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EUROPEAN SECURITY: THREATS AND TRENDS IN THE UKRAINIAN CONTEXT PROSPECTS

Abstract. Analyzing the security situation in Europe, especially using methods of comparison, classification, as well as the real time method, and relying on statistical and factual data, the article identifies the dominant challenges and threats that currently affect the effectiveness of defense and security strategies in European countries. It is proven that against the background of deglobalization processes, the international system is degrading and fragmenting; in the course of the fierce confrontation between democracy and various authoritarianisms, alternative versions of the world order are being formed; European nationalisms are strengthening, that, by distancing themselves from helping Ukraine, the victim of russian aggression, in their own way ensure the legitimacy of the russian dictator, ignoring the prospects of the russian army's invasion of their own territory. In addition, the instability of the security situation in Europe is caused by the change of presidential power in the USA and the uncertainty of the policy of the Donald Trump's administration regarding Euro-Atlantic cooperation, NATO, as well as the not yet fully understood degree of "understanding of russian" by the American president, and, accordingly, his role in ultimately taming the aggressor country, or vice versa - deepening the "understanding" of russian neo-imperialism, racism and ignoring war crimes.

Introduction

Problem statement. European security is experiencing a state of turbulence, instability, uncertainty, ultimately, fragility. And this series of characteristics with a kind of destructive charge under the pressure of a new risks' cascade is expanding and diversifying almost daily. However, this concerns not only security issues, in fact, of Europe, but also of the entire planet: the world is in uncharted waters.

The world, as if resorting to testing the paradigms of the latest quantum theories and, more than ever before, began (quite clearly!) to reveal features that are not characteristic of the macro- or microworld: quantum entanglement is making its mark. Thus, events in one region (be it in Europe, the Middle East, or the Indo-Pacific region) almost immediately have one way or another repercussions in other regions of the planet, leading to global consequences: regional balances are disrupted and disappear. The world (according to the apt observation of Andrew Hyde) "is becoming more and more Hobbesian" and is getting out of control [1]. However, it is still difficult to unambiguously describe the logic of global macroprocesses.

Under such conditions, European security no longer depends only on Europe itself: it is significantly influenced by a number of factors of various scales, which are generated (in the era of total hybridity and, accordingly, hybrid wars) by a rather motley security environment. Its borders for Ukraine, as for every European country, are rather vague and diffuse in their own way, which causes a situation in which the security environment is in a state of constant transformation and specific mimicry, and the amplitude of its instability and imbalance, as we can state, is steadily growing.

In addition, the security environment constantly demonstrates an endless increase in differences between actors in their vision of the contours of the world order in the future, which leads to the formation of new fault lines. First of all, between parties within European states and, in fact, between political elites, between all those who influence political decision-making in states, that, in turn, instantly puts pressure on the policies and behavior of political actors at different levels in the international arena. New conflict lines are also emerging between neighboring states (on all continents), between regions, and ultimately between the Global North and the Global South, or, as some people today note (having heard the feedback from the past in their own way), between the Western and Eastern hemispheres, or between the geopolitical West and the non-West of the planet. Therefore, it is not for nothing that interstate conflicts "with a particularly significant crisis potential" were ranked first in the global risk rating by the business and political elites and risk analysts surveyed on the eve of the Davos Forum 2025, which took place in January [2].

The state of the modern security environment in its own way expresses signs of degradation of international relations and international cooperation, "wear and tear" of the security system and the actualization of particular interests of international actors. And Ukraine, which for centuries has remained a country "flowing with milk and honey" for its neighboring invaders, in the first third of the 21st century. The state of the modern security environment in its own way expresses the signs of degradation of international relations and international cooperation, the "wear and tear" of the security system and the actualization of the particular interests of international actors. And Ukraine, which for centuries has remained a country "flowing with milk and honey" for its neighboring invaders, in the first third of the 21st century was again transformed by their own efforts into bloody European lands. European security has collapsed. Although some Europeans still do not believe this after three years of a full-scale russian invasion of Ukraine.

An analysis of recent studies and publications shows that the problem of European security is one of the key in the spectrum of research interests. Therefore, it is clear that it will constantly require analysis, as well as forecasting. This is evidenced, in particular, by works that have appeared, at least since the beginning of the 21st century. Among them, first of all, we will pay attention to the "Routledge Handbook of European Security" (2013) edited by Sven Bishop and Richard Whitman [3], which focuses on the common security and defense policy of the region through the prism of liberal, constructivist and critical approaches. "The Handbook…" is not just a cross-section of professional views on the more distant or rather recent European security past, on the "errors of the environment", its peculiarities and traps, "peculiarities of Brusseliization" (in the words of Jolyon Howorth), but also a kind of mirror in which there are reflections of the hopes and desires of Europeans within the framework of Euro-Atlantic security and the realization of the potential of strategic partnership, their feelings in a state "between aspirations and pretense" (as

Richard Youngs emphasized). "The Handbook…" is a very recent vision by the best security experts of the trends and prospects of Europe in interaction or competition, or even rivalry and conflicts. "The Handbook…" is not only the truth, but also the illusion or (to use Herbert McMaster's terminology) the "strategic narcissism" of the intellectual elite of the West just on the eve of the full-scale invasion of the troops of the russian dictator Putin into the sovereign territory of the Ukrainian state.

Also worth noting are the studies of Chris Bickerton [4], the monograph edited by Christian Kaunert and Sarah Leonard [5], the works of Diego Borracho and José Luis de Castro [6], Katharina Kinvall, Jan Manners and Jennifer Mitzen [7], Vincent Della Sala [8], which demonstrate the interest of researchers in both theoretical security issues and the problematics of "ontological security" and the European Union as a "security provider", or the attention of analysts to, for example, various aspects of European security in the context of terrorism and intelligence in the context of hybrid warfare, as well as in the context of cybersecurity, etc. It is significant that, despite the variety of challenges, threats, and risks that Europe faced during the first two decades of the early 21st century, a kind of leitmotif of the research was the thesis that "life in the European Union has never been as safe as it is today," as noted in a 2018 publication by Elke Kramann [9].

However, if we analyze security studies over the past five years, we will find that in research on European security issues, peculiar new "points of reference" have appeared for further reflections on security issues, and one of the clear analytical trends has been criticism of the state and policy of the EU's security.

A vivid example of this is the eloquent headlines of publications, such as the article by Celia Belin and Ted Reinert "The European Union's Global Influence Is Eclipsing" [10], published in the spring of 2019, or the article by Magdalena Hora in 2021 with the "cautionary" title "This is Security Stupidity! The Politicization of EU Relations with Neighbors" [11], or the works by Heidi Mauer and Nicholas Wright entitled "How Much Unity Do You Need? Systemic Confrontation in the EU's Foreign and Security Cooperation" [12] and "Still Governing in the Shadows? Member States and the Political and Security Committee in the EU's Foreign Policy Architecture after the Lisbon Treaty" [13], published in the same year of 2021.

In these, as in other publications, the authors actually sought to establish a "diagnosis for Europe" on the eve of or during the crises related to Brexit and the COVID-19 epidemic. Noting that the "end of the world" scenarios for the EU (i.e. its collapse) were premature, the authors nevertheless emphasized the components of the "diagnosis" [14]:

– the presence of forces hostile to the European Union in the governments in Budapest, Warsaw, Rome and Vienna, and their increasing representation in Berlin and Paris;

– the weakening of the EU's ability to promote liberal democratic values and global cooperation by the nationalist-populist challenge in Europe and around the world, which, as predicted, would lead to the eclipse of European power, burdened by internal "political disagreements and the evolution of the continent";

– the unpreparedness of the "European experiment in shared sovereignty" for a global era, the dominant characteristic of which is the growth of nationalism, competition between great powers and the weakening of the transatlantic bond.

Predicting the development of the situation, S. Belin and T. Reinert emphasized that the attempts of nationalists (who are concentrated in the Hungarian party "Fidesz", the Polish party "Law and Justice", and the Italian "League") to transform the EU from within are capable of disrupting further European integration, since nationalists promote the idea of an alliance of nation-states hostile to Muslims and actually lead the front of opposition to European decisions. In addition, they exercise (in particular, in Germany) a "paralyzing influence" on the main parties that adhere to "defensive positions". And one cannot but agree with this statement of the researchers: the "paralysis" or procrastination of decisions on assistance to Ukraine became clearly visible after the full-scale russian invasion of Ukraine (if we analyze the behavior, specifics and

dynamics of decisions of the government of O. Scholz, which was sworn in on December 8, 2021, that is, a few months before the war).

S. Belin and T. Reinert were concerned with the problem of Europe's transformation from a player to a field in a "more competitive world", which, in their opinion, became a threat to Europe's unique experiment in "shared sovereignty". And the problem that this created was that the world turned away from globalization and positive cooperation. In early 2022, another trigger for the weakening of Europe's security, which drew the attention of analysts to security studies, was russian's full-scale war against Ukraine. Understanding the situation with European security, researchers (such as Niklas Helwig) focused, first of all, on Europe's ability to act during war [15]. In addition, - on the scenarios in which the russian-Ukrainian war could end, and are now trying to reflect on the security issues in Europe precisely in the context of the results of its termination. In particular, Matthew Burroughs (whose publications regularly appear on the website of the American Henry Stimson Center) during 2023-2024 considered 5 options for the possible end of the russian-Ukrainian war – a frozen conflict (which involves the highest risks of a sudden new outbreak of hostilities); a ceasefire as a result of negotiations – a truce (which would reduce the chances of resuming hostilities, but would require external approval, international peacekeepers and a demilitarized zone); the development of an even larger conflict (according to forecasts – World War III between the USA/NATO and russian/China); a "Korean-style" truce, which will probably require many years to ensure or, ultimately, a "general peaceful settlement" based on a "broader settlement of differences between russia and NATO" [16]. These 5 potential scenarios, with more or less detail and differences, dominate the analytical and political practices of Europe and America. However, the scenario of a "general peaceful settlement" is assessed as the least likely. So, in particular, M. Burroughs is inclined to believe that the "decline of Europe" continues, and it (an interesting emphasis!) is simply unable to feel safe, finding itself "at a crossroads" [17] as a result (as M. Burroughs argued in another article published in the fall of 2024 under the title "Can Trump be good for Europe?"), firstly, the expansion of the spectrum of internal problems - the aging of the population and its quantitative degradation, the slowdown in economic growth and the weakness of technologies, political and social disagreements within a number of countries, as evidenced by the development and spread of extremist and populist movements that doubt the feasibility of integration into the EU; secondly, under the pressure of political instability from the outside, caused by wars, terrorism, migration. As well as, one might add, many other hybrid influences in the context of, in particular, cognitive wars.

Finally, the third point, emphasized by M. Burroughs (and consonant with the idea of S. Belin and T. Reinert), is related to Europe's weakness in awareness and, accordingly, in timely decision-making over many previous years.

However, having familiarized ourselves with the literature, we can also distinguish another trend in understanding the situation in Europe, which analysts point out. In particular, Heidi Maurer, Kolya Raube and Richard G. Whitman in their publication in 2024. in European Security [18], examining the capabilities of, first of all, the EU (including after the start of the full-scale russian invasion of Ukraine) are concerned with the following questions: has the EU come of age as a foreign policy player and a security player? Is it finally possible to talk about the Union coming of age in the context of a full-scale war on the European continent?

Applying the concept of maturation to the EU, the authors analyzed the features of the EU's reaction to the russian invasion of Ukraine. Noting that this reaction surprised many observers, the researchers scrupulously identified and stated: the Union used a wide range of both new and established foreign policy instruments to support Ukraine. First of all, sanctions, military support. In addition, the EU used the European Peace Fund to supply military equipment, made commitments to deliver artillery ammunition under the ASAP program and to provide financial and budgetary support and on financial and budgetary support, humanitarian and other forms of emergency assistance to Ukraine. And this, as noted by H. Maurer, K. Raube and R. G. Wittman, allowed European leaders, as well as various commentators, to talk about a new stage in the

collective capacity of the EU in the field of foreign and security policy, about the emergence of a common collective position of the Union (despite the presence of different views among the EU member states). And it is difficult to disagree with this: the idea of strengthening the collective capacity of the EU, which has become a distinctive feature and a consequence of the efforts of its members over thirty years of cooperation, is now irrefutable. The European Union's self-awareness of itself as a subject of international processes and its demonstration in practice are becoming increasingly obvious. One cannot but agree with the opinion of the aforementioned group of authors that maturation is not a linear process, since it occurs at different rates at different stages of life, moreover, in different ways, and, moreover, does not acquire some "final completion" in a changing security/international environment.

However, maturity can, in our opinion, be manifested in the ability of the subject to permanently adapt to changing situations, while remaining able to make decisions, take responsibility, etc. It is in this vein that Heidi Mauer, Richard J. Whitman, Nicholas Wright [19] as well as Brigid Leffan [20] conducted their research.

Finally, it is worth mentioning the latest book by Richard Rose [21], which was published in January 2025. The book aroused interest for at least three reasons. First, R. Rose, noting that "security is conditional, not permanent", attempted to comprehend not only the past of European security, choosing 1945 as a starting point and emphasizing NATO's role in the security of the space from the Black Sea to the Potomac River in Washington (which, in particular, allowed Europeans to enjoy unprecedented economic security), but also the present, to which he devoted the third part of the study ("Security is Escalating"). Secondly, it was in the third part that R. Rose noted that Europe is not free from the "curse of war," and pointed out the significance for Europe of the struggle of Ukrainians against Putin's invading russian (pp. 123–142, "Ukraine: A Proxy War for Europe"). Thirdly, he set out his reflections on the future of European security in a situation where US commitment to Europe is decreasing and Putin has made security the "main concern" of Europeans. In addition, R. Rose considered three possible scenarios for the end of the war:

- the war reaches a stalemate; russian troops cannot seize more Ukrainian territory, but are strong enough in defense to maintain control over the territory they hold;

- an armistice similar to the 1953 Korean armistice is concluded, which contributes to the cessation of hostilities, but Ukrainian territories remain occupied;

- trying to avoid the risk of russians renewing the war, Ukraine will seek a long-term guarantee of military assistance.

Thus, in the scientific discourse, areas of analysis of European security have already been formed, in which one way or another Ukraine is at the center, as the leading trends of the time have been outlined. But, in our opinion, there is a lack of emphasis: the results of the end of the war should satisfy Ukraine, the Ukrainian State and society.

The purpose of the article is to analyze the threats faced by Europeans and track the trends of European security practices taking into account the Ukrainian perspective.

Presentation of the main material

Starting the analysis of political practices, let us pay attention to several points.
The first concerns European demography as one of the dominant factors that can both strengthen/guarantee security processes and act as their brake:

– at the beginning of 2025, *Worldometer*, analyzing Europe, identified 44 countries in its composition, starting the list/rating with russia, as the country with the largest population in 2024 – 144,820,423 people, and ending with the Holy See with about 500 inhabitants. In addition to the aforementioned 44 countries, 3 "dependent territories" operate within Europe – the Isle of Man, the Faroe Islands, Gibraltar). Together, the 47 entities were home to over 9,21% of the world's population, or – over 744,717,000 people (out of about 8 billion 200 thousand people on the planet, who were residents of 195 countries of the world). Thus, comparing Europe's human resources

with similar ones in other parts of the world, we find that Europe ranked third among the regions of the planet in terms of population, behind Asia and Africa, which at the end of 2024 had over 4,806,898 people and about 1,515,141 people, respectively [22];

– according to *Worldometer*, the population of Ukraine at the beginning of 2025 was about 38.5 million people (0,47% of the total world population), which allowed it to take 40th place among countries in terms of population;

– according to the latest published data from Eurostat [23], as of January 1, 2023, 448,8 million people lived in the European Union. The most densely populated country was Germany, with 84,4 million people (19% of the total EU population), followed by France with 68,2 million people (15%), then Italy – 59,0 million people (13%), Spain – 48,1 million people (11%) and Poland with 36,8 million people (8%). Just in these 5 countries the 66 % of the EU population has been settled. The smallest population quantity was in Malta (542 thousand people or 0,1 % from the total strength of the EU population), Luxemburg (661 thousand or also 0,1 % from the EU population), and in Cyprus (921 thousand or 0,2 %).

Among other important features of the EU's demographics that are worth paying attention to in the context of security is that in the EU, according to the aforementioned Eurostat, in 2023 the share of people aged 65 and over was 21%, and people aged 80+ – increased to 6%; there were almost 5% more women than men (229 million versus 219 million); the average age of the population in the EU was 44,5 years. At the same time, at the beginning of 2025, the average age of the population [22] in the USA was 38,5 years, in China – 40,1 years; in Russia – 40,3 years; in Ukraine – 41,8 years; in France – 42,3 years; in Poland – 42,5 years; in Germany – 45,5 years; in Spain – 45,9 years; in Italy – 48,2 years (High indicators of the average age of the population in some European countries are, among other things, evidence of the longest life expectancy in them).

Second point worth keeping in mind concerns the ranking of military strength of European countries and–wider–world, because with the election of US President Donald Trump and his determination to reconsider the US role in the Russian-Ukrainian war, transform transatlantic cooperation and, accordingly, American participation in NATO, as well as in other international organizations, understanding the military power of the world's countries (leading as well as others) will create a basis for comparing resources and provide a key to understanding the imbalance of qualitative indicators, as well as, accordingly, the risks associated with this imbalance.

So, according to *PowerIndex-2025* (*PwrIndx*; an indicator of 0,0000 is considered "ideal") [24]:

– the United States ranked first among 145 countries in the world, including 60 indicators – *PwrIndx: 0,0744*. Second place–russia (*PwrIndx: 0,0788*);

– the 10 strongest armed forces in Europe (excluding the russian army) include the armies of the United Kingdom (6th place in the world ranking, *PwrIndx: 0,1785*), France (7th place, *PwrIndx: 0,1878*), Italy (10th place, *PwrIndx: 0,2164*), Germany (14th place, *PwrIndx: 0,2601*), Spain (17th place, *PwrIndx: 0,3242*), Ukraine (20th place, *PwrIndx: 0,3755*), Poland (21st place, *PwrIndx: 0,3776*), Sweden (27th place, *PwrIndx: 0,4835*), Greece (30th place, *PwrIndx 0,5337*), the Netherlands (36th place, *PwrIndx: 0,6412*);

– the armed forces of the European Union countries that were not mentioned above, but those that were included in the world ranking (except Malta and Cyprus), were located in *PwrIndx* in the following order: Portugal (39th place), Denmark (45th), Finland (48th), Romania (51st), Czech Republic (53rd), Hungary (55th), Belgium (61st), Bulgaria (62nd), Austria (68th), Slovakia (71st), Croatia (74th), Lithuania (88th), Slovenia (96th), Ireland (97th), Latvia (99th), Estonia (107th), Luxembourg (117th);

– let's also take into account the *PwrIndx* of several satellites/partners, or currently "sympathizers" of russia: China, taking 3rd place in the world ranking, has a similar indicator to the russianan federation *PwrIndx: 0,0788*; Iran was ranked 16th with a *PwrIndx of 0,3048*; North Korea was ranked 34th with a *PwrIndx of 0,6016*; Kazakhstan was ranked 57th with a *PwrIndx of*

1,1016; Belarus was ranked 70th with a *PwrIndx of 1,3954*; Kyrgyzstan was ranked 105th with a *PwrIndx of 2,2543*.

These figures should be viewed in the context of NATO's capabilities (and this is a third observation) compared to russian's. The data available for analysis [25] were as of March 2024. According to them, 29 of the 32 member states were located in Europe. According to 27 indicators, NATO and russian's power looked like this (Table 1):

Table 1

The estimated NATO-russia firepower ratio (2024)

Indicators	NATO	russia
Joint manpower (personnel)	1,506,750	810,000
Frontline strength (personnel)	851 350	623 175
Manpower reserve (personnel)	649 150	187 500
Total air power (units)	5 253	3 137
Fighters/Interceptors (units)	881	580
Dedicated attack AC (units)	277	558
Transport (units)	381	333
Special mission AC (units)	244	110
Air refueling (units)	155	14
Helicopters (units)	2 172	1 148
Attack helicopters (units)	360	403
Armored combat vehicles (units)	3 184	9 425
Armored combat vehicles (units)	251 909	113 731
Self-propelled guns (vehicles)	1 158	4 931
Towed artillery (units)	1 765	3 252
Rocket artillery (units)	429	2 915
Total naval assets (hulls)	687	449
Aircraft carriers (hulls)	4	1
Helicopter carriers (hulls)	3	0
Destroyers (hulls)	28	11
Frigates (hulls)	34	8
Corvettes (hulls)	16	65
Submarines (hulls)	37	53
Mine vessels (hulls)	45	37
Available manpower (personnel)	103 333 500	52 500 000
Combined/Defense budget	$235.5 billion (combined)	$82.6 billion (defense); in 2025 –
Oil production (barrels per day)	6,838 million	10,750 million
Oil consumption	---	3,700 million

Thus, as the above data show, the world has accumulated significant resources that characterize the significant "firepower" of countries located in different regions of the planet; NATO has advantages over russian's in most "firepower" parameters, but the potential withdrawal of the US from the Alliance, and even more so the combination of russian's potential with the potential of its closest partners/satellites/sympathizers or dependent countries (like the de facto annexed Belarus, which has clearly lost its sovereignty) constitutes a powerful resource for a war against Europe with its (in the words of Josep Borrell) "bonsai armies" and, accordingly, the

subsequent defeat of Europe, as well as for a potential Third World War, which, however, as the media occasionally report, has already begun, and the escalation of violence is only intensifying. Arguments "against" such a statement are difficult to find. And not only because in previous cases (two world wars that the 20th century experienced) the "worldwide" characteristic was singled out after their end, but also because before our eyes the internationalization of the Russianan-Ukrainian war is taking place against the background of Europe's unpreparedness (although the categorical "Poles, wake up!" has already sounded in the European expanses, but it seems that it has only fully responded in its eastern part).

The above prompts us to pose rhetorical questions: *is the "firepower" of democracies and authoritarianisms really becoming dangerously equal? Will the 21st century become the century of the dominance of authoritarian regimes and, accordingly, the economic and geopolitical retreat of the West and democracy? What will be the role of numerous nationalisms, stunningly hyper-polarized by the political elites of Europe, as well as in other regions of the planet, in these processes?*

The Ukrainian view of the consequences of the defense and security, international and domestic policies of the EU and the policies of NATO member states (from the moment of the full-scale russia`s invasion of Ukraine until the beginning of 2025) allows us to distinguish the characteristic features of these policies and defense and security practices: indifference or "concern"; the excitement of representatives of the European establishment, comparable only to horse racing, and bets/predictions as to whether Ukraine will fall in three days? In a week? Will it hold out for a month…; sympathy for the victim or undisguised contempt for it and assistance to the aggressor; insignificant preventive (on the eve of the full-scale invasion) assistance to Ukraine and the further inhibition and endless procrastination of decisions and actions (for example, in the area of sanctions, closing the sky, etc.); resource assistance – from apparent to a kind of "restrictive": assistance "for the continuation of the war", but not "for the victory" of Ukraine, and, ultimately, – the transformation of Ukraine into a "laboratory of war of the 21st century"; latent cooperation with russian (continuation of business and payment of taxes on the territory of the russian federation by a number of European and, in general, Western companies, growth of trade with the aggressor through third countries, use of the shadow fleet of russian, etc.); ejection by part of the political elite of Europe of the thesis that for the old russian dictator the borders of the European Union or NATO countries will not be a significant obstacle.

In addition to the "russia factor", other, no less, or even more significant signs of the times, other factors whose effect on European security is undeniably destructive, can be distinguished.

The first concerns the fact that the international security system is completely broken. UN arbitration, often, does not work. How the norms of international law do not work properly in the modern world. Shameful evidence of this is not only the fallacy of the Budapest Memorandum, or, for example, the position of Mongolia, which, as a signatory to the Rome Statute, did not arrest the russian dictator putin [26], although it should have done so, according to the warrant for his arrest issued by the International Criminal Court (ICC): it is not only Asian Mongolia that is inclined to ignore the "spirit and letter" of international law. Thus, in January of this year, Polish President Andrzej Duda asked [27] the government headed by Tusk to ensure that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu can attend the 80th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp on January 27, without fear of arrest under an ICC warrant. Even earlier, France [28] and Hungary [29] announced that they would not arrest Netanyahu. Romania has spoken in the same spirit: on January 19, the country's Prime Minister Marcel Ciolacu reported on the X network [30] that Romania and Israel are working on preparing a joint government meeting, to which Netanyahu has been invited to Romania.

That is, if we do not focus on who, whom and why is protecting from punishment/arrest (as well as the fact that Israel is not a member of the ICC and disputes its jurisdiction), but simply analyze these facts of violating the ICC's decisions, the conclusion is obvious: international law is being "roded" by the Europeans themselves. And this is a dangerous precedent and a threat to

Ukraine (to be left with an unresolved issue – punishing putin for numerous crimes). And if we take into account that the US House of Representatives even approved sanctions [31] against the ICC (due to the "bias" of the ICC), then we can say that the existing international law is becoming, for one reason or another, a kind of burden for Europeans, Americans, and Asians. And if some analysts in this situation draw attention to the fact that the "collective West" simply does not "surrender" its own (for example, the same Netanyahu), then we emphasize another point: contempt for international law becomes a trigger for dividing the world, since each player wants to establish his own rules of the game and control the processes, which, as we understand, will not contribute to European security, as well as security in the world.

The second, no less obvious factor, shows that international institutions (from the UN to the International Committee of the Red Cross) are showing their incompetence or bias (often as a result of their leaders being "on Putin's payroll." And this applies not only to Gerhard Schröder, or, to one degree or another, Angela Merkel, but also to many European MPs from Austria or France, Hungary or Slovakia, or even Olaf Scholz, who was in no hurry with German aid to Ukraine, and even blocked packages [32] proposed by the German Foreign Ministry and the German Ministry of Defense, which simply does not let the idea die that the Federal Chancellor of Germany is still dependent on Putin in one way or another (due to compromising material, money, or previous commitments of party members). These, as well as numerous other facts, lead to a simple conclusion: European leaders and international institutions today clearly lack not only responsibility, but also, so to speak, high morality (in particular, in the process of identifying the victim and the aggressor), as well as much else.

The third point indicates that there is a rapid reformatting of military and other blocs. NATO expanded at the expense of Finland and Sweden (in 2023-2024); Armenia (in the winter of 2024) announced the "freezing" of its participation in the CSTO at all levels, in August refused to participate in the September CSTO exercises in Kyrgyzstan, and in January of this year launched the process of joining the EU [33] and signed a strategic partnership agreement with the USA [34]; to BRICS in early January 2024. 5 countries joined (Egypt, Iran, UAE, Saudi Arabia and Ethiopia, although, as we recall, Argentina refused to join), and at the beginning of January this year, 2025, the fourth most populous country in the world, Indonesia, officially joined BRICS [35]. Nowadays, there is increasing talk about the "Eurasian Entente" consisting of China, russia, Iran and North Korea.

The fourth feature of the time: we are recording many signs of deglobalization processes (initiated by the spread of COVID-19, which are now deepening, in particular, as a result of sanctions against the Putin regime after the full-scale invasion of the russian aggressor into the sovereign territory of Ukraine), from which all of Europe is clearly suffering. And the conclusion is obvious: deglobalization is destroying containment systems in regions of the planet, as well as in the world as a whole.

Finally, and this is another, *fifth, feature of the first third of the 21st century*: there is a confrontation between the elites of seemingly friendly or partner countries both within Europe itself, and between European and American or Asian elites. What is the audacity of, for example, Elon Musk, who called Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau a "girl" [36], whose opinion is not important, or his blatant rudeness when Musk (in response to criticism about his support for the German far-right) called Olaf Scholz a "fool" and "shit" [37]. Musk also declared his support for the British right-wingers, united in the Reform UK party [38]. So, we are not only talking about interpersonal conflicts between representatives of political elites, but also, as one might assume, about the increasingly powerful dictate in the international arena of leaders or representatives of corporations, their interference in the politics of European countries through, for example, somewhat veiled support for opposition European far-right forces. The latter, as is known, prompted the Bundestag administration to initiate an investigation [39] into whether the actions of I. Musk, who actively promotes the Alternative for Germany, the German law on political parties.

And the organization Lobby Control stated [39] that Musk's actions can be regarded as an illegal party donation (which is prohibited by German law).

Thus, the "attack on Europe" is being carried out not only by russia, but also, as has become apparent recently, by the American elite. And this attack, at least, reveals its hybrid nature (if we analyze the players and their "targets", as well as the rules of the game without any restrictions).

It is clear that this series of either barely noticeable *fluctuations* (in the politics, for example, of supposedly neutral Switzerland [40]), or clearly outlined *points of numerous bifurcations*, which indicate turning points in the geopolitical history of Europe, each European country, as well as states on other continents, may be continued, capturing in the hybrid present new challenges, threats and, accordingly, risks for the geopolitical stability of Europe and the world both today and tomorrow, as well as after the end of the russia-Ukrainian war. Or, "conflict", as European politicians call our, Ukrainian, struggle for the survival of the nation and state, resorting to a "condescending" euphemism.

When predicting the state of security in Europe in the future, it is worth taking into account not only the general negative trends that characterize the present of the planet and affect the geopolitical and security prospects of Europe, but also the critical (and most obvious) challenges of the present:

– no one can say with certainty when the war in Ukraine (as a European state) will end. Trump's claims about its end "in 24 hours" have disappeared. After the inauguration, a new horizon for the long-awaited peace appeared – 100 days;

– no one knows the final results/conditions for the cessation of russia's aggression against Ukraine. That is, in a hypothetical "tomorrow," will the EU border a sovereign Ukraine within the borders of 1991, a Ukraine that shares democratic European values and poses no existential threats to Europe, or will Europe, as in the previous, twentieth, century, have a border with transformed Soviet imperialism, which now appears in the guise of russia's neo-imperialism and racism? Will Europeans, in the event of a shameful "surrender" of Ukraine to the aggressor, have to build walls and other fortifications not only on the border with Belarus and russia, but also with Ukraine, as "friendly" Poland has zealously begun to demonstrate, having begun construction of the "Shield of the East" fortification complex in the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship in the fall of 2024 [41])? Will European countries, predicting their future, take up the challenge of covering their territories with warning siren systems, following the Estonian city of Paide [42]? Like Norway, develop plans for the construction of bomb shelters [43]? Following Switzerland, renew the network of outdated nuclear shelters [44]? Or, like the already mentioned Poland, take up the reform of the civil protection system [45], realizing that the European future has little chance of being carefree. That is, the "facts on the ground" portend the fragmentation of Europe;

– after all, those hybrid challenges in the economic, social and other spheres that will appear even before or after the end of the war and which, one way or another, but definitely will affect the further security of Ukraine and the whole of Europe are unknown today.

However, today there are already known and understandable aspects of the security of European existence. It is known that the security of Europe will be influenced by a number of internal factors, which, in our opinion, are related, first of all, to the coming to power in a number of European countries of far-right political forces that, so to speak, are in constant contact and cooperation with Putin. Thus, let us recall that in September 2024, for the first time in the 11-year history of its existence, the far-right party "Alternative for Germany" won [46] the state elections in Thuringia, significantly ahead of its closest competitor – the Christian Democratic Union (CDU). In Saxony, in the east of Germany, "Alternative for Germany" took second place, lagging behind the CDU by less than one and a half percent of the vote. The Austrian far-right and anti-immigration "Freedom Party" on September 29, 2024. won the parliamentary elections in Austria, receiving about 29% of the vote [47]. And, thus, it reflected in its own way the terrifying transformation of Austria, because for the first time since World War II, the far right won a powerful victory in national elections. That is, the number of Putin's allies in Europe has increased

in 2024, and they, by maintaining (sometimes demonstratively) ties with the Russian dictator, in their own way contribute to the legitimization of his regime. And let's also keep in mind that in the summer of 2024 As a result of the parliamentary elections in France [48] (in which, by the way, voter turnout was the highest since 1987 and amounted to 67%), a coalition of left-wing parties called the "New Popular Front" won 182 seats in the National Assembly (against 168 seats for the "Together" coalition led by Emmanuel Macron), and the "National Union" of Marine Le Pen's protege Jordan Bardelli came in third place. Let's not forget the policies of Slovakia under Robert Fico, and Hungary under Viktor Orban. And here we emphasize: the values professed by European far-right populists turn out to be close to the population of the countries, which supports them in the elections. What will happen next? How right-wing or left-wing populists will build defense/security strategies for their countries after the war ends, how they will build economic and trade relations with the US, Russia, and China – we will understand only over time.

To the above, it is worth adding that we currently do not know how the second round of the presidential elections in Romania (to be held in May 2025) will end: will the hybrid Russian interference in their course end in a triumph for Russia, and again (as in the first round) will the winner be Călin Gheorghescu? Will the Romanians protect themselves from Russian influence? How will the "final round of the battle for Moldova" end – the 2025 parliamentary elections? Will the Moldovan parliament declare deepening relations with Russia as its geopolitical priority?

And who will become the sixth president of Poland after the end of Andrzej Duda's second term - Warsaw Mayor Rafal Trzaskowski or the head of the Institute of National Remembrance Karol Nawrocki, known for his anti-Ukrainian rhetoric? On January 9, Nawrocki already "distinguished himself" by stating that he "does not see Ukraine in either the EU or NATO" [49].

That is, under the influence of internal factors, value and geopolitical transformations are taking place in Europe before our eyes. And if we take into account external factors that have already influenced the geopolitics of a number of European states, and therefore their security factors, then France's geopolitical retreat from Africa will be striking. Although E. Macron, firstly, interpreted the withdrawal from the Sahel countries (where French troops were stationed for ten years) as a consequence of the coups that took place there and, accordingly, the reluctance of the French to help pro-Russian putschists in this regard, and secondly, he stated that another consequence is that France is "growing up and reorganizing" rather than retreating from Africa [50]. Another case is related to the challenges to Europe from Turkey, which at the start of 2025 again speaks out in favor of the creation of two states in Cyprus [51] and, in particular, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

Ultimately, Europe's security will be determined by its relationship with the U.S. Since Donald Trump's claims to Greenland, which is not only characterized by its "in-between" position (between the Arctic and Atlantic Oceans and between Europe and North America, which is arguably strategically important for the US military, in particular its ballistic missile early warning systems), but also reserves of "the most important minerals", as Mike Waltz put it. So, Greenland is not just about the US's relationship with Denmark, but also with the entire EU, with the European NATO member states.

Today, of course, we cannot say whether Denmark will retain its state sovereignty, and in the EU, accordingly, the borders will remain unchanged, as we do not know what will prevail – Trump's calls to reduce external spending and, as a result, limit the involvement of the American military in international conflicts (in particular, in their creation and fueling by one means or another, or by abstaining from decisions and participation), or vice versa – the escalation of conflicts with Denmark/the EU, Panama and neighboring Canada, if the desire to turn it into the 51st American state prevails, which, in the end, will mean both increased spending and aggravation of conflicts. Therefore, it is clear that the delineation of the American-European problem will definitely affect the security situation in Europe and throughout the world. And it will also become an "exemplary basis" for the actions of the newest (overt or still latent) aggressors, and will lead

to a change in China's policy towards Europe, because if the US regains control over the Panama Canal, from the use of which the Chinese today have much greater trade benefits than the Americans, who actually built it (in the period from 1904 to June 1920, when the canal was officially opened), and it was transferred to Panama only after December 31, 1999, then China will most likely be forced to reorient itself more towards Europe.

Despite the claims about the "greatness of the USA" and the promised return of "America great again" by D. Trump, what is obvious today is the geopolitical retreat of the Americans from Asia – from Afghanistan. How the audacity of competitors, which was simply unthinkable until recently, is becoming more and more visible (and not only Russia with missiles and UAVs, which fly in one form or another into the territory of the EU countries, and ships - enter the territorial waters of NATO countries, or China, but also Iran or "HAMAS", North Korea). And what lies ahead? The developing situation reflects the intensification of the strategic competition of the USA with Europe. Or, perhaps, this is the geopolitical retreat of the USA from Europe, including Ukraine? On the one hand, the aggravation of the situation will contribute to the reduction of certain risks for the USA, but on the other hand – the increase of new threats for the USA, Europe, and, in particular, for Ukraine.

In the event of further fragmentation of the international system, undermining the capacity of international organizations (as a result, in particular, of not only the US withdrawal in 2018 from the "hypocritical and self-serving" UN Human Rights Council [52], but also from the WHO and the Paris Climate Agreement, which the world learned about with the beginning of Donald Trump's presidency [53; 54], with the decrease in US participation in NATO, and then his withdrawal from the Alliance altogether), a deepening of the American Republican president's "understanding" of the dictator-war criminal putin, the growth of unstable political systems near European borders and the strengthening of the authoritarian challenge, the growth of populist and extremist movements, terrorist attacks, and migratory pressure, will Europe be able to become independent from the US security umbrella, remain liberal-democratic and become more technologically advanced, and thus be able to become (and continue to be) a full-fledged center of power (global state), a center of attraction for Ukrainians (regardless of whether with the "capital of the EU" in Brussels or, as George Maloney wants, in Rome)?

Conclusions

European security in the context of deglobalization is under pressure (caused by new challenges and threats) from russian aggression against Ukraine and uncertainty related to the prospects of its cessation/deepening (up to russian aggression against NATO countries). The uncertainties are added by brutal new authoritarian and particularist practices, cooperation of undemocratic regimes among themselves, as well as their desire to play a zero-sum game with the "collective West". And also – the rise of nationalist values to the detriment of universal human values and almost the "last chance" for Europe and the entire geopolitical West not to lose its democratic prestige.

Prospects for further research are related to the continuous (daily) analysis of changes in the European and, in general, global security environment, which is endlessly changing, fragmenting, and at the same time, noticeably, constantly becoming more complicated. And such analysis should enable a timely response of Ukraine, Europe, and Western democracies to future challenges, threats, and risks.

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