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International Security Transformation: The Effectiveness of Small Alliances in The European Security Architecture

Abstract.

The 21st century saw a significant reduction in the effectiveness of traditional international organizations to guarantee peace and stability. Therefore, this article provides an overview of regional small military alliances in the European security system.

The paper identifies the advantages of regional formats over institutions with universal membership. Specifically, it highlights the speed of decision-making, resource mobilization and the ability to respond quickly. In addition, the author identifies their role and importance in strengthening the region's security and defense capabilities.

The article examines the key military alliances that are becoming particularly important in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war and the overall crisis in the international security system. The Lithuanian-Polish-Ukrainian Brigade, the Three Seas, the Quadriga format, the Lublin Triangle, and Finabel and PESCO are among such alliances. Special attention is paid to the issues of functional purpose and achievements of the alliances during the Russian aggression against Ukraine.

This paper confirms that the international security environment is transforming to meet new challenges and threats. As a result, changes are taking place in the global security system, where small regional alliances are beginning to play an important role.

The author emphasizes that Ukraine should be involved in all possible regional security and defense initiatives as an active participant in the European security environment. This will ensure its further existence as an independent state and significantly enhance the defense capabilities of the European Union and the West as a whole.

Keywords: security; regional security; international security environment; transformation; cooperation; threats; defense; Russian-Ukrainian War.

Introduction. Regional cooperation research is more relevant than ever, especially in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war, when the entire international community was in a state of shock. International security organizations' activities proved highly ineffective in addressing the consequences of the war and resolving the crisis. Of course, several events led to changes in the security system.

Meanwhile, Russia's large-scale war against Ukraine has necessitated an audit of outdated mechanisms and tools for crisis management. Considering that the structures created after the Second World War - the UN, OSCE, etc., or military-political blocs such as NATO - are responsible for maintaining peace and security, the regional approach to security is gaining more and more attention: flexible, localized cooperation formats.

The research problem has been reflected in various works by foreign and domestic academic community representatives. For example, R. Demchyshak considers expanding cooperation between Ukraine and Central and Eastern European subregional associations, including the Three Seas Initiative, the Lublin Triangle, etc. The author believes such collaboration is necessary due to Ukraine's inability to join certain global alliances such as NATO. Moreover, regional collaboration is aimed at closer interaction in problematic areas for the participating countries [2].

An interesting paper is the work of N.Romaniuk and R.Romaniuk, who investigated the institutional shortcomings of existing international organizations revealed in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war. The authors demonstrate that responding to this kind of crisis has forced the Western community to create more flexible cooperation formats, namely network structures, regional and sub-regional unions, alliances, or ad hoc coalitions to ensure security and peace in the future [13].

In a scientific article, I.Dudko and I.Pogorelova analyzed the development and deepening of cooperation in the form of small alliances as a security strategy for Ukraine. The article identifies this direction as necessary, especially for countering the aggressor and for further prospects of implementing Euro-Atlantic integration guidelines, post-war reconstruction, and stable development [3].

Olga Ivasechko and Halyna Danchuk examined this issue by analyzing the concept of multilateralism, which is the cooperation of a small group of countries to address the specific problems. They found that this approach

is an essential trend for Ukraine. It can be beneficial in issues where Ukraine does not have significant influence within multilateral organizations [5].

S.M. Grabsky, O.I. Lytvynenko, I.V. Mikhailin, and others have also studied the aspects of determining the military potential of international actors.

Overall, in the theory of international relations, the importance of regional cooperation has always been opposed to large-scale, sustainable, and permanent organizations such as the UN, OSCE, and NATO. At the same time, the research on the importance of cooperation in small alliances is relevant for Ukraine and Europe due to the current geopolitical shifts and challenges. Especially valuable is the study of the military-political aspect of existing and future cooperation

The purpose of this article. This article aims to identify the value of regional security cooperation as an alternative to traditional international security structures in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war.

The research results. Establishing and deepening cooperation with partners and allies in various areas is the key to ensuring Ukraine's security. War is a high-intensity test for any state and a significant drain on the economy, military capabilities, and the population's needs. Maintaining at least minimal sustainability in the country requires finding alternative methods to the current international security system.

These issues are primarily associated with the internal dynamics of the UN and its structural limitations. They impede an adequate humanitarian and diplomatic response to Russia's crises. Due to the veto power of permanent members, including Russia, the Security Council has not been able to make effective decisions on the conflict so far.

The OSCE remains a unique organization where all parties to the conflict are represented, potentially allowing for dialogue even under challenging circumstances. At the same time, Russia's aggression against Ukraine has created serious new tensions, making it difficult to reach new agreements within the OSCE.

The approved agreements in the period of 2014-2021, within the framework of the OSCE SMM mission in eastern Ukraine, were violated by the aggressor numerous times. Any warnings and expressions of concern were ineffective. Moreover, Russia has used the OSCE budget as a «political tool to undermine the activities of vital OSCE institutions».

In contrast, NATO has demonstrated adaptation to new challenges and security threats posed by Russia's war against Ukraine. The Alliance has not only begun to improve its institutional framework but has also significantly strengthened its defense capabilities. However, it is critical for Ukraine that it is not a member state of the Alliance. NATO provides Ukraine with military, technical, and political support through training, arms supplies, and intelligence sharing. However, Ukraine is not protected by NATO forces and capabilities in a war against Russia.

These issues force the Ukrainian government and the scientific community to constantly search for alternative ways to ensure security superiority over the enemy in response to ineffective traditional international structures.

Therefore, the examples of such regional initiatives as the Visegrad Group (next – V4), Lithuanian-Polish-Ukrainian Brigade, Quadriga, The Three Seas Initiative, Finabel, etc., should be considered. The above will help to formulate a list of advantages and disadvantages of such initiatives as a separate type of support for security in the region.

Four countries—the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia—represent the Visegrad Group, which was created as a platform for communication and discussion of a wide range of issues. First, this association was vital because it represented the interests of Europe's least covered category, which were often at odds with the countries of its central part.

It should be noted that since the establishment of V4 (1991) to the present day, there have been different stages in the association's existence, both successful and not. At the same time, the organization's activities in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war, namely since 2014, are of scientific interest.

In general, since Russia's occupation of Crimea, V4's activity has increased significantly. Its activities were devoted to expanding cooperation in the V4+ format to transfer integration experience to neighboring countries that sought to join the EU. In addition, V4 activities have generally changed the EU's attitude to policy-making in the region towards Eastern and Southeastern Europe.

From 2014 to 2021, Ukraine was also involved in the V4+ format. This cooperation was a priority area of Ukraine's regional policy and took place at three levels [9]:

Deepening bilateral military cooperation with the Republic of Poland;

Building the Baltic-Black Sea security system (The Three Seas Initiative) in the broader regional context with Ukraine's participation based on cooperation between Central European countries (Visegrad and Baltic states);

Direct enhancement in cooperation with the V4 countries.

The V4 played a special role during the occupation of Crimea when it supported Ukraine's territorial integrity along with the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement in 2014-2015.

During this period, cooperation with Ukraine focused on security and defense. This included joint exercises and training between the armed forces of the participating countries, the development of a dialogue at the level of the Commanders-in-Chief of the armed forces on joint defense planning, etc.

With the beginning of Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine, the V4 was also split due to different political views among the participants, which complicated decision-making. It was especially true of relations between Poland and Hungary, which had good neighborly relations with the aggressor.

Since the fall of 2022, there have been attempts to find new approaches to cooperation within the Visegrad Group. To maintain further cooperation in the V4, the Slovak Republic has changed the priority vector of the association's work from political issues to other areas, including deepening regional cooperation in the development of transport, green and digital technologies, etc.

In the context of supporting Ukraine, the activities were aimed at political and practical assistance at all levels of the country's life, in particular through the programs of the International Visegrad Fund, discussing the future of the Eastern Partnership, and finding ways to promote the European integration of Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, and the Western Balkans [1].

Military-political cooperation between Ukraine and Turkey is expressed in the Quadriga format. The goal of this partnership is primarily to develop a strategic dialogue on security and defense issues between defense ministers and foreign ministers. The cooperation is two-way, with a particular focus on military-technical cooperation.

Before the Russian-Ukrainian war, Ukrainian-Turkish cooperation was not a priority. However, political dialogue has intensified since 2014. Since then, the Republic of Turkey has consistently taken a pro-Ukrainian diplomatic stance on international platforms such as the UN and publicly emphasized its commitment to Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty. However, it does not join the European sanctions against Russia [12].

In general, this association's achievements include important agreements for the supply of Turkish Bayraktars, a significant allocation of funds to order the necessary nomenclature of the military-industrial complex for the needs of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, and joint exercises of the defense and security forces.

Establishing a joint military brigade in 2014 significantly strengthened military cooperation between Ukraine, Poland, and Lithuania. Under a UN Security Council mandate, this brigade was trained to use it in international operations.

The joint Lithuanian-Polish-Ukrainian Brigade aimed to realize several important intentions. Among them, it is essential to establish interoperability through regular joint exercises. Another important objective was to exchange experiences and introduce new approaches to planning, supporting, and executing military operations. On July 24, 2015, the Ministers of Defense of Ukraine, Poland, and Lithuania signed a technical agreement in Lviv to establish the Lithuanian-Ukrainian Brigade. The brigade had an international headquarters, three national battalions, and special units [4].

In this initiative, Ukraine was represented by the military of the 1st Airmobile Battalion of the 80th Separate Airmobile Brigade, one of the best in the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

For instance, numerous events were held during the brigade's existence to develop a common action tactic. It was valuable for Ukraine, as it brought it closer to NATO regarding adaptation to the organization's standards [9].

Among these exercises, mention should be made of Brave Band, Anakonda, Maple Arch, Three Swords, and participation in Common Challenge and Rapid Trident.

This initiative is the best example of cooperation between the countries on a narrow range of issues in the field of security and defense. The initiative has positively impacted the further development of Polish-Lithuanian-Ukrainian relations by strengthening the dialogue between the countries. Moreover, it supports Ukraine's integration into the European Union and NATO. It provided an example of a regional alliance to strengthen security and defense. It is imperative in the context of Russia's aggression against Ukraine and the entire democratic community.

In the face of a large-scale invasion of Ukraine, the Lithuanian-Polish-Ukrainian Brigade initiative has become a kind of training center for the Ukrainian military. In addition, the brigade has become more active in participating in international military exercises, which has significantly helped improve its vision of the modern battlefield [8].

The cooperation between Ukraine, Poland, and Lithuania has taken on a new dimension in the form of a trilateral regional alliance known as the Lublin Triangle. This initiative aims to develop political, economic, cultural, and security dialogue. Building such a strategic partnership will support Ukraine in countering Russian aggression and restoring its territorial integrity.

The Lublin Triangle is considered a significant step in strengthening regional security and promoting stability and democracy in Eastern Europe. After all, one of the Alliance's key tasks is to counter current challenges and threats to standard security from Russia.

Other goals of the Lublin Triangle include Ukraine's accession to existing international associations and coordination of actions within other international organizations. It is essential to involve Ukraine in the European and Euro-Atlantic security systems, establish close cooperation in the format of the Three Seas Initiative, and deepen cooperation within the Eastern Partnership [6].

In the context of the large-scale part of the Russian-Ukrainian war, the Lublin Triangular became a platform for announcing Ukraine's need for weapons and equipment. For instance, one of the outcomes of the meeting

was Poland's announcement that it would provide Ukraine with Leopard-2 tanks. With this decision, Poland set a bright example of its determination to support Ukraine for other European countries.

The Three Seas Initiative is another regional alliance that should be considered. It brings together 13 European Union countries and Ukraine as an associate partner. It refers to the countries around the Adriatic, Baltic, and Black Seas. From a historical perspective, the Three Seas concept was based primarily on geopolitics and security, given Russia's expansionist attitudes [11].

Meanwhile, this initiative's goal is broader and not limited to security and defense issues. It is interested in implementing large-scale infrastructure and logistics projects that promote economic development and cooperation between the participating countries. During the Russian-Ukrainian war, the organization attached particular importance to improving critical infrastructure, such as power grids, pipelines, communication systems, etc.

The organizational structure of 3SI includes annual summits to discuss strategic directions and priority projects for member countries. The European landmass that connects the Baltic, Adriatic, and Black Seas is proving to be an essential geostrategic corridor, further emphasizing the military importance of the 3SI. Therefore, this Alliance is seen as a reinforcement of existing democratic security institutions in the context of global power struggles.

Finabel is an excellent example of a military cooperation alliance. While Ukraine is not a member, this project should be considered an example for further strategic partnership development.

Finabel is an organization that promotes cooperation and interoperability between the national land forces of the European Union member states. This Alliance also encourages the expansion of the European defense market by improving the military industry.

In the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war, Finabel has taken various practical measures to improve defense cooperation between its members and adapt European armies to new challenges. Among these achievements, the modernization of supply and logistics systems is worth noting. It significantly strengthens NATO in defense implementation.

Moreover, the organization began actively implementing the reconnaissance use of drones and developing strategies in the context of enemy attacks. Based on the example of the war in Ukraine and the significant achievements in using small combat groups during the offensive in the Kyiv region, the organization began to decentralize command and increase flexibility in decision-making at the tactical level.

In this way, Finabel actively promotes harmonizing military doctrines, procedures, and concepts among European countries, which is especially important in times of war. The organization serves as a platform for information exchange between the land forces commanders of its member states, promoting greater interaction and coordination.

Indeed, the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) should not be overlooked. This initiative deepens defense and security cooperation between member states. Though it was established in 2017, it was seen as a response to geopolitical security challenges.

This organization aims to deepen cooperation between its members and develop common standards and procedures that ensure better coordination between the armed forces. In addition, this institution has significant financial potential, which is aimed at projects that stimulate innovation and development of the defense sector in Europe.

Throughout the war in Eastern Europe, PESCO transformed its interests in peacekeeping missions into concrete steps to strengthen defense capabilities and deter Russian aggression. An especially striking step was close coordination with NATO, especially in military mobility and joint planning.

In addition, in line with Ukraine's lessons learned in the war against Russia, the Alliance has begun active work to improve critical capabilities, such as air defense, cybersecurity, and medical support, including unmanned systems.

Conclusions. Therefore, the research allows us to draw the following conclusions.

The Russian-Ukrainian war has forced the international community to review its approaches to ensuring its security. The low efficiency of existing international organizations has significantly intensified the activities of small regional alliances and initiatives. These organizations' activities demonstrate their high adaptability, efficiency, and political will to act in the context of threats ignored or insufficiently addressed by large international structures.

In contrast to multilateral organizations with vague mandates and political paralysis, regional formats have demonstrated effectiveness in military coordination, information exchange, logistical support, and strategic planning. Moreover, the ability to introduce changes in defense policy, namely new methods and tools of warfare, is also an extraordinary advantage.

Considering the ongoing crisis of the international security system and the global confrontation of forces, we can predict a further strengthening of the role of small regional alliances as key elements of the new security architecture in Europe and beyond.

In this context, Ukraine, as an active participant in such formats, should be involved in all possible security initiatives in the European region. Strengthening regional cooperation in the format of such alliances should be recognized as a strategic guideline for Ukraine's future foreign policy.

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Присташ А.

Трансформація міжнародної безпеки: ефективність малих альянсів у європейській безпековій архітектурі

Анотація. У 21 столітті спостерігається значне зниження ефективності традиційних міжнародних організацій, які покликані гарантувати мир та стабільність у світі. Тому, у даному дослідженні здійснено огляд малих військових регіональних союзів у системі європейської безпеки.

Дана стаття виявляє переваги регіональних форматів на відміну від інституцій з універсальним членством. Так, виокремлено швидкість прийняття рішень та мобілізацію ресурсів, а також більшу спроможність оперативного реагування. Крім того, виявлено їх роль та значення у контексті підсилення безпекової та оборонної спроможності регіону.

Розглянуто ключові військові союзи, які набувають особливого значення в умовах російсько-української війни та загальної кризи системи міжнародної безпеки. Серед таких об'єднань: литовсько-польсько-українська бригада, Тримор'я, формат Квадрига, Люблінський трикутник, а також Finabel та PESCO. Увагу приділено питанням функціонального призначення, досягненням союзів у ході російської агресії проти України.

Стаття підтверджує, що міжнародне безпекове середовище трансформується до нових викликів та загроз. У контексті цього відбувається зміни в світовій системі безпеці, де важливу роль починають відігравати малі регіональні союзи.

Звернено увагу, що Україна, як активний учасник європейського безпекового середовища, повинна бути залучена до усіх можливих регіональних ініціатив у сфері безпеки та оборони. Зазначене дозволить не лише забезпечити її подальше існування як незалежної держави, але значно підсилить оборонну можливість Європейського союзу та Заходу в цілому.

Ключові слова: безпека; регіональна безпека; міжнародне безпекове середовище; трансформація; співпраця; загрози; оборона; російсько-українська війна.

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