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**SECURITY ASPECTS OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
IN EASTERN AND CENTRAL EUROPE IN THE CONTEXT
OF THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR**

**ASPEKTY BEZPIECZEŃSTWA W STOSUNKACH
MIĘDZYNARODOWYCH W EUROPIE ŚRODKOWO-
-WSCHODNIEJ W KONTEKŚCIE WOJNY ROSYJSKO-
-UKRAIŃSKIEJ**

Abstract: The article examines the security dimension of international relations in Central and Eastern Europe in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war. The research problem is to identify changes in the security environment of the region and to assess the effectiveness of international mechanisms for deterring aggression and ensuring regional stability in this part of the world. The research goal has been achieved through geopolitical

analysis, content analysis and discourse analysis of the security aspects of international relations in Eastern and Central Europe in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war. This was based on a comprehensive approach that included an assessment of the geostrategic position of states, an analysis of their participation in international organisations, military alliances and security initiatives, as well as an examination of historical, political and economic factors that affect their foreign policy.

Zarys treści: Celem niniejszego artykułu jest analiza wymiaru bezpieczeństwa w stosunkach międzynarodowych w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej w kontekście wojny rosyjsko-ukraińskiej. Problemem badawczym jest identyfikacja zmian w środowisku bezpieczeństwa regionu oraz ocena skuteczności międzynarodowych mechanizmów powstrzymywania agresji i zapewniania stabilności w tej części świata. Założony cel badawczy został osiągnięty poprzez analizę geopolityczną, analizę treści i analizę dyskursu na temat aspektów bezpieczeństwa w stosunkach międzynarodowych w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej w kontekście wojny rosyjsko-ukraińskiej. To kompleksowe podejście obejmowało ocenę geostrategicznego położenia państw, analizę ich udziału w organizacjach międzynarodowych, sojuszach wojskowych i inicjatywach bezpieczeństwa, a także badanie czynników historycznych, politycznych i ekonomicznych, które wpływają na ich politykę zagraniczną.

Keywords: Eastern and Central Europe, international relations, Russian-Ukrainian war, security, geopolitical challenges.

Słowa kluczowe: Europa Środkowo-Wschodnia, stosunki międzynarodowe, wojna rosyjsko-ukraińska, bezpieczeństwo, wyzwania geopolityczne.

Introduction

The Russian-Ukrainian war has become one of the most serious challenges to the international security system in the 21st century. Its effects have been felt far beyond Ukraine's borders, affecting the political, economic and military relations of Eastern and Central European countries. This war has highlighted the weaknesses of the existing security architecture in the region, in particular, issues of collective defence, energy independence and resilience to hybrid threats. The international community, including the European Union, NATO and other

organisations, has shown considerable interest in stabilising the region, while facing challenges from Russia's geopolitical ambitions. The study of the security aspects of international relations in Eastern and Central Europe in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war is extremely timely in the face of the enormous challenges that have threatened the stability and security not only of individual states, but also of the European continent as a whole. Firstly, the Russian-Ukrainian war destroyed long-standing mechanisms of peaceful coexistence based on the principles of international law, as Russia's armed aggression against Ukraine has become the largest armed conflict in Europe since World War II, undermining the effectiveness of existing international security structures such as the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the United Nations, among others. Secondly, the Russian-Ukrainian war has highlighted the vulnerability of Eastern and Central European countries to external threats, including hybrid attacks, cyber warfare, energy blackmail and information influence, so the increased tension in the region calls for a review of defence strategies, a strengthening of NATO's role and a strengthening of collective security. Thirdly, the war has significantly affected the European and global order, causing widespread changes in energy policy, economic ties and political unity among European countries. In particular, issues such as energy independence from Russia, the modernisation of the army, increased sanctions pressure and support for countries affected by aggression have increased in importance. Research on this topic is also important for understanding the prospects for lasting peace and stability in the region and for developing new approaches to conflict resolution and preventing future threats, since, as Vasyl Shynkaruk and Natalia Shynkaruk argue, the continuing threat of Russian aggression and the awareness of the lack of credible external security guarantees are the main rationales for supporting Ukraine's strategic course towards Euro-Atlantic integration.¹

The timeliness of the ongoing research stems from the need to create a more effective system of international relations that takes into account contemporary realities and promotes the protection of the interests of the countries of the region. Therefore, the study of this topic is not only of theoretical, but also of practical importance, as it contributes to a better understanding of global processes and the development of strategies to ensure peace and security in Europe.

¹ V. Shynkaruk, N. Shynkaruk, *Vstup Ukrainy do NATO – zabezpechennia natsionalnoi bezpeky, Vidnosyny mizh Ukrainoiu i NATO na suchasnomu etapi: dosiahnennia ta vyklyky: zb. nauk. prats (za materialamy Mizhnarodnoi naukovo-praktychnoi konferentsii, Kyiv, 2 chervnia 2022 r.), 2022, pp. 12–13.*

Security issues have always been at the centre of international relations theory and practice. Recently, the issue of security in international relations in Eastern and Central Europe in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war has become the subject of inquiry for many scholars and analysts. Aspects of security in Eastern and Central Europe have been analysed by Polish researchers and think tanks. In particular, Aleksander Olech and Jacek Raubo have carried out an analysis on the need for close military cooperation between the countries of the Trilateral Initiative, as at present the Trilateral Initiative is primarily economic and political in nature, but with the increase in international tension, including Russia's aggression against Ukraine, it is necessary to expand this format to include a defence dimension.² Piotr Wojcik argues that when making joint investments in infrastructure, it is worth using EU tools focused on the development of cross-border cooperation (Ukraine and the Tri-Portuguese countries), such as the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR), as they can be a valuable source of funding for such projects, in view of the difficulties in obtaining funds from other sources for the implementation of the Tri-Portuguese projects.³ Zbigniew Brzezinski emphasises the importance of Ukraine in ensuring security in the EU and even in the world, and expresses the opinion that in the event of close cooperation in the Weimar Triangle format (Germany, France and Poland), extended by the accession of Ukraine, an axis of states could emerge which, on the one hand, would be the foundation of security and, on the other hand, pose no threat either to Russia or to any other actors on the international stage.⁴

Many Ukrainian academics are actively researching the security aspects of international relations in Eastern and Central Europe. Thus, Ruslan Demchyshak predicts that in the context of the decisions of the last NATO summit, Ukraine's security cooperation with the sub-regional organisations of Central and Eastern Europe will develop at the current pace, periodically gaining new intensity.⁵

² A. Olech, J. Raubo, *Czas na Armię Trójmorza? O konieczności bliskiej współpracy wojskowej państw trójmorskich*, Instytut Nowej Europy, <https://ine.org.pl/czas-na-armie-trojmorza-o-koniecznosc-bliksiej-wspolpracy-wojskowej-panstw-trojmerskich/>, (accessed 30.01.2025).

³ P. Wójcik, *Zacieśnianie relacji Ukrainy z Trójmorzem poprzez dotychczasowe formaty współpracy wielostronnej w EŚW. Wnioski i rekomendacje*, Instytut BiRM, <https://instytutbirm.pl/zaciesnianie-relacji-ukrainy-z-trojmorzem/>, (accessed 30.01.2025).

⁴ Z. Brzeziński, *Wielka Szachownica. Geostrategia amerykańskiego przywództwa*, Pałac Dożów, Kraków 2024.

⁵ R. Demchyshak, *Bezpekovyi aspekt spivpratsi Ukrainy iz subrehionalnymy ob'iednanniamy Tsentralno-Skhidnoi Yevropy*, "Rehionalni studii" 2023, no. 34, pp. 123–128.

The transition of this cooperation to a new level is only possible in the event of Ukraine's accession to the Alliance or the emergence of new viable security alliances with the countries of the region, which could potentially be formed as a result of the post-war transformation of the international system. Ihor Todorov examines the security aspects of international relations in Eastern and Central Europe in the context of the Russian aggression against Ukraine and describes the features of the contemporary aggressive policy of the Russian Federation, stressing that there is no evidence that the Russian authorities are considering revising their approaches to relations with the outside world.⁶ Nataliia Nechaieva-Yuriichuk analyses the security dimensions of geopolitical initiatives in the Central and Eastern European region, arguing that the consolidation of the West (including Ukraine and all Eastern and Central European countries as an integral part of it) is capable of containing Russian aggression and punishing it for systemic violations of international law.⁷

However, there is still a lack of research dedicated to analysing the security aspects of international relations in Eastern and Central Europe in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war. There is a need to complete the analysis taking into account the principles of international relations theory regarding the main factors and systemic tools of destabilisation of Ukrainian-Russian relations in the security sphere, methodological approaches to the study of the security dimension in interstate relations under the conditions of foreign policy transformation of the countries of the world, and to accurately show the Russian factor in the reinterpretation of the defence capabilities of Eastern and Central European countries.

Findings and discussion

The Central and Eastern European region is in need of enhanced solidarity as it finds itself at the epicentre of contemporary geopolitical challenges that require increased strategic resilience. The geographic location of the region makes it crucial in matters of defence and countering hybrid threats. Russian military aggression, cyber attacks, economic pressure and disinformation campaigns pose

⁶ I. Todorov, *Bezpekovi vymir mizhnarodnykh vidnosyn v Skhidnii ta Tsentralnii Yevropi v konteksti rosiiskoi ahresii*, "Politychne zhyttia" 2022, no. 1, pp. 138–144.

⁷ N. Nechaieva-Yuriichuk, *Bezpekovi vymiry heopolitychnykh initsiatyv u rehioni Tsentralno-Skhidnoi Yevropy*, "Mediaforum: analityka, prohnozy" 2022, vol. 9, pp. 141–161.

serious challenges to national institutions and international cooperation. In order to increase their resilience, states in the region should actively develop joint defence initiatives and invest in technologies that enhance self-defence capabilities. Craig Snyder argues that states form temporary alliances when they seek relative advantages – economic, political or military.⁸ A key condition for the stability of Central and Eastern Europe is solidarity between states. An important tool for this is cooperation within the framework of NATO, the European Union and regional initiatives such as the Visegrad Group or the Trilateral Initiative. Only through joint efforts can the challenges posed by external threats and internal crises be effectively countered. Deepening political, economic and cultural dialogue will contribute to strengthening unity and trust among the countries of the region, which in turn will become the basis for their sustainable development and security in a changing global environment.

The security of international relations in Central and Eastern Europe in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war is defined by significant changes in the regional and global security architecture. The war has created new challenges for NATO and the EU, forcing states to strengthen defence capabilities and increase defence spending. Russia's aggression has led to an intensification of support for Ukraine from the international community, including arms supplies, financial assistance and sanctions against Russia. At a meeting of defence ministers from five countries – Germany, the UK, France, Poland and Italy – held in Warsaw on 13 January 2025, Poland's defence minister, Wladyslaw Kosiniak-Kamysz, stressed that Ukraine badly needs the support of its allies, as it is fighting not only for its freedom, but also for security in Europe, so aid must continue.⁹ These words point to the importance of international cooperation and solidarity in the face of the threat posed by Russian aggression and the need to further mobilise resources and strengthen defence and security cooperation in the region. Joint action by allied countries is crucial for the stability and security of not only Ukraine, but all of Europe.

Central European countries such as Poland and the Baltic States have become important partners in strengthening regional security, advocating a tough policy

⁸ C. Snyder (ed.), *Contemporary Security and Strategy*, Macmillan, Basingstoke 1997, pp. 102–119.

⁹ V. Kosiniaka-Kamysza, *U Varshavi vidbulas zustrich ministriv oborony p'iaty krain: ishlosia pro dopomohu Ukraini ta oboronnyi potentsial Yevropy*, Radio Svoboda, <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-varshava-ministry-zustrich-yevropa-bezpeka-viy-na/33274457.html>, (accessed 30.01.2025).

to contain Russia and playing an important role in securing Central and Eastern Europe. Their geographical location on the border between the European Union and NATO on the one hand, and Russia on the other, makes them key players in deterring potential threats. Poland is actively investing in the modernisation of its armed forces, increasing defence spending and is one of the few NATO countries to achieve the recommended 2% of GDP for the defence sector. The Baltic States are also actively cooperating with their NATO allies, particularly through participation in the Enhanced Forward Presence programme, deploying international battalions to strengthen collective defence. In addition to the military aspect, these states are making a significant contribution to countering hybrid threats. Poland is a key hub for gas supplies thanks to the Baltic Pipe project, which contributes to reducing dependence on Russian energy resources. The Baltic States are actively implementing cyber security strategies to protect their information systems. Together, these states form an effective bloc within the EU and NATO, ensuring not only the security of their borders, but also the stability of the entire region.

NATO and the EU are playing a key role in ensuring security in Central and Eastern Europe in the face of the Russian-Ukrainian war. NATO is strengthening collective defence by deploying additional troops in border countries and the EU is providing significant political, economic and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine by introducing new sanctions against Russia. The coordinated actions of these structures contribute to stability, strengthen the defence capabilities of the countries in the region and deter the aggressor. According to Oleh Cebenko and Marta Senkalskaya, the alliance is interested in creating a safe and stable environment in the region that fosters the development of democratic institutions and good-neighbourly relations with countries on NATO's eastern flank. Strengthening the alliance's presence in the region is an essential factor in guaranteeing security for some countries in the region, the stability of the EU and NATO member states.¹⁰ NATO members provide almost €40 billion worth of military support to Ukraine every year. Nato Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the Bucharest Nine summit in Riga, also attended by Finland and Sweden, stressed that we must maintain this level of support for as long as necessary to ensure fresh funding every year. Stable, long-term support sends a signal to President Putin that he will not be able to wait us out.¹¹

¹⁰ Ibidem.

¹¹ *Heneralnyi sekretar NATO v Ryzi*, Orhanizatsiia Pivnichnoatlantychnoho dohovoru, https://www.nato.int/cps/uk/natohq/news_196378.htm?selectedLocale=uk, (accessed 30.01.2025).

The Russian-Ukrainian war has caused radical changes in the foreign policy of many countries, including Germany, Poland, the Baltic States and others. As Vasyl Krotiuk notes, modern warfare is a complex phenomenon that has taken a variety of forms in the global and local processes of power competition of modern times.¹² The proliferation of hybrid methods of warfare, the migration crisis, economic instability and the increased threat of nuclear conflict are direct consequences of this conflict. It is critically important for all Central and Eastern European countries to be able to secure themselves against hostile external influences and to be able to guarantee sustainable development. The main threat is the aggressive policy of Russia, which has not only violated the territorial integrity of Ukraine, but also undermined the stability of the entire region. Hostilities, hybrid aggression, including cyber-attacks and disinformation campaigns, pose a risk to countries neighbouring the conflict zone, such as Poland, Romania, the Baltic States and others. According to Mariana Bihus and Oleksandr Vosia, Russian cyber-attacks on Eastern Europe and NATO are one of the most serious threats to regional stability and security. These attacks have a wide range of targets and methods, including the use of malware and various ransomware programs, as well as other forms of cyber aggression.¹³ This forces countries to strengthen cooperation within NATO and the EU. The second key threat is the destabilisation caused by the economic and humanitarian impact of the war. Millions of Ukrainian refugees have sought refuge in neighbouring countries, putting strain on social systems and infrastructure. At the same time, the influence of pro-Russian forces seeking to destabilise the region through political and social conflict is increasing. In the face of these challenges, the importance of international coordination and solidarity is growing. The war has also accelerated the processes of Ukraine's integration into European structures, including the EU and NATO, which creates new opportunities for strengthening regional security. Nevertheless, addressing these challenges requires long-term strategic support, including financial, political and military support, from international partners.

¹² V. Krotiuk (ed.), *Svitohliadnyi sens suchasnoi viiny: sotsiohumanitarni aspekty*, Kharkiv 2024.

¹³ M. Bihus, O. Vos, *Kiberbezpeka ta informatsiina viina: analiz suchasnykh zahroz ta iniatsiyv na skhidnomu flanzi YeS ta NATO*, in: M. Malskyy, L. Leshchenko, O. Kuchyk, R. Vovk, N. Struchok (eds.), *Ukraine and Transformation of International Security System. Ukrainian Formula of Peace for New World Order. Proceedings of the international scientific conference* (Lviv, May 16–17, 2024), Faculty of International Relations of the Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, Lviv 2024, pp. 14–20.

The Russian-Ukrainian war has significantly exacerbated the geopolitical situation in Eastern and Central Europe (Table 1). It has become a catalyst for new regional and global security challenges, strengthening alliances and revising strategic priorities for ensuring the security of Eastern and Central European countries in the context of Russian threats, namely: strengthening the region's defence capabilities, support for Ukraine (strengthening sanctions against Russia), energy security (development of alternative energy sources), cyber security and information protection, collective security and cooperation, strengthening the protection of the EU's eastern borders, economic stability and sustainable social development.

Table 1. Geopolitical situation in Eastern and Central Europe in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war

Country	Attitude towards war	Military support for Ukraine	Economic support for Ukraine	Attitude towards the Russian Federation	Geopolitical role
Ukraine	Defends itself against Russian aggression	Main parties to the conflict	High level of commitment from allies	Negative, Russia is perceived as an aggressor	Centre of conflict, key partner for the West
Poland	Strongly supports Ukraine	Supply of arms, training	High level of financial and humanitarian assistance	Negative, threat to national security	NATO outpost in the region, active diplomacy
Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia	Expresses unequivocal support for Ukraine	Supply of arms, technical assistance	Significant economic support	Very negative, historical threats from the Russian Federation	Strengthening NATO's eastern flank
Germany	Initially cautious, now more active support	Supply of tanks, air defence, ammunition	Significant economic assistance	Negative, attempts to reduce dependence on Russian energy resources	Leader in the EU, key economic partner
France	Support for Ukraine	Supply of arms, technical assistance	Economic aid, political support	Negative, but maintains communication channels	Influential player in the EU and NATO
Hungary	Ambiguous position, calls for negotiations	Minimum military support	Limited economic support	Moderately neutral, dependence on Russian gas	Problematic partner in the EU

Country	Attitude towards war	Military support for Ukraine	Economic support for Ukraine	Attitude towards the Russian Federation	Geopolitical role
Czech Republic and Slovakia	Support for Ukraine	Supply of military equipment	Substantial economic assistance	Negative, Russia is perceived as an aggressor	Active position in the region, strengthening NATO
Belarus	Russian Federation ally, use of territory for aggression	None	Resource support to the Russian Federation	Positive, dependence on Russian Federation	Threat to regional stability
Romania	Support for Ukraine Military equipment	Supply of military equipment, strengthening of air defence	Humanitarian assistance	Negative, security threat due to proximity to conflict zone	Important NATO partner on the Black Sea
Moldova	Vulnerable to pressure from the Russian Federation, support for Ukraine	Limited	Reception of refugees, humanitarian aid	Negative, concerns about Transnistria	Threatened by escalation due to regional conflicts

Source: compiled by the authors.

Experts from the Royal Institute of International Affairs Chatham House presented a study in 2023 entitled “Seven ways in which Russia’s war with Ukraine has changed the world,” in which they highlighted the profound geopolitical, economic and social changes caused by Russia’s war with Ukraine¹⁴. The Russian-Ukrainian war has become a key factor of destabilisation in Central and Eastern Europe, leading to a rethinking of the security priorities of both individual states and the region as a whole (Table 2). Russia’s invasion of Ukraine violated fundamental principles of international law, including the territorial integrity and sovereignty of states, increasing the risk to neighbouring countries. In response, many countries in the region have stepped up efforts to strengthen their defence capabilities, increased cooperation within NATO and the EU, and requested additional military support from the United States. In addition, the war has catalysed the formation of new alliances and increased regional cooperation, e.g. through formats such as the Bucharest Nine or the Trilateral initiatives. Kenneth Waltz argues that the formation of alliances enables a more even distribution

¹⁴ S. Coles, L. Rellstab, *Seven ways Russia’s war on Ukraine has changed the world*, Chatham House, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2023/02/seven-ways-russias-war-ukraine-has-changed-world>, (accessed 30.01.2025).

of power in the international system, which discourages other states from changing the status quo.¹⁵

At the same time, the Russian-Ukrainian war has created serious humanitarian and economic challenges, which has further affected the security of the region and highlighted the importance of information security as an element of international relations. Countering propaganda, disinformation and cyber attacks has become an important aspect of the fight against hybrid threats. The Russian-Ukrainian war has exposed weaknesses in the functioning of international organisations, such as the UN, which need reform to effectively resolve conflicts and prevent future aggressions. All this underlines the importance of strengthening European solidarity and consolidating efforts to counter common threats, while developing long-term strategies to strengthen stability and security in the region.

Table 2. Security Priorities in Eastern and Central Europe in the Context of the Russian-Ukrainian War

Category	Description	Examples/Facts	Consequences
Military security	Threat to the territorial integrity and sovereignty of states in the region	Russian invasion of Ukraine; strengthening of NATO in Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia	Escalation of conflict; increased defence spending
Energy security	Use of energy resources as a tool of pressure	Discontinuation of gas supplies to the EU from Russia	Transition to alternative energy sources, strengthening of EU energy independence
Economic security	Impact of sanctions, economic pressure and trade restrictions on the region	EU sanctions against Russia; decline in trade between Russia and CEE countries	Reduction of economic dependence on Russia; adaptation of economies to new conditions
Humanitarian aspects	Crisis caused by mass migrations, human rights violations and war crimes	Refugees from Ukraine to Poland, Slovakia, Hungary	Humanitarian aid; strain on social security systems in host countries
The role of international organizations	Influence of NATO, EU, UN and OSCE on the stabilisation of the region	Deployment of NATO missions; EU financial and military assistance to Ukraine	Strengthening the role of international organisations in maintaining peace and security
Regional alliances and cooperation	Deepening cooperation between Central and Eastern European countries for common security	'Lublin Triangle' (Ukraine, Poland, Lithuania); Trilateral initiative	Creating new formats for regional cooperation to counter threats

¹⁵ K. Waltz, *Theory of international politics*, Addison-Wesley Pub. Co., Reading 1979.

Category	Description	Examples/Facts	Consequences
International legal aspects	Violation of international law norms and sovereignty principles	Annexation of Crimea; continued shelling of civilian facilities in Ukraine	Recourse to international courts; introduction of legal sanctions against Russia
Information security	Spread of propaganda, disinformation and cyber attacks	Russian propaganda media; hacking of regional government websites	Developing strategies to counter disinformation; enhancing cyber security

Source: compiled by the authors.

Ihor Todorov notes that strategic communication mechanisms are of key importance in the context of the aggressive policy of the Russian Federation, providing activities aimed at building public support for the democratic system, the principles of the rule of law, the rule of law, the protection of human rights, public transparency and long-term democratic orientation in foreign policy.¹⁶ Strategic communication mechanisms in the context of the security aspects of international relations in Central and Eastern Europe are gaining importance in view of the challenges posed by the Russian-Ukrainian war. In this region, strategic communication serves to consolidate allied positions, counter disinformation and build trust between NATO and EU member states. The active participation of international organisations and key states contributes to the formation of a unified policy towards Russia's aggressive actions, including sanctions and support for Ukraine. Information campaigns are also a tool for strengthening public support for the policy of containment and assistance to Ukraine. A feature of strategic communication in this context is the need to take into account the asymmetric nature of threats. Russia is actively using the tools of hybrid warfare, including propaganda, cyber attacks and manipulation of public opinion in neighbouring states. The response of Central and Eastern European states is through proactive measures, including the establishment of centres to counter disinformation and promote facts at the international level. Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, for example, are examples of effective public mobilisation to counter Russian information aggression. A key element of these mechanisms is the emphasis on partnerships with civil society and the media. Government agencies work with independent media, think tanks and NGOs to increase transparency and raise public awareness of security threats. Such activities contribute to shaping a stable information environment that is resilient to external influences. As a result, strategic communication in Central and Eastern Europe not only ensures a coordinated response

¹⁶ I. Todorov, *Bezpekovi vymir...*, op. cit., pp. 138–144.

to aggression, but also shapes a new security culture in the region. Since the beginning of Russia's widespread aggression against Ukraine, the West has shown an unprecedented level of unity, recognising the need for joint efforts to protect the international order. Ukraine and Eastern and Central Europe have become important elements in this process, as they are on the front line of the fight against Russia's expansion. The European Union, NATO and partner countries have joined forces to implement sanctions and to provide arms and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine. These actions have become evidence of the West's willingness to fight not only for the sovereignty of individual states, but also for the preservation of the basic principles of international law.

Central and Eastern European countries, with their own historical experience of Soviet occupation, play a central role in this consolidation and are the most strongly supportive of Ukraine. Poland, the Baltic states, the Czech Republic and others are actively lobbying for tough sanctions against Russia, providing military and political support to Ukraine, showing that solidarity can be an effective response to aggression. The region has become not only the boundary between freedom and dictatorship, but also a catalyst for changes in Western Europe's approach to security and shared responsibility. Therefore, the West's determination to punish Russia for violations of international law and war crimes is an essential condition for maintaining global stability. Concerted efforts to gather evidence, implement sanctions and prepare international tribunals demonstrate the will to restore justice and prevent similar crises in the future. The consolidation of the West is becoming not only a response to aggression, but also a guarantee for the formation of a new security architecture, recognising the integration of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe as its intrinsic element.

Summary

The purpose of the article was achieved through an analysis of international law to conclude that the Russian-Ukrainian war has significantly exacerbated the security aspects of international relations in Eastern and Central Europe, revealing weaknesses in the existing system of international law and collective security. Russia's act of aggression violates fundamental principles of the UN Charter, including the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs, sovereignty and territorial integrity of states. The response of the international community, including the imposition of sanctions, military and humanitarian assistance

to Ukraine, demonstrates the importance of NATO, the EU and the OSCE in stabilising the region, although it also reveals their dependence on the consensus of their members. The war has highlighted the need to reform international security mechanisms to ensure a more effective response to hybrid threats, including cyber attacks and information warfare. Ukraine's pivotal role in shaping Europe's new security architecture requires a review of existing legal instruments, with a particular focus on deterring the aggressor and ensuring long-term peace. The Russian-Ukrainian war has become a decisive challenge to the regional security of Central and Eastern Europe and has demonstrated the vulnerability of the countries of the region to the aggressive policies of Russia, which is seeking to re-establish its influence in the post-Soviet area. The war has also exacerbated the issue of territorial integrity, which has become a key issue for Ukraine and a potential threat to other countries in the region. It has also increased polarisation among European states, forcing countries to reconsider their security strategies. At the same time, the war has revealed the need for further integration and improvement of the EU's common foreign and security policy. In addition to traditional military threats, the war in Ukraine has drawn attention to hybrid methods. The energy dependence of some countries in the region on Russian gas proved to be a major challenge, stimulating an active search for alternative energy sources and diversification of supply. This aspect has become a key element of the region's long-term security strategy.

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Summary

The research findings indicate that Russia's aggression against Ukraine has dismantled traditional approaches to European security, intensifying concerns about the effectiveness of international security mechanisms such as NATO, the OSCE and the UN. The war has also triggered profound transformations in the foreign policies of regional countries, particularly in strengthening military cooperation, enhancing defence capabilities and reassessing energy security. The Central and Eastern European region requires greater solidarity as it has found itself at the epicentre of contemporary geopolitical challenges that demand increased strategic resilience. The region's geographical position

makes it crucial for defence matters and countering hybrid threats. The authors conclude that Ukraine plays a central role in shaping the security order of Eastern and Central Europe, as its ability to effectively resist Russian aggression has become a decisive factor in deterring Russia and protecting democratic values in the region. Moreover, international support for Ukraine – including military, economic and diplomatic assistance – is vital for maintaining regional stability and security in Eastern and Central Europe.