

SECURITY OF DEVELOPMENT INTO A KNOWLEDGE-BASED SOCIETY: EASTERN EUROPEAN CASE

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Abstract

For the Eastern European region, the destructive impact of the Russian Federation becomes emblematic and characteristic, especially in the last decades after the fall of the Iron Curtain. The Covid-19 pandemic in the period 2020-22, as well the global economic crisis in recent years and the war of Russian Federation in Ukraine that began on February 24, 2022, put enormous pressure not only on the political class and elites, but also on individuals, families and society and practically disrupt established social patterns, including in a region such as Eastern Europe, characterized for several centuries by poverty, instability, insecurity, economic and conflict challenges. The states of Eastern Europe, from a political point of view, have become much more vulnerable to external military and hybrid threats, but also more affected by internal instability in the conditions of increasingly divided societies and political, economic, religious and social polarization. In the current situation, securing the development of such an unstable and vulnerable area as Eastern Europe becomes of enormous urgency. But contemporary development is inconceivable without the modernization of society and its transformation into a knowledge-based society. The mere existence of numerous sides, facets and aspects of security, including for the states of Eastern Europe, denotes the multiple implications and challenges specific to the field of security, in a society totally focused on knowledge. Therefore, it is necessary to mention that the issue of security of a knowledge-based society acquires important conceptual-methodological valences in correlation with the perennial general objective of humanity to survive both physically and culturally, or psycho-socially.

Keywords: Eastern Europe, knowledge-based society, security, survival, development

JEL Classification: O15, O30, O52, H56, F52

1. INTRODUCTION

The situation in Eastern Europe has been affected in recent years by several factors that have contributed to the increase of the insecurity. Such phenomena as the 2020-22 pandemic of Corona-virus Covid-19, as well the global economic crisis of recent years, and the large-scale war launched by Russian Federation in Ukraine in February 24, 2022, put enormous pressure not only on the political class and elites, but also on simple persons, on families and society and practically disrupt established social connections, including in a such region as Eastern Europe, characterized for several centuries by such challenges as instability,

insecurity, economic decay and conflicts (Sprincean, 2019). From a political point of view, the states of Eastern Europe have become in this period of time much more vulnerable to external military and hybrid threats, but also more affected by internal instability in the conditions of increasingly divided societies and political, economic, religious and social polarization (Albu, 2020).

In the current situation, securing the development of such an unstable and vulnerable area as Eastern Europe becomes of enormous urgency. But contemporary development is inconceivable without the moralization, modernization of society and its gradual transformation into a knowledge-based society (Battersby & Siracusa, 2009).

2. CHALLENGES FOR KNOWLEDGE-BASED SOCIETY

The knowledge-based society represents a stage in the evolution of contemporary society, based on a capitalist economy that transforms the knowledge process into a basic resource for progress (Pîntea, 2017). In such a society, knowledge becomes the main source of power, prestige and well-being, in a social, economic and political sense (Enicov, 2006). Knowledge also becomes the field in which jobs are generated. In a knowledge-based society, knowledge is also positioned as the main modality and method of action of the main social actors, in the context in which social progress becomes possible only by amplifying knowledge and by its immediate implementation (Sprincean, 2017). On the other hand, knowledge also plays the role of the main area of new social conflicts (Giddens, 1991). Without knowledge, governance and innovative social management become impossible as new decision-making approaches. In such a society, knowledge means innovation through an unprecedented stimulation of competition but also a criterion of national wealth, by capitalizing on the intellectual potential of the nation (Buzan, 2000).

In order to operationally delimit the knowledge-based society from other types of societies, which is an eminently post-industrial one, Daniel Bell, more than 50 years ago, proposed a restructuring of the economy into five sectors (Bell, 1973). Sector 1 refers to the direct exploitation of nature: agriculture, mining, forestry, fishing, hunting. Sector 2 included industry and was divided into two subsectors: the new industry subsector (electronics, production of computers, robots, automated means, IT) and the traditional industry subsector. The sector 3 delimited the field of economic services (transport, trade, storage, etc.), sector 4 - of social services (health, banking, insurance, tourism, etc.) and sector 5 - of information services (research and development, education, information collection and processing, management, etc.).

3. SECURITY IN THE EASTERN EUROPEAN REGION

For the Eastern European region, the destructive impact of the Russian Federation becomes emblematic and characteristic, especially in the last decades after the fall of the Iron Curtain in 90s of the XX century (Fukuyama, 2018). Thus, we can deduce that the notion of "Eastern Europe", today, in terms of international relations, includes several categories of states, in addition to the Russian Federation and Turkey, states geographically located only partially in Europe, but with a very different impact on the regional security (Cuşnir and Albu, 2018). Therefore, in order to order its common foreign policy and to face the challenges, the European Union included some of the states in the Eastern European region in the Eastern Partnership (EaP) initiative, which started as a good neighbourly project of EU with these states, without any clear and express prospect for them of joining the EU. As a result of this military conflict in Ukraine, the post-Soviet states in the region have suffered a strict polarization of their geopolitical relations, as well as their economic model (Frunzeti, 1999).

Russia's unprovoked war against Ukraine, which began in February 2022, calls into question the future of the EU's two-tiered Eastern Partnership (EaP) initiative. In this context, we would like to mention that Russia's war against Ukraine challenges the very geopolitical premise underlying the Eastern Partnership (EaP) (Sprincean, 2025b). On the other hand, the EU's granting of candidate status to Ukraine and to the Republic of Moldova in June 2022, while postponing the decision on Georgia's application for membership, undermines the main *raison d'être* of the EaP: to maintain the impossibility for states in this category to ever join the EU (Plotnic, 2022). Although the war in Ukraine could lead to a reformatting of the EaP, its fundamental features are likely to remain in place for some time to come (Gribincea, 1998).

The concept of Eastern Europe today also includes some of the EU member states, such as the Baltic states, Poland, Romania, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, Greece, Slovenia, Bulgaria and Croatia. Eastern Europe also includes states from the Western Balkans region, such as some former Yugoslav states and Albania (Cristescu, 2012).

The enlargement of the EU in 2004 has generated profound processes that address its new eastern neighbourhood as part of the threats to the EU's security (Sprincean, 2024b). Within the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy, the EU has developed a very large number of political, legal and financial instruments, designed to facilitate improved customs and border management in order to combat security threats. One of the most emblematic in this regard is the EU Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM), established in 2005 (Chirtoacă, 2005).

The Eastern Partnership (EaP), as a joint initiative involving the EU with its Member States and six partner countries from Eastern Europe: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, has

undergone a major transformation following the outbreak of the war in Ukraine in February 2022, with a major impact on the security sector in Eastern Europe (Coropcean, 2023).

Officially, at the level of state leadership, for now, Belarus and, to some extent, Georgia have moved much closer to the Russian Federation, supporting the geopolitical actions of V. Putin's regime, but other states such as the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine or Armenia and, to some extent, Azerbaijan, have recently distanced themselves from the policy pursued by the Russian Federation (Thakur, 1997).

When the Eastern Partnership was launched in 2009, the EU did not see its relations with the six Eastern Partners as a vehicle for extending its governance model further east than its formal borders (Popescu, 2021). The EU's main justification was the need to consolidate the consequences of the 2004 and 2007 EU enlargements, which had considerably expanded the EU's borders in the Eastern Europe, by developing a new relationship that went beyond the existing one under the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). This offered the Eastern Partners the opportunity to conclude deep and comprehensive free trade agreements.

The Eastern Partnership (EaP) also opened cooperation in new areas, such as good governance and democracy (Sprincean, 2025a), economic convergence with EU legislation, energy security and, to a lesser extent, foreign policy and defence (European Commission 2008). The EU was trying to propagate the enlargement model among the Eastern Partners, but without offering the Eastern Partnership countries a substantial level of financial support or a clear path for their accession to the EU.

According to the document – A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence (EEAS), which presents new objectives for the EU in the field of security and defense, with reference to cooperation with the EaP in the fields of defense and security, these objectives were pursued by providing military assistance to the Republic of Moldova and Georgia through the new European Instrument for Stability for Peace and by launching, in October 2022, the EU Military Assistance Mission in Ukraine, by allocating 16 million euros to support capacity-building of the Ukrainian armed forces (Juc and Ungureanu, 2011).

In March 2022, the three most advanced Eastern Partners – the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia – applied for EU membership. In June 2022, EU leaders, following a record-breaking speedy preparation of an opinion by the European Commission, agreed to grant candidate status to the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, while postponing the decision for Georgia, due to the implementation of a new political reform with questionable consequences on some basic democratic mechanisms in the country. Granting EU candidate status to Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova was mainly due to the need to

demonstrate solidarity with these two countries facing the most immediate threat from Russia.

The future of the Eastern Partnership will certainly depend on the outcome of the war between Ukraine and Russia. Unless Russia suffers a crushing defeat followed by a possible internal collapse, it is likely to remain a threat to the EU's Eastern Partners. In this context, to anticipate geopolitical changes in Europe, French President Emmanuel Macron launched, in May 2022, an initiative called the European Political Community (EPC). It aims to bring together all democratic European nations in a new space for political cooperation, security, coordination in the fields of energy, transport, investment, infrastructure and movement of people (Cervu and Cioranu, 2019).

This initiative is limited to being a discussion forum rather than a strong provider of policies and security. Its impact on the Eastern Partnership is limited, and it is unlikely to replace it (Juc, 2009). Granting the status of EU candidate countries to two or three Eastern Partners is likely to have a limited impact on the future of the Eastern Partnership. Compared to the candidate countries in the Western Balkans, the three Eastern Partners, despite their better performance in terms of economic policy, lag behind in terms of political and legal reforms.

After the collapse of communism and, especially after the dissolution of the USSR in 1991, due to the dominance of the West over the international system (Chulitskaya *et al.* 2022), the Eastern European states that joined the EU and NATO no longer had to face major threats to their national security (Huntington, 1998). Moreover, since some Eastern European states (all EU Eastern European member states except Cyprus and some states in the Western Balkans region such as North Macedonia and Albania) became members of NATO, they could say that they had achieved the highest level of national security they had ever had. They are part of the strongest alliance, with national security guaranteed by Article 5 of the Washington Treaty. In addition, by joining the EU in 2004 and 2007, the respective states obtained funds and development assistance, which is another very important element in the national security equation.

Due to the favorable international context and the low level of threat, these Eastern European states have designed and developed a minimal national security policy, based mainly on effort. Due to a very low defense budget, the approach of these Eastern European states was based on effort, primarily that invested in international missions, especially under the aegis of NATO and the EU, participating in various operations, many of them with a high degree of risk. The overall cooperation of the respective states with the West was also based on effort, including in other important areas, such as diplomacy or intelligence. In return for this effort, these Eastern European states benefited from the security umbrella of the West, obtaining a good level of protection, commensurate with the quieter times of that time.

Due to a combination of factors, we are currently witnessing a serious degradation of the stability of the international system, a degradation that generates serious threats to NATO member states in Eastern Europe as well. Russia's strong return to the world arena, especially through the extensive use of its military force, the impressive rise of China, the aggravation of regional issues, access to new technological solutions, against the backdrop of strategic errors by the West and structural weaknesses, all these factors have led to the revival of great power geopolitical competition. In order to guarantee a minimum level of national security, it is necessary to rely on knowledge. And this additional knowledge must be incorporated into the correct identification of threats to the states of Eastern Europe, in the appropriate treatment of vulnerabilities, in the reorganization of the national security system, in the preparation of the population for the new complicated international situation and, last but not least, in the development of special bilateral relations with certain states of the world, especially with the USA. Thus, in order to ensure and secure development in Eastern Europe, it is necessary to evolve from a national security based on effort to a higher quality one based on knowledge. This requires the remodelling of several pillars of national security, especially the academic and political ones.

The construction of strong scientific research institutions around international relations and national security can only be done by politicians. However, for this, the political class, the main responsible for national security, must accept and publicly recognize the increased degree of danger that the states in Eastern Europe are currently facing. Against this background, the political class must reaffirm the civilizational Westernness of those states in Eastern Europe that affirm their membership in NATO and the EU as the only viable solution for prosperity and national security. The political class must avoid politicizing national security institutions and build a bridge to true specialists, thus professionalizing national security policy. In this way, one can avoid the trap of solving false problems, which around 1940 brought many Eastern European states into the tragic situation of losing national territories.

4. SECURITY IN THE ERA OF KNOWLEDGE

Security is not a given, it is not a state to which you are entitled without doing anything. Security is a difficult and unsustainable, fluid and capricious construction, which you must always maintain and in which you must always invest, because you always need it (Sprincean, 2022). However, you cannot have security if you do not have power. Security is an important function of the system, but the system does not receive it ready-made but must rebuild it every day. You can never be fully secure if you do not manage to correlate and integrate into a whole the four major components of power: knowledge, heritage, that is, value systems, potential, vital interest (Suhrke, 1999).

The defining characteristic of modern knowledge-based societies is the production and use of new knowledge and information in conditions of rapid erosion, of free diffusion of information and development resources, often unofficial and unedited. As a result of massive and continuous innovative transformations, modern knowledge-based societies are becoming increasingly digitalized, marked by uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (Aydin and Triantaphyllou, 2020).

True power lies in knowledge. The process of knowledge is a very complex one, which involves perception, representation, sensitivity, memory, intuition, capacity to assimilate and adapt to a dynamic environment, information, communication, databases, capability to move from one reference system to another, from one state to another and even from one dimension to another, value systems, connections, interdependencies (Panța, 2024).

Over thousands of years, man has made important progress in the knowledge, but he has remained very far from knowing and establishing a safe and viable security environment for his own evolutionary projects in the future. Man cannot access other environments if he does not know and understand their existential dimensions, if he does not communicate in real terms with them. Perhaps he is not yet ready to do so, since he has not reached that level of knowledge that would allow him to do so (Farwell and Hamre, 2012). Man does not know himself very well, not to mention the difficulty of knowing and understanding the complicated mechanisms and processes in which he lives.

For researchers who deal with analysing, evaluating and estimating the evolution of the national and international security environment, some events can be surprising, and the phenomena and processes that underlie the dynamics of this environment can have, and do have, unpredictable developments. In general, the degree of uncertainty regarding the dynamics of social phenomena is quite high.

The degree of uncertainty is not and cannot be the same for everyone. Uncertainty is inversely proportional to the level of knowledge and information, especially that of strategic and operational information. The pyramid of knowledge and that of uncertainty are opposites. However, they can provide a model for understanding the relationships that are created between the elements and events of the security environment. The reality of the security environment lies somewhere between the two extremes and varies depending on them. Uncertainty and certainty are defined by the conditional probability of events, and these events that concern and define the security environment are, in turn, to a large extent, a product of human action, that is, of political decisions that are supported by all kinds of interests, from vital ones to those of networks and various circles, groups, organizations, etc.

If certainty and uncertainty are inversely proportional, in the sense that the decrease of one depends on or implies the increase of the other, reality remains constant (Waever, 1995). It is not reality that influences the degree of certainty

and that of uncertainty, but knowledge of it. Reality is neither certain nor uncertain. It is only dynamic. Certainty and uncertainty are notions that define the way in which man knows reality, in its past, present and future dynamics. Of course, knowledge is an oriented process and not just an independent reality. In this case, knowledge becomes its own reality, especially in the conditions of the technical-scientific revolution.

The technical-scientific revolution of the last centuries determines the unprecedented development of sciences and technologies, the development of which is, obviously, exponential.

New technologies are increasingly productive, thus allowing companies to sell increasingly better products, at increasingly lower prices. This has the effect of increasing the accessibility of industrial goods for a much wider range of people (Sprincean, 2024a). The most attractive investments are those in the high-tech fields. In this way, companies become increasingly interested in innovation (Smith, 2005).

The development of ITC determines the increase in communication between people, the development of new types of businesses, the development of online information centers, etc. (Mârzac, 2025).

Society is gradually becoming much more alert to existing problems. The accessibility of information makes it much easier for individuals to inform themselves and express themselves. The importance of the individual as an independent entity is growing in the new society, based on knowledge.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Due to the development of science, more and more people are engaged in the development of new activities. The number of interdisciplinary research fields, frontier sciences, is growing exponentially.

Although high-tech products and the effects of scientific knowledge find their purpose quite quickly in the lives of people and communities, influencing their way of living, people and the communities they are part of continue to generate and maintain, in their lives and in the environment in which they live, dissymmetric and asymmetric mechanisms based mainly on interests, but also on values. The value systems, which define their identity, community and life, values are irreplaceable supports of duration, constitute only an area.

Values constitute the foundations of culture and civilization, of the unity of the world. They do not generate conflicts and wars, but only unity, duration and connection. They are not power, but support for power. There is no power where there are no values. And there are no values where there is no hoarded knowledge. But it is not values that generate action, but interests. People group themselves not only on the principle of values that connect them, but especially since interests that constitute motives, reasons for action. Motivation is very important; it is essential in human action. And interests, as motives or impulses of human action,

generate the political field, understood as a synthesis of interests, as an expression of the generation of the goals and objectives of effective human action. The decisive level of effective human action is the political one. Here, at this level, power is constituted.

Main goal of the knowledge-based society, in the context of securing its development, becomes the objective of not only formal democratization of social and political relations, but also the implementation of good practices and models of good governance. In this sense, the example of the states of Eastern Europe is a relevant one. Security, in this context, for a knowledge-based society, becomes a path, a fundamental condition, for achieving the general-human objective of survival but also of upward development, in the name of which possible conflicts, compromises or concessions are regulated in a sustainable security context, well-defined, rigorous, but also flexible, implemented situational depending on the optimal path for a concrete community towards achieving the general objective of sustainable and progressive survival.

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