

Peculiarities and Prospects of the European Union Involvement in the Settlement of Conflicts on the Territory of the Eastern Partnership Countries¹

OLHA IVASECHKO, OLEH TSEBENKO, YARYNA TURCHYN
AND YARYNA VEZDENKO



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Abstract: A new EU global strategy is being formed, as opposed to the European Security Strategy, which no longer corresponds to the geopolitical environment. In accordance with the evolution of security threats at the basis of the Global Strategy, the trends of ensuring unity within the EU and its global leadership, as well as strengthening the EU's defence capabilities and changing its security approaches are now becoming of vital importance. It is the security structural transformations that currently pose the task of geopolitical repositioning to international actors in the global security system. In the conditions of such restructuring, the role of the EU in resolving international conflicts is given a special place. It is obvious that its classic approaches to conflict resolution have lost their perspective.

Key words: *European Union; mediation; Eastern Partnership; armed conflicts; negotiation process; peacekeeping activities; territorial integrity; unrecognised republics; separatists; international security; threats; peace agreement; war*

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I. Topicality of the scientific research

The foreign policy orientations of the European Union (hereinafter the EU) are aimed at forming mutually beneficial relations with democratic states that implement pro-European policies. A paramount position is held here by the participating countries of the Eastern Partnership (EP), the initiative launched on 7 May 2009 at the Prague EU Summit. The abovementioned initiative provides for multilateral cooperation of EU member states with the Eastern European countries, namely, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine (Belarus suspended its EP membership in June 2021).

However, the European integration and Euro-Atlantic aspirations of the countries participating in the EP are the prerequisites for the brutal aggressive policy of the Russian Federation (RF), which seeks to make their advancement towards the EU and the North Atlantic Alliance (NATO) practically impossible and to establish its unjustified control over them. The evidence of this is Russia's full-scale military invasion of Ukraine, which is currently being carried out in defiance of all international norms and rules. Due to this, the need to modify tools and mechanisms for resolving regional conflicts in all countries of the EP is particularly urgent at the EU level today. After all, effective mechanisms for resolving conflicts on the territory of the EP countries have not yet been found. In Georgia and Moldova the conflicts are in a 'frozen' state and a full-scale war of the Russian Federation is taking place in Ukraine. In fact, the military threats cause changes in the rules of the game of the entire international system and it requires quick and effective decisions at the EU level to counter them.

The aim of the article is to analyse the effectiveness of EU mediation in the resolution of armed conflicts on the territory of the Eastern Partnership countries in the context of the latest threats from the Russian Federation and to clarify the prospects of its involvement in the resolution of conflicts in new geopolitical conditions.

II. Theoretical and methodological aspects of research

The problem of conflict resolution on the territory of the Eastern Partnership countries is of considerable interest to both foreign and Ukrainian scientists and experts. In particular, it is worth noting the scientific works of such foreign authors as Nicu Popescu (Popescu 2020), Nathalie Tocci (Tocci 2011), Thomas Waal, Nicolaus Twickel (Waal, Twickel 2020), Heorhii Shelest (Shelest 2016), Natia Seskuria (Seskuria 2021), Benjamin Potter (Potter 2022), E. Nuriyev (Nuriyev 2019), Khayal Iskandarov (Iskandarov 2021), Kirakosyan Hasmik (Hasmik 2020), N. Chaban (Chaban 2019), Steven Blockmans (Blockmans 2018), Jacob Bercovitch (Bercovitch 2009) and Natalya Belitser (Belitser 2022).

Among the Ukrainian authors who study conflicts on the territory of the EP countries, it is worth highlighting the scientific works of O. Alekseichenko (Alekseichenko 2014), A. Bakanova (Bakanova 2021), I. Bohinska (Bohinska 2022), N. Bondarchuk (Bondarchuk 2021), K. Vitman (Vitman 2008), M. Kapitonenko (Kapitonenko 2017), O. Kordun (Kordun 2021), I. Levchenko (Levchenko 2021), H. Shelest (Shelest 2009), H. Maksak (Maksak 2020), I. Maksymenko (Maksymenko 2016), Yu. Pasichnyk (Pasichnyk 2013), T. Podkovenko (Podkovenko 2020), V. Ryzhkova (Ryzhkova 2014), H. Solovei and K. Kovtun (Solovei 2021), Ya. Turchyn (Turchyn 2018) and others. For the most part, they consider the historical prerequisites for the emergence of individual conflicts and analyse the prospects for their resolution at the level of the EU and international organisations.

The annexation of Crimea and the emergence of an armed conflict in the East of Ukraine caused the appearance of a considerable amount of scientific research. In our opinion, the following studies are of considerable significance: 1) works by H. Maksak (Maksak 2020); 2) the research by V. Filipchuk and a number of experts, which was carried out at the initiative of the Prague Institute of Open Society (Filipchuk 2016); 3), Eastern Europe Foundation (Proposals for policy on conflict resolution in temporarily uncontrolled territories in Eastern Ukraine, 2017); 4) the International Center for Advanced Studies (Filipchuk 2016).

Therefore, many scientists are studying the current topics of unresolved or 'frozen' conflicts on the territory of the EP countries, and a significant contribution has been made to the study of the general features of the EU's cooperation with these countries. Concurrently, taking into account the unresolved nature and the duration of conflicts (first of all in Ukraine) and the change in the security component of the entire international system, it is appropriate to carry out a separate study focused specifically on the role of the EU in resolving armed conflicts in the EP.

The methodological basis of writing the article is the theoretical justification of mediation and its main characteristics by Jacob Bercovitch. Notably, taking into consideration the mediation effectiveness criteria developed by Jacob Bercovitch, the efficiency of EU mediation in four conflicts on the territory of the EP was determined. In particular, in order to evaluate the effectiveness of mediation, Jacob Bercovitch singles out the following general criteria: 1) presence/absence of an agreement between the parties as a result of mediation; 2) presence/absence of positive conflict dynamics; 3) conformity/nonconformity of the obtained results with the expectations of the mediator (Solovei 2021: 44).

We also rely on Jacob Bercovitch's interpretation of mediation, which, in our opinion, is the most appropriate. According to him, mediation is an effective method of conflict resolution, in which the parties to the conflict seek to resolve it with the help of a mediator who facilitates the process of reaching

an arrangement/agreement between them (Bercovitch 2009). Specifically, he states that mediation is 'a conflict resolution process related to, but distinct from, the parties' own efforts in which the parties seek assistance or accept an offer of assistance from a person, group, state, or organization to change or influence their perceptions or behaviour without recourse to physical force or the authority of the law' (Bercovitch 2009). Accordingly, the result of successful mediation is an agreement reached during the discussion, which will be recognised by each of the parties to the conflict.

At the same time, Jacob Bercovitch notes that mediation is an informal process; there is no direct legal basis or institutional authority; it depends exclusively on the personal resources and characteristics of the intermediary; and it involves only the process of conflict management (Bercovitch 2009). The nature, the quality and the results of mediation, in his opinion, depend on who exactly the parties to the conflict are, and what interests the mediator pursues and whether the mediator does not show favouritism to one of the parties, thereby violating the law of objectivity. At the same time, he defines the success factors of mediation. These include: personal/role factors, situational, interaction and motivation factors (Bercovitch 2005: 291).

Besides, Jacob Bercovitch suggests determining the degrees of mediation effectiveness. In his opinion, mediation can be considered: 1) effective (the conflict is changed or resolved); 2) partially effective (negotiations are taking place between the parties); 3) being limitedly effective (the violence has stopped or a cease-fire agreement has been signed); 4) ineffective (mediation did not help). It should be understood that the results of mediation effectiveness/inefficiency often depend on the context of the conflict, its nature, as well as the process of the mediator's activity, the motivation of the parties, etc. (Bercovitch 2009).

However, it is worth noting that the concept of 'effectiveness' of mediation is a rather ambiguous concept. When evaluating mediation, some scholars draw a parallel only between 'success' and 'failure' and, correspondingly, do not take into account a number of additional factors. Concurrently, the assessment of mediation is both objective (achievement of a peace agreement, its quality, etc.) and subjective (the mode the agreement and negotiations are perceived by the parties). As it is shown by the international practice, the subjective views of the parties to the conflict are broader and do not always coincide with the objective ones, contributing to contradictions. Comparing both interpretations help to understand in which ways different definitions of the situation create obstacles for cooperation between the parties, potentially hindering the resolution of the conflict (Chaban 2019). In addition, tools and techniques, as well as the style preferred by the mediator, are of paramount importance (Podkovenko 2020: 14).

In the scientific literature one can also come across the concept of 'mediation success'. De facto, a 'success' is a reflection of a formal agreement resulting from mediation. Meanwhile, the practical results of the agreement and their assess-

ment or 'mediation effectiveness' are equally important. It should be noted that scientists interpret the correspondence of these concepts in different ways. For instance, Jacob Bercovitch makes a distinction between these concepts. In his opinion, 'success' is a broader concept, and 'efficiency' is its 'most clear, concrete sign' (Solovei 2021). Given this, mediation is a process aimed at change, and its effectiveness is the presence of such change. Accordingly, tangible results are a sign of the effectiveness of mediation, and ineffectiveness manifests itself in their absence. The problem of choosing mediation strategy, i.e. the ways in which mediators achieve their goals, is closely related to its effectiveness. It should be noted that mediation is a tool for implementing EU foreign policy in the context of conflict prevention, settlement and resolution. In the modern sense, the term 'mediation' (lat. *mediatio* – mediation, middle) became established in the second half of the 20th century and involves a procedure/process of conflict resolution in which the mediator helps the parties to the conflict to reach effective ways of resolving it.

It is appropriate to dwell upon the understanding of this concept at the EU level. Thus, in the EU, mediation is defined as 'a way of facilitating negotiations between conflict parties and conflict transformation with the help of a [mutually] acceptable third party' (Solovei 2021). Its goal is to provide an opportunity to reach agreements that the parties consider satisfactory and that they are willing to implement. The signs of mediation within the EU include: 1) peaceful conflict management; 2) the involvement of a third party (a person, group or organisation with its own values, resources and interests) in an interstate conflict; 3) the intervention is carried out by non-violent methods and voluntarily; 4) the parties to the conflict control the results and have the right to accept/reject the proposals of the mediators; 5) the so-called 'ad hoc' principle (i.e., mediators make proposals and then the mediation ends with or without agreement); 6) mediators enter the conflict with the aim of its resolution or transformation, etc. (Bercovitch 2009).

The term 'mediation' also needs clarification. Let us emphasise that this concept is used to denote the role that the EU plays in international conflicts. Mediation is a certain peacemaking cycle in attempts to resolve a conflict, which takes place in the context of the interaction of a mediator (moderator) with the parties to the conflict with the aim of resolving the conflict or reaching a peace agreement (Herrberg 2022).

In a broader sense, mediation activity is the achievement of a certain compromise settlement of conflicting issues between conflict parties, or the minimisation of the consequences of their conflict behaviour. In view of this, the concept of 'international mediation' should be understood as a set of measures implemented by certain international actors for the purpose of managing international conflicts (Vukovic 2014).

The mediating role in facilitating the resolution of EU conflicts was also established during the formation of the Common European Security and Defense Policy in 2000 (Maksak 2020) and adoption of the Gothenburg Program (2001), which provides for preventive measures regarding conflicts, an agreed policy of response to them, improvement of the prevention tools and creation of effective forms of partnership (Council of the European Union 2001). The adoption of the European Security Strategy has also become appropriate for participation in conflict resolution (2003), which added conceptual foundations to the strengthening of the EU's global role and development of the European strategy for neighbourhood policy, within which the EU began to consider its role in relation to 'frozen' conflicts on the territory of the post-Soviet countries. That was the time when the first institutional attempts to regulate them appeared (Maksak 2020). The creation of the Eastern Partnership initiative in 2009, which is related to the EU's desire to improve the security environment on its eastern borders, became especially important (Maksak 2021).

In fact, that was the time when mediation was officially established as an integral part of the EU's foreign policy, and, along with the Administration of Conflict Prevention, Peace and Mediation Tools Department was established within the Directorate of Policy and Security. This made it possible to institutionalise mediation and separate it from the general foreign policy of the EU (Shelest 2016: 474).

The Concept of EU Peace Mediation is also an important document defining the activity of the EU as a mediator. In particular, the European Peace Institute and the European Forum of International Mediation and Dialogue focus their activities on the development of mediation. Therefore, achieving peace is one of the main values of the EU and it has a unique combination of tools to achieve it (Blockmans 2018). Hence, the institution of mediation became part of the legal system of the EU.

The EU institutions for resolving conflicts within the framework of Eastern Partnership are the following: European External Action Service (EEAS) (Davydenko 2016: 439); EU Intelligence Center (INTCEN) (Intelligence Analysis Center 2012); Unit for Conflict Prevention, Rule of Law and Security Sector Reforms, Holistic Approach, Stabilization and Mediation (PRISM) (European Union 2020); European Peace Fund (European Peace Facility 2021).

In addition to the institutional component, the EU also involves financial mechanisms for conflict prevention and settlement in the processes of mediation. Thus, in 2014, the Instrument Contributing to Stability and Peace (ICSP) was developed, which is managed by the Service of Foreign Policy Instruments of the European Commission and provides for the financing of measures aimed at preventing and restraining conflicts, as well as responding to new transregional threats (Instrument Contributing to Stability and Peace 2021).

However, despite a rather powerful institutional component, the EU saw itself as a mediator only in a supporting role. This, in particular, is confirmed

by the EU Global Strategy presented in 2016, which states that the EU's peace-keeping activities are only additional support for UN activities through conflict resolution and stabilisation (Shelest 2016: 473).

Suggesting an integrated approach to conflict resolution, the EU adopted the Civilian CSDP Compact in 2018, which provides for a review of approaches to the national participation of EU members in civilian missions and their resource content and greater orientation towards changes in the security environment (Maksak 2020).

In general, the EU's integrated approach to conflict mediation consists of conflict analysis and prevention that also presupposes a balance between its detection and response. Developing a common approach to conflict management based on a joint approach and post-conflict stabilisation which involves restoration and avoidance of re-escalation is also important. At each of these stages, the actions are coordinated at the level of relevant European institutions (EU Delegations, the Crisis Response Mechanism of the European External Action Service, missions and bodies of the Common Security and Defense Policy, relevant services and departments of the EC, military and civilian agencies, etc. (Tardy 2017).

Therefore, the context of interdependent relations between the countries of the EP and the EU does not allow it to remain aloof from the conflicts that exist on the territory of these states. With the help of the mechanisms and tools of the mediation institute, the EU seeks to play its role in facilitating their resolution, overcoming negative consequences, etc.

III. The main part / Research

It should be noted that historically the EU has not been an active mediator in resolving international conflicts. Only some EU member states have mediation experience (Tocci 2011). *De iure*, this is explained by the purpose of creating the EU and the basic principles of its functioning. According to which, the EU resolves crises and conflicts in the process of implementing its foreign policy on the basis of taking into account the political interests of member states, a common understanding of security threats, the inclination of other states and regions to democracy, freedom, the rule of law, peace, etc. To realise such goals, the EU uses the tools of diplomacy, dialogue, cooperation and integration. Therefore, the priority of the EU is to resolve disputed issues without a military component. Because of this, the EU's conflict resolution policy is often defined as 'peace through integration project' (Tocci 2011). However, in practice, such approaches are not always effective and are subject to criticism.

Considering certain gaps in its mediation policy, the EU has repeatedly attempted to modify its goals. For example, back in the 1990s, after unsuccessful attempts to resolve the Yugoslav and Kosovo conflicts, official Brussels

recognised the need for a greater role in conflict prevention. In view of this, the European Security Strategy of 2003 declared the intention to use the entire range of instruments for conflict resolution – from preventive actions to post-conflict recovery (Maksimenko 2016). The importance of building a circle of stable countries to the East of the EU by forming their economic and political cooperation (i.e. EP) was separately noted.

In general, the EU played a mediating role in this or that way in conflicts in the Balkans in the 1990s, in the signing of the Ohrid Agreement between the Macedonian government and the Albanian minority in 2001 (together with the USA, OSCE and NATO), in the peace process in the province of Aceh between the Indonesian government and the separatists, in the Black Sea region regarding the Transnistrian conflict of 2005, in the conflict in the South Caucasus, in the Middle East peace process (participation in the Quartet), in the settlement of the Russian-Georgian conflict in 2008, in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict since 2014 (Norman format). In total, the EU deployed 29 international missions (Prospects for the development of EU policy: global and regional dimensions 2019: 179). The EU also has experience in six military and eleven civilian missions in different countries (Haidai, Zarembo 2016: 11). Such activities of the EU are based on the principles of the Lisbon Treaty of 2009, which states that the EU has the right to use its civilian and military assets in missions outside its borders for the purpose of maintaining peace, preventing conflicts and strengthening international security in accordance with the principles of the UN Charter (Article 28, paragraph 49) (Shelest 2016: 474).

The experience of EU missions on the territory of the countries of the EP is one of the most complicated. For example, the EU refused to send a peace-keeping mission to Transnistria in 2003 and 2006. Similarly, the EU did not send a monitoring mission to Georgia in 2005, when the activities of the OSCE border monitoring mission were blocked by the Russian Federation. Only four EU missions, EUBAM on the Moldovan-Ukrainian border, EUJUST THEMIS and EUMM in Georgia and EUAM in Ukraine worked in the region. They were all civil. The possibility of sending a military mission has always been ruled out by EU member states (Haidai – Zarembo 2016: 10). It is worth emphasising that until 2005, the EU was not involved in the direct settlement of conflicts on the territory of the Eastern Partnership countries. Only general statements about peaceful methods of solving them were heard on its behalf. In 2007, the EU adopted the first comprehensive document ‘Black Sea Synergy’, which was based on economic development and support for democratic reforms of neighbouring territories. This document partially pays attention to the problem of ‘frozen conflicts’ in this region, indicating the need to strengthen the political participation of the EU in the attempts to solve the problems of Transnistria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh. In this aspect, the EU intended to contribute to the strengthening of economic development, social cohesion,

security and stability. However, these tools are insufficient for full resolution of conflicts. After all, their goal is only support, development and struggle with the consequences. And this is a short-term strategy that contradicts the goals of mediation, which requires greater political involvement of the mediator. Therefore, most experts unanimously state the ineffectiveness of the EU as a conflict mediator. For example, among the reasons for the ineffectiveness of EU conflict resolution H. Shelest attributes a limited strategic approach, and focus on post-conflict reconstruction rather than direct involvement in the conflict. The lack of consensus and a unified position in the EU regarding common foreign policy and understanding of European integration (enlargement) as a factor of conflict prevention also affect the EU's attempts to resolve conflicts (Prospects of EU policy development: global and regional dimensions 2019: 172). Another researcher, Steven Blockmans, points out that in matters of implementation of mediation principles, the EU faces the problems of a significant time gap between conflict prevention and response to it, as well as insufficient cooperation with international partners and a general ineffective military-civilian coordination, that is, lack of political will to resolve complex conflicts; a gap between 'opportunities and expectations' (Blockmans 2018). This is explained by the fact that the EU mainly uses 'soft power' methods to resolve conflicts, and not political mediation as such, especially with regard to post-Soviet countries.

It is of crucial notion that the main prerequisite for the emergence of conflicts in the EP countries was precisely the civilisational one, namely, European or Eurasian integration choice of the states, which is often both perceived differently within the societies of the EP countries and objectively increases the conflict (in particular, due to the different attitude towards the EU itself) and from the outside – by international actors (individual EU countries and the Russian Federation). In fact, for the first time, Europe found itself in a situation where military conflicts in European countries break out due to the desire to integrate into the EU or NATO (Maksymenko 2016). In addition, the member countries of the EP with so-called 'unsettled' conflicts do not have a clear perspective of EU membership (with the exception of Ukraine, which, considering the active phase of the war, expects such a perspective before long). Obviously, peripherality in itself affects the EU's attempts to engage in the settlement more strongly. Let us evaluate EU mediation on the example of conflicts in the EP countries in accordance with the chosen methodology.

IV. The EU as a mediator in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict

The EU does not have a clear mandate in this conflict, aside from only a symbolic presence in the Minsk Group through separate votes of five EU member states. In this regard, scientists rightly point out that the EU's policy on resolving this conflict lacks a visionary and principled approach (Aliexieichenko 2014). Of-

ficial Brussels is practically not involved in its settlement, it offers its assistance only in building trust, which generally limits its influence in this region.

The weak reaction of the EU to the war in Nagorno-Karabakh makes it possible to determine the following results of its policy: 1) it overly relied on 'soft' diplomacy, which did not contribute to security and stability in the region; 2) its actions were limited to statements/calls that emphasised the need to stop hostilities and settle the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict exclusively peacefully under the auspices of the OSCE MG; 3) de facto, the main role of mediation was performed only by France, which turned out to be an insufficient diplomatic effort; 4) none of so-called 'reasonable sanctions' were introduced against Azerbaijan; 5) the emphasis on democracy within EP politics was insufficient, the main approach was the principle of 'less for less' or 'stick' rather than 'more for more'; 6) the priority was on energy goals, not on conflict resolution. These EU weaknesses have caused geopolitical, security and strategic changes in the South Caucasus. Russia and Turkey became the dominant states in the region, and the influence of the EU decreased.

In an effort to change this geopolitical situation, EU High Representative Josep Borrell published a declaration on behalf of the EU (European Council, 2020), in which he noted that the cessation of hostilities is only the first step to resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. More important is the renewal efforts for negotiations, a comprehensive and sustainable settlement of the conflict, including in what regards the status of Nagorno-Karabakh. The EU confirms its full support for the format of the OSCE MG led by its co-chairs. It is obvious that Azerbaijan and Armenia actually 'balance' between the interests of the USA, the EU and the Russian Federation (Foshchan 2020: 495).

Based on the indicated results of the EU mediation in this conflict, we may note that according to Jacob Bercovitch's criteria, it is ineffective because of the following: 1) as a result of the mediation, it was the Russian Federation and not the EU that was involved in the signing of the ceasefire agreement; 2) positive changes in the behaviour of the parties and the nature of the conflict are partially visible before the new escalation in 2020 and after it; 3) goals of the mediator were not achieved, and there is no trust between the parties, besides, the conflict itself needs further resolution. Consequently, the EU has not become a 'geopolitical' and/or strategic or security actor in the region.

V. The role of the EU in the settlement of the conflict in Transnistria

The Transnistrian conflict also remains unresolved to this day. However, it should be noted that the EU is not an official mediator in this conflict. Since 2005, as a result of the expansion of the format of the TMR negotiations, the EU and the USA have the status of observers ('5+2' format). To some extent, the

observer status of the EU was motivated by the fact that the conflict around the TMR is not complicated by religious or ethnic confrontation and has an exclusively economic reason. That is why the EU is trying to overcome the economic problems of the region in every possible way.

Primarily, the EU made an attempt to influence the situation 'from the inside' with the help of tools for providing support to Moldova's European integration policy, the appointment of the EU Special Representative, the inclusion of the TMR issue in the Moldova-EU Action Plan, the creation of the EU Assistance Mission on the Ukrainian-Moldovan border (EUBAM), economic interaction and support for the initiative to change the peacekeeping contingent. With the help of this toolkit the EU aims to turn Moldova into an attractive state with an appropriate level of social, economic and political development. And this seems convincing to contribute to the growth of support for the reintegration of the left and right banks of the Dniester. This should also be facilitated by the signing of the Association Agreement, the creation of a comprehensive free trade zone, which is also open to economic entities from the TPR, etc.

In 2012, within the framework of the '5+2' format, the participants managed to agree on a document called 'Principles and Procedures for Negotiations' and outline an agenda divided into three 'baskets' (social and economic issues, legal and humanitarian issues, and a comprehensive settlement). At the same time, there was a softening of the EU's attitude towards the TMR (Fylypenko 2020: 106). The EU started the gradual rapprochement of both sides of the conflict. In particular, the financing of projects 'Support to Confidence Building Measures Programme', which are implemented through the so-called tactics of 'small steps' and 'confidence-building measures' carried out by Moldova and the EU. Despite this, the EU's attempts to economically contribute to the development of the TMR are not very successful. Forasmuch as the population's awareness of the change in its geopolitical orientations, especially due to the parallel influence of the Russian Federation, remains unchanged (Fylypenko 2020a).

Post-conflict stabilisation of the EU in Moldova, includes the EU-Moldova Action Plan, focused on resolving the conflict in the TMR. It is important that the EU did not allow the Russian scenario of 'asymmetric federalization' of Moldova and the 'Kozak plan' to be implemented, but gave a mandate to the EU Special Representative for conflict resolution. The EU joined the negotiation process (as an observer) and focused its mediation role only on creating economic incentives for cooperation between Kishenev and Tiraspol. For this purpose, the reorientation of trade from the Russian Federation to the EU thanks to the Association Agreement and the implementation of the 'Program for supporting trust measures' (Maksak 2020).

Summarising, it is worth pointing out the following results of EU policy regarding the Transnistrian conflict (Parliamentary questions 2011: 1) the Transnistrian conflict was on the agenda of all high-level meetings on political

dialogue between the EU and the Russian Federation; 2) within the framework of the single format of the '5+2' negotiations (where Moldova and Transnistria are parties to the conflict; Russia and Ukraine are guarantor countries; the OSCE is a mediator, and the EU and the USA are the observers), the EU seeks to find a solution to the conflict with full respect to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Moldova; 3) The EU supports the constructive policy of the government of Moldova regarding the authorities of Tiraspol; 4) extensive progress has been made on confidence-building, in which the EU plays an important role; 5) the working groups resumed discussions and the first tangible results began to appear; 6) The EU Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM) in Moldova and Ukraine complements the EU's joint political efforts to resolve the Transnistrian conflict; 7) The EU remains committed to deepening and strengthening its political association and economic ties with Moldova within the framework of the EP; 8) The Association Agreement between the EU and Moldova may contribute to strengthening the role of the EU in the Transnistrian settlement process; 9) the withdrawal of Russian troops and weapons from the territory of Moldova, which were supposed to leave Transnistria back in 1999, has not yet taken place.

A comparison of the obtained results with Jacob Bercovitch's criteria confirms that: 1) as a result of the mediation, no agreement was signed since the 'Yushchenko Plan' and 'Kozak Plan' did not meet the interests of one or the other party and were not implemented; 2) there have been no positive changes in the behaviour of the parties and the nature of the conflict as the withdrawal of Russian troops from the territory of the TMR and the clarification of the status of the TMR have been a 'stumbling block' for both sides for many years; 3) the goals of the mediator were not achieved since the economic development of the TMR through the mediation of the EU due to the lack of democratic institutions often has the opposite consequences (for example, organised smuggling). Therefore, mediation is partially effective and requires further negotiations.

VI. EU mediation in the Russian-Georgian war

The Russian-Georgian war, which attracted the attention of the international community in 2008, is actually the first conflict on the territory of the EP in which the EU intervened as a mediator. An important feature of this conflict is its multilevel nature. After all, in addition to Georgia and Russia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia are involved in it, each of which having its own conflict with Georgia. As H. Solovei rightly points out, these are the so-called 'nested' conflicts, which are characterised by several levels with different parties having different interests (Solovei 2021). In view of this, it is worth outlining the following four levels of this conflict: internal inter-ethnic (between ethnic groups of self-proclaimed republics); internal intergroup (between the republics and

Georgia); interstate (between Georgia and Russia); geopolitical (between Russia and the West) (Solovei 2021). First and foremost, this causes difficulties in agreeing on the optimal ways to solve it.

The analysis of the Russian-Georgian conflict shows that in the negotiation processes with the participation of the EU, issues of territorial integrity of Georgia were leveled. The representatives of the EU member states only expressed concern about the intervention of one state in the territory of another, which in general proves the ineffectiveness of the agreements accepted for the aggressor's agreement and, thereby, practically establishes the Russian Federation's violation of international norms and principles.

We can assume that this is why, in the conflict on the territory of Georgia, the EU, as a mediator, did not aim to fully resolve it, but only to bring it under control, to settle it in a certain way. Or in other words, there was a dominance of the desire for security and stability over the violation of the norms of international law in matters of violation of the territorial integrity of Georgia.

It is important that 10 years after the occupation of Georgian territories, namely, under the influence of Russian aggression already against Ukraine, in June 2018 the European Parliament adopted a resolution calling on Russia to leave the territories occupied by it and emphasising that the occupation is a violation of international law.

One should single out the following results of mediation: 1) conclusion of a cease-fire agreement between the parties; 3) agreement of the parties to negotiate; 4) organisation of a single negotiation process involving all parties to the conflict; 5) lack of significant progress on the most important issues.

The comparison of these results with Jacob Bercovitch's criteria makes it possible to state that: 1) as the result of the mediation, Russia and Georgia signed an agreement, the conditions of which are almost fulfilled (except for point 5); 2) there were positive changes in the behaviour of the parties and the nature of the conflict, because due to the efforts of the EU it was possible to stop Russia's advance to the capital of Georgia, the parties got to the negotiating process; 3) the goals of the mediator were only partially achieved, since the Geneva discussions *de facto* intensified the parties' contradictions, and in the period of 2009-2011, armed clashes took place on the territory of the disputed republics, and trust between the parties was not achieved. Therefore, the effectiveness of EU mediation in this conflict is assessed as partial and limited.

VII. The EU's approach to the settlement of the conflict in Donbas (Russian war)

The Russian-Ukrainian conflict began in 2014 and continues to this day. Therefore, when characterising the military escalation of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, scientists rightly point to its three-level nature. In fact, this is about:

1) geopolitical (between the Russian Federation and the West), 2) bilateral (between Ukraine and Russia) and 3) intra-Ukrainian (manifestations of separatism in Donbas); these all arose almost simultaneously (Filipchuk 2016: 7).

Among the main causes of this conflict, in our opinion, are Ukraine's European integration steps, its increased interaction with the EU, which, according to the official Kremlin, contradict the priorities of the Russian foreign policy in its desire to reintegrate the former Soviet republics. The next reason is the partial disproportion of the defined state borders with the ethnic composition of the population. After all, as a result of the Holodomor, deportations and other repressions, the ethnic composition and outlook of the population of Crimea and the border regions of Donbas underwent changes and was not characterised by clear loyalty to Ukrainian statehood. The political orientations of the population of peripheral territories have always depended on many political, economic or international circumstances (Filipchuk 2016: 4). Therefore, the Russian Federation, through information propaganda, started a peculiar policy of 'protection' of the Russian-speaking population from a pro-European future.

The EU mediation process in the Ukrainian crisis is reflected in the Geneva and Normandy formats. As part of the Geneva format, which was launched in April 2014, the USA and the EU were involved in attempts to resolve the conflict (Metelova 2020: 111). The parties held negotiations on the de-escalation of the conflict in the east of Ukraine, but to no avail. Afterwards the mediation functions were given to Germany and France in the new Normandy format, later known as the Minsk Agreements. The Norman format caused controversy both among experts and representatives of individual EU countries. For example, Poland has repeatedly stated that it wants to be involved in these negotiations, because Ukraine needs stronger support. However, attempts to expand the format have not been successful.

As a result of the escalation of the war in Donbas in August 2014, the aggravation of the economic situation and external pressure from both the EU and the Russian Federation and with the aim of ending hostilities, Ukraine signed the so-called 'Minsk Agreements' in February 2015, which were marked more as a 'negative peace' than conflict resolution (Models and cost of conflict resolution in Donbas: international experience and Ukrainian realities 2016: 4).

Analysing the course of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, in general, experts note that the Minsk Agreements proved to be a way of partially de-escalating the conflict in Eastern Ukraine, but proved ineffective as a tool for its settlement. It should also be emphasised that the EU was only looking for ways to stop the fire, not an acceptable long-term solution. The Minsk agreements did not take into account the best practices of conflict resolution and did not have the goal of conflict resolution, and their implementation was not possible due to an unfavourable security environment, which, however, could only be guaranteed by an international peacekeeping mission (Haidai – Zarembo 2016: 6).

In spite of the formats for resolving the conflict discussed above, the Russian-Ukrainian war unfolded with even greater intensity, turning into the bloody full-scale military invasion of the Russian Federation in Ukraine on 24 February 2022. It is obvious that the previous formats of cooperation have lost their significance. The EU faced the perception of a new reality, in which relations between it and Russia have also entered a phase of deep crisis. Analysts are almost unanimous in the fact that the essence of a full-scale war of the Russian Federation against Ukraine in 2022 is the non-recognition of Ukrainian independence by the official Kremlin. This is evidenced by the widespread theses about 'one nation' (Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian) (Honcharenko 2022). In addition to the many political and civilisational causes of the war, researchers often appeal to the fact that Russia is 'stuck in the past' (Korsunskyi 2022).

Currently, we are witnessing a significant increase in EU assistance to Ukraine, particularly in security and defence matters. Although foreign policy decisions regarding the conflict in Ukraine at the EU level were dominated by internal division for a long time, now we see unanimity and determination in EU decisions. In fact, the EU made a significant leap in response to Russian aggression. This is evidenced primarily by the provision of humanitarian and military aid to Ukraine including lethal weapons by EU member states to speed up Ukraine's victory in the war with Russia. The introduction of tough sanctions against the Russian Federation as an aggressor country and the reception of a large number of refugees and the assistance to them also became important. In addition, the EU refuses Russian energy carriers and supports Ukraine's rapid accession to the EU, etc. At the same time, the EU cannot provide clear security guarantees to Ukraine and other EP partners. Also noteworthy is the EU's decision to use the European Peace Fund (EPF) to finance the delivery of heavy weapons to Ukraine. In fact, this is one of the main foreign policy shifts of EU policy (Musiol 2022).

The results of EU mediation in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict were as follows: 1) conclusion of the Minsk ceasefire agreements; 2) their ambiguous perception by Ukrainian society; 3) the impossibility of their fulfillment due to the absence of specific implementation mechanisms, in particular, the absence of international additional missions; 4) for the agreement of the aggressor, Ukraine had to introduce a special status for the territories occupied by it; 5) The Minsk talks became a tool for advancing Russia's interests in Eastern Ukraine and at the international level.

Regarding the evaluation of the effectiveness of the mediation results achieved in accordance with Jacob Bercovitch's criteria, we can note the following: 1) as a result of the mediation, the parties to the conflict signed an agreement, the conditions of which were practically not fulfilled; 2) tangible changes were only in the partial ceasefire, which, however, was often violated by the Russian Federation and the separatists; 3) the goals of the mediator were not achieved, since there started a full-scale war between Russia and Ukraine.

Thus, mediation is ineffective. Russian aggression in the East of Ukraine and its annexation of Crimea became for the entire world community a test of commitment to the principles of international law, declared in many international documents.

VIII. The impact of the Russian factor on the settlement of conflicts in the countries of the Eastern Partnership

The historical experience of absolute power in the Russian Federation and its desire to restore the idea of a 'great state' determine the interference in the affairs of the EP countries, the limitation of their independence and sovereignty, as well as the rejection of EU values by the official Kremlin and its supporters. The confirmation of such rejection can be considered the statement of the Russian Federation that the EU is a morally degenerate organisation that has rejected its roots, the Christian values that are the basis of Western civilisation (Shelest 2019: 75). It is generally known that the Russian Federation does not accept the cultural and economic advantages of Europe and strives to be its equal partner, while keeping the region of the EP in the sphere of its 'privileged interests'. In view of these trends, we can state that the EU actually entered into a direct confrontation for leadership in the EP countries with the Russian Federation, which in the scientific literature is called 'external control' (Shelest 2019: 12). The countries of the EP actually became the object of discord and competition between the European Union and the Russian Federation.

The main problem of the format of relations in the EU-EP-Russia triangle was the implementation of the EU expansion plan in the regions of Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, which the Russian Federation seeks to retain. That is why the official Kremlin constantly claims that the EP countries belong to the sphere of its 'vital interests'. The actions of the Russian Federation in Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, which have declared their external course of development towards the European Union and NATO, have become particularly aggressive.

To accomplish its goals on the territory of the pro-European countries of the EP, Russia began to actively use such mechanisms of waging 'hybrid wars', which presupposes the systematic involvement of both military ('hard power'), and non-military ('soft power') tools in various spheres of the state with the aim of obtaining a military and political advantage in the region and in general to support and control of the 'frozen' conflicts (Kordun 2021: 54). We can claim that the conflicts in the EP have become a tool for the implementation of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation. At the same time, the methods of such influence differ depending on the 'priority' of the interests of the Russian Federation in the individual countries of the EP. For example, in some cases, the Russian Federation seeks to control the entire territory of the country, and in

others only key internal spheres (military, political, economic, informational, social and cultural) (Maksymenko 2016). This practice is a reflection of the new foreign policy doctrine of the Russian Federation, i.e. 'limited sovereignty' or the so-called 'Putin doctrine'.

The common algorithm of actions of the Russian Federation in conflicts on the territory of the EP became, first, provocations or creation of conflict and bringing it to military action; second, intervention in the form of a 'peacemaker' or 'defender' of the interests of a part of the population that is discriminated against mostly based on language or citizenship of the Russian Federation; third, the creation, support, recognition and further occupation of the so-called 'independent republics' and 'freezing' of the conflict (de facto preventing its real resolution). Russia took these steps in order to use the armed conflict at the moment needed for pressure (Kordun 2021: 60).

Regarding the occurrence of conflicts in EP, Polish experts (Warsaw Institute) single out the following sequence: *separatists (which are Russian agents, collaborators, militants, hidden representatives of the special services and armed forces of the Russian Federation) seize the territory which is not under the control of the central government, then try to legitimise their rule by conducting negotiations with central authorities or holding a referendum, as a result of which an armed conflict arises, which gradually fades into 'non-existence'. The end result is that in order to support separatists, Russia directly or indirectly intervenes in a conflict or war* (Kozubenko 2021).

We see the implementation of such a scenario in Transnistria, Georgia and Ukraine. As V. Palivoda points out, Russia supports separatist movements, playing the cards of 'oppression of the Russian-speaking population', 'the nation's right to self-determination', and 'the return of illegally lost territory' (Kozubenko 2021). Using such a change of concepts, Russia positions itself as a 'peacemaker' and uses the narrative of 'rescuing' those whom it supposedly comes to protect. At the same time, the Russian Federation's delay in negotiation processes was noticeable in these conflicts. The tactic of the official Kremlin involves consolidating its status as a mediator by limiting the opportunities of the international community to play a more active role in their settlement (Maksimenko 2016).

Consequently, the conflicts in the EP countries became objects of the destructive geopolitical struggle of the Russian Federation. Each of the EU countries is trying to find a way between competing European and Russian narratives. To varying degrees, they are trying to find a balance between three main factors, i.e. internal stability, Russian influence and European integration. In each of these cases, the Russian military presence has led to latent tensions that call into question the sovereignty of the state and the ability of the international community to intervene. At the same time, military escalation quickly destabilises the region in favour of Russia and creates an international crisis. By supporting these conflicts, the Russian Federation holds back Western integration and

strengthens its power over other countries in the region ('conflict manipulation' technique). In view of this, we can claim that the Russian Federation strives to settle conflicts on its own favourable terms, and not on their resolution.

IX. Results

The common features of EU mediation regarding the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh, Transnistrian, Georgian and Ukrainian conflicts discussed above can be considered that the EU acted on the basis of the principles of democratisation, non-use of force and support of territorial integrity mostly at the level of statements. De jure, the EU does not recognise the independence of self-proclaimed states and considers them occupied territory; however, de facto, it has no real influence on the process of conflict resolution. The main factor in EP conflicts are the interests of the Russian Federation, contrary to which the EU has long tried not to contradict on a practical level.

The results of the analysis, in accordance with Jacob Bercovitch mediation efficiency criteria, are shown in Table 1.

The effectiveness of the EU's mediation efforts was too low. As a mediator, the EU did not play a decisive role in the settlement of conflicts on the territory of the SP. In each of the conflicts, the EU had a limited role. For example, in Ukraine, direct mediation was provided to Germany and France and the OSCE. For the South Caucasus, the EU appointed a Special Representative (EUSR), for Georgia, on the actual borders of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the EU formed a Monitoring Mission (MEU), which, however, was denied access to these territories. Therefore, conflicts were generally resolved inertially. Instead, international attention was mostly focused on relations with Russia. Therefore, we can state that the EU was not fully aware of its destabilising role in the joint venture. After all, the longer conflicts continue on the territory of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the more the Russian Federation will perceive itself as a 'winner' in the confrontation with the EU, which is unable to prevent protracted conflicts in countries seeking integration.

In our opinion, the reason for the ineffectiveness of the EU's mediation efforts in the settlement of these conflicts is the declared role of the EU as a mediator in international relations in general. It consists in the impartiality and objectivity of the EU in its involvement in the settlement of conflicts and the emphasis on an integrated approach, which is recognised as a condition for successful mediation. Such a mediating role would be appropriate only in conditions where the parties to the conflict observe international law. Instead, in the conflicts we have considered, international law has been significantly violated by Russia, which annexes the territories of other states, enters its troops under fictitious pretexts, and uses a number of other actions that contradict international norms. Accordingly, the application of the principles of

Table 1: Mediation efficiency criteria

Jacob Bercovitch mediation efficiency criteria	Nagorno-Karabakh	Transnistria	Russian-Georgian	Russian-Ukrainian
1) availability/lack of agreement between the parties as a result of mediation;	it was the Russian Federation and not the EU that was involved in the signing of the ceasefire agreement	no agreement was signed since the Yushchenko Plan and the Kozak Plan did not meet the interests of one or the other party and were not implemented	as the result of mediation, Russia and Georgia signed an agreement, the terms of which are almost fulfilled (except for point 5)	as the result of mediation, the parties to the conflict signed an agreement, the terms of which were practically not fulfilled
2) presence/absence of positive conflict dynamics;	positive changes in the behaviour of the parties and the nature of the conflict are partially visible before the new escalation in 2020 and after it	there were no positive changes in the behaviour of the parties and the nature of the conflict. The withdrawal of Russian troops from the territory of the TMR and the clarification of the status of the TMR have been a 'stumbling block' for both sides for many years	there were positive changes in the behaviour of the parties and the nature of the conflict, because thanks to the efforts of the EU, it was possible to stop Russia's advance to the capital of Georgia and the parties started the negotiating process	noticeable changes were only in the partial cessation of fire, which, however, was often violated by the Russian Federation and the separatists
3) compliance/inconsistency of the obtained results with the expectations of the mediator	the goals of the mediator were not achieved, and there is no trust between the parties, as well as the conflict itself needs further resolution	the goals of the mediator were not achieved, the economic development of the TMR through the mediation of the EU due to the lack of democratic institutions often has the opposite consequences	the goals of the mediator were only partially achieved, since the Geneva discussions de facto intensified the parties' contradictions	the goals of the mediator were not achieved, since a full-scale war between Russia and Ukraine took place

impartiality and objectivity of the EU creates a dilemma for itself – to settle the conflict, taking into account the interests of both parties and to facilitate the achievement of a compromise between them, thereby ignoring the circumstance of an international violation by one of the parties [accepting it as a fact] or to condemn the actions of one of the parties as illegal and still take the position of the other, injured party and thus lose their neutrality.

The solution to this dilemma may lie in the EU's acting role, which determines the ways in which it is used in conflict mediation and the extent of its interest in stability and security, and can be modified depending on the specific features of the conflict. The EU's acting role or the role of an international/global player is a set of practices and tools that the EU has developed and uses

to solve problems of international importance, in particular security (Herrberg 2022). However, in the conflicts in the countries of the EP, the EU showed itself as a player with a number of its own interests, which consisted in reluctance to intensify the confrontation through this region with Russia.

We can say that due to the underestimation of the role of the Russian Federation, the previous methods of conflict resolution have lost their effectiveness. Today, the international security system is facing serious threats (in particular, the possibility of a nuclear war). This requires the development of new mediation approaches to conflict resolution to prevent further risks for all. At the same time, the depth of modern conflict transformations on the territory of the EP countries, and especially in Ukraine, is not yet fully understood by many political figures, who probably seek to return the status quo. The irreversible dynamism of severe conflicts provoked by the Russian Federation, on the one hand, puts international actors in a state of uncertainty, and on the other hand, gives grounds for re-evaluating the EU's activities in the geopolitical dimension. In view of this, foreign policy forecasting, which is based on the prediction of development trajectories/scenarios of certain international processes in the field of EU foreign policy, acquires special significance in the scientific political and international discourse.

Although the effectiveness of EU mediation on the territory of the EP countries depends on the specifics of each individual conflict, they also have a number of common features. First of all, it is the non-coincidence of state borders with the ethnic, linguistic and cultural characteristics of individual regions, a heterogeneous society with different identities and vulnerability to external interference (Models and cost of conflict resolution in Donbas: international experience and Ukrainian realities 2016: 4). For example, according to the rating of the fragility of states in 2016 (Fragile State Index 2016), internal destabilisation is a threat to the emergence of conflicts for more than 100 countries of the world, in which the total indicator of socio-economic and political-security risks exceeds 70 points. Such states are characterised by imperfect internal political aspects of development (weak institutions, corruption, imperfect judicial system, etc.), due to which they are, in fact, unable to resolve contradictions between different population groups. This provokes a feeling of discrimination on the basis of ethnic, religious or ideological affiliation from the state or other population groups and violates the problem of internal security as well as it contributes to the radicalisation of interests, their armed protection, organised crime, terrorism, etc.

On the basis of the indicated common features of conflicts in international practice, four scenarios of conflict resolution were formed, namely, Bosnian, Croatian, Pakistani and German, which to some extent may be appropriate for the countries of the EP. A SWOT analysis of these scenarios is provided (Tables 2–5) (Models and cost of conflict settlement in Donbas: international experience and Ukrainian realities 2016: 11–21).

At the same time, it is worth noting that experts do not rule out the possible direct involvement of the EU in conflict resolution, that is, as a military player. However, such a scenario is possible in connection with NATO. In case it is implemented in the EU, 'soft power' will be replaced by 'hard power' (Musiol 2022). In this context, the further development of EU mediation will depend on two key factors – internal unity regarding foreign policy goals and the strengthening of security programmes on this basis and external circumstances, that is, the specific security situation in those regions that are strategically important for the EU. In other words, official Brussels will be faced with the choice of which of the conflicts is the one that deserves mediation by the EU.

According to these factors, the likely scenarios can be both maintaining the status quo (emphasis on peaceful classical instruments), the expansion of EU mediation, in particular the increase of missions and military operations (strengthening of security cooperation with coordination of efforts with the UN) and the refusal of the mediating role, in particular as a result of the likely strengthening of EU internal political disputes, economic crises, the coming to power of Eurosceptics, etc.) (Shelest 2019: 184).

In our opinion, taking into account the deep difficulties for the political/peaceful settlement of conflicts due to the influence of the Russian Federation, scenarios based on negotiations with the participation of the Russian side are losing their perspective, because in the conflicts we considered, it was the Russian Federation that initiated and supported the development of conflicts. It is also necessary to take into account the fact that *the dynamics of the development of the EP countries are changing significantly, primarily due to cooperation with the EU. They shift their economic, political and cultural development from Russia to the West. Due to the rejection of imperial encroachments and aggressive actions Russia becomes a 'reinterpreted past'. Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia seek further distancing from the Russian sphere of influence. In the long term, such a change in other countries should not be ruled out. Therefore, the most optimal scenario can be considered the unity/strengthening and determination of the EU as a global actor, its advantage in the confrontation with Russia, as well as the formation of a security system of the balance of power so that the latter's influence is minimised.*

X. Recommendations on increasing the role of the EU in mediation for resolving conflicts in the Eastern Partnership region

Many analysts and experts now emphasise that Europe should form a unified position towards the aggressor country. At the same time, the EU should clearly outline what kind of foreign policy subject it wants to be for the EP countries – an influential strategic or an inert and passive one – and whether the EU is ready today for the possible use of 'hard power'. After all, the practice of conflicts on

the territory of the EP has proven that the emphasis exclusively on 'soft power' is not sufficient to guarantee security, particularly in the geopolitical dimension. In response to modern threats, as noted by Kirakosyan Hasmik, 'soft power' should be supplemented with the tools of 'hard power' (Hasmik 2020). The use of exclusively 'soft' tools has repeatedly proven that the EU remains on the sidelines of conflict resolution and, in this aspect, will significantly lose in the confrontation with the Russian Federation, which has long combined these elements. He also points out that at the EU level, it would be appropriate to form specialised analytical centres with the involvement of professional experts in order to provide greater awareness of the development and specifics of conflicts. It is obvious that such a step could become an important countermeasure at the informational level.

To some extent, we are observing the transformation of the EU's global role today in the context of the ongoing war in Ukraine. Thus, for example, Josep Borrell has recently named four key circumstances of this: 1) European countries showed the unity of the EU in the face of the Russian aggression (they applied powerful economic, personal and financial sanctions); 2) military support for self-defence is provided to Ukraine (this is for the first time in the history of the EU); 3) significant steps have been taken towards energy independence; 4) more than 140 UN countries condemned the aggression of the Russian Federation. He also emphasised that the EU should be ready to defend its values, and security issues should be a response to the global consequences of aggression, and he also added that supplying weapons to a third country 'was a taboo that no longer exists' (Hladenko 2008). Besides, on 21 March 2022, the EU approved the first-ever joint EU strategy in the field of security and defence called 'Strategic Compass'. However, experts note that the adoption of this document has no practical significance for Ukraine (Melnyk 2022).

In accordance with this, scientists and experts highlight various recommendations for the EU in order to increase the effectiveness of its approach in this sense. Among them, *we agree with the recommendations of foreign experts Thomas de Waal and Nikolaus von Twickel* (Waal – Twickel 2020). *They therefore determine:*

- for Ukraine: 1) to continue its support in reforms on the way to democratisation, decentralisation and the fight against corruption; 2) exert international pressure on the Russian Federation by means of strengthening sanctions (personal and sectoral); 3) to develop a strategy to help Ukraine with the help of 'soft power' throughout its territory, in particular, not controlled by the government, in order to overcome the isolation of the occupied territories; 4) to develop financial aid programmes in government-controlled areas, as a model of what could be in the occupied areas.
- for Moldova and Transnistria: 1) to provide diplomatic support to Moldova in relations with the Russian Federation; 2) to promote the implementation of trade agreements between Moldova and the TMR, deepen their economic ties with the EU.

- for Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia: 1) to confirm the policy of non-recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia; to condemn the states that recognise these occupied territories; 2) to continue to ensure stability and security in conflict areas through the EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM); 3) to continue to support the development of Georgia as a potentially attractive state for Abkhazians and Ossetians; 4) to carry on working on the implementation of the principles of ‘non-recognition’ and ‘engagement’ (economic, social assistance); 5) to persist the information work with the population.

Likewise, the following recommendations of such Ukrainian experts as H. Maksak (2020) and M. Myronova (2021) deserve peer consideration. They determine: 1) the EU should be more actively and effectively involved in the prevention and settlement of conflicts on the territory of the EP countries; 2) it is necessary to review the approaches to their settlement, first of all on the basis of the established position independent of the Russian Federation; 3) the EU should rethink the drawbacks of its mediation activities of the previous years; 4) to form a separate strategy or security platform of the EU regarding conflicts in the EP, which will clearly define the tools for their settlement; 5) to form/supplement the mechanism for the formation of EU military and civilian missions at the request of a third party (the requests for such a mission were rejected for Georgia in 2005 and Ukraine in 2014); 6) to more practically strengthen the undisputed role of the global leader, in particular by modifying security and defence tools; 7) to strengthen participation in negotiation formats regarding EP conflicts; 8) on the basis of strengthened instruments, to directly participate in the de-escalation of conflicts; 9) to form additional EU missions in the region of the EP; 10) to cooperate more closely with the OSCE, the USA and NATO.

Thus, the world order established long ago, after the end of the ‘Cold War’ is now collapsing. The security architecture of the EP countries, as well as the EU itself, is acquiring signs of insecurity and unpredictability. Therefore, the countries of the Eastern Partnership, due to the acute and unresolved conflicts on their territory and the influence of the Russian Federation (which in every way supports and promotes the development of the conflict environment, and is also the author of the crisis of the world order) objectively need greater involvement of the EU as a mediator, security provider and crisis global actor.

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Olga Ivasechko is a PhD candidate at the Department of Political Science and International Relations, Lviv Polytechnic National University/Ukraine. E-mail: ivasechko.2011@ukr.net. ORCID: 0000-0003-2141-3309

Oleg Tsebenko is a PhD candidate at the Department of Political Science and International Relations, Lviv Polytechnic National University/Ukraine. E-mail: ol.tsebenko@gmail.com. ORCID: 0000-0002-0024-0405

Yaryna Turchyn is a professor at the Department of Political Science and International Relations Lviv Polytechnic National University/Ukraine. E-mail: turchynj@ukr.net. Researcher ID R-1932-2017. Author ID: 57192268948

Yaryna Vezenko is Bachelor of International Relations, Social Communication and Regional Studies, Lviv Polytechnic National University, Lviv/Ukraine, e-mail: vezden2001@gmail.com