



ORIGINAL PAPER

Russia Eastern Partnership and Security of Black Sea area

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Abstract:

In June 2008, the European Council invited the Commission to prepare a proposal for an Eastern Partnership (EaP) with the aim of supporting regional cooperation and strengthening the EU's relations with its eastern neighbors. Following the conflict in Georgia and considering its impact on regional stability, the extraordinary European Council of September 1, 2008, called for this process to be accelerated. The Eastern Partnership aims to strengthen the political association and economic integration of six partner countries in Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia., Republic of Moldova, Ukraine. Russia and Turkey are not integrated into the Eastern Partnership, as both countries have acquired a different status in their relationship with the EU: Turkey - candidate country; Russia - strategic partnership. The Eastern Partnership is a specific Eastern dimension of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP). Through the ENP, the EU collaborates with its neighbors in the south and east to reach the closest political association and the highest degree of economic integration possible. Security, stability and prosperity, democracy and the rule of law in Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus are a priority for the EU. It continues to test new equipment, people and methods in Syria. Russia is consolidating militarily in Crimea. So, in this situation with a rich Russian activity, what is to be done? The response of Western states is different. 1 A kind of appeasement (Germany and the largest country in Western Europe); 2 Resistance and limited containment (the US and some Eastern European countries). Our study tries to analyze these options.

Keywords: *Eastern Partnership; European Neighborhood Policy; Russia; Ukraine; Moldova.*

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Introduction

In June 2008, the European Council invited the Commission to prepare a proposal for an Eastern Partnership (EaP) with the aim of supporting regional cooperation and strengthening the EU's relations with its eastern neighbors. Following the conflict in Georgia and considering its impact on regional stability, the extraordinary European Council of September 1, 2008, called for this process to be accelerated. Efforts are also being made to develop the Eastern Partnership with the aim of bringing the EU's relations to life with Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia. The Eastern Partnership is a specific Eastern dimension of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP). Through the ENP, the EU collaborates with its neighbors in the south and east to reach the closest political association and the highest degree of economic integration possible. Security, stability and prosperity, democracy and the rule of law in Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus are a priority for the EU (European Council, Eastern Partnership 2019).

Russia's Action

Motivated by many factors, Russia's aggression in Ukraine triggered Europe's biggest security crisis since the Cold War. While the United States and European Union have taken significant punitive actions against Russia, they have made no progress in restoring Ukraine's territorial integrity (Masters, 2020). Russia continues to consolidate, fight and kill in Donbas. It continues to test new equipment, people and methods in Syria. Russia is consolidating militarily in Crimea. It strengthens Kaliningrad to block western reinforcements. Store equipment in Belarus. It continues to re-equip the army, especially with modern tanks and technological systems. The Russian Ministry of Defense openly says in the media that it takes another three years to re-equip the army of western Russia with tanks and train troops. First of all, Russia has attacked the Ukrainian army and is slowly harassing it and causing it to consume ammunition. He wants to grow a sense of helplessness. Russia plays strategic games. Separatists are just canned meat. Their task is to be "time buyers" as Russia prepares. They are also part of the Russian stratagem. Ukrainian separatist forces are acting as if they think they are winning because they are convinced of their success in this very limited tactical war. Ukraine lacks the vision because it is not sufficiently prepared for a strategic and operational war. Russia seems to be moving faster and gaining a strategic advantage (Grant, Glen, 2019).

Russian militarization of the Black Sea region

The Black Sea region has over the years acquired a privileged role in the Russian collective mentality. For the Russians, it is a "Promised Country" or even a "Holy Grail". Russia's very power identity was partially formed from its victories in the battles with the Ottoman Empire to control the Black Sea. In fact, the extension of the Russians to the south and the advance to the Black Sea represented a long process, by which the countries tried to acquire a secure natural border, but also to gain the fertile territories, lost by the Kievan Russia in favor of the Golden Horde. The purpose was twofold, both in security and in power and prestige, and since the eighteenth century, Russia has embraced a true ideology of imperial expansion (Celac, Giada Dibenedetto, Purcăruș, 2019: 5).

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The Russian newspaper „Izvestia” announced on June 19 that Skhoi-35S will soon be held in the new annexed Crimea. Based on the reported capabilities and the tactical range of the aircraft, the SU-35S (taking off from an aerodrome in Crimea Peninsula) should be able to intercept air targets throughout the Black Sea region. Russia introduced the A-100 AEW & C aircraft in 2015 and plans to build 39 such aircraft by 2020. But to date, no A-100 aircraft have been introduced in any active units. It is important to clarify that, according to the Russian conception of what a multi-role fighter aircraft should be capable of, the Su-35S can not only intercept and hit air targets but also hit ground objects. According to this vision, the Su-35s can carry guided bombs and air-to-surface missiles, including the X-35Y anti-ship missile with a 260-kilometer radius, a passive casing, and 145-kilogram bombs. This attack capability requires particular attention because of the Kremlin's active desire to build a reliable bastion (A2 / AD) around Crimea - including in particular the northern part of the Black Sea and the whole Azov Sea. The deployment of the SU-35 in Crimea would allow the Kremlin to improve its fighting rotation

That said, the announced deployment of Su-35s in Crimea does not mean that a massive number of such multi-role aircraft could appear over the Black Sea in the near future. Most of the 88 Su-35S aircraft purchased by the Russian Air Force are already stationed in Carilia and in the Russian Far East. Therefore, future SU-35 travel in annexed Crimea is likely not to exceed more than 6-8 such platforms. Moreover, the authorities announced plans to simultaneously increase Russian air capabilities in the Black Sea regions, by deploying the more expensive, fifth-generation multi-role Su-57 aircraft. The plans of the Russian Ministry of Defense envisaged the acquisition and deployment of 52 such advanced aircraft by the end of 2020. But the difficulties of developing this next-generation aircraft forced Moscow to postpone these plans by 2028 at the earliest. A number of problems were identified by the Russian pilots in the SU-35S, including aircraft participating in operations of combat in Syria. Some key components for these aircraft were previously provided by Ukrainian plants. However, after the tightening of the sanctions regime, Russia was forced to turn to its own defense contractors. The planned deployment of the SU-35S in Crimea should be seen in the context of Russia's broader military deployment in the Black Sea region. However, some major changes to these plans can be expected: The number of SUS-35s available for the deployment in Crimea is small and, secondly, their full technical potential still seems problematic. Moscow will most likely use the SUS-35s deployed in Crimea to intimidate its neighbors, rather than really improve its strategic air position on the Black Sea. Over the past five years, Russia has rebuilt Belbek Air base near Sevastopol, where the 38 fighter Regiment is located, modernized Chauda training center in eastern Crimea to provide full training for pilots and crews for Su-35 and other multi-role aircraft platforms (Kabanenko, 2019: 14). In the five years since the annexation of Crimea, Russia has strengthened the capabilities of its Black Sea Fleet, increasing the number of warships from 34 to 49, including the number of submarines, from one to seen.

All new vessels entering the Black Sea Russian Fleet - corvettes, frigates, and submarines - are equipped with "Kalibr" cruise missiles, launching from a maritime platform. Currently, the Russian fleet based in Sevastopol (Crimea) has 72 "Kalibr" missiles, but - according to its military equipment plans - their number is projected to increase to 170 by 2020. Through anti-ship systems, Russia controls the entire Black Sea basin. The S-400 anti-aircraft systems, deployed in the Crimea, track air targets at a distance of up to 600 km and are capable of hitting them at a distance of 240 km.

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Currently, Russia is building a marine detection system, consisting of stationary automatic underwater stations. In the Crimean airspace, up to one hundred planes - bombers, fighter jets, and attack aircraft - were observed during recent exercises. Moreover, the Russians regularly test new types of weaponry, most recently they carried out tests with torpedo missiles.

Despite efforts to settle the conflict in eastern Ukraine, Moscow has close to the Ukrainian border 28-30 tactical groups prepared for battle, says the same senior Ukrainian military officer, but - according to experts from Kyiv - not to invade Ukraine, but as an "intimidation and pressure factor". The situation in the Sea of Azov remains tense. Due to the blockade of traffic through the Kerch Strait, only this year the ports of Mariupol and Berdiansk lost 43% of revenues. As early as March, Viktor Bondarev, chairman of the Defense and Security Committee of the Federation Council (upper chamber of the Russian parliament), had declared that Russia had already deployed Tu-22M3 bombers in Crimea. At the same time, the Russian official had indicated that in the Crimea, operational missile systems were deployed Iskander-M (SS-26, in NATO coding). So, in this situation with a rich Russian activity, what is to be done? The response of Western states is different. 1 A kind of appeasement (Germany and the largest country in Western Europe); 2 Resistance and limited containment (the US and some Eastern European countries).

RAND Corporation report

Rand has just published a policy document that reinvigorates in another and more benign framing of the principles of the Russian proposal of 2009 for a new European security architecture. In this proposal, Russia wanted to divide Europe into spheres of influence, between it, the US and the EU. In 2009, the initiative came directly from Russia and was rejected by the West. RAND recently published a compilation of conference materials that it has put together with the Regional Office for Cooperation and Peace in Europe, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. The group of authors included "representatives from the West, Russia and the states between them." If the expression "states between them" does not refer to anything, the title of this publication is suggestive - "A consensus proposal for a revised regional order in post-Soviet Europe and Eurasia". For example, if you scroll down to page 80, in the Conclusions section, you will find that the document recommends that smaller states practically seek, in their foreign policy, approval of the "major powers" group, such as the U.S., Russia and the EU. Suggests, using this euphemistic language, that the West should stop accepting new members in the EU and NATO. He suggests that "intermediate" states such as Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia accept the status of neutrality and apply it with the approval of the US, EU, and Russia; they cannot give up neutrality unless the three "major powers" agree to this, which effectively suggests that these smaller countries give up their sovereignty and become satellite states. If these "intermediary" states wish to negotiate economic integration with the EU, they should allow Russia to be part of the negotiations, effectively renouncing their sovereignty. Page 59 suggests that "if economic integration disputes were resolved to mutual satisfaction, there would be more opportunities for cross-border trade".

Continuing to read pages 59-60, it says: The diminished tensions create a greater incentive for states and regional entities to be constructive and cooperative in conflict issues, as they will no longer need to signal loyalty to each other by their employers, adopting a direct approach. In other words, the current dynamic - whereby

certain states and entities can act with "powers" for opposing parties in the geopolitical clash - will dissipate significantly, if not completely cease. The RAND study - which recommends the withdrawal of the West from Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia, etc., claims in fact that it leaves them alone, face to face with Russia and under Russian control. It is a political version of the US military withdrawal from northern Syria, which left the Kurds at the mercy of Turkish air bombardments (Minzarari, 2019b).

Steinmeier formula

One might even make an equivalent comparison between the secret protocol of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact that divides the spheres of influence in Eastern Europe in 1939 and the 2019 Franco-German-Russian pact on the informal surrender of Ukraine to Russia. The only difference is that in 2019 this is done in a more elegant diplomatic way. A close follow-up to previous events suggests that this step was forced by pressure from the Russian Federation on Ukraine, as Moscow exploited and instrumentalized the tiredness of the sanctions of France and Germany. Russian President Dmitry Peskov threatened that if Ukraine does not accept the "formula", Russia will "seek solutions to Ukraine's internal problem", referring to the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine. President Macron previously said that Ukraine "needs the courage to build peace". However, Russia has made huge efforts to present Ukraine's proxy war in Ukraine as the internal issue of Kyiv, as the Peskov, Kremlin spokesman emphasized. The reason is quite simple - if this is an internal conflict, then it should be solved only through political negotiations between Kyiv and the "rebels", through concessions. Moreover - and this is the most important element - the proxy war in the eastern regions of Ukraine was initiated by Russia specifically to make these negotiations possible. Russia intends to use these talks to provide asymmetric political influence to its proxy regions, allowing them to block Ukraine's integration into European political or security institutions. Also, by legitimizing its military actors in Donbas as parties to the conflict, Russia can isolate itself from accusations of military aggression against Ukraine and create conditions for stopping Western sanctions.

The "Steinmeier formula" should pave the way for this scenario, as an ideal case. When this happens, it will be presented triumphantly as a solution to the conflict. There will be strong pressure within the European Union to lift sanctions against Russia. A second-best scenario for Moscow is to accuse Kyiv of not implementing that "formula". Under these conditions, it will allow both Russia and its supporters in Europe to claim that Russia wished in good faith to resolve the conflict. And then Russia would blame Ukraine's failure for being counter-productive. Similarly, it will create strong pressure to lift sanctions against Russia. Precisely this logic is deconstructed by influential Kremlin-affiliated publications, claiming, therefore, that "Russia will win in any scenario." Following the implementation of the Steinmeier Formula, Ukraine will slowly but steadily come under the political control of Russia. Paradoxically, it is exactly the aspiration to remain sovereign and to remain outside the control of Russia for which the Ukrainians fought in Donbas, first and foremost (Minzarari, 2019d).

Moldova's Situation

During October 08-10 in Bratislava, under the aegis of the Slovak Presidency in the OSCE, a new official meeting of the Permanent Conference on Political Issues was held in the Transnistrian settlement process (negotiation format "5 + 2"). The talks were interrupted, without at least one protocol being signed, and the meeting was held just as

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a proposal for resolving a similar conflict, the one in Donbas, arose in controversy. Speaking in Free Europe about this meeting, security expert Dumitru Mînzărari calls a supposed document prepared to be discussed in Bratislava, but ultimately rejected by the government, a document similar to the "Steinmeier formula" in Ukraine.

- , point 1 of the declaration requires or demands from the 5 parties - Russia, Ukraine, OSCE, the United States and the European Union - to ensure that there will be no dividing lines in Moldova, which could be seen as spheres of influence.

- it is this idea where the West is asked not to confront Russia, not to create spheres of influence, we see it reflected in the statements of many Russian officials and this is a big trap in the document concerned. offered by the te Peskov.am of President Dodon to the Russian Federation. So, through the Transnistrian problem, the way it is administered at the moment, Russia could take control over the economic, financial flows, it could penetrate Moldovan state institutions, so it could take control over some important levers and institutions in the state. And this would allow them to influence political processes. It's a kind of non-military aggression, political aggression. This is the biggest danger related to the Transnistrian settlement. The current Prime Minister announced that the Republic of Moldova would need two other airports, one in North (Balti?) And another in South (Comrat?), Both in potentially hostile territories in Chisinau. At the same time, Dodon meets with the Russian ambassador to discuss loans for "infrastructure investments" (airports) and puts Moldova in the so-called Euro-Asian Bank (financing mechanism outside Western control?). In other words, Chisinau will borrow money from the Russians for whom he will pay and interest, to build them, the Russians, runways for airplanes One of the reasons for the creation of several airports invoked by the prime minister was that they would like to reduce prices, to create more competition in the field of air transport, which is a wrong one. First of all, conditions would have been created to convince the public of the need to open the Tiraspol airport for international flights, which is now not allowed. And the same harmless partition is used, an economic argument is used, but the opening of the Tiraspol airport, if it will be done, will be only for military reasons, only to allow the Russian Federation potential to consolidate its presence and influence in Moldova and it will also allow the economic and political independence of the Tiraspol regime to be increased? (Dan, 2019). In other words, you convince the public that more international airports are needed, and under this screen you can open airports in Tiraspol and Comrat for international flights, generating the potential for a foreign force to be able to bring military forces by air in case they would there was a risk that the PSRM would lose power. So you use an economic argument to gain military advantage (Minzarari, (2019a). The press in Chisinau also sent some ideas that would be good to open an international airport in Comrat. As the economic and demographic situation develops, the Republic of Moldova does not need more airports, there is a risk that even the Chisinau International Airport will not be fully used.

Several airports raise the likelihood of aggression, expand the space of tactical and operational options for Russia, reduce costs, both monetary and political. So if the cost associated with the aggression against Moldova is high, this reduces the risk of aggression - and it is obtained by abandoning the idea of building additional airports, especially in the areas where the Government controls the situation worse (Balti, Gagauzia and to a much greater extent the Tiraspol). Due to the fact that it has no land borders with Russia, as Ukraine has, a hidden invasion, by proxy, by green men on the land path, as it was in Ukraine, is less likely, but on the air path, it is even very possible. We are not talking about a classic invasion of the Russians with tanks, we are talking

about the appearance of several hundred civilians, armed, representing the people, the national guard of the Transnistrian people or, you know, Gagauz, which will be used to consolidate certain political statements of the PSRM. or their partners from Comrat. And these scenarios could be used in case the risk of PSRM would lose power, so that means that if the risk of Russia losing influence in Moldova would appear. Therefore, we are witnessing measures to prevent the departure of the PSRM from power by force, creating conditions to prevent a democratic transfer of power from the PSRM to democratic and anti-Russian forces in the Republic of Moldova. Under the existing conditions, given the risk of PSRM losing power, these scenarios could be applied (Mînzarari, 2019c).

Containment and resistance

The US military response is based on both the political and strategic perceptions of Russia. At the political level, Russia's description of the US president as a "regional power" was crucial to understanding the US approach. President Obama said "Russia is a regional power that threatens some of its immediate neighbors - not by force, but by weakness", "It is not the number one national security threat to the United States", while China, which is considered more like a global player, Russia's global share increases in the eyes of US decision-makers. In conclusion, the military, political and economic elements of the American reaction to the Russian operations in Ukraine reached only the regional level, but not the global strategic one.

The theoretical threat remains that Russia will not only challenge the existing status quo in Central Europe but will try to break it in the event of a lack of US (and European) commitment. By applying the "Narva doctrine" 7, Russia has the potential not only to threaten the security of the Baltic states but also to jeopardize the general credibility of NATO and the Alliance, which could lead to the breakdown of the current European and Euro-Atlantic security architecture (Radio Europa Liberă, 2019). Following the events in Ukraine, the United States has replaced the concept of "cooperative power" with a limited containment, which is strictly defensive and does not incorporate offensive measures. It has not changed historical trends, especially the rebalancing towards Asia and will continue to guarantee "only" partial US strategic attention to Eastern Europe (HotNews.ro, 2019: 1).

Only the United States, Romania, Poland, and the Baltic States take this threat seriously. The rest is waiting and hoping to disappear. Even NATO is only half-committed because it fails to address the weaknesses of countries such as Bulgaria. But a true Detention requires three pillars for resistance: Poland, Romania, and Turkey. They also need the Ukrainian army to resist. British expert Glen Grant made several recommendations to increase the ability of the Ukrainian army to defeat the Russians: the Ministry of Defense headquarters should be transformed into a war headquarters, with the most responsible strategic commander as soon as possible; the creation of an infantry battalion with rapid-moving (anti-tank) airborne infantry based on all available helicopters as a national strategic reserve should be considered; a national reserve of two brigades is needed to be located near Kyiv; all units in the army that are not used today on the front should be redistributed into support or combat units; all battalion and brigade units should have training personnel and a properly created J2 chain of command, intelligence personnel working from units at the Ministry of Defense. The army support system, which provides people and training, has not changed as much as

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needed; voluntary reserve units should be created, equipped and trained, rather than having individual reserves from now on (Grant, 2019).

Conclusions

The “Steinmeier’s Formula” reflects the fragility and immaturity of the European Union’s foreign and security policy, and its capitulation to a much more mature and cunning strategic culture of the Russian Federation. It signifies the triumph of the short-term national political agenda of France and Germany over pan-European long-term strategic interests. Finally, it reveals the readiness of the European Union’s major players to allow for the disintegration of the rule-based international system, built by the West after World War II and consolidated after the end of the Cold War. However, even if the "Steinmeier formula" is accepted by the Ukrainian government, its repercussions will be smaller, due to the fact that the population through protests, by pressure, by punishing the government and its change, perhaps in early elections, will redress it. In the case of the Republic of Moldova, they are not so lucky to have a population with a high civic spirit and because of this, if a similar initiative is promoted in Moldova and this document presented by Mr. Şova, I would in some way name it a document similar to "Steinmeier formula" in Ukraine. And if such a document begins to be implemented in Moldova, Moldovans do not have the civic capacity to oppose this formula. At least, not yet, I do not see this ability. NATO's military capabilities in and around the Black Sea remain extremely vulnerable. Recent vulnerabilities include polarization and political blockade among some European NATO members. The alliance is also affected by the resurgence of political and economic conflict within it, between the US and European countries.

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