



## Time to Focus on Building European Security Resilience: Move from Deterring Russian Aggression to Overcoming the Core Problems

Olena Snigyr



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## **Time to Focus on Building European Security Resilience: Move from Deterring Russian Aggression to Overcoming the Core Problems**

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Olena Snigyr<sup>1</sup>

Today, in this strange and difficult time of reformatting the global international order, which is already complicated by globalization and a pandemic, the European Union as a community based on the liberal values has no choice but to accept their leadership role as it corresponds to their influence as a global actor. And above all else, due to growing European security reasons.

The united Europe faces a row of systemic challenges – the uneasy process of evolving the EU is combined with a reduction in the US presence in European politics and subsequently finding a balance in the frameworks of Euro-Atlantic relations. The EU-Chinese relations are still a matter of discussion too. The EU's self-awareness and self-determination in the changing world are being conducted under the influence of the purposely destabilized external actors and under Russian pressure to create fast and simple solutions for European security.

The European Union is already a powerful global actor in the economic and technology spheres, and for a period of time has been demonstrating readiness for a more active role in the security dimension of world politics. Under these conditions, European countries should make the correct decisions in the sphere of the European security system to maintain the core of its resilience.

After the Cold War ended, conventional warfare in Europe seemed an anachronism and a senseless “zero sum game”, because peaceful coexistence was much more rational and promising. European countries tried to fix the balance of international relations in Europe through the principles of the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris for a New Europe.

For quite a while, we've been hearing arguments that the comprehensive European security order of 1993-2008 has not been successful (Karaganov, S., Bordachov, T. 2009). That it failed and it is high time for new multilateral dialogues about European security conditions. These arguments are significantly strengthened by the wide-reaching and ongoing Russian hybrid warfare – from conventional weapons to cyber-attacks and disinformation. Since discussions on security reforms are already in place, it is reasonable to look at the realistic goals.

The starting point for undermining the European security system should be defined as the period of the early 1990s, not 2014 or 2008. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and in the atmosphere of the ensuing political chaos, the Russian hybrid operation in Moldova and the Russian army's role in the creation of the Transnistrian enclave (Kolosov, V. 2007) happened almost unnoticed and definitely had not been correctly identified by the European nations. The war in Georgia in 2008 was the Russian incentive and invitation for the Euro-Atlantic community to consider the Russian proposal of a new European security order, which had been announced by President Putin in Munich in 2007 (Putin, V., 2007) and later presented in the form of the Russian-designed European Security Treaty (The Draft of the European Security Treaty, 2009).

Today's international relation system in Europe is truly far from the ideals of the Charter of Paris for a New Europe. The Russian Federation has occupied and tried to annex part of Ukrainian territory and continues its military aggression against Ukraine. At the same time, we hear proposals from the Kremlin, and those who think they understand Russia, about discussing a new “more effective” European security system (Charap, S., Shapiro, J., Dienes, A. & others, 2019). Under the given circumstances, – when military aggression against Ukraine continues and European countries are being destabilized through all available Russian influence dimensions, - these proposals sound more like an ultimatum than a solution.

The Russian Federation's goal of reformatting the European Security system based on the concept of legitimate spheres of influence is acceptable to the global players who seek the same goals in other

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Olena Snigyr is a non-resident fellow at Beyond the Horizon ISSG.

parts of the globe. Surprisingly, there are still Russian apologists among Europeans. Those European politicians and experts who support the Russian idea of division lines in Europe believe that peace in their countries will be guaranteed by moving the frontline of the Euro-Atlantic presence away from Russian borders. But for how long? We all remember President Putin's words, "The Russian borders do not end anywhere" (Putin, V., 2016).

However, in reality, we are talking about moving completely different "division lines." Those that have not been drawn on the geographic map but rather on the map of values, and which gave a feeling of safety for all European countries regardless of their size or military strength. But, there really is a choice. We can accept the failure of the comprehensive European security order based on the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris for a New Europe and we can agree with the fact that the OSCE and the Council of Europe do not successfully uphold the frameworks of those accords. Then, naturally, the logic of realism with its reliance on the military force will prevail in the European geographical areas. That is what is happening within European security right now. The wants of the stronger materialize in dialogues which advise and limit the foreign policy sovereignty of the weaker. There is a great temptation to exchange values for paper security guarantees. But in the end, there will be neither values nor guarantees.

There is another choice. To understand why the projects aimed at European security has not worked and to try to find ways to fix it. The idea of comprehensive European Security is based on the assumption that the signatory states of the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris for a New Europe share or at least aspire to common values of democracy, market economy and human rights. It was assumed that relevant principles, enshrined in the given documents, were to become part of the legislature of the signatory countries and thus would guarantee their citizens human rights, democratic governance, and market economy rules. The comprehensive system of European security had been constructed not on forceful restraint, but on trust and the principle of voluntary compliance with those agreements.

To rely on the goodwill and honesty of a partner is always a risk, and international relations are no exception. Still, the examples of NATO and the EU demonstrate that in a value-homogeneous space, the peaceful balance of relations between countries is possible not out of coercion (out of fear of the neighbour's weapons), but through honest partnership and the creation of a network of mutually beneficial interdependence.

The fragility of the European security system in 1993-2008 was caused not only by the fact that Russia did not intend to abide by its commitments, but also due to the limited possibility of political and economic consequences to the violator, which is an inherent fault in the systems of international law. Sanction policies towards Russia today are a purely political decision of some countries, which can be changed tomorrow, even if Russia does not change its policy. In a way, the Council of Europe changed its own regulations simply to return Russia to the meeting room (Vlasenko, V. 2019)

In the European security system, without sanctions, the violator is more likely to use brute force as a means to achieve its goals. The Russian Federation would be completely satisfied with this state of affairs. But would other European countries want that?

Arguably, most European countries, whether members of NATO or the EU, prefer to maintain the unique nature of the European security environment, which allows all its members, both large and small, to feel safe. Internal unity to European associations and their resilience is guaranteed by liberal values, and those values are the objects of systemic aggression by the Russian Federation.

The Russian Federation attacks not only the rule based European order itself, but the Kremlin seeks to destroy what underlies this order - the values. Moscow urges European countries to agree that Europe will be a safer place if interstate relations are based on principles of international relations other than those set by liberal values. That the division into zones of influence will bring stability and greater understanding.

However, the introduction of authoritarian practices in European international relations is unlikely to

promote peace. Even if these practices are well disguised by democratic rituals.

The inherent features of democratic societies are what makes them vulnerable. In particular, freedom of thought and a culture of dialogue make liberal democracies sensitive to external influences. The ideas and arguments which accept the normalization and legitimization of crime are being discussed during academic and political disputes. At first, they can be rejected by experts and scholars, but without effective measures against influence, “the new political normality” will take roots in political context. And there is the possibility that after some time passes, more European politicians of a new generation can accept the idea of visiting the occupied Crimea and playing along with the dictator’s play of pseudo-democracy.

Although, it can be quite the opposite. Europe may appear to be resilient enough to withstand pressure, discern threats, and gain the necessary immunity to the subversive activities of any outside players.

Even in Ukraine, being at the front line of the hybrid war, we feel the lack of knowledge on how to confront multidimensional threats. The effectiveness of our actions is measured by the ratio of trial and error, the price of which is very high for us and the lessons of which we share with our allies towards a common goal. That is why support from united democracies is a literal life-or-death influence for Ukraine. And that is why Ukraine’s vital interest is for United Europe to maintain its resilience and become a more powerful security player. Protection of liberal values and a rule-based international order is our common goal.

To fix the shaky European order, it is not necessary to completely destroy it and to create a new matrix of international affairs. It is instead necessary to stick to your own principles and to make the already established rules work. The EU policy of sanctions is a very good example of European States consolidating to protect the European order. And even if sanctions cannot stop some big companies from making money with Russians here and now (which creates the illusion of its inefficiency), we understand that the aim of sanctions’ policy is to weaken the authoritarian regime in the future. What should be discussed today is not the lifting of sanctions, as those who “understand Russia” suggest, but the creation of a sanctions mechanism which would sufficiently influence Russia to consider an alternative and more constructive solution to the security problems it has created.

The problem of restoring the legal status of Crimea and the problem of resolving all conflicts created by the Russian Federation - in Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova - have solutions and proven mechanisms within the framework of international law. The interests of the Russian Federation to conduct endless and fruitless negotiations with the purpose of continuing rather than resolving conflicts brings all these problems to a standstill. Obviously, if the Russian Federation does not have the political will to implement the Minsk agreements, then we can offer other peaceful international mechanisms for the de-occupation of the temporarily uncontrolled eastern territories of Ukraine. The issue of de-occupation of Crimea and the maritime areas of Ukraine is a matter of serious discussion by the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and on security in the Black Sea and Mediterranean regions. And we believe that a small start in resolving the Crimea problem could be a dialogue within the framework of the newly launched Crimean Platform.

Today’s security problems in the EU’s neighbourhood would not have arisen, and some of them would have never become truly threatening to the whole of Europe if a policy of immediate collective economic and political sanctions against the violator had been pursued alongside a collective policy of engagement and dialogue. In order to become a stronger and safer place, Europe really needs to start getting rid of illusions and using the tools it has. Correcting mistakes and their consequences are more difficult than preventing them. It demands a lot of political will, but it is still possible for all of us.

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