



**FRIEDRICH NAUMANN
FOUNDATION** For Freedom.



СОФИЙСКИ ФОРУМ ЗА СИГУРНОСТ
SOFIA SECURITY FORUM

NEW **EUROPEAN** **SECURITY**

The evolution of the European security architecture
in the wake of the Russian war against Ukraine.
Viewpoints from Central and Eastern Europe and
the Balkans

ANALYSIS

Imprint

Publisher

Friedrich Naumann Foundation For Freedom
Truman-Haus
Karl-Marx-Straße 2
14482 Potsdam-Babelsberg

🌐/freiheit.org

📘/FriedrichNaumannStiftungFreiheit

📺/FNFreiheit

📷/stiftungfuerdiefreiheit

Authors

Yordan Bozhilov, President of the Sofia Security Forum, Former Deputy Minister of Defence of the Republic of Bulgaria
Mira Kaneva, Assoc. Prof., Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", board member of the Sofia Security Forum

Editors

Theresa Caroline Winter

Contact

Telefon +49 30 220126-34

Telefax +49 30 690881-02

E-Mail service@freiheit.org

Date

January 2024

Notes on using this publication

This publication is an information offer of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom. It is available free of charge and not intended for sale. It may not be used by parties or election workers for the purpose of election advertising during election campaigns (federal, state or local government elections, or European Parliament elections).

Table of contents

1. PREFACE	4
2. OVERVIEW OF THE EUROPEAN SECURITY ARCHITECTURE (ESA)	5
3. RELEVANCE OF THE ESA IN VIEW OF THE WAR IN UKRAINE – A GAME CHANGER? ...	7
4. THE ROLE OF THE MAIN ACTORS – THE EURO-ATLANTIC SECURITY ORGANIZATIONS WITHIN THE ESA	8
4.1. NATO	8
4.2. THE EUROPEAN UNION	9
5. THE SUPPORTING ROLE OF OTHER REGIONAL AND GLOBAL INTERGOVERNMENTAL SECURITY ORGANIZATIONS IN THE ESA	10
6. THE EUROPEAN CENTRE OF GRAVITY IS MOVING EASTWARDS - REFOCUSING CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES IN THE NEW GEOSTRATEGIC CONTEXT	10
7. (DIS)ENGAGING RUSSIA?	11
8. THE ENDGAME: WINNING THE PEACE IN UKRAINE	12
9. THE FUTURE MOVES BEFORE THE ESA - REINVIGORATING THE PRINCIPLES, REESTABLISHING THE STRUCTURES	13
10. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	14
ANNEX: COUNTRY PAPERS	16
ALBANIA	16
BULGARIA	21
CROATIA	26
CZECH REPUBLIC	32
HUNGARY	38
LATVIA	45
NORTH MACEDONIA	51
POLAND	58
ROMANIA	65
SERBIA	71

1. Preface

The aggressive war that Russia launched against Ukraine on 24 February 2022 is a turning point in the European security architecture. Large-scale war has returned to the European continent, something that was considered unthinkable until recently. Generations of European politicians believed that the power of diplomacy, international organisations and economic ties were enough to prevent a major war. The practical result was a serious reduction in military budgets, a weakening of military capabilities and a reduction in the productive capacity of military industrial complexes. Russia's war against Ukraine changed this thinking and put the emphasis on strengthening deterrence and defence.

The European security architecture was put to the test and in a state of transformation. What the new end state will be is impossible to say at this point. Much will depend on how the war against Ukraine will end. But we need to think about the future state now, because the positions and policies we take will affect the future security architecture.

Ten prominent analysts from Albania, Bulgaria, Latvia, Poland, Romania, North Macedonia, Serbia, Hungary, Croatia and the Czech Republic were invited to present their views on the state and future of the European Security Architecture. This analysis is an attempt to jointly answer the questions of whether

the old system can be restored and Russia's credibility regained, whether the future system will be inclusive or exclusive with regard to Russia, what the role of international organisations and Euro-Atlantic structures will be, and others. This volume includes a synopsis of their answers and perspectives. Each country report can be found in the annex.

These countries were chosen because they are most vulnerable to the Russian threat and the potential spread of war to their territories. They are most at risk of the destruction of the European security architecture, and as the German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said in his keynote speech at Charles University in Prague in August 2022 "The centre of Europe is moving eastwards"¹.

¹ Speech by Federal Chancellor Olaf Scholz at the Charles University in Prague on Monday, 29 August 2022, <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-en/news/scholz-speech-prague-charles-university-2080752>

2. Overview of the European Security Architecture (ESA)

The ESA can be defined as a system of principles, international norms (political or legal), inclusive international organisations (such as OSCE, Council of Europe, etc.) or organisations of individual states (NATO, EU) whose main task is to guarantee peace and security on the old continent and to create conditions for cooperation and development.

Its development began after the end of the Second World War, when the organisations aimed at the protection of individual groups of states were established. The signing of the Helsinki Final Act at the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe on 1 August 1975 marked the beginning of an important period in the development of the ESA, which framed issues of security, trust, economic cooperation, human rights and others. The establishment of the overarching organizations and the signing of arrangements for arms control and confidence building measures reduced the risk of direct military confrontation between the two antagonistic blocs, NATO and the Warsaw Pact, which were at the core of the ESA during the Cold War.

The collapse of the Soviet Union (USSR) and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact in 1991 marked a new period in the development of the ESA. Most of the ESA organizations that existed during the Cold War were preserved, including NATO. Importantly for this period, the sense of confrontation was replaced by the idea of cooperation and normalisation of relations. The inclusive OSCE with its principles and arrangements took centre stage in the ESA. The view of inevitable war that marked the entire Cold War period was replaced by the idea of mutual rapprochement through cooperation, especially economic cooperation. Russia, as the successor of the USSR, actively participated in the inclusive organizations initially, but never fit into Western organizations and did not accept Western values. Russia remained as a kind of pole of the European political scheme, although it was not seen by Western states as an inevitable adversary, much less an enemy, but rather as an unavoidable (and to some extent desirable) economic partner. This can be seen in the building of partnerships with NATO and the establishment of the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) as well as in the development of relations with the EU and the signing of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA). During this period, the EU was Russia's main trading partner and largest source of foreign direct investment. At the same time, individual European countries were also actively developing their relations with Russia.

Russia's desire to be a global player and the readiness to impose its own interests including by force created serious tensions in Europe. The first signal of the growing tensions was Putin's speech at the Munich Security Conference in 2007. Serious strain in relations between Western countries and Russia have emerged since Russia's aggression against Georgia in 2008. Russia's annexation of Crimea and instiga-

tion of the war in Eastern Ukraine in 2014 put these relations to an even greater test. Russia has subsequently suspended its commitments under a number of international arms control agreements and waged a large-scale hybrid war against NATO and EU states. A turning point in relations between Russia and Western states was the start of Russia's full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine on 24 February 2022.

Undoubtedly, this was and continues to be the beginning of a new stage in European history and European security architecture, with the focus returning to the organisations and interactions within individual groups of states, and for democratic states this is NATO and the EU. The most striking example of this alteration is the expressed desire for NATO membership by Finland and Sweden and the change in strategic thinking in many European countries.

The new situation of insecurity in Europe raises key questions for analysts and politicians, such as the relevance of the security architecture, the role of organisations such as NATO, the EU, the OSCE and others, the issue of assistance to Ukraine, policies towards Russia and finally, the future of the security architecture. But most of all, the question of peace and security in Europe.

Through the prism of the war in Ukraine, several conclusions can be drawn about the attitude of different groups of states towards the existing security architecture. On the one hand, it is the democratic states that fully accept it. These countries are characterised by a strong trust in international organisations, law and diplomacy, something that was the credo of a whole generation of European politicians after the end of the Cold War. Until the last moment before the war erupted, European politicians believed that they could prevent Russian aggression against Ukraine by means of diplomacy.

It can be stated that there was overreliance on the international norms, institutions and diplomacy and to some extent negligence of the hard force among many Europeans. This perception had its practical dimensions, manifested most clearly in the reduction of European defence capabilities. The war in Ukraine left Europe with emptied military depots, with outdated and insufficient weaponry, with reduced defence budgets and with an industrial base that was – and still is – not ready to respond to the new requirement to cope with the risks and threats.

On the other hand, the friction that has emerged between Europe and the US has created a feeling that perhaps NATO is not so united. The same impression was created about the unity of the EU. The aggressive Kremlin hybrid war against democracies, which was underestimated by many politicians, had no small influence on this.

6 2. OVERVIEW OF THE EUROPEAN SECURITY ARCHITECTURE (ESA)

On the other flank of the perception of the ESA was Russia, whose leadership, in the person of Putin, openly considered the security architecture to be working against their interests, that Russia was being deprived of its rightful place in Europe and in the world. Russia sees the European security architecture as dominated by the West, which is why several attempts have been made to change things in Russia's favour. Gorbachev's idea of a 'Common European home' or Medvedev's views of the 'New European security architecture' were along these lines. Completely inconsistent with the established principles were the agreements proposed by Moscow in December 2021 between Russia and the United States and Russia and NATO, which sought to completely rearrange the European security architecture and effectively deprive the states of the right to choose their own development path, returning to spheres of influence.

In the third place were the states that remained outside NATO and the EU, and at the same time tried to break away from Moscow's influence. They thus found themselves in a grey area of insecurity and, as it turned out, without real guarantees of their independence and territorial integrity.

This imbalance in the European security system and the inability of the existing security architecture to give reliable guarantees to all states contributed to Russia starting a war against Ukraine.

According to the Bulgarian contributor to this volume, security configurations in Europe have always been divisive and exclusive, rather than overarching and inclusive. As pointed out by the Albanian researcher, "the war in Ukraine could be the beginning of the end of the international order created after the Second World War mostly by Western Powers".² At the same time, the crisis of the European security architecture should not be seen as an isolated event but rather an element of many other global processes, such as the clash between democracy and autocracy or the clash of views about the future of the global political and economic order, as presented in the North Macedonian perspective.

According to the Czech analyst, the current state of the ESA is a failure since it did not manage to stop the war. Arguably, the security architecture was not in itself at fault. According to the analysis from Latvia, the issue was Russia's refusal to comply with its regulations and "it was Russia, which deliberately broke the ESA" (Poland).

The above-mentioned attitude of many leaders of democratic countries towards Russia and the ESA as a whole had another practical dimension. Prior to the 24th of February 2022, the chances of the escalation of the Russia-Ukraine low intensity conflict into a major large-scale high-intensity war were misjudged and underestimated in most European capitals (Hungary, Bulgaria).

A number of contributors note the Russian hybrid war against democratic states as inconsistent and undermining the ESA (see the papers of North Macedonia and Croatia).

Against the backdrop of Russia's war on Ukraine and Russia's hybrid war against democratic states, NATO's enhanced role and the U.S. engagement in Europe are key to prevent the hot war from spilling over to other countries, according to all analysts.

The main difference among all analysts included in this volume emerges in terms of the EU's role in European security. Most believe that the EU can and should play a role in Europe's security, but as the European pillar of NATO (Croatia, Czech Republic, Bulgaria). Some, however, consider the EU irrelevant to the situation of insecurity, especially in the face of the threat from Russia (Poland, Latvia). The Czech analyst notes another element of enhancing security, namely through strengthening bilateral cooperation and the regional formats like B9 or the Three Seas Initiative, while using multilateral formats to put pressure on Russia.

All analysts agree that the Russian war against Ukraine is a turning point in the European security architecture.

² see country paper „Albania“ in the Annex

3. Relevance of the ESA in view of the war in Ukraine – a game changer?

What the full-scale war of aggression of Russia against Ukraine has triggered is a self-reflection on the status quo of the European security architecture. The Europeans (political elites and societies alike) have been engaged with their security as a community ever since the fall of the Iron Curtain and the collapse of the bipolar system. Yet, they have been more obsessed with the post-Cold war non-traditional threats, such as ethnic or religious violence, terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, cyber warfare, and the like, than with traditional security risks, such as conventional wars. The breakout of the war on Ukraine, therefore, has provoked a controversy about the salience of a reformed European system of norms, practices, relationships, alliances and institutions which is aimed to enhance or ensure regional security.

A drastic change in European strategic culture is underway and Europe is now witnessing a U-turn from wishful thinking towards pragmatism. This rational risk reassessment has resulted in a substantial rise in defence expenditure in European states during 2022, the steepest year-on-year increase since the early 1990-s,³ as well as attempts to reactivate the military-industrial complex. At the same time, NATO has doubled the number of troops on the ground and extended its forward presence along the Alliance's Eastern flank – from the Baltic Sea in the north to the Black Sea in the south – and has become prepared to scale up the multinational battlegroups from battalions to brigade size. Reciprocally, Russia's tit-for-tat strategy is to escalate its 2024 military budget by 70% compared to the previous year⁴, which demonstrates not only its determination to continue the aggression against Ukraine but also to respond to the measures taken by NATO and the enlargement with two new members – Finland and Sweden. This looming security dilemma may expose Europe to a spiralling armament race and self-perpetuating insecurity. This risk has been aggravated by the advancement of new technologies in the military, such as artificial intelligence, along with their probable transfer to states of concern in exchange for conventional weapons.

Two main primary differences in opinions of the contributors to this volume arise regarding the role of the war in Ukraine. The first revolves around whether the main catalyst for the military escalation in Ukraine was a structural flaw in the European security architecture or the aggressive policies of Russia. Nevertheless, there is a consensus that while the war was generally unavoidable, its occurrence was

foreseeable based on prior relations with Russia. The second discernible disagreement pertains to the impact on the European security framework—debating whether the aftermath calls for a moderate or a radical, a limited or an extensive reconstruction.

All Central and Eastern European states acknowledge the war in Ukraine as the main trigger for an adaptation of the European security architecture to the radically changed strategic context. The Eastern flank countries, the Baltics and Poland maintain the inevitability of the security dilemma which is brought to the limelight by the Russian imperialistic policy and which renders them in a highly perilous position not unlike Ukraine's. They blame Russia's long-standing and total refusal to conform to the regulations of the international order, and moreover, to tailor the whole system in its own fashion.

The 'Ukraine effect' has radically reshaped European security architecture through NATO enlargement, the pursuit of resource self-reliability, and the strengthened military presence. Additionally, it has reaffirmed Europe's commitment to freedom and democratic values. This deliberate policy of Russia's appeasement has left Central and Eastern Europe in a "grey security zone". This geostrategic buffer predestination is identified by Romania and Bulgaria as the major fallacy in the hypothesis that the offensive Realpolitik could have been prevented. All states represented in this volume are aware of Russia's zero-sum game mentality which makes borderland countries especially vulnerable to its blatant aggression or at least prone to persistent hybrid attacks.

Central European states (Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary) as well as Croatia tend to reason about the accountability of a divided and dependent Europe vis-à-vis Russia before 24 February 2022. It could be inferred that the Kremlin regime was encouraged by the Europeans belief that they could somehow appease it within a cooperative security system. The main shortcoming in Europe's response capabilities or negotiation potential lies in the decision-making mechanism and the lack of operational flexibility in regional multilateral formats. The 'double track approach', therefore, could be held accountable, as it allowed individual countries to make concessions for economic gains, compromise on confidence-building measures and early crisis signals, thereby hinting at a fragmentation of Europe both practically and fundamentally in Russia's perception.

³ Dr Nan Tian, Dr Diego Lopes da Silva, Xiao Liang, Lorenzo Scarazzato, Dr Lucie Béraud-Sudreau, Ana Assis: Trends in World Military Expenditure 2022. DOI: 10.55163/PNVP2622, Publisher: SIPRI, Stockholm, April, 2023, https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2023-04/2304_fs_milex_2022.pdf

⁴ Russia approves record spend for its military in new 2024 budget. Euronews Business, <https://www.euronews.com/business/2023/11/28/russia-approves-record-spend-for-military-in-new-budget> (last accessed on 07/01/2024)

The Western Balkan states take up a more generalized and ambiguous view in terms of the international order. The European security architecture is presented to be confronted with a new strategic rivalry very much like the Cold War. The anxiety about the unpreparedness of Europe to secure its order in terms of hard power is the main viewpoint about the implications of the war in Ukraine.

Even presumably 'non-alignment' countries such as Hungary and Serbia follow the red line of denouncing Russian aggression. What can be pinpointed is the solidarity in the European security approach after the outbreak of the military conflict and the incentives to build a more integrated and sustainable architecture.

4. The role of the main actors – the Euro-Atlantic security organizations within the ESA

The European security architecture has an undeniable theoretical value, but in practical terms, it is confronted with much contention as to its essence, characteristics, structure and functions. It is not pre-conceived but has gradually established four main components in the course of its development:

- governance structures (predominantly, NATO, the EU, and the OSCE);
- capabilities, such as security-building best practices;
- international norms;
- and values.⁵

The EU-NATO axis is participant focus point of the debate but there exists a division as to how to delineate the two institutions' roles in terms of responsibilities, which will define the security identity of Europe as more Europeanised or more Atlanticised. This is basically the conceptual and pragmatic split between autonomy and complementarity.

While there is a Europe-wide consensus that NATO is the core organization capable of guaranteeing security, there is disagreement as to the alternative or cumulative position of the EU in the overall architecture. The Baltic states, Poland and Romania recognize NATO's role as indispensable and therefore exclude an EU strategic autonomy; vice versa, Western Balkan states entertain high hopes about the EU's resilience and share a more integrative approach to counter Russia's toolbox of hard, sharp and soft power instruments. Hungary has isolated itself in its position vis-à-vis NATO and EU since it does not block the allied support to Ukraine formally but abstains from de facto commitment.

4.1. NATO

All Central and Eastern European states acknowledge the Alliance as the primary organisation for collective defence, based on Article 5 of the NATO Treaty. A distinct NATO momentum is evident, attributed firstly to the enlargement with Finland and Sweden and secondly to the financial and logistical reinforcement of its military presence in Europe since February 2022.

The Baltic states, Romania and Poland underline NATO's strategic institutional position, with territorial defence and deterrence as its core policy, very much like during the Cold War. They have been persistent in condemning Russia's aggressive policy since the invasion in Georgia in 2008. Romania, for its part, has been following a consistent policy of anchoring NATO in the Black Sea since the Crimea annexation in 2014, irrespective of the domestic political context. The Czech Republic underscores its involvement in NATO's enhanced presence in Eastern Europe with a battlegroup in Slovakia.

The US, UK and Canadian net contributions remain central for the Baltic, Central and Eastern European states, but littoral countries are urged to forgo free riding and take a fair share in the military spending. To several Eastern European countries such as Bulgaria the duplicate part ascribed to the US and the UK, both of which are simultaneously neglected as external agents and embraced as majority shareholders, is problematic in itself. Nonetheless, only a strong transatlantic link, as well as an intensified EU-NATO partnership can lead out of the integration impasse in the Western Balkan region.

⁵ Cf. definitions of ESA in: Zandee D., Deen, B., Kruijver K., Stoetman, A. (2020): Strengthening the European security architecture. - In: European strategic autonomy in security and defence. Clingendael Institute, pp. 11-12, URL: https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2020-12/Report_European_Strategic_Autonomy_December_2020.pdf

Andersson, J. J., Cramer, C. S. (2023): The impact on the European security architecture - In: EUISS Yearbook of European Security. European Union Institute for Security Studies, pp. 25-26, URL: https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/YES_2023.pdf

Ukraine's future is seen by the Baltics and Poland as a NATO member state, thus being a logical continuation of the Eastern enlargement process and a key to the long-standing peace in Europe. Eastern European states, as can be expected, explicitly broaden the distant enlargement perspective with Moldova and Georgia, because they are exposed to the risk of Balkanization.

Having in mind that Russia is a nuclear power with an offensive nuclear strategy, the deterrence against its largest nuclear and conventional counterpart in NATO, the United States, has been reinvigorated, not unlike the bipolar model of the Cold War. This power configuration has amplified US leverage within NATO, and at the same time, has once again questioned the fairness of the pooling and sharing mechanism, and more specifically, whether Europeans are committed to share the burden of defence expenditure and military production. In practical terms, a reshuffling of the burden sharing within NATO means the Eastern European states are to become rather providers than consumers of regional security.

4.2. THE EUROPEAN UNION

Not all Central and Eastern European states fully acknowledge the European Union's potential for strategic autonomy in the security domain. There are three major impediments to that: a deeply rooted reluctance by EU member states to pool sovereignty in such a sensitive area, their divergent strategic cultures, and the tendency to exploit the consensus principle for domestic opportunism. Nevertheless, a significant tipping point has been Denmark's accession to the European Defence Agency and the Permanent Structured Cooperation.

The **Euro-optimistic league** is formed largely by South-Eastern European states, most of them non-EU members. The slow turn of geopolitical thinking within the EU in view of the Russian hybrid warfare in several Western Balkan countries comes under a heavy criticism and this indecisiveness in addressing the elephant in the room may backfire the way it did in former Soviet republics. Western Balkan states such as North Macedonia, Albania and Serbia emphasize the strategic importance of the accelerated EU enlargement, and denounce both the "technical" obstacles and surrogates for membership. Croatia, Serbia and Albania point to the coherence of the geopolitical context, that is, the sustainable resolution of the sovereignty disputes in Kosovo, and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The **Euro-realists** maintain more moderate positions on EU strategic autonomy. As Bulgaria sums it up, despite its ambitious Strategic Compass concept, the EU cannot deal alone with security threats posed by Russia and has to consolidate its efforts within the whole European security architecture. The European Union, therefore, cannot count on unanimous (federalist) measures in critical situations and will have to let major EU-member states such as France, Germany and Poland take the lead in functional (intergovernmental) crisis decision-making. The Baltic states, Poland and Romania alike underestimate EU's role in European security architecture as

a self-determined and self-sufficient actor. This ambivalent stance can be explained with both financial and operational reasons, since any pooling of additional resources into the EU strategic autonomy may undermine NATO.

EU's security viability as a hard power can also be deliberated with reference to France's strategic role as a nuclear power and permanent member of the UN Security Council. However, France's incoherence in political communication with Putin as well as Germany's lenience in its economic rapprochement with Kremlin's regime should also be taken into consideration when discussing European solidarity. What remains consensual is the complementarity approach which presents the entire EU and NATO neighbourhood as a shared space of values, norms and cooperative security.

5. The supporting role of other regional and global intergovernmental security organizations in the ESA

Very few of the European states represented in this volume relate to multilateral governance, both on a regional and on a global scale, as pertaining to an enduring peace. Most of them are relatively small states which nurture the legitimate expectation that setting universal standards is to protect the vulnerable party in an asymmetrical relationship. However, they often encounter the limitations of this legal order, which is constantly eroded by ineffective decision-making processes within the OSCE and the UN.

The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe is primarily identified as a significant, though subsidiary player in the field of European security. Albeit the outstanding contribution of the Helsinki Process to the West-East comprehensive dialogue during the Cold War détente, the institutional framework is condemned as ineffective due to the decision-making procedure of unanimity which entitles Russia to disrupt negotiations. Notwithstanding that few Central and Eastern European states reiterate their stance in favour of multilateralism, they still admit to OSCE's deficits in the law enforcement of resolutions. A reform based on the political will of the participating states seems a "mission impossible" in the near future

because of Russia's veto power. A new Helsinki process due to the promise of the confidence-building mechanism can become the focal point of future political talks, but it still runs the risk of the non-binding outcomes in the end. The paradox is that if a radical reform by abolishing the voting mechanism of unanimity in OSCE is ever to happen, this will deprive the organization of its very essence and will transform it into an utterly different one. Still, an all-European forum for communication with Russia is indispensable, or else the communication will be reduced to a one-way street.

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is briefly mentioned as bound for reform. Russia's veto power incapacitates the UNSC's operability in cases of gross violations of international law. Imperative norms of international law play an essential role in the judicial defence of the international order, specifically in cases of mass violations of human rights before the International Court of Justice (Ukraine v. Russian Federation: 32 States intervening). Still a reform of the institutional mechanism, in terms of prevention and punitive measures, involves Russia's commitment and is therefore only a theoretical exercise.

6. The European centre of gravity is moving eastwards - refocusing Central and Eastern European countries in the new geostrategic context

The refocusing of the centre of gravity within the European security architecture can be interpreted through two prisms. The first one is related to the propensity to perpetuate the progress by expanding the scope of the states belonging to the international rule-based and principle-led community, which is evident in the comeback of both the enlargement and the active engagement narrative among Eastern European states. The second one concerns the urge to detach from the reactionary trends and to prevent the restoration of the Cold War legacy as propagated in the Russian hybrid warfare, which has sensitized Central European states.

The reconstruction of European strategic identity has been triggered to a large extent by Central and Eastern European states' disenchantment with the evasive attitude and disjo-

inted behaviour towards Putin's regime on behalf of the so-called EU integration engines, France and Germany. This has turned Poland, Romania and the Baltic states into the axis of the European security architecture, with a promising future casting of the Western Balkans countries as auxiliary wheels. A disturbing trend can be noted in the disjuncture of the Visegrád Group as far as Orbán's regime does not solidarize with any common position regarding Russia.

Individual states are singled out as instrumental in acclimating the European security architecture to the new geostrategic context. Poland is most frequently appointed as the continental bulwark against Russian aggression westwards in terms of its material support of Ukraine and its outspoken denunciation of Russia (see Albania's, Bulgaria's and Serbia's

concurrent positions). Romania also advocates for having a strategic say on the Eastern flank in the future as far as the Russian aspiration is to turn the Black Sea into a maritime buffer zone between its borders and NATO. Hungary stands out as an outlier with its claim to play the role of a “bridge” between the East and the West, and maneuvering among allies and Russia; those mediating efforts have subsequently distanced it from its traditional neighbouring partner Poland.

Regional groups are also appreciated as crucial to helping their members weather the current storm. The Baltic states have been adhering to their common identity in the security area since the end of the Cold War, but only recently have they begun to expand the community to a larger Nordic one, with Finland and Sweden joining NATO. The Western Balkans are seen as powerful agents of change for former Soviet republics (Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia), because the latter could adapt to EU conditionality by following best practices of re-

cently admitted member states. The Black Sea basin suggests strategic vulnerability due to Russia’s proximity, which is why Romania promotes regional cooperative formats, such as the Three Seas Initiative (together with the Czech Republic), the Bucharest Nine, and trilateral arrangements with Poland-Türkiye, or Moldova-Ukraine. The Slavkov Trilateral is championed by one of its initiators, the Czech Republic, as a complement to the sub regional cooperation within the Visegrád Group.

Nevertheless, the different levels of commitment of European states to dealing with Russia’s threat alludes to their disparate perceptions – is Russia a bargaining interlocutor to negotiate concessions with or is it an aggressor to be categorically deterred? Regional groups can be instrumental in strengthening the connectivity both northwards-southwards and eastwards-westwards, which can be achieved by improving the military mobility and thus the economic growth.

7. (Dis)engaging Russia?

The dichotomy between a zero-sum game and non-zero-sum game in the future scenarios of disengaging and respectively engaging Russia manifests a distinct divide between those who view Russia in absolutist terms as a long-standing enemy (due to established behavioural patterns of imperialism), and those who view Russia as a contingent perpetrator of international crimes against peace and humanity. There is an urgent need for self-reflection on behalf of the Europeans – why societies have divergent views on Russia, why the political elites have acted reactively and belatedly after the annexation of Crimea and why they still lack a comprehensive concept and a holistic approach that is not a copycat of the Cold War mentality. Time is working in favour of Russia because the active support or passive reconciliation with Russia is on the steady rise.

Most European states identify Russia as the major adversary to the Euro-Atlantic security system. There is a visible radical trend among the irreconcilable Baltic states and Poland who perceive the threat coming from Putin’s regime as existential since it challenges Ukraine’s survival and reshuffles the nuts and bolts of the rules-based international order. They disqualify Russia from taking any part in the European security architecture in the short to midterm perspective, except for holding it criminally responsible for the violations of international law and financially accountable for the post-conflict rehabilitation of Ukraine. Some of them, such as Poland, admonish of the freezing of the conflict that may embolden Russia to take higher risks at a later stage.

A second tendency is that of a moderate long-term engagement under strict conditionality and it involves several Central European states (the Czech Republic) and Eastern European states (Croatia, Bulgaria, North Macedonia, and Romania).

This position admits Russia’s destabilizing role while refraining from being more specific about the inevitable conflictual co-existence with the aggressor. Most of these countries condition future engagement with Russia on an ousting in the authoritarian government, so a possible engagement of Russia is premised on a regime change from below, with the involvement of legitimate non-state actors. The Czech Republic is the only one that seeks for multilateral solutions against aggression and injustice, including crisis management and prevention of the spill over of the war outside of Ukraine.

There is a third, more ambivalent, trend concerning the engagement with Russia which is prevalent in Serbia, Albania, and Hungary. It can be reasoned that this equivocal accommodating posture is contingent on pending minority issues. Balancing among two binary options, Albania speculates that Russia’s probable defeat might facilitate the settlement of the Kosovo dispute and curtail Republika Srpska’s secessionism, and thus stabilize the Western Balkans; otherwise, its victory will definitely destabilize and divide the region. Hungary has followed an open “pragmatic” policy towards Russia since the beginning of the invasion, through its opportunistic tactic of ideological and economic “connectivity” with Russia, in the hope of the resumption of the status quo ante. Yet, Orbán’s regime is afraid of a weaker Russia as far as this amounts to a stronger Ukraine with which it sustains a minority-based animosity.

The irony of the situation is that, by force of circumstance, Russia is inevitably engaged in the European security architecture because of its intermediate vicinity and the ensuing security dilemma. The consensus on legal responsibility and sanctioning mechanisms can be a good starting point, yet it confronts European states with the Realpolitik limits that Putin’s cynical regime successfully takes advantage of.

8. The endgame: winning the peace in Ukraine

War is not an end state by itself and will be followed by peace. The question is what kind of peace. Historically, there have been wars that have ended in the complete defeat of one side, with the defeated side accepting the terms of the victor. Wars have ended with a peace treaty in which the parties negotiated the terms of further relations. In third cases, a truce, ceasefire or freeze was established in place of hostilities, forms of relations that could more easily escalate to a new armed conflict. What the modalities of peace in Ukraine are is difficult to say in a situation where both sides are seeking to achieve victory on the military front. At this stage, neither belligerent party has shown the ability to achieve a fully satisfactory military victory that would mark peace. At the end of 2023, the war moved into a phase of positional war and war of attrition.

The prospect is for a protracted war, where neither side can achieve a decisive military victory. Consequently, the conclusion of the war lies within the realm of political decisions, provided there is the will to do so. The key question revolves around what circumstances each belligerent will deem suitable to its interests, taking into account a range of internal and external factors.

The Ukrainian vision of building a future peace with Russia is more definitive and includes restoring the country's territorial integrity, withdrawing Russian troops from Ukrainian territory, releasing hostages and deportees, punishing war criminals, guaranteeing nuclear and food security, and all of this underpinned by a signed treaty.⁶

Russia's political objectives for its war against Ukraine remain unclear, leaving it unclear how it accepts a future peace. Evidently, Russia's initial goal of the 'denazification' and 'demilitarisation' of Ukraine, which, in the light of today's experience, involves the military occupation of the whole of Ukraine and the establishment of a puppet government, has failed. Subsequently, the Russian government defined various objectives with regard to Ukraine, but never stated clearly under what conditions it would stop its war of aggression. From this point of view, it is completely unclear, even assuming that Ukraine would accept some form of negotiated peace, whether Russia would continue its aggression. Therefore, the issue of peace is directly linked to the issue of guarantees for Ukraine's sovereignty, security and territorial integrity. Undoubtedly, the most serious guarantee is Ukraine's future membership of NATO and the EU, but as long as the military conflict lasts, such membership cannot be realised.

If the current peace landscape remains elusive, an analysis of the factors that have an impact on the course of the war can serve as a guideline for policies. These factors, encompassing both internal and external aspects, manifest themselves to varying degrees in relation to Russia and Ukraine.

Internal factors in Russia, such as public opinion, civil structures, the economic and social situation, the positions of the various elites and others, cannot have a significant influence on the policies pursued by the Kremlin. Russian society is repressed and largely supports the war. According to the Levada Analytical Center, although the number of people who want peace is growing, the level of support for the actions of the Russian armed forces remains high (72%)⁷. This gives comfort to the Russian government, and it is speculative to think of such a cardinal change of the ruling elite, which would lead to a radical change in the attitude towards the war waged by Russia. On the other hand, Russia has much bigger 'strategic depth' to allow it to wage a long and exhausting war. External factors, such as the positions of other countries, or Western sanctions, have a limited effect that is insufficient to influence war policy. In the absence of internal and external factors to significantly influence the decision, questions of war and peace will be decided by the ruling elites according to their views and calculations.

The situation in Ukraine differs significantly. Although the Ukrainian society unites in defence of its state against aggression and the Ukrainian army displays extraordinary heroism, the Ukrainian government is notably susceptible to internal influence. Ukraine, its people, and infrastructure are under constant attack, which, combined with other adverse factors, may create a desire to accept some form of peace or truce. Although the vast majority of Ukrainians firmly reject the option of peace in exchange for territorial concessions, the percentage of Ukrainians who want a peace agreement with Russia has increased in recent months from 10% to 14%. At the same time, trust in the government has dropped from 74% to 39% in October, according to a survey by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology cited by The New York Times.⁸

Western aid – military and civilian – remains key to Ukraine. A reduction in military aid could have a significant impact on the Ukrainian army's ability to conduct war. However, Eurobarometer data from early 2023 show that a very high percentage of European citizens support Ukraine⁹. At the same time, it should be borne in mind that in the USA and in a number of European countries elections are forthcoming in 2024, and not all candidates are in favour of maintaining aid to Ukraine, or at least not at the current level.

The war in Ukraine is a turning point in the development of the European Security Architecture and its future will largely depend on how this war ends. Assuming that the interests of Western democracies are linked to the restoration of the European security system (Romania), then the peace plan proposed by the President of Ukraine is most in line with them. This is why support for Ukraine is crucial for the democratic states

⁶ Ukraine has always been a leader in peacemaking efforts; if Russia wants to end this war, let it prove it with actions - speech by the President of Ukraine at the G20 Summit 15 November 2022 <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/ukrayina-zavzhdi-bula-lidom-mirotvorchih-zusil-yaksho-rosi-79141>

⁷ Levada-Center - CONFLICT WITH UKRAINE: ASSESSMENTS FOR SEPTEMBER 2023 <https://www.levada.ru/en/tag/ukraine/>

⁸ "Deadlocked war tests Ukrainian morale", The New York Times, International Edition, Monday, November 6, 2023 p.3 <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/11/05/world/europe/ukraine-war-morale.html>

⁹ Standard Eurobarometer 98 - Winter 2022-2023 - <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2872> (last accessed on 25/11/2023)

themselves. Ukraine is fighting a war not only to defend its own territory. It is also fighting to defend Europe's freedom and democratic values (see the analyses by Latvia and North Macedonia).

Only by reconnecting to fundamental principles of the multi-lateral security architecture and enforcing justice and accountability in Europe for Putin's Russia, it is possible to restore trust and confidence in the old system (Czech Republic). It is of key importance to prevent the conflict from spilling over war outside Ukraine and strengthening the NATO's defence capabilities on the Eastern Flank (Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania). It can be assumed that the outcome of the war will

have an impact on other conflicts, for example in the Western Balkans (Albania). The war is a test of unity of NATO and Russia must not be allowed to destroy it (Poland).

The war that Russia is waging against Ukraine is changing thinking and attitudes in Europe, putting not only the Ukrainian people to the test, but also NATO and the EU. The European security architecture, which was built on the idea of preventing another major war in Europe, has not stood the test. The future of the European security architecture now depends on the outcome of the war between Russia and Ukraine, a conclusion all analysts represented in this volume agree on.

9. The future moves before the ESA – reinvigorating the principles, reestablishing the structures

The future of the ESA is as unclear as is the outcome of the war in Ukraine. However, we can speak of certain trends and factors that will play a role in shaping the future system of relations in Europe.

In order to restore the old principles and norms and to regain trust in inclusive organisations such as the OSCE, the Council of Europe and others, all countries, above all Russia, will have to return to full compliance with agreed norms and principles, including a return to arms control regimes and confidence-building measures. The point is, however, that the credibility of Russia's current government has been stretched to the limit and there is hardly a politician in Europe who would take Putin's words at face value. According to some of the analysts of this volume, establishment of any new European security architecture will take some time (Czech Republic).

The return of rivalry in international relations and war as a form of imposing the interests of individual states will put the emphasis on ensuring defence and security within the organisations of individual countries. In the years to come, the role of NATO, and the United States in particular, in ensuring the protection of member states and democracies in Europe will be critical, as many analysts have noted (Latvia, North Macedonia, Albania). It is crucial that the European countries increase their defence capabilities, with the EU becoming a true pillar of NATO in Europe, which in turn will help to strengthen the transatlantic bond.

The attitude towards Russia remains important for the future ESA. It has been noted more than once that relations between NATO and Russia are at their lowest point since the Cold War. Some analysts believe that with its aggressive war against an independent state, with its hybrid actions against democratic states, Russia has disqualified itself from any role in shaping Europe's security architecture (Latvia). A return to the status quo ante with Russia is unlikely without the meaningful trans-

formation of Russian (or European) politics. This means that the containment of Russia will be the main objective of the policies of the NATO Eastern flank countries (Hungary). In concurrence with Marie Dumoulin from ECFR, a strategy towards Russia is necessary¹⁰.

Nowadays, democratic societies are faced with various forms of hybrid activities, including disinformation, propaganda, fake news, the use of social networks and so on. These means are no less effective in achieving objectives than conventional means, and in some cases pose a more serious threat. The old security system focused almost exclusively on conventional military forces. Therefore, the future security architecture should address these new threats, while countries should build greater resilience (Hungary, Serbia).

A number of the authors of the country papers in this volume rightly note that the ESA is not isolated from global issues. Therefore, its future will involve addressing China (Poland, Serbia). The emerging global rivalry between the USA and China will undoubtedly have its implications on the global world order as well as on the European security architecture. From this point of view, the EU needs to develop a vision of its relationship to the new global trends, which includes a separate policy towards China.

For Europe's future security to be sustainable, there must be no 'grey areas of insecurity'. Therefore, the European and Euro-Atlantic future of the Western Balkan countries takes on a new significance not only for the security of these countries, but also for the whole of Europe (Czech Republic, Serbia). The process of enlargement of the Western Balkans must be thought of as a strategic process rather than a technical issue (North Macedonia). The same strategic approach must be applied to Ukraine (Poland) as well as Georgia and Moldova.

¹⁰ Marie Dumoulin. One step beyond: Why the EU needs a Russia strategy, 22.08.2023, - <https://ecfr.eu/article/one-step-beyond-why-the-eu-needs-a-russia-strategy/>

It has already been repeatedly stated at the highest level that Ukraine's future lies in NATO, but this cannot happen while a war is being fought on the territory of that country. It is important that the internal transformation in preparation for Ukraine's future membership continues so that it is ready for this membership after the war.

The role of multinational organisations in the future architecture is unclear, as well as a potential need to revise their treaties to reflect new realities. According to some, these organisations such as the OSCE are emptied of content and ineffective (Romania, Latvia). While for others, the OSCE might play the role of a main platform for dialogue, permitted the right conditions and potential reform (Czech Republic, Serbia). The potential of the recently established European Political Community (EPC) to contribute to the European security

should be explored, particularly in cyber-security or countering third-party interference (Serbia).

The construction of the future security architecture will also be influenced by the degree of unity among democratic states regarding their positions and approaches. A comparative analysis of contributions from all authors in this volume reveals areas of agreement and divergence. Similarly, there is no unified view in the official policies of the states on key European security issues, not to mention the stark differences in views among domestic political parties. Preserving the unity within NATO and the EU, building a common security culture among member states, the ability to speak with one voice on key issues, will be one of the determining factors for the future security architecture.

10. Policy Recommendations

1. Europe and the USA should uphold the principle of fostering a rules-based international order. The Russian revisionism poses a danger of chaos in international relations. The coming years and decades will be a time of confrontation of views and a struggle to win over a large number of countries to a vision of the development of international relations. Democratic states must therefore rally around this idea to win over the majority of countries, especially those from the Global South.

It is in the interest of Western democracies to avoid a security vacuum. Treaties have been negotiated for years and decades. It is in Europe's interest to return to these treaties and international institutions. At the very least, work should be done on the international stage to discredit aggression as a form of resolving inter-state relations.

2. Russia will continue to be the main threat to peace and security in Europe, and will represent a risk factor for democratic states. A "return to business as usual" with Russia without the territorial integrity of Ukraine restored, peace achieved and Russia returning to fulfilling its commitments, risks discrediting NATO and the EU, and a complete failure of the international order based on principles and norms. This would have negative consequences not only for European, but also for global security.

The future European security system will largely depend on the outcome of the war in Ukraine. Democratic countries must continue to provide military and economic support to Ukraine so that it can defend its territory and sovereignty.

3. The EU should adopt "a common vision of Russia", which would include a clear vision of future relations with Russia, reducing its ability to advance its interests vis-à-vis other countries, especially its neighbours, reducing its

ability to influence the international agenda, preparing for potential changes in the country, etc. It is crucial that the EU and NATO speak with one voice and do not allow weakness in relation to Russia. Russia needs to know that the EU's and NATO's unity is unshakable.

4. In future years, and possibly decades, the centre of gravity will be placed on the organisations that guarantee the security and defence of democratic states in Europe. First and foremost this is NATO as a collective defence organisation. NATO must therefore demonstrate determination and concrete action in building up sufficient defence capabilities, and a clear signal that every inch of NATO territory will be defended by joint efforts.

Building capabilities and deploying forces and assets on the Eastern flank must also be accompanied by clear messages that these are defensive activities. It is important to establish crisis management mechanisms to avoid escalation that could lead to direct military confrontation with Russia. From this point of view, building lines of communication with Russia is important.

5. Democracies shall work closer with partners and like-minded countries to seek regulation at international level to counter hybrid threats. This type of risk has not been reflected in international legal documents so far, but recent years have shown what a devastating effect they have on societies. Democracies are the most vulnerable to this contemporary threat. This should be a strong incentive to seek regulations at international level.
6. Special attention should be paid to cyber threats as they can have a serious disruptive effect.
7. Emerging and disruptive technologies (EDT) create new opportunities but also pose new risks. Their use

can seriously threaten international peace and security.

The future security architecture must take into account the risks of hybrid and cyber threats, as well as new technologies as new means and forms of influencing security, which is why it is necessary to work now to create appropriate international legal regulations.

8. On various key issues of common security, the countries of the Eastern flank have different positions. It is appropriate to seek a convergence of positions, not only for the countries on the Eastern flank, but also for Europe as a whole. To this end, more active use should be made of established cooperation formats, such as the B9, the Three Seas Initiative and others.
9. Eastern flank countries are most exposed to various risks. This is determined not only by geographical proximity, but also by various vulnerabilities related to internal development, historical and cultural relations with Russia, weaknesses of democratic institutions, corruption, etc. The interest of these countries is to build resilience to the risks emanating from Russia. This will guarantee not only their own security, but also the unity of the EU and NATO.
10. Building a common security culture, which includes a common risk assessment and a common approach, is key to unity and to the readiness for joint action against risks and threats. This includes a clearer position on NATO's role in the defence and security of Europe and of the EU as NATO's pillar in Europe, relations with the US and others.
11. Member-states shall work more actively on the preparation and future membership of the countries of the Western Balkans, Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia in NATO and the EU as a guarantor of security and preventing Russia from creating zones of insecurity.
12. 2024 will be a critical year for security and international relations, when the war in Ukraine will enter its second year (or tenth, if counted from 2014). In many countries, including the USA, elections are coming up. There will also be elections of the European Parliament. It is particularly important to step up strategic communication with societies in democratic countries and at the same time to intensify countering hybrid threats. The expertise of individual countries should be pooled to jointly counter Russian hybrid warfare.
13. The construction of the European security architecture will not be isolated from global developments, including the competition between the two major poles, the USA and China. It is therefore important for Europe to develop a clear strategy on China.



**FRIEDRICH NAUMANN
STIFTUNG** Für die Freiheit.

Annex: Country Paper

ALBANIA

**The future of the European security
architecture in view of the war in
Ukraine**

Ledion Krisafi, Ph.D

Introduction

The war in Ukraine is the most significant development in the European continent since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the disintegration of the Soviet control of Eastern Europe. The war has put into doubt everything that the European Union has built over the last thirty years. The idea of the end of history and a liberal world order ended with the war in Ukraine. Russian invasion of Ukraine has shown that cold state interests prevail. This fact has turned the war in Ukraine only superficially a war between Russia and Ukraine with the support of NATO, but in essence a war for the determination of Europe's future and possibly the future of the international order.

Practically, only China and Russia have the potential to challenge the international order created after the Second World War. Other states can ignore it or express criticism of this international order, but they don't have the means or the political, economic, financial and military might to challenge it. Only China and Russia do, and Russia less than China. Because of this, the war in Ukraine could be the beginning of the end of the international order created after the Second World War mostly by Western Powers, or on the contrary, it could become a further consolidation of this order, by knocking Russia out of the challengers. The first scenario is valid if Ukraine loses the war, and the second scenario is most probable if Russia loses the war in Ukraine. The future of the security architecture of Europe should be seen in the light of these two scenarios. In the first scenario, Europe's credibility and NATO's credibility would be badly damaged and other countries like China regarding Taiwan, but also Iran in the Middle East, could try to test the current international order. In the second scenario, a weakened Russia, combined with a strengthened NATO and EU would therefore serve as an example for other powers not to try to test the international order.

NATO's shift to the East

One of the main changes in the security architecture of the continent will be NATO's shift towards the East of Europe. This is a phenomenon already observable during the war in Ukraine, where Poland especially, but also the Baltic states have played a considerable role in helping Ukraine. Once the backbone of NATO was in Berlin and Paris, but the war in Ukraine showed that the Eastern countries like Poland, Baltic countries and Romania were more intense and understanding the threat posed by Russia and consequently proved to be faster and more able to react to the Russian threat.

Especially Poland has turned itself into the most outspoken country against the invasion and has established itself as the main bulwark against a further advance of the Russian army beyond Ukraine. This development will most likely continue and Poland will become practically NATO's main point in the continent. Poland has pledged to increase its army to 300 thousand, making it the largest in Europe, and has pledged to spend 3% of its GDP on the military.

This will depend a lot on how the war will end. In the case of a Ukrainian victory, Poland and a future NATO member Ukraine will become probably NATO's main focus in Europe and the pillar of European security architecture and will keep in check a further revanchist Russia.

But if Russia wins the war in Ukraine and manages to "demilitarize" and dismantle the Ukrainian state, this will mean that Poland also in this scenario will become the main focus of NATO in Europe, in this case with the purpose of keeping in check a further advance of Russia westwards. But a Russian victory can spark disagreements inside NATO and the EU with some countries probably desiring to reach an agreement with Russia and others to continue the military build-up in the Eastern flank. A Russian victory in Ukraine would threaten the whole security architecture of Europe. It would undermine NATO and create disunity among European countries, with some like Poland or the Baltic states supported by the United States and the United Kingdom vowing to continue the stand against Russia, while countries like Hungary, Türkiye, Germany and maybe France, trying to reach an accommodation with a hypothetical victorious Russia. This scenario could undermine the whole existence of NATO and turn the security architecture of Europe in a two actors' game: the United States on one side (supported by Poland, the Baltic countries and the United Kingdom) and Russia on the other side (maintaining probably good relations with countries like Austria, Hungary, Türkiye, Serbia). This scenario would result in perpetual uncertainty in Europe.

In both scenarios, NATO's shift eastwards and the shifting of Europe's security pillar in the East of the continent looks inevitable.

Europe's strategic autonomy and the war in Ukraine

Paradoxically, the war in Ukraine has made Europe more secure. The Russian menace is still there and if Russia wins the war in Ukraine or manages to reach an agreement where it retains the territories already conquered, this menace will continue to be there. However, the war in Ukraine has severed Europe's energy links with Russia, has increased Europe's military expenditures and filled up the gaps in the country's militaries, NATO has expanded with Sweden and Finland and the Alliance is much better prepared and ready to meet any Russian challenge than it was before 24 February 2022. Today, a conflict with NATO is much more difficult for Russia as it was before the beginning of the war. Despite occasional rifts between countries, European unity today is stronger than before the war.

Nevertheless, the war has shown the fundamental role played by the United States in the security of the European continent. Without the commitment of the US towards Ukraine and NATO, the war could have played out differently. The US also were the main push towards bigger military spending in Europe and bigger support for Ukraine, especially for the big countries like Germany, France, Italy and Spain. Even before the war, the US was the only major country forewarning that Putin was absolutely serious to wage war in Ukraine, while major European countries were skeptical.

Contrary to what has been discussed for years, the war in Ukraine has increase the American influence and presence in the military strategy of Europe and has shown why the USA is fundamental in the security architecture of the continent. This is going to be the case notwithstanding what happens in Ukraine in the future. European countries, apart from the Eastern ones, were slow to react to Ukraine's pleas for armaments and countries like France were open for a diplomatic solution to the war even after Russia had sized considerable parts of Ukraine. Without the US role, the Ukrainian army would not have survived the initial months of the war. The war has shown that there is no security architecture of Europe without the United States in the leading role.

In this view, what is the role of the EU? During this war, NATO has become the premier Western organization, which in either scenario could be expected to be continued. It is Ukraine's war supported by NATO that will make possible Ukraine's EU integration in the future. In a future militarized continent always aware of Russia's moves, NATO will retain its premier position, with EU in a "civilian" position.

The view from the Balkans

There are two main hot spots in the region: Kosovo-Serbia dialogue and the functioning of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The outcome of the war in Ukraine will probably determine the future of these two issues and could have an impact on the future security architecture of the continent.

A Ukrainian victory, and consequently a NATO victory in Ukraine, will weaken considerably Serbia's stance towards Kosovo. Serbia will lose a strong supporter like Russia, which could come out of a loss in Ukraine, with potential social and political turmoil and a diminished position in the international scene. This outcome would strengthen EU's and US pressure on Serbia to accept a final agreement with Kosovo, which would de facto or de jure recognize the independence of Kosovo. Serbia's weakened position could make it more vulnerable in accepting a kind of recognition of Kosovo's independence. This outcome would contribute greatly to a more relaxed and cooperative atmosphere in the region. At the same time, Russian loss in Ukraine would considerably diminish the Republika Srpska's secessionist tendencies, and may even open the road towards a reconsideration of the Dayton Agreement, to create a more unified state in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

On the other hand, a Russian victory in Ukraine would strengthen Serbia's position towards Kosovo but also towards EU and US position in Kosovo, which means that the issue will continue to generate occasional tensions and instability in the region. At the same time, a victorious Russia could support not only politically but also militarily Republika Srpska's attempt at secession, which would trigger the biggest crisis in the Balkans since the wars in the 90s.

Inside the Balkans, Albania is one of those countries which doesn't have any equivoques regarding the war in Ukraine: support for Ukraine and condemnation of Russia is almost universal. Russia has historically been seen as an enemy in Albania, apart

from a small period during the communist period. This has happened because of Russia's support for Serbia against Albanians in the region, Russia's decisive role in London's 1913 Conference where it left half of Albanians in the region and Albanian inhabited territory out of the newly created Albanian state, and lastly Russia's strong position against Kosovo's independence. In this view, any war that weakens Russia is welcomed in Albania. Many Albanians view Ukraine and Ukrainians akin to Albanians in Kosovo in 1999, where a larger country waged unjust war and it was only the USA and NATO intervention which saved the population of possible extermination.

Conclusions

The war in Ukraine has already altered the security architecture of Europe, militarizing a continent based on the concept of no more wars after the Second World War; and conducting a proxy war with Russia in Ukraine. The scenarios for the end of the war could change even more the security architecture of the continent. Until the beginning of the war in Ukraine, Europe after the Second World War was built on a model away from the Realpolitik of previous centuries of devastating wars between great powers. The war in Ukraine in a certain way brought back the Realpolitik in international relations in Europe. But the future of the security architecture of the continent will be a more militarized one and based more on Realpolitik, notwithstanding the result of the war in Ukraine. In both scenarios, Europe will either try to check a resurgent Russia victorious in Ukraine, or will have to check a revanchist Russia after losing the war in Ukraine.

Poland, the Baltic states and a resurgent Ukraine after the war, with the support of the United States could slowly become the focus of NATO in Europe and the pillars of Europe's security architecture. The war has shown also that Europe's strategic autonomy, especially concerning military matters, is an illusion. The war in Ukraine would have been over in a month without the United States taking the leadership of the war effort helping Ukrainians against Russia.

A Russian victory in Ukraine would divide the continent in two: those vowing to stand against Russia and those trying an accommodation with Russia. This scenario would create a situation similar to Cold War Europe, with perpetual uncertainty.

About the author

Ledion Krisafi is Project coordinator and Senior Researcher at the Albanian Institute for International Studies (AIIS), in Tirana, Albania. He has published two books about the relations of Albania and Yugoslavia after the Second World War; and about the geopolitics and international law in the case of Nagorno-Karabakh. His areas of interest are security and geopolitics in the Balkans and the history of international relations in the Balkans and Eastern Europe.



**FRIEDRICH NAUMANN
STIFTUNG** Für die Freiheit.

Annex: Country Paper

BULGARIA

**European security architecture:
a view from Bulgaria**

Plamen Ralchev

European security has always been obscure and depending on balances between major powers and the coalitions of middle powers and small states they succeed to garnish with. Hence, security configurations in Europe have always been divisive and exclusive, rather than overarching and inclusive. After the WWII the acrimony between NATO and the Warsaw Pact was the focal point. Once the Warsaw Pact was dissolved and NATO began expanding in Central and Eastern Europe, including former adversaries among its ranks, there were expectations that a possible overarching security in Europe would be completed. No such task is possible however unless it is decided what role Russia would play in the European Security Architecture, provided that it obviously does not fit the present status quo.

1. Tactical assessment of the current European security architecture

Post-Cold War (dis)order reshuffled security concerns and created gray zones and buffer zones in Eastern and Southeastern Europe that primarily favoured Russia. Security arrangements in Europe based on the Helsinki process accords gradually eroded once post-Soviet Russia under President Putin began challenging the eastward enlargement of NATO, meddling in Ukraine during the Orange revolution, taking Abkhazia and South Ossetia in 2008, annexation of Crimea in 2014 and occupation of Eastern Ukraine in 2022. This positions Russia as a steady rival to existing security arrangements in Europe, aspiring to impose or negotiate a new division of Europe.

It seems the European security architecture entirely rests upon what NATO could provide by its joint capabilities. The strengths of the European security architecture build upon the symbiosis between NATO and the EU in the security realm, and the unanimity among its members. **The weaknesses however stem from the immature or limited agency the EU performs alone in security**, despite of institutional changes and increasing political will in recent years. Another weakness is that some perceive the US and the UK as external agents in the European security, but at the same time they are indispensable factors. The strategic autonomy of the EU will be in the making for long. It was exactly because Russia underscores and does not take seriously the EU strategic autonomy, that it confronts straight NATO and the US.

There was no feasible hypothesis that the Russian aggression against Ukraine, which started last year, might have been prevented. For Russia it is a classical security dilemma case – NATO enlargement in Central and Eastern Europe to strengthen and consolidate security in Europe is perceived by Russia as increasingly threatening, closely approaching its vulnerable borders. The fate of Ukraine was compromised by its borderland status. Playing its zero-sum game, Russia perceived Ukraine not as a sovereign and independent state but as its borderland buffer zone to avoid immediate contact with the West/ European security arrangement. This is what **NATO/ US and the EU failed to acknowledge and miscalculated about Russia's determination to avoid inaction that could count for strategic loss**. Ever since 2010 Russia has followed a strategy to permeate in the soft periphery of Europe with nascent hybrid tactics to destabilize political systems and influence and create cleavages in the public

opinion. It is exactly how the very integrity of Ukraine was challenged. This process went unnoticed or overlooked by many intelligence services and it acquired inertia in parts of Eastern Ukraine that led to the events of 2014 and the annexation of Crimea.

No comprehensive security architecture of Europe seems plausible at present. Bluntly, Russia cannot be counted in the European security model. It will always play at odds and will try to determine a security equation to solve its zero-sum problem. Russia relies on negotiations to secure concessions, compensations and guarantees for itself. It views such an option as a buffer zone - sanitary belt between itself and US-led NATO. Unfortunately, Russia's conception of such a buffer zone overlaps with the territory of Ukraine and having that in mind, it made the war inevitable. Once the war has flared up, it will be of utmost importance for the future security architecture in Europe to find a security role for Ukraine, keeping its integrity first. No future arrangement seems possible without paying due consideration to Ukraine.

2. Normative evaluation of the European security architecture

Post-WWII terms left the heritage of ideological, military-political and economic division of Europe between the free West and the Soviet-dominated East with a few buffer states – Finland, Sweden and Austria, which determined the landscape and the environment of the Cold War. After the end of the Cold War era and the collapse of the Soviet Union Russia sought various ways to regain control or avoid certain developments in countries previously dominated by the USSR. This definitely makes the post-WWII terms irrelevant to the present moment.

Rebuilding trust across Europe after the war in Ukraine will be far more difficult than building peace after the two world wars. The main reason for this is the behaviour and strategic choices of Russia. After WWI Soviet Russia isolated itself from institutional arrangements in Europe. After WWII the Soviet Union took over nearly half of Europe and separated it from the West, creating two parallel worlds with colliding principles, norms and institutional mechanisms. Cooperation formats became possible a few decades later with the policy of détente and the mutual respect enshrined in the Helsinki accords. In a similar vein, Russia even today claims that the West (EU, US, NATO, etc.) should adhere to the policy of respecting Russia's interests. The very principle of spheres of influence contradicts the idea of inclusive Europe, the principle of free self-determination and sovereign statehood. Russia is determined to carve out what it deems its "Promised land". It will never feel comfortable in Europe if Europe advocates for norms and principles Russia perceives alien. Thus, rebuilding trust and peace in Europe may take even decades because both sides have completely different security culture and contradictory perceptions about each other.

3. Cooperation vs. Containment

It could be expected that a new dividing line in Europe will be re-established. There will be parallel processes of cooperation among the countries in the EU and NATO and containment with regard to Russia. It is hard to envisage rehabilitated cooperation between Russia and the West. Their relations are severely damaged and will remain tense and marked by distrust in the near future.

As Russia has shown no propensity to deliver to comprehensive security arrangement in Europe, but rather alienate from Europe and pursue its own Eurasian project, Russia automatically has self-excluded itself from prospective security architecture in Europe. The annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the invasion in Ukraine in 2022 were clear demonstrations of Russia's reluctance to pursue its goals through diplomacy and negotiations.

4. Structure of the European security architecture

As we have witnessed by the second year after the Russian invasion in Ukraine, there is no regional organization that can live up to a long-term peaceful resolution of the war. All organizations in which Russia has a veto or blocking power are inept to provide facilitation for mediation or peace talks. The EU will need to be more affirmative and resilient facing Russia, but this demands troublesome and long-term efforts that are beyond the present-day capabilities of the EU. It is clear that despite its ambitious Strategic Compass and Strategic autonomy concept, the EU cannot deal alone with security threats posed by Russia, especially at times of war when Russia plays as a game changer and a challenger of the status quo.

5. Context of the European security architecture

The stability and continuity of the European security order will depend on the ability of the EU as a whole to consolidate its security environment. Major EU member states like France, Germany and Poland, but also external factors like the UK and the US (through NATO) will have impact on prospective security arrangements. The US will most likely continue to play the role of a guardian for Europe as a part of its policy for security nearshoring.

It could be expected that Russia, unless adverse political changes in Kremlin occur, will stay in isolation for long, and the other European states will likely follow a policy of containment with regard to Russia. Rapprochement could be possible in long-term, only if relations with alternative non-state actors both within and outside Russia are nurtured and developed. It will be crucially important for European security to motivate Russian expats for political change at home. Drivers for the relations with Russia will depend on whether Russians themselves will find their own way to determine the political future of their country.

6. What future role of the EU and NATO and the Transatlantic link for the European security architecture

Any further security arrangements in Europe would require close collaboration between the EU and NATO, because the Union has been desperately late in designing and implementing its own security capabilities. What is scheduled for 2030 should have been completed by 2020, and that would have prevented Russia's invasion in Ukraine. **Putting aside the diplomatic curtsey, the EU cannot deliver security without and outside integrated NATO capabilities.** The swift change of security policy orientation of Finland and Sweden in favour of NATO membership, ending decades old public and political cleavages in both countries, are probably the clearest proof that any future security architecture of united Europe should rest upon negotiated and integrated arrangement between the EU and NATO. A new security arrangement between the EU and NATO would be probably also a way out of the stalemate with Türkiye, which is a critical security actor on its own merits, within NATO as well, but still outside the EU.

Concluding remarks

The European security architecture will be in flux for the whole period of the war in Ukraine. As it is foreseen as a prolonged conflict, the security arrangements will be an open process, the dynamics of which may reach certain ad hoc temporary solutions, but on the whole, **it will take decades to build a new comprehensive security architecture in Europe, including Russia.** Meanwhile, the EU will have to focus on its own security consolidating its relations with NATO, which is the only viable security providing international organization.

About the author

Plamen Ralchev, PhD, Associate Professor, Department of International Relations, University of National and World Economy; Non-resident Fellow, Sofia Security Forum.

His research interests focus on foreign policy, European politics and security, identity politics, international communications, public diplomacy and information operations. He employs constructivist and post-positivist theories and approaches, researching the irrational character of international relations and international communications, and the influence of subjective social and psychological factors.



**FRIEDRICH NAUMANN
STIFTUNG** Für die Freiheit.

Annex: Country Paper

CROATIA

**Redesigning the future of south east
European security – Croatian perspective
within the European political landscape**

Monika Begovic

Introduction

Countries in Central, Eastern and South East Europe have common historical experiences, especially with external influence, that is also visible today. Therefore, for these countries security is a particularly salient issue, even after the fall of the Soviet Union, since Russia still influences the security and stability perspectives, with a heightened perception of threat coming from this direction. This is the reason these countries need a strong assurance of NATO and the European Union in providing security guarantees, while making the prospect of further NATO and EU integration in the defence and security sectors stronger. Within the post-2022 international relations context, question on whether a complete revision of the existing European security system is needed, can be viewed from different angles.

New challenges and threats to the European security system – review and recommendations

The importance of NATO in Europe is constantly being targeted by various stakeholders, who try to minimize NATO's role, sow divisions and undermine democracies. It is proved again, due to the war on the European continent, that military power still plays a central role in pre-crisis or crisis scenarios, and deterring adversaries, especially in Europe. Some great powers, using the existing crisis created with the Russian aggression against Ukraine, while considering that historical and geographical reality still have a deep influence on international relations, are trying to win a larger part of the influence. In a way, the Ukraine crisis showed that the European Union has a problem with power, especially hard-power, it showed the division among some European states, especially in the domain of security. The European security system is questioned, even if the EU itself does not take part in this aggressive war. It showed that Russia doesn't accept anymore the rules of the democratic system and institutions underpinning the European security order, and it returned to a competition with the West, being a strategic rival again. The biggest new challenge for the EU and NATO is the fact that the strategic competition has returned to Europe with Russia as a strategic rival.

Common values that both the EU and NATO share, became more relevant than during the Cold War. Values, norms and shared interests create the community that exists among Western states, they give the shape of the European security architecture, with NATO in the centre as an institutional expression of "the West". Despite the positive developments in the relations with Russia, it has to be admitted that it was always difficult to fit Russia into a system of European security. This development had a geopolitical consequence, as it created a sort of a fear of renewed Russian power, especially to countries of Central, Eastern and South East Europe, thus creating at the same time the prospect of European integration more attractive. Russia saw itself challenged to appear as a great power and that caused reactions, so one of the most significant challenges to the European security order will be responding to Russian efforts to

weaken the pillars of security of the West. New **architecture of the great powers competition** has been created, and responding **to global developments, Ursula Von Der Leyen in her speech in 2019 stated: „This is the geopolitical Commission that I have in mind, and that Europe urgently needs”,¹¹ referring to the the fact that geopolitics is back on the political agenda.**

Continued importance of geopolitics was always present, but it is even more with Russia's renewed invasion of Ukraine in 2022, that has overturned the geopolitics of Europe. What the world witnesses today is a creation of a divided Europe again, since states are choosing sides, and the buffer zone on both South and East is being lost, but a line is being formed. The geopolitical ambition will require power, and the EU has NATO to continue to be a security guarantor, while from the inside the EU will need to use every chance to wield more significant geopolitical influence. The European security architecture is being redesigned, stressing more than ever common principles, values, norms and institutional mechanisms that give fresh focus and this system remains preferable among European countries.

Reform of the European security architecture – Croatia's perspective and interests in the Western Balkan

Larger borders of the European Union, especially the membership of the Western Balkan countries, is in Croatia's security and political interest. Stability in its neighbourhood, as one of Croatia's strategic interest, is seen through the European path and stronger resilience of the Western Balkans as a region, which can become stronger only through an effective regional cooperation. In this regard, and due to its geostrategic position, Croatia acts as a stability factor for the Western Balkans, but also for the whole South East Europe. Regional cooperation shows its importance in overall stability, economic progress, and development of the region and Europe, as it is speeding up the European integration of the Western Balkan countries, it leads towards continuation of reforms in this region, and the confirmation of its belonging to the Euro-Atlantic family. Croatia's stand is that a clear European perspective is the only road towards the stability of the Western Balkans.

The EU integration of the Western Balkans needs to be a win-win situation for all. While discussing the directions of the possible reform of the European security architecture, it is important that the war, that has returned to the territory of Europe, does not distract the EU from the Western Balkans, but that, exactly because of the war, the focus of the EU and NATO is more on the Western Balkans. Geopolitically, this region is a crucial element of Europe's security, stability and democratic resilience, especially for the EU member states that surround this region. This is the answer not only to the question why EU membership would be good for the Western Balkans but also to why it would be good for the EU and its member states.

¹¹ Speech by President-elect von der Leyen in the European Parliament Plenary on the occasion of the presentation of her College of Commissioners and their programme, 27 November 2019, Strasbourg, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/speech_19_6408

As Croatia sees it, it is important for the European security architecture that the EU revitalises the enlargement process towards the Western Balkan region, because:

1. It can resolve instabilities caused by Russia's role in the region;
2. It can be used to adapt the EU for, eventually, new Eastern members (Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova), while the process itself also averts possible anti-EU counter-narratives. A credible enlargement perspective promotes greater stability, while requiring continuous enhanced cooperation and sustained efforts in internal reforms;
3. It is important for the process of planning for energy sovereignty, that requires regional stability and reliable partnerships, based on common rules and values between the EU and its neighbouring like-minded countries.

It is in Croatia's interest that the EU and NATO play a global pivotal role in securing the countries that surround the EU, while creating an integrated and coherent geopolitical stand. As a former Western Balkan country, now a full NATO and EU member state, Croatia has the potential to take a leadership role in making the Central and South-Eastern European countries more homogeneous, while playing an active role in transcending regional animosities. So far, Croatia has not fully realized its potential among its Western Balkan neighbours, as there is still a big space in further maximizing its role in the wider region, with a specialized role within the larger context of geopolitical configuration. As a democratic and economically developed country, with interests that do not differ from those of Western democracies, Croatia may well represent a decisive factor in the continuing efforts to the future development of neighbouring countries and other regions to stabilize South East Europe. It is a fact that common problems, challenges and threats to the European security architecture can be tackled when modern democratic countries are united and homogenous with a strong unified European voice.

Reform of the European security architecture - Policy recommendations

Geopolitical ambition of the EU requires cooperation and coordination, that will rebuild trust across Europe that lies on common principles and values. What matters are internal and external policies overall consistency regarding European defence so that the European Union can be a powerful driver behind common geopolitical stances. South East Europe and the Western Balkan, as a region of political instabilities, have a geopolitical importance for Europe's stability, therefore the European Union and the United States, especially through their role in NATO, as geopolitical players, should continue with exerting influence in this region, not to allow setting back reform processes which could jeopardize stability in this region, but possibly wider, due to its geopolitical relevance.

¹²A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence, European Union External Action (EEAS), https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/strategic_compass_en3_web.pdf

The return of war in Europe has already caused major geopolitical shifts, with European security order being discussed, thus a thorough assessment of international affairs and a guide of the development of the EU security and defence agenda *Strategic Compass*¹² was released with the words of Josep Borrell „*We now need to ensure that we turn the EU's geopolitical awakening into a more permanent strategic posture.*“ For that, a stronger transatlantic link is needed, with a reform of the European security architecture, and the European Union a valuable partner to NATO. Taking these in consideration, several points are to be focused on when discussing the European security architecture reform process:

1. Strengthening cooperation among organizations that contribute to the European security

With new security challenges, it is important to additionally strengthen cooperation among the EU, NATO, the United Nations, the Council of Europe, and the OSCE, with emphasis on common principal values. As an instrument of international law, the UN Charter, among other things, defines the legal responsibilities of states in their conduct with each other. As accordingly, defending the sovereignty of Ukraine is actually defending the international order. This approach leads to more effective and coherent responses to different security challenges and threats, it shows the strength of democracy, and consequently it creates a better starting position for possible future negotiations with Russia.

2. Strengthening cooperation among European Union member states

Common foreign and security policy is, among others, defined by the Treaty on European Union, especially Article 21 which guides EU's external action to pursue common policies in order to “*preserve peace, prevent conflicts and strengthen international security*”. With this goal a *foreign policy instrument – the European Peace Facility* - was established to *enhance the EU's ability to act as a global security provider, as it has the possibility to provide military equipment to increase its partners' security and defence capacity, thus making the European Union a proven valuable partner to NATO.*

3. Strengthening the transatlantic link

In a challenging multilateral world, NATO and the transatlantic link is an important factor for the European security architecture. Common rules-based international order is important for tackling multiple crises, especially while facing with different challenges, among which is the aggressive behaviour of Russia. War has returned to Europe and it rages on European Union borders, while the answer is in the EU and NATO acting together, constantly strengthening unity which derives from the commitment to protect peace and security.

4. Reaffirmation of common values

The common values of the transatlantic community unite the states, and they form a basis for enhanced cooperation between the EU and NATO. It is

therefore paramount to maintain unity, to reaffirm the importance of common fundamental values and principles in times when the modern world is faced with global threats to rules-based multilateralism, human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Common values are the basis of enlargement policies.

The European security architecture reform process should be designed to strengthen the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy that were left behind since no EU member state wanted to give its sovereignty, expecting that these issues were exclusively within the framework of NATO. Strengthening good governance, democratic norms, the rule of law and respect for human rights, in line with internationally agreed norms, is a reminder on the reasons the European Union was founded at all.

Conclusion

When discussing possible future outcomes, it seems that once foreseen *'the end of history'*¹³ is becoming the *new beginning of history*. What can be concluded is that, for better effectiveness, the Euroatlantic community should keep a unity of purpose, remaining committed to the principle that the door to NATO and the EU stays open. Future European security order, once the Ukraine war ends, despite the uncertainty and a perspective that makes the negotiations still to remain elusive, needs to envisage regional and global shifts and strategic realities. Current absence of agreement on the common values and principles in a multipolar world shows the need to build new European security architecture, with the strong transatlantic link and the US as a primary European security guarantor. The European Union, with existing normative and institutional structures, lacks a needed dynamics to import changes in enhancing common European, but also national foreign, security and defence policies. It simply has no ready alternatives but to rely on its partner - NATO Alliance, that is the best connection with transatlantic partners, while defending common Euro-Atlantic values underpinning the current and future security order.

European stability is intertwined with the strong position of NATO in Europe. Ukrainian security today represents defending peace, and it is not just security for Ukraine, but a basis for European stability too.

About the author

Monika Begovic has a PhD in political science, humanistic studies, with 25+ years of professional career, profiled as a researcher and an expert in international relations and international security. Voluntarily, she leads the NGO and is President of the Atlantic Council of Croatia and Secretary General of the Atlantic Treaty Association, working on the promotion of Euroatlantic values.

¹³ Reference is made to: Fukuyama Francis, 'The End of History and the Last Man', when stating in 1992, after the end of the Cold War, that the world has come to the point showing that liberal democracy is the final form of government for all nations.



**FRIEDRICH NAUMANN
STIFTUNG** Für die Freiheit.

Annex: Country Paper

CZECH REPUBLIC

**The evolution of the European security
architecture in the wake of Russian war
against Ukraine – a viewpoint from Czechia**

Pavel Havlicek

Introduction

As a convinced multilateralist, Czechia has been struggling to find a new balance of power on the European continent in the wake of new phase of the Russian war against Ukraine, which has been grossly undermining its own security and national interests as well as the multilateral European and world order, which is seemingly failing to respond to the Russian aggression. Striving for change, the country has invested almost everything to stop the Russian war and poured resources into its alliances, building coalition as well as consensus to overcome the profound moment of crisis for the European security architecture and the world order.

Policy Review

1. Tactical assessment of the current European security architecture

From the point of view of Czechia, a country whose security has been traditionally based on multilateralism and cooperation with allies and partners, the current state of European security architecture has been a failure since it has not managed to stop the biggest military conflict on European soil since 1945. The new phase of the Russian war against Ukraine starting on 24 February 2022 came as a true shock and awakening that the existing tools and mechanisms preventing a military conflict in Europe have again failed to achieve their original goals and declared principles.

For Czechia, which has already had a bad track record in relations with Russia from the past years, the start of the new wave of the Russian aggression meant not only the last nail to the coffin of bilateral ties, but also a profound mental shift that brought the county into the ranks of Eastern flank nations within NATO and the EU, even if geographically being surrounded by friends and allies. This has been reflected by an increased role in the defence and security area, stepped up military spending or committing to new responsibility of leading one of the NATO Enhanced Forward Presence missions in Slovakia, for the first time ever. Czechia has also been among the most vigilant supporters of Ukraine, including in the military and security realm, significantly pushing over its size, especially early into the war operations.

Institutions, including the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Council of Europe (CoE) or even the United Nations (UN) have in the Czech opinion proved too weak, unable and/or unwilling to deal with the challenge and serve as a response mechanism or platforms for negotiations for peace settlement. In some of them, particularly the OSCE or the UN Security Council, the Russian membership in their decision-making positions and power further contributed to their paralysis and lack of action to stop the gross violation of international law, norms and principles.

In response to that, Czechia invested in consensus and coalition-building within the EU and NATO, which have on both strategic and tactical level largely replaced the inefficient multilateral organisations in keeping security and order in the region of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and preventing further spread of violence outside of Ukrainian territory. This has been the case not only within the institutions themselves, including during the Czech EU Presidency during the second half of 2022, but also in cooperation with members of both of the alliances, especially on the regional basis.

Since February 2022, Czechia has prioritised the Bucharest Nine as a security-driven initiative bringing together the CEE members of EU and NATO. It has also invested in fostering closer ties with its closest neighbours in the Slavkov format (also together with Austria) or bilateral ties with Poland and Germany. For the first time ever, Czechia started playing a more important role in the Three Seas Initiatives that now has Ukraine as a special partner. These organisations have been seen as complementary to the EU and NATO dimension, especially in practical implementation of the defence and security goals of both blocks. Concurrently, it has cooled its official contacts with Hungary, which has been an outlier among the CEE countries due to their position on Russia and its aggression against Ukraine and the West.

At the same time, Czechia has continued fulfilling the potential of the multilateral architecture to exercise pressure on Russia and making use of even the limited possibilities to hold it accountable for its crimes and aggression. Therefore, it has supported the fundamental basis of the European security architecture even if realising its current limitations and tactically switching into crisis mode and conflict management by other means, especially based on its membership in the EU and NATO.

2. Normative evaluation of the European security architecture

Speaking about the normative side of the European security architecture, the multilateralist approach of Czechia is certainly more relevant than the tactical one today. Stemming from the historical tradition going back to the interwar period, during which the then Czechoslovak leadership intensively invested in the League of Nations, predecessor organisation to the current UN system, the Czech normative approach has been clearly shaped by successes and failures of the past 100 years of the European and global development in the area of international law and security architecture, particularly the one built as a result of the Second World War.

Benefitting from the Helsinki process and its continuation in the 1990s, the Czech independent state has been a keen promoter of multilateralism as a principle of achieving stability, security and prosperity in the world and as a means of conflict prevention by dialogue and peaceful coexistence among nations, or eventually conflict resolution by non-violent means based on international law, norms and principles. This has been particularly evident in the area of human rights, a traditional domain of the contemporary Czech foreign policy stemming from the post-communist heritage and identity after 1989.

On the one hand, multilateralism helped Czechia become a modern economy and state with governance based on liberal democracy and facilitated its transformation, which led to the *return to Europe* in 1999 and 2004 when the country joined NATO and the EU. But on the other, the current multilateral international system and security architecture in Europe did not prevent Russia's aggression against Georgia in 2008, Ukraine in 2014 as well as the most recent full-scale invasion into Ukraine's territory and has been assessed critically by the country's leadership as well as society that have sided with Ukraine.

Therefore, from the Czech point of view, which has been traditionally in favour of reforming the UN system and post-1989 architecture, including in the OSCE based on the principle of unanimity, the opportunity could not be more obvious to rebuild the roots of the security architecture in Europe and beyond in a comprehensive way. One of the concrete examples has been the UN Security Council and the seat for the post-2WW "great powers", including today's Russia, a nuclear superpower but also a country aggressor violating the most profound international rules and principles. Similarly, most of the country's leadership welcomed Putin's Russia departure from the Council of Europe, with which today's Russian Federation had little in common already before 24 February 2022.

Only by reconnecting to fundamental principles of the multilateral security architecture and enforcing justice and accountability in Europe for Putin's Russia, it is possible to restore trust and confidence in the old system, which has been shaken by the horrific images of cruelty committed by Russian soldiers in Bucha, Irpin and other towns and cities all around the country, which by many has been call a genocide on Ukraine's people.

3. Cooperation vs. containment

For Czechia, the principle of cooperation, peaceful coexistence as well as dialogue and striving for common goals has always been at the forefront of its approach to international affairs and cooperation and communication with partners in Europe.

At the same time, the events following 2014 and even more 24 February 2022, to some degree altered this deep conviction and motivated Czechia to confront aggression and injustice at all fronts and platforms leading to containment and crisis management, including prevention of further spilling over of war outside of Ukraine.

Thus, during these times of profound crisis, it is containment and risk mitigation that drives the Czech standing in the EU and NATO, particularly when it comes to Russia and dealing with the consequences of the war, which hit the country and its society significantly and led to a rather sharp decrease of standard of living of its citizens.

The Czech position is built on the attitude that it is essential to preserve and further expand the space of stability, security and prosperity, which the country enjoys as part of the EU and NATO. That is why, Czechia's long-term position has been that it is essential to offer the same opportunity to the countries of the Western Balkans and the Eastern Partnership, including most notably Ukraine, Moldova and also Georgia, even if based on merits and successful process of international transformation and adaptation of the EU's *acquis*.

Policy Recommendations

In order to rebuild and restore what has been left of the current European security architecture, the Russia question needs to be figured out by agreeing on a common strategy of isolation of Russia and Belarus and building sufficient deterrence against their common aggression against Ukraine and the West. Ukraine's victory in the war for full restoration of its borders and territories, in which Czechia firmly believes and supports it, should be the first step on this path. Change in the Russian leadership and holding the current one accountable should follow just after. Only then, conditions could be met in theory for the process of rebuilding the system and trust towards both of the aggressors in order to start playing a role again and remove the omnipresent feeling of insecurity that is currently present in Central and Eastern Europe.

Before that happens, Czechia is going to rely on NATO and the EU for its security and stability and prosperity and it is going to invest more in sustaining them and making them as robust and unified as possible. This is also why the Czech leadership puts so much energy into the Transatlantic relations, which it perceives as strategic and guaranteeing its security, especially via NATO of which the United States have been the one key player and investor. The potential re-election of Donald Trump as the future US president is a wild card in this regard, on which the Czech leadership is not quite ready to respond just yet.

Regarding the platforms for future discussion on the security architecture in Europe, it is clear that the OSCE used to play the role of the main platform and venue for dialogue even among non-like-minded countries and thus could come back to performing this function when conditions allow. However, it is obviously a question that goes beyond the change of the current leadership in Russia. The OSCE has some of the tools and instruments at hand to bring all relevant parties together, but little of the law enforcement power or resources to deliver, which has been evident over the past more than 19 months. The principle of unanimity has also brought the organisation into a fundamental crisis, in which neither the leading positions and budget, nor the rotating presidency is confirmed for 2024, which only speaks in favour of the profound need for reform. Apart from the OSCE, the Council of Europe could offer the space for the normative and more value-driven discussions and provide another venue for potential restoration of the fundamental principles and norms for the future order in Europe.

Concluding remarks: While there are still several key dilemmas and questions, including the future development of relations between the USA and China, final result of the Russo-Ukrainian war or the future development inside of Russia, which remain unanswered but with an enormous potential impact on the future of the European security architecture, it is obvious that the struggle for establishing any new security architecture is going to last for some time and would not be easy. The role of multilateralism and restoring the trust towards international institutions and conflict resolution by law and peaceful means will represent a litmus test for the robustness of the system that is going to be challenged again at some point, either from inside of Europe, or maybe this time from outside. Thus, only by reforming the inefficient institutions that were supposed to uphold the principles of international law and rules-based-order, it is possible to improve it in the future and prevent future crises.

About the author

Pavel Havlicek is a Research Fellow at the Association for International Affairs (AMO). His research focus is on Eastern Europe, especially Ukraine and Russia, and the Eastern Partnership. He also deals with questions of security, disinformation and strategic communication as well as democratisation and civil society support in the CEE and post-Soviet space.



**FRIEDRICH NAUMANN
STIFTUNG** Für die Freiheit.

Annex: Country Paper

HUNGARY

**Failed return to the Status quo ante:
the view of Russia's aggression from
Budapest and how Hungarian hopes for
a cooperative European security
architecture have been undermined**

Tamás Csiki Varga

1. Tactical assessment of the current European security architecture

Prior to 24 February 2022, the chances of the escalation of the Russia–Ukraine low intensity conflict into a major large-scale high-intensity war were misjudged and underestimated in most European capitals, including Budapest, despite consistent American whistleblowing since November 2021. There were several possible reasons for this, that have their roots in the traits and functioning of the – then already disintegrating – post-Cold War European security architecture.

First, Russia's willingness to disrupt political relations with the Western countries and uproot economic ties, and extensively use its armed forces instead, to carry out renewed aggression against Ukraine had been underestimated (as well as Belarus' passive involvement was unaccounted for). This was so despite the lessons of the 2008 Russo–Georgian war and the first armed aggression of Russia against Ukraine in 2014, or the sustained conflict thereafter, because decades of cooperative political culture and economic interests pushed European leaders to remain skeptical about how realistic the option of returning military confrontation to Europe would be. As the 'double track approach' adopted by the EU and NATO after 2014, as well as leading individual countries, like Germany, has shown, European leaders seemed to be ready to implicitly negotiate moderate (even formally unacknowledged territorial) concessions to Russia as long as business was running smoothly. This appeasement policy based on a strong belief in the sustainment of the post-Cold War European order reinforced Russian expectations that Europe is politically weak and fragmented.

Second, economic cooperation relying on relatively cheaper Russian energy for developing European industrial production with a competitive advantage – building on the success of German 'Ostpolitik' – developed into the central tenet of European–Russian relations. Central and Eastern European infrastructural dependencies served as a supporting pillar for maintaining this arrangement. However, from a means of stabilization and prosperity, energy interdependence has become a vulnerability over the years, what Russia was trying to actively abuse since the first gas disputes in 2006. Again, these moderate warnings did not change the course of dealing with Russia, because short-term economic growth was valued more important to national governments than long-term security. The transformation of energy supplies to Europe, particularly of natural gas, what served the interest of remedying a strategic vulnerability to Russia, proved to be a costly step, as we have witnessed in 2022-2023 – but not impossible.

Third, during the past two decades, important pillars of European security have also ceased to function efficiently, or even exist: confidence and security building measures (such as transparency regarding the conduct of major military exercises), multilateral and bilateral U.S.–Russian agreements (CFE, INF), and the respect for security guarantees provided by the great powers in international agreements (all four agreements standing up to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine). In a world moving towards multi-polarity, neither party seemed to be interested or capable to remedy the demise of these 'soft' elements.

Fourth, as defence and (both conventional and nuclear) deterrence has to a large extent been based on U.S. military presence in Europe, mostly within NATO's framework, Russia yet again addressed its security concerns vis-à-vis Western interest in a Russia–U.S. and Russia–NATO format, as highlighted by the two diplomatic offers / ultimatums issued in late 2021, sidelining European countries or the EU, downplaying European interests. Such negotiating tactics from Moscow attempted to make (Central) European countries only objects, not subjects of negotiations.

The imminent effect of the escalation of the Russia-Ukraine war was a strong motive – especially among Central European countries – to define, determine and ensure their security and defence not together with Russia, through shared institutions, as well as political and economic engagement, but against Russia, calling for the recalibration of the European defence architecture with definite and strong defensive capabilities in the Russian neighbourhood. This endeavour now extends to Sweden and Finland through NATO accession, and to Ukraine and Moldova through enhanced partnership as well, which is exactly the opposite strategic outcome than the initial Russian demands had been.

The Hungarian government's views and actions in this regard had mostly been diverging from the mainstream European stance providing Ukraine the (political, economic, and military) means necessary to fight its war of self-defence against Russian armed forces. As a result, the failed assumption of a short war (in its 2nd year already, likely to continue in 2024), as well as the consequences of the war (relatively strong, united European answers including the break-away from Russian energy dependence, as well as unprecedented military support to Ukraine), mixed with wishful thinking (conservative turns in European capitals in 2023-2024, hoped to align more countries with the Hungarian stance), Budapest has been moving on a path of isolation at a time when regional political and military cooperation has been 'the norm'. Still, despite controversial political messages and mixed moves, the most important red-line agreements within EU and NATO had not been effectively blocked by Hungary, showing a moderate level of compliance with shared interests in defence.

2. Normative evaluation of the European security architecture

The Russian political elite – as we currently know it: ruling an autocratic state, disregarding international conventions and humanitarian law, relying on hybrid means of warfare and military aggression – does not share the view of a rules-based world order. On the contrary: Russia is an open challenger of the post-Cold War order, pursuing a sphere of interest in post-Soviet space, which it deems should be subjugated to its strategic interests. As President Putin perceives Ukraine's, Moldova's (or Western Balkans countries') will to join European and Euro-Atlantic integration institutions as contradicting his claims for a renewed post-Soviet sphere of interest, claims for the reconciliation of the two would lack solid foundations.

Still, the Hungarian government seemed to hope for a return to the 'status quo ante' (as of 24 February 2022), as expressed in not only maintaining but also intensify-

ing Russian energy dependence, the frequent diplomatic meetings with FM Lavrov, and some symbolic diplomatic gestures, like removing Patriarch Kirill from the EU sanctions list. As PM Viktor Orbán and political director Balázs Orbán have repeatedly expressed, and as it is also enshrined in the 2020 National Security Strategy, their government follows a 'pragmatic, realistic' foreign and economic policy (void of ideology and the limiting effects of shared values) and runs these relations accordingly.

3. Cooperation vs. Containment – is this a new normal in the relations between the countries on the continent?

Keeping in mind the open, repeated aggression of Russia against Ukraine and its less open use of any (hybrid) means in its toolbox trying to undermine European security and weaken Transatlantic cooperation, most European countries are voicing the need to contain (or even deter) Russia in the foreseeable future either based on universal values (systemic threat) or based on their direct threat perception (national threat). In this regard a new 'military iron curtain' seems to descend across the Eastern flank of NATO, including Sweden and Finland, even willing to give up their neutral/militarily non-aligned status in the aftermath of the Russia-Ukraine war.

Hungary, in this regard voices moderate dissent, particularly because its strained bilateral relations with Ukraine because of minority right concerns that are not likely to ease under the Fidesz government, and during Ukraine fighting the current war. While subscribing to NATO decisions to strengthen forward presence in Central Europe and not blocking the allied support to Ukraine effectively, bilateral military support has clearly been refused and concerns regarding EU military support (particularly arms) are voiced loudly. There are concerns whether the Orbán government would rather welcome a strong or a weakened Ukraine (and Russia) once the war ends, but it has been declared that 'some entity' between Central European countries, like Hungary, and Russia should prevail – which would serve as a buffer against future Russian expansionism. Still, a strong, well-armed Ukraine is not a Hungarian interest keeping in mind the strained bilateral relations, what might easily become a fault line in regional security.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

4. Structure of the European security architecture. What future role of the EU and NATO and the Transatlantic link for the European security architecture.

In terms of deterrence and defence, it is still NATO (and will be in the short- to mid-term) that can provide the necessary political momentum and military means – assuming sustained strong US commitment – against Russian conventional and non-conventional threats through collective defence mechanisms. The EU, even though realizing some break-through in defence policy, like the use of EPF funds for providing direct military support to Ukraine and strengthen European armaments initiatives, will not become an efficient security provider, particularly vis-à-vis Russia.

Still, bearing in mind the shifting geostrategic focus of world politics from the Euro-Atlantic region to the Asia-Pacific, coupled with the (possible/likely) transformation of US commitment and capabilities in the mid-term, the strengthening of European defence capabilities and cooperation is a must.

For the coming years, this can be done through the modernization, (possible expansion) and increased integration of national armed forces within NATO's European pillar. The German-led Central European element of the framework nation concept might be a suitable frame for this, coupled with growing (division-level) Polish undertakings in the coming years.

As for the normative dimension of institutions, Russia's will to participate in such institutions remains questionable, and Moscow cannot be forced to conform itself with 'Western' values – or even universal norms as it seems –, therefore decoupling, confrontation and mutual distancing is expected. Re-establishing confidence and security building measures – for example in the OSCE framework, to which Russia is at least a party – as means of a possible re-orientation towards cooperative security would be an asset. But this largely depends on Russian undertakings as trust in Moscow's commitment to international norms, agreements and institutions remains questionable, to say the least. Keeping in mind the firm distancing from the Putin regime among Western countries, any high-level rapprochement is unlikely even in the OSCE format as long as Vladimir Putin, currently under ICC warrants, leads the Russian Federation.

Designing and developing a new, solid institutional arrangement for the wider European / Transatlantic security architecture is way beyond the current convergence of interests among these countries. For the narrower Central European region, initiatives such as the Three Seas Initiative or the Bucharest-9 format of consultations could gain momentum, thus also increasing regional coordination and co-operation in security and defence. But to make it effective, outliers, like Hungary need to show better alignment or would risk isolation.

5. Context of the European security architecture

A return to the status quo ante with Russia – what the Hungarian government seems to hope for – is unlikely without the meaningful transformation of Russian (or European) politics. On the contrary: containing Russia will be a key aspect of Central European / NATO Eastern flank countries for the 2020s, supported both by allied and self-interest of the U.S., counterbalancing a de facto challenger of the rules-based world and regional order. Strengthening defence, deterrence, and resilience will be the focus of regional efforts, with Poland and Romania, with the support of Baltic (and Nordic) countries playing leading roles. A central tenet of strengthening Central and Eastern European defence will be preserving the sovereignty and independence of Ukraine – even in a territorially truncated format – and supporting its self-defence, as Kyiv is widely seen as the first line of defence against Russian military endeavours. These measures would enjoy (at least limited) support from Türkiye.

Hungarian foreign policy took a (narrative) position since 2022 that opposes the strengthening of 'blocks', and would pursue 'connectivity' instead, because this could create opportunities for a desired 'bridge role' between East and West, and more room for maneuver among allies and challengers. The U.S.' commitment to European security, thus the effective functioning of NATO will be a determining aspect of these frameworks, because as long as Washington is able to strongly influence European security and defence, the return to normalized relations with Russia may not be a viable option. This also rids Hungary of its primary Central European allies, most importantly Poland over their opposing views of threats and challenges posed by Russia. Despite the negative repercussions from the Western allies, the Fidesz government plays on being able to avoid the complete isolation of Russia and the preservation of ties at least in the energy policy, what would be fundamental to realize the energy-intensive industry development policies of Hungary.

Beyond the United States, China (or other great powers) will not play direct roles in European defence. Indirect effects might materialize if / as much as Washington would be able to form a block against rising China and other challengers, including European allies, or if the U.S. would be absorbed in a military conflict in East Asia, limiting its ability to sustain security guarantees to the European allies. Avoiding simultaneous 'opportunistic aggression' from China and Russia is the key strategic goal of the U.S., to which the European countries might also subscribe – and for which case the best preparation would be to strengthen and expand European defence capabilities.

About the author

Tamás Csiki Varga, PhD is a senior research fellow at the Institute for Strategic and Defence Studies at the University of Public Service in Budapest (Hungary). He has been conducting security and defence policy analysis for ISDS, the background think tank of the Hungarian Ministry of Defence, since 2009. His research is focused on European security and defence, including Central European defence cooperation, as well as Hungarian security and defence policy.



**FRIEDRICH NAUMANN
STIFTUNG** Für die Freiheit.

Annex: Country Paper

LATVIA

Ukraine in, Russia out – Europe's future security

Imants Lieģis

The celebration of NATO's 75th Anniversary next year will also be a celebration of the success of an enduring European security architecture. NATO should remain as the foundation for Europe's security, with Ukraine as a member. When shaping Europe's future security, Russia deserves to be excluded until it can convince that it has abandoned its imperialistic tendencies.

How we got here

To understand the current state of security in Europe, a short historical perspective is of help.

In 1949, when NATO was established as a tool for upholding peace in Europe with the presence and help of the United States, Latvia was under the illegal occupation of the Soviet Union. Europe was a continent divided between East and West and would remain so until the peoples' peaceful uprisings erupted in the late 1980s and early 1990's, seeking the return of freedom.

In parallel with the defensive alliance, the free part of Europe was also able to use trade and the production of coal and steel as a tool for upholding the post 1945 peace. The emergence of the European Community, now the European Union (EU) meant that the historical rivals, France and Germany, were tied into a cooperation mechanism which ensured that military conflict between the two of them would be unthinkable.

Both NATO and the EU evolved with countries that were essentially committed to the principles of universal values such as democracy, human rights and the rule of law. As a way of trying to engage with the Soviet Union in respect of these values, as well as economic and trade issues and arms reduction, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE, now known as the OSCE – Organisation on Security and Cooperation in Europe) was established in 1975. The countries involved in establishing the CSCE were the USA, Canada, the Soviet Union and European countries, including those not incorporated into the Soviet Union, such as Poland, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, but not Albania.

In the period after the collapse of the Soviet Empire during the 1990s, Russia's involvement with European security was essentially through the OSCE. Dialogue with Russia on security issues were also conducted through NATO and the EU. A NATO-Russia Founding Act on mutual relations, cooperation and security was signed in 1997. This was later followed in 2002 by the establishment of the NATO-Russia Council "as a mechanism for consultation, consensus-building, cooperation, joint decision making and joint action"¹⁴ In parallel, the EU signed with Russia the EU-Russia Partnership and Cooperation Agreement in 1997 with a view to giving a framework for covering political, economic and cultural relations between the two sides. Respect for democratic principles and human rights were slated as constituting an essential element of the partnership¹⁵.

¹⁴ NATO - Topic: NATO-Russia Council (NRC)

¹⁵ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/eu-russia-partnership-and-cooperation-agreement.html>

These initial arrangements for dealing with Russia were agreed upon before Latvia and a number of other countries became members of NATO and the EU. The major enlargements of both organisations embracing Eastern European countries took place in 2004, even though Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic joined NATO in 1999.

Russia's rejection

The endeavours to engage with Russia through the security architecture that evolved after 1991, and as outlined above, were unsuccessful in stopping President Putin from returning to Russian aggressive imperialism. This Russian aggression was based on Putin's assertion that the collapse of the Soviet Union was "the greatest geopolitical catastrophe" of the 20th century - a humiliation that needed correction. Ukraine was fundamental to this process. Even before Putin emerged as President, Zbigniew Brzezinski noted that "if Moscow regains control over Ukraine [...] Russia [...] regains the wherewithal to become a powerful imperial state"¹⁶.

In contrast to most countries that regained their freedom in the early 1990s, Russia as a successor state of the Soviet Union never fully embraced the international rule-based order. Whatever security architecture had evolved by 2022, Russia held it in scorn and ultimately trampled over the rules and regulations that had emerged after 1945.

The security architecture for Europe was not in itself at fault. The issue was Russia's refusal to conform with its regulations. The lofty ideas proposed by Moscow such as Gorbachev's "Common European home"¹⁷ or Medvedev's "new European security architecture" which he defined in his Berlin speech in June 2008 as "a legally binding treaty on European security"¹⁸ were essentially attempts to create a new system on Moscow's terms. These terms, as we can witness today, also meant a total refusal by Russia and its Soviet predecessor to accept responsibility for crimes of the past. There is no acknowledgement of the mass deportations from the occupied Baltic States in 1941 and 1949, no atonement for Stalin's genocidal famine policy against Ukraine (known as the Holodomor) in the early 1930s. A genocidal policy being carried out again today using different pretexts by the Russian aggressor.

President Putin's leadership of Russia from 2000 led to a reversal of earlier trends towards democracy in Russia. His KGB led regime stifled democracy and moved the country towards authoritarianism. Putin surrounded himself with corrupt oligarchs, seemingly as a means of personal enrichment and retaining power. Indications of the brutality of Putin's regime included the jailing and even killing of outspoken dissenters in Russia and "traitors" on foreign territory; cyber-attacks; persistent disinformation campaigns; the interference in elections in third countries. Not to mention military interventions in neighbouring countries Georgia (2008) Ukraine (2014) and elsewhere (Syria, Africa). These were the "alarm bells" ringing out from Russia. But they fell on

¹⁶ Brzezinski Z. 1997 "The Grand Chessboard: American primacy and its geostrategic imperatives" p.46

¹⁷ https://www.cvce.eu/obj/address_given_by_mikhail_gorbachev_to_the_council_of_europe_6_july_1989-en-4c021687-98f9-4727-9e8b-836e0bc1f6fb.html

¹⁸ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/documents/dv/d_ru_20080617_04_/D_RU_20080617_04_en.pdf

many deaf ears in the West. Until, of course, they culminated in Russia's unprecedented and ongoing brutal full-scale war that begun on 24th February 2022.

The agenda of engaging with Russia was not meant as a tool for forcing Russia to change. Change in Russia itself was a matter for Russia's leadership and population. They chose to reject democratic values and the international rule-based order and revert to the historical imperialistic mode. The West cannot be blamed for Russia's choice, nor did they push Russia onto this aggressive path.

Current evaluation

Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine has become a defining moment for future peace and security in Europe and beyond. A new European security architecture began rapidly to take shape in ways that Putin could not have planned for.

Finland and Sweden are joining NATO, making the Baltic Sea essentially a "NATO lake". Ukraine (and Moldova) have been given official EU candidate status in 2022.

The security of Europe's energy supply has also moved from excessive dependence on Russia, to resilience and a move to dependency on more reliable and non-war-mongering partners.

America's military presence in Europe has, for the time being, been increased and assured.

NATO has successfully focused on the collective defence of its territory and on providing more money to pay for it. In particular, in his famous speech to the Bundestag a mere three days after Putin unleashed his full-scale war, Chancellor Scholz announced a *Zeitenwende* ("historic turning point/ watershed moment") with a big financial boost to Germany's defence, as well as other crucial policy changes previously unimaginable for a country hooked on Russian gas and a Russian-favourable *Ostpolitik*¹⁹. Scholz also asserted in his speech that Putin "is demolishing the European security order".

This contrasts with the approach that was embraced by the EU's other major player, France. Even in December 2022, almost a year into Russia's full-blown war, President Macron in an interview referred to the question of "how to give guarantees to Russia the day it returns to the negotiating table"²⁰. This approach of over-prioritising the need to address Russia's concerns about its place in a future European security architecture antagonised many of France's European partners in Central and Eastern Europe in particular.

¹⁹ <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-en/news/policy-statement-by-olaf-scholz-chancellor-of-the-federal-republic-of-germany-and-member-of-the-german-bundestag-27-february-2022-in-berlin-2008378>

²⁰ <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/macron-says-new-security-architecture-should-give-guarantees-russia-2022-12-03/>

But France's leading role in moulding Europe's security should not be underestimated. France is the only EU country with a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. It is the only EU nuclear power.

So the seeming recent changes in President Macron's approach should be welcomed. These changes appeared during his speech in Bratislava on 31st May 2023²¹. Macron acknowledged that Western Europe lost an opportunity when it hadn't previously listened to the concerns about Russia relayed by Eastern Europeans. He also agreed that Ukraine needed to be given a path towards NATO membership.

The Ukraine effect

Ukraine is fighting a war not only to defend its own territory. It is also fighting to defend Europe's freedom and democratic values. This helps to secure its place in a future European architecture. Ironically, Ukraine's suffering at the hands of Russia's attempts to wipe Ukraine off the map of Europe could result in Ukraine being firmly placed in the EU and NATO orbit.

The impotence of the OSCE (as well as the United Nations) in preventing a brutal, genocidal and imperialistic war returning to Europe has been exposed. This impotence was caused primarily by Russia's rejection of the rules and blocking of the effective functioning of the organisation. Meanwhile, NATO's hands were tied in preventing Russia's aggressive war as Ukraine was not a member.

Ukraine's place in Europe has highlighted the dividing lines in Europe's security, defined by NATO and the EU. Ukraine's movement towards Europe's democratic values system and Euro-Atlantic security was perceived as a threat to Putin's Russia. After all, if Ukrainians wanted to break away from the corrupt and KGB-led embrace of Russia, would not Russian people follow? This was the "threat" as perceived by Moscow.

Recommendations

The European security architecture has, since 1945, weathered the storms of the collapse of the USSR and wars in the Balkan region. NATO as a military alliance has never been attacked in Europe since it was founded. It has upheld peace and security for its European member states through the ongoing defence and deterrence against adversaries, primarily the Soviet Union during the Cold War, and now, Russia.

This is why NATO must remain as the linchpin for security in Europe, with territorial defence and deterrence as its core policy.

A strong US military presence of the United States (and Canada) in Europe, must remain.

²¹ <https://www.elysee.fr/front/pdf/elysee-module-21303-en.pdf>

European countries should focus on increasing military capabilities as a contribution to NATO. Although the concept of some type of strategic autonomy for Europe should be rejected, strengthening military capabilities and avoiding duplication in the production of military assets within Europe are ways to handle the risk of a potential lessening of America's military commitment to Europe.

Ongoing concerns about defence budgets must be addressed by all NATO partners to ensure that defence and deterrence can be carried out.

Ukraine's place in NATO is essential in shaping the future security of Europe. The push to ensure that Ukraine joins NATO should continue. In the short term this means aiming for an invitation to be issued at the Washington Summit next year. It goes without saying that in parallel, all military and other support should continue to flow to Ukraine to ensure a victory in defending their territory. Although decisions to invite new members into the Alliance require consensus, Ukraine's fight to defend Europe's values and develop an army with unprecedented war fighting experience should sway the political decision-making process without totally abandoning other preconditions. Kyiv's Western partners should not impose a premature peace on Ukraine against the will of the Ukrainians.

A Ukrainian victory with return to sovereignty of all occupied territory is the only way to stop Russia's imperialistic aggression in other parts of Europe. There can be no room for any country to blatantly breach the established rule-based order by militarily attacking a sovereign neighbouring country and attempting to single-handedly impact security in Europe.

It is not for Europe to guarantee the security of Russia in the future. Russia's imperialistic military aggression disqualifies Russia from having any say in Europe's security architecture in the short to medium term. However, early steps should be taken by Euro-Atlantic partners to develop a strategy for dealing with Russia after the end of their war against Ukraine. This strategy should include prosecuting for blatant war crimes committed since February 2022. Russia and its ruling oligarch elite should pay for the future reconstruction of Ukraine. The fact that Russia remains a significant nuclear power should not be ignored in developing a strategy.

Lessons for Europe's security from Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine should be applied, especially for the defence of NATO countries in Europe that adjoin Russian territory. These countries have bolstered defence budgets and intend soon to spend around 3% of GDP for defence – well above the political commitment of 2%. These moves will contribute to NATO's newly adopted regional defence plans being implemented to ensure the defence of every inch of NATO territory, but the speedy engagement of other NATO allies to implement the plans will also be crucial.

Concluding remarks

By bringing back a brutal and unnecessary genocidal war into Europe, Russia has disqualified itself from any role in shaping Europe's security architecture. Ukraine has earned the right to a place in that architecture by way of early membership in NATO and joining the EU. These Euro-Atlantic institutions, with a strong US engagement, will need to be the foundation stones for dealing with a post-war Russia and shaping Europe's future security architecture.

About the author

Imants Lieģis, Former Minister of Defence and Ambassador; Senior Research Fellow, Latvian Institute of International Affairs with research focus on a wide range of security, defence and foreign policy issues.



**FRIEDRICH NAUMANN
STIFTUNG** Für die Freiheit.

Annex: Country Paper

NORTH MACEDONIA

**The new European security architecture –
Russia the biggest challenge**

Prof. Nikola Dujovski

Introduction

Aware of the challenges and dangers brought by Russia's open war against Ukraine and the possible risks to the security of the European continent, every democratic state, especially NATO and EU, as well as candidate countries for EU membership, i.e. all governments that share the same or similar democratic values, have the right and duty to contribute to the construction of the new European security architecture (ESA), which should ensure and guarantee peace in Europe. ESA should ensure the development of good security policies for all EU member states, but also for candidate and aspirant countries, that respect and promote European standards and values and put an effort to meet those standards. This does not mean Russia, Belarus and other countries that are not ready to accept European security values. The lasting peace envisioned by Schumann, Jean Monnet, Adenauer is now under a strong challenge that calls into question the basic development of European societies and threatens the future and security of millions of people in Europe.

Such serious threats can only be answered through a clear, unambiguous, strong common response, a response that will build the new security architecture of Europe, bearing in mind that there is no complete and absolute security, but also that every individual and every institution are important for choosing the most appropriate answer.

1. Strengths and weakness of the European Security Architecture

Having in mind all other challenges for European security, such as violent extremism and terrorism, organized crime, illegal migrations, cybercrime, etc., for the purposes of this project we will focus only on the threat called Russia.

The Russian secret network, which was apparently reactivated by the Russian authorities after the fall of the Berlin Wall, has not yet been fully explored. It is generally known that Russia conducts its foreign policy through the so-called blackmail of energy products and that the price of the same is not the same for everyone, but is politically formed. Such a policy and the greed of certain political circles in Europe, resulted in the incredible spread of the Russian network and its hybrid warfare, especially in Germany, Austria, Italy, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, North Macedonia and other countries. It is not difficult to define the Russian or pro-Russian „players“ in these countries who have been spreading their network on the „energy“ issue for years in the banking sector, non-governmental organizations, political circles of influence and finally the media as a powerful weapon of propaganda. No one lifted a finger to stop the Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2014, and it is necessary to analyze why and how it happened. Were the Russian power planners convinced that NATO is falling apart and that the EU is about to collapse, and that Ukraine will surrender in 2022 at the mere appearance of Russian tanks?

If Putin is the head of the largest organized criminal syndicate in the world, who are his assistants and collaborators in the above-mentioned countries? In the case of the handover of Ukraine to Russia, did they also have the task of handing over their states

to their master from the Kremlin? Was it the Russian plan of the „New Z Europe“ and the division of Europe, because that is the only way Russia sees Europe, as divided, weak, and energy-dependent? Is Europe fully aware that saving Ukraine saves itself? Did we all understand well that Ukraine and brave Ukrainians are saving democracy and our way of life? Have some countries forgotten what it's like to be under the Russian occupation boot for tens of years? That Europe also clearly and strongly supports Ukraine and does Europe understand the scale of the Russian intelligence network throughout Europe as well as the hybrid actions it carries out?

Undoubtedly, the war in Ukraine has brought the European security architecture back into focus and raised the question of how ready it is to defend itself and preserve democratic values in European societies. Geopolitics and the geopolitical way of thinking became dominant in the EU, which accordingly put it in focus and expansion as one of the goals of the new security architecture in Europe.

From a security angle, we have at least three different processes:

1. First, on the ideological level. Clash between democracy and the liberal model of governance, versus the authoritarian model of governance.
2. Second, on a geopolitical level. The clash is at the core of the question of what kind of world we want to build: unipolar, bipolar, multipolar. Future global movements and the future international order will depend on it.
3. Third, the global economic order. Do we want the free, global, world economic market to succeed or do we want to promote several parallel economic initiatives and groupings.

The conflict on all three grounds is strong, with a clear use of all the power of the actors, which led to the most undesirable possible solution, to clear things up by war. That should concern us all. The world, and especially Europe, has entered a new era, in which the current economic, political and security architecture is shaken to its very foundation. We are facing the biggest security challenge in the past seven decades.

It is good that the EU has united around the solution of common crises, especially around health (COVID 19), financial, energy and the war in Ukraine. The EU must retain its strategic autonomy in all domains, including in relation to the Common Security and Defence Policy. The EU, as a supranational category with 450 million people, should gradually increase its overall power on a global scale. The strong EU and US response to Russia's war against Ukraine confirms this.

To truly achieve its strategic autonomy and preserve its credibility globally, the EU will have to commit to rapidly addressing three crucial security issues:

- Strengthening the collective security and defence of the EU member states through the NATO mission and/or through the realization of the idea of common European defence;

- Deciding how to support the ultimate strategic defence of the EU, whether through the nuclear potential of France or through the nuclear potential of the United States, or through the use of the capacities of both nuclear powers;
- Expansion and accelerated admission of the countries of the Western Balkans, but also other neighbouring countries (Moldova, Ukraine, etc.)

In creating the new European security architecture, we should be aware of the challenges that war brings, like on the battlefield, especially with the news we see regarding the so-called „war of drones“, the war that is openly being waged online through fake news, and the threats on various grounds, the political influences in the countries in the region, and in Europe etc.

1.1. Putinism²²

More than two decades of Vladimir Putin's rule in Russia is more than enough to define „Putinism“ as a model of governance with a strong corporate state with a cult of sovereignty. It is characterized by a moderate populism based on a strong social and patriotic rhetoric in which the notorious traditional values - family, order, spirituality - will guide people to be with the majority and will not allow them to be outside the established foundations. Some reputable world authors even in 2014 described Putin as the most dangerous statesman in the world at that moment, a man with dangerous intentions who is not a strategist, but an opportunist, a leader who accepts an outcome that suits only his game, a game in which he always wins, and the other side always loses.

The war in Ukraine is not only led by Putin, now the entire Russian nation is involved in it. Creating the new security architecture in Europe, we should be aware that even after Putin, the Russians with this kind of management (but also attitudes and behaviour) will continue to be the most serious threat to peace and stability in Europe. Research in the past few years (especially after the beginning of the aggression against Ukraine) shows that for the majority of the population in Russia, it is more important the state to be strong than to have guaranteed human rights, democracy, rule of law, etc.

2. The western Balkans in the changed security environment

The countries of the region without full integration into the EU will neither be prosperous enough nor safe enough, but will always be left to the possibility of foreign influence, primarily from Russia, China, and even Turkey, but also other regional organizations or economic entities that through their influence, directly or indirectly, fulfill the strategic objectives of the mentioned countries. Here, we mean banks and other firms that are under sanctions from the international community (International Investment Bank from Hungary), but also politicians, businessmen and other persons who, with their attitude, harm security in the region and in Europe. And on the other hand, the EU without the countries of the region does not represent a finished, complete peace and development project.

As a lack of quality reforms and a clear political vision in North Macedonia, and other countries in the region, but also as a result of the EU's indecisiveness and unprincipledness when it comes to enlargement, the process of radicalization of societies in the Western Balkans and the possibility of strong Russian influence that goes against EU and US interests, is felt more and more. Democratic processes are going backwards, human rights and freedoms are under open threat, media freedom is endangered, the free market economy has numerous restrictions and corrupting influences, the process of militarization of these societies is strengthening, and Euroscepticism and resistance to democratic and European values is growing. Why, after many years of support and invested funds and resources for reforms in these countries, instead of Europeanization, „Balkanization“ is growing? The answer is quite clear and politically easily predictable. Due to the lack of brave political decisions in the EU and real reforms in the candidate countries.

Within the framework of the new European security architecture, the process of enlargement of the Western Balkans must be thought of as a strategic process rather than a technical issue. Enlargement must be accelerated and follow the basic vision of European integration as a strategic project, which will bring stability and security, a basic prerequisite for prosperity and progress throughout Europe.

According to our deep conviction, the war in Ukraine must not be an argument for the enlargement, but should represent an incentive to accelerate and complete the process within a reasonable time. Any delay in this process represents a serious and real threat to democratic processes and to peace and stability in the region and especially in Southeast Europe.

2.1. The risks faced by North Macedonia

Russian influence in North Macedonia is consistent with the concept of „sharp power“, especially through the promotion of the Slavic-Orthodox brotherhood and the use of the church. Russian influence draws the population into this concept and implies that we have nothing in common with the western world - which is not true. This is one of the ways through which resistance to the EU and NATO is encouraged. This narrative was promoted through visits by religious figures and joint religious services, a perfect example of an information operation. Some of the counter-measures that the authorities in North Macedonia have taken are the expel of a Russian priest who has ties to the intelligence services and worked directly to endanger Macedonia's strategic interests. Continuous measures are being taken to monitor the activities of the Russian representatives or persons close to them, and all diplomatic and other representatives who are determined to be a danger to North Macedonia are expelled.

22 <https://vocentar.com/%D1%88%D1%82%D0%BE-%D0%B5-%D1%82%D0%BE%D0%B0-%D0%BF%D1%83%D1%82%D0%B8%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%B7%D0%B0%D0%BC-%D0%B7%D0%B0%D0%BF%D0%B0%D0%B4%D0%BE%D1%82-%D0%BC%D0%BD%D0%BE%D0%B3%D1%83-%D0%BF%D0%BE%D0%B3/>, accessed on 1 August 2023

The study of Russian influence through the F2N2 project of the non-governmental organization MOST revealed a mass transmission and presence of Kremlin representatives in the online space in North Macedonia, using media controlled by the Russian state as sources in the articles, pro-Russian messages from politicians from the region and beyond who are Russian allies, as well as several cases of coordinated mass dissemination of Facebook content through a well-established and coordinated pro-Russian infrastructure. A number of portals appear to simply be reporting Russian officials or Russian-controlled media, despite the fact that they are mostly lying. In doing so, the media supports Russian efforts and reinforces messages that use phrases and language that create misconceptions and misperceptions that contribute to making Russian narratives and propaganda more palatable on the one hand, and audiences more susceptible to them on the other.²³

Conclusion

Creating a new European security architecture should take into account the following challenges:

- In the short and medium term, it should focus on responding to Putin, Putinism and the contemporary Russian state and politics - including fake news and unprincipled political influence.
- Russia can be a partner, but a serious approach is needed to choose the best way for possible further cooperation. The change of power in Russia can encourage the process of reconciliation and cooperation with Europe, instead of fear and building capacities for undermining the security of the European continent.
- Every country in Europe shares the same or similar risks and challenges, so the response to threats should be common - respecting the contribution that each country can make, but also by promoting a single, European response to modern security challenges.
- North Macedonia and the countries in the Southeast Europe region can significantly strengthen European security and participate in the implementation of the new principles of European defence.
- NATO, the EU and OSCE are dominant institutions and all resources should be directed towards the integration and strengthening of the policies and capacities of these institutions, instead of focusing on disintegration and the introduction of new institutions, which in this period will be unproductive and unhelpful for the security image in Europe.

²³ <https://f2n2.mk/ruskata-propaganda-vlijanie-i-dezinformacii-vo-severna-makedonija-se-problem-krajno-vreme-e-da-im-se-sprotivstavime>, accessed on 1 August 2023

- Last but not least, one should be very aware of the diversity in the European Union regarding the threats posed by Russian politics. At least one, and probably more, member countries lead a policy that is in direct opposition to ESA and European policies in general. Before we think about building ESA's capacities, we must agree on the basic principles that all member countries should adhere to.

About the author

Prof. d-r sc. Nikola Dujovski is full professor in security sciences and Dean of the Faculty of Security Skopje, University St. Kliment Ohridski Bitola, North Macedonia. His professional background encompasses both law enforcement and academic work. Prior to the academic career started in 2008, his law enforcement engagement of 12 years involved various positions within the Ministry of Interior including operational and commanding level.



**FRIEDRICH NAUMANN
STIFTUNG** Für die Freiheit.

Annex: Country Paper

POLAND

Poland and the future European security architecture

Marcin Terlikowski

Introduction

Poland presents a principled stance in discussions about how to stop Russian invasion in Ukraine and how should European security architecture look like after the conflict. The main goal of Poland is to establish lasting peace in Europe and uphold the principles which enabled the historic changes in Central and Eastern Europe after the end of the Cold War, bringing freedom to nations and individuals. This implies, first, putting Ukraine on a fast track to NATO as soon as the conflict ends, and, second, continuing containment policy towards Russia. Any other development following the war is widely seen in Poland as potentially threatening Polish existential interests, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the state included.

The Value of the European Security Architecture

Needless to say, the notion of the European security architecture does not have an agreed definition. Practically, however, it is understood to comprise main organizations of the Euro-Atlantic area, with OSCE but also NATO and the European Union, as well as the set of rules and regimes, which govern relations between states in the area of security (these concern mostly arms control, disarmament and military transparency). What is common for these institutions is that they were designed to establish an enduring peace and stability in Europe and gained new significance after the end of the Cold War. Only with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact the concept of cooperative security, assuming that “confrontation and division” in Europe is replaced with “cooperation and respect”²⁴, could finally become a foundation of the European security architecture.

Poland is among the states which benefited the most from the fundamental change of security architecture in Europe after 1991. While for Western European states it marked an end to the Cold War-era menace of nuclear war, for Poland it meant breaking Russian imperialism and regaining full independence in the first place. This was possible because of the principle of the freedom of nations to choose their security arrangements, which paved way for post-Communist and post-Soviet states to join Euro-Atlantic institutions. Notably, accession to NATO in 1999 and to the European Union in 2004 continues to be seen by a clear majority of Polish public opinion and political elites as the best guarantee of long-term security of the state against Russian imperial ambitions.

A Failure of the System or within the System?

With the start of the Russian invasion in Ukraine on February 24th, 2022 questions started to be asked if European security architecture ultimately failed. Some voices pointed to alleged structural flaws in the system, which proved to be incapable of building trust with Russia and effectively address Russian concerns. It was argued,

²⁴ CSCE Paris Charter for a New Europe, 21 November 1990, <https://www.osce.org/mc/39516>.

in particular, that the “expansion” of NATO and American military deployments to Europe were main factors, which ultimately made Russia hostile towards the West. However, in the view of the majority of Polish political elites, experts and public opinion alike, European security architecture did not fail, but it was Russia, which deliberately broke it²⁵.

It is a widespread perception in Poland, that for more than 30 years the West continued to be self-restrained – if not self-delusional – about Russia and about the prospect of building a cooperative security system, which would accommodate Russian interests. Poland complained regularly about adverse effects of this policy on its security. In the energy sphere, for instance, the case of Nord Stream 1 and 2 gas pipelines illustrated clearly, how the willingness to engage Russia economically was damaging Polish energy security²⁶. In the defence sphere, NATO’s self-restraints as regards its force posture in the Eastern Flank, spelled out in the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act, resulted in virtually no allied forces deployed to Poland except for training or brief exercises until 2017²⁷. In Polish debate, NATO’s reluctance to pursue the 2008 Bucharest summit language on Ukraine and Georgia and move both towards membership in the Alliance, or the fact, that the return to business-as-usual with Russia took only months after Russian assault on Georgia in August 2008, were seen as a result of Western allies’ deliberate policy of not antagonizing Russia, even if this meant leaving a part of Europe in a grey security zone.

At the same time, the fact that Russia continued to escalate tensions regardless of the Western policy of engagement and cooperation, is considered in Poland a proof that the overall Russian goal was never to stabilize Europe, but to change the European security architecture to its liking. How the new system should look like according to Russia, is presented in the December 2021 draft treaties on Russia-US and Russia-NATO relations. Russia proposes to establish a *de facto* zone of its influence in Central and Eastern Europe, where no American or other Allied forces could be deployed and where all decisions regarding defence policy of nations would have to be formally consulted with Russia²⁸. If implemented, Russian concepts would throw Poland – and a large group of other Central and Eastern European states – to the early 1990s-like gray zone of security, open for Russia’s policy of coercion.

The Stake of the War

The fact that the fundamental change of the European security order after the Cold War is seen in Poland in terms of breaking away from Russian domination, has direct implications on Polish understanding of the stake of the Russian-Ukrainian war. It is widely considered in Poland that it is not only about the future of Ukraine itself, or Russia

²⁵ Compare: Statement by H.E. Zbigniew Rau, Chairman-in-Office, 1 December 2022 r., <https://www.osce.org/chairmanship/533447>.

²⁶ More: A. Gawlikowska-Fyk, M. Terlikowski, Nordic-Baltic Security in Times of Uncertainty: The Defence-Energy Nexus, “PISM Report” 7 March 2018, www.pism.pl.

²⁷ More: A.M.Dyner, W. Lorenz, A. Kacprzyk, Consequences of the Russian Invasion of Ukraine for the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act, “PISM Strategic File”, no 6 (114), www.pism.pl.

²⁸ More: A. M. Dyner, M. Terlikowski, Potential Impact of Russia’s Demands on NATO’s Defence and Deterrence, “PISM Bulletin” no 218 (1914) 22 December 2021, www.pism.pl.

for that matter, but about something much bigger – a new peace order in Europe, which will emerge out of the war. At the same time, it is the matter of the existential Polish interest, if this new order seals the breaking of Russian imperialism, or, in contrary, moves Russia closer to implementing its imperial concepts from the December 2021 ultimatum.

It is regularly highlighted in the Polish debate that Russian invasion in Ukraine must not end with a political solution, either temporal or permanent, that could lead to undermining the normative framework, being the foundation of the post-Cold War European security architecture. While in the popular perception Ukrainian struggle is seen as a yet another battle of an European nation against Russian imperialism, experts indicate that what will decide about upholding the basic principles of post-Cold War security architecture is how the conflict will be settled at the political level²⁹. In practice, it is a widely shared view, that a “Minsk 2”-like agreement – granting Russia any kind of rights towards occupied territories or encroaching on Ukrainian sovereignty in any way – will constitute a grave challenge for peace in Europe in the long term. It is believed in Poland, that such a false compromise – concessions to Russia for stopping the hostilities – is precisely, what Putin regime counts on.

Often referred to as a “freezing of the conflict”, it would give Russia a breathing space for reconstituting its military potential, repairing economy and strengthening social mobilization. What could follow is another escalation against Ukraine, whenever Russia feels ready and considers the West – and definitely the US – unable or unwilling to stand up again to help Ukraine defend itself. In such contingency, Russian escalation against NATO – and the Eastern Flank nations, with Poland in the first place – could not be excluded. Russian calculations may simply change and Russia may be willing to take high risks to make sure, that this time the West stays idle in the face of escalation against Ukraine. If, eventually, Russia is able to effectively undermine the solidarity of the West with Ukraine, decouple Ukraine from the Trans-Atlantic community, or even question the credibility of Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, the door will be open for a new European security architecture. Clearly, it would resemble the Cold War with a large group of nations deprived of any chance to shape their future freely and independently.

Setting Stones of the Next Security Architecture

Obviously, the final shape of the future European security architecture does not have to follow the worst case scenario. In Polish public debate and in officials’ statements, three elements are indicated as necessary to prevent it.

The first is quick integration of Ukraine with Western institutions. Both Polish political elites and public opinion see the future of Ukraine in NATO and – to a lesser extent – the EU. It is widely argued, that only a tangible option of Euro-Atlantic integration will

²⁹ Compare: Information of the Minister of Foreign Affairs on the principles and objectives of Poland’s foreign policy, 13 April 2023, <https://www.gov.pl/web/diplomacy/minister-of-foreign-affairs-on-the-principles-and-objectives-of-polands-foreign-policy>.

guarantee Ukraine security and successful reconstruction in the long-run. Majority of voices in Polish debate consider any kind of security guarantees – or assurances – for Ukraine much less effective, than simple membership in NATO. Article 5, with the US military power behind it, is considered the best deterrent towards Russia, which Ukraine may get. At the same time however Ukrainian membership in NATO is also considered in Poland one of prerequisites of establishing a lasting peace in Europe. It is seen as a logical continuation of NATO's enlargement process, which started in 1990s with Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary and was a practical implementation of the concept of "Europe whole, free and at peace". And again, in Polish debate this issue is seen through the prism of putting a tame to – and eventually breaking – Russian imperialism, perceived as the single biggest threat to stability and long term peace in Europe.

The second is containment of Russia. In Polish debate it is widely believed, that after the Russian invasion in Ukraine it is not possible to return to a policy of engagement and cooperation with Russia, even motivated – for instance – by the need to address common threats, like climate change. Notably, there is no differentiation between the current Putin regime and Russia in general. Majority of Polish experts indicate, that the next Russian leadership is unlikely to present a different approach to the West, compared to Putin. Consequently, Poland indicates that both sanctions on Russia and adaptation of NATO to the Russian threat have to continue over long term. It is often stressed in Poland, that Russia may relatively easy reconstitute its conventional military capacity and augment its nuclear posture, so that the threat to Europe could be even greater, than before February 24th, 2022. Hence, the return to cooperation with Russia is seen as very remote – if not theoretical – possibility. The issue of developing mechanisms to avoid unintended NATO-Russia escalation is not widely discussed in Poland, mostly due to a belief that Russia has been deliberately playing with such risk to support its political goals versus NATO and will continue to do so.

The third is addressing China, or – more precisely – responding to the interdependence between the Indo-Pacific and European theatres. China is neither seen in Poland as a military threat nor considered a part of European security architecture. Yet, Chinese stance towards the Russian invasion in Ukraine has been closely observed in Poland. China's open support for Russia – even if it did not involve supplying armaments, at least to date – contributed to a reassessment of the Polish approach to China. The emerging Sino-Russian "alliance of opportunity" is seen in Poland as an additional dimension of the Russian threat³⁰. It is now widely considered, that destabilisation in Europe may be in Chinese interest in a scenario, in which it would eventually decide to escalate around Taiwan. The implied incapability of the US forces to prevail in two major conflicts (as the Biden administration defence strategy suggests) is seen in Poland as a signal, that in case of a crisis in Indo-Pacific, the USA may have not enough assets to react adequately to a Russian escalation in Europe. Consequently, it's now widely accepted in Polish expert community, that to keep the USA ready and willing to

³⁰ W. Lorenz, China as a Challenge for NATO: Weighing Its Influence on the Collective Defence of the Alliance, "PISM Bulletin" no 150 (2067) 15 September 2022, www.pism.pl .

engage militarily in Europe had Russian decided to escalate, two conditions must be met. First, Europeans will have to take a much bigger share in defence and deterrence against Russia. Second, Europe should reassess its economic links to China and adopt a de-risking, if not de-coupling policy. To what extent European commitment to these goals will be genuine will decide about the terms on which the USA will remain the ultimate guarantor of European security order.

Conclusions

What is special about how the Russian invasion in Ukraine is seen in Poland is the fact, that Ukraine is the very first nation in Europe, which was able to effectively withstand both Russian attacks and political pressure to stop fighting and begin negotiations. What was met in Poland with surprise was also the level of Western support, which gradually crossed all the imaginary redlines, mostly as regards types of weapons to be delivered to Ukraine. Hence, it is more and more often noted in Polish debate, that Ukraine can be a battlefield in which Russian imperialism is eventually broken and stop threaten nations in the Central and Eastern part of Europe. For this to happen, the Russian invasion in Ukraine has to end with withdrawal of all Russian forces from Ukraine's territory in its 2014 borders, holding perpetrators of war crimes accountable and paying reparations to Ukraine by Russia. Only in such scenario a strong message will be send to Russia – but also and to all adversaries of the West, which pursue imperial policies – that there is no price, which can be paid for breaking basic principles of international law and then for returning to business-as-usual.

About the author

Marcin Terlikowski, Ph.D, is deputy head of Research Office in the Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM), where he has been defence analyst since 2007 and coordinator of International Security Programme between 2013 and 2022. In his research he focuses on military aspects of European and transatlantic security with particular focus on NATO, EU and defence/defence-industrial policies of key European states.



**FRIEDRICH NAUMANN
STIFTUNG** Für die Freiheit.

Annex: Country Paper

ROMANIA

**A security architecture with North-
Atlantic foundation and strong european
pillars**

Oana Zamfir

The war in Ukraine and the perspective of long-term challenges to continental security stemming from Russian aggression and global strategic competition have simultaneously consolidated Romania's reliance on the US and NATO for its defence, and raised awareness of the necessity for complementary coordination with European partners. The main obstacles lie in the differences in threat assessment and interests among EU member states, which is what Romania believes has failed to prevent the invasion of Ukraine; as well as in the capacity and capabilities gap, and the perceived duplication of efforts with NATO. Nevertheless, Bucharest will be a constructive partner for any initiative that improves cooperative security in Europe, given that it regards revisionism as the foremost threat to the Euro-Atlantic agenda.

Romania belongs to the group of countries that saw their assessments of Russia as a threat to European peace and stability confirmed. The national defence strategy for 2020 - 2024³¹ explicitly identifies Russian belligerence as a potential source of instability and insecurity. It also acknowledges substantial potential for the reconfiguration of relations among global actors and resurgence of global strategic competition, often through the increased use of force by non-Western powers challenging the existing rules-based international order. This is seen as having a direct impact on the stability and predictability of the international system, resulting in transition to a new security paradigm. In this context, the strategy considers the repeated infringement of international law by both Russia and other actors with regional ambitions as highly problematic. The view in Bucharest has always been that, as a mid-sized country, Romania is best protected within a common space of rules, norms and values and while it notes the growing inclination toward transactionalism, it believes that Euro-Atlantic efforts should be aimed at restoring the rules-based system and reject any concessions to revisionism.

A strategic posture defined by Russia again and again: 2008 - 2014 - 2022

The continuity in Romania's assessment of Russia as a revisionist actor that makes use of the whole range of conventional and non-conventional means at its disposal³² to undermine Euro-Atlantic security has prompted successive administrations in Bucharest to set preparedness to deal with potential Russian aggression or attempts at destabilisation as the top national priority. However, unlike Poland for instance, Romania has not significantly upgraded its territorial defence capabilities. While recognising - unlike many - the gravity of Russia's incursion into Georgia in 2008 as an indication of worse attempts to come, it was focused on demonstrating its contribution to allied missions (which at the time were out of area) as a relatively new NATO member. Only after the annexation of Crimea in 2014 has the strategic outlook shifted to territorial defence, with the Russian fleet, troops, weapons and potentially even nuclear warheads only 300 km away from Romanian shores, confronting Bucharest with the most

³¹ https://www.presidency.ro/files/userfiles/Documente/Strategia_Nationala_de_Aparare_a_Tarii_2020_2024.pdf

³² Hybrid and political warfare, economic pressure, cultural diplomacy and propaganda, elections interference - alongside the use of military force in its former sphere of influence

serious threat in decades. This was accompanied by a ten-year plan to meet the allied requirement of committing 2% of GDP to defence, but significant delays have thwarted implementation.

Romania has invested heavily in the strategic partnership with the US and in securing NATO commitment to the Black Sea region, including through the presence of boots on the ground and military installations, branding itself as *the* trusted ally on the South-eastern flank. This strategy aimed to give NATO allies a direct stake in the security of Romania and thus make Article V and its provision of collective defence an almost automated mechanism. Irrespective of the changes in political leadership, the core belief remains that NATO is the only organisation that can provide genuine security guarantees and should be further strengthened and adapted to respond to changes in the strategic environment.

Anchoring NATO in the Black Sea

The invasion of Ukraine has not changed Romania's strategic posture significantly. At its core lies the resurgent aggressiveness of the Russian Federation, seen as posing a fundamental challenge to Euro-Atlantic security and the balance of power in Europe, not just to Russia's immediate vicinity. Romania continues to maintain that the Russian goal is to regain influence and control in its Eastern European neighbourhood to establish a buffer zone between its borders and those of NATO; but also that its larger aim is to challenge the Western-dominated international order and exert a more decisive role in the security of the continent and the balance of power with the US³³. This justifies why, while advocating for a strategic shift to the East, officials in Bucharest exhibit relative flexibility toward partners and allies in the EU and NATO, in the interest of reaching consensus on collective security arrangements.

Bucharest's efforts to draw the attention of NATO to the Black Sea (and mouths of the Danube), which it sees as the most vulnerable entry point for Russian forces, long predates the invasion of Ukraine. The fact that Russia had already been able to establish an A2/AD area was a source of major concern. Romanian officials were frustrated with the fact that successive NATO summits, since Wales and Warsaw, had failed to step up engagement in the region on a par with allied consolidation of the northern flank. Given the difference in threat assessment among European allies and the various difficulties of cooperation with other littoral states (Türkiye, Ukraine, Bulgaria), Romania further developed a NATO-centric approach, counting on the US and UK sharing similar views on the strategic importance of the region and ensuring the capacity and willingness to deploy the hard and soft security instruments at their disposal to counter Russia.

³³ Much as Putin himself has indicated in his famous discourse on 'a common security space from Lisbon to Vladivostok': <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/wirtschaft/putin-plaedoyer-fuer-wirtschaftsgemeinschaft-von-lissabon-bis-wladiwostok-1.1027908>

European defence plagued by lack of trust and capacity

Bucharest did not support the project of European Strategic Autonomy because of concerns that it may undermine NATO. For both financial and operational reasons, member states were not in a position to commit resources to both and to have a coherent and coordinated approach combining the two. In addition to this, Romania did not trust European allies like France and Germany, who were driving the initiative, to have an accurate understanding of the threat posed by Russia. It also doubted their intentions, given Berlin's economic relations with Moscow and Paris' continued provision of military technology to Russia even after the illegal annexation of Crimea. After Brexit and the Trump era in America though, the leadership in Bucharest has slowly started to consider additional partnerships and alliances and to seek more active participation in the debate, while still emphasising the crucial point of prioritising NATO and increasing the European contribution to the Alliance.

The war in Ukraine has further consolidated the perception in Romania, as well as across Central-Eastern Europe, that NATO and especially the US are the only partners that these states can trust. The US and UK have demonstrated superior insight, intelligence, capacity to decide and act, deterrence capacity, continuity of supply when it comes to the defence industry, a strategic outlook and long-term commitment to the region. Any engagement with European partners, while greatly facilitated by the radical change in some allies' view of Russia and in their strategic posture (see the German *Zeitenwende* and the deployment of a French surface-to-air missile system and a battalion to lead a multinational battlegroup, alongside Dutch and Belgian troops³⁴), will still be seen as secondary to the strategic partnership with the US and to Romania's role as a NATO member. It will also be focused mainly on assuming greater responsibility for continental security; boosting industrial capacity to replenish stocks and support a war effort; improving coordination among European allies. Nevertheless, efforts to drive the establishment of a permanent NATO and US military presence will only increase and all the dimensions of the already valuable strategic partnership with the US will acquire yet more importance: "political (dialogue and mechanism for security guarantees), military (US military presence in Romania), economic (IT, defence industry, energy security), and security/ intelligence (anti-terrorism and intelligence sharing)"³⁵. The context of a potentially prolonged war in Europe prompts measures that can be taken swiftly and with limited resources. Hence, existing interoperability with NATO and the US is an asset, and the amplification of cooperation with non-European partners such as Israel, Japan, South Korea, etc. respond to pressing needs for weapons systems and armament.

³⁴ <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/with-troops-romania-france-seeks-capitalise-military-ties-2023-01-27/>

³⁵ <https://dgap.org/en/research/publications/european-defence-new-age-edina>

Room for complementarity

Given the perception in Bucharest that we may continue to face low-intensity conventional war alongside hybrid activity aiming to destabilise states and societies politically and socially and negatively impact the economy, the role of the EU and European partners is, however, seen as taking on a more strategic dimension, in complementarity with that of NATO. Romania has signed up to all EU measures against Russia, from increasing energy independence to imposing sanctions, and it continues to participate in EU missions in the fields of civil emergencies and humanitarian assistance, cyber security, border policing and countering information operations.

The country has been diversifying and increasing its presence in projects under PESCO³⁶ and the European Defence Industrial Development Programme, it supports the European Defence Agency promoting cooperation among EU member states, as well as regional cooperative formats, such as the Three Seas Initiative, the B9/ Bucharest Format, or trilaterals with Poland-Türkiye (the regional actors it sees as crucial to the stability of Central-Eastern Europe) or Moldova-Ukraine: the former, because of the special relationship that Bucharest has always had with Chisinau; the latter because of its current circumstances, but also for its major role in regional security. Relations with Ukraine have often been difficult or even tense, but for Bucharest the interest of drawing the entire EU and NATO neighbourhood into a shared space of values, norms and cooperative security trumps any other considerations - which is why it supports EU and NATO enlargement. For the same reason, Romania participates quite actively in all regional organisations, as well as the OSCE, but none of these is seen as particularly effective.

Overall though, the level of ambition set by the European Union in defence cooperation is considered “transitory” and designed in a context of shifting circumstances and assessment thereof, in order to respond to the unexpected challenge mounted by the Russian Federation, but without the necessary in-depth consideration of the future strategic identity of Europe. As highlighted by Claudiu Degeratu in ‘European Defence in a New Age’³⁷, the EU Strategic Compass seen from Bucharest reveals objectives that are likely to be operationalised no sooner than 2030-2035, which is the same time when the world power hierarchy is set to shift in favour of China, as the key driver of potential strategic rearrangements. Hence, “the current European level of ambition reflects the more normative dimension of the European defence project and less the ambition to become a geopolitical actor”. The level of ambition and even the definition of strategic autonomy are therefore expected to be revisited, factoring in complex elements such as national military adaptation to the reality created by Russia’s war, the accession to NATO of Sweden and Finland, the role of the UK, potential fallback from elections in the US and the state of transatlantic relations, etc. Additionally, from the perspective of driving complementarity with NATO and avoiding duplication, coherence and ambition at the level of the EU suffers from the still widely diverging interests, outlooks and threat assessments of the 27 member states, generating a level of strategic ambiguity that thwarts clarity of goals and the development of adequate means

³⁶ <https://www.mae.ro/en/node/2064>

³⁷ <https://dgap.org/en/research/publications/european-defence-new-age-edina>

to reach them. The fledgling transatlantic relationship contributes to deepening this ambiguity: phasing off dependence on the US will be a long, uncertain and partly undesirable process (for a country that has cultivated reliance on Washington and views favourably the division of labour whereby NATO deals with hard security, and the EU with soft security). Upcoming elections and US global interests may lead to America downgrading its involvement in Europe. Very importantly, EU-NATO cooperation is still lagging far behind optimal levels, and parallel planning processes between the two organisations may force nations to prioritise their contributions to one or the other.

The war in Ukraine has offered Romania opportunities for the streamlining of national efforts, which have been reactive or inefficient before, partly because of the ‘outsourcing’ of both conceptual and operational leadership to the US and NATO. The North-Atlantic Alliance has adopted a new force model at the Madrid summit that defines the Black Sea region as one of strategic interest, and three defence plans at the Vilnius summit, including one for the Mediterranean and Black seas. The US has been developing its own Black Sea strategy and France has deployed a French-led NATO battlegroup to Cincu. Romania is likely to have an important role in all of the above and hence further develop strategic capacity and operational capabilities. This is an important driver for a country where several major modernisation and transformation projects have been plagued by delays caused by political instability and poor management. Romania’s National Defence Council has already adjusted the army transformation and modernisation programme ‘Army 2040’³⁸, following the decision to increase the defence budget further, to 2.5% of GDP. The government has also accelerated the implementation of territorial defence objectives that had been planned ever since 2014. While so far emphasis has mostly been placed on land and air forces, the question of how Romania can work with partners to develop Black Sea naval defence and deny Russia control of the maritime domain remains a difficult one, with Türkiye the only littoral state able to balance Russia.

Restoring stability to the region and building enduring peace in Europe are the top priorities for Romania, and Russia is seen as the most active challenger in this endeavour. Moscow will continue to be a disruptor in the long run; it therefore remains in the interest of Bucharest to build consensus within the EU and NATO around containing Moscow, without accommodating it or yielding one inch to pressure. European allies need to co-opt willing neighbouring countries like Ukraine, Moldova and most in the Western Balkans in curtailing the Kremlin’s room for manoeuvre, while laying the bricks for détente - when that becomes possible.

³⁸ <https://www.mapn.ro/legislatie/documente/STRATEGIA-MILITARA-A-ROMANIEI-ENG.pdf>

About the author

Oana Zamfir is a former State Secretary for EU Affairs and currently Director of GlobalFocus Center, a foreign policy think-tank. She is associate expert at ECFR and a fellow at IWM (Vienna) and Agora Strategy Institute (Munich). Her expertise covers mainly geopolitics and security in the EU/NATO neighbourhood, EU policies, transatlantic relations, global political risk and strategic analysis, shifting models of governance, democratisation, information warfare and malign foreign influence.



Annex: Country Paper

SERBIA

Implications of the war in Ukraine for the European security architecture

SUZANA GRUBJEŠIĆ

Introduction

The Russian aggression against Ukraine has forced the EU to wake up from its post-historical dream of eternal peace and to learn to speak the language of power³⁹. For the very first time in its history, the EU has decided to finance military assistance for a non-EU country which is under attack. One consequence of the Ukrainian war will be a restructuring of the European security architecture, not only through NATO expansion, but also through national defence spending increases.

1. Current European Security Architecture

Since the 1990's, Europe's security system has been established around four main actors: the EU, NATO, the OSCE and Russia, which have defined the security architecture and structural dynamics in the last decades. Decoupling from Russia, an important economic and trade partner, particularly in the energy sector⁴⁰, has been a challenge for Europe, while large adjustments are needed in the security system as well. NATO remains the most important and relevant security organization as it was after the Cold War.

After the Russian aggression in Ukraine in February 2022, the EU has become much more united in its determination to achieve integration in security and defence policies, building a more sustainable security architecture. Already in March 2022, the EU approved the *Strategic Compass for Security and Defence*⁴¹, a framework that aspires to a greater autonomy on one hand, and to improved coordination with NATO, on the other. In June 2022, NATO reached a new *Strategic Concept*⁴², increasing focus on bolstering deterrence and defence, along with a new emphasis on building resilience; the identification of Russia as "the most significant and direct" threat to the Alliance; and the first ever reference to China as a strategic challenge.

The EU has its *Common European Security and Defense Policy (CSDP)*⁴³, and its own Article 5 equivalent (Article 42.7- *mutual defence clause*)⁴⁴ which is weaker than the one in the founding treaty of NATO, but EU membership does have defence implications. **Still, Europe's security depends on NATO and the United States of America, which are responsible for collective defence in Europe.** Regarding the pan-European security institutions, which were initially designed to be a platform bridging East and West, the OSCE is hamstrung⁴⁵, while others, like the Euro Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), established in 1997, Partnership for Peace (PfP), launched in 1994 as NATO programme, as well as NATO-Russia Council, launched in 2002 and suspended

³⁹ European Union External Action, Several Outlets, Europe Must Learn Quickly to Speak the Language of Power: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/several-outlets-europe-must-learn-quickly-speak-language-power_en

⁴⁰ The EU has so far imposed 11 rounds of massive economic sanctions against Russia, in response to its aggression against Ukraine

⁴¹ European Union External Action, A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/strategic-compass-security-and-defence-1_en

⁴² NATO 2022, Strategic Concept: https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/6/pdf/290622-strategic-concept.pdf

⁴³ European Union External Action, The Common Security and Defense Policy (ESDP): https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/shaping-common-security-and-defence-policy_en

⁴⁴ EUR-Lex Access to European Union Law, Mutual Defense Clause: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/glossary/mutual-defence-clause.html>

⁴⁵ Peter Jones CMG, commentary European Security Architecture: Against Russia or With It? RUSI, 14 December 2022: <https://www.rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/european-security-architecture-against-russia-or-it>

in April 2014, after Russia's illegal and illegitimate annexation of Crimea, the Helsinki Final Act (1975), the Charter of Paris for a New Europe (1990), the 1992 Helsinki Summit – have failed to build and maintain the system of involving all countries in Europe, including Russia.

2. Normative evaluation of the European security architecture

Debates about Europe's security have focused on visions of possible paths to achieving some degree of European *strategic autonomy*. The term appeared in the EU's *Global Strategy* of June 2016⁴⁶, incited by the rhetoric of the former U.S. administration that suggested its commitment to European security was conditional on increased European capability. Despite that the EU treaties assigned the task of collective defence to NATO, several governments had begun to ask how the defence of Europe would look without the U.S.⁴⁷ For that purpose, *Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO)* was launched in 2017, as a military cooperation pact which now includes 68 projects⁴⁸. But, even the most vocal proponent of European strategic autonomy, the French president Macron, has made clear that the NATO continues to be the primary organization responsible for the territorial defence of Europe. The use of the *European Peace Facility*⁴⁹, a fund designed to strengthen the capabilities of partner countries, and the launch of a task force for the joint procurement of materials to replace donations to Ukraine, reflect the EU's intention to adapt to the new circumstances. *Structured Cooperation* and the *European Defense Fund*⁵⁰ have the potential to contribute to the area of deterrence and territorial defence.

Germany made a radical shift by sending weapons to Ukraine, thus ending the hitherto policy of not exporting weapons to war zones. The coalition government recently presented a new security strategy⁵¹, which has three priorities: military security, resilience at home, and sustainability, especially related to climate policy. The decision to actively oppose Russia was instrumental in raising Poland's mark on the world stage (a new centre of gravity in Europe⁵²), also increasing its defence spending, but to 5% of the GDP. Denmark decided on a referendum to join European defence institutions, and to abolish its opt-out from participating in EU defence and security policy⁵³. Other European states, members of NATO, are also significantly increasing defence spending, but only 7 have reached the 2 per cent target.⁵⁴

⁴⁶ Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe, A Global Strategy for the European's Union Foreign and Security Policy: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eugs_review_web_0.pdf

⁴⁷ See Clingendael Research: European Strategic Autonomy: Going It Alone? <https://www.clingendael.org/publication/european-strategic-autonomy-going-it-alone-0>

⁴⁸ Council of the EU, Press Release 23 May 2023: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2023/05/23/eu-defence-cooperation-council-welcomes-denmark-into-pesco-and-launches-the-5th-wave-of-new-pesco-projects/>

⁴⁹ The European Peace Facility: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/european-peace-facility-0_en

⁵⁰ European Defense Fund: [https://eda.europa.eu/what-we-do/EU-defence-initiatives/european-defence-fund-\(edf\)](https://eda.europa.eu/what-we-do/EU-defence-initiatives/european-defence-fund-(edf))

⁵¹ Robust. Resilient. Sustainable. Integrated Security for Germany – National Security Strategy: <https://www.nationalesicherheitsstrategie.de/National-Security-Strategy-EN.pdf>

⁵² Washington Post, Poland has become a new center of gravity in Europe, 07.04.2023: <https://tvpworld.com/69043942/washington-post-poland-has-become-a-new-center-of-gravity-in-europe>

⁵³ Reuters, Denmark to join EU Defense Policy after historic vote, June 1, 2022: <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/denmark-looks-set-join-eus-defence-policy-exit-poll-by-public-broadcaster-dr-2022-06-01/>

⁵⁴ Bloomberg, Only Seven NATO Allies Meet Spending Goal Despite Russia's War: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2023-03-21/only-seven-nato-allies-meet-spending-goal-despite-russia-s-war#xj4y7vzkg>

⁵⁵ European Commission, Press Release, EU-Russia Relations: Commission and High Representative propose the way forward: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_3010, 16 June 2021

3. Cooperation vs. Containment

The EU strategy titled “EU-Russia Relations - Push back, constrain and engage”⁵⁵ was released in June 2021, presenting the intention to work along three main lines regarding Russia: to push back when Russia violates international law and human rights; to constrain when it increases pressure on the EU, particularly through disinformation and cyber-attacks; and to engage on issues which are of the EU’s interests. It points out that managing relations with Russia represents a key strategic challenge for the EU. The common position of Eastern European countries is firmer containment against Russia, as attempts to re-engage with Putin’s Russia have failed. On the other hand, Western Europe has finally increased military support to Ukraine⁵⁶, thus leaving a placating strategy towards Russia which was at the core of both Germany and France’s approaches before the 2022 invasion in Ukraine.

4. Adapting the European security architecture to the new realities

A new security architecture is emerging from this crisis in which the EU and NATO seek not only to complement, but also to mutually reinforce one another. They must also keep working together to protect the common values and principles both organizations stand for. Europe no longer has the luxury of not to take its own defence very seriously. A crucial element of a new, common European policy toward Russia is making European states and societies more resilient against Russian influence. Better coordination is especially important, as well as self-protection against disinformation and hybrid attacks, military deterrence, and economic and energy decoupling.

It is too early to speculate about Russia after Putin, because in Russia “nothing is true and everything is possible”, as Peter Pomerantsev claims in his book⁵⁷, describing the success of putinism. Containment of the Russian military strength and economic and political influence is needed, as the present Russia will continue to be a threat to European security, but for Europe Russia will always be a neighbour and there have to be relations, whether good or bad.

5. Policy recommendations

- No doubt that the Russian aggression of Ukraine was an enormous geopolitical shock to Europe, after decades of relative peace and stability on the continent. Europe therefore must rethink its security and defence policy, preserving the increased transatlantic cooperation and unity of the West.

⁵⁵ European Commission, Press Release, EU-Russia Relations: Commission and High Representative propose the way forward: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_3010, 16 June 2021

⁵⁶ Kiel Institute for the World Economy, Ukraine Support Tracker, A Database of Military, Financial and Humanitarian Aid to Ukraine: <https://www.ifw-kiel.de/topics/war-against-ukraine/ukraine-support-tracker/>

⁵⁷ Pomerantsev, Peter, Nothing is True and Everything is Possible: The Surreal Heart of the New Russia, November 2014 by Public Affairs

- A new European security architecture should include Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova and the Western Balkans. NATO membership is not around the corner for all of them, as confirmed at the latest NATO Summit in Vilnius⁵⁸, but nevertheless enhanced military and security cooperation and tighter institutionalized relations are more than necessary undertakings in the nearest future. The same goes for the EU enlargement because there is security reason behind it – these countries should be encouraged to pursue their reformist agendas, and the EU must finally start to fulfill its promises to the Western Balkans. The Western Balkans should be strongly anchored to the West, and not left out for grabs of the third actors. The ongoing Russian aggression against Ukraine puts Serbia in a difficult position as it tries to pursue the EU-integration process while maintaining close ties with Russia. The issue of Kosovo puts all Serbian balancing skills to the test: readiness to pursue the dialogue and to achieve a durable solution with Kosovo on one hand, and to rely on Russia or China to veto its recognition at the UN Security Council on the other. The issue of Kosovo gives Russia enormous leverage over Serbia and prevents the region's Euro-Atlantic integration. Russia has no interest in seeing the Kosovo issue resolved, but it is rather willing to denounce any deal reached between Belgrade and Pristina. Other key pillars of Russian influence in Serbia are shared Orthodox faith, energy dependence and pro-Russian sentiment of the population, which has been profusely nurtured by the pro-government media in the last decade or so. Although Serbia voted in favour of five Ukraine-related Resolutions in the United Nations, condemning the Russian aggression, it still refuses to join the EU in its sanctions against Russia. The calculation is clear, but it is becoming harder and harder to justify this opportunistic position. But Serbia is the only country in the Western Balkans that sent aid for the reconstruction of the electrical energy system of Ukraine. Serbia is also promoting military neutrality as an official policy, instead of seeking membership to NATO. Fresh memories from the NATO bombing of Serbia during the Kosovo war in 1999, and anti-Western sentiment of the population result in low public support to possible Serbia's accession to NATO – it varies between 7 and 11 per cent only, according to several polls. Expecting a U-turn of Serbian foreign policy would be too optimistic, but the growing concern that this non-alignment with the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy could inflict major damage to Serbian economy which is by two-thirds linked with the EU countries, might shift its current position sooner than expected. Serbia cannot afford to be perceived as the Russian pawn in the Western Balkans as this would be detrimental to its European future.
- Defining what role the OSCE can play in a future European security order is a challenge because it comes down to the political will of the participating states, including Russia. The world's largest regional security organization approaches the 50th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act in 2025 with a task to reinvigorate itself, which is almost a mission impossible. Institutional reforms within the OSCE

⁵⁸ NATO Vilnius Summit Communiqué: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_217320.htm?utm_source=multichannel&utm_medium=smc&utm_campaign=230711%26vilnius%26summit%26declaration

are needed if it wants to make itself as important and relevant as it used to be. The consensus rule seems to be the biggest obstacle which offers only limited options, but moving to majority voting changes the very nature of the OSCE as a platform which enables dialogue even among enemies. Taking decisions without Russia might be easier, but the OSCE was founded as a forum for taking decisions with Russia. When and how the war in Ukraine ends will impact the future of the OSCE, and in the meantime it should think of its concrete role in Ukraine in case of a peace agreement or even a ceasefire.

- The potential of the European Political Community (EPC)⁵⁹ to contribute to the European security should be explored, particularly in cyber-security or countering third-party interference. But to achieve that, it needs to become an institutionalized entity and not only a dialogue platform. It should also focus on specific issues of the EU enlargement, having in mind aspirations of Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and the Western Balkans, and not to be viewed as an alternative to EU membership, or a consolation prize.
- Europe needs to develop a coherent strategy towards China, reconciling its two contradictory approaches – pursuing economic ties, while having security concerns at the same time. It does not have the same appetite as the U.S. for a more confrontational stance towards China. A consensus between allies of how to approach China would be most beneficial to maintaining a functional international order.

Conclusion

Russia's war against Ukraine has given Europe a chance to consolidate. This war is redrawing the European security and economic map, shifting power to North and East Europe. Ideally, a new European security architecture will encompass the idea that all European countries are safe, and Russia is no longer a threat to any of them. The coexistence and cooperation of the EU and NATO is crucial for organizing security and defence in Europe. NATO is now more united than ever, has added Finland to the alliance, and is on track to add Sweden by the end of the year. The EU has to make enlargement a geopolitical imperative. International cooperation, dialogue and commitment to a rules-based European security order is key to long-term stability and security in Europe.

Is the new security architecture possible without Russia? When answering this question, the division lines in Europe become even more pronounced: from wanting Russia to suffer the consequences of its war, and returning of the Cold War madness, to the building a solid security architecture with Russia. The CEE region's position to this issue is not homogeneous as well and we cannot continue to speak generically that all

⁵⁹ On May 9, 2022, President Macron launched discussions on a European Political Community: <https://www.elysee.fr/en/emmanuel-macron/2022/05/09/closure-of-the-conference-on-the-future-of-europe>

countries are pushing back against Russia, although the immediate impact of the war in Ukraine on the security of CEE has been severe. The region should strengthen its position within the EU and NATO and has to get a greater role in shaping the security policy in both organizations.

In contemplating possibilities for a different future that is not as bleak as the current situation may suggest, one thing is for sure – geography will not go away, and Russia will remain the largest European neighbour, with whom deterrence alone will not do the job. Ultimately, the answer by large depends on the forecast if there will be any political evolution in Russia or not. If Russia wants to be part of the security architecture in Europe, it cannot continue to be a serious existential threat to European countries in the future.

About the author

Suzana Grubješić, Vice-president of the Center for Foreign Policy in Belgrade

