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SOME ASPECTS OF ACTIONS TO RESPONSE TO EXTERNAL SECURITY THREATS AND CRISES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION COUNTRIES

DOI: [https://doi.org/10.9770/szv.2024.1\(6\)](https://doi.org/10.9770/szv.2024.1(6))

For citation: Tumalavičius V., Kriviņš A. (2024) Some aspects of action to response to external security threats and crises of European Union countries. *Sociālo Zinātņu Vēstnesis / Social Sciences Bulletin*, 38(1): 103–112. [https://doi.org/10.9770/szv.2024.1\(6\)](https://doi.org/10.9770/szv.2024.1(6))

The European Union is taking action in various areas of security to improve its ability to respond to crises and increase its resilience to future challenges, so this article examines the evolution of crisis response actions of the European Union countries in the face of challenges and threats in a rapidly changing geopolitical environment in relation to European security. This, in turn, is reflected in the speed of decision-making by the competent associations of the European Union regarding legal regulation that corresponds to the current situation. The authors identify and analyze the main directions of action and response measures of member countries in the legal field. In this context, the authors pay special attention to the consideration of the European Union's security policy in relation to hybrid threats from neighboring states, ensuring cyber security, the use of modern information communication technologies, as well as mediation tools in the prevention of these threats. The authors analyze issues of cooperation between the European Union and the United Nations in the field of peacekeeping and military missions. The authors also touched on the specifics of lessons learned from addressing the consequences of crisis situations and the impact of the EU countries' integrated approach to responding to crisis situations in the context of the past pandemic, as well as the impact of hybrid threats. The results of this study show that the relevant institutions of the European Union skillfully, promptly and effectively coordinate decision-making on response and management in crisis situations, and as part of improving the anti-crisis management strategy, taking measures to prevent the consequences of crisis situations in the EU area (hybrid threats, illegal migration, terrorism, organized crime, etc.).

Keywords: EU crisis management, EU security, hybrid threats and security challenges, EU networks and information systems, cybersecurity, decision making

Atsevišķi rīcības aspekti, reaģējot uz ārējiem drošības draudiem un valsts krīzēm, Eiropas Savienības valstīs.

Eiropas Savienība veic pasākumus dažādās drošības jomās, lai uzlabotu savu spēju reaģēt uz krīzēm un palielinātu noturību pret nākotnes izaicinājumiem, rakstā ir aplūkota Eiropas Savienības krīzes reaģēšanas sistēmas attīstība, saskaroties ar izaicinājumiem un draudiem strauji mainīgajā situācijā pasaulē. Tas savukārt atspoguļojas Eiropas Savienības kompetento asociāciju lēmumu pieņemšanas ātrumā par pašreizējai situācijai atbilstošu tiesisko regulējumu. Autori identificē un analizē iesaistīto valstu galvenos darbības virzienus un atbildes pasākumus tiesību jomā. Autori pievērš īpašu uzmanību Eiropas Savienības drošības politikai, izskatot atsevišķu valstu hibrīddraudu novēršanu, nodrošinot kibernetdrošību, izmantojot modernās informācijas un komunikācijas tehnoloģijas, kā arī starpniecības instrumentus šo draudu novēršanai. Autori izskata Eiropas Savienības un Apvienoto Nāciju Organizācijas sadarbības jautājumus miera uzturēšanas un militāro misiju jomā. Autori pieskarās arī pieredzes specifikai, kas iegūta krīzes situāciju seku risināšanā un Eiropas savienības kompleksas pieejas izmantošanā pagājušās pandēmijas krīzes laikā, hibrīddraudu ietekmē. Dotā pētījuma rezultāti liecina, ka Eiropas Savienības attiecīgās institūcijas kvalificēti, operatīvi un efektīvi koordinē reaģēšanu un vadības lēmumu pieņemšanu krīzes situācijās, pieņem lēmumus krīzes situāciju seku novēršanai ES zonā (hibrīddraudi, nelikumīga migrācija, terorisms, organizētā noziedzība utt.) antikrīzes reaģēšanas stratēģijas pilnveidošanas ietvaros.

Atslēgvārdi: ES krīzes-menedžments, ES drošība, hibrīddraudi un drošības izaicinājumi, ES tīkli un informācijas sistēmas, kibernetdrošība, lēmumu pieņemšana.

Introduction

The evolution of the European Union crisis response strategy is taking into account adaptation to new challenges to European and global security. At the present stage, EU policy in this area is formed under the influence of a number of factors. The problem of increasing the geographical zone of instability and

“failed states”, as well as hybrid threats (infiltration of terrorist groups into conflict zones, information wars, etc.) comes to the fore. As a result of the dynamic processes of globalization, the differences between the internal security of the European Union and ensuring international security in priority areas for the EU have practically disappeared (European Commission 2022b).

The parameters of the European Union’s crisis response policy continue to be determined by the EU Global Strategy, modernized in 2016, which continues to remain relevant (European Centre of Excellence for Civilian Crisis Management 2016). In accordance with its guidelines, the concept of crisis response is adjusted. The adaptation of the anti-crisis strategy was dictated by the desire not only to develop an optimal guideline for the European Union in an era of fluctuations and instability, but also to use it as a tool for consolidating the foreign and domestic policies of the Union in the face of new threats and in connection with the withdrawal of Britain from it (Tocci 2017). International crises, most recently the Covid-19 pandemic and war in Ukraine change view of the world. While European Union’s crisis response policy had an internal purpose as a way to affirm the EU’s identity as a global actor and manage the EU’s own complexity, such purpose has become more evident in recent years. European Union’s policy has become increasingly linked to internal (e.g. resilience of EU’s critical infrastructures, cybersecurity, resilience of EU democratic systems and its societies) rather than external dynamics (Joseph, Juncos 2024).

The main directions of evolution of the crisis response strategy

The modern EU crisis response strategy focuses on the following priorities (Molis 2008):

- an integrated approach to crises based on conflict prevention and resolution;
- stabilization of power structures of “failed states”, strengthening the stability of the state and society both in the east and in the south and, above all, in the geographical area of the Western Balkans, countries south of the Sahara and Central Asia, as well as in the South Caucasus;
- taking measures to strengthen the security of the European Union with an emphasis on countering terrorism, hybrid threats, and global infections;
- strengthening energy security and effective environmental protection.

The main focus will be on countering hybrid threats and ensuring cybersecurity (Munkøe, Mölder 2022; Barrinha, Christou 2022). On this range of issues, the European Union will continue to cooperate with the North Atlantic Alliance. This is, in particular, indicated by the EU and NATO report on the implementation of jointly developed and approved proposals in the field of defense and security.

Hybrid threats to the European Union include low-intensity asymmetric conflicts, covert deployment of unaffiliated armed forces, terrorism, illegal migration, gaining control over natural resources, piracy, financial, economic and diplomatic leverage, transnational crime, cybercrime, disinformation, civil disobedience, street riots and information wars (Bajarūnas 2020).

In recent years alone, the European Union has adopted a number of initiatives to accelerate its response to hybrid threats, coordinate the actions of member states and confront challenges at the national level. An analysis of vulnerabilities in protection against such threats, their early detection and the relationship between the external and internal aspects of this phenomenon in terms of security implications is also provided. Among these initiatives, the release of an operational protocol on countering hybrid threats (European Commission 2016) should be highlighted (Fiott, Parkes 2019).

In addition, the EU’s strategic guidelines for countering hybrid threats were set out in the European Council Conclusions on enhanced measures to increase resilience and counter hybrid threats adopted in December 2019. Particular attention was paid to adapting the mechanisms and tools of the European Union to combat hybrid threats to modern realities in the context of improving the latest technologies and the

use of artificial intelligence, which simultaneously creates opportunities for more effectively containing hybrid threats and complicates the work to counter them (Council of the European Union 2019). In the fight against global threats such as terrorism, cybercrime, the EU takes a systemic approach, which makes it possible to assess the level and degree of the convergence of threats to critical infrastructure and the infosphere, as well as the possibilities of counteraction (Caballero-Sanz 2023).

As a result, we can confidently say that the European Union is developing many conceptual approaches to counter hybrid threats in order to strengthen the internal political stress resistance of the Union member states and their potential ability to quickly respond to crisis situations created by external players.

Role of networks, information systems and their protection

In 2016 the EU has adopted a directive on the security of networks and information systems (EUR-Lex 2016), which is the first EU-wide legislative instrument aimed at strengthening cooperation between EU countries on the particularly important issue of cyber security.

The directive sets security obligations for essential service providers in critical sectors: hospitals, energy networks, railways, data centers, public administration institutions, research laboratories and factories producing critical medical devices and medicines. Its adoption was also a crucial step in strengthening cyber resilience in the European Union. As part of the EU cyber security strategy in December 2020, the European Commission submitted a proposal for a revised directive. The new proposal responds to the changing threat landscape and takes into account the digital transformation of our society, which has been further accelerated by the COVID-19 crisis. The Council of European Union and the European Parliament have reached a preliminary agreement on the new measures, which will:

- stronger risk and incident management and cooperation ensured,
- the scope of application of the rules has been expanded.

Next the use of the latest information and communication technologies (ICTs) for the purposes of crisis management and recovery in countries affected by armed conflicts and degradation of public administration is becoming one of the important directions of the EU strategy to stabilize crisis situations on the periphery and minimize the consequences for member states EU (large-scale migration, terrorism, religious extremism). This also serves the purposes of strengthening the influence of the Union in the future in strategically important regions.

Official EU policy on ICTs objectives for post-conflict reconstruction is linked to the Digital Agenda for Europe. At the same time, one of Brussels' goals is to promote its digital technology governance model to develop, together with partners, collective responses to modern challenges and common approaches to blockchain, artificial intelligence and high performance computing in the interests of global security and stability (European Union 2019).

A feature of the EU strategy in this area is the creation of a global and regional network of digital platforms for dialogue with partners in order to solve a variety of problems - from combating terrorism, ensuring cybersecurity and Internet governance to protecting human rights and developing a modern economy, digital agriculture, and the latest communication systems (5G) and democracy in according with European values. The necessary digital network infrastructure is created by forming alliances with interested countries and regions on the basis of special cooperation agreements or through joint projects with the assistance of EU representations in countries and regions of particular interest (Barbe, Morillas 2019).

At the same time, the EU's course towards digitalization is motivated by the need to promote economic growth and sustainable development of potentially crisis regions within the framework of the UN Agenda for Sustainable Development until 2030 (European Commission 2022a).

The creation of modern information and communication infrastructure and digital platforms in various regions of the world undergoing social economic and political transformation significantly expands the technical capabilities of the EU. In particular we are talking about monitoring, early warning and forecasting of potential crisis situations and armed conflicts, as well as planning the optimal parameters for EU assistance both in the field of development and in post-conflict reconstruction.

When it comes to the use of information and communication technologies for post-conflict reconstruction, the EU relies not only on technical aspects (tools, processing of large data, information networks), but prefers an integrated approach that combines the technical and social dimensions of its strategy for both users and recipients these technologies. The deployment and use of ICTs falls under the remit of the European External Action Service, which is responsible for EU operations and programs for peacekeeping and post-conflict reconstruction, and coordinates these activities through Instruments Contributing to Stability and Peace as well as the EU Peacebuilding Partnership (Gaskell et al. 2016).

Another important area of ICT use is the mediation missions of the EU and the UN, which are becoming increasingly important in the context of preventing and peacefully resolving crisis situations.

New technologies can help improve the effectiveness of crisis management. With their help, it is possible to solve the problem of collecting large-scale information about the positions of the parties to the conflict, the real situation in crisis areas, as well as their plans and priorities in terms of the configuration of a political settlement. As a rule, it is the lack of information that aggravates a conflict situation. The advantage of modern information and communication technologies is that they open up unprecedented opportunities for quickly analyzing a large amount of data received in real time from social networks Facebook, Skype, Twitter, WhatsApp, Viber, etc. In addition, for these purposes, technologies such as (Jenny et al. 2018; Calderaro, Blumfelde 2022):

- machine learning – allows you to analyze big data using artificial intelligence, including voice identification based on entering standard information;
- block chain – ensures maximum transparency and security of downloaded information;
- remote sensing and early warning systems – warn of large-scale movements and crowds of people associated with the threat of crisis situations.

Social networks and mobile digital platforms created on their basis make it possible to establish a dialogue between rival parties and develop decisions based on consensus (Jenny et al. 2018).

Priorities for an integrated approach in the European Union

The emergence of the concept of a comprehensive approach of the European Union to crisis management and maintaining global security is associated with the transformation of the nature of modern regional conflicts. The EU proceeds from the fact that the effective resolution of this kind of crisis situations requires a change in traditional approaches based primarily on the use of force. Previous types of action have proven ineffective in dealing with modern conflicts. The alternative is based on the integration of all key elements of crisis management (*conflict prevention, strategy planning for their resolution, post-conflict development assistance*) into a single package.

The European Union defines an integrated approach as “the strategically integrated use of EU foreign policy mechanisms and instruments in crisis situations.” Integration of military and civilian components

of crisis management is the key to the success of operations within the framework of the EU Common Security and Defense Policy to address the following priorities (Faleg 2017b):

- increasing the level of operational readiness of the European Union in order to manage crisis situations in the context of expanding the geographical zone of the Union's strategic interests and the scale of crises;

- compensation for the lack of capabilities to conduct large-scale military operations in high-intensity armed conflicts;

- integration of military and civilian components for effective crisis management to increase the level of coordination between EU military and civilian mechanisms when planning operations.

Through an integrated approach to security, the EU hopes to improve the coordination of its institutions and instruments in crisis management.

This approach follows from the provisions of the Lisbon Treaty (European parliament 2007), on the basis of which the foreign policy service of the European Union was reformed and the post of the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy was created. The Foreign Service has established civilian and military crisis management structures, as well as intergovernmental committees, including the Crisis Management and Planning Directorate (CMPD) and the EU Military Staff (EUMS). The CMPD carries out the tasks of strategic planning of operations and ensuring coordination of their military and civilian aspects.

Two concepts played an important role in the development of the EU's integrated approach. In 2002, on the recommendation of the military committee and in accordance with the decision of the EU Council, the *concept of civil-military coordination* (CMCO) was approved. This made it possible to significantly improve the interconnection of all key institutions at the political level and eliminate competition between them at the planning and decision-making stages (Faleg 2017b). The *concept of civil-military cooperation at the tactical level* (CIMIC) is concerned with ensuring coordination between the various institutions and instruments of the Union.

A prerequisite for the practical implementation of this concept was the approval by the European Council in December 2013 of a common strategic document developed by the European Commission and the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. It became the basis for the practical implementation of an integrated approach in relation to operations in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel regions (Faleg 2017a). The real motive behind the EU's bet on the concept of an integrated approach was not so much the desire to reorient itself towards the predominant use of "soft" power, but rather to use it to strengthen the role of Union institutions in planning and decision-making by narrowing the competencies of EU member states and thereby strengthening political unity European Union. CIMIC made a significant contribution to the level of resilience in crisis management on a global scale, positively impacting a broad spectrum of core abilities during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many countries across the globe mobilized their military forces in order to cope with sudden and exponential surges of critically ill patients with COVID-19 in stretched healthcare systems (Ries 2022).

In parallel, in order to improve the level of operational military planning, the European Union adopted NATO standards and tools in this area. These are the Guidelines for Operational Planning (GOP) and Comprehensive Operational Planning Directive (COPD) (Mattelaer 2013).

It is also important to note the role of the European External Action Service in integrating the military and civilian components of the integrated approach, which has significantly improved the level of crisis management in the EU. In particular, in accordance with the Lisbon Treaty (European parliament 2007),

departments dealing with cross-cutting civil and military issues were included in the foreign policy service. We are talking, in particular, about development assistance and humanitarian assistance, the issues of which are dealt with by the European Commission's Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DEVCO) and also the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO); defense and security issues – subcommittee on Security and Defense (SEDE) and Emergency Response Coordination Center (ERCC). The adoption of the EU's comprehensive approach was facilitated by a consensus that developed not only among member states, but also among most non-governmental organizations, as well as non-governmental public institutions. The harmonization of the civil and military components of an integrated approach is largely facilitated by the innovation policy of the European Union to create networked social structures around the main core of institutions and bodies of the Union and consisting of representatives of public and academic organizations (Faleg 2017a).

EU-UN cooperation

Since 2017, operations within the framework of the EU Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) have become the main tool for crisis resolution, including in cooperation with the UN. The Lisbon Treaty (Article 42.1) (European Parliament 2007) brought the models of EU and UN operations as close as possible, legally establishing the possibility of carrying out both civilian and military missions under the auspices of the EU. Military operations under CSDP fall under the general criterion of crisis response operations because they do not involve the direct use of force and peace enforcement. However, some EU operations against piracy and illegal migrant trafficking in the Gulf of Aden and the southern Mediterranean Sea “Sophia”; “Atalanta” (EUNAVFOR Med) in its mandates implicitly allowed the use of force. Unlike the NATO operations in Libya in 2011 and the French armed operation in Mali (currently ongoing), the mandates of the above-mentioned EU missions on the use of force contained clear restrictions. For example, EU consensus is required for the use of force and compliance of the measures taken with international law and the positions of the states on whose territory these operations are carried out. This approach indicates that Brussels pays special attention to the compliance of operation mandates with the UN Charter and its Chapter VII (allowing the use of force in certain circumstances) (The Diplomatic Service of the European Union 2023).

According to a political scientist Per M. Norheim-Martinsen (2013), the mandates of EU operations are approved based on combinations of cross-references to European Council decisions, UNSC resolutions or host states' invitation/consent. The mandates for EU operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Gulf of Aden, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Chad contained references to UN Security Council resolutions. Some other operations in Mali and Somalia were carried out on the basis of invitations from host states.

Over the past decade, the European Union has accumulated some experience in conducting both civil and military operations within the framework of the EU Common Security and Defense Policy. Union member countries are selective in the deployment of military missions, trying to minimize the risk of losses of personnel and weapons. This is explained by constitutional restrictions on sending military contingents outside the Union. The European Union attaches particular importance to the ideological framing of decisions taken on the planning and deployment of its operations in crisis regions of the world. In this case, possible options for the use of force are built into the framework of normative approaches that give priority to “soft” power (The Diplomatic Service of the European Union 2023):

- provision of humanitarian assistance,

- guarding humanitarian convoys,
- return of refugees,
- disarmament of combatants and their integration,
- holding democratic elections,
- protection of human rights,
- post-conflict reconstruction,
- stabilization of the socio-economic and political situation, etc.

As a rule, EU military operations in crisis countries and regions are associated with the overall goals of foreign policy strategy.

An analysis of the four largest EU military operations – CONCORDIA in North Macedonia, ARTEMIS in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, ALTHEA in Bosnia and Herzegovina, ATALANTA – EU NAVFOR and the parallel European training mission EUTM SOMALIA - shows that they all differ in the balance of military and civilian instruments (The Diplomatic Service of the European Union 2023).

The European Union’s operation ARTEMIS in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was largely focused on solving military problems. In this regard, the Western expert community recognizes that this operation is an example of a purely interventionist model, which is characterized by the lack of a clear connection with civilian instruments for crisis resolution (Norheim-Martinsen 2013). One of the recent military operations of the European Union, EUTM Mali – 2013, had a clearly defined military component, since its goal was to restore the territorial integrity of the country and neutralize the threat from terrorist groups. The results of one of the latest military operations to suppress illegal migration of the European Union, EUNAVFOR MED Sophia, deserve special attention in the context of ensuring the security interests of the European Union. Its mandate included enforcement functions related to the identification, seizure and destruction of vessels used by smugglers (The Diplomatic Service of the European Union 2023).

Thus, we can say that the main military operations of the EU are aimed at the practical solution of tasks to ensure security in conflict zones, neutralize extremist and terrorist groups, prevent illegal migration to the European Union, post-conflict restoration of crisis regions and countries, taking into account their long-term economic and trade interests.

Conclusions

The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent natural disasters, as well as various types of conflicts, show that the European Union is promptly and effectively coordinating decision-making on response and management in crisis situations. The transformation of international relations and new challenges have accelerated the adaptation of the European Union’s crisis response strategy. This process is due to the synchronization of security measures at the global and regional levels to strengthen the influence of the European Union.

At the same time, close interaction between the European Union and the United Nations, as well as other influential international organizations, is important. The European Union’s crisis response strategy is focused on implementing an integrated approach to crisis situations with the active use of the latest information and communication technologies. Particular emphasis is placed on reviving the state structures of “failed states”, strengthening their sustainability and preventing the resumption of the “conflict cycle” in regions of strategic importance for the European Union.

The main goal is to prevent the consequences of crisis situations from entering the European Union area (*hybrid threats, illegal migration, terrorism, organized crime*, etc.). The modernization of the anti-crisis strategy has become an integral part of the strategic autonomy of the European Union. It is used to strengthen its political unity and increase the efficiency of the mechanisms for making major political decisions.

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