

UKRAINE IN GLOBAL AND EUROPEAN SECURITY COORDINATES

Geography and history of a country seriously influence its home and foreign policy. Ukraine, geographically lying in the centre of Europe, found itself geopolitically sandwiched between the West and Russia, largely owing to the historic factor. Foreign policy preferences of different representatives of the political elite and society between the East and the West substantially differ. As state leaders demonstrate absence of a strategic vision, political will and an ability to convince citizens in the rationale of specific decisions, official Kyiv continuously teeters between two centres of influence with regular sharp turns in the foreign policy vector. Such kind of foreign policy brings about continuous internal confrontation of political forces and, respectively, their adherents and opponents, and undermines respect for the country in the international scene. The West has been tired by Ukraine's inconsistency and weakness, and the East has seen Ukraine as an unreliable ally, or an enemy, dependent on how much Kyiv's actions meet Moscow's expectations. One way or another, during two decades Ukraine did not manage to establish equal, true, sincere partner relations with anyone. As a result, Ukraine risks finding itself in a geopolitical buffer zone.

Ukraine's search of its place in regional and global systems takes place in the conditions of growing tension in the external security environment, with emergence of new and aggravation of traditional global challenges, regional and geopolitical rivalry, weakening of pan-European and global security mechanisms. In the current situation Ukraine remains exposed to both "Western" and "Eastern" influences, and the result of the "reset" in their relations can be decisive for the future of both Ukraine and the whole European region. This requires from Ukraine and its international partners greater efforts for promotion of sound, mutually advantageous cooperation to enhance the European security.

GLOBAL TRENDS

Assessment of the current strategic environment by experts in any country will evidently have only slight differences, meeting by substance the quotation from the US National Security Strategy: *"In the two decades since the end of the Cold War, the free flow of information, people, goods and services has accelerated at an unprecedented rate. This interconnection has empowered individuals for good and ill, and challenged state based international institutions that were largely designed in the wake of World War II by policymakers who had different challenges in mind. Non-state actors can have a dramatic influence on the world around them. Economic growth has alleviated poverty and led to new centres of influence. More nations are asserting themselves regionally and globally. The lives of our citizens – their safety and prosperity – are more bound than ever to events beyond our borders"*.¹

Summing up competent assessments of the present state of international security and strategic forecasts in that sector, a few general conclusions can be made². *First*, the world has not become safer, and the current generation

will not have the luck to live in the era of universal peace and stability. *Second*, most of the present-day threats are of a global nature and require common approaches to counter them. *Third*, the character of threats is changing faster than the governments' and international institutions' ability to counter them effectively.

Over a short period of time, the bipolar world has become unipolar to further pass to formation of multipolarity. The USA remains the world leader, but limitation of the leaders' ability to influence global developments becomes ever more evident. Struggle of new global powers (Brazil, Russia, India, China) for influence mainly takes peaceful forms so far. Deepening interdependence is the basis for formulation of the future development strategy, now resting on the imperative of peaceful coexistence. Meanwhile, as the historic experience of the past century proves, *"geopolitical rivalries and their consequences have been... significant causes of the multiple wars, collapse of empires, and rise of new powers"*.³

Formation of the security environment is dominated by globalisation processes, becoming ever more intense.

¹ US National Security Strategy, May 2010, p.7 – www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/national_security_strategy.pdf.

² Such assessments may be found, e.g., in: *SIPRI Yearbook 2009: Arms, Disarmament and International Security*. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. – Oxford University Press, 2009; *Global Trends 2025: A Transformed World*, Washington DC: Office of the Director of National Intelligence, National Intelligence Council, 2008. p.116 – www.dni.gov/nic/NIC_2025_project.html; *Global Strategic Trends – Out to 2040*, Development, Concept and Doctrine Centre, UK Defence Academy, 2010, – www.mod.uk/defenceInternet/microsite/dcdc/; NATO 2020: Assured Security; Dynamic Engagement. Analysis and Recommendations of the Group of Experts on a New Strategic Concept for NATO – www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_63654.htm.

³ *Global Trends 2025: A Transformed World*, Washington DC: Office of the Director of National Intelligence, National Intelligence Council, p.5.



They bring about sharp growth of transborder flows of goods, services, human resources, technologies and traditions, but also – of crime and weapons. Deepening interdependence unites the world, but not necessarily makes it safer. Globalisation, as we know, leads to strengthening of some actors and marginalisation of others, while growth of mutual economic interests of countries does not give a full guarantee of mistrust and confrontation problems' solution.⁴ One can not say how stable and durable the current balance of power and interests among key actors is. After all, in addition to strategic trends of social, political, economic, technological development, there are also strategic shocks fundamentally changing the flow of history.⁵

The past decade has brought a steady trend to a decrease in the number of interstate conflicts. The probability of large-scale military conflicts, especially in the Euro-Atlantic region, is deemed low. However, the general level of armed violence involving both state and non-state actors remains high enough in different regions of the world. Even in Europe there remain zones of "frozen conflicts" and interstate, ethnic, religious confrontation that require continuous attention from national governments and the international community. In the present globalised world, the probability of global effects of events in separate regions substantially grows. That is why the international community has to interfere in affairs that in not so distant past were the exclusive domain of national governments.

Despite the scale and pace of change and numerous declarations of the need of modernisation, most international institutions founded many decades ago have seen little change. They continue to serve the cause of international problem solution in line with the existing legal mechanisms and tools. World leaders and states claiming global and regional leadership often try to use international organisations for attainment of their interests – even if such goals harm statutory principles of those organisations. Although most of the 21st century decisive trends influence all countries and peoples, common interests of nations and peoples are quite often neglected because of mistrust and futureless competition.⁶ In the past, struggle for leadership led to ruination of then systems and, as a result – to two world wars. It remains unknown so far what will ensue from the change of the old-fashioned global order – renovation of the existing international institutions, emergence of new ones, or division of the burden of responsibility between "old" and "new" superpowers. However, there is hope that world leaders will have the wisdom and political will to resolve toughening of geopolitical rivalry and economic crisis at the beginning of the 21st century in a way different than in 1910s and 1930-1940s.

The main factors now threatening global security and likely to shape the security environment in the near future include:

- the proliferation of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction;
- the ambitions of international terrorist groups;
- the persistence of corrosive regional, national, ethnic, and religious rivalries;
- the world's increased reliance on potentially vulnerable information systems;
- the competition for petroleum and other strategic resources;
- demographic changes that could aggravate such global problems as poverty, hunger, illegal immigration, and pandemic disease; and
- the accumulating consequences of environmental degradation, including climate change.⁷

The list above may be extended, the priority of threats may also differ for each separate country. However, their global character and the need of global approaches to address them remain unchanged.

EUROPEAN TRENDS

Disintegration and reintegration processes taking place on the European continent in the past 20 years aggravated old and gave rise to new threats and challenges, caused instability and emergence of areas of active, "frozen" and potential conflicts, including in and around Ukraine.

The imbalance of power caused by the collapse of the socialist bloc, emergence and establishment of new independent states, Russia's painful feeling of loss of former satellites continue to pose risks of contradictions growing into a military conflict.

Disarmament within the framework of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE), repudiation of Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan from nuclear arms, processes of crisis settlement and recovery in East Europe and Balkan countries mitigated the acuteness of that threat in Europe.

However, Russia's ever stronger claims of regional leadership and exclusive zones of influence, differences in positions of European countries in relations with Russia and the USA, instances of national egoism and attempts of some European states to restore historic justice at the expense of neighbours, on the contrary, aggravate differences and lead to instability in the balance of political, economic and military power in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE).

The defence potential of the CEE countries combined with the EU, NATO, OSCE capabilities and mechanisms remains an important tool of national security and contribution to the global and regional security, witnessing however serious changes in the force structure, forms and methods of employment.

⁴ NATO 2020: Assured Security; Dynamic Engagement. Analysis and Recommendations of the Group of Experts on a New Strategic Concept for NATO, p.15 – www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_63654.htm.

⁵ For more detail see: Global Strategic Trends – Out to 2040, Development, Concept and Doctrine Centre, UK Defence Academy, 2010, p.7 – www.mod.uk/defenceInternet/microsite/dcdc/.

⁶ "In recent years America's frustration with international institutions has led us at times to engage the United Nations system on an ad hoc basis." US National Security Strategy, May 2010, p.13.

⁷ NATO 2020: Assured Security; Dynamic Engagement. Analysis and Recommendations of the Group of Experts on a New Strategic Concept for NATO, p.15 – www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_63654.htm.

In such conditions, East European countries saw their salvation in unconditional integration in NATO and made their choice a reality, when ready. Despite the peaceful and democratic nature of that process, Russia sees the Alliance's enlargement as a danger of curtailment of its area of influence and views Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova as the last frontier in a resolute battle for national interests in Europe.

Meanwhile, "border" or peripheral states staying outside collective security systems, not possessing reliable deterrence means or external security guarantees, face real threats – both military and non-military. On the other hand, the absence of a common principled stand of the Euro-Atlantic community and of effective responses to new and transformed old threats to regional security add to the feeling of security vacuum in the CEE countries. This refers to both military and non-military aspects, in particular, due to:

- uncertainty in connection with Russia's suspension of CFE participation;
- disputes with Russia on the issues of nuclear disarmament and anti-ballistic missiles;
- inability of European security institutes to effectively solve problems in the areas of "frozen conflicts" and prevent emergence of new ones; and
- signs of the EU, NATO, the USA and some CEE countries' attempts to resume bilateral cooperation with Russia, neglecting security considerations.

Russia, NATO and the EU remain key actors in the region. At that, one should keep in mind not only the geographic location of those actors on different sides from Ukraine, but also different options of their positioning, dependent on the situation. NATO and the EU remain the core of stability and security in the Euro-Atlantic region. Russia, with its size and stand, also plays an important role in formation of the Euro-Atlantic security environment.

Luckily, Russia supports the Western efforts of strategic nuclear arms control, fighting terrorism and piracy. Meanwhile, the above mentioned Analysis and Recommendations on a New Strategic Concept reads: "*Experience teaches, however, that Russian and NATO leaders do not always view the same set of facts in the same way. Leaders in Moscow have expressed concerns about past and prospective NATO enlargement, while Allies have voiced concerns about possible attempts by Russia to engage in acts of political or economic intimidation*".⁸

Ukraine has a key position, where one may expect a conflict rather than community of views between Moscow and Brussels and Washington in the complex "combination of common interests and tense feelings" specific of the relations between Russia and other lead European security actors.

TRENDS OF UKRAINE'S NATIONAL SECURITY

As we noted above, Ukraine's search of its place in regional and global systems occurs in the conditions of growing tension in the security environment.

Meanwhile, the main challenges for Ukraine's national security are mainly of a domestic origin. The processes of independent state-building, establishment

of market relations and civil society have not become sustainable. The fact that the Party of Regions' nominee Yanukovich came to power democratically is not enough for the conclusion of the country's progress on the road of democratic development.

The main internal destructive factors include:

- *low effectiveness of the cumbersome and corrupt state machinery* in formulation, adoption and implementation of political decisions, barring prediction of and adequate response to present-day challenges;
- *stratification of society* on regional, political, property, religious, language grounds, hindering the search of common interests, solidarity and consolidation of society;
- *weakness of democratic institutes*, adding to the political system deregulation, depriving it of incentives to operate effectively, complicating introduction of and abidance by the rules of democratic interaction between state and society;
- *strong confrontation between political forces*, unreadiness for compromise and weak traditions of parliamentarianism, resulting in politicisation and ineffectiveness of the state policy (including in the national security sector).

Lack of coordination of reforms in different bodies of the security sector led to *deregulation of the national security system*, impairment of the ability to respond to crisis developments, growth of contradictions between the substance and pace of reformation of the Armed Forces and other security structures.

Ukraine that chose the road of integration into NATO, but did not use its chance in time found itself halfway to the end goal, in the area of particular interests and continuous influence of Russia. Not possessing the means to oppose that influence, Ukraine feels a sharp deficit of security.

For Ukraine, the alternatives of security guarantees look as follows:

- defence of sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity by its own forces (non-aligned/neutral status);
- alliance with Russia within the framework of any of its reintegration projects (e.g., CSTO, EurAsEC, the Customs Union, the Union of Slavic States);
- integration in the EU, resumption and acceleration of integration in the Euro-Atlantic collective security system – NATO.

The first option would conserve the present state with all its problems. The second and third mean a choice of the civilisational development vector, i.e. – "back to the USSR" or "forward to Europe".

After the election of Viktor Yanukovich the President of Ukraine and formation of the coalition of political forces led by the Party of Regions, developments in Ukraine acquired new traits and greater certainty. The President has made a number of indicative statements regarding the foreign and security policy priorities, confined to: 1) deeper integration with Russia; 2) a non-bloc status for the country; 2) refusal from fully-fledged integration into NATO.

⁸ NATO 2020: Assured Security; Dynamic Engagement. Analysis and Recommendations of the Group of Experts on a New Strategic Concept for NATO, p.15 – www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_63654.htm.



There are reservations regarding potential threats of implementation of the idea of non-bloc/neutrality for Ukraine:

- as one of the main “arguments” in favour of the non-bloc status, they speak of the desire to formalise Ukraine’s actual non-bloc status, revealing short-sightedness of the policy looking back, not forward. In early 1990s, Ukraine luckily made use of non-bloc to escape return under Russia’s “military-political umbrella”. But, these means can be used by Russia and anti-Western political forces in Ukraine to bar its Euro-Atlantic integration in the future;
- neutrality requires substantial resources. For instance, neutral Turkmenistan whose population is 10 times smaller than Ukraine’s (nearly 4.9 million people) has only a twice smaller conscript army (100 thousand troops) and spends on defence 3.4% of the GDP;
- neutrality of a state is worth nothing without external guarantees given by lead interested actors, in the case of Ukraine – the EU, NATO, the USA, and Russia. However, extension of such guarantees and, moreover, provision of mechanisms of their implementation prompts renewed confrontation among those actors, inadmissible against the background of the current “reset” of their relations.

Therefore, calls for a non-bloc or neutral status, due to its impracticability, fallacy and ineffectiveness, present not an alternative choice but rather a means to bar Ukraine’s course of Euro-Atlantic integration and oust it to the buffer zone between the West and East, creating favourable conditions for gradual “peaceful” annexation of Ukraine by Russia – i.e., implementation of the above-mentioned second alternative.

The new authorities’ achievements, beyond doubt, included rapid building of the executive hierarchy. Meanwhile, their first 100 days became a serious test for the young Ukrainian democracy. The methods of work of the new authorities bear signs of inclination to the Russian model of “controlled democracy”. Given the disorientation, disunity and confusion of the opposition, one cannot be sure of the ability of traditional “democratic safeguards” – constructive parliamentary opposition, civil society, independent media – to firmly oppose destructive actions of the authorities. As we know, democracy does not guarantee stability, especially at early stages of its development. However, the government’s desire to rapidly impose stability in the country by authoritarian means poses a threat of even greater destabilisation in the future.

Attempts and some results of package solution of complex political and economic problems of relations with Russia reveal the authorities’ readiness to meet the interests of oligarchic groups in the first place, desire to stay in power and agreement to the Kremlin’s domination in definition of priorities of the Ukrainian policy.

Prompt non-transparent passage of foreign policy decisions without observance of the established procedures, neglecting the opinion of the opposition and a great part of society, shows the inability to oppose large-scale pressure

of the Kremlin and can bring negative effects, irrespective of the motives behind such decisions.

Reviewing the Ukrainian situation in the Euro-Atlantic context, it makes sense to cite its assessment by international experts. In particular, a known Western analyst has briefly but expressively described the current stand of the new leadership: *“The naivety of Yanukovych and his partners is to forget that for Russia, Ukraine’s independence is an historical aberration. As long as Russia feels it holds the cards – and that is exactly the way it feels now – it will not let up the pressure until it feels it has succeeded in reducing Ukraine’s independence to a purely decorative state. Moscow seeks complete control of Ukraine’s energy sector and a veto over who, if anyone, can develop new energy resources. It seeks the integration of Ukraine’s defence and intelligence structures into Russia’s own. It also seeks unrestricted and unfettered operation of Russian capital inside Ukraine. Once you have all of those, what independence is left?”*⁹

CONCLUSIONS

Ukraine is in a very complex and dynamic security environment. Despite its traditional peaceful foreign policy, the state leadership failed to establish equal, reliable, sincere partner relations with any of the key partners. The multi-vectored foreign policy with sporadic deviations in the East-West coordinates in fact resulted in its shift to the geopolitical buffer zone. The sharp turn of the foreign policy vector towards Russia bears new risks – of stay in the sphere of exclusive interests of one of the lead actors and loss of the sovereign right to formulation and implementation of an independent home and foreign policy.

Ukraine’s actual turning into a buffer zone, a small coin in the big geopolitical game, was facilitated not only by the lack of the state leadership’s strategic vision, political will and ability to unite society, but also by the not always productive pliability of the West in relations with Russia. That game may end with gradual annexation of Ukraine by Russia, growth of the conflict potential in Ukraine that can grow into a true conflict, and emergence of new dividing lines in Europe.

Meanwhile, Ukraine still remains open for both “Western” and “Eastern” influences. However, the result of the “reset” of relations between Russia and the USA/EU/NATO may become the decisive factor for the future of Ukraine and the entire Europe.

Not questioning the fact that Ukraine is an independent state and formulation of the home and foreign policy remains a sovereign right of the democratically elected country leadership, it should be noted that Ukraine’s Western partners should take a more active stand in relations with the new Ukrainian authorities. This especially refers to the home and foreign policy decisions that can either run contrary to international commitments or have negative effects not only within the country – and therefore should be a subject of consultations with partners. The Ukrainian authorities should in the first place be interested in such consultations, since their mechanism gives some guarantees of avoidance of erroneous decisions, opportunities for sharing responsibility, and promotes partner relations. ■

⁹ J. Sherr: “Yanukovych has miscalculated”, Kyiv Post, May 30, 2010. – www.kyivpost.com/news/opinion/op_ed/detail/68071/.