

INSTABILITY AS A TREND IN THE EUROPEAN SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

Igor Izhnin

In order to characterize the current state of relations in the European region in terms of international security, the most appropriate is the word instability. Instability in the sense of lack of predictability, lack of defined, recognized and accepted rules and principles of action that would regulate relations and open up the opportunity for effective settlement of disputes basing on compromises and reconciliation of interests. Moreover, this is not an issue that is relevant for Ukraine alone – it is an open question for the whole system of relations in the whole European region, and hence the issue of adoption the of European security architecture.

In the opinion of the author, there was a radical turn from the paradigm of cooperation to the paradigm of confrontation in the European security system. Again, this turnaround took place not in 2014 – with the onset of Russian aggression against Ukraine, the annexation of the Crimea and external destabilization in the southeastern regions of Ukraine. This process began much earlier, and the Russo-Ukrainian conflict became only its manifestation and consequence. The first apparent manifestation was the Russo-Georgian war of 2008 – a year after Putin's speech at the security forum in Munich and in anticipation of the NATO summit on the prospects of the MAP for Ukraine and Georgia. Then it was decided to turn a blind eye to the problem – Georgia is the periphery of Europe and European interests. However, in today's world, the security of small nations is no less important than the security of the great ones. Moreover, the security of small nations is an indicator of the soundness of the international system as a whole.

As a result, if prior to the wars against Georgia and Ukraine the use of force by one state against another was an extraordinary case (at least in postwar Europe), now it is an objective reality. It should be taken into account when formulating foreign policy and security strategies. The military force (either in its classical, conventional form or in «hybrid» manifestations) has returned as a significant factor shaping relations in the security sector in the region. Secondly, we are witnessing a return to the ideas of division of the world into spheres of influence – not in the context of the post-modern world of high technologies, transnational and multinational businesses, competition of cultures and values, but in the context of direct military and political control over certain territories. A striking example of the practical implementation of these ideas is Syria. This challenge has been documented at the level of strategic documents, in particular, in the 2018 national defense strategy of the USA. It explicitly states that "Concurrently, Russia seeks veto authority over nations on its periphery in terms of their governmental, economic, and diplomatic decisions to shatter the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and change European and

Middle East security and economic structures to its favor."¹. Thirdly, the paradigm of confrontation is already formalized: the Russian Federation recognized NATO as the main threat to its security and vice versa. NATO as a military and political association recognized Russia as the main source of threats to member states, and at a NATO Military Committee meeting in January 2018, it was recognized that Russia has once again become a strategic opponent of the Alliance. Confrontation is evident and NATO and Russia are increasing their military presence on their eastern and western flanks, respectively. They form new military and command structures and units. The Russian Federation is actively implementing a course on re-equipment and modernization of its armed forces.

In this regard, Ukraine happened to be on the line of collision between the two confronting parties. Not least this was the result of a long stay of Ukraine in a security "gray zone", when Ukraine was recognized as an important element in the architecture of European security, but it falls out of the institutionalized systems of European security. To the great extent it is a consequence of our state policy – the long-standing "non-bloc" policy was an attempt to preserve the strategic balance between the West and the East. It led to the transformation of Ukraine into a sphere of struggle between individual states and groupings of states and led to destabilization both within Ukraine and to the creation of a source of instability on the eastern borders of the EU / NATO. The current situation in Europe shows (at least in the nearest future) that the idea of a pan-European security system is dead. The idea of transforming the European security architecture, basing on the principle of indivisibility of security, is dead.

The cooperative paradigm of regional security has no chances for returning to the security policy agenda until the principles violated by the Russian Federation – respect for territorial integrity, inviolability of borders, non-interference in internal affairs, non-use of force or threats by force, fulfilment of treaty obligations (in fact, the entire list of principles enshrined in the Final Act of the CSCE in 1975) – are reestablished and guaranteed. And this is not only a problem of Ukraine (although it concerns us most at this moment, we are acutely aware of the consequences of non-compliance with these principles). This is a problem for the whole of Europe: is it possible to return to a predictable security situation in the region and to resolve security problems basing on co-operation principles, not confrontation ones.

In this context, the case of Ukraine becomes a test for the European security system, and the Minsk negotiation process is currently the only available format for finding a solution to a conflict.

¹ Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of The United States of America. Sharpening the American Military's Competitive Edge. – p. 2. [Electronic resource]. – Available at: <https://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>

However, the four-year results of the Minsk process are rather disappointing. That's true that the large-scale hostilities have been stopped, but the resolution of the conflict is still a distant prospect:

- In spite of the obvious facts and the evidences submitted by Ukraine, Russia does not recognize itself as a "party to the conflict" in the East of Ukraine, at the same time, international organizations, the UN and the OSCE are actually blocked by Russia in the context of decision-making on this issue;

- Quadripartite "Norman" negotiation format (Germany, France, Ukraine and Russia with mediation of the OSCE) appeared ineffective due to asymmetric approach of Russia to the negotiation process;

- OSCE, the only all-Europe international organization for security, proved its impotence to settle the conflict in the East of Ukraine and failed to offer any international instrument (except ineffective mediation in the negotiations and monitoring), really capable to provide the Minsk agreements implementation;

- Despite the continuing violation of international principles, the rules of law and fundamental European values by Russia in Ukraine, in the European Union, it is more insistently offered to soften or even to lift the sanctions against Russia due to their ineffectiveness in countering Russian hybrid aggression. At the same time, it is offered to impose for Ukraine so-called "A political settlement of the conflict through the elections in the East of Ukraine, ignoring issues in the cessation of hostilities and security" - scenario, which will be favorable for Kremlin.

All this shows the acute need for modernization of the Minsk process as well as the whole approach to the security issues in the region.