteristic feature of not only the EU neighbouring countries and region. At the end of 2013, the EU made a decision to revise the Union's security and defence policies, as well as the European Security Strategy, taking into account the changes in the character and intensity of external threats. The fundamental work in this direction began in 2014-2015. On 18 May 2015, for the first time since 2012, a meeting at the level of Ministers of Defence and Foreign Affairs of the EU Member States was held, which signifies the rise of security issues on the agenda of the European Union. Another proof is a shorter timespan between the moment of generating an idea and the moment of launching military operations

¹ Council conclusions on the Review of the European Neighborhood Policy, 20/04/2015, source: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2015/04/20-council-conclusions-review-european-neighbourhood-policy/>

of the European Union. The fact that in June 2015 the EU Council adopted the decision to start a military operation (EUNAVFOR Med) in the Mediterranean Sea can be a positive example².

The almost parallel revision of the European Security Strategy and the European Neighbourhood Policy is the evidence of the need to find a synergy between these two dimensions and to strengthen the security component in relations with close neighbours. In this context, it is necessary to mention several fundamental reference points on enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the specified EU's policies with regard to the Eastern Partnership region.

1. Political Will and "Founding Fathers" of the Policy

Since the moment of developing the Eastern Partnership policy, when it transformed from being a Polish-Swedish initiative to the category of the EU policy, neither in Brussels, nor in the capitals of the big member states there was a clear understanding of the direction in which this initiative should develop and its ultimate goal. As time passed, the policy received its institutional and legal framework, but it was still unclear how to build relations in the strategic neighbourhood.

For the European Neighbourhood Policy to have tangible results in the region, including those in the construction of the area of stability and prosperity around the EU, it is necessary to have political will in the EU to be engaged in issues of the region and to accurately evaluate external threats and internal risks in these countries.

It becomes quite obvious now that minor improvements in the European Neighbourhood Policy at the bureaucratic level cannot substantially change the situation in the neighbouring states for the better. Just like in the case when the Eastern Partnership initiative was proposed, in order to introduce an improved policy, a political "heavyweight" at the level of the European Union or several states should be involved in the process. Germany, which today demonstrates much more interest in the Eastern Partnership policy than during its launch in 2008-2009, could become a locomotive that would give an additional political impulse to the ENP development. Warsaw, as an initiator of the Eastern Partnership, could propose joint initiative this time as well, suggesting that Berlin should join this process.

2. Strategic Approach to the EU Strategies

It is also important to mention that the existence of the Eastern Partnership policy alone is not sufficient to establish order and stability in the region. There ought to be a transparent synergy

² Remarks by High Representative Federica Mogherini following the Defense and Foreign Affairs Council, Brussels, 18/05/2015, source: http://www.eas.europa.eu/statements-eeas/2015/150518_05_en.htm

of purposes and tasks of a new Neighbourhood Policy with other regional or operational strategies of the European Union within the framework of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). It is only possible to provide a precise hierarchy of priorities by coordinating all strategic documents that define the EU activity in the international sphere.

The new challenges that the EU faced in the security sphere in 2012-2014, clearly affected Brussels' aspiration to reconsider the basis for its external policies and its strategic approaches to security. The European Security Strategy adopted in 2003 needs to be fundamentally reviewed in terms of identifying security external threats, strengthening prevention instruments, and including the strategic vision of the process. Since the development of this strategy, the EU has already adopted a number of strategic documents in separate geographical and thematic dimensions, which can be characterised by a more integrated approach when it comes to the definition of threats and operational solutions. It is high time for all of them to have a common denominator of principles, purposes, and possibilities of the European Union.

On 25 June 2015 during a session of the European Council Heads of Member States will consider the results of the evaluation of the current EU's security and defence. By the end of 2015, there must be developed a new framework for the creation of strategic documents in the field of foreign policy and security.

It is crucial that the processes of the security policy and ENP policies review to be grounded in the same fundamental prerequisites that determine the EU external action purposes, tasks, and tools. The creation of a unified European Foreign Policy and Security Strategy (EFPSS) that would incorporate the previously fragmented thematic and geographical strategies of the EU external policy and would make it possible to develop relations with the countries of Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus in a more adequate manner. After the common EFPSS is developed, it would be possible to make a decision on whether it is necessary to adopt a separate targeted strategy for the Eastern Partnership region or the countries that have signed the Association Agreements. The targeted strategy would be correlated with the EFPSS general principles, however at the operational level it would unite the ENP instruments, thematic security policies, and the EU internal policies that would provide in a precise and sufficient way the balance of the interests of the EU and partner countries in building common cooperation space. It is also necessary to revise in the same way the approach to the Southern ENP dimension at the level of targeted regional strategy development.

Similarly, at the strategic level, the EU should solve the question of strengthening its role in the world as a security provider and active actor in conflict resolution.

As for the Eastern Partnership region, the EU has to realize that currently the policy of preserving frozen conflicts is a part of the tactics of the Russian Federation that is not interested in their fast resolution. The presence of a special European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM)

in Georgia and the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia has been a positive experience; however, they are not able to fundamentally solve the question of Georgia's territorial integrity. The reports on the ENP implementation in 2014 in the countries of the South Caucasus prove that there is no considerable progress and that the situation is deteriorating.

The strategic approach to peacekeeping initiatives and conflict settlement could also enhance Europe's participation in the solution of the Russia-Ukraine conflict in Donbas. Being related to the overall aims and principles of the European Foreign Policy and Security Strategy, the EU steps concerning Ukraine will be able to receive more accurate organizational framework. In this case, it will be clear what mission should be introduced in Ukraine and whether it is necessary to appoint an EU special representative for the conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

3. Unions within the European Union

The EU should have the political will to further integrate in the spheres that cover the security and defence issues and imply a partial transfer of national powers. The creation of the Energy Union, declared as one of priorities of the new European Commission President is a logical response to the energy crisis and conflicts faced by the EU countries during the past 10 years. The concept of this Union also presupposes the deepening of not only energy integration inside the EU, but also certain guarantees of energy security for the neighbouring countries by creating a system of interconnectors, early warning systems against crisis situations in the gas sphere, etc.

The direct threat to the security of the EU countries forces the EU leaders to think of more serious security guarantees apart from the NATO mechanisms. While the European Commission President speaks about a possibility of creating the European Army, an expert group chaired by Javier Solana is developing the foundations of the European Defence Union. The proposed ideas represent a breakthrough; they create a basis for the formation of a full-fledged independent defence mechanism on the territory of the EU countries.

The European Defence Union will hardly be created in the nearest future, whereas the European Energy Union is already taking shape. Both unions are the next logical step in the search for a response to the hybrid and dynamic external threats. The further development of such integration projects should be based on inclusive work with neighbouring countries that demonstrate their good will and wish to be not only recipients, but also providers of security in the common Neighbourhood.

4. Association with the EU and Security

The European Union should have the political will to distinguish between the Eastern Partnership and the Eastern Neighbourhood. The level of obligations undertaken by Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine within the framework of the Association Agreements (AA) is disproportionate to the frameworks of the relations that are being built by the other partner countries. In this case the «more for more» principle, as well as a profound target approach to security issues based on the Agreement's provisions should be applied

Section 2 «Political dialogue and reforms, political association, convergence in the foreign policy and security policy field» of the Association Agreements between EU respectively Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine, accordingly, contains almost identical set of articles related to the foreign policy and security issues. In particular, these are questions of convergence with the EU foreign and security policy, maintenance of regional stability, conflict prevention, crisis management, non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and the fight against terrorism. The AAs implementation plans of the three countries in the part on security specify the problem spheres that each of them considers the biggest priority for itself. However, the presence of these norms in bilateral cooperation facilitate a more active rapprochement within the framework of separate security policies, which in the long term creates possibilities of a multilateral format of cooperation.

It is quite logical that the signature of the Agreements and the pre-signing preparatory process encourages joining the CFSP declarations. For instance, in 2014 Ukraine joined 35 (73%) out of 49 CFSP declarations; Moldova - 31 (63%); Georgia - 23 (47%); while Armenia joined 15 and Azerbaijan - none.

In 2014 the cooperation within the framework of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) between the EU and Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine was strengthened, which shows the understanding that it is necessary to intensify cooperation. Ukraine took part in the EU Naval Force Operation Atalanta; Georgia and Moldova for the first time participated in the EU training mission in Mali. Georgia also became the second biggest contributor to the EUFOR RCA operation in the Central African Republic³. The framework agreements on their participation in the CSDP allow these countries to jointly plan the participation in the EU military and civil missions.

³ JOINT STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT "Implementation of the European Neighborhood Policy Eastern Partnership Implementation Report", Brussels, 25/03/2015, source: http://eeas.europa.eu/enp/pdf/2015/enp-regional-report-eastern_partnership_en.pdf

Ukraine's experience of participating in the activity of EU battlegroups can also be of interest to Moldova and Georgia. Ukraine continued to actively take part in the activity of EU battlegroups in 2014, but had to suspend its presence due to Russia's military aggression. Ukraine has confirmed its readiness to participate in the formation of the Visegrad Battlegroup in 2016. The joint participation of the countries signatories to the Association Agreements in the formation of such defence elements can help generate common approaches to the military strategy and increase the military mobility and interaction during joint operations.

The Association Agreements provide the countries that have signed them with additional possibilities to strengthen cooperation in the field of security and defence with the EU. In particular, the AA norms stipulate access to the EU internal programmes and agencies, including those in the defence sphere. In the long term, for example, it could be possible to join the EUs directives in the field of purchasing defence production and special goods in the security sphere, moreover - defence enterprises from the EaP countries can be included in the European technological and industrial defence base.

5. Participation in the Policy Development

As Commissioner Johannes Hahn noted, the EU will never get the best from this EaP policy while it is seen as something more or less imposed by Brussels, rather than a partnership actively chosen by the other side⁴.

While evaluating positively the very process the European Neighbourhood Policy review and the wide-ranging consultations with external actors, it is important to underline the need for Europe's political will to implement mutually beneficial decisions. As it has already been mentioned above, such an open and inclusive approach should be used during the development of the European Foreign Policy and Security Strategy, as well as the EU separate policies in the security field.

At the same time, the Eastern Partnership countries should now take active part in the process of developing and strengthening the CFSP and CSDP toolkit. There must be consultations not only and not so much within the framework of the CSDP Panel, but at the level of special consultations of specific ministries of the EU countries, the EEAS, the European Defence Agency, and the Eastern Partnership countries.

For the Eastern Partnership countries, the Horizon 2020 programme represents significant possibilities for the development of military and technical cooperation, creation of military and

⁴ Speech on the European Neighborhood Policy Review and Package, 05/05/2015, source: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/2014-2019/hahn/announcements/speech-european-neighbourhood-policy-review-and-package_en



technical innovative solutions, and cooperation with the EU countries. Moldova and Ukraine have already received their associated membership in the program in 2014; Armenia and Georgia are still in the negotiation process. Their participation in joint studies on the military potential development in the countries of the region will allow them to build prospective cooperation links and later join the co-production of modern weapons, equipment, and dual purpose production. In the long run, this will help to reconstruct the enterprises of the defence industry of the EaP countries that have suffered due to the loss of connections with Russia.

6. Securitization of the Priority Cooperation Dimensions

In view of the numerous cases of the so-called hybrid strategies and operations, by the end of 2015, EU institutions have to present their framework proposals on combatting hybrid threats to the EU, Member States, and Partner Countries, which should be reviewed by the European Council. One of features of this document is that it will be based on the open cooperation with international organizations, including NATO, as well as partner countries⁵. The EaP countries should take active part in consultations with drafters of this document so as they take into account the need to introduce additional tools to fight against this sort of aggressive policy.

Considering the fact that today the majority of security threats to the Eastern Partnership countries come from Russia, as well as taking into account the hybrid character of using aggression in the region, the European Union has to develop a relevant approach to the definition of hybrid threats. As exemplified by most countries in the Eastern Partnership region, first of all, Ukraine, we can see the main dimensions of pressurizing the governments of these countries. If the EU considers the trade, economic, energy and information spheres, as well as involvement in frozen conflicts as separate tools of provoking instability in the Eastern Partnership countries by Russia, this approach can help to adapt and develop more adequate mechanisms of providing security and minimizing negative consequences for stability.

Thus, it is crucial to have responses to threats to economic, energy, and information security included in the EU new strategic documents, that would be based on the clear understanding of the situation on the ground and suggest adequate countering measures.

7. 3+ Multilateral Approach

Despite the differences in the approaches to building relations with the European Union among six partner countries, as well as the distinctions in the political models of development in these states and the different level of progress in the democratic reforms' implementation, the

⁵ Council conclusions on CSDP, 18/05/2015, source: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2015/05/18-council-conclusions-csdp/>



presence of joint multilateral programmes within the Eastern Partnership framework can have a favourable effect on strengthening the cooperation in the security sphere in the region.

It is important to understand that cooperation in the defence field between certain actors is hardly possible due to the fact that they participate in different regional international organizations with a military and political dimension.

At the same time, the cooperation on countering certain threats is possible not only on the bilateral level, but also on a multilateral basis with the EU participation. The legal framework of the security cooperation between the partner countries and the EU should become a minimum standard for cooperation. The Association Agreements have relevant sections on security cooperation and provide a sufficient basis to enhance trilateral and bilateral initiatives between Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine apart from their cooperation with the EU. In the future, with the improvement of contractual frameworks between the EU and respectively Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Belarus, accordingly, joint 3+ initiatives could be established (Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine together with individual or all other partner countries) where joint efforts will be based on similar cooperation principles.

Taking into account the developments in the Eastern Partnership region since the launch of the policy in 2009, the security issue is the cornerstone of ensuring the development of the region. Searching for the joint directions for preventing transnational challenges and threats, one has to apply a systemic approach towards the 6 partner countries.

To ensure the policy at the intergovernmental level, the EaP Platform 5 « Security and Defence Cooperation » it is possible to create, it could raise the level of countries' interest in the development of joint initiatives in the security field. The separate panel dedicated to the CFSP within the Platform 1 and the working plan for 2014-2017 is not able to provide response for all the security dimensions that are for the EaP countries.

8. Region's Openness for Cooperation

In order to build successful mechanisms to guarantee security in the region, it is necessary, first of all, to build relations between the EU and partner countries on a bilateral basis; this should be supplemented with the cooperation with a number of other global and regional actors supporting the preservation of the international order and respect of the territorial integrity of countries.

Considering Russia's illegal annexation of the Crimea, there is a real threat of militarizing the peninsula and transforming the Black Sea region into another zone of instability and increasing tension. According to the Ukrainian special services, as well as the regularly received information from the inhabitants of this region of Ukraine, Russia restores the existing military

infrastructure and fills it with offensive nuclear weapons of ground, sea, and air basing⁶. Besides being simply illegal, such activity represents a direct threat to the countries of NATO and the Eastern Partnership.

The participation of the ships of the Black Sea Navy of the Russian Federation in the Russian-Georgian war in 2008, as well as their direct participation in the preparation for the annexation of the Crimea, means that this element of Russia's military potential can also be used in the future in this region to put pressure on all countries in the Black Sea region. This scenario does not seem so fantastic, taking into account the recent signing of treaties between Russia and the unrecognized republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which provide for the creation of a common area of defence and security. Georgia has considered these treaties to be Russia's step towards the annexation of these Georgian territories.

In this context, there is a real need to increase military and political cooperation with Turkey, one of important regional actors in the Black Sea region. Joint initiatives under the aegis of the EU or NATO, including the Eastern Partnership countries (Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine) should be developed. This implies not only the possibilities of the joint exercise on the sea and on the territory of the Black Sea states, but also the transformation of the EU regional policy in this region. This could be reached by reforming the Black Sea Synergy policy and strengthening cooperation in other security dimensions.

Georgia and Azerbaijan can also be interested in the trilateral cooperation with Turkey as it can represent an additional component in the security sphere.

The transatlantic format of cooperation of the USA – the EU – the Eastern Partnership countries is also crucial for the security of the region. In this case, the partner countries should aim to become an international actor as a region, which is possible if the following conditions are met. First, they should have a common vision of their regional development. The Association Agreements can become a uniting platform as they provide for the development on a similar trajectory of reforming the countries' political and economic systems. Second, leadership and initiative in the advancement of common interests must be demonstrated by one of the partner countries. In the medium term, Ukraine could become such a regional leader in case of the favourable development of the situation in the country and in the region as a whole.

In addition to global and regional international organizations that deal with security matters, it would be promising for the Eastern Partnership countries to reanimate the GUAM (Organization for Democracy and Economic Development) that already has its developed institutional and normative base. In the security context, it would be useful to renew the work of the working

⁶ Turchinov: Russia places nuclear arms in Crimea, 28 May 2015; source: <https://ukranews.com/news/171020.Turchinov-zayavlyaet-o-razmeshchenii-Rossiey-yadernogo-vooruzheniya-v-Krimu.ru>

groups on energy and the fight against terrorism, organized crime and drug trafficking. Considering the fact that these dimensions are also an integral part of the Association Agreements, the cooperation with the EU in a multilateral format within the GUAM framework can bring concrete positive results for the participating countries. It is necessary to underline that the GUAM format stands out in the context of strengthening the transatlantic component of cooperation.

Moreover, it is necessary to mention the possibilities of deepening cooperation between individual EU countries and partner countries in the EaP region. Since security and defence issues are dealt with at the national level of decision-making in the EU countries, separate initiatives can strengthen the degree of partner countries' security in certain sectors. In their work on the creation of the European Defence Union, the experts lead by Javier Solana see the prospects in sub-regional defence alliances within the framework of the EU on the basis of the PESCO algorithm⁷. To a greater extent, this concerns regional initiatives of the EU states and the Eastern Partnership countries that have a common border.

Conclusion

At present, the weakness of the ENP in the positive transformation of partner countries reflects the weakness of the EU as a uniform organism that makes necessary decisions. The internal EU integration processes do not allow it to pay enough attention to external processes and to understand peculiarities of societies from the countries of the EU strategic neighbourhood. Against this background, the absence of the political will and common coordinated foreign policy made it possible to create an area of instability around the EU's borders. In order to reverse these processes, the Eastern Partnership region should become priority for the EU; there must be a strategic vision to develop relations supplemented at the operational level with a mix of the security policy, the ENP, and access to a number of the EU internal programmes and integration projects. In their turn, the partner countries themselves should advance security and defence initiatives that, inter alia, can go beyond the framework of their cooperation with the EU and form their own joint approaches to defence and security in the Eastern Partnership region.

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⁷ Report of a CEPS Task Force “ More Union in European defense”, February 2015, course: <http://www.ceps.eu/publications/more-union-european-defence>