



## Reshaping European and national security in a post COVID – 19 context

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**Abstract:** *The COVID-19 crisis, undoubtedly, raised a series of questions concerning aspects of national and human security. The crisis impact, per se, tested, in extremis, the medical systems and the political capacity to take swift decisions needed to protect the population. It is a general accepted thesis that the world will face a second wave of effects: economic and systemic. Regarding the last aspect, the current international system is constructed around many principles among them, relevant for our research are, global governance and national sovereignty. The manner in which the two concepts operate was tested during the pandemic. On one hand the international system of global governance failed to ensure a higher level of human security when facing a crisis. On the other hand, states were left to tackle the effects of the pandemic, more or less alone, as the entire international system was paralyzed. In this context state had to turn to classic concepts of national security, egocentric and protectionist, but needed to ensure one of its fundamental functions – providing the security of its citizens. As others crisis are expected to unfold in a domino like effect, redefining national security will be essential for states and regional organizations. But in this process decisions could collide with assumed international obligations. In this context the article explores this impact of the COVID 19 over the how states define their national security concepts. In this context a special attention will be given, as an example, to the industry sector in the context of the green deal, as European states will be pioneering in implementing new standards in climate protection policies that will affect certain sectors of the economy. Rethinking the national security agenda will certainly face aspects which impose the protection of certain sectors that have a higher negative impact over climate change.*

**Keywords:** *global governance, national security, green deal, sustainability,*

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## 1. FROM GLOBAL GOVERNANCE TO NATIONAL SECURITY IN A PANDEMIC CONTEXT

The global governance system was generated from the need to protect humanity against transnational threats (Benedict, 2001). As Jinseop Jang, Jason McSparren and Yuliya Rashchupkina point “*Global governance is concerned with issues that have become too complex for a single state to address alone*” (Jang, McSparren, & Rashchupkina, 2016), even a powerful one, as they are transnational in distribution and effects. In this context an event in one part of the world could have regional or international impact depending on the amplitude of the effects. Global governance operates in basis of a structure formed by international organizations, state and non-state actors, international treaties all involved in resolving interconnected problems of potential global risk. Thus, in the case of health, the World Health Organizations (WHO) should work together with states, NGO’s, transnational companies to raise the general health level of the global population. Moreover, one of its core functions is to alert states of the potential risks regarding an epidemiological outbreak (WHO, 2006).

The dooming hypothesis discussed within the WHO for decades regarding a possible pandemic (WHO, July 2009), came to reality through COVID 19 which overwhelmed the world and the impact of the crisis tested the structural layers of global security.

The reaction of the international organization was put under scrutiny (Hernández, 2020 ) because of untimely response and lack of consistency (Peel, Gross, & Cookson, 2020) in promoting international measures to stop or decrease the impact of the pandemic. There were many scholars who contested, even prior to COVID-19, the real impact of the global governance (Chase-Dunn & Lawrence, 2011) (Halliday, 2000) (Jang, McSparren, & Rashchupkina, 2016) or pointed towards the need to adapt it to new realities (Goldin & Vogel, 2010). The COVID-19 pandemic proved that the impact of global governance can be small and that a reform should be considered in the near future in order to turn the international organizations form bureaucratic forums into functional institutions in time of crisis.

The malfunctioning in the global governance system left states to face the pandemic in face of misleading and sometimes contradictory informations, while facing hybrid threats of different nature. This generated two type of reactions: mistrust and a quick repositioning in the definition of national security.

Every state has a national security and defense policy. In it, there are defined national objectives and international ones as some threats to national security have transnational roots. In this context these documents follow the international agreements and practices and establish fields of national interest or national security interest (Wolfers, 1952). But in the process of establishing them the states define their priorities, an approach that, sometimes, can conflict with international policies or the mainstream practices in international politics. The concept is deeply rooted in the realist model of thinking international relations (Steans, Pettiford, & Diez, 2005, p. 68) and sometimes seen at the core of the international relations system dynamics (Steans, Pettiford, & Diez, 2005, p. 75).

The national security addresses the main objective of the state which are constant in time and follow the same main objectives, sometimes pointing towards general issues (Wolfers, 1952). Initially the main objective was defense against problems that represent threats to national security and were mainly linked to military security. According to Joseph J. Romm for 45 years the US national security was focused on containing the Soviet Union, and the race was a military



one (Romm, 1993) with all the classical elements of the security dilemma. On the other hand, the Soviet Union focused on the same core aspect.

For Communist Romania, the objective to pay external debts was considered as a national security objective as it reduced the dependence towards other countries or international institutions. In this case the objective was economic but with high impact in the place Romania wanted to play in the international arena.

Nowadays we understand security as a complex concept which include more than military security. The Copenhagen school of security identifies several sectors of security such as: military/state, political, societal, economic and environmental (Wæver, Buzan, & Wilde, Security: A New Framework for Analysis, 1997). Even if the concepts were vividly debated in the literature (Wæver & Buzan, Slippery? contradictory? sociologically untenable? The Copenhagen school replies , 1997) the sectors, with some additions are considered in most of national security policies.

But even if the main directions are relatively constant the way each state understand to achieve this goal can be subjective and can be altered in nuances or in structure from a political cycle to another. So, Trump (Trump, 2020) defined the national interest in a manner, while Biden in another (Biden, 2020). While the objective is still the same, namely keeping the place of the US as a great power, the means to achieve this goal are different.

## 2. NATIONAL SECURITY, GLOBAL GOVERNANCE AND COMPLEX INTERDEPENDENCE

Coming back to the COVID-19 one aspect must be noted: every state had to act to protect its national security, including human security. As a first response states imposed national restrictions (BBC, 2020) and tried to meet needs in medical devices, medical protective equipment and medicine. In March 2020, the WHO called for the help of the industry sector and states to increase the production of protective equipment with 40% (WHO, 2020). The Vice president of the European Commission, Věra Jourová, called to “*end our “morbid dependency” on China and India for medical supplies, a situation highlighted by the coronavirus crisis*” (Euractiv, 2020). In time of crisis states had to find their own way to cover national needs resolving to closed borders, protectionism and redirecting the industrial production towards the internal needs. The lockdowns interrupted global chain supplies which accentuated problem of access to certain goods (Guan, Wang, Hallegatte, & et all, 2020).

In the International relations the complex interdependence theory explains the context in which actors or situations have a mutual influence over each other. In these cases, the outcome is connected to the relationship of dependence. One type of interdependence is the economic one which is according to Joseph S. Nye Jr. “similar to the military one in the sense that it is the substance of traditional international politics” (Nye Jr., 2005, p. 183). Also, according to Nye the interdependence can be symmetrical or asymmetrical. In the first case of the symmetry there is an almost equal level of dependence between the countries. In the second case, the asymmetry, understood as a state is less dependent than the other, causes disruptions and in the long run a possible position of power for the less dependent one (Nye Jr., 2005, p. 187). In this case each state chooses which asymmetries should be handled according to its national security strategy.

In the case of EU, the dependence on medical supplies, especially pharmaceuticals, is a considerable problem for the European security and it points toward a level of dependency from China and India. In this case the European Union should adapt policies in order to reduce that given dependency and the security strategy should help in defining the sectors that should receive a certain level of protection in order to reduce this dependency.

### **3. REDUCING ASYMMETRIC INTERDEPENDENCE IN THE INDUSTRIAL SECTOR AND THE GREEN DEAL.**

The problem is that most of these sectors of industry have high rates of pollution, and thus, a negative impact on climate change. So, in the case of reducing dependency some policies must be considered and adapted, in such a manner not to have a negative impact on the environment, competition law and international free trade.

In this case the UE have to conciliate between the targets established in the Geen Deal policies, needs of the European market, needs of the European states and the strategic need to rethink the security policy. In this part we will make references to the chemical industry as an example as it is a polluting sector and also a strategic one as the COVID-19 crisis have shown. Also, acknowledging the high risk the dependence that the EU has in this sector, some policies are being drown.

The Green Deal strategy develops on the structural agreement of 55 countries to keep below 2-degree C the global warming, all incorporated in the legally binding international act known as the Paris Agreement on Climate change (Paris Agreement, 2015). Understanding that climate change represents a risk to European and global security, EU and its member states are founders of the Agreement and assumed a nationally determined contribution targeted to decrease “the greenhouse gas emissions by at least 40% by 2030 compared to 1990” (Europa Climate Action, 2020).

As a strategy the Green Deal is an ambitious project, aimed at changing the mentality and practices in numerous sectors of the economy such as energy and energetic efficiency, industrial production, transportation, agriculture and so on (European Commission, 2020). A remarkable target is the decrease greenhouse gas emissions as to become “climate neutral by 2050” (European Commission, What is the European Green Deal?, 2020). In order to achieve this objectives actions must be taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in all sectors. But the COVID 19 was a cornerstone in approaching the green deal, industrial policies and strategic sectors. The EU understood it has to identify sectors in which a high level of dependence can become a threat to European security. This is why the European Commission reached the conclusion that: the “*EU must strengthen its open strategic autonomy with resilient value chains and diversify sustainable sourcing for those chemicals that have essential uses for our health and for achieving a climate-neutral and circular economy*” (European Commission, 14.10.2020). Also, the European Commission states: “*The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted that the limited number of suppliers for some chemicals used in essential societal applications may pose risks, for example to the availability of medicines and to EU’s capacity to respond to health crises. EU’s resilience to supply disruptions is not only key to guarantee availability of chemicals used in health applications*” (European Commission, 14.10.2020).

In order to achieve these objectives, the Commission will identify “*strategic dependencies*” and will propose measures to reduce them (European Commission, 14.10.2020) (European Council, 2020). Also, some policies will be updated such as the European Industrial



Policy. Another area of involvement will regard the “strategic foresight on chemicals” (European Council, 2020).

The COVID-19 crisis draws the attention towards certain EU vulnerabilities in the economic sector which must be addressed in order to raise the level of EU security. In this context new policies must be developed, and certain concessions must be made. Also, a series of financing mechanism must be developed in order to support these sectors to be economic efficient and climate neutral, as others international players may not conform to the same green standards and thus may have lower expenses in comparison with the European counterparts.

#### **4. DISCUSSIONS**

The situation described above is only one example and certainly other similar situation will be identified, as the effects of the COVID-19 crises will unfold in other sectors. Moreover, the EU acknowledged that vulnerabilities may be found in other sectors and this is why it committed itself to investigate and analyze the situation with the purpose to identify the problematic areas and to adopt measures in order to reduce dependencies. In this context a reanalysis of certain policies will take place as needed. This should be seen as a continuous and tumultuous process, with many political uncertainties, which will take time starting from the process of policy making to consensus and, then, implementation.

It is in this register, of the concept of European/national security, that the case of 5G networks must be analyzed. In the center of the debate was the Chinese manufacturer Huawei (Cerulus, Europe’s 5G plans in limbo after latest salvo against Huawei, 2020), the European and national security in the context of growing threats of hybrid war materialized in this case in aspects of cybersecurity. The unfolding debate about the safety of Huawei components for 5G networks had European states divert from a common policy and states undertook different measures in the matter ranging from strict norms in aspects of cybersecurity to declaring 5G networks as matters of national security (Cerulus, Trump and friends: Where European countries come down on Huawei, 2020).

In some sectors measures were already taken in order to reduce dependencies as is the Energy Sector where the EU norms and the Green Deal establish clear rules meant of tackling inequities, develop distribution chains and reducing dependencies (European Commission, Clean Energy, 2020). But the vulnerability level among states varies from country to country in the EU, and the impact of the transition will be different. Also, the pace in which the states are capable to implement the Green Deal targets and absorb funds needed to implement certain projects is different.

As an example, Romania has a high potential of green energy, but it also has an energetical production structure with substantial advantages based on natural reserves of coal and gas as it is presented in Table 1 (Romanian energetic strategy 2019-2020, with the perspective of the year 2050, 2018, p. 7). It is also important to mention that Romania has a “balanced and diversified energy mix” which for the year 2017 was composed of: coal – 15% of the total mix; oil - 32,6% of the total mix; natural gas – 27%; hydroelectric, nuclear or solar power – 15,2%, imported petroleum products – 8,7% (Romanian energetic strategy 2019-2020, with the perspective of the year 2050, 2018, p. 6). If we cumulate coal and gas and we consider the objective to reduce fossil CO<sub>2</sub> emissions Romania may face a security problem that may

collide with national interests of energetic sustainability. In this case massive investments in regenerable energy and advanced technology must be supported by the Romanian government and the EU. Indeed, in the Energetic Strategy 4 strategic investments of national interest are being defined, namely: “*Completion of Groups 3 and 4 from Cernavoda NPP; Construction of the Hydropower with Accumulation by Pumping from Tarnița-Lăpușești; Realization of the 600 MW Group from Rovinari; Construction of the Turnu-Măgurele-Nicopole Hydrotechnical Complex.*” (Romanian energetic strategy 2019-2020, with the perspective of the year 2050, 2018, p. 6). The only problem is that Romania does not have a good record in absorbing European funds for infrastructure development, which in this case could generate a substantial problem in energetic security.

**Table no. 1 – Romania primary energy resources**

RESURSE PURTATOARE DE ENERGIE PRIMARA	RESURSE		REZERVE		PRODUCTIE ANUALA ESTIMATA		PERIOADA DE ASIGURARE CU RESURSE SI REZERVE	
	Milioane Tone <sup>1)</sup>	Milioane Tep	Milioane Tone <sup>1)</sup>	Milioane Tep	Milioane Tone <sup>1)</sup>	Milioane Tep	RESURSE ANI	REZERVE ANI
	LIGNIT	690	124	290	52	25	4.5	28
HUILA	232	85	83	30	0.8	0.3	290	104
TITEI	229.2		52.6		3.4		67.4	15.5
GAZE NATURALE	726.8		153		10.5		69.2	14.6
URANIU <sup>2)</sup>								

<sup>1)</sup>exclusiv gaze naturale exprimate in Miliarde m<sup>3</sup>  
<sup>2)</sup>date cu regim special disponibile in anexa clasificata

Source: (Romanian energetic strategy 2019-2020, with the perspective of the year 2050)

If Romania does not meet the investment objectives two consequences may arise: one the energetic regional security could be affected, and the targets established in the Green Deal would be impossible to reach. The problem is that regionally other countries could be in the same situation which will generate vulnerabilities in the Black Sea Region and will affect the EU ambitions to be a regional provider of security for the Eastern Partnership States.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

When it comes to security the policies should be realistic and must take into consideration complex aspects. When aspects of European security are being outlined it is important to understand that there are even more complex aspects to consider. Every state has national interest and national strategies and harmonizing them is sometimes difficult as the case of 5G networks is pointing. Also, there are companies that need to be competitive in the international market, if a stricter level of conformity with climate protection rules are requested in one place the companies may choose to move their production in states more flexible in this matter. If this happens, Europe and European states will discover more and more areas in which they are dependent on other states.

As every international policy, the rules provided by the Paris Agreement are efficient as long as every state actor complies with them. If only some actors will implement them and other will not enforce them or will enforce them in a formal manner, there will be an unbalance between the e.g. European producer and the ones that originate in a country with less stricter rules. In this case a problem of competitiveness may arise that must be fixed in a manner or another.



As the current situation is presented, China is the bigger producer of fossil CO<sub>2</sub> emissions with 30.3% of the global share, with a yearly increase by 3.4% (from 2018-2019) (Crippa, et al., 2020). In this context, in a post COVID-19 world, the EU should follow closely if other actors are respecting in fact the objectives of climate protection and to adapt its policies accordingly. If this is not followed properly, EU could discover that, as in the case of intellectual property that the major counterfeit manufacturers end up developing in parallel their own products protected by intellectual property rights. These are international players who exploit the international system on all sides, both legal and obscure. From this game the EU has only to lose.

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