

**REFLECTIONS ON CONTEMPORARY NON-MILITARY
SECURITY CHALLENGES AT EUROPEAN LEVEL**

Abstract:	<p><i>The third millennium brought with it a series of structural transformations in terms of the international system and the nature of confrontations, so peripheral elements, usually with an auxiliary role, became central elements of combat strategies. Moreover, probably because of the nuclear deterrence during the Cold War, modern, post-modern warfare has become non-military in the classical sense of the term.</i></p> <p><i>This research shyly addresses an increasingly hot topic on the security agenda, a topic quite ignored and considered harmless or too theoretical until recently, the topic of cultural war. The hybrid nature of recent European security threats forces us to reflect, but without pretensions of life-saving solutions or absolute conclusions on the increasingly tense situation unfolding around us.</i></p> <p><i>Crises overlap and take different forms, from the refugee crisis to the internal identity crises of the West, but all make the European security environment vulnerable and require analyzes that look for the deep sources of these crises and the useful tools in their management.</i></p>
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Introduction

The beginning of the third millennium didn't seem to bring fundamental changes to the structure of the security of nations, but rather a diversity of those and violence, generated mainly by the terrorist threat, which had more instruments to manifest itself. The major confrontation of the future seemed to be between the civilized world and the barbarism of the terrorist threat, which took more and more advantage of the realities created by the post-modern and interdependent society, defined ever since the 80^s as the Society of risk by Ulrich Beck¹.

However, as the violence created by terrorism took new shapes and the need to efficiently counter it became a critical factor in the Western society, the European world discovered, in its effort to understand the terrorist threat, issues considered peripheral and irrelevant to its own security.

The West discovered something that it ignored for too long for various reasons, namely the cultural dimension of security. The reasons of this ignorance are multiple and they have generated different opinions in the public opinion. For example, some authors such as Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit in *Occidentalism: The West in the Eyes of Its Enemies*², explain the hatred of non-Westerners against the West through the cultural roots of a superiority. This superiority of others coming from the West was then converted in the logic of demonizing foreigners and, by default, in the logic of demonizing the enemy. The authors – different, non-Western political and religious trends, trends that, by default, generate fundamentalism and prejudice about the West (Europe and the USA). These trends provide argumentative resources for a civilizational confrontation, and this leads us to Huntington's work – *The clash of civilizations*³- a work both disputed and appreciated. For other authors, the behavior of the West, especially of Europe, in the face of complex dangerous phenomena such as mass migration, remains strangely incomprehensible, in this sense Douglas Murray being relevant⁴.

¹ Ulrich Beck, *Word Risk Society*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2001, p. 9

² Ian Buruma, Avishai Margalit, *Occidentalism, Războiul împotriva occidentului*, Humanitas, București, 2016, pp. 9-21

³ Samuel Huntington, *Ciocnirea civilizațiilor și refacerea ordinii mondiale*, Litera, București, 2018, pp. 221-280

⁴ Douglas Murray, *Strania sinucidere a Europei, migrație, identitate, islam*, Corint Books, București 2019, pp. 21-37

The state of affairs

Are we facing a clash of civilizations? Does this clash necessarily manifest itself as a cultural war? Could such a war be avoided or is it already in full swing?

These questions/concerns become more and more serious, and they are not, for a long time now, simple philosophical reflections of some intellectuals, but they begin to become key questions in intelligence analysis and in the effort to manage national and international security issues¹.

Thus, we are witnessing a reassessment of the non-military dimensions of security, as we observe the structural transformation of threats that today, more than ever, are manifested not only by classical military aspects, but especially by hybrid forms and fake news, emotional manipulation, social enmity, populism, irregular migration, pandemics, and cyber-attacks. Obviously, these are not new threats, as they have been active throughout history. What is new, however, is their scale and the possibilities technology offers in spreading them throughout society.

The American professor James Davison Hunter² has the merit of bringing to the public space and problematizing, ever since the end of the Cold War in 1991, the concept and danger of cultural war. This war, he pointed out since then, will generate failures within our societies, true front lines which could divide and even implode the Western society which will no longer be able to find the set of common values that gives it a common identity. The danger of such fragmentation became visible and dangerous during the last elections in the USA, on the one hand. On the other hand, in Europe, these gaps are deepening even more between the so called old Western Europe and Eastern Europe, the Poland-EU relationship being relevant in this case. The social polarization on various topics in the public space might be a real argument to say that we are, already, in a form of cultural war in which different, irreconcilable and incompatible visions are fighting to impose themselves as dominant in the society.

A study conducted by Kings College London in May 2021³ shows a growing concern on this subject, through the comparative analysis of public space coverage of the topic cultural war. Thus, in Great Britain in 2015, for example, 21 articles have been published. The number grew to 534 in

¹ Silviu Nate, *Intelligence și securitate societală, provocările unei tranziții comune*, Academia Națională de Informații "Mihai Viteazul", București, 2014, pp. 35-38

² James Davison Hunter, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America*, Basic Books, New York 1991, pp. 10-35

³ Bobby Duffy, Kirstie Hewlett, *How culture wars start*, <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/how-culture-wars-start>, (10.11.2021)

2020¹. The subject is a worrying one, the British wondering themselves whether the socio-political and cultural cleavages the USA will manifest in a similar way in the Great Britain, as a consequence of Brexit. The same question remains valid for the European Union as a whole.

As we have already seen, the situation is not new, as confrontations for the dominant perception in society have always existed, thus generating paradoxical situations, if we go back in time. The change of societal paradigm at European level causes an interesting paradox, which is beyond a change in the interpretation and perception of the concept of security and, by default, of the concept of security threats. The ones who fought for change and presented themselves as opponents of the dominant power, for example the generation of anarchists in France in the 60^s, once the change took place, they came to power as promoters of a dominant culture at the societal level but eventually become conservatives, just like those they have been initially contested. This paradox is masterfully exposed by Jean Pierre Denis in *Why does Christianity scandalizes?*², and can be seen, nowadays, in the fighters of social justice who claim to be activists of rights and equality but who are just as uncompromising if contradicted, just like ancient Puritans or inquisitors of the past ages, demonizing the adversary³.

Delving deeper into the source of the cultural identity crises of the Western world, especially the European one, we cannot ignore the strain between the classical European spirit, anchored in religious values, and the new self-declared progressive current freed from religious constraints. This tension dates back to the times of the French Revolution, but it has never exhibited itself as visibly and with as many societal consequences. A clear and well-reasoned perspective on this conflict of cultures can be found in Joseph Ratzinger's work, *Europe in the Culture Crisis* in which he emphasizes that "Europe is going through a real test of effort... in the debate regarding the definition of Europe and its new political form, a nostalgic battle of the rearguard of history is at stake, but rather a great responsibility for today's humanity"⁴. In view of the previous arguments, we can infer without fear that we, as Europeans, are at a crossroads, a crisis situation that

¹ *Idem*

² Jean Pierre Denis, *De ce scandalizează creștinismul*, Nemira, București, 2012, pp. 27-48

³ Andreea Zamfira, *De-a baba-oarba în perfidul an 2021 Apel la solidaritate*, "Observator Cultural", <https://www.observatorcultural.ro/articol/de-a-baba-oarba-in-perfidul-an-2021/> (10.11.2021)

⁴ Joseph Ratzinger, *Europa în criza culturilor*, Biblioteca Apostrof, Cluj Napoca 2008, p. 45

encompasses other crises, older or newer, and which generates a series of challenges, not necessarily newer, but certainly much more complex.

Specifically in terms of efforts to secure the EU, Josep Borrell, the EU High Representative for Foreign Policy, launched in 2020 the need for an EU Strategic Compass, which can be perceived as a defining strategic document, highly like NATO's strategic concepts. Advocating for an integrated vision of security and defense at European level, Borrell begins his plea with a serious warning, namely: Europe is in danger!¹

Challenges

The world has never stopped, the dynamics of society have always generated challenges and fears within, however, each era has encountered its peculiarities in terms of the nature and forms of these challenges. Thus, contemporary society, at least from the Western/European perspective of things, is today facing challenging and decisive realities for the future.

First of all, we are facing a major paradigm shift at international level, the direction towards multilateralism of the international scene and the shift of the center of gravity towards the Asia-Pacific area, it is not only a political and economic challenge, but primarily one of a cultural nature. The worldview and values prevalent on the global stage should change radically if they were different from what the West has produced. This change implicitly generates a reconfiguration of security approaches. Culturally it is a great challenge for Europe, but it can also be a great opportunity for reaffirmation.

Secondly, a number of hybrid challenges and threats are increasingly being manifested aggressively, which are putting pressure on European security. The instrumentalization of migration from Poland's border with Belarus this autumn is a suggestive example that joins the information operations specific to a full-fledged hybrid warfare between Europe and the Russian Federation. The feeling generated by the information confrontation recreating the atmosphere of the Cold War. The cyber-attacks, the avalanche of fake news, the energy crisis that generates concern on the threshold of winter, along with all the restrictions and frustrations generated by the Covid 19 pandemic, create the landscape of a battlefield in the most classic way possible.

¹ Robert Lupitu, *Europa este în pericol: Josep Borrell propune o doctrină militară a UE și constituirea unei forțe de reacție rapidă de 5.000 de soldați*, <https://www.caleaeuropeana.ro/europa-este-in-pericol-josep-borrell-propune-o-doctrina-militara-a-ue-si-constituirea-unei-forțe-de-reactie-rapida-de-5-000-de-soldati/> (11.11.2021)

Norwegian researcher Karsten Friis noted in an analysis¹ dedicated to the effects of the pandemic on global security and defense, the frequency of the use of the term war in official speeches of leaders during this period. Interestingly, this concept of war is no longer used to define armed confrontations, but increasingly to define the immediate new reality, in which we can identify overlapping and incompatible interests. Fear² in this equation plays a central role, whether we are talking about the feeling generated by the threat of a classic war, or the effects of Covid 19, or the reluctance of losing values and identity, our society is experiencing a resurgence of democracy unfortunately and a dangerous fragmentation that generates major fault lines within it. It cannot be ruled out that this fear will be beneficial in terms of self-preservation in a certain respect, but the danger lies in the instrumentalization of fear and the vulnerability of the European construction by emphasizing the value and cultural cleavages primarily between East and West. Thus, also in the range of hybrid challenges/threats we can add, as a melting pot of all the others: the cultural war, which seems to be unfolding before our eyes.

The third great challenge is the deep internal crisis of Europe's values, a crisis superimposed on externally generated threats and perhaps the most problematic, being also the deepest of them. The dilution of the religious factor in the European value system is problematic not only in relation to its own identity, which no longer manages to define a meaning, but it becomes challenging in relation to the non-European otherness, deeply anchored in its religious identity and which comes to Europe in search of prosperity but ends up hating the European lifestyle. Where does this change in attitude come from, or what are the roots of this hatred towards the West and its values? The answer is quite simple, non-Europeans strongly anchored in their own religious values and traditions can very easily when they observe the European identity disorder, perceive the culture and life of the West as a decadent and self-destructing one, for some of them these are enough arguments to dream of an occupation of this perverted cultural space and its ruins. Unfortunately, the examples of the attacks of the last decade are self-explanatory.

Returning to the religious aspects, the most recent internal disorder of the West was generated (voluntarily or involuntarily) by the very one who is traditionally the balance factor and the guarantor of the preservation

¹ Olivia Todorean, Sergiu Celac, George Scutaru, *Lumea de mâine. Ce urmează după pandemie*, Curtea Veche Publishing, București 2020, pp.109-121

² Barry Buzan, *Popoarele statele și frica, O agendă pentru studii de securitate internațională în epoca de după Războiul Rece*, Cartier, Chișinău, 2014, p. 344

of the values assumed by the Catholic Church. Thus, the papal document *Traditionis Custodes*¹, through its limitations on ancient liturgical practice, generated much emotion and tension among those who constitute the hard core of Catholic Christianity. This situation, along with other situations such as the issue of the role of women in the Church, the Amazonian Synod as well as the proximity in speeches to certain political currents, have led to discontent and even small but novel protests, for example since July when the document was published, up until now, a group of traditionalist French Catholic believers protesting in front of the headquarters of the Embassy of the Holy See in Paris².

Unfortunately, along with the political crises, we can also join the ecclesiastical turbulence that put an important imprint on the European security climate from the perspective of the cultural dimension.

The fourth major challenge for European security is to take on policies to counter climate change. The assumption of the Green Deal³ project to reduce carbon emissions by 2050 to 0 will have a major impact on the economies of states and will imply a radical change in lifestyles and perhaps even in citizen habits. However, it remains to be seen whether this objective will be possible and whether this perspective will exacerbate the European energy crisis, which is already raising great social problems.

Conclusions

Looking at the arguments summarized in this small article, without the claim already made to draw absolute conclusions, but rather to signal certain aspects of European security, we see a Europe at a key watershed moment. Thus, less addressed issues such as the cultural and religious crisis deserve in this context a moment of reflection. We do not know whether Europe will face a classic war in the future, and we hope that it will never happen, but we observe that Europe is in a security dilemma, facing a series of overlapping crises that put it in front of difficult choices specifically: what kind of security actor it wants to be, hard or soft power? It is also visible that societal reality, even if it is not the kind of war that declares

¹ William Johnston, *Traditions Custodes: How Did We Get Here?* <https://churchlifejournal.nd.edu/articles/traditionis-custodes-how-did-we-get-here/> (11.11.2021)

² Alexis Bugnolo, *Catholics Protest Traditionis Custodes At Paris Nunciature*, <https://www.fromrome.info/2021/07/28/catholics-protest-traditionis-custodes-at-paris-nunciature/> (11.11.2021)

³Comisia Europeană, *Pactul verde european*, https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_ro (11.11.2021)

itself, behaves and reacts as if in a real cultural war. Social fragmentation on various topics, almost fanatical adversity erodes the foundations of society built on the principles of freedoms and human rights, which skews us to be cautious and responsible in managing security issues and the future that regardless of our strategies and analytical capacity will remain unpredictable and a great unknown.

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