

New Trends that Influenced the Way We View the International Relations

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Abstract: The objective of the article is our intention to present changes in the international environment, changes that have occurred in the recent years. All these changes have had, and will have, a significant impact on how we view international relations. Firstly we will start in the Black Sea region due to the fact that in this region we find the starting point of the most important events with global impact but also where it is expected to be "the chessboard" where the majority of these events will take place. We believe that this region is the point in the world where international relations theories can be tested and analyzed through a holistic approach because it is the meeting point of different civilizations, the place where most conflicts in the world have occurred over time for various reasons, it is an area of interest for the great powers but also an area with a history dating from antiquity. All these aspects make the Black Sea region an ideal place to begin analyzing the changes that have occurred in international relations. These changes were caused by the evolution of the conflict in Syria, the wave of immigrants that still continues to create real problems in the European Union, terrorist attacks in EU countries, the election results in European countries, as well as strengthening the position of the Russian Federation. We believe that due to the short timeframe in which these changes occurred, approximately two years, careful consideration is needed of how the international situation changed and, therefore, we can find new trends in the area of international relations. The method used for the research of this article will be mainly the observation method and the strategy approach will be the inductive research type. The induction form will be that of the "full induction", which will be based on presenting the features and characteristic considered relevant for events. After we conduct this analysis we will formulate a conclusion regarding the new trends in international relations.

Keywords: international relations; new trends; European Union; foreign policy

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1. Introduction

Nowdays, perhaps more than ever, we see the result of globalization, with its positive and negative effects. In the context of globalization, international relations will determine how states interact and, at the same time, how political, economic and cultural relations occur globally. Everybody can see that distances, extreme natural phenomena or religious concepts no longer limit the world. Anything of interest is available in every home via the Internet or television and, when something important happens in any corner of the world, almost every man on the planet will learn about that event. Today, everyone has an idea of who the world powers are and, to some extent, the interests of these powers. International relations have entered the lives of each of us and, unconsciously, we feel it is no longer enough to know what happens within our borders and we feel the need to know everything that is happening beyond those borders and how we are influenced by those events. Thus, the subject of international relations becomes nowadays a topic of interest to ordinary people as well and not just for the politicians or academics. Moreover, some of us even want to take part in these events, being pushed by the fact that everybody now realizes that their lives may be affected by events taking place thousands of kilometers away. An example that depicts this idea is that everyone in the world has followed with interest the outcome of the presidential election in the United States. The result of these elections, although they happen in the other side of the world, will have a significant impact on many inhabitants of this planet, including Romania. While this is a simple example, maybe exaggerated, it is understandable that events such as these should be carefully analyzed and we must determine how international relations will take place in the future in order to be prepared to act accordingly.

Furthermore, we believe that an analysis of how international relations are established in the current global context is one way in which Romania could take advantage of certain opportunities that arise, in order to promote their economic and political interests. But all this must have as starting point the events that occur in the Black Sea region. This is the region in which Romania, due to its strategic position, can play the role of a regional power, thus consolidating its position globally. This is possible because the Black Sea region is the place where the most significant events of recent times take place. These events stretch far beyond the borders of the Balkan Peninsula with effects in the other parts of Europe, and even in the United States.

The Black Sea area, in terms of geographic aspect, is considered to be the region that is disposed between Southeastern Europe and Southwest Asia. It has a surface of about 413,000 km² with a coastline length of 2200 km. It has connections with the Planetary Ocean through the narrowest strait in the world, the Bosphorus Strait (minimum width 700 m), with Marmara Sea through the Dardanelles Strait and through the Strait of Kerch is connected with the Azov Sea.

Depicted in some publications, from geopolitical, geo-economic and geostrategic perspective, as the Wider Black Sea Region, the Black Sea area includes, besides the sea surface, the areas of the territories of the seven-riveran countries (Romania, Ukraine, Moldova, Russian Federation, Bulgaria, Turkey and Georgia).

The Black Sea area has always been the region where the interests of large empires (Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Ottoman, Russian) have clashed over time. Also, the great powers of our times have an increased interest in this area due to the strategic location and access to different places in the world. This region is simultaneously a bridge, a border, a buffer and a transit zone between East and West as well as between North and South.

As the crossroad of three geopolitical and geostrategic areas - Southern Europe, Eastern Europe and the Middle East, the Black Sea area became, after 1990, an area of instability. This area is marked by politico-military and economic disputes of the “local residents”, but it also became an area of concern for other states that had to reconsider their interests in this part of the world.

2. Key Events and their Effects on International Relations

We believe that the most important events that have occurred lately, and have significantly influenced the way of looking at international relations, are the following: the migration that European countries face, Brexit, the terrorist attacks in the European Union, the election of the new President of the United States of America and the politico-military actions of the Russian Federation. Of course, these events were selected in terms of their magnitude and the impact they had on the media. Surely, we cannot analyze all the reactions triggered by each event due to the complexity of the phenomenon, but we will make a connection between them and how this affects international relations and their dynamics in the contemporary world.

3. The Migration Phenomenon

Globalization, as well as the various events on the international scene, has contributed to the increase in migratory flows, especially in recent years. Thus, the European area is developing its multi-ethnic character and cultural diversity. However, there are also some other aspects of this phenomenon that have negative impact on the European society.

Surely, of all the events that took place in recent years, migration has by far the greatest impact on the relations between European countries. Migration, and the tensions it created in the Schengen area, will continue to be the major concerns on the agenda of the European leaders. Moreover, the pressure on political leaders will grow exponentially with the continuous expansion of the fundamentalist Islamic-inspired terrorism threat.

Most immigrants come from countries facing war, violence and poverty. The countries that face these problems are mostly Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon and Syria. The war in Syria started four years ago and, as things look right now, there is no sign of it coming to an end. This is especially true since there is no concrete diplomatic approach that could end it from the part of the world leading countries, countries that could have a significant influence in this respect. After the violent conflict in Syria started, the wave of immigrants that want to enter Europe has grown considerably.

The phenomenon of migration must be understood as having two perspectives: security and integration. In the first instance, European Union member states initially have upgraded their own borders' security (building of fences, thorough checks at borders, denial of refugees, etc), but security is not just about closing the borders and isolation one country or, in this instance, a continent. Member states should assess, as a whole, this phenomenon and to identify global solutions for all. Security, in this context, also means combating illegal immigration and human trafficking, a phenomenon supported and developed by criminal networks. This, sooner or later, will develop and can reach extremely high levels through terrorism and acts of terrorism, which will obviously happen on European territory (mostly the receiving states).

As far as the second perspective is concern, the integration of migrants, the European policy is built on the traditions of Europe regarding asylum and migration. Both human rights and humanitarian aspects are considered and all

migrants will enjoy the benefits of the European Union and also those benefits of the countries in which they will be provided asylum.

The integration of migrants into the European society aims to balance their rights and the culture of their country of origin. This benefits both the migrants and the society in which they will live and work in the future. However, European countries should make consistent efforts (primarily financial) regarding the integration of migrants (both in the labor market and also in economic and cultural terms). Another aspect that needs to be taken into consideration is combating illegal immigration and security of the external borders of the European Union (financial aid for Greece and Italy for securing the area of entrance that migrants use is a necessity and must be addressed as soon as possible).

At the level of the European leaders, several ideas were issued regarding the policy to halt the phenomenon of migration and to fight against illegal immigration. At the beginning of this year (2016) a summit on the subject of migration was organized, but there was no viable plan materialized. Discussions were held around two ideas: firstly to establishing a coastguard and secondly to undertake an in depth review of the Treaty of Dublin¹ in terms of the legal aspect regarding the procedure of asylum applications. The European Commissioner for Internal Affairs and Migration, Dimitris Avramopoulos, endorsed this idea openly.

However, European Union member states have not adopted the same position on migration unanimously. This happened because, while developed countries like Germany and France already have increased financial capacity and conditions to integrate migrants on their territories, other smaller countries like Greece, Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania lack the logistics to face such a challenge and were not prepared to accept migrants.

4. Brexit²

The result of the UK referendum was, with no exception, an unexpected one. If, however, some analysts were reluctant to predict with certainty the result, many of them have relied on the people's capacity to choose the position of European

¹ The Convention obliges the country through which the asylum seekers first enter the EU to handle applications for asylum on behalf of all the other Member States-the procedure is undertaken by another member state only if there are serious reasons presented.

² The term Brexit is made by the joining of the words Britain and Exit.

membership. Thus, many were not expecting such a result and, as we have seen later on, even the British population did not expect this. We draw this conclusion considering the post-referendum reactions: protests and allegations that they didn't know for sure what it meant to no longer be part of the European Union and to give up the status of European membership and the privileges that came with it.

However, even if the founding states of the European Union, Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg warned and hoped in a negative result of the referendum, once the British people made their choice, these countries pressured the United Kingdom to establish a timetable for leaving the European Union quickly. Some of the most vocal leaders in doing so were Germany and France that have called for rapid measures and made some categorical statements in this concern.

These days there are discussions on how the referendum result will be put into practice. However, it is still uncertain as to when the negotiating of the terms of the departure will start and, more importantly, who will take place in these negotiations.

Technically speaking, article 50 of the European Union Treaty, lays down the procedures for the withdrawal of a Member State. That State of the European Union shall notify about the wish to withdraw from the European Union and afterwards it must negotiate a withdrawal agreement. Once article 50 is invoked, a two-year period follows, in which the parts are to negotiate new terms of their cooperation, including key issues relating to work in the UK and the European Union, citizens access to the common market, and other relevant issues that need to be addressed.

The Supreme Court announced the previous days that the executives from Scotland and Wales have the possibility to intervene in the process on how Theresa May, the British Prime Minister, can activate article 50. This means that the departure of the UK from the European Union can be delayed and thus more problems could arise.

This decision means that the Supreme Court grants the Scottish Parliament veto power over the Brexit strategy. Considering the protests in Scotland and the will of the Scottish people to remain in the European Union, this is very likely to happen. An action such as this will throw the UK into a constitutional crisis, affecting at the same time the Brexit's program announced by Theresa May and also the plans that European officials have made for the departure of the UK. Furthermore, if this

happens, then the relations between Scotland and UK will alter in a dangerous manner that will create even more problems.

Thus, we can assume that a procrastination of the withdrawal process is sure to happen due to the "difficulties" encountered by Theresa May (who is pro Brexit). These difficulties will come from the part of the other state institutions in the UK.

The consequences of the British referendum, apart from the subsequent effective withdrawal from the European Union of Great Britain, are the following ones: the vulnerability of the European system created with so much effort many decades ago, the precedent for any other member state to opt out from the membership of the European Union (immediately after the UK referendum result, far-right parties in France, Italy, the Netherlands and Ireland have called for a similar referendum in their countries), and last but not least, the result created the conditions to fuel a dangerous idea, the idea of eurocepticism - a phenomenon that grows every day in European countries that feel left aside by the most powerful ones. Certainly, there will be other attempts from different countries to renounce the European Union membership. However, it is important that people in those countries fully understand what this de facto status implies, the benefits that they enjoy and also the obligations of European Union membership.

Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that if in the case of Great Britain - an important state in the European Union, the other important states were very blunt and direct in their statements, it is expected, from their part, to react in the same manner if such an issue should appear again from the part of another member state.

Opinions are divided and much speculation has appeared these days regarding Brexit. The Telegraph calls it "The greatest disaster that befalls on the Europe Union"¹, due to the fact that until now no state has ever left the European Union. Russian President, Vladimir Putin, also takes the opportunity to accuse the former British Prime Minister David Cameron that he blackmails Europe, while European leaders fear that this kind of action (leaving the European Union) could take place in other countries as well. While it is still not certain that Britain will leave the European Union, BBC, one of the largest television companies in the world and the

¹ <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jun/17/vladimir-putin-accuses-david-cameron-blackmailing-europe-by-calling-referendum>, accessed on 26.11.2016.

largest in the kingdom, notes that "it would be seen as political suicide to go against the will of the people expressed through the referendum."¹

5. The Terrorist Attack in Nice-France

The emergence of non-state actors, who claim their place and role in the new world order by trying to change by force the paradigms established in the system of international relations, as the **Islamic State - ISIS**, emphasized the tensions and cleavages existing in the relations between states. Their existence and actions is generating a series of crises that have a high likelihood to persist and even worsen in the coming year.

The most serious attack that was registered in 2016 took place in Nice - France, in the evening of July 14th. The event is the third attack in France after the January 2015 in Ile-de-France and the attacks in Paris in November 2015. The results of this attack were devastating: 85 people, including 10 children, were killed, and more than 250 people were injured.

Although, there were some warnings regarding the high degree of probability of such events, the security structures of the European Union have failed to prevent them from happening. This raises some questions about the ability of European countries to manage their own security, both legally (surveillance legislation is still ambiguous) and operationally (technical capabilities and staff). All these issues have a direct impact on how the European countries are perceived globally and, implicitly, their negotiating position is affected in relation to other world powers such as the United States, Russia or China.

Analysts predict an accelerated development of terrorist groups that operate as national liberation movement or substitute themselves in its action. Thus, all countries that are considered as possible terrorist targets must take the necessary measures for detection and neutralization of terrorist acts.

Clashes will continue to have an atypical character, different from classical military conflicts, and will be increasingly difficult to counteract. New types of aggressions already include cyber attacks, economic sanctions and constraints of various types, public misinformation, campaign funding for non-state actors to intervene in interstate disputes, etc.

¹ <http://www.vox.com/2016/6/23/12021222/brexit-what-happens-next>, accessed on 28.11.2016.

Hence, we can expect a diversification of methods, processes, actions of both the Islamic State, and other terrorist organizations, relying mainly on the psychological impact on public opinion. In this context, European Union member states and NATO will have to adjust to this threat and to show understanding, in order to be able to fight together against these new types of actors on the map of international relations. They will also have to clearly define who are the enemies, which are the current risks and threats, which the methods and techniques addressed to this new context of conflicts.

6. Donald Trump's Election as US President

Once again the globalization phenomenon proves its direct consequences on all of us. This is also the case of the election results in the United States, where President-elect is now the controversial businessman Donald Trump.

If during the election campaign he was very vocal and direct in addressing sensitive topics, somehow, after the election result, he has “nuanced” his position on those specific topics, including the conflict in Syria and the tensions between Israel and Palestine.

Thus, Donald Trump considers the Syrian conflict an important issue on his agenda as the next president of the United States and ensured the public opinion that he has “a different perspective for everyone”. However, he didn’t mention what this different perspective was. He has also shown interest in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and stated that he will be “the one to make peace between Israel and the Palestinians”. This statement comes after the position that he took in his campaign when he has angered Palestinians by proposing to them to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

And yet, regardless of his statements ante or post elections, his actions - whatever they may be, will have direct consequences for the whole world. USA is the forerunner in the fight against terrorism and the US President is the one who dictates how the pieces on the chessboard of the world are positioned and the US policy has direct repercussions upon all states in the entire world.

In addition to this, we must not forget that if, until now, we had Barack Obama's political vision and the Democrats strategy to back it up for two mandates, now, with or without Trump's vision, we are dealing with Republican strategy. This will

have a significant impact on US foreign policy and we are likely to see root changes regarding major issues that concern the entire world.

During the election campaign, TV debates argued that Donald Trump wants to reset the entire US foreign policy under the slogan “America First”. Moreover, he said US allies such as NATO European countries and Japan should pay for US military protection and that US military commitments in the world should be reduced. These statements, if materialized, will have significant consequences both in terms of military conflicts in which the US is involved, but also on NATO policy and vision.

If the United States, with Donald Trump as President, chooses to play this card, then there are also other aspects that need to be taken into consideration. It is well known that the United States is engaged, in financial and military terms, in various conflicts, but this is done with the endorsement and support of other NATO member states. If Trump's policy will be to “remove from the table” the other “players” (NATO member states), then these states in turn may withdraw their support concerning these conflicts.

During the campaign there was an intense debate as to where the United States wish to change the current policy towards the Russian Federation and Vladimir Putin, and have “warmer” relations. Trump’s statements fueled all these discussions and the world waits to see what is going to happen in the future. Analysts in foreign policy and international relations are somehow divided into two camps. The first believe that Trump’s statements are real and that he wants more harmonious relations with Russia, while the other part considers that he will maintain the US policy that is in place today.

However, if we want an answer to this question, it is worth analyzing the latest appointments that Trump has made regarding his team at the White House. The ones appointed are Republicans that form the conservative core of the party. Firstly, the Republican Senator Jeff Sessions was appointed as prosecutor general. Secondly, Mike Pompeo, a former intelligence officer during the Cold War, was named CIA director, and thirdly we have Mitt Romney as the Secretary of State. We mention that Mitt Romney was quite critical regarding the Russian President in the past. So, if we only take a glimpse at the above appointments, we can foresee the future US policy concerning the Russian Federation. This policy is not one of friendship and harmony, as the Russian President showed in his recent statements.

Regardless of Donald Trump's vision, the Republicans' vision or the US actions in terms of foreign policy, it is clear that each measure or statement the US will take or make will have a direct impact on the other states worldwide. If those effects are positive or negative will only be a question of how each country interacts with the United States.

7. The Russian Strategy

Russia's strategy in Europe was to influence, in one way or another, the policy that the European countries have regarding the relations that are developed between them, in order to better manipulate and weaken the unity of Europe. One type of influence is that of force (under tanks siege) and here we have the recent case of Ukraine, the annexation of Crimea and also the case of Georgia in 2008. Another type of influence that Russia is undertaking is in the politico-economic sphere. Many analysts believe that the extremist parties that are most vocal in the European Union member states (France, Italy, the Netherlands) are financed by the Russian Federation. Through this strategy, these parties will influence the population and consequently the policy of that member state. Moreover, there are voices (including former US diplomat Richard Grenell, former spokesman for US Ambassador to the UN) that believe that Russia was involved, in a high degree, in the election campaign and the elections in the United States America. This was not proven and remains only a speculation. In this way, Russia pursues the creation of spheres of influence and the division of Europe between the major powers.

“What we see is a Russia that in recent years has strengthened its military capabilities. It exercises more and more forces, even nuclear ones, and proved that it wants to show this force against its neighbors: Georgia and Crimea. In Syria, Russia supports the Bashar al-Assad regime and is bombing in a discriminatory manner”¹. The NATO Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, made this statement in an interview published on November 4th 2016 in the Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera*.

Through this statement, the NATO Secretary General creates the true picture of the Russian influence in Europe and in other parts of the world. He shows that Russia is constantly in a continuous competition with both the United States and NATO.

¹ http://www.askanews.it/nuova-europa/stoltenberg-nato-russia-punta-a-spartizione-europa_711932967.htm, accessed on 24.11.2016.

As far as Romania is concerned, and also the Romanian-Russian relations, there have been some statements from both sides showing tensions between the two countries. These tensions were mainly related to commitments made by Romania in NATO, especially by placing the missile defence shield at Deveselu. This created the grounds for Russia, through official statements, to make threats to Romania and thus creating a climate of instability and tension. All these statements were made even though, repeatedly both NATO officials and Romanian politicians, gave assurances that the missile defence system poses no threat to Russia. However, Russia, while it is well aware that Deveselu is neither a danger nor an obstacle, is using this opportunity, in a propagandistic manner, to justify the international steps taken, most of which were already established well ahead. For this reason, we stated at the beginning of this article that the Black Sea region is where tensions are born. These tensions will later have the potential to escalate into conflicts with international impact.

8. The Results of the Research Regarding the Events that have Influenced Contemporary International Relations

The year that is about to end has brought a number of major geopolitical changes that reflect a crisis concerning the principles of global governance by challenging, increasingly louder, the existing world order. As a result of this fact, we can see the repositioning of the powerful states under new formulas for cooperation and also new relationships of power.

Regardless of future decisions regarding the UK or another possible exit from the European Union, it should be noted that solidarity and cohesion in Europe would continue to erode, which will mainly be seen in the way foreign policy is conducted. This will be easily observed in the major issues that the European Union is facing, like the migrants' crisis, the relations with the Russian Federation and Turkey and the conflict in Syria. Thus, one of the consequences of this phenomenon, which is already taking place, is the eurosceptic trend and the resurrection of the nationalist extremist parties. This will change the structure of the political establishment and lead to the degradation of the political climate in Europe. This can be seen in the rise of the extremist and nationalist parties in states with a long history in the European Union (France, Italy, UK). These parties gain significant part of the electorate at every election. This shows mainly a complete change of attitude in the population, an attitude that is now, more than ever, anti-

system. We have such an example in the United States where the result of the elections was a complete surprise to the whole world.

The nationalist feeling is fueled lately by the migration phenomenon, which has created problems for political leaders everywhere, especially in Europe. The current leaders lack the ability to provide fast and precise solutions and thus the population sanctioned them.

The people in the countries that are facing problems, caused by the migration phenomenon, turned to the extremist parties looking for solutions. Migration will continue to be a serious issue in the coming year, primarily because European leaders hope that the problem will solve by itself. This is clearly not the case and we fear that this will turn into a major crisis in the coming years. Another important event that is going to happen will be the elections in Germany (Angela Merkel will try to win a new mandate as chancellor and will put the migration issues on top of her agenda).

This nationalist trend is seen, indeed in a smaller percentage, also in countries with pro European attitude or who still believe in a strong and united European Union. These smaller states have put, at a certain time, their hopes for a better future in this dream. This is also the case of Romania.

Donald Trump's election as President of the United States will, most likely, not influence the Black Sea area, at least not in the short term. This can be seen firstly from his statements but also from his new position that shows a more careful approach regarding the US foreign policy. There are some discussions about a change of diplomats, including the ambassador in Romania, but this will not greatly influence the relation with Russia or the NATO policy in the Balkans. One of the issues that could have a direct effect on our country might be the NATO – US partnership and the financial participation of the US in NATO. So, if we take into consideration Trump's statement regarding the withdrawal of US troops and also withdrawal of funding, there might be a problem concerning the funding of defense projects of the coalition and thus our country could be affected.

Globalization, while it develops, has several consequences. So, for certain countries, extraordinary opportunities will appear, allowing them to exploit the technological progress that they possess and take advantage of the open market to which they have access. This allows those countries to obtain real benefits and strengthen their position in the world. Another big advantage that globalization

brings, is that distances are significantly reduced and real-time communication is available almost to everyone (a whole world followed with interest the referendum in the UK as well as the outcome of the US elections).

Another consequence is that the nation-state, as we know it, is now facing serious competitors (international governmental organizations and multinational corporations) regarding primacy on the international stage. These actors, to which we can add terrorist groups (as ISIS), also have access to the benefits that globalization provides. This makes it even more difficult for the other countries, not only from economic perspective, but also from the security point of view to compete on the international scene.

Hence, the process of globalization does not exclude nor lets anyone to be a simple spectator at the major events that happen in the world. No one is ruled out and it is certain that an event that takes place in one corner of the world will influence, one way or another, a different part of the world. If we are prepared, as a country, to face these changes in the international environment, we will see in the years to come, when the world order will find its balance.

9. Conclusions

As a result the facts presented above, we believe that the accelerated pace of global events, the multiple implications resulting from the occurrence of these events, and the multitude of international actors involved, have caused significant changes in the way we see international relations. Because participants are not only states but also various non-state organizations, we can say that in the contemporary world it is no longer required to be a legitimate recognized state in order to take part in the “game” of international relations. This complicates the traditional way of relating to the analysis of international relations and makes it difficult when we try to predict trends and possible actions by different actors, important or less important.

This is why we consider that it is necessary to carefully study all the phenomena that have implications, not only internationally but also locally and regionally, because, at present, all states are interconnected not only economically and politically but also culturally. Moreover, the current trend of states is that each of them tries to be part of various international organizations (NATO, UN, EU, etc.).

This makes the equation of international relations an even more complicated one. What is going to happen if conflicts between countries that are part of the organization would arise? Who will be better positioned in the game of international relations will surely have a lot to win and also become an important actor in the international context.

In addition to all the reasons given above and also due to the fact that international relations are no longer as they used to be in the past, we believe that it will be very difficult to analyze their dynamics. This is especially true nowadays. We presented this in the beginning of the article where we showed that the interest of each individual regarding the development of international events and their implications is growing as time passes.

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