The European Union and the International Arena at the Turn of the 21ˢᵗ Century
Identity, Religious and Cultural Challenges

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1. The International Arena—Defining Features and Present-day Challenges

A S RECENT events have clearly demonstrated, the first years of the 21ˢᵗ century have been tenser than experts in the field would have estimated some time ago. This situation is largely due to significant developments in the global security environment, generated by newer (cybercrime) or older (terrorism, trans-border crime) risks and threats, which have reached unpredictable levels of intensity. Changes in the security environment will inevitably lead to a reconsideration of identity security and of the responsibility for the patrimonial, cultural and religious values of a state.

Thus, "national identity represents a central component of the security problem."[1] Just like language, education, art and religion, heritage—both tangible and intangible—plays a substantial role in shaping, defining and forming a community. The assumption and promotion of national identity may "contribute to safeguarding security in difficult historical times."[2] The security of such an identity may be ensured by supporting, cultivating and promoting its heritage of cultural values. Culture, education and spirituality may forge a homogeneous communal identity, creating forms of loyalty and solidarity among the members of the community in question.

In its *2020 Agenda* strategy, the European Union sets out to accomplish several objectives, which could indeed be reached through common policies in several domains: the environment, energy, the taxation system, employment, research and education. In his study *Statele Unite ale Europei* (The United States of Europe), Professor Adrian Ivan states that "starting from the structures of the present-day EU, Europe can build a federation of states and peoples that can withstand the *challenges of the international environment* and, most of all, *contemporary interdependencies*."[3] In addition to the objectives that are to be achieved through common policies, we consider that it is also necessary to devise a coher-

ent strategy concerning the particular **cultural, identity, religious** and **patrimonial** characteristics of the Member States.

The phrase *historical heritage* currently designates "a fund intended for the delight of a planetary-scale community, formed through the constant accumulation of a diversity of objects that belong to a common past: fine art works and masterpieces, as well as products and objects belonging to all the human sciences and crafts."[4]

A heritage artwork expresses the assumption of a particular set of values and a certain spirituality, embraced and lived at a certain moment in history. Naturally, we may notice the existence of correlations between heritage, spirituality, religiosity and identity. The correlative support is provided by the education, feelings, experiences and religious sentiments of a community, value-based education representing one of the noblest and most complex human activities.

These are some of the reasons why we believe that *cultural heritage*, *religious education* and *heritage education* should be given an important place both in the European educational systems and in the efforts designed to enhance the security of a community or a state. It is widely acknowledged that the most regrettable form of degradation that the culture, the heritage and the spiritual values of a nation may undergo resides in their being passed into oblivion.

The foremost economic trends in the history of the European peoples, reflecting and reinforcing their *cultural and spiritual patterns*, are generally well known; however, there are major forthcoming changes that will affect the progress and geographical distribution of the population in terms of religious and cultural affinities, given the present-day mutations and metamorphoses of relations that have been built over centuries of economic, cultural and religious evolution.

According to Eric Hobsbawm,[5] the year 1989 witnessed the emergence of several states under the circumstances in which there was no independent boundary delineation mechanism or these states refused to have a third party play the role of an impartial mediator. The main phenomenon that became defining for this period consisted, above all, in economic crises. Today we are confronted with a crisis of global proportions, identified by Niall Fergusson as the crisis of globalization itself,[6] a crisis whose starting point was in the United States. It was relatively easy to see that the United States of America, the European Union and several major powers in Asia were facing a synchronized recession in 2009.[7] Despite the fact that pessimists believe the worst of the crisis is yet to come, the optimistic majority considers that the world economy has been subjected to a (shock) therapy, whose first positive results are already visible in some EU countries (Poland, Germany and France).

Starting from the challenges posed by the emergence of such risks and threats, the world's states have endeavored to address the crisis as effectively as possible, leading to significant economic growth and activating the geopolitical and geostrategic dynamics. The expansion of the North-Atlantic Alliance (NATO) and the enlargement of the European Union (EU) are to the most important movements that have taken place during this period, with vast consequences not only for the economies and the security of the states concerned, but for the entire world, particularly given the degree of the two international organizations' involvement in global issues. We may also note, however, the reassertion of the

personality of some states, such as Brazil, Indonesia, etc., due to economic growth, or the increased importance of others in regional geopolitical equations (see the region of Southeast Asia). These actors of the international geopolitical and geostrategic stage will probably become the power pillars of tomorrow's world, which, in all likelihood, will become multipolar, as some experts in international relations have suggested.

In the opinion of Robert Latham,[8] arguments that the present-day world order is destructive are implicitly based on a certain lack of continuity. We should not imagine that the tensions and problems that brought the *Cold War* period to an end have disappeared, that we will have an altogether different way of life and that future events will take a different course. Some researchers have rightly wondered whether there is a real basis for the new world order. The specialists' remarks and observations make us think not necessarily about the disappearance or withdrawal of the state, but about *changes that will affect the state's functionality*: indeed, states will continue to exist, but they will assume new responsibilities and obligations. To put it briefly, we can state that we are facing a hybrid situation, in which the states' responsibilities are shared with governmental and non-governmental organizations.

The new reality has now become more complex. Numerous responsibilities (regarding economic goods, human rights monitoring, access to information), which used to belong exclusively to the states, are now also assumed by international organizations, defining, to some extent, the current international order.

Confirming Kenneth Waltz's predictions regarding alliances ("alliances are flexible and short lived"),[9] after the war, the USA and the USSR became competitors on a worldwide scale and, after the Berlin crisis (1948), they turned out to be downright enemies. Following the terms of a similar comparison, former enemies in World War II—the USA, Britain and France, on one side, and Germany and Italy, on the other—became allies in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, aiming to "protect the freedom, the common heritage and civilization of peoples, based on principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law, to protect themselves against any armed attack that, even if directed against only one of the Allies, will be considered an attack against all."[10]

The end of the Cold War meant not only a lower risk of war between the two great powers (military blocs), but also the reactivation of latent or frozen conflicts, monitored by the USA and the USSR. Even though it has a large-scale economy, the European Union does not have a political-military unity that would enable it to play a more important role on the international stage—a goal that is often proclaimed, but has so far not produced any consequences or led to any firm decisions.

2. The Position of the European Union in Today's International Arena

I T IS widely acknowledged that the European Union is becoming a major player on the international stage. From an economic point of view, the EU tends to draw close to the USA, promoting joint or competing initiatives in this regard. Brussels has developed a *European Security and Cooperation Policy*[11] (established by the European

Council), which includes humanitarian, crisis management and tension prevention goals, objectives and actions.

The European Security and Cooperation Policy is broadly correlated with NATO policies, the Union aiming to safeguard the common values, the independence and the integrity of its member states, as well as to consolidate democracy and the rule of law. Some EU member states support military actions in the theaters of operations from the Balkans and Afghanistan, becoming involved also in the area of the conflicts generated by the Arab Spring or by ISIS. Like the USA, the EU considers the following situations as posing threats and dangers: poor governance and the lack of democracy; internal and interstate crises and conflicts; the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; illegal migration; trans-border crime; the discrepancies between the member states of the Union.

It should be noted that after the collapse of the USSR, yet another concept—*unipolarity*—was added to the two existing fundamental notions of *multipolarity* and *bipolarity*.[12] The involvement of the major actors—*international* (the USA, the Russian Federation and China) and *regional* (Iran, Turkey)—in Central Asia has produced multiple effects: on the one hand, it has contributed to the inclusion of some regions within the main international economic and political circuits; on the other hand, it may cause the intensification of certain tensions and conflicts, due to the influence of powers with different and, sometimes, opposing interests. The EU member states—notably France, Italy, Great Britain and Germany—aspire to obtain a distinctive position in the region, with emphasis on the energy sectors, as do, in fact, Japan and South Korea.

For the EU, direct participation in harnessing the energy resources and raw materials of Central Asia and Siberia is vital in light of the intensified competitive trends between the world's main economic blocs.[13] The political, economic, military and cultural relations between the EU and Russia are complex, both at the level of the Union's bodies and institutions and at that of its member states and of some of the countries invited to join it. Like in the case of the EU's relations with the USA, the evolution of Russia's cooperation with the Union has evinced the existence of several contradictory aspects, generated by their different interests and by their membership in different international alliance systems. There are sufficient grounds to assert that both the European Union and the Russian Federation have, up to a point, attempted to identify a common platform for reducing the political pressure exerted by the USA and for promoting their own economic interdependence. The Russian Federation has called for economic and political equality with the USA. The EU—almost equal to the USA in economic terms—regards Eurasia as a natural space where it can promote its own interests, competing, in this respect, with the USA, China and Japan. In 1999, the *Strategy for the Development of Relations between the Russian Federation and the European Union* was adopted in Cologne.[14] This strategy was centered on strengthening relations with Moscow, based on cooperation in the economic, political and security domains and on the promotion of democratic values. The EU imports about 45% of its oil from the Near and the Middle East and about 40% from the Russian Federation. In other words, the USA, the Russian Federation and OPEC practically control the EU's oil and gas needs. This is the main reason why Brussels has an interest in promoting the strategy for the *EU-Russian Federation common economic space*[15] and why it pays particular attention to its cooperation with some of the states in North Africa and South America.

Ignoring the difficulties encountered during the recent negotiations between the Europeans and the Russians, Germany has unilaterally boosted bilateral relations: several thousand German companies are operating in the Russian Federation and German banks provide some of the Russian companies with assistance during periods of crisis. In general, however, the relations between the Russian Federation and Western Europe have evolved considerably, particularly within the framework of the *EU–Russian Federation Partnership*[16] and of the *EU–Russian Federation Council*.[17]

As regards the **relations between the EU and India**, by overcoming older tensions and intolerance, India has maintained regular contact with the Anglo-Saxon world, especially at the scientific and cultural levels. The European Union is one of India's largest trading partners. After the Cold War, the rapprochement between the EU and the authorities in New Delhi intensified, based on commercial reasons and on collaboration in the cybernetics and IT sector. The EU member states entered a cooperation agreement with India in 1994, which was preceded by a joint political declaration. In 1996, the Commission presented a document on the *EU-India Strategic Partnership*.[18] It should be noted that alongside China, India will most likely become a serious economic competitor at international level in the coming decades.

The EU-China relations. Today, China has a population of about 1.4 billion people and an area of 9,596,960 km². Its GDP amounts to approximately 5,818 billion dollars; Hong Kong has a GDP of 240 billion dollars.[19] The natural resources of this country are: coal, iron ore, oil, natural gas, mercury, tin, manganese, molybdenum, vanadium, magnetite, aluminum, lead, zinc, uranium, etc. China has perhaps the greatest potential for hydroelectric power generation in the world. Analysts consider that China occupies the 3rd or 4th place in the world's economic power hierarchies, after the USA, the European Union and Japan (with which it contests this place). It had an economic growth of about 10% in 2009, exports amounting to about 40% of its GDP. It is estimated that China's economic expansion will affect the rest of the world to a greater extent than Japan's success.

3. The European Union–NATO Relations

T HE PRESENT-DAY architecture of European security reflects the key features of the geopolitical environment: the transition towards a multipolar international system; competition between the Euro-Atlantic powers for the redistribution of roles; the depth of integration in the EU; Russia's attempts to maintain its status as a major power in the international arena and to occupy key positions in the European security structures. *Security and collective defense*, on the one hand, and *cooperation-based security*, on the other, are fundamentally different, albeit complementary instruments[20] of the international security policy.

The implementation of the subsidiarity principle in the organization of European security is predicated on a multi-layered security system: the EU, the OSCE, NATO and the UN. Now more than ever, the need for a correlation between the various security institutions is self-evident. The evolution of events in the EU, the competition between the EU and NATO, the possibility that some of the Western countries' *national inter-*

ests might prevail over the EU's *common interests*, and the assessment of security not only from a financial, but also from an ideological standpoint represent the main factors that call for an efficient European security system. The level of interoperability on which the relations between the EU and NATO are based seeks to activate the collective European capacity for crisis and conflict management.[21]

The discussions held in Washington in 1999 and the formula adopted on that occasion gave the EU more weight in the decision-making process within the Alliance and provided the Union with the necessary instruments for fulfilling the missions it had assumed. According to NATO's new strategic concept, it is considered that the development of a common foreign and security policy, which includes the progressive development of a common defense policy, which is also required by the Treaty of Amsterdam,[22] is compatible with the common security and defense policy laid down by the Treaty of Washington. For both organizations, but also for the countries of Central Europe, an important issue is the enlargement of the EU and of NATO. More and more authorized voices have expressed the belief that at the turn of the 21st century, the geopolitical and geostrategic realities require abandoning approaches based on the question *what has the USA done for Europe?* and accepting the model *what will the USA accomplish together with Europe?*[23]

For starters, the two organizations should extend their strategic dialogue[24] beyond the Balkans. The resumption of the dialogue between the *North Atlantic Committee* and the *EU's Political Security Committee*,[25] on topics such as the fight against terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction or on situations such as those in Ukraine and Syria, will enable NATO and the EU to examine ways of cooperation for the prevention and management of current and future international and regional crises.

4. The European Union and International Security

T HE EVOLUTION of the international security environment along political and diplomatic coordinates is influenced mainly by the diminished credibility of the UN, by the struggle for a new world order, by the fact that the world might be dominated by one superpower and by the relatively lower relevance of the state in international relations. The USA's world domination is described by Céline Bryon-Portet as a "domination exerted in the economic and military domains, but also at a cultural level. ... [The USA is the] promoter of the American lifestyle, the advocate of a Western model that it wants to see implemented in non-Western countries ... using all the possible weapons of soft and hard power and imposing its own rules of conduct on the international stage."[26] The present-day world order and the USA's position of dominance are synthesized by former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright in an already famous adage: "multilateral when possible, unilateral when necessary."[27]

Criticism leveled against the present-day world order concerns:
- the dominance of the powers that were victorious in World War II;
- the UN's structural lack of mobility and its low capacity to adapt to changes in the international security environment;

- the growing economic and even political influence exerted by transnational corporations and by NGOs.

The struggle for a new international order is inextricably linked to the status and role of the UN within the international security framework. Thus, Ronald Steel considers that *during the Cold War, the UN was nothing more than a forum for debate. The big nations notified each other, while the smaller nations, under the sway of corruption or the arms trade, aligned themselves through their votes.*[28]

The eastward **enlargement** of the EU and especially of NATO has been creating serious security problems. The 2004 wave of NATO expansion, which comprised seven states (including the Baltic States), brought the North Atlantic Alliance, for the first time, to the frontiers of Russia—under the Membership Action Plan—and incorporated, also for the first time, ex-Soviet states. Although Russia was opposed to this expansion, it did not have the necessary force for preventing the accession of these countries to NATO.

The **European Union** has launched several initiatives[29] for improving its capabilities in the field of security and defense. The results of these initiatives are varied. On the one hand, the EU is leading several operations in Africa, Southeast Europe and the Caucasus, where it imposes itself both in military and in political terms. On the other hand, the EU, whose 28 member states constitute a major economic force in the world, is still struggling to identify more substantial financial resources for its peacekeeping missions, a sign that it is facing some problems related to its budget deficit.

As stated in the *European Security Strategy*,[30] Europe plays a role in maintaining international security and for this it needs military forces that can protect and advance European interests both at home and abroad. Europe today certainly has the greatest economic and technological potential in its entire history, but is also facing the most delicate problems it has ever had to cope with (resources, financial crises, religious tensions, etc.). By supporting private initiative, the states of Europe have fostered a process of substantial social development, on several tiers: workforce circulation, partnerships, and exchanges of good practice.

At the same time, anthropological research and social psychology studies indicate the emergence of phenomena evincing the robotization or mechanization of everyday life and the prevalence of worrisome addictions. Cultural and religious phenomenology may offer some explanations and also some possible solutions in this regard. It is obvious that on the cusp of the 20th and the 21st centuries, globalization is an all-encompassing phenomenon. Several transformations that have occurred in recent times may be outlined:

- changes affecting the social, political and economic activities within the borders of the national states and the exchanges taking place between different regional areas;
- the growth and diversification of communication systems and networks, of capital transfers and of the manner of conceiving investments at the international level;
- the deepening impact of global events on personal life.

In light of all this, it is important to remember that spiritual and cultural institutions have profound resources for conducting interdisciplinary research on these issues and providing viable solutions for the concrete problems the world is facing today. According to a study carried out by Vasile Ghețău, "Populaţii si religii la mijlocul se-

colului XXI" (Populations and religions in the mid-21st century),[31] Europe is the only region in which the population will decrease, by up to 100 million Christians. As Ghețău estimates, their proportion will go down from 75% to 65%, in parallel with a rise in the proportion of those who are religiously unaffiliated to nearly 25% and of Muslims to 10%. The combined effect of birth rates and migration will result in a doubling of the proportion of Muslims in several Western European countries.

These transformations are naturally taking center stage in intercultural and interreligious debates. In the abovementioned register, considerable attention is devoted to the "oppositions between united Europe and globalization, on the one hand, and the temptation of regionalization or the retrieval of lost, marginal, provincial identities," on the other.[32]

Final remarks. We believe that besides representing a political project, the effort of managing Europe is or should also be a *project for managing the European cultural space*. Valorizing the heritage of every nation, safeguarding the masterpieces that have not yet been recognized as such, the monuments, the traditions and the "small heritage" of all the countries belonging to this cultural area (regardless of the political evolution of united Europe) is becoming the primary mission in a **Europe of cultures**.

The UNESCO definition of heritage clearly evinces this right and this duty we have towards our heritage: *Heritage represents the legacy of the past that we are enjoying today and that we will transmit to the generations to come. A common inheritance of the collectivity, an integral part of the living environment and an asset for national tourism, heritage serves as the cornerstone of manifold projects of vital importance*. During the days of the French Revolution, when the new concept of nation came into existence, Abbe Grégoire drew attention to the fact that: *Public respect should seek specifically to protect national assets, which belong to no one and are, therefore, the property of all. All the monuments of science and art should be protected by all the good citizens, through education and by assuming and promoting identity, religious and community values*.

Day after day, it is becoming increasingly clear that 21st-century Europe is a space of—often inadvertent—interference between religion and culture, the former having contributed to the development of culture and having, indeed, created culture. Aware of its contribution to the creation of culture, religion remains open to dialogue with the culture of the secular society, not in order to impose its own views, but to build interconnecting bridges. Culture, albeit reluctantly at times, is increasingly drawn toward religion, as suggested by the insights of transdisciplinarity, in an attempt to acquire an in-depth grasp of certain religious aspects and to analyze them against its own creeds. The object of the state-church relation is the citizen and, respectively, the believer.[33]

Noting the impact of cultural and religious determinations on either individual or collective personality, social psychology is called upon to analyze and describe the ways in which individuals and societies can influence culture, behavior and spirituality, but also the ways in which **culture** and **religion** can influence, in their turn, individuals and societies.

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1. Barry Buzan, *Popoarele, statele şi teama* (Chişinău: Cartier, 2000), 82.
2. Mălina Ciocea, *Securitatea culturală. Dilema identităţii în lumea globală* (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2009), 9.
3. Adrian Ivan, *Statele Unite ale Europei* (Cluj-Napoca, CA Publishing, 2014), 307.
4. Françoise Choay, *Alegoria Patrimoniului* (Bucharest: Simetria, 1998), 1.
5. Eric Hobsbawm, *Globalisation, Democracy and Terrorism* (Little & Brown, 2008).
6. Niall Fergusson, "And How to Deal with It," in *The New York Review of Books*, 56(2009).
7. Wolfgang Munchau, *World Economy in 2010*, http://www. Thetimes.co.za/Business/Article 1.
8. Robert Latham, *Political Space: The New Frontier of Global Politics* (Yale: SUNY Press, 2002), 21.
9. Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1979).
10. André Fontaine, *Istoria războiului rece*, vol. 1 (Bucharest: Editura Militară, 1992), 8.
11. The Common Foreign and Security Policy is governed by Title V of the *Treaty on European Union*. There are also plans for a long-term common defense policy, which may eventually lead to the establishment of a common defense force.
12. Adrian Filip, *Gândirea militara românească*, Bucharest, 1(2003), 105.
13. Rodica Zaharia and Tiberiu Brăilean, *Uniunea Europeana si economia globală* (Iaşi: Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, Center for European Studies, 2005), 7.
14. "Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on EU-Russia Relations," *Official Journal of the European Union C 54/24*.
15. Adrian Severin, "The EU Eastern Neighborhood Policy and Its Impact on Trade and Business Opportunities," speech delivered at the Economic European Summit, London, 11 April 2012.
16. Russia and the EU signed a *Partnership and Cooperation Agreement* on 24 June 1994.
17. During a two-day summit held in St. Petersburg on 3-4 June 2011, the EU and Russia discussed the *perspectives for their relations, economic and financial issues, as well as a series of international developments*.
18. The *strategic partnership* between the EU and India is based on a document adopted in 2005 and updated in 2008, which includes four priorities: *peace and comprehensive security, sustainable development, research and technology* and *interpersonal cultural exchanges*.
19. "The world in 2009," *The Economist*, 112.
20. See Monica Sanjose Roca, "L'identite europeenne de securitate et de defense," *Bulletin d'information de l'Observatoire Europeen de Securite*, 6(2003) and 8(2004).
21. Elena Tănăsescu & Aurel Ciobanu Dordea, *Politica externă şi de securitate comună* (Bucharest: Centrul de Resurse Juridice, 2004), 55.
22. The *Treaty of Amsterdam* (May 1999) established the so-called "area of freedom, security and justice."
23. Gheorghe Marin, "România în NATO - împliniri şi aspiraţii la cinci ani de aderare," *Gândirea Militară Românească*, Bucharest, 2(2009), 71.
24. The new Strategic Concept was adopted at the Lisbon Summit (November 2010).
25. The *Treaty of Lisbon* stipulates the creation of a new EU autonomous structure—the *European External Action Service*—which will assume a prominent role in foreign policy matters. The new service will assist the High Representative in coordinating the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy and will ensure the consistency of the EU's external actions.
26. See Céline Bryon-Portet, "L'idéologie moderne de la transparence et ses limites," *Sociétés - Revue des sciences humaines et sociales*, 3(2011) and "La culture du secret et ses enjeux dans la Société de communication," in *Sociétés - Revue des sciences humaines et sociales*, 4(2014).

27. Ronald Steel, *Temptations of a Superpower* (Cambridge: London, Harvard University Press, 1995), 83.
28. Steel, *Temptations*, 87.
29. For a comprehensive overview of the issue, see Constantin Moştoflei and Vasile Popa, *Rolul Uniunii Europene in asigurarea Securităţii Globale* (Bucharest: Carol I National Defense University, Centre for Defense and Security Strategic Studies, 2008).
30. *Internal Security Strategy for the European Union – Towards a European Security Model* (Luxemburg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2010), 21.
31. Vasile Ghetău, "Populaţii si religii la mijlocul secolului XXI," *Contributors.ro*, 9 April 2015.
32. Alin Gavreliuc, *Psihologie interculturală* (Iaşi: Polirom, 2011), 21.
33. Constantin Ţanu, *Biserica şi dimensiunea socială a securităţii* (Bucharest: Institutul European, 2012), 287.

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Abstract
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Keywords
the international arena, the European Union, identity, religious and cultural challenges, religious and patrimonial characteristics, international security, European Cultural Space, culture and religion