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RESEARCH

- CHANGE OF THE SECURITY PARADIGM
- NON-PROLIFERATION REGIME
- EUROPEAN SECURITY AND VALUES

## The Change of Security Paradigm

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# NO SECURITY WITHOUT VALUES

**Taras Mykhalniuk,**

Director, Open Ukraine Foundation

***The article examines interdependence between values and security, as well as the ability of the existing international system and its actors to ensure protection of democratic values and thus security. The article raises questions of need for new international mechanisms for security protection. The problem of competition between state-centrism and human security concepts is examined through Russia's aggression against Ukraine and the international system's inability to protect basic principles of international law and ensure peace.***

## Introduction

In international relations, as in any other human sphere, values play a decisive role. The decision-makers' values determine their perception of what is good and what is evil, and this is key to relationships they establish. Values can differ but if you announce your affiliation to certain values like rule of law, democracy, liberal economy – you must believe in them, protect them and adhere to them. Security without values is impossible, since 'might is right' then becomes the overriding factor, and force determines the outcome.

Values ensure predictability – a key security condition. Rule of law is a value, which ensures that norms and agreements are implemented and systems regulated. It is possible to compromise on values, but if fundamental values are compromised, a dispute ends in chaos and violence. Good intentions can sometimes lead to extremely bad results.

Every system has its norms and regulations, and international relations are no exception.

Adherence to these norms is an important condition. If norms and regulations are to be changed, this should be done in a legal, publicly accepted way. Otherwise, it will bring the system to chaos.



***If norms and regulations are to be changed, this should be done in a legal, publicly accepted way***

Russia has brought chaos to the system of international relations. By invading Ukraine<sup>1</sup> it violated the principles of territorial integrity, reliability of international agreements, and now is running political buffoonery at the UN, the existing international system's key institution. Though Russia has always expressed adherence to democratic values<sup>2</sup>, it was little more than lip service as in reality it acts as if the crucial voice belonged to the strongest participant demonstrating permanent readiness for military confrontation<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Maksymilian Czapurski, John Herbst, Eliot Higgins, Alina Polyakova, Damon Wilson, Hiding in Plain Sight: Putin's War in Ukraine, 13 July 2015 {[www.atlanticcouncil.org/](http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/) access: 25 July 2015}

<sup>2</sup> Tom Batchelor, Putin Celebrates Russia's open Democracy... 12 June 2015 {<http://www.express.co.uk/> access: 21 August 2015}

<sup>3</sup> Gabriela Baczynska, Russia announces war games 1 December 2015 {<http://www.reuters.com/> access: 21 August 2015}



***Russia's aggression towards Ukraine, and the escalation of tension in the region, has revealed security gaps in the present system of international relations inherited from the Cold War and exposed unresolved problems, which allow conflicts to flare.***

Russia's aggression towards Ukraine, and the escalation of tension in the region, has revealed security gaps in the present system of international relations inherited from the Cold War and exposed unresolved problems, which allow conflicts to flare.

### **Raising Questions**

Recent developments in the Russia-Ukraine conflict raise three sets of questions. First of all, what values does the whole international community share? Are different international players allowed to have different values? On what values is compromise impossible?

Another set of questions concerns the existing system of international relations. Is the international system with its norms, agreements and regulations stable and non-changeable or can it be flexible? Do mighty international actors possess more power to change the rules and do others just have to obey?

Finally, what is security – is it state security or human security? What should be our priorities between these two sometimes antagonistic notions? Moreover, how should security, as we see it, be reached?

### **System of International Relations. Breaking the Rules**

Let us take a look at the key principle in the existing international system. The current system was established in the wake of WW 2 and to a significant extent is a product of the Cold War, so its main goal is to maintain the status quo and avoid escalation of conflicts. Thus, "since the end of World War 2, the international political system has been organized around the notion of equal sovereignty of states, internal competence for domestic jurisdiction, and preservation of existing boundaries..."<sup>4</sup> This has been the key pillar for international relations for the last 50 years.

However, an international security system based on containment is unable to respond to many emerging challenges; it is passive rather than active and can be manipulated by actors oriented towards satisfaction of their interests and not towards global prosperity and security. The Russian Federation aspires to restore its influence within the former USSR space including Eastern Europe. It considers itself a founder of the existing world order, and believes that this fact and its nuclear arms give it the right to establish a new order<sup>5</sup>. Its totalitarian values and last-century vision is based on the worst aspects of the Cold War, when the whole system was an arena for competition and geopolitical fights for interests.

Russia emphasizes that its policies aim at a fair and democratic world order, and it is not challenging the international order. However, in reality it deems democratic behaviour a weakness. Democracy is for small states, its demeanour suggests, and

<sup>4</sup> J.Scudder, Territorial Integrity: Modern States and International System, 5 January 2015 {[www.exploringgeopolitics.org](http://www.exploringgeopolitics.org) access: 22 July 2015}

<sup>5</sup> V Putin, Speech and discussion during Munich conference on security policy (Выступление и дискуссия на Мюнхенской конференции по вопросам политики безопасности). 10 February 2007 {<http://archive.kremlin.ru/> access: 22 July 2015}

has little to do with actual politics – it is simply a political show for ordinary people.

The international system allows such behaviour. Containment is its main achievement but it can guarantee neither effective prevention nor punishment of an aggressor. Russia's threat of a nuclear war allows the other international players to concentrate on soft measures and wait for a resolution rather than act. From a state-centred point of view, current developments can be seen as optimistic – a dubious cease-fire has been reached in Ukraine with no further escalation, now is the time for efforts to move from a military conflict to political discussions and negotiations. However, it does not change the situation on the ground.

The problem is the international system's state-centrism. Politicians and diplomats turn a blind eye to deaths of soldiers and civilians despite the cease-fire, to a million of IDPs and refugees and even to the Russian military units on the Ukrainian soil. If the system were oriented towards human security, in which every human life matters, different measures would have been adopted at the very beginning of the conflict. The international community's focus on containing its economic and political losses has meant more human deaths and a million of IDPs and refugees<sup>6</sup>.

One can find a proof of the present security system's fixation on state interests in the fact that when the UN General Assembly voted in support of Ukraine's territorial integrity as of March 27, 2014, those who abstained were mostly African and Asian countries, and another 11 countries voted along Russia against the Resolution. When many UN members act according to their

political interests, and neglect even such a crucial value as the territorial integrity of a UN member-state, it is clear that the state-centred international system leaves much room for manipulation as the states' interests stay above the values and principles they declare to protect within the UN.

### **Human Security Aspiration Movement of International System**

The last century saw consistent efforts to create a more people-oriented approach to international concerns. First came human rights, and then other issues became prominent, such as environmental protection and good governance. All of these comprise the human security approach. Further development of this concept was complicated by the fact that the system is determined and governed by states that are not ready to give up their interests (political/economical) and influences and let anybody interfere with their jurisdiction. Very often, human life does not count for much in comparison to economic and political interests.

A driving force for human security was the fact that the most developed countries have democratic governance and under democracy, a human-oriented policy is one of the main principles. The United Nations has also given strong support to the concept of human security – the UN General Assembly adopted the human security approach for the UN programs worldwide<sup>7</sup>.

Conflicts in places like Iraq, the former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, or Syria emphasize the need for human security. The question remains unanswered – how to create

<sup>6</sup> Maksymilian Czapurski, John Herbst, Eliot Higgins, Alina Polyakova, Damon Wilson, Hiding in Plain Sight: Putin's War in Ukraine, 13 July 2015 {[www.atlanticcouncil.org/](http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/) access: 25 July 2015}

<sup>7</sup> Human Security Unit, UN, Overview of Human Security Concept {[www.un.org](http://www.un.org) access: 29 July 2015}

an international system/organization independent of state influences (which are politically oriented) and possessing enough strength to counter emerging threats to human life? At present, the most effective mechanism is the collective security mergers of the countries, which share democratic values, such as the European Union.

If we consider Russia's war against Ukraine in this context, we will see that Russia is testing the international system's human orientation. Its purely totalitarian approach to principles and interests and readiness to sacrifice lives and welfare of millions of people for its geopolitical interests follows in the footsteps of the worst Cold War policies.

## Democracies

Can we rely on democratic countries to promote human security? To some extent, we can. But, unfortunately, double standards are flourishing in the democratic camp, too. One has to remember that once you have double standards and different sets of values for internal developments within your country and for external policies, you automatically become a fake democracy – losing one principle, you lose them all. Once a democratic country develops cooperation with a totalitarian regime, it thus supports its existence and creates a potential security threat for the other states. In terms of values, it starts to move into a fake-democracy direction, no matter how democratic it would be inside. Recent international developments clearly proved that due to weakness of states to promote their values it is necessary to vest the burden of implementing and protecting the human security principles in transnational

international organizations and bodies or alliances less dependent on states.

A society is only democratic if it sees democratic values as fundamental, applies them itself, and works to spread these values around the globe. This may be seen as proselytism but it is a vital part of a value-based society that it works to extend the reach of dignity, rule of law, and freedom to societies, which do not adhere to these values. The United States does a lot to promote democratic values<sup>8</sup>. Very often, non-democratic countries resist the US' influence as they feel that in this new world order there is no place for their regime. At the same time, the intensity of the US' engagement in certain regions of economic interests makes one concerned about real intentions behind the intervention.

The Budapest Memorandum that guaranteed Ukraine's territorial integrity (1994) was violated, yet there were no immediate and adequate responses by the guarantor nations, which included the US. The US is giving Ukraine immense assistance (both political and technical),<sup>9</sup> without which Ukraine would have been long overrun by the Russian forces. But the US is reluctant to get into a direct military confrontation with Russia. Therefore, questions were raised whether such support was enough and how the US sees its obligations under the Budapest Memorandum. When signing it, they certainly did not expect it would force them to confront a nuclear state.

In Europe, the situation is much worse. The European Union is a powerful force in promoting democracy across the region, thanks to attractiveness of the

<sup>8</sup> Sean M. Lynn Jones, Why United States should spread democracy. March 1998 {[www.belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/](http://www.belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/) access: 20 August 2015}

<sup>9</sup> Darren Boyle. Take that Putin! U.S. delivers ten armoured Humvees to help Ukraine's defence against Russian-backed separatists as part of \$75million non-lethal military aid deal. 26 March 2015 {<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/> access: 21 August 2015}

European integration. Nevertheless, its unwillingness to become a global player and take responsibility for security, at least, in Europe and those countries, which aspire to join the EU, create a security threat. They are well aware of Russia's dislike of the European enlargement eastwards, and their reluctance to stand against Russia's aggression towards Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia has contributed to a security collapse in the region.

The problem of the European Union is that, while maintaining democratic standards internally, it tends to put its economic and political interests first in its external relations. Sanctions should have been introduced as soon as Russia turned towards a totalitarian direction<sup>10</sup> starting from 2005 with deterioration of the situation with political and civil rights.<sup>11</sup> Had there been stronger international pressure at that time, Russia would have understood that the democratic community including the EU was united and determined to protect its values, and would have found it harder to invade Ukraine. Therefore, for Europe, the first recommendation for ensuring security on the continent is to strengthen the values not only internally but also internationally and to become a stronger international advocate for democracy and rule of law, at least on the European continent. Unwillingness to acknowledge that need will cause security collapse on the continent –like it happened with the World War 2.

The only sensible aim for negotiations with Putin's Russia is to bring about a cease-fire. Beyond that, no compromises are

possible until there are signs of democratic development in Russia, and tremendous changes in its foreign policy.

## Democratic Alliances

As individual states, including leading world actors, often demonstrate weakness when it comes to the values, the effective way to uphold these values and thus security can be reached through transnational institutions and organizations.

If we examine one of the leading and currently the most effective democratic military alliance – NATO, its initially aims not to protect the values but to defend its members, which, in their turn, are united around the democratic values. Domination of such state-centrism is undermining even article 5 of the Washington treaty – one of NATO's basic principles, which says that when any of its members is attacked it is an attack on all of its members<sup>12</sup>. At least, at the research level, there have been ongoing discussions as to whether these guarantees will stand if an attacker is a large nuclear state.<sup>13</sup> The example above with the Budapest Memorandum's guarantees for Ukraine creates a fertile soil for such doubts.

Due to the above considerations, NATO can be also considered as one of the products of the Cold War era and, to become a real security guarantor, it needs to concentrate on protection and promotion of democratic values – as a basic condition for upholding a secure international environment. To our opinion, it can be an ideal development route for the organization, which can be seen

<sup>10</sup> Alexander Podrabinek. Is Putin's totalitarianism inevitable? 11 July 2014 {[www.imrussia.org/](http://www.imrussia.org/) access: 21 August 2015}

<sup>11</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the world 2005 {[www.freedomhouse.org/](http://www.freedomhouse.org/) access: 21 August 2015}

<sup>12</sup> Ivo Daalder: NATO, the EU and the use of force. 1999 {[www.brookings.edu](http://www.brookings.edu) access: 21 August 2015}

<sup>13</sup> Yoel Sano, Will Russia make a play for Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia?, 23 March 2015 {<http://blogs.ft.com/> access: 24 July 2015}



as a protector of democracy rather than a security umbrella. Presently, NATO is still on the way of transformation, and the Alliance is taking its first steps toward including promotion of democracy into its concepts<sup>14</sup> as well as contributing to democratizations of states with membership aspirations through enlargement<sup>15</sup>.

## Summary and Recommendations

Russia posits a test for the democratic world, and countries under undemocratic regimes are closely watching these developments. Russia will not stop unless its interests in Ukraine are satisfied. The democratic world order will not recover unless the aggressor is punished for its aggression. Failure to dispense such punishment is a direct threat to the democratic states' credibility.

So, democratic states should understand that their weakness and readiness for compromise cannot bring peace and will result in chaos and insecurity spreading deeper into Europe and around the globe. If a state adheres to democratic values within the country but does not implement them in relations with other states, or is passive in protecting fundamental values abroad, it is festering tensions and insecurity in the region and worldwide.

Totalitarianism is no longer an internal issue, if it results in international aggression. Every measure should then be applied to reduce its ability to wage war. Etatism dominating in Russia will inevitably turn into totalitarianism. The

state controls most of the spheres of civic life and politics and enjoys support by the huge propaganda machine and absence of pluralism.<sup>16</sup> Totalitarian regimes should be tackled at every stage of their development as a potential threat not only to lives of their citizens but to the international community.

Conflict must be dealt with when it is still brewing. State centred systems should be replaced with human security oriented international relations. Human security should become a priority for international relations as a whole and no human lives should be sacrificed for geopolitical and economic interests. Democratic nations need to become stronger through alliances. No compromises on fundamental values are acceptable. Democratic values must be protected by all means. In such alliances, democratic values and human security principles should dominate over state interests, whose influence on the decision making process should be minimized.

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<sup>14</sup> The Alliance's Strategic Concept. 24 April 1999. {[www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int) access: 21 August 2015}

<sup>15</sup> Jos Boonstra. NATO's role in democratic reform. May 2007 {[www.frider.org](http://www.frider.org) access: 21 August 2015}

<sup>16</sup> Alexander Podrabinek. Is Putin's totalitarianism inevitable? 11 July 2014 {[www.imrussia.org/](http://www.imrussia.org/) access: 21 August 2015}