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Analytical Instruments to Assess the Condition of the International Security Environment: Strategic Reviews, Global Indexes and Estimation Criteria

Abstract. The article is focused on the current issue of researching the international security environment. The Russian–Ukrainian war has caused fundamental changes in the international security system and made international actors not only acknowledge the fact of war in Eastern Europe but also change their approaches to ensuring security in the international environment. Increasingly, countries in the Euro–Atlantic security space have begun to describe the category under study – the international security environment – as unstable and fraught with threats and challenges. Meanwhile, the absence of a definition for this concept and the elements considered in its assessment in the security strategies and defense reviews of countries, particularly Ukraine, makes it necessary to conduct further research in this area.

Therefore, the article presents the results of a review of key defense planning documents from countries within the Euro–Atlantic security system. This analysis enabled us to identify the key elements to consider when evaluating the state of the international security environment.

The article also considers other potential approaches to assessing the studied category, justifying the use of global empirical indicators, expert assessments, and SWOT analysis.

The necessity of a scientific understanding of the concept of «international security environment» and the criteria for its assessment, with a view to its further integration into the Ukrainian national security sphere, is substantiated.

Keywords: international security; international security environment; transformation; assessment; threats; defense; Russian–Ukrainian War

Introduction. The study of the international security environment and the assessment of its state are more relevant than ever. The Russian–Ukrainian war has become a significant catalyst for fundamental changes within the international security system. This event has significantly altered the views of countries around the world on issues of national security, particularly in the Euro–Atlantic security space. The use of the term «international security environment» has become increasingly common among NATO countries; however, its essence and meaning, as well as the criteria used to characterize it, remain unclear.

The analysis of works by the foreign scientific community revealed a common trend in interpreting the concept under study. The study by Ahmet Erciyas and Abdullah Soydemir, «Transformation of the EU Common Security and Defense Policy after 2014», examines how changes in the security environment following Russia's aggression against Ukraine transformed EU defense policy. The authors argue that the European Union has moved from an expeditionary approach to collective defense, reflecting profound changes in the international security environment [5].

Edward Deverell's research paper, «Essential Security Interest: Challenges to Ammunition Security of Supply in Sweden», analyzes the impact of the changing security environment on ensuring defense resilience. The author concludes that strategic resources, particularly ammunition, are becoming a critical element of states' defense capabilities in today's threat environment [4].

Upon analyzing the papers of the Ukrainian academic community, several works devoted to this issue were identified. Particularly noteworthy is the monograph by Bocharnikov, V., and Sveshnikov, S. The paper defines the conceptual foundations for the formation of a global and regional security space. The researchers predict the state of the environment until 2030 by analyzing the political, economic, and technological factors that affect the stability of the international security system [1].

Bohdanovych V., Ilyashov O., Komarov V., and Oleksiyuk V., in the collective article «Approach to Assessing the Security Environment under Modern Conditions of Armed Struggle» [2], develop a practical approach to the quantitative and qualitative assessment of the security environment in wartime conditions. The authors consider situational environment indicators and propose an algorithm for monitoring security threats to inform defense planning.

An important contribution to the development of research methodology was made by Kaliuzhna N., in her article «Methods for Forecasting the Evolution of the Security Environment» [14], which analyzes modern forecasting methods – from expert and scenario-based to economic and mathematical modeling. The author

demonstrates the necessity of combining qualitative and quantitative approaches to analyzing security evolution trends, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of state policy in the field of national security.

These scientific developments form a solid theoretical and methodological basis for studying the security environment at the state level. However, there is a need to combine theoretical models with practical analysis tools. However, in the context of changes occurring in the international security system, it is essential not to limit oneself to the national level, but to conduct research on the security environment at the regional and global levels. Since the close interdependence of actors in international relations directly determines and influences the state policy of each country.

Within this context, it is essential to consider strategic reviews of countries that are direct actors in the environment, global empirical indicators, expert opinion, and SWOT analysis as integral parts of assessing the state of the environment.

This triangulation of approaches enhances the reliability of analytical conclusions and contributes to the development of scientifically sound recommendations for the state's overall security policy.

The purpose of this article. This article aims to justify the feasibility of analyzing strategic security reviews, taking into account global empirical indicators in combination with expert assessment, as well as conducting a SWOT analysis of the environment as an integral part of forming an overall assessment of the state of the international security environment.

The research results. In the face of global instability in the international security system, the term «international security environment» has become increasingly common on the agenda of key actors in international relations. In the context of the Russian–Ukrainian war, international security organizations and NATO member states often characterize it as unstable and fraught with threats. It encourages a deeper investigation of this category and the identification of a set of criteria that actors in international relations rely on when characterizing this issue.

The review of academic research reveals that this concept often encompasses all aspects of the international community's life and defines the conditions and circumstances under which the actors of the international security system interact.

In the context of determining this definition, its international legal regulation is interesting for analysis. The concept of the international security environment is generally not defined and is not enshrined in the basic documents of international law.

The North Atlantic Treaty, for instance, which serves as the legal basis for the collective defense system in the Euro-Atlantic security space, emphasizes the need to overcome challenges and threats in order to ensure stability in the environment [27].

The United Nations Charter, which defines and enshrines the principles of collective security in the world, states that the goal of the UN is to guarantee peace and security in the international environment by countering any aggression, with diplomatic settlement of conflicts as the primary tool [3].

The European Security Strategy is a crucial document that defines the international security environment as a strategic priority for the European community, but it does not clearly define the concept [26].

Therefore, it is proposed to consider other defense reviews of NATO countries to form a general understanding of the concept under study and to identify the key elements necessary for its assessment.

The NATO Strategic Concept 2022 defines Russia's invasion of Ukraine as an event that has significantly changed the security environment. Indeed, under current circumstances, Russia's aggressive actions are identified as a key threat and source of danger to the entire Euro-Atlantic community. To adapt to environmental changes, NATO defines the overall state of the international security system and, accordingly, identifies the strategic priorities and actions necessary for their implementation [20].

In the European Security White Paper – Readiness 2030, the category under review is described as dangerous due to several challenges and threats to the European security system caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Therefore, their elimination is considered at both the national level of each country and the global level, as the goal is to maintain the stability of the international order [7].

Importantly, expanding and deepening international cooperation and collaboration with partners in the field of security and defense has been identified as a tool for stabilizing the international security environment. Consequently, it can be concluded that the categories of «interest» and «threat» in the international security environment play an important role in determining the nature of relations between its actors.

In connection with the need to identify other critical elements necessary for determining the state of the international security environment, the author reviewed key strategic concepts of security and defense in the Euro-Atlantic space.

In general, the author reviewed the following Defense Planning Documents:

Global Britain in a competitive age. The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy Presented to Parliament by the Prime Minister by Command of Her Majesty (2023) [13];

National Security and Defence Industry Strategy (2024), Federal Ministry of Defence of Germany [8];

Revue Nationale Stratégique (2022), Government of France [12];

National Threat Assessment (2025), State Security Department and Defence Intelligence and Security Service of the Republic of Lithuania [25];

International Security and Estonia (2024), Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service [6];
Latvia's Foreign and Security Policy Yearbook (2024), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia [18];
Government Report on Finnish Foreign and Security Policy (2023), Government of Finland [11];
Strategic Defence Review (2023), Ministry of National Defence of the Republic of Poland [19];
Year of Nordic–Baltic Cooperation (2024), Nordic–Baltic Cooperation Report [22];
Security and Defence Policy of the Kingdom of Denmark until 2035 (2023), Government of Denmark, Ministry of Defence [10];

Focus – 2025, Norwegian Intelligence Service [23].

The analysis of the above–mentioned documents and reports of defense agencies revealed the following: the list of elements examined in the context of characterizing the international security environment is identical in most countries of the Euro–Atlantic and European systems. Nevertheless, they can be categorized into relevant common areas that should be taken into account when assessing the state of the environment.

Therefore, it is proposed to classify them as follows:

- the state of international security and main trends;
- the level of stability in the region;
- interests, values, and priorities;
- the number of actors involved in international relations;
- threats and their sources;
- available potential and capabilities;
- the actions necessary to ensure security.

Notably, the analysis of defense reviews shows that Russia's aggressive and hybrid actions have been identified as the main threat to Euro–Atlantic and European security systems since 2022. It confirms the transformation occurring within the international security environment amid the Russian–Ukrainian war.

The author also reviewed the regulatory documents of Ukraine's defense institutions, in particular:

The Law of Ukraine «On National Security of Ukraine» of 2018 [15];

The National Security Strategy of 2020 [20];

The Foreign Policy Strategy of Ukraine of 2021 [9];

The Military Security Strategy of 2021 [17];

The Law of Ukraine «On the Defense of Ukraine» as amended in 2022 [16].

The analysis of these documents revealed that the category of «international security environment» is mentioned indirectly, without a clear definition of the concept. Therefore, the conceptual meaning of the category is not laid down in the regulatory and legal documents of the Ukrainian state, which makes it difficult to effectively implement the state's foreign policy goals in this area.

Meanwhile, a detailed description can be found in the Order of the Minister of Defense of Ukraine No. 484 of December 22, 2020, regarding the Procedure for Organizing and Implementing Defense Planning within the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine [24]. However, the document examines the concept of «security environment» within the state's domestic policy, assessing both internal and external aspects of security. Research into the security environment is considered a necessary condition for ensuring the state's security from both foreign and local threats.

The MoD Order is a valuable document, as it highlights the importance of considering categories such as military capability and the potential of international security actors when assessing the security environment. Therefore, the author proposes to include it in the general list of criteria for evaluating the international environment. Firstly, this is related to the possibility of further forecasting trends in the international security system.

In addition to analyzing strategic security and defense documents, other approaches can be used to assess and supplement the evaluation of the environment under study. One such method is the use of global empirical indices.

When assessing the capabilities and military potential of a country or organization, it is essential to utilize data from Global Firepower, The Military Balance, and Trends in World Military Expenditure. This data can fully reflect a country's defense budget, active and reserve human capital, as well as, crucially, the military capability of the state, taking into account the types of armed forces, namely: land, sea, and air components.

The general state of international security and tensions can be examined using the Global Peace Index and data from the SIPRI Military Expenditure Database. It will allow us to determine the growth in military defense spending.

Global empirical indicators are extremely valuable because they enable researchers to examine the overall dynamics of international relations. They also help identify critical points where changes started happening and what caused them.

At the same time, to substantiate the data obtained from the analysis of global empirical indicators, it is worthwhile to employ the expert assessment method. It is because experts in the relevant field can explain certain phenomena and events in accordance with the intentions, conditions, and circumstances of specific actors in international relations. It is reflected in scenarios of future events, which is particularly relevant in the context of assessing the international security environment.

This method is best suited for use by leading analytical agencies and institutions. In the context of this research, these are agencies that analyze contemporary challenges and threats to international security. Examples include the Atlantic Council, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, the European Union Institute for Security Studies, and others.

Another tool for assessing the international security environment is SWOT analysis. It is not a stand-alone tool, but rather serves as a supplement to the detailed analysis of the international security system that has already been conducted. The SWOT analysis takes into account all the weaknesses, strengths, opportunities, and threats for those actors in international relations that are of scientific interest. It may include existing defense capabilities, financial capabilities, and identify internal and external threats and challenges. In addition, the results of the SWOT analysis are often taken into account in strategic documents and concepts related to security and defense, such as the UN Security Council Assessment, the EU Strategic Compass, the NATO Defense Planning Process, and strategies on national resilience.

Therefore, the conducted analysis reveals that assessing the state of the international security environment is a complex, multi-stage process that takes into account a range of data. First and foremost, it encompasses the interests of the parties, actions aimed at achieving these interests, intentions and capabilities, and, most significantly, threats and challenges that generally determine the trends in relations between the parties in the security environment. According to this assessment, forecasts of developments, decisions on cooperation, military coalitions and alliances, humanitarian aid, and other related matters are formed and developed.

The international security environment is a system of interactions between states, international organizations, and non-state actors. The factors of global and regional stability are formed, manifested, and evolve within this environment. Its essence lies in the combination of political, military-strategic, informational, technological, humanitarian, and other processes that determine the level of security in international relations.

Such an environment encompasses both the state of inter-state relations and the balance of power, as well as the system of norms, institutions, and mechanisms that regulate the behavior of security actors amid constant change in the global order. It features unpredictability, asymmetry in threats, the emergence of new forms of hybrid influence, and the strengthening of interdependence among national, regional, and collective security.

Therefore, the international security environment can be considered an integrative category that reflects the combination of external and internal factors that shape states' defense policies, influence the structure of the international security system, and determine the strategic priorities for its development. The concept serves as an analytical basis for risk forecasting, defense capability planning, and the formation of mechanisms for collective responses to the challenges of the modern world.

Conclusions. Understanding the changes and transformations occurring in the international security environment is crucial for planning a state's defense policy. Primarily, it fosters an understanding of changes in approaches to ensuring security within the overall security system and determines the directions of cooperation between actors in international relations, highlighting common interests and allowing for the prediction of potential challenges and threats, as well as future regional cooperation formats.

In the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war, it is crucial to develop approaches that enable a systematic analysis of the state of the international security system and its environment, as this is necessary to determine Ukraine's place in the security environment and to identify promising directions and formats for further cooperation.

The assessment of the state of this environment is not a theoretical issue for Ukraine. However, a practical tool for the country's survival, enabling it to understand which external trends directly affect its security and how to best adapt to global changes.

That is why it is critically important to continue working on forming a clear concept of the «international security environment», developing a unified methodology for monitoring its dynamics, as well as criteria and indicators for its assessment.

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Присташ А.

Аналітичні інструменти для оцінки стану міжнародного безпекового середовища: стратегічні огляди, глобальні індекси та критерії оцінки

Анотація. Дана стаття присвячена актуальному питанню дослідження міжнародного безпекового середовища. російсько-українська війна спричинила кардинальні зміни в системі міжнародної безпеки та змусила акторів міжнародних відносин не лише визнати сам факт війни на теренах Східної Європи, але й змінити підходи до гарантування безпеки в міжнародному середовищі.

Країни євроатлантичного безпекового простору все частіше почали охарактеризувати досліджувану категорію – міжнародне безпекове середовище – нестабільним та сповненим загроз і викликів. Водночас, відсутність визначення даного поняття та елементів, які урахуються при його оцінці в стратегіях безпеки та оборонних оглядах країн, зокрема України, обумовлює необхідність для проведення подальших досліджень за відповідним напрямом.

Відтак, у статті представлені результати з огляду деяких із ключових документів оборонного планування країн євроатлантичної системи безпеки. Зазначене дозволило окреслити необхідні елементи для урахування при здійсненні оцінки стану міжнародного безпекового середовища.

Розглянуто й інші потенційні підходи до оцінки досліджуваної категорії, а саме: надано обґрунтування використання показників глобальних емпіричних індикаторів, методу експертних оцінок та SWOT-аналізу.

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

Стаття надійшла до редакції 09.10.2025.