

MÁRTA BENEDEK¹**Sources of conflict affecting Europe
A schematic survey****Az Európát érintő jelentősebb konfliktusgócok vázlatos
áttekintése****Abstract**

The geopolitical processes affecting Europe and within it Hungary considerably changed by the first decade of the 21st century. The ongoing socio-political changes with global impact have re-drawn the strategic map of the world and the process has brought about new, persistent territorial conflicts. The fights in these pits are against the spread of the radical Islam on the one hand and they stand for the confrontations among the regional midsize powers for geostrategic interests on the other hand. The appearance and manifestation of these conflicts, varying in character and territorial effects, produce crisis phenomena that reformulate the individual regions' safety challenges.

Key words: conflict, dividing line, safety

Absztrakt

Európa és benne Magyarország geopolitikai folyamatai a XXI. század első évtizedére alapvetően megváltoztak. Globális kihatású társadalmi-politikai változások zajlottak és zajlanak a világban, amelyek átrajzolták a világ stratégiai térképét, mely folyamat egyben tartósan érvényesülő új területi konfliktusokat hozott magával. Ezen „tűzfészkekben” egyrészt a radikális iszlám térnyerése ellen folyik a harc, másrészt a geostratégiai érdekek konfrontációja zajlik, mely utóbbiban regionális középhatalmi közreműködők is kiveszik részüket. A jellegükben és területi hatásaikban is különböző konfliktusok megjelenése, megnyilvánulása és sajátos területi hatása révén válságjelenségeket eredményez, melyek bizonyos fokig újrafogalmazták a regionális környezetünk biztonsági kihívásait.

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Kulcsszavak: konfliktus, törésvonal, biztonság

INTRODUCTION

The decade ahead of us has brought about considerable global changes both in foreign politics and security policy and as a result some changes in the approach to national security as well. This paper intends to present those dividing lines along which long lasting, and possibly escalating conflict crises come to life that need to be inevitably taken into account.

In the first decade of the 21st century a number of new dangers, challenges and risk factors came to life. The safety of the country, of the region and of Europe and the events in the neighboring crisis zones have dynamically changed in unexpected ways. The security of our region presumably will not be threatened by the military misbalance of the countries discussed, in the following decades, but it will be affected by the disturbances and conflicts originating from the instability and loss of balance within and among certain countries and regions. The new and threatening types of risks, especially in the Middle and Near Eastern countries, in Eastern and South Eastern Europe as well as in the region of Central Africa produce perpetual crisis centers and zones. In the pit, in well definable areas there are the religious and ethnic oppositions.

1. THE CONFLICT LADEN REGIONS OF TODAY

A reasonable part of today's conflicts, characteristically present in the economically least developed regions, is linked to certain geographical areas that are lagging behind in the process of globalization. It is indispensable to take into account the regional context for understanding the individual processes. In recent times there have arisen or resurged 15 new conflicts. Eight in Africa, three in the Near East, one in Europe (in the Ukraine) and three in Asia.² Hardly a few have been solved. Their features show that the agents and the processes themselves cannot be defined within their limits. They have divergent roots, and many go back to serious historic grievances. In the 21st century we can see that in the background there is a system-based/ideological³ foundation holding the ideological, religious and socio-economic factors. Expressed in numbers, out of the 409 politically motivated conflicts 155 resulted directly from these reasons in 2015. The fight for resources can be mentioned as the second reason of conflicts, especially the right of ownership over

² Armed Conflict Survey 2015, Armed Conflict Database. *The International Institute for Strategic Studies, IISS* <http://www.iiss.org/en/publications/acs>, <http://www.iiss.org/en/about%20us/press%20room/press%20releases/press%20releases/archive/2015-4fe9/may-6219/armed-conflict-survey-2015-press-statement-a0be> és UNHCR *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2014*. <http://unhcr.org/556725e69.html> (2016.01.16.)

³ The item system/ideology was assigned to a conflict in which a conflict actor aspired to change the ideological, religious, socioeconomic, or judicial orientation of a political system or change the regime type itself. - Conflict Barometer 2015. Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research. http://www.hiik.de/de/konfliktbarometer/pdf/ConflictBarometer_2015.pdf (2016.05.16.) p.31

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natural resources and raw materials. That has led to conflicts in 98 cases. Ethnic force can be specified as cause in 93 cases. Enforcing control over territories and population has generated conflicts in 46 cases. Strivings for autonomy and separation have resulted in 108 crises. There were 18 conflicts directed at territorial gains and at efforts for alteration of border. The conflicts listed above reached the seriousness of a war in 19 cases.⁴

2. CENTERS OF CONFLICT

The changes and novelties in the system of challenges have made European security malleable. The EU and the other international organizations have to lead concerted and unified practices to help improve European stability, to maintain peace, and ensure credibility to European politics through the common handling of these challenges which is of strategic interest. The new types of threats – as a result of the catalyst effect of globalization and the complexity of the security environment – cannot remain regional in their character. Processes escalate, they seem to cross country borders and destabilize greater territories than the individual states in terms of economy, politics and intelligence services, even the social and the military system. Within the rather narrow framework of this paper I would only like to discuss the dividing lines along which European conflicts originate, as well as the resulting challenges that they bring along.

The most significant line dividing Europe is basically a cultural one and coincides with the borders of the Western Christianity dating back to the 1500s as Huntington had put it.⁵ People living south and east to this line were Orthodox or Muslim and they either belonged to the Ottoman or to the Tsar's empire. These countries usually were economically less developed and it seems they have had fewer chances to develop stable and democratic political systems. This duality is described by Gloria Man's The Orthodox Fault Line, that is, this line divides the western type Christian and the eastern type Christian Europe.⁶ In the Balkans the dividing line coincides with the historic border between the Habsburg and the Ottoman empires, resulting in a direct contact with the Near East. The other contact zone described in the two theories above divides the dominantly catholic west Ukraine from the Orthodox east Ukraine, which pulls towards Russia as center; the same line also demarcates the Baltic States and Russia. The line, as a zone of conflict in a broader sense is to which today's Russian-EU matters are tied. In the ever progressing geopolitical competition

⁴ Conflict Barometer 2015. Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research. http://www.hiik.de/de/konfliktbarometer/pdf/ConflictBarometer_2015.pdf (2016.05.16.)

⁵ To give the full picture, a group of the Orthodox Christian countries, like Greece, Romania and Bulgaria are presently members of the EU and another group, Montenegro, Serbia and Moldavia gravitate towards the EU. Based on that it is predictable that the cultural and religious borders become blurred but they are unlikely to dissolve. I believe that the same holds true for the Muslim states in the Balkans – Bosnia, Albania and Kosovo – which in 2016 are still at the doorstep of the EU.

⁶ Man, [Gloria](#) : [Az ortodox törésvonal](#). Háttér Kiadó, 1997. (The Orthodox Fault Line)

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under the leadership of the EU and Russia there is a forming Eurasian Union;⁷ Orthodoxy and Catholicism strain against each other, which has a cultural aspect and value. Along the geopolitical border (limes)⁸ by the half of the second decade of the 21st century two other dividing lines emerged. One is between the north and the south – the Euro zones where tensions appeared between the lender and the borrower nations; and which coincides with the American line demarcating the northern and the more Russian influence-tolerant southern part. The other one is deepening between the Central European region and the western European central states because of the worsening migrant situation. The two dividing lines are definitely distinct, and certain interrelatedness can be recognized considering the following two aspects. On the one hand we can talk about the infringement of rules commonly accepted and laid down in contracts, like article 101 by the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union⁹ and the Schengen Agreement. On the other hand a few countries (France and Italy) have indicated that due to the enhanced danger of terror and the rising costs of immigration they cannot comply with the Maastricht deficit criteria. On the vertical axe another difficulty is brought about by the UK versus the EU, because it bursts the cohesion forces which are so vulnerable these days. Brexit¹⁰ can generate a disparate potential that would have corrosive effects on the existence of the EU.

2.1. THREATS COMING FROM THE SOUTH

The challenges coming towards Europe from the south are complex as in the geographical sense two regions meet and connect in several ways here; it is the Balkans and the broadly perceived Greater Near East.¹¹ Both regions are characterized by instable internal political relations, by economies in a transitional state, corruption, poverty, the high rate of unemployment, accompanied by conflicts stirred up by religious and cultural differences. In the case of a number of states we witness the “Lebanon Syndrome,” when the greatest risk for both the stability of the state and the region lies in the political life being organized along ethnic and religious dividing lines.¹² The sharp ethnic oppositions, the ethnocratic way of

⁷ The Russian contracting party promises to the post-soviet countries a market supplied with cheap energy and secured with administrative instruments, the European Union offers EU resources and competition based access to the EU markets to its associate members. (Ara-Kovács Attila- Magyar Bálint: A birodalmak perifériáján. <http://magyarnarancs.hu/publicisztika/ara-kovacs-attila-magyar-balint-birodalmak-periferiajan-88940> (2016.01.31.)

⁸ Geopolitical borderline

⁹ **Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union – the contract on the European Union and on the functioning of the European Union in a common system.**

(http://europa.eu/pol/pdf/consolidated-treaties_hu.pdf p.89 (2016.02.05.))

¹⁰ The name Brexit is used to denote the intent of Great Britain to leave the EU after a referendum on 26 June 2016 initiated by Prime Minister David Cameron.

¹¹ This essay uses the notion of Greater Middle East (Hung. Közel-Kelet) in a broader sense, with the same meaning as MENA (Middle East and North Africa region – Hung. Közel-Kelet és Észak-Afrika)

¹² http://biztpol.corvinuembassy.com/?module=corvinak&module_id=4&cid=6&scid=80 (2016.02.29.)

thinking is a serious source of conflicts in many cases. As a consequence, the political spaces are complex and tend to strongly protect their historically defined nature.

The MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region is dominantly Muslim,¹³ it is linked to the Balkan States through religion and culture,¹⁴ and so to Europe as well.¹⁵ The bridge between the different parts of the region is assured by the Islamic cultural area; Balbisi Louai gives an explanation for present day use defining political and social modes of action: *"The social institutions could not develop to the same extent as in the West, because the notion of a Muslim community is incompatible with individualism which is a basic condition of democracy."*¹⁶ Another frame of interpretation can be the origins of the national states, which process was completed in most parts of Europe in the 20th century. Yet after the disintegration of Yugoslavia it has been going on in the Balkans even these days. The basic organizing principle characterizing the region is the ethnic principle which influences the political, economic, social and cultural processes in the various states.¹⁷

2.1.1. *The dividing line of the Balkans*

The Balkan region has been considered Europe's barrel of gunpowder for centuries. The traditionally fragmented Balkans has faced newer and newer challenges. Some states – Croatia, Romania and Bulgaria – were able to emerge; in the case of Serbia it was the EU accession process that launched democratization as well as the adaptation to the international legal principles. The insecurity incurred by the ethnic and religious conflicts that reach across the borders to the other states of the region or the nationalist desires for revenge tend to define their neighborhood policy putting the stability of the whole region in danger. To that we can add the imperfection of the rule of law system and the underdevelopment of the democratic political culture. Unfavorable economic prospects and economic failure, the high rate of unemployment, especially among the youth (e.g. 40-45% in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo) have further en-

¹³ The non-Muslim population is approximately 4.4% of the total population in the Near East and North Africa. <http://iszlami.com/iszlami-az-elet-vallasa/az-iszlami-tortene/tem/1236-a-nem-muszlimok-helyzete-az-iszlami-vilagban-a-20-21-szazadban> (2016.02.06.)

¹⁴ The number of Muslims living in the Balkans is estimated around 15 million out of 75 million. The majority of them are followers of the Sunnite strand but there are other directions as well, like the "Bektashi" in Albania. http://www.bbc.co.uk/hungarian/balkans_muslims_hungarian/index.shtml (2016.02.05.)

¹⁵ The other significant part of the community migrated to and settled in Europe after the second world war, their number is around 9.2 million. (Liptay Lothar: Az iszlám korunkbeli európai inváziója. <http://www.refteologia.sk/likei.pdf> (2016.02.05.))

¹⁶ Balbisi Louai: A mediterrán országok gazdasági kitérés kísérletei az Európai Unió kibővülésének tükrében. Ph.D. disszertáció. BKÁE Nemzetközi Kapcsolatok. Budapest, 2001. p.9. http://phd.lib.uni-corvinus.hu/48/1/balbisi_l.pdf (2016.02.06.) Doctoral dissertation.

¹⁷ Reményi Péter: Etnikai változások a Nyugat-Balkánon 1991-2011. Mediterrán és Balkán Fórum, VIII. évfolyam 1. szám. (http://epa.oszk.hu/02000/02090/00020/pdf/EPA02090_mediterran_2014_01.pdf (2016.06.13.))

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hanced the social tension within the particular countries and within the region as well. Since the 2008 world economic crisis, with the exception of Macedonia and Albania where positive economic-structural and balancing processes have started, stagnation and in several cases recession have been typical.

The Balkan region has been under significant pressure due to the challenges from the outside and the low adaptive capability to cope with them. The challenges *“like the monetary crisis, for example, reached the region often with the mediation of the EU, their main economic partner. In other cases it is the often disputable political steps taken by one or other member state which constitute a braking force for the EU integration of the individual country (the Greek-Macedonian name issue or the Slovenian-Croatian border dispute, for example).”*¹⁸ A further neuralgic point is the question of Kosovo and Great Albania **which highlights how the Albanian nationalism is linked to Islam**. Kosovo is a member of the NATO and Albania is a NATO member as well, and both are considered to be among the “most Atlantist” states; it is unlikely that the fears of the surrounding Slavic nations, which surely would be monitored by the western commitment to protect the status quo in the Balkans, could come true. Despite everything, the existing conflict between Macedonia and Kosovo can endanger the fragile peace process going on between Serbia and Albania and can endanger the peace of the region as well. The geopolitical situation of the zone is influential: it is in the intersection point of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea; it has strategic importance for the rivalry among the great powers.

In the case of Macedonia and Montenegro the world has witnessed the strengthening of the internal and external political challenges in the past years. The framework of interpretation is touched by the Russian influence; Russia has regarded the Balkan Peninsula as its zone of interest enjoying close cultural and political relationships with most of the countries there. In the case of Macedonia, which is one of the poorest states in Europe, a further complication came from the division into Albanian and Macedonian parallel societies. By 2015 the authoritarian governing resulted in conditions close to a civil war. Another aspect is the determination of Greece to block the Macedonian strivings to become a member of the NATO and the EU.

The international status of Kosovo has not been cleared even today,¹⁹ which means that the state is not present in most of the international organizations. The internal relations have sharpened, and as a result in 2014 a huge emigration has started from Kosovo which culminated in January and February 2015. The majority of the 1.8 million strong population of Kosovo is Albanian Muslim, out of which hundreds have joined semi-military organizations in Syria and Iraq.²⁰ A similar process is developing in the low-achieving Bosnia-

¹⁸ Juhász József: Az EU és a Nyugat-Balkán ma. In: Mediterrán és Balkán Fórum. VIII. évfolyam 2. szám. PTE Kelet-Mediterrán és Balkán Tanulmányok Központja, 2014. p.32

http://epa.oszk.hu/02000/02090/00021/pdf/EPA02090_mediterran_2014_02_28-35.pdf (2016.02.05.)

¹⁹ The independence of Kosovo has not been recognized by a few states among them five EU members: Spain, Slovakia, Romania, Greece and Cyprus.

²⁰ <http://nol.hu/kulfold/ez-volt-a-konnygaz-eve-1582417> (2016.02.05.)

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Herzegovina in terms of economy and politics, though it is worth concluding that the majority of the people in both states seal themselves off from radicalism and the terrorism represented by ISIS.

Serbia alone in the region undertook openly the role of a balancing factor between the West and the East. While it is promoting its Euro-Atlantic integration, its historic traditions and economic ties link the country to Moscow. *“The experts of the Union do not consider it a source of danger that a candidate country has close ties with Russia, as presently the normalization of the Serbian-Kosovar relations is the key to the successful integration.”*²¹

We can say that until these states do not solve their internal conflicts and the challenges of their relations to each other in a satisfactory way, one cannot expect a positive change in their external judgment. We cannot disregard the formerly discussed external effect, or the near neighborhood of North Africa and the Near Eastern region.

2.1.2. The challenges of the MENA region

The MENA region is located where three continents meet and it is the birthplace of three monotheist religions. Its strategic importance comes from the abundance of its natural resources and its geopolitical position, as forty percent of the world oil trade flows across the Persian Gulf,²² the region owns 47.7% of the oil and 42.7% of the natural gas resources. Most of the oil – 31.7 % – is extracted in this region.²³ The distribution of the natural resources in the region is not even, so there is a reasonable economic difference between the wealthy and the poor states around the rich gulf. One third of the masses live in poverty, the unemployment rate is high, health services are insufficient, elementary education is unknown in a number of villages, and the electric power supplies are weak. On top of poverty family planning is almost missing or it is unknown. A problem of similar urgency is water; the amount of fresh water per capita is shrinking in the region and due to its geographical position the drying effect of the desert is strong. Agriculture and food production are strongly influenced by the water shortages. Though 42% of the population works in the agricultural sector, the GDP share in return is barely 6-7%.²⁴ The other important item regarding the region is the Arabic societies – especially those that have been affected by the Arab Spring – which have always existed in a duality. Formally they can be states con-

²¹ The cooperation between the two states is strong within the energy sector as the Russian Gazprom is the majority shareholder of the Serbian oil and gas company NIS (Naftna Industrija Srbije) whose expansion towards south-east Europe is a priority for both parties. In the future the appearance of other Russian energy companies (Gazprom, Lukoil) is expected in Serbia. In terms of politics a priority is blocking Kosovo in the international institutions and the discussion of military relations. (Németh Ferenc : Szerbia: Oroszország és a Nyugat között. <http://biztonsagpolitika.hu/cikkek/szerbia-oroszorszag-es-a-nyugat-kozott> (2016.02.05.)

²² Selján Péter: Konfliktusok a világ egyharmadán. p.14

<http://www.peter.seljan.hu/publications/konfliktusok-vilag-egyharmadan> (2016.02.18.)

²³ <https://www.bp.com/content/dam/bp/pdf/energy-economics/statistical-review-2015/bp-statistical-review-of-world-energy-2015-full-report.pdf> (2016.02.06.)

²⁴ <http://www.amf.org.ae/content/joint-arab-economic-report> (2016.02.18.)

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structured along western patterns, they are constitutional monarchies or republics with institutions existing in our (western) societies and known by us, referendums are held and there are balancing institutions as well. This is an outer shell; these systems are neo-patrimonial in reality where the western shell is just a mask.²⁵ *“In the “real” space the monarch/leader rules by the means of the traditional instruments of exercising power through its clientele, and at its base there is the social contract reinforced by the formally taken oath of faithfulness”*²⁶ The economic and social prospects of the region are uncertain.

The initial sources of the conflicts going on in the region are the political and religious disputes some of which are many decades or even centuries old.²⁷ Other disputes have come up in the recent years only. Nearly half of the wars going on in the world are in progress in the region.²⁸ There are several failed states: Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Yemen. A source of conflict is the formerly artificially founded national states which are starting to fragment. A similar significance can be attributed to the state founded in 1948, Israel. It is because history rarely has seen such long range, always re-flaming, erupting armed conflicts that influence world politics with its deeply rooted, metaphysical and emotional nature, making it difficult to reach negotiated agreements over issues like the possession or division of Palestine and the Holy Land.²⁹ A further political, economic and religious problem center of the region is the Islamic Republic of Iran which is the most populated and the second largest country of the Near East. The two regimes in its neighborhood, that of the Taliban and that of Saddam Hussein were turned over by the international coalition led by the USA in 2001 and 2003. For Iran it meant that both in its narrow and broad environment a way opened to make her a regional power. Parallel to that Iran opened towards the “third world” and started to develop a system of relations beyond the regional range.³⁰ The US-Iran reconciliation in 2015 strengthened Iran’s position against Israel and Saudi Arabia. Though the future position of the Persian state in terms of regional, international and political matters is still malleable, the lifting of the international sanctions means that on the global arena the reintegration of Iran has begun.

By these days the threats coming from the region have multiplied. The expectations for the Arab Spring which turned out to be illusory proved what Gazdik Gyula stated, that in

²⁵ Miklós Gábor: Arab tavasz, iszlám tél. (<http://nol.hu/kultura/arab-tavasz-iszlam-tel-1556147> (2016.01.17.))

²⁶ N. Rózsa Erzsébet: Az arab tavasz - A Közel-Kelet átalakulása. Osiris-Külügyi és Külgazdasági Intézet, Budapest, 2015. p.237-243

²⁷ The area is relatively even in terms of religious belonging, 95% of the people living in the Near East are Muslim, 28% are Shiite, 72% Sunnite and there are further schools within these religions. Iran and Iraq are countries with Shiite majority. The religious opposition between the two branches is centuries old but it was redefined with the apparition of ISIS in our days. (<http://tortenelemcikk.hu/node/182> (2016.02.06.))

²⁸ http://www.hiik.de/de/konfliktbarometer/pdf/ConflictBarometer_2014.pdf p.147 (2016.01.16.)

²⁹ Rostoványi Zsolt: Együttélésre ítélve – Zsidók és palesztinok küzdelme a Szentföldért. Corvina Kiadó, Budapest, 2006. p.9

³⁰ N. Rózsa Erzsébet: Irán a mai nemzetközi rendszerben. <http://www.doksi.hu/get.php?lid=20138> (2016.01.17.)

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these societies stability, order and livelihood security are much more important than the values of western type democracies.³¹ The other source of tension is within the Islam itself, the struggle between modernism and traditionalism. The tardiness of modernization and the gains of the non-democratic powers (the Islamic State and Al-Qaeda) might trigger such cataclysms in societies of the Near East that result in the rising level of migration which later will be part of an even greater Eurasian restructuring, but presently it is uncertain what the outcome would be.

2.2. THE EASTERN DIVIDING LINE

The eastern dividing line is along the eastern and central European countries, whose political, economic and social development was integrated in the soviet interest zone for 40 years. Then, after long and painful transition processes it constitutes the border of the western interest zone, which at the same time is the border between the western and the Orthodox civilization.

2.2.1. West-Eurasian centers of conflict

In the case of the Ukraine the dividing line or border is within the country, a further complication given by the east-western division meaning ethnic, geographic and political division. Ever since the independent Ukraine was formed, a duality characterizes it.³² While the western side of the country carries Central European values, with strong nationalism and western orientation, the eastern side has a pan Slavic identity and fosters friendship with Moscow.³³ These two identities clash, as they represent two opposing interests. Europe and the Atlantic region supports the territorial integrity of the Ukraine, while on the Russian part there have emerged two scenarios. The federal solution has been rejected by the Ukraine from the beginning, because they see it as a threat to the integrity of the country.³⁴ The internal ethnic and cultural tensions have to be considered significant factors. According to the other, a more radical view or scenario, Russia should not only annex the Crimean

³¹ <http://magyaridok.hu/kulfold/nem-jott-letre-a-varva-vart-demokracia-egyiptomban-325123/> (2016.02.22.)

³² Dobák Imre: Az uniós külső határok által kettéosztott Kárpátok Euróregió biztonságföldrajzi elemzése, PTE 2011. PhD értekezés, 50.o.

http://old.foldrajz.ttk.pte.hu/phd/phdkoord/nv/disszert/disszertacio_dobak_nv.pdf (2016.06.13.)
Doctoral dissertation.

³³ http://geopoleurasia.blog.hu/2014/08/07/geopolitikai_jatszma_ukrainaban (2016.02.27.)

³⁴ *This solution will lead to disintegration and not to the enlargement of the state structure. The federative structure is functioning on the condition that is based on mutual agreement to defeat a common enemy or to maintain an economic cooperation. In the case of the Ukraine they want to force upon the state the conception which may lead to the economic and political destabilization of the country.* – Vladimir Kuchma – former president of the Ukraine. <http://www.karpatinfo.net/cikk/belfold/kucsma-ukrajna-federalizacioja-az-allam-felbomlasahoz-vezethet> (2016.02.27.)

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peninsula,³⁵ but it should turn half of the Donetsk county and one third of the Luhansk county into zones of Russian influence.³⁶

It has been a 25 year old long question whether the Ukraine is modernizing the European or the Russian way in terms of security policy.³⁷ Additional, interwoven geopolitical and economic factors influence the conflicts. The conflict erupted as a result of the forced Russian control over the Crimean peninsula. The tension can be traced back to ethnic problems, further affected by the presence of the Russian fleet and the creation of the Sevastopol base on the Black Sea, due to the strong interest linked to the oil and natural gas resources.³⁸ As a consequence a lot of experts think that the Crimean conflict is a turn point in the international relations because it re-values the importance of Russia on the international political arena. *“Both the United States and the European countries have to rethink their relationship with Moscow.”*³⁹ A defining element is the freshly developing Eurasian Union led by Russia.⁴⁰ One of the considerable pillars of it would be the Ukraine; the other pillar would be the already joined White Russia.

The conflict is complex and there are several levels of interpretations. On the internal level two actors differ in terms of interest relations: the opposition and the right wing militant

³⁵ The Crimean Peninsula is a center of conflict in itself, as 58.5% of the population is Russian, 24.4% are Ukrainian, and 12.1% are Muslim Crimean Tatars. (Fehér Diána: A soknemzetiségű Krím-Félsziget az orosz–ukrán kapcsolatokban. p.88

<http://www.prominoritate.hu/folyoiratok/2010/ProMino10-2-05-Feher.pdf> (2016.03.01.)

³⁶In May 2014 the east-Ukrainian “republics of Donetsk and Luhansk” created by pro-Russian separatists unilaterally declared themselves independent alluding to the results of the regional referendums on independence. President Poroshenko reacted to the events by initiating changes in the constitution on the autonomy of certain territories. Within the present circumstances these changes are yet to come, so on the political level the Minsk agreement contains these criteria, too, apart from the Ukrainian constitutional reform. (Póti László: Oroszország örökre elveszítette Ukrajnát.

<http://orientpress.hu/148263> (2016.03.01.))

³⁷ Bővebben lásd: Dobák Imre: Az uniós külső határok által kettéosztott Kárpátok Eurorégió biztonsgföldrajzi elemzése, PTE 2011. PhD értekezés, p.122 Doctoral dissertation.

http://old.foldrajz.ttk.pte.hu/phd/phdkoord/nv/disszert/disszertacio_dobak_nv.pdf (2016.06.13.)

³⁸ There are huge oil and gas fields in the neighborhood of the peninsula. There is a large amount of gas under the waters of the Azov Sea, and to the south-east and west of Crimea. Each hydrocarbon deposit lies on a continental shelf with the advantage of a cheaper extraction than from the deeper parts of the Black Sea. (<http://www.vq.hu/velemenyelemzes/a-medve-kozbelep-az-orosz-krimi-422769> (2016.02.28.))

³⁹Deák András - Póti László - Rácz András: Az ukrajnai válság további eskzalációjának lehetőségei és hatása Magyarországra. <http://www.ceid.hu/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/CEID-Tanulmányok-Ukrajna.pdf> (2016.02.28.)

⁴⁰ There are geopolitical arguments set by Russia to create the Eurasian Union, which wants to become an alternative to the EU. On the other hand, like the Euro Atlantic system, it wants to become the Eurasian part of the security structure and wants to emphasize the Russian role as regional leader. One cannot ignore that it promises economic advantages and privileges to its members like the common service market, the free movement of goods and termination of the internal customs control. They promise to found the common energy market by 2019, the common oil- and gas-market by 2025 and the common financial market. (<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/for-russia-urasian-union-is-about-politics-not-economy/501126.html>) (2016.03.12.)

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groups go against the will of the state. On the outer level Donetsk, the Crimean peninsula and Luhansk live with a Russian background. The number of victims in the conflict was 4,327. 985,000 people were forced to flee their homes in 2015.⁴¹ After the Minsk II agreement which brought considerable hope,⁴² the intensity of the fights in the breakaway regions of eastern Ukraine decreased considerably.

The other critical center of conflict of the region is Moldova, a country of 3.5 million people, which became independent in 1991. There has been a constant crisis there since 2014. The country is in the crossfire of several interest groups, the tension is escalating in the pro-western- Russian-Romanian-Ukrainian square. The most significant division within the country is between the pro-Russian and the pro-western camp. The economic effects are sharpened by the ban on imports by Russia imposed as a result of the Association Agreement signed with the EU in 2014.⁴³ Another source of tension is the unresolved status of Transnistria⁴⁴ (territories over the Dniester) which is a geopolitical enclave between the Moldovan Republic and the Ukraine but which is so pro-Russia that it seeks opportunities to join it. Though after the peace treaty concluding the 1992 war Moldova decided to waive all rights to have a say, it does not acknowledge the state's sovereignty and regards it as a part of its own. In the present the conflict, that has been latent for 24 years, and which seems to sharpen again, the Moldovan and Ukrainian government demanded the withdrawal of the 2,600 Russian "peacekeepers" located there, but was not approved by Transnistria.⁴⁵ As a new actor, the Ukraine joined the process⁴⁶ after the Russian-Ukrainian military cooperation was terminated in May 2015 and the country stopped the

⁴¹ Conflict Barometer 2015. Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research.

http://www.hiik.de/de/konfliktbarometer/pdf/ConflictBarometer_2015.pdf (2016.05.16.)

⁴² According to the agreement, the opposing parties in Eastern Ukraine have to withdraw their heavy arms and Ukraine has to reform its constitution, taking into account the rights of the east Ukrainian population. President Petro Poroshenko declared that the agreements do not grant autonomy to the eastern Ukrainian territories on the hands of pro-Russian separatists.

(http://mno.hu/kulfold_archiv/rendezodhet-az-ukran-valsag-ion-a-minszki-tizenket-pont-1272462 , Póti László interjú: Megvalósuló félben van az egy éve megkötött Minszk II.

<http://inforadio.hu/hir/kulfold/megvalosulofelben-van-az-egy-eve-megkotott-minszk-ii-797616>

(2016.03.12.) Radio interview.

⁴³ <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/republik-moldau-regierung-a-1060184.html>,

<http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/moldau-oligarchen-und-politiker-nehmen-den-staat-aus-a-1059138.html>, <https://www.tagesschau.de/ausland/moldau-115.html> (2016.03.05.)

⁴⁴ The Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic (Transnistria) has asked the UN to recognize its independence, unsuccessfully. Its population is about half a million, with 31.9 % Moldovans, 30.3 % Russians, 28.8 % Ukrainian, 2 % Bulgarian, 2% Gagauz, 2% other. (<http://hatareset.blogspot.hu/2013/01/egy-oroszag-europaban-ami-nincs-is.html>) (2016.03.05.)

⁴⁵ By signing the truce treaty, Moldova agreed to the 14th Russian army (as a third party) be stationed on its internationally recognized territory. With this Moscow ensured the factual separation of the state of Transnistria. (Oláh András: A transznisztiai konfliktus két évtizede és megoldatlanságának okai I. Nemzet és Biztonság 2014/5. szám. p. 96)

⁴⁶ Kiev has broken the 1992 agreement between Moldova and Transnistria, in which the it should be one of the safeguards in the Transnistrian peace process.

<http://nyomaban.blogger.hu/2015/06/11/transznisztia-orosz-katonai-segitseget-ker> (2016.03.05.)

support of the Russian troops on land, giving direct link to the Russian-Ukrainian crisis.⁴⁷ Romania is indirectly related to the conflict by the high degree Russianization of the Romanian ethnic nationals living in Transnistria after the war⁴⁸ and by the fact that 75.8% of the Moldavian population is Moldavian.⁴⁹ The third element of the conflict is the Gagauz minority.⁵⁰ Earlier their priority was to prevent the union of Moldova and Romania. Among today's political events they urge the separation from Moldavia and the union with Russia,⁵¹ the first step of that would be the founding of the customs union.⁵² In 2013 a referendum was held and 98% of the population of 160,000 voted for this option.

2.2.2. *The Caucasian set of problems*

The Caucasus region has been one of the most significant crisis zones on Earth characterized by a linguistic and ethnic color scheme and religious differences.⁵³ More than 50 ethnic groups live in the northern part of the Caucasus region and at least 37 languages are spoken. The area is integrated in the administrative system of the Russian Federation and it consists of seven republics and two border zones. The separatist efforts are strongest in Chechnya and Dagestan and have led several times to conflicts the size of wars.⁵⁴ In the

⁴⁷ <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/transnistrien-kriegsgefahr-zwischen-moldau-und-ukraine-a-1037149.html> (2016.03.05.)

⁴⁸ <https://eurocom.wordpress.com/2014/04/22/a-hetkoznapok-geopolitikaja-a-transzdnyszterikonfliktus-egy-diszkoban-kezdodott-adevarul/> (2016.03.05.)

⁴⁹ The ethnic composition of the country: 8.4% Ukrainian, 5.9% Russian, 4.4% Gagauz, 2.2% Romanian, 1.9% Bulgarian, 1.4% other. (**The World Factbook**. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/md.html> (2016.03.05.)

⁵⁰ The Gagauz is a dominantly Orthodox Christian ethnic group speaking a language from the Turkish family. The autonomous Gagauzia has been legalized by the Moldavian parliament with 1994 in a qualified majority rule, called "organic law" ("Law on the Special Legal Status of Gagauzia.") (<http://bgazrt.hu/files/NPKI/Gagauz.pdf> (2016.03.05.))

⁵¹ Barabás T. János: A Moldovai Köztársaság változó környezetben. KKI-elemzések. E-2015/5. p.6 <http://kki.gov.hu/download/e/ef/d0000/No%205%20Barab%C3%A1s%20mold%C3%A1v.pdf>

⁵² <http://www.dw.com/de/kommentar-gagausien-bleibt-anti-europ%C3%A4isch/a-18334252> (2016.03.05.)

⁵³ In the Caucasus region there are 181 nationalities, in terms of religious belonging 46% are Christian, 51% are Muslim, 3% other (dominantly Jewish). Source: Gerencsér Árpád: A Kaukázus társadalmi viszonyainak elemzése (http://oroszvilag.hu/?t1=elemzesek_interjuk&hid=3585 (2016.05.25.)

⁵⁴ The first Chechen War between 1994 and 1996 demanded a great number of victims. The peace treaty signed on 12th May 1997 did not account for the definitive status of Chechnya. The terrorist actions of the Chechen extremists continued and the Islamisation of the territory became stronger. The events gradually led to a newer Russian intervention and to the second Chechen War that started on 30th September 1999. Hundred thousands of people had to flee their homes because of ethnic cleansing. There is an important difference between the ideologies of the two wars. The first war was started based on the decree on restoration of the state order; the second one was explained with the fight against terrorism. Other armed conflicts started in the zone in the spring of 1991 and escalated in October 1992 between the ethnic Ingush forces and the north Ossetia troops in the Prigorodni region. The aim of the Ingush was to annex the zone around the capital city of North Ossetia to Ingushetia. The war lasted 10 days and the death toll was 600. On the political level the conflict has not come to a

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period between 1999 and 2003 these movements spread to Ingushetia, Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria, the southern part of the Caucasus and up to the present day they define the security and political challenges of the region.

The federal government has difficulties creating peace and stability in the North Caucasus region heavy with latent ethnic tensions, human rights violations, uneven economic development, corruption and organized crime as well as high rate of unemployment and poverty. Among the sources of conflict we can identify the contrast between the radical and the moderate Islam, the involvement of the Russian Federation in the internal politics of these zones as well; and the economic underdevelopment on top of all that. *“The ‘inner abroad’ precisely defines the relationship between the Federation and the Northern Caucasus: in law it is part of the country, in fact it is walking the path away, a region observed with fear by the majority population.”*⁵⁵ There is another aspect of today’s radicalization, and it is the Islamic Fundamentalism which started developing in the North Caucasus region in the 80s with Dagestan as its ideological center while the practical field of implementation was Chechnya.⁵⁶ Moscow tried to prevent the escalation of violence in many ways. In the era of Putin military oppression was dominant. In the Medvedev era developmental and modernization politics was emphasized with the economic rise in its center and the reduction of unemployment, starting from 2012⁵⁷. The local actors became centrally supported as the new system came into force. Moscow implemented administrative reforms, introduced the status of the special envoy and founded the Ministry of North Caucasus Affairs. These elements were especially employed in Dagestan ensuring that issues can be addressed through negotiations to prevent the ethnically heterogeneous republic from polarization. After the failed political agreement, since 2014, the politics of force has been dominating again. A further complication is the Russian involvement in Syria, and the high number of

conclusion even these days, though several agreements have been signed. (<http://mult-kor.hu/20-eve-tort-ki-az-also-csecsen-haboru-20141211>)

Souleimanov, Emil - Ditych, Ondrej: Az orosz-csecsen konfliktus nemzetköziesítése. Mítoszok és valóság. (http://www.hhrf.org/kisebbssegkutataskk_2009_02/cikk.php?id=1724, Neukirch, Claus: Russland (Inguschetien, 1992). <http://www.wiso.uni-hamburg.de/fachbereiche/sozialwissenschaften/forschung/akuf/kriege-archiv/209-russland/> (2016.03.11.)

⁵⁵ Kiss Annamária: A radikális iszlám észak-kaukázusi terjedése mint orosz biztonságpolitikai kihívás: a Kaukázusi Emirátus. p.78. http://kki.gov.hu/download/0/8a/b0000/Kulugyi_Szemle_2013_03_A_radik%C3%A1lis_iszl%C3%A1m_%C3%A9szak-_pdf (2016.03.06.)

⁵⁶ In 2007 the Chechen separatist Dokka (Doku) Umarov proclaimed the Caucasus Emirate (Imarat Kavkaz), which is a state based on the principles of salafism having the sharia order of laws. Opposite the other Islamic organizations (ISIS, Al-Kaida) it only confronts the Russian state power.

⁵⁷ More than 90% of the Chechen, more than 80% of the Ingushetia and more than 65% of the budget of Dagestan comes from Moscow. (<http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/ausland/krieg-im-nordkaukasus-russlands-zone-der-ohnmacht-1579427.html>) (2016.03.11.)

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fighters who are on the side of ISIS and are expected to leak back,⁵⁸ leading to possible further radicalization.

After the dismantling of the Soviet Union three states became independent in the Transcaucasus area. Naturally the regional and the great powers did not refrain from the conflict because geopolitical games emerged: Russia, the US, France and Iran aligned supporting Armenia for various motives and to various extents, Turkey supported Azerbaijan.⁵⁹ In Georgia, after Adjara, South Ossetia and Abkhazia declared themselves independent,⁶⁰ other relations of interest dominated; the goal was to preserve the integrity of the country and to reunify it. However, the country is not uniform as an area, neither ethnically, nor religion-wise.⁶¹ Another influencing factor is the energy transporting corridor in the region which connects the Caspian Sea – through the “modern Silk Road” to the West. The actual interests have changed the dimensions of the conflict several times in the past 30 years. Between 1989 and 1992 it was considered an internal matter of Georgia, between 1992 and 2001 it was an element of the Russian-Georgian conflict, in the past few years it has outgrown the competence of Tbilisi and has become subject of the geopolitical disputes between the United States and Russia⁶² with two mid-size inevitable agents, Iran and Turkey.

The Armenian-Azeri relationship is another source of conflict in the area. The ownership and belonging of Nagorno-Karabakh has been a source of ethnic tensions for the longest time in the post-soviet region demanding the most victims.⁶³ There has never been a peace

⁵⁸ Based on 2015 data, about 3,000 Russians joined ISIS either in Syria or Iraq. (Conflict barometer 2015. Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict. p. 52 (2016.03.11.)

http://www.hiik.de/en/konfliktbarometer/pdf/ConflictBarometer_2015.pdf

⁵⁹ Marosvári Csaba: A hegyi-karabahi konfliktus (1988–1994).

http://www.grotius.hu/doc/pub/FXXWTT/2013-10-16_marosvari_csaba_a-hegyi-karabahi-konfliktus.pdf (2016.03.06.)

⁶⁰ Georgia suffered a defeat in the five-day war of 2008. South Ossetia and Abkhazia declared their independence unilaterally. The Russian troops have been stationed in those two quasi states since then. The conflict is still being kept moving with the refugee crisis. Abkhazia strives for a total political independence, Georgia would only grant her autonomy. The population of South Ossetia voted for independence in a referendum in 2006. In the background there is Russia which signed a treaty with both countries about Moscow controlling the area and the borders, what was de facto interpreted by Georgia as a Russian occupation. In 1991 Adjara also took steps towards independence, which was in vigor until 2004 when the Georgian troops restored the central control in the region.

(<http://nol.hu/kulfold/az-oroszok-lassan-kebelezik-be-deli-szomszedjukat-1535561>) (2016.03.10.)

⁶¹ The Georgians belong to the Kartvelian nation in the Caucasus language family. The Abkhazians differ from the Georgians in the ethnic sense, they are dominantly Orthodox, but with quite a large number of Muslims. The Adjars are basically Georgians, but they have a great group of Muslims too next to the Orthodox religion. The people of South Ossetia belong to the Iranian language group and are Orthodox. <http://vlaston.webnode.hu/news/a-2008-as-orosz-gruz-haboru-kronikaja/> (2016.03.11.)

⁶² Tálas Péter: Orosz-grúz háború - Sarokba szorítva. (<http://magyarnarancs.hu/kulpol/orosz-gruz-haboru-sarokba-szoritva-69282>) (2016.03.11.)

⁶³ It was Stalin's decision to make Karabakh part of Azerbaijan. On 7th July 1923 the Autonomous Region of Nagorno-Karabakh was formed on the former territory of a khanate. From time to time there were disputes about the belonging of the territory and Armenian communists in 1945 and 1966 put the

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treaty between the parties but the unification of Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia was completed de facto and Russia supports the situation both politically and in a military way. The conflict is escalating again these days with the re-arming of the Azeri army on the one hand and the Russian military support together with the prolonged stationing of Russian forces in Armenia until 2044 on the other hand.

The stability of the South Caucasus region is further threatened by the Turkish-Armenian relationship, the settling of which is yet to come. The relationship has been burdened by the trauma of the 1915 genocide against the Armenians demanding 1.5 million victims.

The region is conflict-laden and a solution has not been reached. As a result of the ethnic political tensions two states out three – Georgia and Azerbaijan have lost territories. The future of the region can be solved with bi- and multilateral regional cooperation that would mediate between the political, economic and security political agents. Cultural, ethnic, religious and linguistic differences are so great in the South Caucasus that they cannot be compared to other regions which have already created the framework for cooperation and that is a drawback.⁶⁴

The conflicts existing along the eastern dividing line came forward after the Soviet Union fell apart⁶⁵ and they have their roots in the mutual recognition of the new state borders. 60% of the former border lines that divided the soviet republics have never been set as they were not marked by two political communities on the two sides of the border. These borders were not concluded in contracts but it was the political will of the Moscow government. A further problem were the “new” ethnic minorities that “came to life” on the territory of the new states. After the dismantling of the Soviet Union 45 million people became ethnic minorities.⁶⁶ In this context the key question in the region is the special position and the

question on the agenda, but the Soviet Union did not change the borders. The next incident was on 13th February 1988 when the Armenians of Karabakh protested demanding that the territories be annexed to Armenia. Meanwhile, due to the ethnic cleansing in the two states a considerable number of refugees fled the Armenia and Azerbaijan. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in August 1991 the conflict rekindled: it became a war of two independent countries, not just rivalry or conflicts. On 16th May the fighting parties concluded an agreement of truce. On 6th January 1992 Nagorno-Karabakh declared its independence and asked to be accepted member of the UN. The number of the victims of the conflict has reached 30 thousand by these days and the number of the refugees is counted by the hundred thousand. (Gyene Pál: Azerbajdzsán: játékos vagy sakkfigura a „nagy játszómában”?) http://kki.gov.hu/download/8/aa/b0000/Kulugyi_Szemle_2012_03_Azerbajdzs%C3%A1n-j%C3%A1t%C3%A9kos_vag_.pdf and http://multkor.hu/20120906_egy_befagyott_konfliktus_anatomiaja?pldx=3 (2016.03.10.)

⁶⁴ Stepanyan, Ruben: Bezpečnostné aspekty zahraničnej politiky štátov Južného Kaukazu.

Medzinárodné vzťahy. 2007/2, szám. Fakulta medzinárodných vzťahov Ekonomickej univerzity v Bratislave. p. 171 (<http://fmv.euba.sk/RePEc/brv/journl/MV2007-2.pdf> (2016.03.12.))

⁶⁵ Except for the conflict in the Karabakh region.

⁶⁶ The change has affected mostly those Russians who found themselves outside the Russian Federation. Almost a fifth of the Russian population, 25.3 million people became trapped in the inner soviet peripheral independent states. (Sz. Bíró Zoltán: Oroszország és a posztszovjet térség biztonságpolitikája, 1991–2014 (I.) Nemzet és Biztonság 2014/3. szám. p.43.)

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role of the successor state of the Soviet Union which is Russia considering the whole region as its zone of influence. It tries to maintain and even strengthen its influence in the region while concentrating on a double task. On the one hand the stabilization of the federal structure and on the other hand focus on its interests strongly affected by the ethnic tensions threatening with civil war in the new states that have emerged on its periphery. The gas and oil industry as well as other natural resources, are factors with special political influence in the zone. The states are in the possession of considerable oil and natural gas supplies over which other agents in the Black Sea and Caspian Sea area, like Turkey and Iran compete in their fight for economic influence. Resulting from all those above we can conclude that in the system of the international powers and in the network of the international cooperation the zone situated along the eastern dividing line is not even and it is unlikely that it can become an integrated and stable region. The direction of development in the individual states is vague, which affects their reciprocal and international relationships even outside the region.

SUMMARY

The formation of the political and economic structures has not come to an end in the regions positioned along the southern and eastern dividing line. Predictability and consolidation are questionable; the elements of building partnerships are malleable. The actors in the conflicts have changed in the modified environment, the number, the activity and influence of non-governmental actors has grown, all which rely on the technological possibilities offered by globalization. ISIS emerging out of these agents can be regarded as one of the greatest challenges of our times, an example of the developmental direction in which a subnational rebel group turns into a transnational organization and demands the attributes of a state.⁶⁷ The process is directly related to the problems of the instable and non-functioning states where violent actions, criminality, terrorist activity lead to a predictably rising number of complicated conflicts.⁶⁸ Corruption is spreading in those regions; signs of economic, political and social crises leading to poverty, demographical problems, organized criminal actions, the expansion of the drug trade and mass migration can be followed.

⁶⁷ Szörényi András: A nem állami szereplők befolyásának növekedése és annak okai. Külügyi Szemle. 2014. tél. p. 181

<http://kki.gov.hu/download/6/30/e0000/8%20Sz%C3%B6r%C3%A9nyi%20Andr%C3%A1s.pdf>
(2016.03.13.)

⁶⁸ Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds a publication of the National Intelligence Council. p. 57
<https://globaltrends2030.files.wordpress.com/2012/11/global-trends-2030-november2012.pdf>
(2016.05.19.)

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The crises in the conflict zones cannot be solved on the short run, which is evident as the sources generating the problems are too deeply rooted. That is why Europe needs to re-define its notion of security.

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