Russia's war against Ukraine and the transformation of the Euro-Atlantic Security Architecture

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Abstract: *This article attempts to contribute to the debate on the reasons for the inability of the US and its allies to prevent Russia from destroying the Euro-Atlantic security architecture by a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, as well as to the discussion of scenarios to strengthen the Euro-Atlantic community in the frame of preparation for the new post--war political landscape and reality. Based on a critical analysis of existing research, it is argued that despite the diversity of views of scholars and the still unpredictable outcome of the war in Ukraine, today it is possible to formulate some theses on the main directions of the European order transformation. These include enhancing the unity of the collective West, awakening Europe in the security and defense dimensions, strengthening and expanding NATO, increasing the US presence in the European region and 'the end of the history' of Russia's return to the League of Superpowers. At the same time, the following issues remain controversial: the relations between Russian aggression and the US-NATO strategy after the Cold War, the prospects of the United States maintaining the leading role in ensuring European security given the war-induced increase in Europe's defence capabilities, and Ukraine's future European and Euro-Atlantic integration.*

Keywords: ***full-scale invasion, war, Russia, the collective West, NATO.***

I. Introduction

Ukraine plays an important role in maintaining European and international security, although for a long time this fact has been hardly taken into account. Now it has become one of the fronts of rivalry between the great powers, i.e.

a renewed geopolitical confrontation between the collective West and Russia, which is likely to be one of the main features of the international order in the coming years. Russia's current war in Ukraine is much more than Ukraine itself and its possible membership in NATO, rather it is about the future of the European, and perhaps global, order after the Cold War. By invading Ukraine, Putin seeks not only to bring the country back under his influence, but also to change the security architecture in Europe, which, he believes, ignores Russia's security concerns. He wants to turn the clock back to the late 1990s until NATO's first eastward expansion or to the late 1980s when Moscow ruled in this part of Europe.

The conflict, which before the beginning of the full-scale war on 24 February 2022 seemed terribly inconceivable, has marked the end of one era and the beginning of another, the contours of which are still unknown. They will be determined not only by the results of the fighting in Ukraine, but also by the global response to this unprovoked aggression.

Given the unbelievably destructive scale of this conflict, as well as its transformation potential for the European and perhaps global political order, it inevitably provokes much debate about how this disaster could have been prevented and what challenges it posed to the future of Euro-Atlantic security. There is a heated scientific debate whether Putin's war in Ukraine has finally destroyed the liberal international order, or whether, on the contrary, it has a chance to be revived under this challenge. What should the strategy of the collective West be to counter the aggressor and restore mechanisms to ensure European security? Some argue that a concerted response to Russian president Vladimir Putin's actions could strengthen a global alliance that unites democracies against Russia and China, thereby strengthening a free world for the next generation (Beckley – Brands 2022). Others insist that the future of the global order should be decided by competition in Asia rather than by wars in Europe. Events in Ukraine are of limited significance for the world, and decisive only for the European region (Menon 2022). The third group of scientists presume that there is no liberal world order (Applebaum 2022) or that the Cold War never ended (Kotkin 2022), and they call on the West to rediscover itself and consolidate through renewal.

So far, it is difficult to predict the extent to which the Russo-Ukrainian War will determine the direction of the global order transformation. However, some contours of changes in the Euro-Atlantic region that strengthen the unity of the West and the power of its partners and alliances are already evident. These are not the changes that Putin sought out but they have appeared to be a direct consequence of his actions in Ukraine.

As an attempt to draw some preliminary conclusions, this article analyses the debate on the reasons for the failure of the collective West to prevent Russia's destruction of the Euro-Atlantic security architecture and on the scenarios

for the future of transatlantic security. The authors offer a critical analysis of publications on this topic in the authoritative magazine *Foreign Affairs*, on the pages of which the views of representatives of various scientific camps are constantly presented regarding the causes of the Russo-Ukrainian War and possible ways to stop the escalation, as well as individual materials in such publications as *The Atlantic*, *The Guardian*, *The National Interest*, *The New York Times*, *Atlantic Council*, etc. The chronologically analysed sources cover the period from the autumn of 2021, when warnings about the likelihood of a new Russian invasion of Ukraine and admonition regarding the risks of escalation were published, to the autumn of 2022. It is also necessary to emphasise two purposeful restrictions before proceeding to the presentation of the main material. Firstly, given the recentness of the events, the article relies heavily on non-peer-reviewed literature. And, secondly, since the conflict is still ongoing, its long-term consequences are difficult to forecast, so predicting any scenarios in this situation is analytically difficult and may turn out to be futile.

In the first part of the article, we consider Russia's demands for 'security guarantees' from the West and the discussion on the 'NATO door' on the eve of the invasion. In the second part, we examine the scientific debate whether the NATO enlargement was a strategic mistake that led to the war or, on the contrary, the far-sighted wisdom confirmed by this war. The third part is devoted to the analysis of the most significant geopolitical consequences of the war for the Euro-Atlantic security structure, which are emphasised by scholars studying this conflict. We focus on issues that remain controversial, such as the relations between Russian aggression and the US-NATO post-Cold War strategy, the prospect of the US leading role in maintaining and ensuring European security given Europe's defence capability increase provoked by the war, and European and Euro-Atlantic prospects of Ukraine's integration, etc.

II. Russia's demands for 'security guarantees' and the discussion on 'NATO's door' on the eve of the invasion

Since the autumn of 2021, Russia has deployed about 150,000 troops on its border with Ukraine and has threatened 'military-technical measures' if NATO continues to cooperate with Ukraine and Russia does not receive security guarantees from the West. In December, the Kremlin unilaterally developed two extremely aggressive draft treaties with the United States and NATO that, Moscow said, were necessary to prevent a possible military conflict in Ukraine. The Russian government demanded a formal halt to NATO's eastward expansion, a ban on the deployment of Allied military infrastructure in the countries that had joined the alliance after 1997, a halt to Western military aid to Ukraine and so on (McFaul 2022). It was more like an ultimatum before the war than a step towards negotiations.

In January 2022, the US president Joseph Biden and NATO provided detailed written responses to the Kremlin in an attempt to enter into a dialogue with the Russian president (McFaul 2022). Naturally, no Western government was ready to accept these demands. The United States and Europe are committed to the idea that nations are free to determine both their internal systems and their foreign policy orientation. In his special address on the situation around Ukraine on 15 February 2022 Joe Biden declared decisively 'the right of countries to choose their destiny, the right of peoples to choose their future' (Посольство США в Україні 2022). On 17 February Russia conveyed, through the US ambassador to Moscow, a 'response to a previous US response to Russia's draft treaty... on security guarantees', which called for the withdrawal of all the US troops and weapons from Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe, the Baltics and the Alliance's legal refusal to expand to the east. In case of failure to provide legal security guarantees of this kind, Russia repeated the threat to realise military-technical measures (Радіо свобода 2022).

Against this background, a heated scientific debate erupted over whether restrictions on Ukraine's future membership in NATO could resolve the crisis and prevent war. Some argued that it was time to close the alliance's doors to new members, while others claimed that it would be a serious mistake to allow Putin to dictate conditions for European security.

Some Western analysts claimed that NATO should close its doors to Ukraine. Thus, Michael Kimmage has asserted that for its own good NATO should change course publicly refusing further enlargement so as not to be involved in a conflict between a country that is not a member (Ukraine) but only seeks to do so, and a nuclear state that wants to prevent this membership. Since Ukraine will still not be able to join the alliance in the near future, NATO must close its doors, which will reduce the likelihood of a Russian military attack. Continuing the course of Ukraine's accession to NATO in such conditions would be, in his opinion, 'strategic madness' (Kimmage 2022).

However, other international analysts have vehemently criticised such approaches, believing that the arguments are wrong and should be rejected once and for all. Thus, Eric S. Edelman and David Kramer have considered that following this logic would mean rewarding Putin for his aggression and blaming the state of affairs not on the Russian leader (on whom it undoubtedly lies), but on the North Atlantic alliance, which has contributed to the security of the European continent for more than seven decades. The scholars have realistically predicted that Putin will not be reassured by assurances that Ukraine's (and Georgia's) membership will not be considered. On the contrary, such concessions would increase their rates, as he would see them as a sign of weakness, and may further require the exclusion of the possibility of these states' membership in the European Union, and so on. Closing the door to NATO in those circum-

stances would demoralise Ukraine, make it more vulnerable to Putin's plans and split the alliance itself (Edelman – Kramer 2022).

Thus, two broad narratives about the possibility of war aversion dominated the debate even before Russia's full-scale invasion. The first, which can generally be characterised as realistic, considered attempts to integrate Ukraine into Western structures to be harmful and called for compromises with Russia, which were considered better than a probable war (Kimmage 2022, Charap 2022). The second narrative, typical of liberals, viewed Russia as an imperialist state seeking to dominate its neighbours, chastised the West for its lack of containment efforts in previous years and called for active opposition to Putin (e.g., Edelman – Kramer 2022, McFaul 2022, Stent 2022).

As a result of active diplomatic contacts between American, European and Russian diplomats, the Biden administration and its allies have strongly rejected the Kremlin's demand that Ukraine never join NATO. Indeed, it would violate the principles of the alliance's founding Washington Treaty, the UN Charter, the Paris Charter for a New Europe of 1990 and the 1999 European Security Charter which provide for the right of every state to freely choose and change its security measures; it would leave Ukraine in a dangerous 'gray zone' and would mean NATO's recognition of Putin's claims to influence.

On 21 February, Putin signed Decrees recognising the 'independence' of the 'L / DPR' which marked a failure in Western diplomatic efforts to deter Russian aggression, destroyed the Minsk agreements, escalated tensions between the West and Moscow, and posed new threats to security and territorial integrity of Ukraine. The same day in his speech, Putin said his security was threatened by a much smaller neighbour who, he claimed, was not really a sovereign country, but only a toy in the hands of much more powerful Western powers (*The Guardian* 2022). On 24 February, Russia launched a large-scale invasion of Ukraine, hoping to seize it quickly. However, its leader miscalculated, not taking into account the patriotism, heroism and ingenuity of the Ukrainian people, the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the determination of V. Zelensky and the rapid awakening of the West.

The most important conclusion that can be drawn today from the debate about the possibility of preventing a big war is that it was very difficult to avert an invasion in the months leading up to it. Russia had and still has many significant reasons to consider control over Ukraine to be its vital interest. Containment of Putin was much more complicated because of his obvious ideas about the political weakness of both Ukraine and the West at the time.

III. Is NATO enlargement a 'strategic mistake' that led to the war, or the far-sighted wisdom confirmed by this war?

In this very direction the scientific debate on the NATO factor in this war after 24 February 2022 is developing. A number of researchers, mainly international

relations realistic theorists, continue the tradition started by the famous American neorealist John J. Mearsheimer in 2014 (Mearsheimer 2014), claiming that NATO's expansion to the East was an unnecessary provocation that encouraged Putin to act aggressively against neighbouring states. For example, Charles Kupchan believes that it was a cardinal mistake to expand NATO and to build a security order in post-Cold War Europe that accumulated Western power against Russia. The United States was to pursue the Partnership for Peace as a more flexible security system that would allow all European nations to cooperate with NATO without formally expanding the alliance and establishing new dividing lines (*Foreign Affairs* 2022). This view is shared by Michael Mandelbaum, who argues that the NATO enlargement has shifted sentiment in Russia from pro-Western to anti-Western, thus creating the political context that Putin used to conduct his aggressive campaigns (*Foreign Affairs* 2022).

Robert Kagan (2022) offers a more moderate explanation of the relations between Russian aggression and the US-NATO strategy after the Cold War. In his opinion, it is absurd to accuse the United States of Putin's inhumane attack on Ukraine, but to insist that the invasion was completely unprovoked is also wrong. Russia's decision was in response to the natural expansion of the hegemony of the United States and its allies in post-Cold War Europe due to the desire of Eastern European countries, including Ukraine, to join the transatlantic community. Even if the United States had rejected the states' requests to join NATO, those countries would have continued to resist Moscow's attempts to bring them back into its sphere of interest, seeking any help from the West. And Putin would still consider the United States the main reason for this anti-Russian behaviour. If we blame the United States for what is happening in Ukraine, it is only because Washington failed to see in time that its influence had grown here, and could not predict that participants dissatisfied with the liberal order would try to overthrow it (Kagan 2022).

The insistence of some realists, notably John J. Mearsheimer, that the war is almost entirely the result of the structural factor of NATO expansion, which has become a legitimate Russian security concern (Mearsheimer 2022), has drawn a barrage of criticism from a wide public. Indeed, if NATO's eastward expansion contributed to the war to some extent, it is, at best, only a partial explanation. At this point, there is no way to clearly establish Putin's motivation with a high degree of certainty, but it is unlikely that a single motive can explain this invasion.

The vast majority of scholars believe it is clear that Moscow's rhetoric about threats to its security as a result of the NATO enlargement was only a false excuse to justify Russia's full-scale offensive against Ukraine in order to bring it back under its influence. The NATO enlargement did not pose a threat to Russia, but instead added security to Europe, strengthened democracy in Central and Eastern Europe and finally corrected Yalta's injustice (ask Poland, the Baltic states

and Romania if they consider their membership in NATO a strategic mistake) (*Foreign Affairs* 2022).

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has tragically confirmed the wisdom of the NATO enlargement. As Alina Polyakova rightly emphasises, NATO membership is the only reason why the Baltic states and other Central and Eastern European countries have not been attacked by Russia. Instead, the alliance made a strategic mistake by not moving faster to include Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia. Putin uses rhetoric about the dangers of NATO enlargement to divert attention from his greatest fear – the loss of his control over power (including the theft of billions of dollars from the state). If Ukraine continued on its path to becoming a prosperous, West-oriented democracy, Russians, by watching the freedom and prosperity of their neighbours, could strive for the same for themselves. Thus, the NATO enlargement has nothing to do with Putin's desire to remain a corrupt dictator of Russia (*Foreign Affairs* 2022).

Marek Madej underlines that the accession of CEE and the Baltic states to the alliance has brought positive results both for the senior members of the organisation and for the alliance itself. He doubts that NATO would have been able to undergo a transformation effectively after the Cold War in the realities of the 1990s, only by proclaiming new functions and tasks, and there was also a need for geographical change. Enlargement has not only helped democratise and stabilise Central and Eastern Europe, but it has also strengthened NATO's legitimacy as an organisation that has given Western countries (Europeans and Americans) a better chance of building European security than any other alternative could offer. Expanding, promoting the stabilisation and spreading democracy in the CEE countries have largely given the alliance a 'new reason to live', supporting its core function of an 'insurance policy' for bad times and a collective defence instrument when it was difficult to find external threats that could justify (especially among the US citizens) expenses for organising a collective defence. The new members brought rather mediocre military capabilities, but the political gains were valuable enough to make NATO enlargement profitable (*Foreign Affairs* 2022).

At the same time, it was not the NATO enlargement that led to a resurgence of imperialism in Russia. Russia's desire to dominate its neighbours has a much longer tradition and local roots in tsarist Russia. Given its wealth of natural resources, nuclear potential, post-Soviet nostalgia and long tradition of authoritarianism and expansionism, the likelihood of Russia's imperial ambitions recovering from the Cold War and an authoritarian regime (probably aggressive toward the West) was quite high (*Foreign Affairs* 2022, Florea 2022). Since the mid-1990s Russia's political trajectory has meant that the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the Baltics could not be sure that their 'return to Europe' would not be threatened without firm security guarantees. At that time, only NATO, rather than the EU or the OSCE, could provide such guarantees. So

Poland and the Baltic states were right when they warned against Moscow's imperialism. Current events help confirm the rationality of this early precaution.

A great example of the long-standing comprehension of the threat of Russia's imperial ambitions resurgence is cited in *The Atlantic* by Anne Applebaum that quotes a speech by Estonian president Lennart Meri delivered in February 1994 (!) in Hamburg. He warned that freedom in Estonia and Europe could soon be in jeopardy, as Moscow was already boiling with insults, aggression and imperial nostalgia. Meri called on the democratic world to act: the West must 'make it clear to the Russian leadership that another imperialist expansion will not stand a chance' (Applebaum 2022). At this time, the deputy mayor of St. Petersburg, V. Putin, who was present in the hall, got up and walked out (Applebaum 2022).

As Russia is waging its unprovoked and brutal war against Ukraine today, it must be made even clearer how important the NATO enlargement has been for the Euro-Atlantic and European security. It has provided stability in much of Europe (it has also made the EU enlargement more likely), and the current degree of NATO unification in the face of Russian aggression is extraordinary. At the same time, it is unjustified to blame the alliance for Putin's desire to destroy Ukraine as an independent state or for his willingness to kill peaceful Ukrainians indiscriminately, as he did in Grozny and Aleppo, two cities that had nothing to do with NATO or its enlargement.

According to Peter Dickinson from the Atlantic Council, Russia's plans to annex southern Ukraine make ridiculous his statements about a defensive 'military operation' against Western encroachments on the Kremlin's traditional sphere of influence. The Russian dictator sought to justify the war by pointing to possible threats posed by decades of NATO enlargement and by claiming that Moscow was simply seeking security guarantees. In fact, Russia's invasion of Ukraine is the largest open imperialist event since the time of Adolf Hitler (Dickinson 2022).

All Putin's words of the NATO enlargement and its development of Ukraine's territory is a false pretext to attack it. He knows for sure that NATO does not threaten him. Russia was interested in Ukraine not being in NATO so that it could invade its territory at any time. Because Putin sees Ukraine as Russia's lands under Western influence to be recaptured rather than a sovereign state (*The Guardian* 2022).

Given the aforementioned, one can argue that NATO's strategy in the post-bipolar era has not been entirely flawless. The policy of pretending that Ukraine and Georgia were on the path to membership in the alliance when in fact they remained 'suspended' after the 2008 Bucharest Summit was at least the losing approach if not a strategic mistake. The war in Ukraine is a painful result of Putin's reaction to NATO's Bucharest mistake. In our opinion, the declaration that Ukraine and Georgia would one day join it, which some realists character-

ise as the worst possible solution (Charap 2022), was not a fault. The mistake was that the alliance did not implement this declaration immediately and did not start the process immediately by establishing safeguards (similar to those recently announced by the United Kingdom and the United States for Sweden and Finland at the time of their application for NATO membership). Considering Putin's view of NATO enlargement as a threat to Russia, this period of uncertainty provided him with an incentive, as well as an opportunity, to wage a preemptive war. The erroneous decision of the 2008 Bucharest Summit (not because Ukraine and Georgia were promised membership, but because they did not go far enough to specify when and how) was far from being resolved, left everyone dissatisfied and showed Putin that the West was hesitant, so there was an open window of opportunity to change the situation in his favour as long as these countries did not have a NATO 'insurance policy'.

In any case, today there is no alternative to reaffirming NATO's traditional open door policy, as NATO officials have repeatedly confirmed since Russia's full--scale invasion of Ukraine, regarding Sweden, Finland and Ukraine as well. At the same time, under the current conditions – until the end of the war – it is impossible to accelerate Ukraine's membership in NATO. It is also clear that there will be no Allied troops entering Ukraine, the no-fly zone or no persecution of Russian troops if the Ukrainians manage to expel them from their territory. Such actions pose serious escalation risks that NATO seeks to avoid. However, at the same time, the alliance will make every effort (to increase the supply of weapons to Ukraine, ammunition, intelligence data and military training) to prevent Moscow's victory in this conflict, not only for Ukraine's sake or because it would be immoral, but also because the other option would be destabilising in terms of Europe's future. Russia's war against Ukraine tragically demonstrates that a peaceful and secure Europe depends as much on the stability of smaller states as it does on agreements between great powers.

So, while many realist theorists have correctly predicted war in Ukraine, their warnings about the risks of escalation and calls for compromises with Russia, which allegedly seeks only to prevent Ukraine from joining NATO, are not popular with academics and analysts. The arguments of the other (liberal) camp seem to be more plausible, specifically that Putin is an imperialist, revisionist leader who seeks to maintain full control over Ukraine or destroy it.

Different interpretations of reasons of the Russo-Ukrainian War by representatives of competing theoretical approaches lead to significant differences in policy recommendations: if Putin is acting out of ambition, then the West should increase deterrence and take a tough stance against Russia, but if he is acting out of fear of NATO, it should compromise and accept limitations on the future expansion of the alliance. The way the collective West has responded and continues to respond to this conflict is clear evidence of its commitment to the first approach. This will be discussed in the next part of the article.

IV. Consequences of the war for the Euro-Atlantic security architecture and prospects for its further transformation

It is no longer possible to return to the situation that had existed before Russia began to increase its troops on the border with Ukraine. Michael Beckley and Hal Brands believe that the international response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine could form a global alliance that will unite democracies in the fight against Russia and China to preserve a liberal international order. Citing policies that helped the West win the Cold War as a model for what needs to be done today, they call for both Russia and China to be held back by increasing the US troops in both Europe and Asia (Beckley – Brands 2022). At the same time, a number of scholars, such as Shishankar Menon and Stephen Wertheim, claim skeptically that Russia's war in Ukraine will not change the global order, it will be determined by competition in Asia (Menon 2022), and warn the Biden administration against waging a risky global cold war (Wertheim 2022).

It is difficult to predict how profound this war will be for the world. This will largely depend on how the conflict unfolds. However, it is already significantly changing the contours of the European security architecture. We agree with Angela Stent that the third reorganisation of the Euro-Atlantic security system since the end of World War II could be the end result of the Russo-Ukrainian War. The first one took place with the consolidation of the Yalta-Potsdam system into two warring blocs in the late 1940s and mid-1950s. The second (late 1980s–early 1990s) is connected with the collapse of the Communist bloc and the Soviet Union, followed by the expansion of Western structures and especially NATO to the East. Now Putin's actions in Ukraine are challenging this order (Stent 2022).

Regarding the latter, he has already succeeded, but evidently not in the way he probably wanted. Instead of splitting the West, Putin's attack on Ukraine united it. In the days since the invasion, the United States and its allies have joined forces to impose tough sanctions on Russia, making it the world's heaviest sanctioned country. As Stephen Kotkin emphasises, with the start of this war, the West has rediscovered its multifaceted strength. After the Cold War, instead of the concept of the West, many American elites adopted a vision of a liberal international order led by the United States that could theoretically integrate the world, including societies that did not share Western values, into a single globalised entity. Hot dreams of an endless liberal order overshadowed the stubbornness of geopolitics, namely that the three civilisations of Eurasia – China, Iran and Russia – have not disappeared, and in the 1990s their elites clearly showed that they did not intend to participate in the only world in Western conditions (Kotkin 2022). Russia's invasion of Ukraine marks the collapse of the liberal international order. Instead, the collective West has a greater chance than ever to revive, strengthen and even expand its borders. The skillful

diplomacy of J. Biden on the eve of the invasion was of utmost importance in this process. His team and he used declassified intelligence data to strengthen transatlantic relations and to unite the wider democratic community, including Asian partners (Japan, South Korea, Taiwan) in order to impose large-scale economic sanctions against Russia, to strengthen NATO's position in Eastern Europe and to provide assistance for the defence of Ukraine.

Ivo Daalder and James Lindsay rightly quote American diplomat and historian George Kennan, who argued that democracies remind a prehistoric monster so indifferent to what is happening around him that 'you practically have to whack his tail off to make him aware that his interests are being disturbed' (Daalder – Lindsay, 2022). However, when their tails are hit hard, Western democracies respond with speed, determination and strength. According to the authors, for the United States and its European allies, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which, in terms of size and scale, has been the largest use of military force on the European continent since 1945 and poses a direct threat to NATO territory, has become just such a case (Daalder – Lindsay, 2022).

In the future, it is important to maintain this unity around Ukraine in the long run, because if it proves short-lived and the West is divided again, Putin will try to exploit these differences in the hope that all is not lost. This is a difficult task, which is well illustrated by the problems with Hungary's position on the EU embargo on Russian oil, different views of Member States on granting Ukraine the EU candidate status, Turkey's ambiguous position on Sweden's and Finland's accession to NATO and so on.

The second consequence of the Russian war in Ukraine, in addition to strengthening the collective West, was the strengthening of the North Atlantic alliance and the course for its further expansion. Instead of withdrawing its forces from Eastern Europe, as Putin demanded, NATO has doubled its fighting presence in the region and intensified its response force. About forty countries have started or increased arms supplies to Ukraine. Russia's attack has reunited NATO and made its enlargement much more likely. Among its most significant and unexpected geopolitical implications is that Finland and Sweden join NATO. 'NATO enlargement was never a cause of Mr. Putin's decision to invade Ukraine, but it is certainly a consequence… Sweden and Finland now see a Russia that is revanchist and revisionist in a way that is much more dangerous than during the latter part of the Cold War', Nathalie Tocci concludes in *The New York Times* (Cohen 2022).

Finland has a 1,300-kilometer border with Russia, and the Finnish capital, Helsinki, is closer to St. Petersburg, Putin's hometown, than to Stockholm. NATO, which will include Finland, will more than double the alliance's land border with Russia. Finland and Sweden will bring significant new military capabilities, including advanced air and submarines that will change the security architecture of Northern Europe and help deter further Russian aggression

(Bildt 2022). Russia's war against Ukraine made strengthening the alliance an imperative and only contributed to its further expansion.

Another consequence of the Russo-Ukrainian War is the rapid awakening of Europe, which has become apparent in recent months. For a long time before the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Europe was divided. Countries close to the Russian border, such as the Baltic states and Poland, have long taken the Russian threat seriously, based on bitter historical experience. Countries further west, including Germany and France, have underestimated Putin's ambitions (Cohen 2022). Russia's invasion of Ukraine has put an end to the era of European illusions about Moscow. European countries are trying to strengthen their defences, the European Union is uniting to gradually get rid of its dependence on Russian energy and Ukrainian refugees are being sheltered in Europe, although their numbers far exceed those who arrived in Europe in 2015 from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. Germany has reconsidered its pacifist stance and embarked on a rearmament process, as evidenced by Olaf Scholz's announcement of a new € 100 billion defence fund and a firm commitment to spend 2% of GDP on the armed forces (Daalder – Lindsay 2022). The EU countries will continue to increase their military strength, regardless of the end of hostilities in Ukraine. In the long run, these measures are likely to enhance Europe's long-standing desire for strategic autonomy to place less reliance on the United States in defence matters.

The United States will face many difficult dilemmas in the European direction. Russia's invasion of Ukraine came at a time when the US Grand Strategy focused on rivalry with China. Russian missiles and bombs have blown up not only a number of Ukrainian cities, but this strategy as well. Many American politicians and scholars would prefer to continue to focus on long-term competition with China. But to deter an aggressive Russia, the United States will have to increase its military presence in Europe. The Biden administration has already increased the number of American troops in Europe to about 100,000, a level not seen for decades (Wertheim 2022).

We think it is a mistake for Stephen Wertheim to think that the United States should take advantage of the opportunity that falls once a generation, to put the European security order on the path to self-sufficiency, to encourage Europe to stand up to Russia, while the US should focus on 'security in Asia and home renovations' because 'such a division of labor is fair' (Wertheim 2022). We believe the United States will continue to pay more attention to Europe and direct more resources and forces to it, at least until the end of Biden's presidency. Europe's quest for greater strategic autonomy is commendable and deserves US support, but until the European security order is self-sufficient, America cannot afford to leave prematurely because it could have catastrophic consequences.

And what about Ukraine? Since gaining its independence in 1991, Ukraine has consistently moved away from the Soviet legacy and pursued political and

economic liberalisation. For more than thirty years, and especially since the Revolution of Dignity in 2014, it has managed to achieve more democratic progress than most other former Soviet states. In recent years, Ukraine has created transparent anti-corruption institutions, decentralised state power, deregulated business, improved governance of state-owned enterprises and cleaned up its banking system. The country has significantly improved its energy efficiency and independence, fostered the development of a free media and an active civil society, made tangible progress in its aspirations to join the European Union and NATO, which were enshrined in its Constitution in 2019 (Prokopenko 2022). By launching the invasion, Russia aimed to nullify that progress and to throw Ukraine back decades in economic and political development. But the Ukrainian state has stopped Russia's advance owing to the monumental efforts of the entire society.

Eight months after the start of Russia's unprovoked full-scale aggression, it is still unclear how long the war will last, but undoubtedly it will end with the defeat of Russia and the restoration of a sovereign and independent Ukraine as a new European state. However, immediately after the war, Ukraine will need reconstruction. This is where the United States, the EU and the United Kingdom must help.

The economy of Ukraine has suffered greatly from the Russian invasion. It is expected to decrease by 45 percent in 2022 (Haass 2022). Fifty-six percent of companies that are members of the European Business Association in Ukraine have reported that they stopped operating during the war. The direct damage already suffered by Ukraine is estimated at more than 500 billion dollars (Prokopenko 2022). More than 6.5 million Ukrainians (out of the population of 44 million) have left the country since the beginning of the war. More than seven million have become internally displaced persons (Haass 2022). Every fourth Ukrainian was forced to leave his/her native home, not knowing if he/she would ever return (Vindman – Bustillos 2022). If the war continues, many of them will have to build new lives abroad, and many, especially those whose cities and towns were destroyed by Russia, will not return, exacerbating Ukraine's pre-existing demographic problems. According to recent surveys, 44 percent of Ukrainians are now separated from their families because of the war (Vindman – Bustillos 2022). Such huge costs are difficult to sustain.

Today, the West is rightly focused on providing Ukraine with the military aid it needs to win. However, such assistance is only part of the support. Denys Shmyhal, prime minister of Ukraine, and the Kyiv School of Economics have estimated that post-war reconstruction costs will total nearly $ 750 billion – a colossal sum that will only grow as the conflict continues. Werner Hoyer, president of the European Investment Bank, estimated that Ukraine would need up to $ 1 trillion for reconstruction (Vindman – Bustillos 2022). External support from the United States, the European Union and the United Kingdom will be vital

to balancing the budget, rebuilding damaged infrastructure and compensating for Ukraine's losses, and will require economic investment on the scale of the 21st century Marshall Plan.

However, all the heroic sacrifices of Ukrainians will be in vain if the United States and its allies wait too long to support the Ukrainian economy. Instead of bombed-out residential buildings and twisted wreckage of industry, Ukrainian refugees returning from abroad should witness the emergence of a viable and prosperous Ukraine – indivisible and secure in Europe (Vindman – Bustillos 2022).

Facilitating the reconstruction of Ukraine is not only the West's moral duty because protection of Ukraine is based in international order and European collective security. An economically successful, sovereign Ukraine is a strategic priority of collective Euro-Atlantic security. Western leaders such as Joe Biden, Justin Trudeau, Liz Truss, Ursula von der Leyen and Andrzej Duda are fully aware of this, and have publicly stated that Putin must be defeated and Ukraine must win (Markiewicz 2022).

The restoration of its territorial integrity and accession to NATO could be considered Ukraine's victory. Because the first without the second will mean the almost inevitable loss of this integrity in five to ten years due to the new aggression of the Kremlin. The decisions of Finland and Sweden to abandon the neutrality they have maintained for decades are the most convincing evidence that a new Europe is emerging today, with no more intermediate space. The countries of the region are either under NATO protection or they are left alone with Russia, which is ruled by a man determined to establish Russia's place on the world stage by force (Cohen 2022).

The Ukrainians are sure to have the right to decide independently on acceptable conditions for ending the war and the future geopolitical orientation of the state. However, any decision on Europe's security architecture and changes in the balance of power on the continent cannot be approved without the participation of the United States and its European allies. Therefore, they may have to decide whether to leave NATO open for Ukraine and other former Soviet republics seeking accession. If Ukraine declares a non-aligned or neutral status or NATO refuses to expand further, an agreement will need to be found that a non-aligned or militarily neutral Ukraine can be confident of its security by maintaining close ties with the collective West (Graham – Menon 2022). Only the settlement that preserves an integral, independent Ukraine with reliable means to ensure its security (the best option is its accession to NATO) can be considered a success. However, if Ukraine gets stuck in no man's land on the outskirts of Russia and without NATO protection (this certainly applies to Georgia and Moldova as well), it will have dangerous consequences in the future.

Ukraine's long-term victory will also require its integration into the European Union. Ukraine is already making progress on its way to the EU: the Ukrainian government submitted an official application for EU membership on 28 Febru-

ary this year, and the country received the status of a Candidate State at the June meeting of the European Council. The future security of the EU largely depends on Kyiv's success, given Ukraine's proximity to the EU and its strong ties to many European economies. Therefore, the EU assistance programme for the reconstruction of Ukraine can be integrated into a broader plan for Ukraine's accession to the Union, which may appear in the near future. However, success on this path will depend not only on the EU. Ukraine will need to meet a number of EU requirements, including the creation of new anti-corruption institutions and a judicial system capable of ensuring accountability.

Taken together, a multinational wave of support for Ukraine would be a powerful opportunity for democratic renewal. As Alexander Vindman claims, the risks of losing Ukraine are much greater and will lead to irreversible damage to the liberal order, international law, security standards and global stability (Vindman 2022).

While the outcome of the war in Ukraine is unknown, it is impossible to predict what country Russia will be in the coming decades. But whatever the next scenario, few doubt that Russia will not only not regain control of Eastern Europe, but it will enter a period of rapid or slow decline. There are no plans for its reconstruction according to post-war German or Japanese models. In addition, it will emerge from this war more dependent on China. It is likely that the country will be significantly weakened economically and limited militarily, but more dangerous and capable of creating geopolitical problems politically. The Putin regime, no matter how long Putin himself stays in power, is unlikely to give up his imperial ambitions. They will last until the regime is transformed, and Russian rulers, as Stephen Kotkin claims, make a strategic choice to abandon the overwhelming desire to become a great power equal to the West, and instead decide to live with it and focus on Russia's internal development (Kotkin 2022).

This reality is fundamentally changing the way we think about the security of European countries. It is clear that the deepening of transatlantic ties, the strengthening and further enlargement of NATO and the increase in European defense expenses are part of the response to this new security situation.

V. Conclusions

Having made a critical analysis of existing research, this article contributes to the debate on the reasons for the inability of the United States and its allies to prevent Russia's destruction of the Euro-Atlantic security architecture, as well as to the discussion of scenarios for strengthening the Euro-Atlantic community in preparation for the new post-war political landscape and reality. The most important conclusion that can be drawn today from the debate about the possibility of preventing the Russo-Ukrainian War is that it was very difficult to avert the invasion in the months leading up to it. Russia had and still has many

significant reasons to consider control over Ukraine to be its vital interest. To deter Putin was much more difficult due to his obvious ideas about the political weakness of both Ukraine and the West at the time.

Our results show that while many realist theorists have correctly predicted war in Ukraine, their warnings about the risks of escalation and calls for compromises with Russia, which allegedly seeks only to prevent Ukraine from joining NATO, are not popular. The arguments of the other (liberal) camp seem to be more plausible, which sees Russia as an imperialist state seeking to dominate its neighbours, chastises the West for its lack of containment efforts in previous years and calls for active opposition to Putin today.

Our findings also suggest that Russia's large-scale aggression against Ukraine has had the exact opposite effect than Putin intended. NATO ha not withdraw its troops from the eastern regions, on the contrary, it has expanded due to Sweden and Finland; Ukrainian pro-European identity has strengthened even more; Ukraine is fighting for its right to be called a European nation with dignity and the potential that is known all over the world. The new reality in the field of security has led to strengthening the collective West unity, the awakening of Europe in terms of security and defense, the strengthening and expansion of NATO, the growth of the US presence in the region and the 'end of history' of Russia's return to the league of superpowers.

The outcomes of the study let us state that now Europe and the US are mostly united in their determination to oppose Putin and prevent him from winning the war in Ukraine. In the future, it is important to maintain this unity for the long term. The risks of losing Ukraine are much bigger than the risks of losing Russia, because they can lead to irreversible damage not only to the Euro-Atlantic security system, but also to the global order, international law and world stability. For the West, military support for Ukraine in the war against Russia and assistance in its reconstruction are critically important for the future of Euro--Atlantic security. Ukraine's membership in the EU and NATO is the best way to get rid of the Eastern European gray zone, which, according to Putin, Russia should dominate. The war has already caused important reconfigurations in the politics, security and economy of the Euro-Atlantic region. In the near future, the attitude of the collective West towards Russia will be a key factor that will determine its unity, the strength of partnerships between individual states and the efficiency of their alliances

This study also opens up such areas for further analysis as the prospects of preserving the leading role of the United States in guaranteeing European security in view of the war-induced increase in the defense capabilities of Europe, as well as the European and Euro-Atlantic integration future of other states that are between the EU, NATO and Russia (Georgia, Moldova).

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