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Data: 15/11/2026 05:26:12

DOI:10.17951/we.2020.6.2.115-125 | Wschód Europy • Восток Европы • East of Europe vol 6, 2 / 2020

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Ukraine's Security Problem: in Search for a solution

1. Introduction: understanding the problem

The problem of international security on the European continent is one of the most pressing issues of international relations nowadays. Sustainable security in Europe has never been an easy task for a region where the both World Wars started. Today we are witnessing a complex problem of international security involving Ukraine and there is little consensus in the political as well as academic circles throughout the European countries as to finding the way out.

As it is always the case with major conflicts, the year 2014 can show us an incident, but in search for a real reason we need to dig deeper in history in order to understand the current situation. Indeed, a retrospect analysis of the security developments in Europe in the precedent years shows that the European security system as of 2014 was lame on both legs.

Basically, the problem under analysis is the result of erroneous confusion between the concepts of security and defence. The simple logic advises that the more defence measures we take, the more secure we may feel. When short-term (mis)calculations prevail, states act according to this logic. But in the long term, as illustrated by the relevant 'security dilemma' studies[1], such a strategy provokes a decay in the international security.

The only explanation why this strategy works is that the realm of international politics is anarchical and each actor's behaviour reflects predominantly individual 'defensive' interest. Similar calculations are the essence of any decision to join a military union, where we observe the principle of 'first in, last out', i.e. the earlier a state joins a military union, the longer period of time it will perceive itself secure.

Although theory may offer simple explanations, the practice of real international politics provides for more complicated considerations. An accurate analysis of the cur-

[1] C.L. Glaser, *The Security Dilemma Revisited*, "World Politics" 1997, vol. 50, no. 1, pp. 171–201; J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001.

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rent security problem in Europe needs to address this issue from the viewpoints of multiple stakeholders, i.e. Ukraine, Russia, the European countries and, of course, the USA.

Unlike most of Central European and Baltic countries, Ukraine has had different views of its security mechanisms throughout the period of independence. The political parties and the Ukrainian society were ready to discuss all the options: permanent neutrality, non-alliance, NATO membership, alliance with Russia and even self-reliance based on a nuclear status.

Signing the Budapest memorandum in 1994 left the 'nuclear option' out, and Ukraine never considered it again seriously as a rather economically costly and politically risky endeavour.

A security alliance with Russia was never considered in Ukraine as a viable option since the very independence, as it contradicted the idea of independence itself. Moreover, approaching Russia-led economic integration projects (like the Single Economic Space or the Customs Union), always triggered intense political debates and demarches in Ukraine.

On the contrast, NATO membership often appeared as a program point of some political forces in Ukraine. Nevertheless, NATO–Ukraine cooperation was limited instrumentally by the Partnership for Peace programme with common military exercises and institutionally by Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC). These are broad and inclusive cooperation formats, which were created for all the European countries including Russia, and cannot be considered as pre-membership steps. Ukraine was never offered a Membership Action Plan on behalf of NATO, although the will to join the military union had been expressed several times in history and currently is on the agenda for the Ukrainian government.

The major political forces in Ukraine also never seriously employed the option of a permanent neutrality. The matter is, that the idea of Ukraine's European integration was far more popular among the population and much 'easier to sell' politically, so the idea of neutrality was to be sacrificed.

On the contrast, the formula of non-alliance was easier to fit in the complex nexus of security mechanism of Ukraine stuck between NATO in the West and Russia in the East. Non-alliance was at the core of Kuchma's so called 'multivector foreign policy'. For some in Ukraine, it was a policy without priorities, while the others regarded it as an attempt to balance with Russia.

So, which security mechanism could be really an option for Ukraine now? To answer this question we need to return to the theoretical problem articulated earlier, that is of confusion between security and defence. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact, the future of NATO was at question. Indeed, why should we need NATO if we need to counter the Soviet menace no more? As an organization of collective defence, or military bloc, it was doomed, as many predicted[2]. But NATO

[2] K. Waltz, *The Emerging Structure of International Politics*, "International Security" 1993, vol. 18, no. 2, pp. 44–79.

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evolved in the sphere of security offering internal security mechanisms for its members in response to new threats and providing cooperation mechanisms (e.g., PfP) with non-members. As a result, NATO developed an intense dialogue and cooperation with Russia, mitigating somehow the irritating process of enlargement to the East. NATO crisis of 2002–2003, related to political rift among the major NATO members on the issue of Iraq, helped Russia perceive the bloc as functionally powerless.

Still, NATO never seized to be a military bloc with the idea of collective defence at its core. Therefore, when the allied countries observed Russia's oil-driven military build-up during the 2000s and 2010s, especially after the Russian aggression against Georgia in 2008, they recalled not the Russia-NATO Council in the first place, but the content of the article 5 of the NATO Treaty.

The approach of collective defence works, but only for those, who joined the club in time. Those who were left behind need to count on other security mechanisms. This situation clearly demonstrates that in the world of collective defence the international security is divisible. In Europe, the regional security is divided between NATO and Russia. Those who are in between possess less security and need to compensate the loss with something else (sovereignty, property, territory, loyalty etc.).

No wonder that any attempt to create a security belt between the Baltic and Black sea were void, since NATO members did not need and could not afford development of alternative security arrangements, that would politically challenge the existing regional defence system provided for by the NATO Treaty.

The situation with security problems in Europe in the recent years proves the idea that great powers prevail in the international politics. Therefore, issues that are existential to the great powers shall be closely considered by the regional states in their foreign policy strategies. Small powers like Ukraine[3] have to keep in mind that great powers possess capacity to challenge the status quo. It is especially relevant to the case of Russia, which during 2000–2010's developed enough capacity and accumulated relevant resources to sustain its revisionist policy in Europe.

For Ukraine, it is a great challenge to be a neighbour of a great power like Russia as well. As far as in 1990's Russia has articulated her special interest in the 'near abroad', or former republics of the USSR. Aggression against Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine, as well as involvement in the affairs of Belarus, Armenia and other ex-USSR countries illustrates Russia's readiness and capacity to invest in and sustain its right to dominate the approaches to Russia.

On the other hand, for other great powers confronting Russia, there is a natural temptation to exploit Ukraine against Russia. As Zbigniew Brzezinski once said, 'without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be an empire'. Therefore, a small power like Ukraine neighbouring such a great power as Russia, shall avoid situations of confrontation with

[3] We here distinguish, of course, between small powers and small states. Ukraine here is considered small power according to criteria outlined in detail in: A. Toje, *The European Union as a small power: after the post-Cold War*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, pp. 29–30.

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its neighbour unless it has sufficient capacity and resources to escalate a conflict. In 2014 Ukraine had neither military nor institutional capacity to sustain and escalate the conflict with Russia. The current world order (or disorder, as many would argue) is not capable to protect the weak against the strong, even in Europe, unless the weak is a member of NATO.

Consequently, during the years of conflict and war with Russia, Ukraine has developed a victim syndrome. Ukrainian politicians and leadership have been anxious explaining the world and Europe particularly that the war is taking place in Europe, and that Ukraine is at the cornerstone of the European security restraining the aggressive Russia. As Margaret Thatcher is quoted as saying, 'Being powerful is like being a lady. If you have to tell people you are, you are not.'

Indeed, if it were collective security in minds of Ukraine's European partners and if Ukraine's security were crucial for the European NATO members, we would see concerted action to prevent and mitigate the conflict with Russia. Instead, the framework of collective defence pushes the Baltic and Central European states to strengthen US military presence in the region and secure political reassurances of adherence to provisions of Article 5 in case of Russia's aggression against any of the Eastern NATO members concerned.

Russia's wars against Georgia and Ukraine prove that NATO is not a solution if we think of a region-wide system of security. Based on the idea of divisible security, NATO can provide security only to its members. The same is relevant to any military bloc. If we were to search for a solution for Europe, we would be offered to choose between two variants of Europe. Either we would see a Europe split into military blocs (as it was in the Cold War times), or a Europe with a comprehensive and thoroughly developed mechanism of collective security, which originated in Helsinki in 1975 and gave birth to measures of confidence building, verification, arms control, human rights protection etc.

Ukraine's future would hardly be peaceful and prosperous if we chose the first option. Let us face it: NATO does not need Ukraine. European partners are quite comfortable with the current model of the Ukrainian conflict management. They support Ukraine financially, as well as institutionally maintaining anti-Russian sanctions policy: it is much cheaper and less risky than sacrificing their soldiers in order to revert Russian aggression. Similarly, the US does not need to be obliged to defend Ukraine from Russia. NATO is supported by the US not for charity, but in order to prevent the European countries, mainly Germany, from developing their own nuclear capacities. Once Ukraine exchanged the nuclear arsenal for the Budapest memorandum, there is no need to extend the American umbrella eastwards[4].

[4] Eastern NATO members are often regarded as the US's group of support inside NATO, as recently was demonstrated by controversy around US troops stationed in Germany: T. Jones, Deutsche Welle, https://www.dw.com/en/us-threatens-to-withdraw-troops-from-germany/a-49959555, "US threatens to withdraw troops from Germany", 09.08.2019, accessed 10 VIII 2019. In a similar fashion, countries of Central Europe often search for a special place in the US's politics, as can be illustrated

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The second option seems more relevant to Ukraine's security circumstances. As the theory says, small powers are interested in international institutions. Not possessing enough power to establish its own agenda, it is in interests of a small power to support and invest in a system of internationally bound norms and institutions. Ukraine, as a small power, which does not enjoy membership in a military bloc, feels all the consequences of the approach of divisible security. Surrounded by neighbours enjoying higher levels of security, Ukraine shall insist on a logic of indivisible security showing that insecurity spill over to its neighbours shall stimulate the latter ones support its stance in settlement of the conflict.

It is a huge problem of the current time that the mechanisms of collective security developed decades ago are often ignored by the members of the UN. Instead of forcing the Security Council and its permanent members as the ones responsible for maintaining the international peace and security engage in full capacity in the resolution of the bloody war and brutal breach of international law, the international community willingly supports partial efforts in the framework of the Normandy format. The weakest point of any conferences, which involve great powers together with small powers, is that the great powers always feel their supremacy. The tradition to convene inclusive ad hoc conferences dates back as far as to the Congress of Vienna, as well as the practice of great powers to maintain two channels of negotiations: an open one for all the conference participants, and a secret one reserved exclusively for the great powers[5].

That is why small powers shall always tend to diplomacy in the framework of institutionalized mechanisms. The UN system is not free from inequality problem, of course. However, the permanent members of the Security Council are bound by special responsibility and moral accountability for preservation of the international peace and security. The OSCE mechanism, once designed for the European continent, is another example of a collective security architecture, which is worth investing trust and political authority in it.

Adherence to the principle of indivisible international security and, therefore, support for the global and regional institutionalized security mechanisms like the UN and the OSCE, needs a systemic approach to be employed by Ukraine. Such an approach shall create a 'network of linkages' which would be useful in Ukraine's efforts to compensate security deficit created in Europe. By network of linkages, we mean a set of measures meant to incorporate Ukraine in the existing system of international relations in such a way that any aggression against Ukraine would be critically limited.

by the issue of moving embassies of some of these countries from Tel-Aviv to Jerusalem in order to please administration of President D. Trump.

[5] G. Peterson, *Political Inequality at the Congress of Vienna*, "Political Science Quarterly" 1945, vol. 60, no. 4, pp. 532–554.

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2. In search of a solution: political measures

We cannot re-write history, of course, but prior to 2014 Ukraine underestimated the role and capacity of the Budapest memorandum. What was produced as a political declaration in 1994 needed continuous diplomatic work after that towards re-assurances of the provisions of the memorandum. A unique document, the Budapest memorandum needed a unique diplomatic approach. Ukraine was not offered NATO membership in 1994, instead the great powers should have regularly reaffirmed their readiness to guarantee Ukraine's independence and territorial integrity. The Budapest memorandum should have developed institutionally into a permanent multilateral mechanism of consultations and should have grown in numbers from 3+1 (Russia, the USA, Great Britain and Ukraine) to 5+1 (adding France and China as the Security Council permanent members) or even 6+1 (adding Germany as a key European state).

This was the task to be done before the war with Russia began[6], but still the Budapest memorandum shall not be abandoned and shall be given new meaning. The idea is to fulfil capitalization on the unique historical fact of Ukraine's denuclearization in the 1990s. The new meaning of the Budapest memorandum shall bring about a formal commitment on behalf of the abovementioned states, including Russia, that Ukraine's independence and territorial integrity is valued as a crucial element of the all-European security system where different actors, by nature and capacity, co-exist in balance and cooperation.

In order to free this proposition from naivety, Ukraine, like any small power in its quest for higher levels of security, shall take seriously the global issues. The current global problems have been a real challenge for the modern civilization for some decades. They appear to be the only driving factor to question the anarchical nature of the modern international relations and endorse development of global governance systems. Active participation of the great powers, including Russia, is essential to resolve the global issues. Moreover, it is an affair of honour for the great powers to lead the way for the world's fight against climate change, spread of disease, hunger and poverty, etc. As the world recognizes the great powers' special responsibility for the international peace and security, similarly the great powers shall assume responsibility for the pioneering role to resolve the global issues. As was the threat of mutual nuclear extinction a prerequisite for a détente during the Cold War period, so shall the threat of global issues lead to international cooperation and collective action.

Therefore, the global issues discourse is crucial in promoting Ukraine's security agenda because any measures leading to détente in Europe and the world would even security disparities between NATO and Russia, on one side, and the countries in between, on the other.

[6] Some elements of the vision provided here are foreseen in the often-quoted article written in 2009 by highly respected Ukrainian strategic thinkers Volodymyr Gorbulin and Oleksandr Lytvynenko. See: Литвиненко О., Горбулін В., Дзеркало тижня, https://dt.ua/POLITICS/velikiy_susid_viznachivsya_scho_ukrayini_robiti_dali.html, "Великий сусід визначився. Що Україні робити далі?", № 35, 18–25.09.2009, accessed: 11 IX 2019.

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On the national level, Ukraine has a lot to do to enhance its security. First, it is a high time to restore proper public administration, install real democratic procedures and empower rule of law. Ukraine's modern history and the period of independence after collapse of the USSR proves evidence that autocratic regime has no chance in the Ukrainian society. However, at the same time, democratic reforms have not been accomplished yet and a lot needs to be done in order to construct a real democracy free from corruption, abuse of power and violation of human rights.

Democratic rule is existential for Ukraine. Almost 30 years of independence witness that the Ukrainian society is very pluralistic and it needs an unbiased mechanism to reach agreement and consensus. Ukraine needs 'Good governance' to develop painlessly with the problems of language controversies and different regional affiliations. In addition, democratic mechanisms shall be better employed on the municipal level in order to promote rural development and stop labour emigration.

Human rights continues to be a challenge to the individual security in Ukraine in the light of the problem of annexation of the Crimea and occupation in the Eastern part of Ukraine. Ukrainian citizens of these territories are temporarily under control of Russia and Russia-backed forces. Therefore, Ukraine has a very limited capacity to protect her citizens from prosecution and repressions there. By far, we can say that restoration of security for Ukrainian citizens is incomplete until restoration of full control of Ukraine over her internationally recognized territory.

3. In search of a solution: economic measures

Economic development is important for any country, but is rarely seen as a source of security. Nevertheless, in the modern international relations creation of economic linkages with other states means raising stakes for them to start a conflict. No wonder that initiating a viable cooperation model in Europe after the World War II needed to be founded on basic industries (coal and steel) in order to terminate warmongering and revanchist options in the foreign policy of the post-war governments.

For Ukraine as a country, which does not enjoy solid security mechanisms and guarantees, there shall be a priority to develop economic capacity and linkages with its neighbours and could-be foes. A military option against Ukraine should have been far more expensive for Russia in 2014 than diplomacy. By the way, significant intensification of economic relations with Russia was one of the recommendations back in 2009, solely for security reasons[7].

The US ties with Russia in space and oil are critical for both nations, and it is hard to imagine a decision from any of the states today to start a serious conflict between them. Therefore, the countries refer to diplomacy in their bilateral relations and use third countries to project their power against one another.

Unfortunately, the war in Ukraine had some benefits for other actors. Russia gained territories and enhanced her strategic position in the Black Sea. Some countries re-

[7] *Ibidem.*

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ceived a significant influx of cheap Ukrainian labour. The US enjoys an excellent opportunity to influence Russia in significant proximity to the Russian border. As for Ukraine, she needs to stop this process of transformation to someone's foothold and resource base, and create its own unique market capacity to become attractive to others in terms of economic cooperation.

The key to success in the modern capitalist system is creating a suitable environment for capital creation and accumulation. For a country in transition, it is a great challenge. Unfortunately, Ukraine has not finished her transition from socialist to capitalist system. This is clearly seen in two main problems. The first is about very low level of foreign direct investments attracted during the period of independence. According the World Bank, Ukraine attracted 2.5 bln USD as of 2018. It is almost nothing is we compare this rate with that of, on one side, Poland (16.7 bln USD) and, on the other side, less populated and less liberal Belarus (1.4 bln USD)[8]. The main reason for such a low level of foreign investments is insecurity of capital in Ukraine, which stems from weak legislation and law enforcement in this sphere. As a result, long-term investments appear to be too risky and subject to political developments in Ukraine.

The other problem, which restrains development of market economy and integration of Ukraine to the modern capitalist system, is insecurity of personal property rights. Famous Peruvian economist Hernando de Soto described this as a problem of 'dead capital'. According to H. de Soto, the developing countries and countries in transition share the common problem of being market economies without the major component of any developed (capitalist) state. This component is ability of a national economy to generate and accumulate capital, which stems from a transparent and state-guaranteed system of protection of individual and corporate property rights[9].

Managing these two problems of economic nature gives chances to Ukraine to enhance significantly her security position. Integration to the global economy not just as a banana republic, but also as a value-added producing nation, may serve as a safeguard to possible conflicts. The Middle Eastern region is a good example to illustrate this effect. It is a common perception of the region as a whole as a highly insecure and explosive. Nevertheless, there are zones, namely, countries, where wars are almost unthinkable (Saudi Arabia and Persian Gulf monarchies, which enjoy very tight economic linkages with the global economy). At least, probability of war against these states or conflict around them activates intense preventive diplomacy by regional and global actors. Of course, we may link their security to the US military presence on their territories, but it is a subject for a separate discussion on the issue which is primary – 'economic development due to military presence' or 'military presence in order to protect economic ties'.

[8] The World Bank, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.KLT.DINV.CD.WD?end=2018, "Foreign direct investment, net inflows (BoP, current US$)", accessed: 10 IX 2019.

[9] H. de Soto, *The Mystery of Capital: Why Capitalism Triumphs in the West and Fails Everywhere Else*, Black Swan, London 2001.

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4. Conclusions

The proposition that Ukraine has to choose between evil and dangerous East and good and secure West in order to exist and develop is rather manipulative. Security is the basic value of any independent state, and it can be achieved only after close consideration of multiple factors.

It is rather problematic to talk about a Europe-wide security system in a situation when we observe divisible security for countries covered by international security arrangements simultaneously with countries, like Ukraine, which find themselves in a security vacuum. At the same time, international security and internal (national and individual) security are interdependent, and many great powers tend to exploit small powers' internal weaknesses.

Table 1. Political and economic components of a small power's security arrangements

Security	Politics	Economics
International	Collective security approach	Global economic linkages
National	Democratic procedures	Security of capital
Individual	Human rights	Property rights

As summarized schematically in the table above, security of a small power on the three levels – international, national and individual, can be realized through relevant political and economic measures. Conceptually it shall be based on democracy and market economy, which are strengthened by global linkages and broader engagement of international institutions.

Therefore, for Ukraine to strengthen her security position, the government and the Ukrainian society shall, based on real democracy and market economy, create and develop multiple political and economic linkages with both parts of the European continent and global actors, as well as prioritise engagement of the UN and OSCE to the settlement of the conflict with Russia.

Abstract: Independent Ukraine will soon turn 30, but the country in the heart of Europe cannot boast a predictable and stable security position. The conflict with Russia after the regime change in 2014 proved, that a prolonged conventional war in Europe is still a probability.

In order to install a durable peace, the all-European security arrangement shall have no low-profile security positions of those European countries, which do not enjoy membership in military unions. The Cold-war legacy of perception of security as a divisible notion is a contradiction to the idea of security for Europe. As long as there are divergences in the level of security, there would be a temptation to test the opponent's readiness and strength on the territory of a weaker country. This is what happened in Georgia in 2008 and has been happening in Ukraine since 2014.

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In search for a solution, a special attention shall be paid to the issues of status and perception of security. For a small power, which is not a member of a military bloc, it is existential to follow an approach of collective security, not collective defence. Perception of security as indivisible supposes prioritising intensive engagement of the UN and the OSCE.
Ukraine as a small power shall also enhance its security position through implementation of decent democratic procedures and true market reforms. These measures have a potential to create global economic linkages through integration of Ukraine's economy to the global capitalist system not as a supplier of raw materials, but on parity basis.
Keywords: Ukraine, security, small power, collective security, diplomacy, democratic reforms, market economy, property rights.

Problem bezpieczeństwa Ukrainy: w poszukiwaniu rozwiązania

Streszczenie: Niepodległa Ukraina wkrótce skończy 30 lat, ale kraj w sercu Europy nie może pochwalić się przewidywalną pozycją bezpieczeństwa. Konflikt z Rosją po zmianie reżimu w 2014 roku pokazał, że przedłużająca się wojna konwencjonalna w Europie wciąż jest prawdopodobna.
W celu ustanowienia trwałego pokoju ogólnoeuropejskie porozumienie w sprawie bezpieczeństwa nie powinno zajmować mało widocznych stanowisk w zakresie bezpieczeństwa tych krajów europejskich, które nie należą do związków wojskowych. Zimnowojenne dziedzictwo postrzegania bezpieczeństwa jako pojęcia podzielnego jest zaprzeczeniem idei bezpieczeństwa dla Europy. Dopóki istnieją rozbieżności w poziomie bezpieczeństwa, istniałaby pokusa, by sprawdzić gotowość i siłę przeciwnika na terytorium słabszego kraju. Tak stało się w Gruzji w 2008 roku, a na Ukrainie trwa od 2014 roku.
W poszukiwaniu rozwiązania szczególną uwagę należy zwrócić na kwestie statusu i postrzegania bezpieczeństwa. Dla małego mocarstwa, które nie jest członkiem bloku wojskowego, egzystencjalne jest podążanie za podejściem do zbiorowego bezpieczeństwa, a nie zbiorowej obrony. Postrzeganie bezpieczeństwa jako niepodzielnego zakłada priorytetowe traktowanie intensywnego zaangażowania ONZ i OBWE.
Ukraina jako małe mocarstwo wzmocni także swoją pozycję bezpieczeństwa przez wdrażanie przyzwoitych procedur demokratycznych i prawdziwe reformy rynkowe. Środki te mogą potencjalnie stworzyć globalne powiązania gospodarcze przez integrację gospodarki Ukrainy z globalnym systemem kapitalistycznym nie jako dostawca surowców, ale na zasadzie parytetu.
Słowa kluczowe: Ukraina, bezpieczeństwo, mała siła, bezpieczeństwo zbiorowe, dyplomacja, reformy demokratyczne, gospodarka rynkowa, prawa własności

Проблема безопасности Украины: в поисках решения

Аннотация: Независимой Украине скоро исполнится 30 лет, но страна в сердце Европы не может похвастаться предсказуемой позицией в области безопасности. Конфликт с Россией после смены режима в 2014 году доказал, что продолжительная обычная война в Европе все еще остается вероятностью.
Для установления прочного мира общеевропейская система безопасности не должна допускать, чтобы те европейские страны, которые не имеют членства в военных союзах, имели низкий уровень безопасности. Наследие холодной войны в восприятии безопасности как поня-

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тия делимого противоречит самой идее общеевропейской безопасности. Покуда существуют различия в уровнях безопасности отдельных стран, будет соблазн проверить готовность и силу противника на территории более слабой страны. Что, собственно, и произошло в Грузии в 2008 году и происходит в Украине с 2014 года.

В поисках решения проблемы особое внимание нужно уделить вопросам статуса и восприятия безопасности. Для малого государства, которое не является членом военного блока, необходимо придерживаться подхода коллективной безопасности, а не коллективной обороны. Восприятие безопасности как неделимой предполагает приоритетность интенсивного задействования механизмов ООН и ОБСЕ.

Украина как малое государство также должна укрепить свои позиции в области безопасности путем осуществления надлежащих демократических процедур и реальных рыночных реформ. Эти меры могут создать глобальные экономические связи путем интеграции экономики Украины в глобальную капиталистическую систему не как поставщика сырья, а на паритетной основе.

Ключевые слова: Украина, безопасность, малое государство, коллективная безопасность, дипломатия, демократические реформы, рыночная экономика, права собственности

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