

Shelest, Hanna

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THE PROSPECTS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION MEDIATION AND PEACEKEEPING IN THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

Hanna SHELEST*

Abstract: *While many of the European Union (EU) member states have been actively involved in conflict resolution around the world as single states, the EU itself does not have a sufficient experience in this sphere, among others due to the concentration on confidence-building as the main instrument of involvement and also due to the absence of a consensus in foreign and security policy, especially in the conflict settlement sphere. The situation started changing in 2008, because of the Russian-Georgian conflict, whereas the Ukrainian crisis of 2014 brought a serious challenge for the EU. Against this backdrop, this article seeks to answer the following questions: Is the EU a reliable partner in peacekeeping and mediation activities in the European conflicts and what are its strengths and weaknesses? This paper argues that despite years of involvement, it is still difficult to name the European Union a reliable mediator and a possible peacekeeper in the Eastern Partnership region. The article also insists against calling the EU a mediator in the Ukrainian crisis, since its involvement in peacekeeping is low.*

Keywords: European Union; Common Security and Defence Policy; conflict resolution; Eastern Partnership

1. Mediation and Peacekeeping in the EU Common Policies

Many of the European Union (EU) member-states had a long history of conflict resolution and mediation, however the Union as a whole has been rarely seen in this capacity in the past, mostly due to its limited approach, based mainly on confidence-building and post-conflict reconstruction instruments, and also to the inability to find internal consensus for a common position on a specific conflict. The EU's peacekeeping activities have been usually triggered by the necessity to support the UN activities. The EU Global Strategy presented in 2016 just confirmed this thesis of the UN priority, while considering own operation just as a complimentary action: "Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) could assist further and complement UN peacekeeping through bridging, stabilisation or other operations" (European Union, 2016, p. 40).

Given its often violent history, Europe's own integration process has long been regarded as the EU's main contribution to conflict prevention. Furthermore, according to Gross (2013, p.18), in the EU's immediate neighbourhood exporting a set of values through enlargement and conditionality has been salient in conflict prevention – an approach that was later adapted and applied to the wider neighbourhood through the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP).

* PhD. Editor-in-Chief, UA: Ukraine Analytica and Member of the Board, Foreign Policy Council "Ukrainian Prism", e-mail: ukraine_analytica@ukr.net

Despite the principle of “acceptance”, whether conflicting sides are ready to accept the EU as a mediator, it is even more important to start from whether the EU sees itself as a possible mediator and peacekeeper. For this purpose, it is necessary to evaluate whether CSDP considers the joint mediation and peacekeeping missions as its main mechanisms. In Lisbon Treaty adopted in 2009 it was stated that “the CSDP shall be an integral part of the common foreign and security policy. It shall provide the Union with an operational capacity drawing on civilian and military assets. The Union may use them on missions outside the Union for peace-keeping, conflict prevention and strengthening international security in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter” (Art. 28 – point 49 of Treaty) (EUR-LEX, 2007). Before the Treaty of Lisbon entered into force, the tasks, which could be carried out under the framework of the CSDP, were: humanitarian and rescue missions; conflict prevention and peace-keeping; combat forces in crisis management. The Treaty of Lisbon added three new tasks to this list: joint disarmament operations; military advice and assistance; post-conflict stabilisation (EUR-LEX, 2010).

However, there is not a single word on mediation as an instrument of the foreign policy and conflict resolution either in the Treaty on European Union or in the Lisbon Treaty. Yet, the mediation efforts were present in the EU activities, and received special attention after 2008 involvement in the Russian-Georgian conflict.

Already in 2009, the concept on Strengthening EU Mediation and Dialogue Capacities was adopted, stating that “in practice mediation is already an integral part of EU external action, [since] the EU has so far used this tool in a rather ad-hoc fashion” (Council of the European Union, 2009). The creation of the Division for Conflict Prevention, Peacebuilding and Mediation Instruments – within the Security Policy and Conflict Prevention Directorate was an important step for institutionalization and separation of this work from the general foreign policy activities.

The 2016 Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign and Security Policy (European Union, 2016) *de-facto* put the mediation in the same line as preventive diplomacy, seeing it as an instrument for pre-emptive peace and early action – “Early warning is of little use unless it is followed by early action. This implies regular reporting and proposals to the Council, engaging in preventive diplomacy and mediation by mobilising EU Delegations and Special Representatives”. Concurrently, Conflict Settlement section is mostly dedicated to the questions of work with local authorities and municipalities for confidence building and development, engagement with civil society, inclusive governance, cultural, inter-faith, scientific and economic diplomacy.

In fact, after the involvement in conflicts in the Balkans states, the EU concentrated on a *soft security approach*, not paying much attention to the conflicts in the Black Sea area, where three out

of six Eastern Partnership (EaP) states are located. The so-called “frozen conflicts” in Moldova (Transnistria), Georgia (South Ossetia and Abkhazia) and Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh) have been much more in line with the post-conflict reconciliation and confidence building measures activities rather than mediation and conflict management. The OSCE has remained the main responsible actor, while the EU has spent most of its time and money on democratisation and association issues, seen as the best leverage for achieving compromise between the conflicting parties.

In the European Security Strategy adopted in 2003, where serious attention is paid to the problem of conflict resolution, a bigger consideration is given not to the conflicts as they are, but to issues such as terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, failed states and organized crime, which were perceived as consequences of regional conflicts that could ultimately influence the security of the European Union. A choice of cases presented in the Strategy attracts attention, since a special focus is paid to the Middle East, in particularly Arab-Israeli conflict; the Balkans were mentioned as an example of the European success in conflict management; Democratic Republic of Congo, East Timor, Afghanistan as examples of military presence; Kashmir, the Great Lakes Region and the Korean Peninsula with their direct and indirect impact on European interests; and the Mediterranean area, which undergoes serious problems of economic stagnation, social unrest and unresolved conflicts (European Council, 2003). However, the Caucasian region and neighbouring Transnistria have not been sufficiently under the loop. This vision was correlated in terms of mechanisms used in the Concept of Strengthening EU Mediation and Dialogue Capacities (2009), but the global approach remained: “The EU is a global actor and its political, developmental and security interests go well beyond its neighbourhood. It will therefore continue to offer its mediation (support) services whenever relevant and as part of its comprehensive approach to conflict prevention and resolution” (Council of the European Union, 2009).

In early 2000s, many experts raised quite a sceptical question as whether an economic organization – as the EU was perceived – should be involved in conflict resolution, or this filed should be left in the responsibility of the regional security organizations. Despite launching CSDP, the EU faced a dilemma of whether it should be involved in military security issues by making use of NATO capabilities. In addition, the Western European Union still existed until 2011 (before being closed as a result of the Treaty of Lisbon) (Western European Union, 2011), but had never before been considered as a capable peace-making mechanism. The EU has become a part of an implicit international division of labour in which regional organisations play an increasingly important role (Engberg, 2013). Member states politically favoured intervention through their membership in NATO as a transatlantic framework (Afghanistan, Libya), a coalition of the willing (Iraq 2003) or decided to

wait for a UN or regional response (Lebanon 2006-09, Sri Lanka 2009, Kyrgyzstan 2010, Syria 2012). Thus, since many EU deployments were not in response to crises but were more of a capacity-building nature, the term ‘crisis management’ does not fully correspond to the reality on the ground (Hazelzet, 2013). CSDP operations have become important tools of the EU’s external action, but they have also shown the limits of what the EU and its member states are able and willing to offer for enhancing global security (Tardy, 2015).

Most of the EU involvement in the crisis management was inspired by the UN missions on the ground. For instance, in the EaP region, only a small UN mission in Georgia acted, sharing responsibilities with the OSCE. The cooperation between the EU and the United Nations was a logical continuation of the Boutros Ghali “Agenda for Peace” concept (Boutros Ghali, 1992) based on the greater involvement of the regional organizations in conflict resolution. While going further than a natural region of responsibility, the EU usually involved in conflicts in the states, where it had strong interests in the past, or in regions experiencing security vacuums, and lack of international involvement. In such cooperation, the UN received additional human and material resources due to the EU involvement, while the EU, instead, received moral authorization and legalization of its participation. In all four conflicts (South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabakh and Transnistria) existing in the EaP region before the Ukrainian crisis, the UN played a minor role, so the European Union did not have its traditional “entrance” which meant that it needed to coordinate its presence with the OSCE missions active on the ground. Moreover, during its pioneering decade as a military crisis manager, the EU has chosen to intervene in conflicts that have looked more like opportunities than challenges. They have situated themselves in the low-to-middle bandwidth in terms of values, interests and risks at stake (Engberg, 2013).

With the adoption of the EU Global Strategy, which envisaged a greater international involvement for the EU, the attitude towards peacekeeping has not changed, still presenting to the UN a leading role. Thus, discussing the investing in peace possibilities, the European Commission upholds: “Believing in the UN means, investing in it, notably in its peacekeeping, mediation, peacebuilding and humanitarian functions. The EU and its Member States, as already the first contributor to UN humanitarian agencies, will invest even further in their work. CSDP could assist further and complement UN peacekeeping through bridging, stabilisation or other operations” (European Union, 2016). In reality, it can be read as limiting its own initiatives in peacekeeping activities. Not withdrawing such efforts from the European Union security agenda, but not acting without the UN. Even more, such statement does not limit the geographical implication, but seems applying such a vision to all conflicts in the world.

De facto, the first autonomous military operation of the EU was in 2003 in DR Congo. The long-time involvement in the Balkans has been concentrated on the peacebuilding efforts, rather than peace-making or peace-keeping. According to Engberg, by 2013 the EU's six military operations could be considered a quiet success as they had contributed to the stabilisation of war-torn countries in the Balkans, stopped the escalation of conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, shielded vulnerable refugees in Chad, and helped stem piracy off the coast of Somalia (Engberg, 2013).

The EU does not have a significant experience in conducting peacekeeping operations. Even this term is seldom used in the official documents. The EU usually concentrates on the peacebuilding activities, confidence-building measures and post-conflict reconstruction, first of all, institutional, and conflict prevention. Separately one can name civilian crisis management operations.

Still, the EU involvement is difficult to separate from the NATO and multi-national operations, as many of the states involved are the same. So having operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, etc. led to an "intervention fatigue" of the European Union states and increased popularity of the "no boots on the ground" concept by 2014.

2. EU involvement in conflict resolution in the Eastern Partnership area

It is necessary to mention that until 2005, the European Union had not taken any position regarding the settlement of the conflicts in the post-Soviet space, except for the general statements concerning peace methods of their resolution. In the Eastern Partnership (EaP) states, the EU's involvement started in 2005 with the inclusion to the "5+2" format over Transnistrian negotiations and later acting as a mediator in the Russian-Georgian conflict in 2008. However, these efforts had their time and scope limitations.

The EU's first involvement was connected with Moldova's Transnistrian conflict. In 2005 in Chisinau, GUAM states under a Ukrainian initiative invited the European Union to help manage the Transnistrian conflict, an invitation that was accepted. Thus, it has been more satisfied with the activities of the European Union Border Assistance Mission to Ukraine and Moldova (EUBAM), which in addition to the border management and anti-corruption activities, exercise some minor mediation efforts. This first attempt "inspired" further EU involvement in the Transnistrian conflict settlement. However, even having general position vis-a-vis Moldova's territorial integrity, one could notice the "threeplicity", when simultaneously the EU, Germany and Romania pretended to mediate. It resulted in certain difficulties to the general peace process, since all three had different level and quality of relations with the Russian Federation. Moreover, Romania tried to be a provider of

information for Brussels in this way seeking to enhance its position within the EU. The EU has also increased its rhetoric insisting on withdrawal of the Russian troops from Transnistria as a fulfilment of the respected obligations taken in 1999 at the OSCE meeting in Istanbul. Moreover, it has promoted the possibility of the peacekeeping operation format change, which should be more international. However, the EU has not been ready to take it under its own mandate, even if the mission would be changed from military one to police one.

De facto, the EU was not considering seriously the Black Sea region or a post-Soviet space as a region, which needs increased engagement. Only in 2007, the first comprehensive document was adopted for the Black Sea - the Communication on the Black Sea Synergy, which mostly concentrated on economic development and stimulation of the democratic reforms. Only one paragraph paid attention to the problem of the “frozen conflicts” where the Commission advocated a more active EU role through increased political involvement in ongoing efforts to address the conflicts (Transnistria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh) and has proposed that the EU should also look at ways of enhancing its participation ... “addressing the overall climate by tackling the underlying issues of governance and lack of economic development, lack of social cohesion, of security and of stability. Special attention must be paid to promoting confidence-building measures in the regions affected, including cooperation programmes specifically designed to bring the otherwise divided parties together” (European Commission, 2007).

Here, we can raise a reasonable question whether a promoter of peace is a synonym to a mediator. Confidence-building measures, support of the ground initiatives, disarmament and democratization, post-conflict reconstruction and conflict prevention, including dialogue, are effective means for peace promotion; however, their aim is not always to stop the conflict, to intervene impartially between the conflicting states and use political will for this purpose, but to manage the conflict and its consequences. Mediation requires greater political involvement in the resolution process itself. Also, in the EU Global Strategy, the authors propose that “our peace policy must also ensure a smoother transition from short-term crisis management to long-term peacebuilding to avoid gaps along the conflict cycle” (European Union, 2016). While such strategy in general is worth of consideration and can be strategically more effective, however, we should mention that mediation and peacekeeping activities are usually aimed for short-term crisis management (even if peacekeeping mission is stationed for a long time). None of them, mediation or peacekeeping, are aimed for a long-term peacebuilding propose.

The appointment of Peter Semneby as the European Union Special Representative for the South Caucasus in 2006 has represented a watershed in the EU policy towards the region. His hands-on

engagement in Georgia aimed chiefly at ‘preventing conflicts in the region’ and a ‘contributing to the peaceful settlement of conflicts’ (European Council, 2006). However, he has been given few means to achieve these objectives. He has not been authorized to act as a mediator between the conflicting parties, nor has he been given any strong material leverage (e.g. to promise anything about future EU integration) to exert influence on them. His main role has been to act as the local relay of the EU messages designed to moderate the conflictual behaviour between the parties (Georgia, Russia, South Ossetia and Abkhazia) and to persuade them to reinvigorate their search for a negotiated settlement. He has held political dialogue with the parties to the conflict and other interested actors such as the UN, the OSCE and the UN Group of Friends (Merlingen and Ostrauskaite, 2009).

The situation started changing in 2008, when the EU for the first time attempted to act as a single mediator in the Russian-Georgian conflict, intervening in the hot stage of its development. The disputes still going on whether this mediation can be considered successful, since fighting stopped but the peace has not been reached and separatists regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia announced their independence, supported and recognized by Russia, so the question remained whether the latter undermined the cease-fire success. The issue of the mediator success is often one of the most disputable among both academicians and diplomats. If to evaluate the mediation by the full conflict settlement only, almost none of the mediation efforts can be regarded as so. However, if to evaluate by identifying what is a goal of the mediation efforts or what has been reached as temporary or intermediary goals – the mediation can be assessed in a more objective way. With this regard, the EU does not have a goal of managing the long lasting conflicts at the territory of Georgia, but just to reach a cease-fire between Russia and Georgia, to prevent further development of the military actions, and to return back to the negotiation table of the protracted conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

The Russian-Georgian conflict of 2008 showed the limited possibilities of the international organizations, which have already been presented as mediators and peacekeepers in the region (the United Nations, Commonwealth of the Independent States and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe), but also evolved the European Union activity as a mediator. Prior to 2008, the European Union played a secondary role in a conflict resolution and peace building in Caucasus. It has evolved in response to the changes in the international system, the EU’s own internal political dynamics, and the EU’s capacity and willingness to play a major role in regional and international conflicts (Bardakç1, 2010). *De facto*, until 2008, the European Union was providing mostly confidence-building measures in the region, as it is generally more comfortable with a post-conflict rehabilitation and a peace-building role, and has been wary of becoming directly involved in conflict resolution (International Crisis Group, 2006, p.2). However, Brussels neither had an operational role

with regard to peacekeeping forces in the two breakaway republics nor was it a member of the principal multilateral negotiation formats dealing with the management and resolution of the conflicts – the JCC and the Geneva process (Merlingen, 2009, p.9).

In 2008, the EU unexpectedly was able to impose itself as peacemaker, due to the French Presidency and President Sarkozy successful mediation attempt, when the EU played the key role in ending the short war and in leading the international talks that were convened to deal with the fall-out from the conflict (Merlingen, 2009, p.10). With this agreement, the EU for the first time started to act as an official mediator, however, still in the preparatory phase, it decided to limit its mediation to issues related to conflict management, as opposed to conflict resolution. According to Merlingen (2009), this was the result of a realistic assessment on the part of the EU of the dim prospects of a genuine peace conference along the lines of the Dayton negotiations on Bosnia.

One of the main concerns was that Europe usually had not been ready to speak with one voice in issues of peace and conflict resolution. The ability to act as a single actor in the Russian-Georgian conflict management had a significant effect on perception of the European Union as a reliable and possible mediator in the region. Soft issues of democratization, fighting corruption, visa liberalization demonstrated greater solidarity, the hard security concerns remained salient. However, the situation has changed, and it came not only from the external conditions in which the EU had appeared after the latest round of enlargement, but also from the internal understanding of the changing role of the EU, necessity to take bigger responsibility in the world affairs and certain accommodation of the different national policies towards the crisis regions.

In the EaP area, the EU has faced diversification of the member-states opinions, influenced by their different perception of the relations with Russia, which saw this region as a sphere of its national interests, ready to use any means for its protection. The EaP aimed from the beginning at strengthening relations in the spheres of trade, economics, travel, social issues, without sufficiently tackling security concerns. Security under the first Communication (European Commission, 2008) was limited to border management, man-made disasters response, visas and law-enforcement reform. Conflict areas were addressed only in a context of supporting civil society efforts in confidence building and possible cooperation in early-warning systems. It was only with the revision of the ENP in November 2015 that the European Council pledged to “enhance cooperation with partners, including through, where appropriate, CSDP activities or the EU's Special Representatives, to support the management and resolution of conflicts in the neighbourhood including through agreed frameworks” (European Council, 2015).

The main feature of the EU involvement in the conflict resolution in the Eastern Partnership states is that it has been positively perceived by all parties to the conflicts, and considered a more or less neutral mediator. Most countries in the region saw the EU as a more acceptable peacekeeper than the USA, because it could encounter less opposition from the Russian Federation. Nagorno-Karabakh conflict still remains almost out of the EU concern, leaving France as a main involved actor within the OSCE Minsk Group format.

3. The Ukrainian crisis involvement challenges

The Ukrainian crisis of 2014 brought a new challenge for the EU. As integration with it was seen as one of the reasons for the crisis, so the European Union could not stay apart, however, due to the dissonance in the positions and approaches of the member-states, the EU was not able to become a real mediator. Both Euromaidan clashes (2013/2014) and the conflict started in the East of Ukraine in 2014 made it impossible for the EU to avoid involvement, though there are still doubts whether the EU or rather separate member states are real mediators there. The launch of the Normandy format with Germany and France as mediators became an evidence of this.

During Euromaidan (November 2013-February 2014), the European Union was seen as a more consolidated actor. It was not only up to the European Commission to be involved, but the European Parliament as well. Later, the single position has been elaborated (after tough negotiations and bargaining) on sanctions against the Russian Federation due to the involvement in the Ukrainian crisis. The EU used to be seen as an “honest broker” so welcomed to the negotiation table of conflict resolutions, even in the post-Soviet space. The Ukrainian situation was different, as one cannot ignore a detail that Ukrainian crisis was the first one triggered by the desire of active European integration of the state. Therefore, in these circumstances, the basic prerequisite of the good mediation – impartiality – was more difficult to guarantee. The leverage of the possible European integration played, for example, a significant role in the Kosovo-Serbia rapprochement in 2013, mediated by the EU. While this argument did not have the same effect for the Moldova-Transnistria situation, and had even less effect in Ukraine.

What drives the EU involvement in the conflict resolution is one of the important questions. As Argyro Kartsonaki and Stefan Wolff ask in their article, is it driven by human or European security imperatives? In a meaning of a norms-driven policy informed by the human security approach and a utility-driven policy that seeks greater European security in the sense of greater security for the EU and its citizens and member states (Kartsonaki and Wolff, 2015). In some way, it sets the question of

motivation of the European Union member-states to be involved in conflict resolution. On the one hand, the normative approach of the EU and a core idea of the unity – no war in Europe anymore – presents a pacifistic tactic of resolving conflicts in other states that violate democracy, human security, development and cooperation in Europe. On the other hand, the motivation can be perceived as that one protecting its own security, preventing spill over effect, fortifying national interests and minimizing negative effect of transnational threats. At the same time, it should be pointed out that the motivation of the EU to be involved can differ depending of the proximity of the conflict to its borders. The EU applies a human security approach, albeit predominantly in an instrumental way, in particular in those areas where it also has the strongest security interests of its own (Kartsonaki and Wolff, 2015). Therefore, the EU motivation in Europe usually has double reason – protecting its security and implying peace approach and normative values to others.

This theoretical explanation is perfectly proved by the Ukrainian case. Different level of interest of the EU member-states and their perception of the Crimean annexation and military actions in Eastern Ukraine depended on their geographical proximity to the threat source. While Baltic states were extrapolated this situation to their own security, Poland traditionally supported Ukraine, and Romania was cautious about possible spread of the Russian hybrid warfare to Moldova, so Spain worried much more about challenges coming from the North Africa, and Greece played a game of bargaining between the EU and Russian support for its weak economy. The direct bordering of Ukraine with the EU member states has also influenced the case, why the conflict in Eastern Ukraine gained much more attention than latest fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh in spring 2016, as Caucasus is still perceived by many member-states as something far from its security interests that cannot directly threat their own security.

While in 2003 the EU Security Strategy proposed preventive engagement, which can avoid more serious problems in the future (European Council, 2003), it has not been implemented in real practise. Back in May 2014 Steven Blockmans and Daniel Gros insisted that “an EU Police Mission (EUPM) should be sent in to stabilize the aforementioned critical areas... The force would have to be large enough to dissuade or control the demonstrations, which in most cases have amounted to fewer than a thousand. It should be possible to prevent a repetition of the events of Odessa (and of Donetsk) if the EU could send a couple of hundred officers to each of the oblasts that are still relatively trouble-free to beef up the local police force. The dispatch of this EUPM Ukraine should give the civilian population the feeling that everybody will be protected and there is no need for arms” (Blockmans and Gros, 2014). As an example was taken mission in Macedonia in 1995, which facilitated stabilization process not allowing the conflict to develop and violence to continue. The authors of

CEPS commentary proposed a civilian mission, not to confront Russia, as military actions at that time were not happening in Donbas. However, the political process was chosen instead of the prevention operation.

Originally, there were two attempts to mediate the Ukrainian crisis: Geneva format and Normandy format. Geneva format, initiated in April 2014, involved Ukraine, Russia, the US and the European Union, where European Union were presented as an organization. The parties to the negotiations agreed about measures of conflict de-escalation in the East of Ukraine. Unfortunately, very soon the conflict has erupted with even more violence. A certain unwillingness of the US to be actively involved as a mediator has ruined this format, while a new one - Normandy has evolved. However, this time, the EU was not present there, represented by Germany and France, both as single players and as a voice of the EU. This format, later also known as Minsk format, due to the negotiations in Minsk in February 2015, raised many questions among the experts, and even the EU member states itself. For example, Poland for many times stated, that it would eager to be involved in these negotiations, as Ukraine need a stronger support (Новое время [The New Times], 2015).

None of the new initiatives on the peace formats for the Ukrainian crisis expressed an idea of the greater EU involvement, as for example, for the last five years is actively discussed about the OSCE Minsk Format for Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (currently OSCE Minsk group, the main mediation mechanism involved co-chairs from Russia, the US and France, and ideas presented to replace France by the EU for more impartial position). At the same time, journalists have raised a question on why, among all the EU states, Germany and France have participated. While Germany is seen as one of the EU leaders with a strong position against Russian one, with leverages and political will, so the French involvement remains inscrutable. It is still a question, why the EU as an institution has not been able to take an initiative instead of France-Germany duet. Partiality due to the sanctions introduction cannot be considered as an argument, as both member-states joined the sanctions almost without hesitation.

The call of the Ukrainian side to send the EU peacekeeping mission became an additional question of concern, as neither Ukraine realized the format it needed nor did the EU have sufficient capacity to deploy. On February 18, 2015, the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine adopted a decision to call upon the UN and EU to deploy in Ukraine a peacekeeping operation. In numerous official statements and comments there were ideas to ask for the UN peace operation or the EU police operation, as an alternative to a possible Russian veto to the UN Security Council resolution, needed to deploy its peacekeepers. The original estimation of the Ukrainian side was that

such operation could be deployed in one and a half months, what sounded impossible from the very beginning.

One of the existing problem was that Ukrainian leadership did not present a clear vision about what type of the operation it needed, what kind of functions it expected. Peace-making activities as measures to address conflicts in progress, which usually involves diplomatic action to bring hostile parties to a negotiated agreement (United Nations 2015), had been already exercised within the Normandy format and Trilateral contact group with the OSCE participation. Peace-enforcement – as application of a range of coercive measures, including the use of military force, which requires the explicit authorization of the Security Council and used to restore international peace and security in situations where the Security Council has decided to act in the face of a threat to the peace, breach of the peace or act of aggression (United Nations, 2015) – was seen impossible, as in case of the UN, these functions were usually delegated to other organizations, and in case of the EU – it could be perceived both internally and externally as full involvement in the conflict on one side, losing possibilities for mediation.

Therefore, the expected format for managing conflict in Ukraine could be peacekeeping operation, which according to the UN definition, in principle, is deployed to support the implementation of a ceasefire or peace agreement, often required to play an active role in peace-making efforts and may also be involved in early peacebuilding activities (United Nations, 2015). Usually such kind of operations are deployed after cease-fire agreement reached, what in case of Ukraine were confirmed by signing Minsk agreements however not implemented in full on practise.

This question of unclear expectations also covers the choice between military, police and monitoring mission. All three options present different functions, responsibilities and personnel needed. Actually, monitoring function has been already covered by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine since March 2014, which has around 500 unarmed civilian monitors in 10 cities around Ukraine (OSCE, 2015), still experiencing difficulties with having access to the separatists-controlled territories or even being threatened by them.

Moreover, the confusion between the UN and EU police missions' models can be traced in the Ukrainian official statements. While the UN police missions are considered as military missions but with specific tasks, so the European Union clearly separates military missions and police civilian missions. Traditionally in the EU police missions, currently deployed in Afghanistan and Palestine (in the past in DR Congo, Bosnia and Herzegovina and FYR Macedonia), the main tasks are the following: police and judicial reform, assistance in fighting organized crime, security sector reform, trainings and advisors support. Thus, most of these functions are already covered by the existing EU

Advisory Mission for Civilian Security Sector Reform Ukraine (EUAM Ukraine) (EEAS 2015a). Moreover, the tasks of the police missions are not adequate to those conditions currently being in Donbass region of Ukraine.

From the UN point of view, today's multidimensional peacekeeping operations facilitate the political process, protect civilians, assist in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants; support the organization of elections, protect and promote human rights and assist in restoring the rule of law (United Nations, 2015). Hence, if facilitation of the political process, organization of elections, human rights and rule of law are exactly within the EU priorities, so disarmament or demobilizations, monitoring cease-fire and civilian protection has not been experienced largely.

Insisting on the EU mission under the explanation to overcome the Russian veto in the UN was a potential risk. First, the EU does not have sufficient experience in this type of missions; second, perception of the EU as an interested party can lead to the blocking of this initiative from the side of the so-called Lugansk and Donetsk peoples republics. As the European Union integration of Ukraine is presented as one of the core reasons for the separatists' intentions, it would be difficult to imagine an agreement of the "DPR" and "LPR" representatives for the EU mission deployment. Moreover, such a mission can be blocked by those EU member-states whose leadership have close contacts with the Russian Federation.

As of 2015, the EU have had five military and 13 civilian operations in different countries around the world. Both missions, which work in Ukraine, are civilian - EU Advisory Mission for Civilian Security Sector Reform Ukraine (EUAM Ukraine, since March 2014) and The EU Border Assistance Mission to the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM, since 2005). Most of the EU military missions' mandates are not relevant for the Ukrainian situation. And only EUFOR RCA (Central African Republic), finished in March 2015, deployed combat units in an executive operation to provide temporary support in achieving a safe and secure environment, creating the conditions for providing humanitarian aid (EEAS, 2015b). Moreover, the EU military missions are usually short term and auxiliary to the activities of other international organizations.

The five military missions currently operating in Somalia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mali and the Central African Republic (EEAS, 2015c) have differences in their functions, but among similarities are: provide capacity building and training to the Armed Forces, neutralize organized crime and terrorist threats, preparing a reform of the security sector. None of this expected on the East of Ukraine currently.

The positive moment in the Ukrainian case, is that the decision of the EU itself is enough to start an operation, which can skip the issue of the possible Russian veto in the UN Security Council. At the same time, the European Union mostly deployed its operations, where the UN mission had already been in place, or another international organization present and the EU mission played an assistance role. In Hazelzet's view the EU mainly brought a decisive contribution in three types of situations: the EU was willing and capable to act (i) where other organisations were not; (ii) when there was a specific demand for it to intervene; and (iii) in low- to medium-intensity conflict environments (Hazelzet, 2013). We would emphasize that the combination of the first and third reasons was the most important. While in Kosovo and Georgia the European Union appeared the only available mediator, due to the Russian blocking of the OSCE and the UN missions' prolongations, the intensity of the conflict were already low. The same can be said about Kosovo, as the EU mission replaced the UN mission on the ground. In case of Ukraine, all three conditions are weakly presented. OSCE is already on the ground – so other international organizations present. The specific demand to intervene existed, but recently mostly raised in association with the political rather than peacekeeping involvement. The question of conflict intensity is more difficult to answer, as despite the cease-fire agreement, it is not fully implemented and it can be difficult to predict its development in case of the EU military presence, even if in a role of mediators.

Conclusions

After 10 years of involvement in different capacities in the conflict management in the Eastern Partnership states, it is still difficult to name the European Union a reliable mediator and a possible peacekeeper. The Ukrainian crisis has articulated strength and weaknesses of the EU possible involvement in the conflict settlement at its immediate borders. While the new strategic documents envisaged a more active role in peace and conflict resolution, including mediation and peacekeeping operations, in reality it is still difficult for the EU to be involved in those countries right on its borders. Moreover, the EU not always acts as a single player, but represents the separate states, demonstrating the diversification of interests and concerns among the member-states.

The EU cannot be named as a mediator in the Ukrainian crisis, as has been excluded from the negotiating format. The delegation of these functions to Germany and France still provokes propositions of the Normandy format enlargement. Inability to act as a classical mediator - impartial if not neutral, - was determined by the triggers of the conflict (signing the Association Agreement between the EU and Ukraine). In such situation the EU both lost its traditional leverages and was not

perceived positively by the Eastern Ukrainian separatists regions. The economic sanctions imposed have the deterrent effect, but do not facilitate the mediation activities. In terms of the peacekeeping operation, the EU CSDP operation could be successful if deployed quickly just after the Crimean annexation in spring 2014, so to prevent a further escalation on the ground. Though, inability to foresee the violent development of the situation in Eastern Ukraine, in addition to a wrong estimation of the Russian Federation intentions, led to a wasted chance.

In terms of other Eastern Partnership countries, the only real chance to get greater EU involvement has been the Transnistrian conflict, since both sides to the conflict maintain a permanent political dialogue with the EU. The current relations between the European Union and Azerbaijan and Armenia do not foresee possible greater EU participation. In case of Georgia, considering limitations of the already existed EU mission and a strong Russian position, enlargement of its functions to a full-fledged mediation or wider zone of responsibility for peacekeeping cannot be envisaged as well.

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