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THE EUROPEAN UNION AND INTERNATIONAL CRISIS MANAGEMENT:

The frozen conflicts in the post-Soviet space

(SUMMARY)

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Table of contents

The choice of the central research topic ('The European Union and International Crisis Management') was made for at least two reasons. First, the topic is greatly popular in the context of the transformations experienced by today's international system and the redistribution of power among the actors in the system, all against the background of an increase in the insecurity and multidimensional threats boosted by globalisation. From this point of view, the European Union is considered a "late actor" in the management of international crises, having in mind that it adopted a common vision of this field only in the early 21st century. Although the Western European Union had urged the member states, since as early as 1992, to take the opportunity and involve in military interventions which went beyond the sphere of mutual defence, the practical means in support of a European security and defence policy were introduced in the EU law by the Treaty of Amsterdam (1999). However, the development of the common foreign policy's institutional and decision-making frameworks was not an easy endeavour, and the enthusiasm of the EU leaders was often mismatched by unconvincing results. However, over the last decade, the EU joined the efforts of the international community in the management of international crises out of several reasons: humanitarian reasons, the commitments taken along the US, United Nations or the OSCE, the local stakeholders' expectations for EU action, or geopolitical reasons, as was the case in the near abroad (Western Balkans, the Middle East). The ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon is expected to create the premises for a more unified EU presence in the world, urging the EU to match the goals and expectations of its member states with firm actions.

Second, the choice of this research topic stems from the awareness of the fact that the topic of EU crisis management practices is insufficiently dealt with in the Romanian literature, hence bearing a great potential for development. It has been noticed that the Romanian authors are inclined to conceptualize the EU' involvement in international crisis management by means of case studies and a military-strategic approach focusing on the role of international security institutions. It has become obvious today that, although the EU is a key partner to NATO in its operations abroad, its international activism cannot be assessed exclusively from a 'hard power' perspective. On the contrary, the competitive

advantage of EU interventions among the other international actors is due to its normative behaviour based on inner values. This complementary approach is what makes the EU indispensable. Under these circumstances, we are witnessing a lack of comprehensive studies based on an interdisciplinary approach of the field of international crisis management and conflict resolution which favors multilateral cooperation as an alternative solution for guaranteeing security and building trust, instead of coercive methods. This knowledge gap is providing a niche in today's sphere of research.

The case-study on the post-Soviet frozen conflicts in the context of international crisis management offers a necessary contribution to the understanding and knowledge of the way the EU positioned itself against the geopolitical evolution of this space and how it supported the endeavors of the international community through autonomous instruments for international crisis management and conflict prevention. Some studies dealing with the involvement of the EU in the post-Soviet space are flawed by unilateral approaches, mainly eurosceptic, based on the wrong premises: e.g., if the EU did not send peace enforcement and peacemaking troops, it is not a relevant actor in the resolution of frozen conflicts; or, all EU actions in the Eastern neighbourhood are fostered by the EU's efforts to preserve the security of the common European space. These limited approaches prevent the full understanding of the complexity of internal and external factors underpinning the EU's action or inaction in the frozen conflicts, or by what means it saw fit to manage its relationship with the Eastern post-Soviet states. Some of the misperceptions and insufficiently fact-related arguments are caused by the fact that the EU's Eastern neighbourhood has been a recent concern on the political and security European agenda and among researchers given the endemic features of the post-Soviet space and the sensitivities of certain new EU Member States concerning Russia. The circumstances which channeled the international attention towards the post-Soviet space were created by the concerns for the security of the EU borders after the accession of ten new states in 2004 (including the post-Soviet Baltic States) and of Bulgaria and Romania in 2007. The EU's Eastern neighbourhood also holds a geostrategic importance for the EU today, considering the need to diversify its energy supply.

The period before the EU enlargement to Central and Eastern Europe corresponded to changing perceptions of global security against the background of the terrorist threats and the changing collective security paradigm. The new threats to human security, above all, prompted a reconfiguration of the strategies and methods to reestablish the world order.

The EU seized the opportunity to set up an extended security agenda which could allow it a distinctive place in the international system and a more engaging role in managing the threats coming from its near abroad.

Considering the internal and international context which urged the EU to develop specific instruments for implementing the European Security and Defense Policy, and after identifying the factors which had the EU increase its involvement in the Eastern neighbourhood, we set off our research by asking two questions: Is the European Union an actor in international crisis management? What is the EU's role in the resolution of the frozen conflicts in the post-Soviet space and in the security management of its Eastern neighbourhood? These two questions allowed us to establish links between several variables: "the European Union" and "international crisis management", "the European Union" and "the resolution of the post-Soviet frozen conflicts", "the European Union" and "security management in the Eastern neighbourhood". At the same time, these questions became research hypotheses to which we tried to answer by defining the interactions between operational concepts. The research operates on several levels: *the level of the European Union's presence in the international system, the internal level of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy, the level of the frozen conflicts in the post-Soviet space* and *the level of the EU's policies towards the Eastern neighbourhood.* These levels were not analyzed in isolation, but noticing the multi-level and multi-actor links between them allowed us to accomplish the research objectives, such as how active is the EU at international and regional (post-Soviet space) levels and to what extent does this activism qualifies it as an actor in international crisis management.

In support of this analysis, we set as research objectives answering the following questions: What are the statute and external representation of the EU in the international system? Can the EU be considered a global actor? What are the lessons of the international crises in the 20th century? How did post-Cold War European security evolve and what are the prospects for global security in the 21st century? What is the EU's political-strategic conceptualization of the international crisis management against the background of contemporary threats and future challenges to global security? What are the factors which determine the efficiency of the EU's interventions abroad? Is there an added value of the EU's actions to international crisis management and conflict prevention? How is the EU's contribution to transatlantic partnership assessed after the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon? How important is the post-Soviet space and what is the stake of the frozen

conflicts in the framework of relations among regional actors and the position adopted by strategic players? Is there a correlation between the EU's policies towards the Eastern neighbourhood and the frozen conflicts management? What are the prospects for the resolution of these conflicts and security management in the Eastern neighbourhood?

The structure of this thesis consists in four parts: I. The European Union in the international system; II. The European Union and international crisis management; III. The frozen conflicts in the post-Soviet space; IV. The Eastern neighbourhood policies and the management of frozen conflicts. In each part, the systemization of information and the analytical framework provided a ten-chapter structure with corresponding sub-chapters.

From a methodological point of view, this research is based on an *interdisciplinary approach* of the topic of international crisis management, considering that this field of research evolved in the second half of the last century based on studies in history and international relations, political studies, international economic relations, political philosophy, ethno-cultural studies, social sciences, the sociology of international relations, military and strategy studies, the psychology of leadership, to name just a few. Using this approach, we managed to gain a multidimensional perspective on at least three central aspects dealt with in this study: 1. Global security and present security threats (military, defence, geostrategic, energy, socio-economic, ethno-territorial dimensions and a political leadership dimension); 2. The instruments used by the actors in the system (the UNO, USA, EU, OSCE) in order to counter the sources of instability and conflict in the context of today's multi-level threats (political-diplomatic, military-strategic, civil, economic, trade, financial, humanitarian); 3. The factors which determine the competition for influence among international and local-regional actors over a geopolitical space (historical, identity, political, ideological, geostrategic, economic factors).

As the focus of this research is on EU practices associated with international crisis management, we also adopted a methodological approach based on the *liberal-institutionalist paradigm* which encompasses the liberal-intergovernmental and supranational approaches of European integration. Applied to the EU's common foreign and security policy and to the strategies and decisions concerning international crisis and conflict management, these two approaches allowed us to understand the importance of some variables specific of European integration: the convergence of the Member States' interests and the way it influences the strategic directions and the decision-making process in common foreign policy, the role and limits of supranational institutions, mainly the

European Commission, in formulating and implementing the foreign policies and strategic vision of the EU.

On a different level, we argued that the political-economic integration and territorial cohesion are advantages qualifying the EU as a model and source of inspiration, as well as a legitimate promoter of regional integration in other regional organisations and fora presenting high integrative potential. For this purpose, the analytical model we adopted was the *regionalist approach*, in its evolutionary process, focusing on the New Regionalism. By means of the features of this regional integration model, we also analyzed the way in which the EU approached cooperation towards the Eastern neighbourhood.

In order to interpret the conflicting relations and prospects for cooperation between the *de facto* regimes and the *de jure* governments, and between the *de facto* regimes/ *de jure* governments and the regional actors involved, i.e., the EU and Russia, we used the interpretations provided by Morton Deutsch's *theory of cooperation and conflict*. In his opinion, the implications of this theory on conflict management are as follows: if the parties adopt cooperation norms they may find constructive solutions to the conflict because they understand the positive interdependencies between them and accept conflict as a common problem; on the other hand, the parties' competitive attitude hinders communication and coordination, fuels mutual suspicion and urges them to dominate each other. This attitude causes negative interdependencies between the parties' goals, creating a destructive effect on conflict resolution.[1]

In carrying out this research we did not describe these approaches, paradigms and theories, nor did we test their validity by applying them to the EU's crisis management and conflict prevention practices, but instead used their analytical and methodological elements to accomplish the objectives of this research.

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In the first part of this dissertation ('The European Union within the international system') the goal of the three chapters was to identify the position and role of the EU in the contemporary international system. Acknowledging the fact that, along its political-institutional development, the EU gained international visibility not based on explicit statings of its legal personality, but based on the implicit recognition by the other actors in the system, the first chapter assessed to what extent the EU accomplished the

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[1] Morton Deutsch, "Cooperation and Competition", în Morton Deutsch, Peter T. Coleman (eds.), *The Handbook of Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice*, Jossey-Bas Publishers, San Francisco, 2000, pp. 21-40.

legal conditions to be recognized as an international law subject, and in what institutional-functional frameworks based on primary EU law evolved the external representation of the European Communities and, subsequently, the EU. In the second chapter, we established a correspondence between European security and the conceptualization of the EU as global actor. For this purpose, we used the dialectics on the conceptualization of the EU as actor and power in the international system. Also, we analyzed in a critical manner the European Security Strategy in order to identify the cooperation opportunities provided and to what extent the definition of strategic guidelines managed to counter the challenges which appeared along the way. The third chapter was conceived as a preamble to the second part of this thesis, synthesizing a typology of international crises in the contemporary international system. We referred to the evolution of the crises in the bipolar international system in order to analyze briefly the links between 'crisis', 'system' and 'conflict', and to identify the management solutions reached by the actors in the system. Also, we analyzed the way in which the post-Cold War geopolitical transformations influenced the evolution of European security, and then, we presented the main tendencies of global security and cooperation opportunities for the international actors in the 21st century.

The first part of this dissertation led to several conclusions, based both on a contextual approach when referring to the EU's presence in the contemporary international system, and on an analytic framework rooted in the liberal-institutionalist paradigm of European integration, which balances two decision-making centers in the common foreign policy: Member States (liberal-interguvernamentalism) and the European Communities/European Union (supranationalism).

The international representation of the EU was influenced by the practice of international law and the primary EU law. Before ratifying the Treaty of Lisbon, the EU owned an implicit legal personality as international law subject, based on exercising foreign policy functions and competencies: the capacity to conclude agreements with other international actors and the capacity to uphold bilateral diplomatic relations. The EU gained these two legal competencies during its institutional development, despite the fact that its legal personality was not explicitly stated in the founding treaties. During the first decade of the 21st century, the EU's international representation was marked by institutional dualism as a consequence of the two centers of gravity in the common foreign policy: on the one hand, there was the ESDP complex under the leadership of the EU Council, and on the other hand, there was the European Commission with its

administrative and external action mechanism. The CFSP's uneven development revealed the differences between Member States with respect to allowing a more important role for the EU and common external policies, while the lack of a unitary representation in international fora affected the EU's credibility on the world stage. Under these circumstances, enhancing the EU's statute in international multilateral organisations and fora, and gaining a more coherent and unified profile abroad are the two main prerequisites for the EU to be acknowledged as a global actor. The Treaty of Lisbon is the first legal document stating the legal personality of the EU. The innovations it brings in the common foreign and security policy creates the premises for the EU to set up a more coherent, unitary and proactive external representation.

The EU's efforts to be acknowledged as a global actor and the debates centered on this concept took place in the early 21st century, against the background of the changing in the international system's polarity, the redistribution of power among actors and the increase in non-state actors, in the framework of strongly interdependence relations. Territorial integrity and sovereignty as finalities of the traditionalist security paradigm have lost their relevance in favor of post-modern dimensions of security, such as human, societal, ecological, energy or cyber security.

The EU's vision of security in a large sense is equal to the assumed mission of changing the world by fighting poverty, underdevelopment and conflicts in line with its values and political culture, through diplomatic and political dialogue, strategies, humanitarian and development assistance, as well as supporting multilateralism, all in line with the principles of international law. This distinctive behaviour led to a series of debates among theoreticians and analysts of European integration who aimed to conceptualize as accurately as possible the EU's capacity to behave and act as a global actor. Hence, the public discourse has been filled with concepts like 'civilian power', 'normative power', 'ethical power', 'force for good', 'soft power' or 'fortress Europe', to name but a few labels used to define the EU. This diversity of references has revealed a lack of theoretical consensus regarding the EU's external identity, a situation worsened by the EU's inability to carry out its commitments and match the expectations through unified capabilities and firm actions. However, we support the statement that, given the EU's ability to set goals and make decisions impacting the Member States and the objects of its external action, as and given its capacity to interact with other international actors and create expectations for action, the EU can be assessed as a global actor. This activism-prone vision stems from the

EU's primary law and the official strategies referring to the inner values which the EU is commited to use in all of its foreign policy actions.

The European Security Strategy has become a 'landmark' in the development of the CFSP as it provided the EU with the necessary criteria for filtering its global role, setting clear security goals and identifying the guidelines which the Member States need to follow in their common external actions: multidimensional threats, such as terrorism, WMD proliferation; regional conflicts; organized crime; and, the need to develop a 'strategic culture' which may facilitate proactive responses and swift interventions. Taking note of the weaknesses of the common foreign and security policy in the early 21st century, in a context of great uncertainties for the security of the international system, the ESS pleaded for the EU's transformation into a more capable and more coherent actor, more prone to work with other international actors in multilateral institutions. Although it achieved significant progress in the formal cooperation among the EU Member States, this programmatic document was flawed by gaps and incoherencies, also confirmed by the EU's inability to translate commitments into practice in the following period. The EU's repeated efforts, during the entire past decade, to define a new common identity on a more clear, more firm and more engaging legal basis have hindered the implementation of the ESS's provisions.

The new European security agenda was also a cornerstone in the EU's approach towards international crisis management and conflict prevention. However, a few lessons in this field can be drawn from the interdisciplinary approach underpinning the development of international security studies in middle 20th century. In practice, the typology of international crises over the past century has shown that a crisis can have systemic consequences if the actors fail to act promptly and with more innovative means, although under time pressure, to prevent tensions from escalating and spreading into the entire international system. Also, studying the international crises and the responses to these crises allowed us to make a conceptual clarification: although crisis management and conflict settlement use different approaches and goals, they can be very efficient when performed in complementarity.

The characteristics of the international system in the 20th century also revealed that mediation is a very useful and peaceful instrument for the management of international crises. Although the EU has not fully developed its profile as international mediator, this practice has the potential to increase the EU's chances of managing international crises

more efficiently in the future. This change of approach is also claimed by the EU's need to act more flexibly in view of guaranteeing global security post-Cold War. The dilemmas faced by international actors concerning the evolution of post-Cold War European security have shown that the problems of the 21st century cannot be dealt with efficiently in the framework of existing multilateral institutions. Instead, more flexible and pragmatic global partnerships and coalitions are needed. In this respect, the EU can involve in the restructuring of the international system by creating, together with its western allies, networks of flexible partnerships which can attract as many actors as possible, both states and regions, according to the opportunities they provide for satisfying the specific needs of every stakeholder.

The second part of this dissertation ('The European Union and international crisis management') is the central research area. The three chapters analyze the development by the EU of policies and mechanisms for the management of international crises in the 21st century. The chapter dealing with the institutionalization of the CFSP/ESDP uses a multidimensional approach: *political-strategic, operational, institutional-functional* and *empirical*. By means of this analytic framework, we aimed at laying out the consequences of the intergovernmental character of the ESDP and, implicitly, the role of the European Council in developing and translating into practice the international crisis management mechanisms. At the same time, we established the conceptual boundaries of specific actions agreed at international level (by the United Nations) in the field of crisis management, and analyzed how the EU positioned itself through autonomous mechanisms. The next chapter dealt exclusively with the European Commission's contribution to the development of the CSFP, and, more precisely to international crisis management and conflict prevention. In this section, the analysis focused on aspects related to international conflict prevention and development cooperation, through partnership and cooperation agreements concluded with third countries, including the immediate neighbourhood. Describing the financing instruments used by the Commission to promote development cooperation has allowed us to have a clearer vision of the contractual relations between provider and recipient, and of the financial frameworks in which the EU manages the link between development and security. In the chapter referring to the common foreign and security policy post-Treaty of Lisbon we addressed in a critical manner the most important innovations in the area of CSFP, the expectations raised by the EU's design of a coherent external identity and the

implications of these transformations for the transatlantic cooperation and burdensharing in the pursuit of international security.

The second part of this thesis also led to several conclusions. From a methodological perspective, *the liberal-intergovernmental and supranational approaches* of EU integration underpinning this analytical framework revealed that the CFSP has evolved based on an institutional dualism concerning the decision-making and operational levels of foreign policy action. However, the complementarity between these two pillars provided the EU with a comprehensive approach of international crisis management and boosted the visibility of EU's actions on a global level.

The EU's political-strategic conception of international crisis management proved to be an essential element in the EU's endeavor to gain global actorness. The EU's conceptual design of the crisis management instruments was inspired by the five-phase 'peace operations' coined by the United Nations (conflict prevention, peacekeeping, peacemaking, peace enforcement and peace building). The specific practices designed by the EU made up the 'armed pillar' of the ESDP and are known as the 'Petersberg tasks': humanitarian and rescue tasks, peacekeeping and peace enforcement by combat forces, including peacemaking operations in crisis management.

The EU gradually improved its operational (military and civilian) capabilities in crisis management as the Member States developed a strategic vision of a common defence policy inspired by the European Security Strategy. Although the EU's interventions outside its borders are recent, the new typology of global threats urged the Member States to adopt an approach combining military and civilian instruments. Hence, over the past decade, the EU achieved great progress developing the operational framework of the ESDP: extended the expertise of civilian missions; improved the civilian missions by adding more capabilities – conceptual, planning, and operational; supplemented the resources pooled by the Member States; created synergies between the civilian missions and military operations, and between the EU's actions and those of external players; raised the quality of military and rapid reaction capabilities in line with the evolution of the strategic international environment and of military technologies; performed simultaneous military operations by raising the operability, flexibility and mobility of battle forces.

From 2003 to 2011, the EU performed 24 independent interventions in crisis management, consisting of small civilian missions (police, rule of law, monitoring, border assistance and security sector reform), large-scale peacekeeping military operations and

hybrid missions. Analysing all these external interventions we concluded that the EU performed mostly autonomous civilian missions, specializing in expert assistance and monitoring and assessment missions in areas such as the rule of law, police, border assistance and security sector reform. The military operations and the only naval operation in Somalia were performed following UN Security Council resolutions and were aimed at supplementing or substituting the multinational operations conducted by international and regional partners, namely the UN and the African Union (only in Africa did the EU perform 10 different operations so far).

Besides the ESDP civilian missions and military operations, managed by the EU Council with the Member States' consensus, the actions performed by the European Commission supplemented the operational efforts of the Member States by means of financial, economic, trade and humanitarian instruments. These instruments accompanied the cooperation agreements and partnerships with third countries, in view of promoting the EU's external governance. The programmatic vision of the European Commission concerning conflict prevention revealed the distinction between the reactive and urgent nature of crisis management actions, and the proactive and long-term nature of conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction. Although distinct, these two types of activities are more efficient if used in complementarity.

The contribution of the European Commission to the implementation of the EU's strategic vision of crisis management and international conflict prevention proved indispensable, considering that the goals it sets are addressing the deep roots of conflicts and the local leaders' behaviour through political dialogue and cooperation programmes for long-term development. The Commission is also using an approach mixing the provision of benefits with imposing conditionalities in bilateral cooperation frameworks: 'positive conditionality' through material and financial benefits in exchange of cooperation, and 'negative conditionality' though coercive instruments, such as diplomatic sanctions and economic embargoes, when local governments are breaching the agreements concluded. In this respect, this research revealed a slight distinction between conflict prevention and post-conflict instruments: although similar at operational levels, post-conflict actions may be more successful because of the higher risk of conflict recurrence, which urges the recipient states to comply more easily with the norms of cooperation and take more urgent steps in performing internal reforms.

Providing development assistance to governments threatened by political instability and states prone to socio-economic degradation proved its added value in the EU's global strategy towards those recipients. This approach favors the development of civil society and citizens in general and, by acting with discretion, prevents the provider-recipient relationship from gaining an overtly political turn. The European Commission is universally acknowledged as the advocate of such relations with third parties. Also, since the swift measures taken during a developing crisis do not provide sustainable solutions for the complete removal of the conflict roots, the contribution of the European Commission has proven indispensable for the EU's ability to prevent conflicts and manage international crises.

In spite of the ambitious commitments taken abroad, the lack of a clear inter-institutional demarcation of competences between the Council and the Commission has often replaced positive synergies of action, impacting negatively on the EU's image abroad. A practical problem encountered in EU crisis management is the lack of an efficient early warning system, which affects the management of information, delays the right decisions and creates imbalances in the costs vs. benefits ratio. We support the advice that the EU change its approach as follows: integrate the ESDP operations into the EU's global strategy towards the target state; obtain more firm commitments from the target state with regard to the ESDP missions and operations; use efficient benchmarks for assessing the progress achieved by the target state; hire staff with more extensive expertise in international crisis management.

Referring to conflict prevention, it is wise that the EU review its specific practices having in mind the lessons taught by previous conflicts: prevention is less expensive than reactive involvement, provided that the actions taken are early, long-term and adapted to local needs; conflict prevention instruments need to be integrated in sectoral policies, such as governance, development, trade, investments; more involvement by EU top-level leadership is required; better use of economic leverage; conflict prevention efforts should be enhanced only when they can provide real added value. Better use of the competitive advantages provided by the its external missions can be achieved only on condition that the EU give up reactive crisis management and focus on conflict prevention, clearer priorities and an improved early warning system.

The institutional innovations of the Treaty of Lisbon were aimed at enhancing the EU's position as a global actor and at improving the decision-making and functional

frameworks in the common foreign and security policy in order to allow the EU to perform more coherent and unitary actions. The new configuration of the EU's foreign policy includes new representative functions and structures, as well as a decision-making framework bound to correct the EU's flawed responses so far in line with the need to be acknowledged as a responsible and reliable partner in preserving peace and security in the world. However, analyzing the innovations of the Treaty of Lisbon against the expectations of the US/NATO, as international partners, one notices the increase in EU's responsibilities towards the collective security of its Member States while its expected international commitments are also growing higher.

Considering the increased security threats and the need for reform in multilateral security institutions, transatlantic cooperation could become the centre of a global partnerships network which could manage international crises more successfully. Transatlantic cooperation is a fundamental pillar of the EU's security and an asset for common EU-US external action. It may also stand as an efficiency test for the EU's institutional reform as envisaged by the ToL. Yet, by enhancing the intergovernmental nature of the CFSP decision-making process, correlated with some unclear provisions in the field of common security and defense, the ToL could impact negatively on the EU's consecrated profile of 'soft power', and shed a bad light on the trustworthiness of its security commitments abroad. That is why it is advisable that the EU acknowledge and turn to good account its competitive advantages against the tasks assumed by NATO, and reduce operational costs by choosing to intervene only where it can bring about real change.

The third part ('The frozen conflicts in the post-Soviet space') consists of a chapter referring to the evolution of the post-Soviet space and of the four frozen conflicts (Transnistria, Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia and South Ossetia). Another chapter analyzes the geostrategic importance of the Caucasus and the dynamics of regional relations. In this respect, we presented synthetically the endemic features of the Caucasus (South and North) and the interactions between the regional actors and the EU against the stake involved: the security of the EU's borders, including the security of energy supplies. Then, we synthesized the vision of national security in post-Soviet Russia, insisting on its policies towards the 'common neighbourhood', including the frozen conflicts.

This part of the dissertation was designed both in a descriptive manner, when referring to the evolution of the post-Soviet space and the frozen conflicts, and

analytically, in order to underline the geostrategic importance of the Caucasian region and the dynamics of regional relations, with a focus on the Russian Federation's national security conception against the background of the frozen conflicts.

The methodological approach used in this section is based on the interpretations provided by the *theory of cooperation and conflict*, and led to several conclusions. The failed resolution of the four frozen conflicts is due, mostly, to the fact that the attitudes of both the *de facto* leaders and the central governments are not driven by cooperation and compromise. Their refusal to acknowledge positive interdependencies is blocking communication and constructive discussions and prevents solutions meant to accommodate the interests of all parties. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is particularly complex as it opposes directly two independent and sovereign states, Armenia and Azerbaijan. Moreover, the conflict is essentially an expression of two diverging international law principles – self-determination and territorial sovereignty – which are equally recognized by the international community with respect to the rights of the Armenian minority living in Nagorno-Karabakh and the legal borders of Azerbaijan. This climate of mistrust has been worsened by external factors as well, mainly Russia's influence on several levels: it undermines the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the ex-Soviet republics by maintaining military bases and permanent troops on the territories of Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine; it fuels the energy dependence of these states on Russian supplies; it upholds territorial separatism by supporting economically, financially, militarily and politically the *de facto* regimes in Transnistria, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The research revealed, however, that there is a chance in the future that other regional actors, like Turkey and Iran, play a bigger role in the resolution of the South Caucasus conflicts.

The frozen conflicts were plced on the international agenda in the 1990s in the framework of multilateral negotiations. The OSCE is the main mediator in the conflicts of Transnistria ('5+2' format) and Nagorno-Karabakh (the Minsk Group). In the Georgian conflicts, the UN upheld for many years an observation mission, but withdrew its presence in 2009 following the Russian veto in the Security Council. At present, the crisis in Georgia is being monitored and assessed in a negotiation group co-chaired by the EU and known as the 'Geneva talks'. The only international presence has been assured by the EU's monitoring mission. However, in spite of long-standing diplomatic efforts, the international community has not managed so far to mobilize the unblocking of the political

situation in the four conflicts, probably because Russia has been present in all existing negotiation and peacekeeping formats.

In fact, Russia's understanding of its national security for the next decade is highly pragmatic. The perceived threats go beyond Russia's perception of a great power, targeting the multiple dimensions of Russian security: economic, military, technological, energy, environmental and societal. The pillars of Russia's future security strategy are technological development, modernization and economic growth, and international cooperation in view of countering unconventional threats, terrorism and WMD proliferation. In this environment, the post-Soviet space will continue to be a sensitive issue on Russia's foreign policy agenda, considering that the 'thawing' of the South Caucasus conflicts may trigger similar movements in the North Caucasus states, thus threatening the integrity of the Russian federal state. Nevertheless, Russia's lack of a coherent strategy for the post-Soviet space reveals itself from its ad-hoc tactics combining repressive actions with measures stimulating the loyalty of the *de facto* regimes in order to undermine the authority and sovereignty of the *de jure* governments. It has been obvious, however, that over the past years Russia has adopted an increasingly proactive and interventionist policy in the post-Soviet conflicts against the EU's lack of involvement (except for South Ossetia) in direct talks. The EU's preferred tactics was mainly bilateral and multilateral cooperation aiming at spreading good governance in the neighboring post-Soviet states, hoping to lead eventually to a resolution of security-related problems.

The persistence of the frozen conflicts, without any obvious finality, worsens the problems pertaining to political, economic and social development in the EU's partner states, and their insecurity has transnational repercussions. At the same time, Europe's energy security is tributary to the security of energy supplies originating from the Caucasus and Central Asia, in the context of EU's efforts to diversify its supplies by reducing its reliance on Russia. Considering the high incidence of Western, mainly EU, geostrategic interests in this region, the resolution of the frozen conflicts is a fundamental issue for European security. However, this endeavour has been hindered by the competitive behaviours shown by Russia and the EU in relation to the post-Soviet space, following what has been called a 'values' gap' between them: while the EU acts as a normative power, Russia has adopted the 'spheres of influence' approach, acting like in a zero-sum game. Following this logic, all Western involvement in the post-Soviet space has been perceived by Russia as threatening its strategic interests.

The fourth part of this dissertation ('EU's Eastern neighbourhood policies and the frozen conflicts management') consists of a chapter dealing with the EU's involvement in the four frozen conflicts in the post-Soviet space through institutional and operational instruments of crisis management and conflict prevention developed autonomously by the EU or in coordination with other international and regional actors (the United Nations and the OSCE). In the final chapter, we established a correspondence between the management of regional cooperation and the frozen conflicts management, in the framework of the EU's bilateral and multilateral policies addressing its Eastern neighbourhood. In reaching this research objective, we set off from analyzing the New Regionalism paradigm and the conditions it provides for managing regional interdependencies in the age of globalization. Assuming that the EU is the most advanced model of regionalism, we analyzed the main policies used by the EU to promote the security, welfare and sustainable development of Eastern neighbours, based on bilateral and multilateral cooperation. In this respect, we analyzed in a critical manner the progresses and flaws of the European Neighbourhood Policy in promoting the EU's external governance, including regional security. Then, we analyzed the prospects for the Eastern Partnership to advance multilateral cooperation. In the end, we described the way in which cooperation in the Black Sea Region unfolds, particularly within the Organization for Black Sea Economic Cooperation, and the EU's own contribution through the Black Sea Synergy policy. We focused on laying out the factors which favor or hinder the progress of cooperation in the Black Sea Region and the prospects for a more coherent and efficient EU role in building regional integration in the post-Soviet space and the extended Black Sea region.

This final part was based on two methodological approaches. In the first place, the EU's involvement in the frozen conflicts was analyzed in the context of the causal relationship between a few variables specific of the decision-making process in EU foreign policy and lead to several conclusions. The diverging interests of the EU Member States concerning the post-Soviet space and the relationship with Russia have delayed or completely hindered the Council's common actions in relation to the four frozen conflicts. The individual initiatives by some EU Member States (France, Germany, Sweden and Poland) have been more visible than a single common EU strategy. For this reason, the EU is hardly considered a relevant actor in the political top-level dialogue addressing the frozen conflicts. However, the European Commission's contribution to the democratization

of the post-Soviet states hosting these territorial separatist wars, by means of economic and development assistance at bilateral and multilateral levels prevented the spread of controversial talks within the Council and raised the EU's normative profile in the post-Soviet space.

Second, using the regionalist approach (New Regionalism) in analyzing the benefits of regional integration, we managed to establish the causal relationship between the management of regional cooperation and the management of frozen conflicts and regional security. Starting from this conclusion, we proposed as a solution to the security of the post-Soviet space regional integration through functional cooperation in the Black Sea-Caucasus-Caspian Sea region.

The EU's recent interest in the frozen conflict in the Eastern neighbourhood has been prompted by the EU's concern with the security of the EU's borders after the 2004 and 2007 enlargements. In order to fight the unconventional threats originating from the Eastern neighbourhood, the research revealed that the EU has designed policies both on short-term – through diplomacy and political dialogue (EU Special Representatives), civilian border-expert missions (EUBAM in Moldova) and monitoring missions (EUMM in Georgia) and on long-term – through development financial and technical assistance and bilateral partnership relations with prospects for deeper association.

The enhancement of the bilateral and multilateral cooperation after the European Neighbourhood Policy was launched has been designed by the EU as a management pattern for its relations with some states of the post-Soviet space. The ENP has been inspired by the process of reterritorialization, which aims to prevent new fault lines and structural gaps between the EU Member States through regional cooperation which helps manage interdependencies. Thus, the ENP has been conceived primarily as a geostrategic imperative in order to counter the security threats coming from the Eastern neighbourhood and to protect the EU's community of values. Although it is based on cooperation and partnership with mutual advantages for the EU and its Southern and Eastern neighbours, the ENP does not provide these states with concrete accession prospects, thus being subject to critical claims that there is an obvious correlation between accession conditionalities and the these states' determination to perform internal reforms and assume the liberal values promoted by the EU. Nonetheless, the EU's excessive concern with the security of its external borders is believed to uphold a behaviour which undermines the logics of cross-border cooperation with its Eastern neighbourhood and raise new barriers of mistrust.

In spite of some flaws, the ENP has the necessary tools to increase the influence of the EU in the Eastern neighbourhood space, by means of exercising EU external governance in areas of functional cooperation. The opportunities created in this respect are confirmed also by the fact that economic vulnerability, political instability, institutional deficiencies and poverty continue to fuel a fragile security environment near the EU's borders. At the same time, the ENP is a 'soft power' instrument which promotes the attractiveness of the EU's political and economic integration in order to bring the post-Soviet states on the path to democratic evolution and economic development, by the power of attraction and positive example.

Although not a conflict resolution instrument *per se*, the European Neighbourhood Policy has favored an increase in EU's visibility in conflict management. However, its role has been undermined by the internal tensions among Member States and by external factors, precisely the role and influence of Russia in the post-Soviet space. Nonetheless, the pattern of sectoral functional cooperation set by the ENP might be an efficient conflict management instrument in the post-Soviet space. Enhanced economic interdependencies could ensure more prosperity and fewer socio-economic discrepancies, as well as increased material benefits for the ethnic minorities to give up the option of territorial separatism in favor of reintegration into the motherland. However, the process of building transboundary spaces of social, economic and political relations is complex, particularly if we consider the blatant diverging visions of the three South-Caucasian states (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia) concerning their internal development and foreign policy options. The EU's preference for a common approach towards these ENP states, instead of individual strategies tailored to the needs of each country, are undermining the EU's ability to improve regional governance. But, although it fails to offer prospects for EU accession, the ENP at least has the merit of testing the potential of these states to perform reforms in the public sector policies and their degree of flexibility in adapting to the EU standards.

The EU's potential to promote the resolution of the post-Soviet conflicts at a political level has been hindered by the EU's lack of credibility as a global actor and by tensions in the relation with Russia, causing the EU an unfavorable profile in the separatist territories. The EU has been often criticized for making political statements condemning the anti-democratic behavior of authoritarian leaders and their illegal *de facto* regimes, but being slow in acting promptly in order to measure the firmness of its verbal commitments. This weak performance stems from the fact that the EU fails to undertake strategic long-

term actions concerning certain regions, and the post-Soviet space is such an example. The diversity of national interests within the EU and the position of external actors, namely Russia, in relation to these conflicts hve reduced the chances of consensus among Member States. The conflict in South Ossetia and the following actions by the European diplomacy revealed not only a lack of credible and influent EU leadership. It has been it noted that strategic aspects of common foreign policy are being assumed and managed (successfully at times) by some EU Member States, such as France and Germany.

By enhancing the ENP's Eastern dimension (Eastern Partnership), the EU agreed to remedy some flaws in its relationship with the Eastern neighbourhood and to bring an added value by supporting multilateral cooperation among the six Eastern states, while conditioning benefits on the degree of differentiation among them (the 'more for more' principle). Boosting bilateral relations is an important stage in accelerating the legislative approximation of the Eastern states to EU standards. To this end, the EaP supports the development of a new generation of bilateral agreements (association agreements) which offer extended benefits for the EU's partners concerning their access to the internal EU market: free trade, visa facilitation with prospects for liberalization, and regulations in the energy sector. The EaP provides the Eastern partners with the advantage of stable and durable cooperation relationships due to the deeply technical nature of the sectoral partnerships it promotes, removing the focus from highly political areas, such as security and regional conflicts. At the same time, the EaP is promoting institutionalized multilateral cooperation by setting up a formal dialogue and cooperation framework in which the Eastern partners can share experiences and good practices and develop common action. However, in spite of addressing a small number of states, the differences between them could be an obstacle in the advance of regional multilateral cooperation.

The EU policies addressing the Eastern neighbourhood are showing that the EU is prone to use the instruments it masters, namely good governance and democracy instruments, in order to ensure the stability and security of the Eastern space and refrain from direct involvement in the frozen conflicts. However, the fact that the EU is not a central actor in the settlement of the frozen conflicts might be an advantage provided that the EU manages to boost inter-personal relations and enhance civil society in conflict zones, thus refraining from taking political positions which may inevitably uphold the freezing of these conflicts.

In order to contribute more efficiently to the conflict management and resolution against the background of globalizing interdependencies, the democracies and international community are bound to take concrete actions to build sustainable peace and extend welfare to all people. To this end, a basic prerequisite is increasing competitiveness through the regional integration of the peripheral areas around the main development centers.

The European Union is a regional actor capable of aggregating the development needs of its neighbouring states through a regional approach which divides equally the benefits of integration at economic, political and social levels. This approach helps foster a feeling of solidarity, common values and interests, leading to an efficient management of the multidimensional interdependencies between the EU and the post-Soviet space. However, the EU needs to set positive precedents of bilateral cooperation with the main strategic partners in the East. It has already started to negotiate association agreements with Ukraine and Russia, which include prospects for free trade areas and visa liberalization in view of increased people-to-people contacts. Moreover, the EU and Russia are negotiating a Partnership for modernization which, if concluded, would facilitate Russia's economic, technological and social progress, including the respect of democratic values and the rule of law, opening the prospects for these benefits to spillover into the entire post-Soviet space.

Moscow's politics at present indicate a strong awareness of the global tendencies towards regionalism and regional integrated structures, and aim to ensure a better management of the economic, energy and defence interdependencies with the CIS states, mainly Central Asia and the Caspian region. Under these circumstances, the EU must conceive a unitary strategy towards the post-Soviet space, bound to accommodate the interests of all regional actors.

For these reasons, we propose and support as sustainable solution for enhanced cooperation between the EU and its Eastern neighbours the adoption by the European Council of a EU Strategy for the Black Sea, encompassing the Caucasus-Caspian area in multilateral cooperation in the following areas (not exclusively): economic relations and trade liberalization; technological development; transport infrastructure development; growth through innovation and knowledge; climate change and environment, including sea pollution. Successful multilateral cooperation in such a heterogeneous space as the extended Black Sea region could only be guaranteed through functional cooperation,

whose success would eventually urge the regional actors to harmonize their positions on more sensitive aspects, like regional security and defence, including the resolution of the frozen conflicts. Turning this proposal into action would set the premises for the development of institutionalized regional cooperation within a future 'Southern dimension' of EU-Russia cooperation, benefitting from the positive experience of the existing 'Northern dimension'.

We are also confident that the resolution of the frozen conflicts in the post-Soviet space is impossible if the EU and Russia fail to advance their relationship based on mutual trust and functional cooperation within the framework of the future association agreement and based on the common values agreed in the Partnership for modernization. These harmonized positions would also have to include fewer references to the rule of law and human rights in Russia. Over the past few years, this rhetoric has slowed down cooperation between Russia and the West. The competition between Russia and the West is not a valid option in the 21st century in the context of common threats, such as terrorism, proliferation and the security of energy supplies.

In the end, we believe that, although the new European diplomatic service created the conditions for the EU to provide more unified responses to the challenges of global security, the EU's performance in international crisis management will continue to be hindered by several factors. On the one hand, the EU has failed to uphold consistent policies and strategies for long-term conflict prevention, opting for political and diplomatic dialogue instead of preventive actions based on efficient mechanisms of crisis warning and prevention. On the other hand, its interventions in evolving crises have been short-term or ad-hoc both because of the conflict of interests among EU Member States, and the EU's inability to pool resources proactively in order to prevent latent conflicts which do not require urgent action. Also, one can notice the EU's lack of rapid adjustment to the transformations and dynamics of contemporary conflicts, and insufficient human resources with solid expertise in conflict management.