

CONCEPTUAL COMPREHENSION OF EUROPEAN SECURITY ARCHITECTURE: MYTHS AND REALITIES

^aTETIANA PALAMARCHUK, ^bVITALII BASHTANNYK,
^cVOLODYMYR IEMELIANOV, ^dOLEKSANDR
ZHAIVORONOK, ^eHALYNA ZAVORITNYA

^{a,e}Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, 60,
Volodymyrska Str., 01033, Kyiv, Ukraine

^bUkraine National Technical University "Dnipro Polytechnic",
29, Gogol Str., 49044, Dnipro, Ukraine

^cUkrainian State Employment Service Training Institute, 17a,
Novovokzalna Str., 03038, Kyiv, Ukraine

^dDepartment of the State Protection of Ukraine, 8, Bogomoltsa
Str., 01024, Kyiv, Ukraine

email: ^atetiana.palamarchuk@knu.ua,

^bvbashtannyk@gmail.com, ^ciemelianoov@dgravity.legal,

^deurotelecom@ukr.net, ^egalka.zavoro@knu.ua

Abstract: In the article, the region of European security is considered in the global context of world politics. The authors analyze the consequences of global world political transformations at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries for the structuring of the regional security system in Europe after the end of the Cold War and correlate these transformations with modern regional realities in Europe, including war in Ukraine. The final section of the article is devoted to the consideration of options for building a new European security architecture within the context of new realism, its benefits and drawbacks.

Keywords: Conflict, European security, Neorealism, Security architecture.

1 Introduction

The problem of peace and war is the general problem in the history of all peoples. After the end of the Cold War, the world did not become safer, and in a changing world, some risks and threats are replaced by others, or change places according to the degree of their danger.

Based on the foregoing, it can be argued that all kinds of risks, threats, and violence with their consequences are a natural part of the existence of society, which is not always possible to anticipate and avoid. However, their intensity and consequences can be significantly limited.

There are no zero risks as such. Therefore, the relevant question is whether the international security environment is anarchic, unsystematic, or vice versa, systemic, and are there certain patterns that help manage these processes? In this regard, an urgent need to ensure the European security strategy in the coming millennium is the analysis of its current architecture, theoretical and practical patterns to neutralize the internal and external causes of crises, conflicts, and wars.

European security, according to a long tradition, is usually considered in a purely regional context [1]. This has been the case since the Cold War. At that time, the European subsystem of international relations was central to the global system of bipolar confrontation between the two superpowers. Therefore, the contradictions that existed in Europe between the two blocs had not only a regional but also a global dimension. After the end of the Cold War, for the several decades now, Europe, and more broadly the Euro-Atlantic, in the sphere of security continues to be focused on its internal regional affairs. This does not mean that there is no awareness of global security threats in the region. On the contrary, all concepts of security, both national and multilateral, emphasize the need for adequate responses to new global challenges and risks.

The problem is different: the Euro-Atlantic region has not yet united as a region in the face of global threats of the 21st century. From the Euro-Atlantic region, scattered signals are sent to the world on how to reflect today's global challenges. There is a separate Russian approach, there is an American approach, there are NATO approaches and EU approaches. There are numerous recognitions of the convergence of approaches to the security of regional factors. There is proclaimed Russian idea of interaction on a wide range of issues of world politics within the

framework of the Russia-USA-European Union triangle [3, 6, 18]. However, there is an acute shortage of joint decisions and joint actions.

In other words, the structuring of the Euro-Atlantic as a security region is far from complete. In fact, a kind of "asymmetric bipolarity" has developed in this region over the post-bipolar decades: on the one hand, there are 28 NATO member states, and on the other, 7 CSTO member states. However, there is still no clear answer to the question of what type of relationship has replaced Cold War confrontation.

It seems that the protracted transition of the European security system from a bipolar type to a post-bipolar one cannot be explained only by intra-regional factors, for all their importance. One of the most significant points of the possible perspective of the study is that today it is hardly necessary to consider the changes that have taken place in Europe since the end of the Cold War, in isolation from the transformations that the world has been going through since the second half of the 20th century.

These transformations of the world political system objectively have several consequences for building the Euro-Atlantic security architecture of the 21st century.

Extra-regional challenges to European security are noted in the documents of almost all institutions of European security. For example, the EU Security Strategy, adopted in 2003, states that European security is seen as security from external challenges and threats. Similar provisions are fixed in the new NATO Strategic Concept.

In addition, the Helsinki Final Act, which still underlies the Euro-Atlantic security architecture, once became the first regional document to formulate the concept of a comprehensive approach to security. Already in those days, this concept combined all three dimensions of security: military-political, economic, and humanitarian. Through cooperation, primarily in the economic sphere, military-political tensions were eased. The economy already in those days made states increasingly more interdependent. After the bloc confrontation ended, the interdependence and complementarity of the Euro-Atlantic states increased significantly [5, 7]. This circumstance makes a comprehensive approach to modern European security even more relevant than before.

Many questions of Euro-Atlantic security remain unanswered; meanwhile, answers to them are essential for building security architecture for the 21st century. This applies both to conceptual aspects and to a number of specific measures in the field of regional security.

In the light of tensions in the Middle East, and in particular the recent events on the European continent - the unprecedentedly cynical war of the Russian Federation against Ukraine - the issue of a new European security architecture is becoming especially acute.

2 Materials and Methods

The methodological basis of the work is the principles of dialectical analysis, as well as scientific approaches: historical, systemic, logical, comparative, and others.

The main research method was a comprehensive methodology for studying international security, which is part of historical science, including the principles of theoretical international relations analysis in the study. The methods used in the article are divided into two groups: general scientific and particular scientific [2, 4, 9]. General scientific methods include systemic, historical-comparative analysis and synthesis, which allows, in an interdisciplinary plan, to generalize and typify a wide range of ideas about the goals of public policy, as well as a comparative-analytical method, combined with the principles of objectivity.

The private-scientific method is the special methods of historical, philosophical, political and other humanities, which, in combination with the principle of historicism, most fully achieve the solution of the tasks set in the study.

The authors are based on the assumption that the system and architecture of international security create the prerequisites for a broader analysis, forecast, and modeling of world systems and various political strategies, including developing new approaches to political processes.

3 Results and Discussion

After the end of the Cold War, all schools of international political studies had to answer the question: what will be the international relations after the end of the bipolar confrontation? Actually, predicting the logic of further developments is one of the tasks of science, and the Theory of International Relations is no exception [12-15]. The main place in it is occupied by the school of neo-realism, or as it is also called – structural realism.

This direction of political realism is called structural, because representatives of this school put the configuration of forces in this system (the number of poles) that form its structure as the basis for interpreting the logic of the development of international relations [3]. In addition, neorealists believe that only the level of the system of international relations can decisively influence the leading actors of the system - large states - and shape their behavior [8]. That is why it can be argued that the school of structural realism approached the study of the problem of the possible evolution of international relations after 1991 methodologically and conceptually prepared. Therefore, it is not surprising that already in 1993, the leading figure of the school of neorealism – Kenneth Waltz – offered his vision of how international relations would soon develop, based on the main postulates of this school. Like any representative of the realistic paradigm, he focuses on large states that can potentially compete with the United States for dominance in the system of international relations. Among them, the author identifies three such potential competitors – Germany (or Western Europe as a potentially unified state), Japan, and China. At the same time, Waltz focuses on the trends in the economic and political development of Japan, and to a lesser extent, Germany [44]. It is interesting that at that time Waltz doubted the future status of the Russian Federation as a large state. A similar mistake was made by many other political analysts and experts in the field of international relations. Accordingly, preventive measures were not taken to ensure effective European security architecture.

Since the end of the Cold War, due to changes in the security architecture, the European Union has recognized that the European building project cannot be complete without the dimension of foreign policy and defense. Thus, since the mid-1990s, the EU has taken important steps to develop a common foreign and security policy, in order to assume a more coherent role in the international arena, and to be able to cope with possible crises. In order to be able to face future challenges, the EU has recognized the need to institutionalize the ESDP, establish a permanent military architecture and a rapid reaction force (RRF). The transformation of the ESDP into the CSDP (Common Security and Defense Policy) was formalized by the Treaty of Lisbon, which retains its intergovernmental nature and the principle of unanimity.

The European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) aims to develop the civil and military capacity of the EU to manage crises and prevent conflicts at the international level. Since the formation of the ESDP and the militarization of Europe are an anomaly for theories of European integration (in which defense is not seen as part of European integration, and the EU remains a civil actor), modern explanations of European integrationism argue that classical theories fail to explain the causal relationships of the identity and European defense policy formation [18].

The establishment of a permanent EU military architecture, especially the institutionalization of security and defense policy

in accordance with the Treaty of Nice through the Committee on Politics and Security, are important steps in building a Europe capable of responding to international crises [19, 21, 23]. However, one cannot talk about “common defense” because the EU does not propose the creation of a European army and only in theory the ESDP will become self-sustaining and independent, since NATO remains the basis of collective defense and plays an important role in crisis management.

As far as EU-NATO relations are concerned, the Treaty of Lisbon did not bring any notable changes. In principle, relations are governed by the same rules previously established in the Agreements or Treaties on the Organization and Functioning of the EU that preceded the Treaty of Lisbon. In addition, the provisions of the Lisbon ESDP-NATO Relationship Treaty reinforce the idea of NATO's central role in maintaining and ensuring the security and defense of its member states. Thus, Article 42, paragraph 7 (the last part is new) of the Lisbon Treaty provides that obligations and cooperation in this field must be compatible with the obligations assumed in the framework of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, which for Member States remains the basis of their collective defense and forum for its implementation [11]. This emphasizes and reaffirms the role and importance of NATO for its member states, even if they are also members of the EU.

Another change brought about by the Treaty of Lisbon is the introduction of a mechanism for permanent structured cooperation (Art. 28), designed to ensure that all member states develop military capabilities. In accordance with Article 45, the Treaty of Lisbon establishes the tasks of the European Defense Agency during its period of operation, such as: a) to contribute to the determination of the objectives of the military capabilities of the Member States and to assess compliance with the obligations assumed by the Member States in relation to capabilities, b) to promote the harmonization of operational needs and the adoption of efficient and mutually compatible methods of acquisition, c) to propose multilateral projects to achieve military capabilities objectives, ensure the coordination of programs implemented by Member States and manage special cooperation programs, d) to support research in the field of defense technology, coordinate and plan joint research activities, as well as the development of technical solutions that meet future operational needs.

Two other important innovations were introduced by the Treaty of Lisbon [in Article 28. Paragraph A.6,7], namely the mutual defense clause and the solidarity clause. The mutual protection clause refers to the fact that if any member state is the victim of armed aggression, without prejudice to the neutrality of states or to relations with NATO, the member states will undertake to offer it assistance. The Solidarity Item is a new mechanism of assistance if a Member State is the target of a terrorist attack or natural disaster. However, this has political and symbolic implications, but does not create a proper EU defense system, and only increases solidarity between member states. The obligation to provide assistance clearly falls under the responsibility of the Member States and not of the Union.

Until recently, no attempt has been made to compare NATO and EU defense and security policy on the single basis. While the North Atlantic Alliance was considered from the position of a variety of approaches (through neorealism [16], the theory of alliances [17], neo-institutionalism [18], constructivism [20] and even the English school [13]), for the analysis of the EU, as a rule, neoliberal concepts were applied [24], and its foreign policy activities were interpreted as having a normative-transformational character [27].

The main analytical shortcoming of neorealism in assessing NATO's foreign policy activity is the exclusion of internal dynamics and the tendency to explain centrifugal tendencies by the absence of a common threat [33]. However, the rather successful formulation of the Russian threat between the Wales and Warsaw summits in 2014 and 2016 had only a short-term rallying effect. Attempts to update the Chinese threat, which began at the London summit in 2019 [35] and were consolidated

in the #NATO2030 report on the adaptation of the strategic concept and the final communiqué of the Brussels 2021 summit, do not yet create a new *raison d'être* for the Alliance, but a new source of contradictions [10].

The theories of integration and complex interdependence popular with regard to the EU are also losing relevance for the analysis of its foreign policy, which since 2016 has clearly moved away from the research agenda of studying the normative power of the EU, the ability to form transformational incentives in neighboring countries in favor of a more politicized and even securitized agenda [45].

The European Union, for objective reasons, faces a lot of difficulties in the second stage of creating its own security community. Until recently, the collective identity of the association did not imply a military-political component, and the process of “social learning” was rather associated with the elimination of disagreements in the economic sphere. However, in recent years, external challenges (the transformation of the world order, centrifugal tendencies in NATO, the migration crisis and the change in the status quo in relations with Russia) and internal problems (the UK leaving the EU, the spread of right-wing populism in Germany, France, Hungary, the Netherlands, Austria) pushed the Union to build up “stress resistance” not only at the expense of authority in international affairs, economic well-being and regulatory strength, but also development and defense independence. The EU is a clear example of how the systematic promotion of new discourse can initiate a change in the culture of an organization.

The European decision-making structure in the field of foreign policy and defense is fundamentally different from the institutional structure of NATO. Its active formation, in fact, began in 2016–2017, while before that, defense institutions were in their infancy and poorly correlated with the mechanisms for developing foreign policy. At this stage, this is a rather branched, but rather horizontal system, consisting of civilian and military institutions, not coordinated with each other in everything [25, 26]. To understand the causes of the problem, it is necessary to devote time to the analysis of evolution of mechanisms.

In recent years, transformational processes have been observed in the security system in Europe: while NATO was its original core, today the prerequisites for creating its own parallel system have appeared in the EU.

In order to justify the meaning of existence and new tasks for the participating countries, a new discourse was formed in both associations as the first step in updating their collective identity. In NATO, its formation took place as part of the #NATO2030 process, but did not lead to a significant transformation of the former globalist vector. In the EU, the process is most systematically reflected in the idea of “strategic autonomy” and the draft “Strategic Compass” project.

Both communities have both strengths and weaknesses in the development of intangible components. The Alliance is distinguished by the accumulated experience of “social learning”, the relative continuity of the key components of even a weakened collective identity, while the military-political component is still alien to the usual identity of the European Union. At the same time, the European discourse is more acute and more convincing due to its novelty, flexibility, and consistency of advancement. However, it is too early to talk about its successful consolidation, since the implementation of the strategic line largely depends on the consensus of the major powers and does not have independent inertial dynamics.

It should also be noted that, approximately five years after the annexation of Crimea, the situation in Europe was still more or less calm, NATO reconfigured its priorities in terms of its strategy: by strengthening its presence in Eastern Europe, the Alliance turned to more “relevant” topics such as cybersecurity, new technologies, and infrastructure protection [41-43]. But at the same time, NATO was also open to cooperation with

partners who also wanted to participate in these projects, without, however, combining them with issues of collective defense.

Today, the activities of the EU can be characterized as an attempt to launch the process of building up capacities in all sectors of the defense complex and create prerequisites for the formation of intersecting military-technological clusters of countries participating in various projects that depend on each other and are inscribed in a single institutional decision-making system [28-32, 34]. Despite a reasonable approach to the creation of new institutions, their development into the implementation of fundamentally new common practices that would indicate the consolidation of a new discourse in the identity of the EU is difficult.

The war unleashed by Russia against Ukraine has become a serious challenge for the European security system. In particular, in the field of institutional structure, NATO has an absolute advantage, as it is a mature mechanism with well-established algorithms for mobilizing member states in the formats of various common practices. The channels for making such decisions in the EU are in the process of formation and have not yet demonstrated practical effectiveness, allowing contradictions between member states to block joint practices. An example is Hungary's refusal to provide military assistance to Ukraine, as well as the country's blocking of anti-Russian sanctions.

The war in Ukraine has literally turned the whole order in the sphere of European defense and security upside down. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has shown that the entire European security architecture needs to be tested.

A possible explanation for the failure of the post-Cold War European order is that Russia, NATO, and the EU have failed to use the channels and contacts they have established to engage in real dialogue and successfully manage relations. The EU and Russia developed a four-tier structure in the early 1990s to manage their relationship. The dialogue between the EU and Russia has successfully addressed issues such as Russia's access to the Kaliningrad exclave after the accession of Poland and the Baltic states to the EU. However, after the war between Russia and Georgia in 2008, the Eastern Partnership effectively deprived Russia of the opportunity to participate in multilateral discussions with the EU. The Russia-NATO Council, established in the early 2000s, gave Russia access on a more equal footing to discuss issues with NATO member states, but Russia had no say in the actual decision-making. Nevertheless, Russia's cooperation with NATO on Afghanistan and the program of contacts and exercises between NATO and Russia remained fairly stable until 2013 [6].

Now the situation is different from the situation in 2014: then Russia annexed Crimea with little or no use of force, and Russian soldiers did not even wear official uniforms. In 2022, everything is different – Russia decided on a full-scale invasion of a neighboring country. However, the EU did not pay due attention to the annexation of Crimea, not seeing in this event a subsequent full-scale military conflict being prepared by Russia.

Most countries are now likely to rearm or at least increase their defense budgets. Germany has already announced this [40]. This means a fundamental change in their strategies that has not happened since the Cold War.

The geostrategic factor that determines the logic of Moscow's actions and the response of the West is one of the reasons for the difficult situation [36-39]. Since the issue transcends the Ukrainian context and reflects deep structural mutual suspicions, a long-term solution must also consider these external elements. The Kremlin's decision to annex Crimea and support militias in the Donbas was driven not only by interests in Ukraine, but also by its own vision of European and global security. This was not taken into account in the defense-strategic institutions of the EU.

The most serious challenges to the order in post-Cold War Europe have come from disagreements over the geopolitical

orientation and political security of the states of the former Soviet Union bordering Russia. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia has declared its special interests in these states, including in the field of security. This idea of a “sphere of privileged interests” is increasingly at odds with the West’s view of these states as fully sovereign. Since Western states and institutions, the EU and NATO, increased their presence and activity in the post-Soviet countries, Russia saw this as a challenge to its interests [17]. The clash of these two opposing views led to wars in Georgia and Ukraine.

The ongoing war in Donbass since 2014 and subsequent US and EU sanctions against Russia have exacerbated mutual hostility and further undermined the European order. Russian cyber operations, such as during the 2016 US elections, as well as high-profile attacks on Moscow critics abroad, have further hit relations between Russia and the West. In addition, the European order was further shaken by such purely domestic Western phenomena as Brexit. Despite the Biden administration’s emphasis on US commitment to security in Europe, President Trump’s criticism of NATO has raised serious doubts about the strength of US commitments that have been a cornerstone of European security since the late 1940s.

Each subsequent peace treaty, as an act of international law, was based on geopolitical realities and on the experience of earlier peace treaties, and all of them, calling for “eternal peace”, were adopted in the interests of the winners. The new architecture of international relations and the European security system they were shaping was modeled on the vision of the victors of the war. Therefore, we can speak of them as an operating system of peace treaties created in Europe, by analyzing which it is relatively easy to predict and simulate the expected intentions of the actions of coalitions or victorious states. For example, the Yalta-Potsdam Conference is a product of the further development of the Westphalian system [1].

It is characteristic that the basis of war always coincides with the basis of peace treaties. So the Westphalian system of international relations and European security, created as a result of the Thirty Years’ War, is similar to the modern one, with the recognition of more or less precise state borders. It was from the principles of this system that the victors of the First and Second World Wars proceeded when they formed the new architecture of European security. Today, the European community has a chance to create a new sustainable security architecture that provides for the timely recognition and response to threats [46]. There is a chance to prevent possible further aggression of the Russian Federation.

The neorealist approach to the analysis of international relations suggests that in order to study international politics, it is necessary to add an additional level of analysis – the level of the international system. The causes of changes in the system of international relations (e.g. changes in the number of great powers) lie only in part in the behavior of states; some of the reasons are at the level of structure [11, 22, 24]. It follows that an analysis solely at the state level is bound to lead to misleading results. Conversely, an approach that combines analysis at the state level and analysis at the system level will be explicit both for changes and for recurring trends in world politics.

Neorealism, as a theory, only in a very general way explains the behavior of the state in a security dilemma. According to many, additional assumptions are needed to describe and explain the behavior of a state that pursues its interests. In particular, “when the risks to military security are high, a rational actor will sacrifice his future to a large extent in order to ensure his own survival right now” [16, p. 29], which is now observed in the behavior of the Russian Federation in the conditions of the disruption of its “blitzkrieg” plans.

Western countries will have to conduct a substantive dialogue with Russia, not relying on unreasonably high expectations, giving priority to goals that are truly vital and mutually achievable. Russia must find less destructive and coercive ways to deal with its neighbors. Russia’s legitimate interests are

certainly linked to the political orientations and actions of its neighbors, but it needs to pursue its interests in a less destructive and counterproductive way [45].

Europe as a whole needs a multilateral forum to identify and discuss the wide range of security issues that have emerged and accumulated as East-West relations have deteriorated over the past decade. A structured dialogue within the OSCE on some of the most pressing issues of non-nuclear military security could be a good start.

Such actions can actively build a new mutually acceptable and, one hopes, more stable order. The alternative is to let European security take its course, which has not led to anything good since 2014.

4 Conclusion

It is not yet clear what will replace the post-Cold War European order. The main political and security institutions of this order – NATO, the EU, and the OSCE – continue to function, but their future roles and activities are unclear and are in the process of being redefined both externally and from within. Serious questions arise: what place do these institutions occupy in the emerging order, how they will correlate with each other.

The war of Russian President Vladimir Putin in Ukraine is a world-historic event, marking the final act of the post-Cold War period and the beginning of a new yet unwritten era. The spectrum of possible outcomes ranges from a new unstable cold or hot war involving the US, Russia, and China, a frozen conflict in Ukraine, or a post-Putin settlement in which Russia becomes part of a revised European security architecture, given that the West has imposed unprecedented sanctions against Russia in record time, and there is a real potential for an escalation of the conflict. Historical lessons should become the basis for building new effective European security architecture.

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